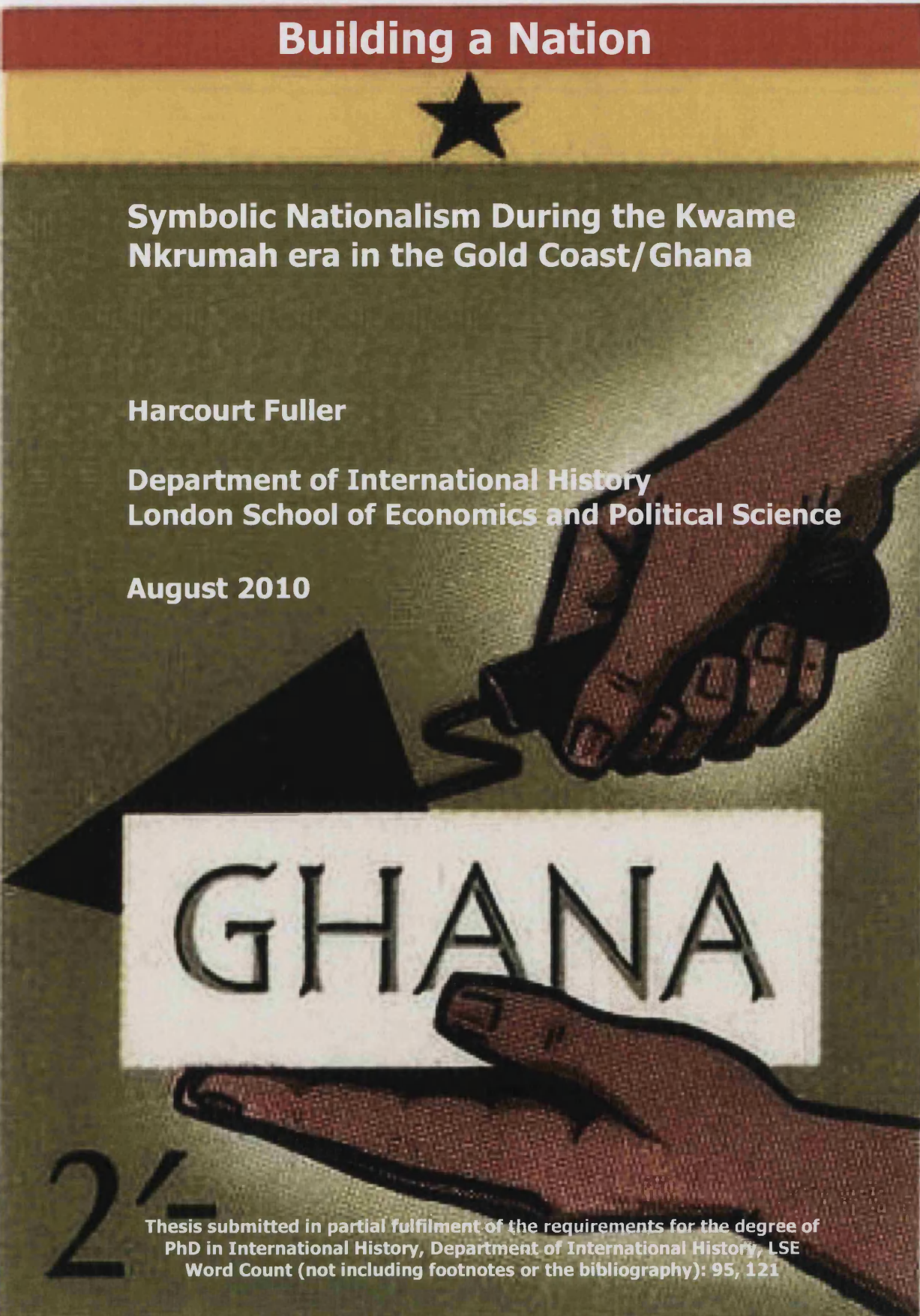


Building a Nation



Symbolic Nationalism During the Kwame Nkrumah era in the Gold Coast/Ghana

Harcourt Fuller

Department of International History
London School of Economics and Political Science

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GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Many of my people cannot read or write. They've got to be *shown* that they are now really independent. And they can only be shown by signs. When they buy stamps they will see my picture – an African like themselves-and they will say “Aiee...look here is our leader on the stamps, we are truly a free people” (Kwame Nkrumah, ‘Why the Queen’s head is coming off our coins,’ *Daily Sketch*, 20th June 1957, 12).

For almost two decades (1951 – 1966), Kwame Nkrumah was the major nationalist leader in the Gold Coast/Ghana and the living personification of the Ghanaian nation-state. In this thesis I analyse the dynamics of how Nkrumah attempted to construct a homogenous national identity for Ghana, the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence from a European imperial power. His nation-building strategies encompassed the propagandistic use of political iconography, expressed through what I call “symbols of nationhood,” including money, postage stamps, monuments, museums, dress, non-verbal maxims (Adinkra symbols), the national anthem, emblems, and both national and party flags. The premiership of the self-proclaimed *Civitas Ghanaensis Conditor* – Founder of the State of Ghana –was also characterized by the ‘cult of personality’ where he branded the nation with his image by personalizing these public symbols of nationhood. Despite these efforts, much of his nation-building projects became quite contentious and contradictory within the country and with foreign nations. They were consistently countered by alternative historical narratives and competing symbolisms from the departing British colonial officials (from whom he inherited much of these symbolisms), as well as traditional leaders, opposition parties, the military, merchants and intellectuals in Ghana. Since the 1966 coup that toppled him, many of the symbols of nationhood that Nkrumah constructed have been debated, demolished, reconsidered and reengineered by successive governments to rewrite the Ghanaian historical narrative and the legacy of Nkrumah himself. The examination of symbols of nationhood has largely been neglected in the literature on anti-colonial nationalism. The thesis is based on archival research conducted in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, the British Library, the British Postal Museum and Archive, the National Archives of Ghana, the Ghana Post Archives, and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum (USA).

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	African Affairs
ABC	African Banking Corporation
AEB	Atomic Energy Board
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AHR	American Historical Review
ANA	American Numismatic Association
ANC	African National Congress
ANS	American Numismatic Society
ANZAC	Australia New Zealand Army Corps
ARPS	Aborigines' Rights Protection Society
ASEN	The Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism
ASR	African Studies Review
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBWA	Bank of British West Africa, Ltd.
BDEEP	British Document on the End of Empire Project
BM	The British Museum
BOE	Bank of England
BOG	Bank of Ghana
BON	Bank of Nigeria, Limited
BPMA	British Postal Museum and Archive
BWA	British West Africa
CFA	<i>Colonies françaises d'Afrique</i> (French colonies of Africa)
CHA	Cambridge History of Africa
CJAS	Canadian Journal of African Studies
CO	Colonial Office
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CPP	Convention People's Party
DAAPE	Digital Archive of African Political Ephemera
DBPO	Documents on British Policy Overseas
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa)
EACB	East African Currency Board
ECO	A proposed common currency for several West African countries
ECOWAS	The Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FLN	<i>Front de Libération Nationale</i> (National Liberation Front – Algeria)
GAFM	Ghana Armed Forces Museum
GAP	Ghana Action Party
GAS	Ga Aborigines Society
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
GCP	Ghana Congress Party
GMMB	Ghana Museums and Monuments Board
GNSM	Ghana National Science Museum
GPA	Ghana Postal Archive
GSC	Ga State Council
HSG	Historical Society of Ghana
IAS	Institute of African Studies (University of Ghana, Legon)

ICOM	International Council of Museums
IGPC	Inter-Governmental Philatelic Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRA	Irish Republican Army
JAH	Journal of African History
JICH	Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History
JMAS	Journal of Modern African Studies
JSAS	Journal of southern African Studies
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
LPDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MoC	Ministry of Communications
MNC	<i>Movement National Congolais</i>
NA	The National Archives (UK)
NAL	National Alliance of Liberals
NAM	Non Aligned Movement
NCBWA	National Congress of British West Africa
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NLC	National Liberation Council
NLM	National Liberation Movement
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NPP	Northern People's Party
NRC	National Redemption Council
NTC	Northern Territories Council
OAU	Organization for African Unity
OCA	Optimum-Currency-Area
OXBE	Oxford History of the British Empire
P&T	Posts & Telecommunications Department
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands
PAP	People's Action Party
PG	Prison Graduate
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PNE	Peaceful Nuclear Explosions
PNP	People's National Party
PP	Progressive Party
PRAAD	The Public Records and Archives Administration Department (National Archives, Ghana)
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRO	Public Record Office (UK)
RC	Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville)
RDA	<i>Ressement Democratique Africain</i>
RLG	Royal Lao Government
RMS	Regimental Sergeant Major
RNS	The Royal Numismatic Society
ROC	Republic of China
SDC	Standing Development Committee
SMC	Supreme Military Council
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SEN	Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism
SWAPO	South West African People's Organization

TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UAC	United Africa Company
UAS	Union of African States
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
UL	University of London
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VRA	Volta River Authority
WACB	West African Currency Board
WACC	West African Currency Committee
WAMZ	West African Monetary Zone

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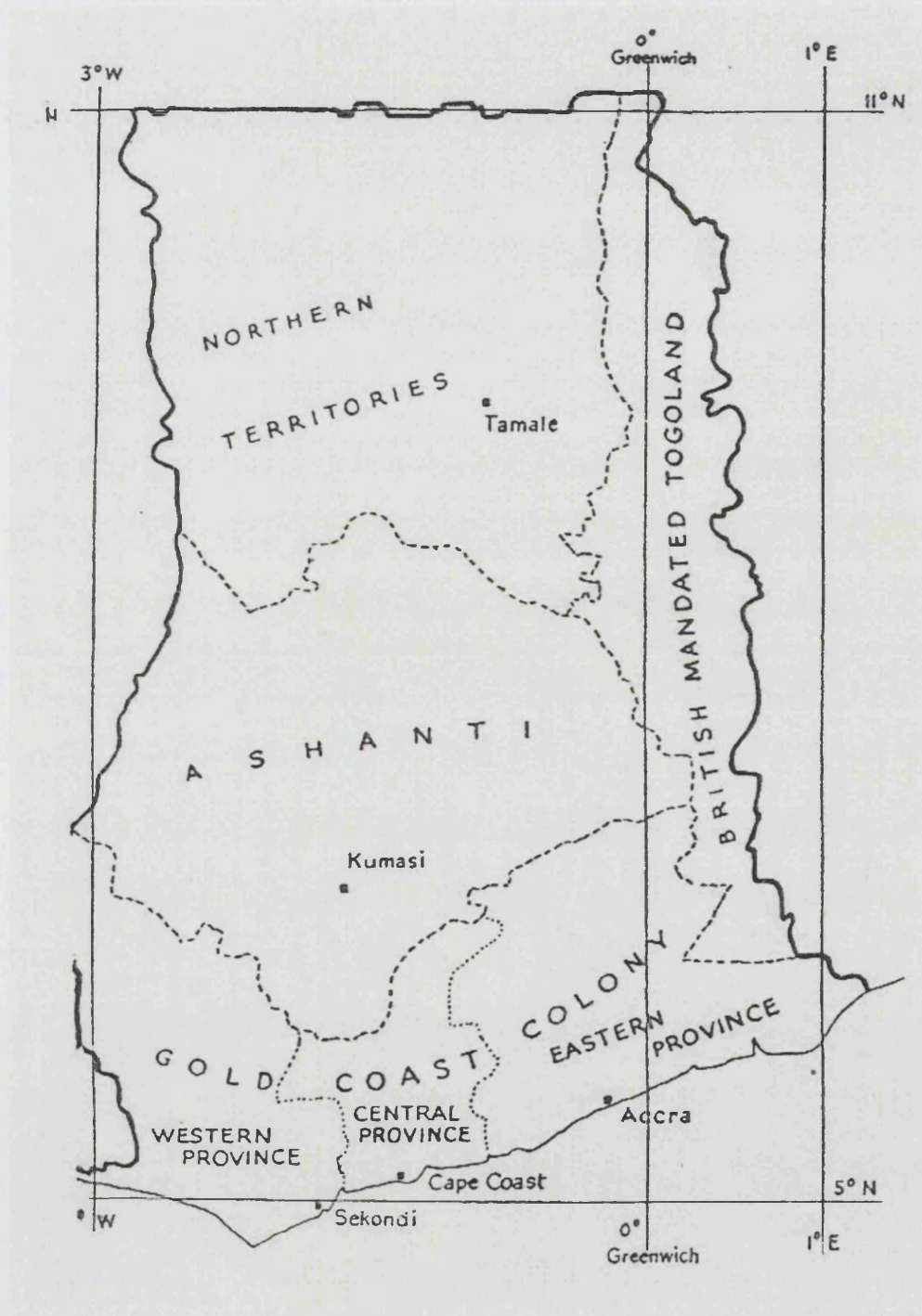
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Timeline of Important Dates in the life of Kwame Nkrumah¹

Date	Event
1909	Nkrumah is born in Nkroful in the south-western part of the Gold Coast
1935	Nkrumah attends Lincoln University in the United States, and stays in the US for ten years
1945	Leaves the United States for London, England
1945	Participates in the 5 th Pan-African Conference in Manchester
1947	Summoned back to the Gold Coast to become General Secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC)
1949	Splits from UGCC and creates the Convention People's Party (CPP)
1950	Nkrumah launches "Positive Action" campaign against British colonial government
January 21, 1950	Nkrumah and other CPP members are jailed for their activities
February 12, 1951	Colonial government releases Nkrumah from prison
February 23, 1951	Nkrumah elected as Leader of Government Business in the Gold Coast Assembly
1952	Nkrumah is sworn in as Prime Minister of Government Business of the Gold Coast
March 6, 1957	Ghana gains independence with Nkrumah as Prime Minister
July 1, 1960	Nkrumah declares Ghana a republic and becomes its first President
1964	Ghana declared a One Party State, with the CPP as the only official party and Nkrumah as President for Life
February 28, 1966	NLC stages first military coup in Ghana (against Nkrumah)
March 2, 1966	Nkrumah seeks asylum in Guinea-Conakry. President Sekou Touré names him Co-President of the Republic of Guinea
April 1972	Still in exile, Nkrumah dies in a Romanian hospital in Bucharest

¹ See Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Panaf, 1957), and <http://perso.orange.fr/les.insatisfaits/the.osagyefo.html> (accessed June 24, 2007).

MAP II: Gold Coast & Dependencies³



³ Elizabeth Wrangham, "A Changing Colonial Relationship: The Gold Coast Colony in the Period of the First World War" (paper presented at the African History Seminar, SOAS, London, May 17, 2006).

Introduction



“Many of my people cannot read or write. They’ve got to be *shown* that they are now really independent. And they can only be shown by signs.”¹

In 2000, the British Broadcasting Corporation’s (BBC) African listeners who took the *BBC World Service Listener’s Survey* voted Kwame Nkrumah “Man of the Millennium.” In 2004, the readers of *New African*, an international Pan-Africanist magazine, voted him as the “Second Greatest African” that ever lived.² The *Osagyefo*³ is an important but controversial personality, not only in the history of his native Ghana, but also in African and international history. He is also one of several African heads of states that pursued some of their studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science.⁴ After gaining his formative education and training as a teacher in the Gold Coast in the first third of the 1900s, Kwame Nkrumah would spend ten years in the United States of America (from 1935 – 1945), studying at Lincoln University. Nkrumah then went to Britain at the end of

¹ Kwame Nkrumah, “Why the Queen’s Head is Coming off our Coins,” *Daily Sketch*, June 20, 1957, 12.

² Baffour Ankomah, “Never Again!...40 Years After the Coup that Derailed Africa’s Progress,” *New African*. Special issue, *Nkrumah’s Legacy 40 Years After the Coup*, February 24, 2006, 2. Nelson Mandela was voted the Greatest African that ever lived.

³ The Twi-language title ‘Osagyefo’ (the Redeemer) was bestowed upon Nkrumah by his supporters for leading the Gold Coast to independence from Britain.

⁴ In addition to Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya, as well as John Atta Mills, the current president of Ghana, studied at the LSE.

the Second World War, where he continued his studies at LSE and the University of London. During his two and a half years in Britain, he also gained further work experience and ideological exposure to the main issues of the day such as racial discrimination, colonialism, imperialism, etc. Political developments in the Gold Coast, particularly the rise of anti-colonial nationalist movements, propelled him to return home to engage in politics, leaving behind his goals of completing his doctoral studies.⁵

His exposure outside of Africa gave him the credibility and preparation to fight for the cause of Gold Coast/African independence and nationhood. In his autobiography, he writes, “Those years in America and England were years of sorrow and loneliness, poverty and hard work. But I have never regretted them because the background that they provided has helped me to formulate my philosophy of life and politics.”⁶ During this period in the United States, “the flame of nationalism...had been fanned and kept alight [in me] for over ten years.”⁷ But Nkrumah did not only get philosophical ideas about Western imperialism and nationalism from living and studying in the United States and Britain alone. He also greatly admired and studied the philosophies and opinions of several “revolutionaries and their methods,” most notably Hannibal, Napoleon, Cromwell, Mazzini, Lenin, Gandhi, Hitler and Mussolini. In these men, Nkrumah “found much of value to be gleaned and many ideas that were useful to me later in my own campaign against imperialism.”⁸ However, the person who had the most lasting impact on Nkrumah’s ideas about nationalism was the Columbia University-trained

⁵ See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/pressAndInformationOffice/aboutLSE/worldLeaders.htm>. The LSE’s Press and Information Office states that Kwame Nkrumah received a PhD from the LSE in 1946, although it is more likely that he was awarded an honorary doctorate after he became Prime Minister of Ghana in 1957.

⁶ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, vii.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁸ *Ibid.*, vii–viii.

Gold Coast educator, Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey. Around 1926, Aggrey became the first African member of staff and Assistant Vice-Principal of the Prince of Wales' College at Achimota, later to be renamed Achimota Training College.⁹ Nkrumah praised Aggrey as a man opposed to all forms of racial segregation and inequality who encouraged racial co-operation while at the same time still being a proud African. He writes:

To me he seemed the most remarkable man that I had ever met and I had the deepest affection for him. He possessed intense vitality and enthusiasm...and he was a very great orator. It was through him that my nationalism was first aroused...It was because of my great admiration for Aggrey, both as a man and a scholar, that I first formed the idea of furthering my studies in the United States of America.¹⁰

Nkrumah followed in Aggrey's footsteps to go to America for his tertiary education. There were several other notable African nationalists who left an indelible mark on Nkrumah's political philosophy before he left for the United States. S.R. Wood, a secretary of the National Congress of British West Africa was a "rare character" that "first introduced me to politics. He knew more about Gold Coast political history than any other person I have ever met and we had many long conversations together."¹¹ The Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe, who wrote articles for *The African Morning Post* and Wallace Johnson, a Sierra Leonean labour organizer who pioneered the Youth League in West Africa, and George "Pa" Grant, the acclaimed "father of Gold Coast Politics" and first President of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) were other notables who inspired Nkrumah's sense of nationalism.¹²

⁹ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹² *Ibid.*, 22, 27.

Events that unfolded in international affairs also ignited Nkrumah's desire to take up the nationalist's cause to rid the Gold Coast of British colonialism. In 1935, while in London en-route to the United States to study at Lincoln University, he read the newspaper headlines that the Italian fascist Mussolini had invaded Ethiopia:

That was all I needed. At that moment it was almost as if the whole of London had suddenly declared war on me personally. For the next few minutes I could do nothing but glare at each impassive face wondering if those people could possibly realise the wickedness of colonialism, and praying that the day might come when I could play my part in bringing about the downfall of such a system. My nationalism surged to the fore; I was ready and willing to go through hell itself, if need be, in order to achieve my objective.¹³

Therefore, by the time that Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast in 1947, he had already formulated an ideology perhaps more properly described as Pan-African nationalism, which was an amalgamation of the philosophies and opinions of a variety of Africans and peoples of African descent in Europe, the Caribbean and the United States. He had also formulated a personal politico-religious philosophy, describing himself as a non-denominational Christian as well as a Marxist socialist, the two not being mutually exclusive to him.¹⁴ Nkrumah defined the ideology of African nationalism as a Marxist-socialist-led revolt by African nationalists against imperialism, colonialism and racialism in Africa.¹⁵ According to Nkrumah, the blueprint for Pan-African Nationalism was truly first revealed at the Fifth Pan African Congress, which was held in October 1945 in Manchester, England. "It was this Fifth Pan African Congress that provided the outlet for African nationalism and

¹³ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

brought about the awakening of African political consciousness. It became, in fact, a mass movement of Africa for the Africans.”¹⁶

After the Congress, Nkrumah and several like-minded colleagues formed the West African National Secretariat in London, for which Nkrumah served as General Secretary. The Secretariat’s objective was “to put into action the new Pan African nationalism, with particular reference to West Africa and with the object of calling a West African National Congress and of directing the programme of self-government for the West African colonies, British as well as French.”¹⁷

Once Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast, his political career took off. He was jailed twice in the late 1940s for his “Positive Action” campaign of non-violent resistance and non-cooperation against the British colonial state. His incarceration only made him more popular in the eyes of the masses, and the British were forced to release him from prison and offer him a seat at the table of the colonial government. Nkrumah became *Head of Government Business* for the Gold Coast in 1951. In 1952, he became Prime Minister of the Gold Coast, which became a “self-governing” colony in 1954. On 6th March 1957, the Gold Coast gained independence and its name was symbolically changed to “Ghana” after *Ancient Ghana*, the seat of one of the most powerful Kingdoms that existed in West Africa hundreds of years prior. Ghana, however, did not become independent as a completely sovereign nation-state in the political sense; it became a Dominion within the British Commonwealth, with Nkrumah as its first Prime Minister. As a British Dominion, Queen Elizabeth retained the highest (symbolic) title of Head of State of Ghana. Nkrumah decided to change this status by declaring Ghana a

¹⁶ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 52-54. The Congress was attended by the most notable Africans and peoples of African descent from the Americas and the Caribbean, including the Harvard-trained American W.E.B. DuBois and Jomo Kenyatta, who would become the first premier of independent Kenya.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

Republic on 1st July 1960, where he held the highest office – that of President of the Republic of Ghana (although Ghana still remained a member of the Commonwealth). Kwame Nkrumah was deposed by a U.S.-sponsored military coup on 24th February 1966.

Historians and ordinary observers of all persuasions have cast Nkrumah as everything from a great African nationalist; a politician who did not deliver on the promises and hopes of independence; a Communist/Socialist; a puppet and political pawn for the West; a lukewarm Cold Warrior who could not decide between East and West; a hapless dreamer who prematurely pursued the idea of a United States of Africa¹⁸ too soon after independence; and a visionary who was way ahead of his time.

Even in the public realm where Nkrumah attempted to build the nation through many public symbols of nationhood - as the opening quotation and this thesis will argue - his legacy has been much debated and contested among “ordinary” Ghanaians and others. In 2006, *Vibe Ghana* - an online discussion website dedicated to debating and commenting on popular issues of concern to the nation – posted a discussion titled, “Should Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's Birthday be declared a National Holiday in Ghana?”¹⁹ The responses to this question reveal the split-historical legacy of Nkrumah amongst Ghanaians at home and abroad. “Nyao” in Canada wrote:

¹⁸ Interestingly, his dream of a United States of Africa was inspired by examples from both East and West, including India, China, the United States and the Soviet Union, which “have proved the efficacy of unions embracing large stretches of land and population.” Hear Nkrumah’s speech on track 10, “On Peace, Defence, Joint Military Command & Continental Union of Africa,” in *Africa's Man of Destiny: 40th Independence Anniversary Ghana 1957 – 1997 - Commentary of Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah's Speech at the Conference of African Freedom Fighters in Accra on 04/06/62*, produced by Kwame Sarpong, The Gramophone Records Museum & Research Centre of Ghana at Cape Coast, (CD), 1997.

¹⁹ Vibe Ghana, <http://vibeghana.com/2006/11/14/should-dr-kwame-nkrumahs-birthday-be-declared-a-national-holiday-in-ghana-post-your-respones.aspx>, comment posted November 14, 2006 (accessed May 29, 2007).

...I have always asked myself why Nkrumah's [sic] birthday is not a national holiday, he was the first president of the republic of Ghana and he built all the foundations for Ghana to become what it has become today, the government of Ghana [sic] must wake up and honour Dr Kwame [sic] Nkrumah, what has surprised me all this [sic] years is that instead of the government to [sic] Declare [sic] his birthday a national holiday they name [sic] the circle round-about after our first president [Kwame Nkrumah Circle] and named the only international airport in Ghana [sic] after [General] Kotoka? [sic] what has Kotoka [sic] done for Ghana? nothing [sic] is the answer, go round in Ghana today and tell me one single development that Kotoka founded, we Ghanaians are funny, the only honour we honored Nkrumah [sic] was we built a statue of him and not a holiday, example [sic] a foreigner comes to Ghana, it is hardly [sic] to hear this [sic] people ask who is this, but if his birthday is declared a national holiday they will see shops closed and see our independence square parked and filled with honour, then they will ask what is going on and then we can tell them we are honoring our first president.²⁰

“Akoto” in Osu (Accra) commented:

I call on Ghanaians [sic] to ask themselves a very simple question, who is the father of Ghana? I [sic] believe it is Dr. Kwame [sic] Nkrumah, this question must be brought [sic] to the attention of government, every country has [sic] their founding fathers and our founding father in Ghana [sic] is Dr. Kwame [sic] Nkrumah, yes his birthday should be declared a national holiday.²¹

Besides these commentators who were supportive of Nkrumah's good name, there were others in Ghana and the Ghanaian Diaspora who expressed their lack of enthusiasm for Nkrumah's nation-building projects and his historical legacy.

“Kwamena” in Boston insisted that:

Nkrumah [sic] has done Ghana [sic] nothing but misuse the little money that the colonial [sic] left for Ghana, he used all the money on other countries that are today better than Ghana, he is not a hero.²²

“Tooth pic” opined that:

Kwame Nkrumah had the worse [sic] human rights violations [sic] in history. He declared [sic] himself president for life, [sic] arrested all his political opponents. He neglected the internal affairs of Ghana [sic] and was rather using our resources [sic] to finance mercenaries [sic] to topple gov'ts that were not in

²⁰ Vibe Ghana, <http://vibeghana.com/2006/11/14/should-dr-kwame-nkrumahs-birthday-be-declared-a-national-holiday-in-ghana-post-your-responses.aspx>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

support of his "africa must unite" concept. He gave Guinea 10 million dollars just to get them to support his idea of africa [sic] must unite...10 million dollars could have built about 3 universities in those days...Kwame Nkrumah is the reason ghana [sic] is suffering today. Instead of following the capitalist Ideology [sic] of free market, he chose to rather [sic] implement the communist Ideology [sic] of state own [sic] enterprise. Nkrumah was a tyrant and Ghana does not need his legacy. No wonder political parties that campaign on Nkrumah's [sic] ideology [sic] never wins [sic].²³

These popular commentaries amongst Ghanaians in Ghana and in the Diaspora reveal much about the socio-economic, symbolic and ideological contentions that remain unresolved thirty-eight years after his death. They illustrate, for example, how his Pan-Africanist programs conflicted with his nation-building obligations. This legacy still haunts the Ghanaian present and will continue to have impact on its future fifty years after independence.

Ghana celebrated its Golden Jubilee of nationhood on 6 March 2007, the year coinciding with the 200th anniversary of the parliamentary act that abolished the slave trade in the British Empire. In addition to the debates among "ordinary" observers, scholars have also begun to review the history and achievements (or lack thereof) of this nation-state during the last fifty years.²⁴ The legacy of the *Osagyefo* was one of the central issues of debate. Nkrumah's legacy in Ghanaian, African and world history was especially pertinent, given that the centenary of his birth was

²³ Vibe Ghana, <http://vibeghana.com/2006/11/14/should-dr-kwame-nkrumahs-birthday-be-declared-a-national-holiday-in-ghana-post-your-responses.aspx>. After Guinea (Conakry) gained independence from France on 2nd October 1958, Nkrumah gave its first President - Sékou Touré – the sum of ten million dollars (U.S. \$10, 000, 000). The money was granted to aid Ghana's new neighbour in its nation-building efforts. However, this gesture of neighbourly camaraderie would not go unpaid. Touré invited Nkrumah to live out his life in exile in Guinea, after the 1966 coup in Ghana. Guinea became Nkrumah's headquarters where he continued his Pan-Africanist rhetoric and writings, right up to his death in 1972. See June Milne, "The Coup that Disrupted Africa's Forward March," 6–9; Nkrumah, *Autobiography*; Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, New ed. (1968; repr., New York: International Publishers, 1969a); Kwame Nkrumah, *Kwame Nkrumah the Conakry Years: His Life and Letters*, comp. June Milne (London and New Jersey: PANAF, 1990); Kwame Nkrumah, *Voice from Conakry: Broadcasts to the People of Ghana Made in Conakry Between March and December 1966 on Radio Guinea's "Voice of the Revolution"* (London: Panaf Publications Ltd, 1967b).

²⁴ For example, the theme of the 2006 Historical Society of Ghana Conference was, "Preserving and Recording Ghana's Past: Fifty Years of Ghana's Independence."

marked in September 2009 in Ghana and other countries.²⁵ His notoriety as one of the foremost Pan-Africanists (after Marcus Garvey), African nationalists and stalwarts of the Non-Aligned Movement has been well documented and is constantly being reiterated.²⁶ However, what is missing from this interrogation is an analysis of the ways in which Ghanaian nationhood was symbolically expressed in the public domain during the Nkrumah era. This thesis therefore aims to contribute to the literature on Ghanaian nationalism by revisiting and re-evaluating Kwame Nkrumah's nation-building record in light of new archival and ephemeral evidence on the symbolic aspects of Ghanaian nationhood during the Nkrumah period.

Symbols of Nationhood

Kwame Nkrumah – as the opening quotation establishes – felt that he needed to use public signs or symbols to convince the “largely illiterate” Ghanaian masses that they were independent of British colonialism. These symbolization processes were made for mass consumption, that is, they had the ability to reach millions of people throughout the country (and sometimes abroad) at any given time. This notion has led me to ask the following six interrelated and central questions, which will be the guiding lines of inquiry for this doctoral dissertation. (1) Theoretically, how important are symbols to “nation-building,” the expression of anti-colonial

²⁵ For example, The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) convened an international conference in July 2007 titled, “Ghana@50 – In search of Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah – Charting New Frontiers of Knowledge and Leadership for Africa in the New Millennium.” In November 2009, I convened an international symposium to commemorate the centenary of Kwame Nkrumah's birth under the auspices of the History Department at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut. The event was entitled, “Ghana in Africa and the World: A Symposium Commemorating the Centenary and Legacy of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (First President of Ghana), 1909 – 2009.”

²⁶ In addition, Nigeria and a host of other Sub-Saharan African countries will mark fifty years of independence in 2010 and thereafter, which will ignite further research into the trajectory of African nationalism and nation-building since the era of independence. Some scholars have already begun to evaluate the success or failure of African states fifty years after independence, most concluding that African states have largely “failed” to deliver the goods of independence. See, for example, Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair, A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

nationalism and national identity in newly independent states? (2) To what extent was Nkrumah's proclamation (as per the opening quote) legitimate, or was his use of public symbols a way of "branding" the nation in his own image? (3) What historical and nationalist narrative were these symbols designed to convey? (4) What were the major "symbols of nationhood" that Nkrumah implored to achieve his objectives? (5) How and by whom were these policies contested? And (6) How has Nkrumah's legacy and national building projects been reconstructed and reconsidered since he was deposed in a 1966 coup, especially in light of Ghana's celebration of fifty years of independence in 2007 and the commemoration of the centenary of Nkrumah's birth in 2009?

This introduction provides an overview of the major works analysing the run-up to independence and the political climate thereafter. In the first case, it will provide a detailed survey of the literature on the major forces, which contributed to the decolonization of the British Empire in general, and in West Africa and Ghana more specifically. These sources will include primary archival documents, visual archival sources, published primary sources as well as books and articles chronicling the end of empire from around the Second World War to the late 1950s. Secondly, I will review the literature on Gold Coast/Ghanaian nationalism between as espoused by the classical scholars on the subject, as well as more contemporary writers.

Focusing on the period roughly from the 1948 Accra Riots which precipitated decolonization to 1966 when Nkrumah fell from power²⁷, I will analyse the rationales for and the nature of the symbols of nationalism that Kwame Nkrumah

²⁷ I argue that, although Kwame Nkrumah was deposed while he was out of the country, he remained influential in Ghanaian politics while being based in neighbouring Guinea (Conakry) under the auspices of Ahmed Sékou Touré until his death in Europe in Romania in 1972. Moreover, the legacy of Nkrumah has dominated or otherwise played a major part in the making and remaking of Ghanaian nationalism since his death. The Nkrumah era can therefore be conceived of not only in the context of the actual years of his premiership, but even in death.

used to consolidate the newly independent nation-state of Ghana and to construct a national identity. As the major nationalist figure during this period, Kwame Nkrumah had an ongoing rivalry with other nationalist movements and contentions with the outgoing British colonial officials. These rivalries, it will be shown, impacted on the success or otherwise of his symbolic nation-building projects. The thesis will emphasize the obstacles that Kwame Nkrumah faced in consolidating the Ghanaian nation-state, specifically showing how, by whom and through what means his “nation-building” projects were frustrated, contested, modified and – after his deposition – ultimately rejected and remodelled.

Nkrumah attempted to construct a Ghanaian *imagined community* after independence by utilizing what Anthony D. Smith calls “ethno-symbolism”.²⁸ In *I Speak of Freedom*²⁹, in a chapter titled “Building a New Nation,” Nkrumah outlined the major economic, cultural and political programs that were already in place, and those which were necessary for Ghana to be “on the way to progress.”³⁰ These included the establishment of a Central Bank (the Bank of Ghana) to undertake the macroeconomic policies of the state, such as issuing a national currency, economic and cultural cooperation with foreign stakeholders. It also shortlisted the national flag, a national shipping line (Black Star Shipping Line), a Ghana Navy and Air

²⁸ See, for example, A.S. Leoussi and Steven Grosby, eds., *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Anthony D. Smith, “Nations and History,” in *Understanding Nationalism*, ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 9-31; Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Anthony D. Smith, “The Origins of Nations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12, no. 3 (1989): 349-356; Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1983).

²⁹ Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1961).

³⁰ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 115.

Force, etc.³¹ For example, since becoming Head of Government Business of the Gold Coast Colony in 1951, Kwame Nkrumah's ethno-symbolic expressions included demands to replace the West African Currency Board (WACB) with a "national bank" that would introduce a national or territorial currency. The new Ghana pounds, shillings and pence that were issued by the Bank of Ghana (BoG) in 1958 bore Nkrumah's image circled by the Latin phrase - *Civitatis Ghaniensis Conditor* (Founder of the State of Ghana) - not unlike the early Greek coins featuring the likeness of the *Caesar*.³² He also issued postage stamps featuring nationalistic, Pan-African and Cold War themes and symbols. Moreover, Nkrumah changed the colours of the national flag to match that of his Convention People's Party (CPP) banner colours. He also had the national anthem re-written and personalized, and constructed statues of himself and other national monuments such as Independence Square (Black Star Square) and the National Museum that housed the material culture and history of Ghana and Africa.

Although Nkrumah may have had some success – initially - in branding the nation in his image, the outgoing British colonial officials as well as Ghanaian political opponents and Cold War contenders contested many of his nation-building programs. The National Liberation Council (NLC), the U.S.-backed military junta that ousted Nkrumah from power on 24th February 1966, began a public campaign to attack his nationalist programs and Pan-Africanist ideology. They re-named and re-issued the national currency and removed his image from all coins, banknotes and postage stamps. In 1968, the regime issued a stamp series commemorating the "2nd Anniversary of the 24th February Revolution." These stamps featured images of revolutionaries entering Accra, marching troops, cheering people, and victory

³¹ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 111–118.

³² The HSBC Money Gallery at the Coins and Medals Department, The British Museum.

parades celebrating “liberation” from Nkrumah, who the NLC military leader Colonel A.A. Afrifa had described as “a tyrant whom Ghanaians want to forget once and for all.”³³ Moreover, Nkrumah’s statue at Parliament House was defaced by a mob during the coup. The white stripe, which he had introduced in the national flag, was replaced by the original golden stripe, and the national anthem was reworded to remove not too subtle references to Nkrumah. The regime also issued written reports exposing what they determined to be Nkrumah’s deception of the people.³⁴ In the forty-four years since the 1966 coup, successive Ghanaian governments have constructed monuments and named landmarks after other “national heroes,” including traditional Asante and Ga chiefs, and other nationalist leaders, such as J.B. Danquah, who Nkrumah failed to honour during his time in office.

The research is important because the dominant literature has been overly preoccupied with the deconstruction of Empire in Africa rather than the construction of countries in the same geographical terrain. Thus, scholars have too often focused on the processes and nature of decolonization and less so on the “nation-building” processes, that is, the means by which the respective political and nationalist leaders sought to consolidate and construct the identity of the newly emergent nation-states. Those studies which have focused on nationalism in Ghana have been confined to the rivalries between Nkrumah’s CPP party with other political entities such as the National Liberation Movement (NLM), the Northern People’s Party (NPP), and also Nkrumah’s contentions with the traditional leadership.³⁵ Moreover, Nkrumah’s

³³ E.K. Komen-Sapanin, “C50 Notes Abolished,” *Daily Graphic*, February 24, 1967, 28.

³⁴ See, for example, Ghana Information Services Department, *Nkrumah’s Deception of Africa* (Accra: 1967); and Ghana Ministry of Information, *Nkrumah’s Subversion in Africa: Documentary Evidence of Nkrumah’s Interference in the Affairs of Other African States* (Accra: 1966).

³⁵ See, for example, Jean M. Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Ashanti Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Jean M Allman, “The Youngmen and the Porcupine: Class, Nationalism and Asante’s Struggle for Self-Determination, 1954-57,” *Journal of African History* 31 (1990): 263–279; Jean M. Allman and Richard Rathbone, “Discussion: The Youngmen and the Porcupine,” *JAH* 32 (1991): 333–338; Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946*

Pan-African programs have also received the bulk of scholastic attention, while his nation-building agenda has been largely seen as subservient to his pan-Africanist preoccupations.

Literature Review (Decolonization)

There are several long-running historical debates as to the extent to which nationalism “on the ground” was responsible for decolonization in the British Empire in general, and Africa in particular. A proper grasp of these debates is important in order to properly situate the problematique of Kwame Nkrumah’s symbolic nationalism to the nation-building process in the Gold Coast/Ghana. Among the major schools of thought which seek to explain the manner in which British (and European) colonialism came to an end are those arguing that decolonization was “planned,” as evidenced by the colonial restructuring programs of the inter-War period. Others stress the dominance of domestic developments and political jockeying between the British Labour and Conservative parties; an inward-looking Europe after World War II; neo-colonialism, which was characterised by political independence but economic dependency; the Cold War and the Non-Aligned Movement; the role of international bodies such as the United Nations, which advocated the right of nations to govern themselves; and the effects of the rising tide of nationalist movements that demanded independence from Britain.

From the following literature review on each of these schools of thought, it will be apparent that there is no unanimous consensus as to the single most important factor that contributed to the end of empire in Africa. It is more likely that the rise of peaceful and violent nationalist movements, the inward-looking focus of

– 1960 (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); and Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah & the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951 – 1960* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000).

the European powers after the Second World War, the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as “anti-colonial” world powers, and the ideals of the United Nations all converged to bring about a radical shift in the colonial world order.

Some scholars maintain that, far from being a haphazard phenomenon based on external circumstances (such as nationalism), decolonization in British Africa was a “planned” exercise, commencing with several major colonial restructuring policies during the late inter-War period.³⁶ There are several important works highlighting the domestic (British) context that shaped the end of empire, such as the divergent dichotomies and political outlook of the Labour and Conservative Parties. Among the authors espousing this argument are P.S. Gupta, D. Goldsworthy, S. Howe, and P. Murphy.³⁷ Other sources examine the results of the new global order after the Second World War, when on the one hand, Europe began to look inwardly by undertaking massive structural, political and social rebuilding, and on the other, their outward-looking, wider empire concerns became less significant to these domestic developments.³⁸

³⁶ John W. Cell, “On the Eve of Decolonization: The Colonial Office’s Plans for the Transfer of Power in Africa, 1974,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 8 (1980): 235–257; R. Robinson, “Andrew Cohen and the Transfer of Power in Tropical Africa 1940 – 1951,” in *Decolonisation and After: The British and French Experience*, ed. W.M. Morris-Jones and Georges Fischer (London, 1980), 86 – 104; John Flint, “Planned Decolonization and its Failure in British Africa,” *African Affairs* 82 (1983), 389–411; Robert D. Pearce, “The Colonial Office and Planned Decolonization in Africa” *African Affairs* 83 (1984), 77–93.

³⁷ Partha S. Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914 – 1964* (New York, 1975); David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics 1945 – 1961: From ‘Colonial Development’ to ‘Wind of Change’* (Oxford, 1971); Stephen Howe, *AntiColonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918 – 1964* (Oxford, 1993); Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951 – 64* (Oxford, 1995).

³⁸ See, for example, John G. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988); John G. Darwin, “British Decolonization since 1945: A Pattern or a Puzzle?” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no.2 (January, 1984): 187-209; JohnG. Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1991); David Goldsworthy, ed., *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1951 – 1957*, British Documents on the End of Empire 3, ser. A (London: H.M.S.O., 1992); Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ronald Hyam, ed., *The Labour Government*

Some writers on twentieth century decolonization and “neo-colonialism” have applied a similar argument that has been made by Walter Rodney and Eric Williams. These and other scholars insisted that capitalism was the main catalyst for the abolition of slavery and the eventual “transition” to formal colonialism through the partition of Africa by European powers in the nineteenth century.³⁹ Sarah Stockwell’s work offers a concise survey of the literature on the debates on the relationship between businesses, decolonization and nationalism in the British Empire, although her book focuses on the Gold Coast.⁴⁰ There are writers who have articulated “economic dependency” arguments, maintaining that as the British wound up its formal colonial relationship with Africa (and elsewhere) in the mid-twentieth century, colonial officials encouraged and supported their expatriate firms to continue the domination of the economies of the newly independent nation-states after independence. This argument further maintains that the neo-colonial economic order was facilitated in no small part by the cooptation of many of the nationalist leaders who benefited from or lacked the power to challenge the domination of their economies by these expatriate and multi-national companies.

Several scholars also argue that the neo-colonial order was characterised by the economic dependence of these new nation-states on foreign direct investment, economic development aid and other forms of economic domination by expatriate firms, which, in most cases, were the same ones that had monopolized the major

and the End of Empire 1945 - 1951, British Documents on the End of Empire 2, ser. A (London: H.M.S.O., 1992); William R. Louis, “The Imperialism of Decolonization,” *JICH* 22, no.3 (1994): 462-511; and William Louis and Judith M. Brown, eds., *The Twentieth Century*, The Oxford History of the British Empire 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

³⁹ See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981); S.R. Cudjoe, ed., *Eric E. Williams Speaks: Essays on Colonialism and Independence* (Wellesley, Mass: Calaloux Publications, 1993); Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Deutsch, 1964).

⁴⁰ Sarah. Stockwell, *The Business of Decolonization: British Business Strategies in the Gold Coast*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

industries in the territories under colonial rule.⁴¹ Scholars such as Stahl, A. G. Hopkins, Tomlinson; M. Kahler, D. K. Fieldhouse, and Stockwell have also chronicled the commercial/economic dimensions of colonialism and the end of empire.⁴² However, other scholars have contested the arguments in favour of the benign relationship between colonialism, metropolitan commercial interests and decolonization. They have offered various examples demonstrating that, from the beginning to the end of empire, there have been contentions, contradictions and limitations in the colonial state's backing of business interests.⁴³ Moreover, the idea that the Second World War compelled Europe to voluntarily retreat from empire in Africa, on the one hand, while Europe encouraged its multi-national corporations to invest in Africa after colonialism ended is contradictory. For if the colonies were

⁴¹ For several examples of decolonization and the neo-colonial socio-economic order, especially in East and West Africa, see S. Amin, *Neocolonialism in West Africa* (1973); Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neocolonialism 1964 – 1971* (London, 1975); Gary Wasserman, *The Politics of Decolonization: Kenya, Europe and the Land Issue, 1960 – 65* (Cambridge, 1976); Rhoda Howard, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Ghana* (London, 1978); and P. Gifford and William R. Louis, eds., *Transfer of Power in Africa, 1940 – 1960*, (London and New Haven, 1982). There are, of course, important counter-arguments to the neo-colonialism, economic dependency school of thought which discount the notion that imperially-backed capitalist monopolisation of the economies of Europe's former colonies in Africa was a major policy consideration for decolonization in the first place. See, for example, Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951 – 64* (Oxford, 1995); and Robert Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire: State and Business in Decolonizing Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya, 1945 – 1963* (Princeton, 1998).

⁴² Kathlene Stahl, *The Metropolitan Organization of British Colonial Trade* (London, 1951); Antony G. Hopkins, "Imperial Business in Africa, Part I: Sources," *JAH* 17 (1976): 29–48; Antony G. Hopkins, "Imperial Business in Africa, Part II: Interpretations," *JAH* 17 (1976): 267–290; Antony G. Hopkins, "The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System: The Origins of the West African Currency Board," *African Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (1990): 101-132; B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj 1914 – 1947; The Economics of Decolonization in India* (London, 1979); Miles Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France: The Domestic Consequences of International Relations* (Princeton, 1984); D.K. Fieldhouse, *Black Africa 1945 – 1980: Economic Decolonization and Arrested Development* (London, 1986).

⁴³ See, for example, William K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs* 1 (Oxford, 1937); William K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs* 2 (Oxford, 1940); Anne Phillips, *The Enigma of Colonialism: British Policy in West Africa* (London, 1989); Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* 1 (London, 1992); Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* 2 (London, 1992); Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan, eds., *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A.H.M. Kirk-Green* (Oxford, 1993); D.K. Fieldhouse, *Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United African Company 1929 – 1989* (Oxford, 1994); and Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks, eds., *Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India* (London, 1994).

economically important to the building and rebuilding of Europe (as the Rodney-Williams school of thought argued for the rise of colonialism in the nineteenth century and beyond), the imperial powers would not have voluntarily wound down their administration of African colonies. Europe would have wanted to continue to extract the material and mineral wealth from Africa in order to rebuild itself after the War.

Other scholars credit the end of British and European colonialism in the Third World to the bipolar rivalry between the liberal United States and its communist counterpart – the Soviet Union. Both axis powers were engaged in an ideological and strategic “Cold War” to gain spheres of influence in the new Europe and among the new nation-states, which were to emerge from the collapse of the latter’s empires after WWII.⁴⁴ On the one hand, the United States – “the empire of liberty” - emerged as a global super-power that preached a liberal, Wilsonian gospel of the right of nations to govern himself or herself. It felt that colonialism alienated Third World peoples fighting for autonomy and pushed them into the communist camp. On the other, there was the Soviet Union – “the empire of liberty” – that was bent on spearheading and channelling movements for independence into a socialist framework that challenged European and American hegemony.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For an excellent analysis of the U.S. – USSR Cold War rivalry and its contribution to the dismantling of the European empires in Asia and Africa and the formation of the modern international system, see Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and William. R. Louis, “The Imperialism of Decolonization,” *JICH* 22, no.3, (1994): 462-511.

⁴⁵ See Westad, *The Global Cold War*, chapter 1, “The Empire of Liberty: American Ideology and Foreign Interventions”, and chapter 2, “The Empire of Justice: Soviet Ideology and Foreign Interventions.” Independent Ghana reconciled these two political ideologies of the two Cold War superpowers on the Independence Monument that was constructed to mark the event. The inscription on the monument reads, “A.D. 1957 Freedom and Justice.” For more on the impact of the Cold War on decolonization in the British Africa, see also William R. Louis, “The Imperialism of Decolonization”; and Ritchie Owendale, “Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957 – 1960,” *Historical Journal* 38 (1995): 455–477.

Another significant factor in the demise of European colonialism which discredits the role of nationalist movements is the growth and prominence of international organizations in the post World War II era, principally the United Nations. Proponents of this theory maintain that the UN was created with a mandate that was geared towards ending the domination of one state over another – the very anti-thesis of colonialism. This mandate, endorsed by both Cold War rivals, emphasized the gradual self-governance of territories in Europe’s colonies over time through its various arms, including the Trusteeship Council. However, the Members of the Non-Aligned Movement – of which Kwame Nkrumah was one of the major African parties – would use the UN as a platform to press for decolonization in the remaining territories. As soon as Ghana gained membership in the UN, Nkrumah and other leaders of newly independent nation-states used the UN as a platform to advocate for speedier decolonization in the Third World.⁴⁶

Review of Literature (Nationalism)

Some of the literature on nationalism has also identified the emergence of Third World and African nationalist agitations “on the ground” as a major (in some accounts, *the* major) factor for putting pressures on a weakened post-War Europe for eventually braking the back of British and European colonialism. Among the main scholars advocating this school of thought are R.F. Holland, J.G. Darwin, J.D. Hargreaves, F. Ansprenger, and F. Furedi.⁴⁷ These authors in most cases adequately

⁴⁶ See Kwame Nkrumah, *Osagyefo at the United Nations* (Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, ca. 1960), and “Ultimatum to the United Nations”, track 8 on *Africa’s Man of Destiny*.

⁴⁷ R.F. Holland, *European Decolonization, 1918 – 1981: An Introductory Survey* (London, 1985); John G. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke, 1988), and John G. Darwin, *The End of the British Empire* (Oxford, 1991); John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (Harlow, 1988); F. Ansprenger, *The Dissolution of the Colonial Empires* (London, 1989); Frank Furedi, *Colonial Wars and the Politics of Third World Nationalism* (London, 1994).

explain how the nationalist movements were formed and their effectiveness (or lack thereof) in pressuring the British to end colonialism. They also explain the nature of, complexities and challenges to the nation-building processes in newly independent nations after colonialism. However, they have not adequately taken into consideration how these nationalisms were expressed symbolically, especially in the context of the nation building projects of Kwame Nkrumah.

There is also a long-running debate around whether nationalism takes on “ethnic” versus “civic” forms in Africa and the larger Third World. In this debate, several scholars in the “ethnic” camp emphasize the role of class and ethnic tensions, rivalries and conflicts between traditional political forms of organization and that of the modern political nation-state in shaping the political landscape of the country. Some scholars argue that “ethnicity” was the basic unit of political organization and mobilization for the Kikuyus in Kenya, where ethnic or “tribal” demands and competition debased national unity both before and after independence. In contrast to this notion, other writers have highlighted the centrality of “civic” nationalism over tribal affiliation as the basis of nation-formation. As Terrence Ranger argues, by the mid 1940s, many African elites saw more to gain from pursuing nationalistic goals rather than “tribal” or “ethnic” goals. “Educated Africans came to realize that the way towards gaining real power to bring about modernizing change did not lie in relatively small-scale African ‘kingdoms’. They began to invent nationalist rather than tribal traditions.”⁴⁸ As Anthony .D. Smith has found, nationalistic politics would afford the new educated African

⁴⁸ Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 243.

classes the ability to participate in the European traditions and the power structures that the colonial officials were enjoying in the colonies.⁴⁹

Related to this dilemma is the debate as to whether colonial (i.e. European) or ethnic (i.e. pre-colonial/native) identification with territory dominated the independence movements in Africa. The intellectual concept of *diffusionism* as adequately put forth by Elie Kedourie sides with the first notion; that the independence movements in Africa were fuelled by Western-educated colonial subjects who returned home with Euro-centric ideas to lead nationalist movements for independence. A.D. Smith refutes Kedourie's arguments by emphasizing the contribution of pre-colonial socio-cultural groups, institutions and customs in the formation of nation-states after colonialism collapsed:

The genesis and development of nationalism in...Nigeria, Kenya and India must be located, not simply in the diffusion of Western ideas through conspiratorial cells of restless indigenous intellectuals who have returned empty-handed from the West, but in the interests, sentiments and aspirations of a variety of social and cultural groups in colonial India, Kenya and Nigeria. These social and cultural groups are partly formed by the activities of colonial officials, traders and missionaries, but they are also derived from pre-colonial ethnic communities and polities, and from traditional social strata like chieftains and traders, tribal castes and Brahmins, which have taken on a new life in the colonial setting.⁵⁰

However, these two schools of thought were not always mutually antagonistic, as argued by Githu Muigai who showed in the Kenyan case, that both ethnicity and colonial concerns mattered in the independence movement.⁵¹

In the Ghanaian case, some studies have chronicled the rivalry between the newly formed modern, "national" political parties and the more "ethnic" or "sub-national" entities, which fits perfectly in the "ethnic" versus "civic" nationalisms. The major political rivalry existed among Nkrumah's Convention People's Party

⁴⁹ Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," 242-243.

⁵⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 108.

⁵¹ Githu Muigai, "Jomo Kenyatta & the Rise of the Ethno-Nationalist State in Kenya," in *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, ed. Bruce Berman et al. (Oxford: James Curry, 2004).

(CPP), the National Liberation Movement (NLM), and the Northern People's Party (NPP). For example, Richard Rathbone argues that the Ashanti-dominated NLM, which sought to separate from the Gold Coast Colony upon independence, can be seen as "sub-nationalist." On the other hand, Jean Allman maintains that the NLM belongs to the category of a "nationalist" movement.⁵² Moreover, there were also political and class contentions between Nkrumah's CPP party and the traditional leadership, i.e., between chieftaincy and nationalism.⁵³

African nations and nationalisms

Modernist (as opposed to primordialist or perennialist) theorists of nationalism have defined nations in various ways, including being "imagined" (Anderson) or "invented" (Hobsbawm and Ranger).⁵⁴ Smith defines the "modern nation" as "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members."⁵⁵ Gellner theorises that cultural homogeneity, a literate and historically self-conscious population, and an anonymous, mobile citizenry whose allegiance is to the state are precursors to nationhood.⁵⁶ Breuilly sees nationalism as a predominantly political movement designed to create or maintain a hold on nation-states.⁵⁷

⁵² See Allman, "The Youngmen and the Porcupine," 263–279; and Allman and Rathbone, "Discussion: The Youngmen and the Porcupine," 333–338.

⁵³ See, for example, Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946 – 1960*; Allman, "The Youngmen and the Porcupine," 263–279; Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine*; and Rathbone, *Nkrumah & the Chiefs*.

⁵⁴ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); and Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁵⁵ Anthony D. Smith, "Nations and History," in *Understanding Nationalism*, ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 19.

⁵⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 138.

⁵⁷ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

Some of these rigid definitions are problematic for our discussion of nations and nationalisms in Africa, and would indeed preclude most African countries from the category of “nation.” Grinker and Steiner contend that Africa is “a subject that has been constructed, invented, and interpreted in writing,” and that “Africa” is construed in a unitary category, although it comprised an amalgam of diverse ethno-linguistic groups spread across the spatial and temporal confines of the continent.⁵⁸ Most of Africa’s fifty-three nation-states – the majority of which gained independence in the early 1960s – are but microcosms of this literary (and colonial) creation. However, while most African nation-states may be non-homogenous invented or imagined communities, they are nonetheless real in the minds of those who consider themselves Congolese, Ghanaian or Nigerian. In a recent book - *Reconstructing the Nation in Africa* – the Ghanaian scholar Michael Amoah challenges orthodox theories of nations and nationalism by showing how “nations” existed in places like Ghana before the onslaught of European colonialism:

With time, ethnonational heterogeneity evolves into national homogeneity (and vice versa) if the conditions are right . . . heterogeneity is not an absolute obstacle to the attainment of a single national identity for the multinational postcolonial state . . . Hence modern Ghana is a nation and all citizens within the Ghanaian state share similar nationality irrespective of ethnonational heterogeneity.⁵⁹

Moreover, in light of the primordialist-modernist debate on the threshold of nationhood (“when is the nation”) and whether or not non-European polities pass the temporal litmus test of nationhood, Amoah asserts that, “there existed such nations

⁵⁸ Roy Richard Grinker and Christopher B. Steiner, eds., *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), xix.

⁵⁹ Michael Amoah, *Reconstructing the Nation in Africa: The Politics of Nationalism in Ghana* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 5.

in the Gold Coast as the Fanti and Ashanti prior to 1789 France, late 18th century England, and 1957 Modern Ghana.”⁶⁰

Nkrumah would have agreed with Amoah’s assessment and definition of nationhood. In *Class Struggle in Africa*, Nkrumah provides an answer to the question of “what is a nation?”:

The notion that in order to have a nation it is necessary for there to be a common language, a common territory and a common culture, has failed to stand the test of time or the scrutiny of scientific definition of objective reality. Common territory, language and culture may in fact be present in a nation, but the existence of a nation does not necessarily imply the presence of all three. Common territory and language alone may form the basis of a nation. Similarly, common territory plus common culture may be the basis. In some cases, only one of the three applies. A state may exist on a multinational basis. The community of economic life is the major feature within a nation, and it is the economy which holds together the people living in the territory. It is on this basis that the new Africans recognise themselves as potentially one nation, whose dominion is the entire African continent.⁶¹

Thomas Hodgkin defined African nationalism as any group, which asserts the rights, aspirations and claims to oppose European colonialism. This group can be as small as basic language groups to wider Pan African claims.⁶² In their quest to gain total independence from Europe and to consolidate the new nations, nationalist leaders and adherents of the *négritude* movement, such as Aimé Césaire (Martiniquan poet), Léopold Sédar Senghor (the first President of Senegal) and Kwame Nkrumah, sought to highlight the common cultural and political history of Africa.⁶³ The positive aspects of black history and culture were articulated through their individual writings, speeches and political activities. However, not all the *négritude* advocates were fixated on highlighting the glorious African past as the location of contemporary African identity and mobilisation. Nkrumah, for example –

⁶⁰ Amoah, *Reconstructing the Nation in Africa*, 7.

⁶¹ Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 88.

⁶² Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (London, 1957).

⁶³ Grinker and Steiner, xxviii.

in line with the political stance of Frantz Fanon⁶⁴ – realised that the realities of Africa at the time were more important than its past.

Like most of the leaders of newly independent, multi-ethnic nation-states in Africa, Nkrumah faced the problem of popularising “Ghana” to a populace of over fifty ethnic groups. In the case of Ghana’s similarly multi-ethnic neighbour, Côte d’Ivoire, Steiner explores the failed attempt by President Félix Houphouët-Boigny – the first President of the country – to use the Festimask (an outdoor festival showcasing “common” Ivoirian traditional masks) as a unifying marker of Ivoirian-ness. In addition to masks, other “traditional” symbols of national identity have been placed on Ivoirian banknotes and coins and that of other “francophone” West African nations that use the Francs CFA common currency.⁶⁵

However, the iconography of banknotes, coins, postage stamps and other symbols of nationhood issued during the Nkrumah period did not feature “traditional” or “ethnic” symbols, though there were a few. Rather, they represented modernity and development, and elements of progress such as industrialisation and the exploitation of Ghana’s natural resources. Moreover, unlike many other African states, there were no images of Founding Fathers or traditional rulers such as chiefs who Nkrumah perceived as backward and aligned with the former colonial masters. Instead, he chose to mint his likeness on money and postage stamps as the unmasked personality around whom (he hoped) the entire nation would rally and identify. Nkrumah’s use of symbolic nationalism as a means of unifying the newly-independent Ghanaian nation-state was therefore a pioneering and effective policy on the African continent. The use of symbolic nationalism in Ghana was similar to

⁶⁴ Grinker and Steiner, 625.

⁶⁵ Christopher B. Steiner, “The Invisible Face: Masks, Ethnicity and the State in Côte d’Ivoire,” in *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History and Representation*, ed. Roy Richard Grinker and Christopher B. Steiner (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 672, footnote 2.

that of the propagandistic iconography on political posters, postage stamps, currency and the construction of nationalistic monuments in Stalin's Russia and Mao's China. Its main purpose was to communicate to the largely unsophisticated and illiterate masses, most of who would not normally be able to read the nationalist newspapers, that they owed their allegiances to the building of the all-encompassing nation-state, and not to their tribe, region or religion.

Nkrumah, Janus and symbolic nationalism

Nationalists may simultaneously pursue modernisation goals, while at the same time holding on to tradition. This forward-backward oscillation – termed Janus face of nationalism – has been analysed by scholars including Tom Nairn, Tricia Cusack and Igor Cusack.⁶⁶ The backward-looking gaze of nationalists is meant to resurrect those national heroes, legends and events that give the nation a deep-rooted history, as well as to legitimise and authenticate particular regimes. However, as Rathbone points out, the post-war climate in Africa did not necessarily embrace the notion of a glorious African 'past' as a precursor for the founding of independent, progressive and modernising societies:

African nationalism after 1945 was undoubtedly revolutionary; colonial rule and chieftaincy were widely perceived to be unheavenly twins linked by mutual support, an unholy alliance, and they were thus jointly destined to enjoy the fate of all doomed anciens régimes. Moreover nationalist ideology, and its translation into policy throughout Africa, was very insistent about the imperatives of material modernization and economic transformation. Chiefs were widely regarded as barriers to the achievement of either of these goals; they stood for the past, for other worldly values, and were opposed to both individualism and modernizing corporatism.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ See Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (New York: Verso, 1997); Tricia Cusack, "Janus and Gender: Women and the Nation's Backward Look," *Nations and Nationalism* 6, no. 4 (2000): 541–561; Igor Cusack, 'African National Anthems: "Beat the drums, the red Lion has roared,"' *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (December 2005b): 235-251.

⁶⁷ Rathbone, *Nkrumah & the Chiefs*, 3.

Therefore, leading nationalists like Nkrumah – although having an acute awareness of the African past and its traditions – focused on the forward face of Janus. Rathbone further reveals that Nkrumah abhorred traditional leaders – symbolised by native chiefs – who ruled the various ethnicities that made up the Gold Coast/Ghana.⁶⁸ He saw them as relics of the past with outmoded customs and traditions, and colonial collaborators who encouraged tribalism and political balkanisation. This made them obstacles to national unity and modernisation, and Nkrumah sought to curtail or eliminate their powers. Nkrumah’s rejection of tradition – the backward gaze of Janus – is exemplified by his CPP motto, “Forward Ever, Backward Never.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, Nkrumah was not from the dominant Akan (the Asantes, for example) or Ga (Accra-based) ethnic group, and did not have the option of pursuing an “ethnic” or backward-looking nationalism; he had to opt for the “civic” or forward-looking one. Consequently, instead of resurrecting a glorious past, he chose to propagate a new national narrative for the present and future, promoting himself as the nation’s sole Founding Father and focusing on modernization and development through African Socialism.

The enormous Volta River Project, the main outcome of which was the construction of the Akosombo Dam and Power Station between 1961 and 1965, exemplifies Nkrumah’s focus on forward-looking, State-led industrialisation and modernisation. According to the Volta River Authority, the Akosombo Hydroelectric Plant and Dam marked “an important step for industrialization and economic growth of the newly independent state of Ghana.” In a state ceremony, Kwame Nkrumah officially commissioned the Volta River Project in January 1966, and a set of four postage stamps was issued on 22 January 1966 to commemorate its

⁶⁸ Rathbone, *Nkrumah & the Chiefs*, “Introduction.”

⁶⁹ The statue of Kwame Nkrumah at his mausoleum in Accra is postured as a forward-facing founding father, assuming the “Forward Ever, Backward Never” position.

completion (see Chapter II).⁷⁰ The building of the Akosombo Dam resulted in the creation of the Volta Lake, the largest manmade lake in the world. The Volta River Project also represents the single largest investment project in Ghana to date (at an estimated initial cost of £70 - £130 million), and the dam still provides hydroelectric power to Ghana and its neighbours, Togo and Benin.⁷¹

My Value-Added Contribution to the Field

There is a gap in the literature on decolonization, nationalism and nation building in postcolonial states in general and the Gold Coast/Ghana specifically that I intend to fill. As has already been reviewed, previous researches have focused on the oppositional forces to Kwame Nkrumah's nationalism, in the form of traditional leaders and rival political parties. Others have examined the impact of neo-colonialism on Nkrumah's nation-building projects, as well as his relationship with Britain, the United States and the socialist bloc during the Cold War. However, Nkrumah's contested use of politically-inspired signs and symbols has been neglected. Revisiting the ways in which Nkrumah went about nation-building through symbolic nationalism is important for several reasons. Firstly, scholars have tended to see Nkrumah first and foremost as a Pan-Africanist and not a nationalist, given his political rhetoric and practice of this philosophy. Secondly, the literature has focused on the contentions between Nkrumah and his rivals (both domestic and foreign) over his particular approach to nation-building, and not the programs themselves. My position is that, while Nkrumah was the pre-eminent Pan-Africanist, he was first and foremost a nationalist. His primary agenda was to build Ghana as a model nation-state upon which a future United States of Africa would be modelled.

⁷⁰ Volta River Authority (VRA), 2007a.

⁷¹ VRA, 2007a; VRA, 2007b, 4; Ghana Home Page, 2007.

To use a metaphor from the construction industry, we need to first understand Nkrumah as a mason who tried to use Ghana as a single building block (the nation) in the construction of a larger Pan-African house (the United States of Africa). As this thesis will show, there has been a growing literature on the use of symbols of nationhood, particularly postage stamps, currencies and monuments in the process of nation-building in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In the latter context, Ghana has received little attention until now.

The analysis of the symbolic nature of nationalism in the Gold Coast/Ghana during the Nkrumah era is important for several reasons. Firstly, the Gold Coast is the first colony in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain political independence from a European colonial power⁷², thus establishing precedence for other British and European colonies in Africa that were to follow in its footsteps. However, it is not just the temporal factor, which makes the Ghanaian case unique and important. The political, economic and cultural policies that went into Ghanaian decolonisation became templates for the subsequent decolonization that took place in the rest of the British Empire. Rathbone reveals that the Gold Coast played a:

...pioneering role in the history of decolonisation in Africa. Much of the policy and methodology which emerged out of...[this] experience...were to become significant precedents for the ways in which successive British governments were to deal with other parts of Africa and other parts of the British empire in the years which followed Ghana's independence.⁷³

Therefore, Ghana's independence on 6th March 1957 was a watershed moment in the international arena of colonial relations and nationalist movements. This thesis will therefore make a contribution to the field in terms of its analysis of symbolic nationalism in post-colonial states. As the construction of national identity and the

⁷² Rathbone, *British Documents on the End of Empire Project* (BDEEP - Ghana I), xxxi.

⁷³ See note 5 of Rathbone, BDEEP (Ghana I), lxx.

representation of the nation symbolically is a process that is on-going, and is continually contested and debated in the public sphere, this research will have implications for the past as well as the future. More specifically, Ghana's case study can be utilized as a basis for future comparative studies on the ways in which nationalist leaders sought to "build" new nation-states by imploring public symbols of nationalism designed to construct and consolidate national identity in formerly colonized territories in Africa.

Janet Hess argues that, like the pre-colonial polities that preceded and the Western powers that colonized them, postcolonial politicians in Africa employed "cultural exhibitions, documentaries, and spectacles to underpin systems of authority" and to produce culture.⁷⁴ This was especially the case with Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana:

"In attempting to construct a sense of nationalism that could displace existing political alliances, the administration of Kwame Nkrumah similarly encouraged the production of exhibitions, documentaries, and representations promoting a specific vision of political authority. This vision of independent authority was paradigm-shattering, and set into motion a wave of political and ideological moment across the continent of Africa."⁷⁵

This included government controlled and influenced newspapers (the *Ghana Evening News*, *New Ghana*, *Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times*, and the *CPP daily newsletter*), which frequently featured nationalist editorial cartoons and articles, popular music, radio, television, documentaries, film, portraits and postcards. Janet Hess discusses many of these media in her book, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, as well as in several articles.⁷⁶ However, unlike the present

⁷⁴ Janet Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 17.

⁷⁵ Janet Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 17.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Janet Hess, 'Exhibiting Ghana: Display, Documentary, and "national" art in the Nkrumah era,' *African Studies Review* 44, no. 1 (April 2001): 59–77; Janet Hess, "Imagining Architecture: The Structure of Nationalism in Accra, Ghana," *Africa Today* 47, no. 2 (Spring 2000):

treatise, Hess only mentioned postage stamps in passing in her book⁷⁷, although, as Posnansky and other scholars maintain, postage stamps are the most important artistic devices in Africa. She did not have access to recently released postal archival documents that I was privileged to gain access to in Ghana in 2007. Hess also pays little attention to the role of national currency in the nation-building process in Ghana and how it was resisted by the British and parties tied to the traditional leaders in Ghana, particularly the NLM and the Gas.⁷⁸ Her book also covers South Africa, Tanzania and the African Diaspora while the present treatise focuses on Ghana, which deserved attention on its own merit.

There are also other limitations to some of the artistic media that Hess's works analyses. Newspapers require basic literacy to be understood, and not everyone had a radio or television set at home. On the other hand, the national currency on which Nkrumah's likeness was minted is more visible and accessible to the national populace, and anyone who travelled through a major city such as Accra or Kumasi would have observed the Nkrumah statues erected in front of prominent government buildings. Hess also mentions other tools of state propaganda used by the CPP administration to advance a visual of a prosperous nation led by Nkrumah. These included life-size colour portraits and other depictions of Nkrumah on posters, canvas, the sides of public buildings, murals, illustrated propaganda cinema vans as well as theatrical productions.⁷⁹ However, as Hess admits, "virtually all of the images described here have been destroyed"⁸⁰ after the military coup, and therefore are hardly available for critique by other scholars. All of the media and supporting

35–60; and Janet Hess, "Spectacular Nation: Nkrumahist Art and Resistance Iconography in the Ghanaian Independence era," *African Arts* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 16–25, 91.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Janet Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 30, 34, 52, 53, 68, and note 74, chapter 1, 184.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, note 62, chapter 1, 183.

archival documents, which I reference in this thesis, on the other hand, are still available to be reviewed by other academics.

This doctoral dissertation therefore seeks to analyse the contentions and contradictions in the programs of “nation building” that Kwame Nkrumah sought to undertake during his almost twenty-year tenure as head of the Gold Coast/Ghana government. My emphasis will be on several symbols of nationhood, which epitomized the public culture of nationalism that Nkrumah sought to cultivate. They were consistently countered by alternative historical narratives and competing symbolisms from the departing British colonial officials (from whom he inherited much of these symbolisms), as well as traditional leaders, opposition parties, the military, merchants and intellectuals in Ghana. His nation-building strategies encompassed the propagandistic use of political iconography, expressed through what I call “symbols of nationhood,” including money, postage stamps, monuments, museums, dress, non-verbal maxims (*Adinkra* symbols), the national anthem, emblems, and both national and party flags. In the last couple of years, an increasing number of scholars have been paying attention to some of these symbols of nationhood, analysing, for example the relationship between money, postage stamps and nationalism in China, Taiwan, Laos, Latin America and Africa.⁸¹ As this thesis will argue in the Ghanaian context, Nkrumah was unique among the first cohorts of post-colonial African nationalists in terms of the weight that he placed on the

⁸¹ For recent studies on postage stamps and nation-building, see Jack Child, *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Yu-Chin Huang, “Making a China of One’s Own: National Identity in the Postage Stamps of China and Taiwan, 1949 – 1979” (paper presented at the 16th annual conference of the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN) - “Nations and Their Past: Representing the Past, Building the Future,” LSE, March 30, 2006). For the relationship between national currencies and national identity, see Oliver Tappe, “A New Banknote in the People’s Republic: The Iconography of the Kip and Ideological Transformations in Laos, 1957–2006,” *Internationales Asienforum* 38, no. 1-2 (2007): 87–108; and Lutz Marten and Nancy Kula, “National Identity and the Semantics of Currencies in Africa” (paper presented at the Money in Africa Conference, British Museum, London, England, March 9–11, 2007).

utilization of symbolic nationalism to achieve nation-building, and the resultant backlash from his detractors was equally as intense.

Methodology, Thesis Structure and Chapter Outline

Methodologically, the thesis is based primarily on archival research conducted in the British National Archives (Public Record Office), the British Library of Political and Economic Science at LSE, the British Museum, the British Library, the National Archives of Ghana (PRAAD), the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum and the African Studies Library at Boston University. It contains five core chapters, an introduction and a conclusion.

This **Introduction** provides a concise review of literature, theoretical framework, methodology, and my value-added contribution to studies on African nationalism in general and Ghanaian nationalism in particular.

Chapter I: *Civitas Ghaniensis Conditor: Colonial Currency, National Money & the Contentions of Coinage.* As Helleiner posits, territorial currencies are essential to the consolidation of new nation-states.⁸² The establishment of an independent Ghanaian currency after independence created tensions with the outgoing British colonial officials and traditional leaders in Ghana. This was due to Nkrumah's use of money as a form of mass-media to build a Ghanaian imagined community. The new coins and banknotes featured Nkrumah's image surrounded by the Latin phrase - *Civitas Ghaniensis Conditor* – Founder of the State of Ghana. The Bank of Ghana also fought to make the new money popular with Nkrumah's political rivals and the rural Ghanaian masses. By replacing the West African Currency Board (WACB) currency bearing the image of the English Queen with a

⁸² See Eric Helleiner, "National Currencies and National Identities," *American Behavioural Scientist* 41 (August 1998): 1409-1436.

national currency featuring his photograph, Nkrumah sought to promote himself as the sole Founding Father of the Ghanaian nation-state. I have utilized both British-based and Ghanaian-based archives to inform this chapter, which address the political and the symbolic aspects of decolonization and nation-building in the Gold Coast/Ghana. These include the archives of the Colonial Office, Crown Agents, Treasury and other files found at the National Archives, in addition to Bank of England archives.

Chapter II: *Addressing the Post-Colonial State: Nation-Building and the Political Iconography of Postage Stamps.* The Stamp Advisory Board of Ghana - with Nkrumah's approval - issued millions of postage stamps from independence until 1966. The Nkrumah government used postage stamps as a form of political propaganda to promote his numerous nation-building projects and to project an image of a united and prosperous Ghana. However, these "tiny transmitters of nationalist...ideology"⁸³ also reveal the contradictions between his nation-building and Pan-African objectives, the two often being mutually exclusive. As Posnansky has observed, postage stamps are a key mass-medium for political propaganda that has thus far been overlooked by scholars.⁸⁴ In addition to the visual record of postage stamps, I have utilized the National Archives of Ghana (otherwise known as the Public Records and Archives Administration Department - PRAAD), the records of the Ghana Stamp Advisory Board, the Ghana Postal Services Company, the British Library Philatelic Collections and Crown Agent Archive, the British Postal Museum and Archive. I have been able to access hundreds of archival documents relating to the issue of postage stamps during the Nkrumah era from the Ghana

⁸³ Igor Cusack, "Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology: The Postage Stamps of Portugal and its Empire," *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 4 (October 2005): 591-612.

⁸⁴ Merrick Posnansky, Agbenyega Adedze and Jessica Levin, "Postal Images of Africa: A New Frontier," *African Arts* XXXVII, no. 2 (Summer 2004a): 52; and Merrick Posnansky, "Propaganda for the Millions: Images from Africa," *African Arts* XXXVII, no. 2 (Summer 2004c): 53-57.

Postal Service Company. Some of these sources may have been hitherto unknown of or un-accessed by other researchers. These archives include the records of private companies that issued stamps for Ghana, including Harrison and Sons, Ltd., De La Rue Plc, and the Inter-Governmental Philatelic Corporation (IGPC).

Chapter III: *Displaying the Nation: Museums and the Nation-Building Project.* In addition to building a “national” museum to exhibit the history and culture of Ghana, Nkrumah also began work on a national science museum as well as a personal shrine-museum in his hometown of Nkroful. Kwame Nkrumah also made personal donations of African-made weapons to the Ghana Armed Forces Museum (GAFM). The exhibition of the nation’s cultures, the promotion of science, technology and weaponry, and presentation of personal items belonging to Nkrumah in museum spaces caused contentions among his detractors.

Chapter IV: *Deconstructing Colonialism, Constructing the Nation: The Monumental Task of Nation-Building.* The Nkrumah government constructed many nationalistic structures and monuments. These included monuments (such as Independence Square and Arch), personal statues, universities, streets and other structures, many of which were named after him. The chapter will query the sorts of messages and historical narratives Nkrumah was trying to convey through these public monuments. It will reveal how Nkrumah’s public history etched in stone monuments was contested and deconstructed, as well as how his opponents reacted to this public personalization and branding of the nation. I have utilized the archives of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, the Ghana National Museum, the Ghana National Archives as well as the records and publications of Nkrumah’s political oppositions such as the NLM and the NPP to determine how they reacted to this public and personalized branding of the nation.

Chapter V, *Emblematic Nationalism: Conflicting Flags, Anthems, and Black Stars*. After 1960 when Ghana became a republic, Nkrumah became increasingly authoritarian, eventually establishing a single party state in 1964. As this transpired, Nkrumah personalized and synchronized the central symbols of the nation (such as the national flag and anthem) with the CPP party image and insignia, such as the red cockerel. This chapter will examine the fierce debates that occurred in the public sphere regarding the significance of these occurrences.

The **Conclusion, *Facing the Janus - The Symbolism and Legacy of the Nkrumah Years***, provides an analytical summary of the conclusions of the preceding chapters. Symbolic nationalism was central to the construction of new nations in Africa and the Third World. However, many of those symbols of nationhood were contested, and attempts to make them popular by their very action rendered these symbols of nationhood unpopular. I will also examine how Ghanaians and scholars look back at the legacy of Kwame Nkrumah in the post-Nkrumah era, especially in the light of Ghana's commemoration of fifty years as an independent nation-state in 2007, as well as the centenary of the birth of Kwame Nkrumah in September 2009.

CHAPTER I

Civitatis Ghaniensis Conditor: Colonial Currency, National Money & the Contentions of Coinage¹



"The act of coining or producing currency has been synonymous with an expression of independence since the earliest years of coinage in Ancient Greece."²

I want the Queen and the people of Britain to know WHY we are doing these things. My Cabinet have decided, with my agreement, to put my head on the coinage, because many of my people cannot read or write. They've got to be *shown* that they are now really independent. And they can only be shown by signs. When they buy stamps [and use currency] they will see my picture – an African like themselves-and they will say "Aiee...look here is our leader on the stamps [and money], we are truly a free people..."³

Money (in the form of modern coins and paper currency) has been an essential medium for consolidating not only the British colony of the Gold Coast, but also its successor nation-state of Ghana. This chapter will argue that the institution of a national currency system after independence was an effective but contentious symbolic aspect of the consolidation and homogenization of the nation state by the Nkrumah administration. However, before we can dissect the symbolic expressions of monetary nationalism, we must first understand how money was used to consolidate the colonial state, which preceded the national one. In the first instance, therefore, the

¹ Versions of this chapter were published as two separate articles: Harcourt Fuller, "*Civitatis Ghaniensis Conditor*: Kwame Nkrumah, Symbolic Nationalism and the Iconography of Ghanaian Money, 1957 – the Golden Jubilee," *Nations and Nationalism* 14, no.3 (July 2008): 520-541; and Harcourt Fuller, "From Cowries to Coins: Money and Colonialism in the Gold Coast and British West Africa in the Early 20th Century," in *Money in Africa*, ed. Catherine Eagleton, Harcourt Fuller and John Perkins (London: British Museum Press, 2009).

² Douglas Mudd, "Money & Sovereignty," 2005, <http://www.dmudd.net/hist697/msfinalintro.htm> (accessed June 22, 2005).

³ Nkrumah, "The Queen's Head," 12.

chapter will explore the validity of the arguments articulated by the British colonial administration and business interests in favour of the institution of a colonial common currency system in British West Africa in 1912. It will also provide an analysis of the symbolic expressions of the colonial project on British West African currency, and the extent to which West Africans accepted or challenged the new colonial monetary order.

During the early colonial period, British business and colonial officials argued in favour of the institution of a colonial common currency system in British West Africa in 1912. The coming of colonialism, and the establishment of a colonial monetary system in the form of the West African Currency Board (WACB) occasioned the loss of politico-monetary sovereignty in the Gold Coast. The WACB managed the production and design of a common currency for the British possessions in West Africa, namely, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, The Gold Coast, Northern and Southern Nigeria (see Map 1).⁴ However, the Board faced numerous challenges in maintaining its monetary monopoly on West Africa before and after the First World War. Analysing the history of the WACB is significant because it provides insights into the manner in which early 20th century British colonial policy was formulated in London and executed in the colonies. As Anthony G. Hopkins attests, “there was an imperial monetary policy... and the solution propounded with respect to West Africa was fully consistent with that policy.”⁵ This examination also enables us to gauge the effectiveness of the African responses to monetary colonization.

⁴ J.B. Loynes, *The West African Currency Board, 1912 – 1962* (London: The WACB, 1962).

⁵ Anthony G. Hopkins, “The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System: The Origins of the West African Currency Board,” *African Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (1990): 129.

The introduction of colonial coinage to West Africa

Before the formal introduction of colonial coins and paper money in British West Africa in the first quarter of the 20th century, Africans had their own currencies. African societies and kingdoms used monies such as cowry shells, gold nuggets and dust, iron rods, *manillas* and cloth currency. In the Gold Coast as well as the other British territories in West Africa, the indigenous currencies and United Kingdom silver coinage were largely replaced by the West African Currency Board currencies (see table I), which were issued after 1912 when the WACB was established. This colonial currency became the sole legal tender for British West Africa covered a total area of 451,000 square miles and a combined population of over 18 million people.⁶

Eric Helleiner argues that during the age of imperialism, currency boards were created by European powers in their respective colonies for economic ends, including the reduction of international and intra-colony transaction costs, and to promote imperial political identities.⁷ The creation of the West African Currency Board confirms his argument. Its establishment was due to the recommendations of the Report of the West African Currency Committee (WACC), a body commissioned by the Rt. Hon. Lewis Harcourt, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies. The mandate of the Committee was:

To inquire and report as to the desirability of introducing into West Africa a special silver coinage common to the five British West African administrations, and also as to the desirability of establishing a joint issue of currency notes in the same territories, and to advise upon the measures necessary for the regulation of the special coinage if introduced or for the better regulation of the existing currency in the event of a special coinage not being adopted.⁸

⁶ NA: CO 984/2, "Report of the West African Currency Committee: Appendix I. The Area, Population, and Trade of the West African Dependencies," *The Records of the West African Currency Board*, January 12, 1911, p. 19.

⁷ Eric Helleiner, "Introduction to Special Section on 'The Geopolitics of North-South Currency Blocs,'" *Geopolitics* 7, no. 1 (Summer 2002a): 1-4; and Eric Helleiner, "The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism: Why Did Imperial Powers Create Currency Blocs?" *Geopolitics* 7, no. 1 (Summer 2002b): 5-6. See also Hopkins, "The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System," 103.

⁸ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 2.

Table I: Legal Tender Coins in the Five West African Administrations, 1912⁹

Administration.	Legal Tender without Limit			Limited Legal Tender		
	British Gold and Silver	Foreign Gold	Foreign Silver	British.	Local	Foreign
1. Sierra Leone; and 2. Gambia	All Gold and silver coins legally current in the U.K.	Certain French, Spanish, and American gold coins	Five-franc pieces of the Latin Union	All bronze coins legally current in the U.K.	Nil	Nil.
3. Gold Coast and Dependencies.	Ditto	Nil	Nil	Ditto	Nickel-bronze, 1/10 th of a penny, half-penny, and one penny pieces.	Nil.
4. Southern Nigeria (Western Province)	Ditto	Certain French, Spanish, and American gold coins.	Nil	Ditto	Ditto	Nil
5. Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria (Eastern and Central Provinces).	Ditto	Nil	Nil	Ditto	Ditto	Nil.

While economic considerations were central to the establishment of the Board in West Africa, it also had political ramifications for the local populations. It deprived Africans of the ability to develop and control an indigenous monetary system that would give their leaders greater political autonomy from the colonial administration. Prior to the publication of the Report, the WACC consulted with 22 of what the Report termed as “witnesses,” including the five colonial governments and business interests, such as the major banking and maritime establishments operating in British West Africa.¹⁰ None of the people consulted regarding the new currency system were African, however.¹¹ What does this exclusion of indigenous economic

⁹ NA: CO 984/2, “Statement of the Coins which are now Legal Tender in the Five West African Administrations,” *Report of the West African Currency Committee*, May 6, 1912, p. 2.

¹⁰ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 2.

¹¹ Hopkins, “The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System,” 130.

and political interests tell us about the aims of the incoming monetary regime? It appears that the British colonial authority was not aiming to empower Africans to take the reins of a modern economic and monetary system as top-level administrators. Rather, it is evident that the aim was to replace an existing, albeit less modern economic system across the colonies, with a modern British system. It also appears that Africans were not thought to be capable of or desired to be active stakeholders in the ensuing monetary order. This evaluation on the part of the colonial and business officials, that Africans lacked the experience to participate in the new system, as we shall see below, was not completely accurate or justified.

Factors for change

Before 1912, colonial officials and their business counterparts contended that the most widely-circulating medium of exchange in British West Africa was United Kingdom silver coinage. Moreover, a variety of legal tender foreign currencies were also in circulation in the region at the time the WACC Report was published, as Table 1 shows. At the same time, barter trade and traditional African currencies constituted the major aspect of trade in many rural areas.¹² For example, in the Gold Coast Colony, while coin transactions dominated the urban areas, cowry shells enjoyed widespread usage mainly in more remote areas. Gold dust, the Akan all-purpose money, was also used as currency for larger transactions in rural parts.¹³ The presumed negative situation in the Colony of Ashanti and the Protectorate of the Northern Territories (see Map 2) also contributed to the complexity and urgency of implementing a new colonial currency order. Overall, the WACC found that the Gold Coast and Dependencies were:

¹² NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

In a backward state as regards the employment of metallic currency. In Ashanti, however, the use of British silver is stated to be making rapid progress, and gold is said to be considerably in demand by cattle traders in Coomassie [Kumasi], mainly for the purpose of trade with French territory. In the Northern Territories the natives still employ cowries for the small transactions of the market, but silver is gradually coming into use, and five-franc pieces are in demand by traders from French territory, and stand at a premium in relation to British money.¹⁴

The characterization of metallic money in the British territories as being in a “backward state” was not an entirely accurate assessment of the monetary reality in British West Africa. This is evident if we take the case of an important Dependency of the Gold Coast Colony, namely, Asante. The success of the British forces in the Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900-01 resulted in the political annexation of Asante and its incorporation into the Gold Coast Colony. While the use of *British* metallic money was not common there at the time, *Asante* metallic currency, namely gold dust, was the currency of choice for official and commercial trade and transactions. Furthermore, gold dust currency was not only important in cattle trading with French territories, but in a variety of commercial transactions beyond the confines of British authority.

Tom C. McCaskie, in his two-part article, “Accumulation, wealth and belief in Asante history,” reveals the extent to which the Asante state and its commercial sector was economically developed with regard to money and trade. In the late 19th century, the Asante state had a fiscally functioning and effective system of accountancy, taxation and even a “national” treasury. The latter was a kind of state bank called the “Great Chest of the Treasury,” which was located in the palace of the Asantehene in Kumasi, where gold dust (metallic money) was deposited.¹⁵ In the 20th century, moreover, successful Asante entrepreneurs and traders operating between Asante and

¹⁴ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 3.

¹⁵ T.C. McCaskie, “Accumulation, Wealth and Belief in Asante History: II. The Twentieth Century,” *Africa* 56, no. 1 (1986): 4.

the Gold Coast Colony used gold dust currency to trade in commodities including gold, rubber, cocoa and timber. They also provided services as moneylenders, gold dealers, investors, retailers, transportation suppliers and urban developers. Asante businessmen were also involved in the import-export trade.¹⁶ Therefore, for at least one major segment of the Gold Coast Colony and Dependencies, there was a complex economic and political system, with a central administrative authority, banking infrastructure and money that enabled trade to take place. However, McCaskie acknowledges that the advent of British “*laissez-faire* capitalism and the colonial cash economy” ushered in a new economic regime that would eventually replace the local monetary order.¹⁷

One of the most important reasons for Britain’s monetary colonization of West Africa was its predisposition for taxation, albeit without African representation. Helleiner explains, “a particularly important colonial objective was that of bringing peasants in colonial societies into a monetized economy as taxpayers, wage labourers in colonial enterprise, and producers of cash crops for export.”¹⁸ For example, by mandating that poll taxes be paid in the colonial currency, the state forced its subjects into the export-oriented cash crop economy and other colonial ventures, where they were paid with said currency. This situation contributed to resistance and resentment of that system by colonial subjects.¹⁹ Secondly, British coins were imported into the colonies by two private banks, namely the African Banking Corporation (ABC, which was established in Lagos in 1892) and the Bank of British West Africa, Ltd (BBWA).²⁰ These banks had

¹⁶ Ibid., 4, 7.

¹⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁸ Helleiner, “The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism,” 12.

¹⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁰ See also Chibuike U. Uche, “Banks and the West African Currency Board,” in *Money in Africa*, ed. Catherine Eagleton, Harcourt Fuller and John Perkins (London: Trustees of the British Museum,

“special arrangements” which amounted to an exclusive contract with the imperial government to supply currency to the colonies.²¹ Britain paid for freight and other miscellaneous expenses for supplying silver coins to the colonies, “in return for prepayment in the United Kingdom of its nominal value.”²² After the ABC ceased operations in 1893, the BBWA, which had opened up in Lagos in 1894, took over these functions from the former by securing an exclusive agreement with the Lagos government on 4 May 1894.

The BBWA subsequently set up operations for the supply of British coins in the Gold Coast and the other British West African colonies; it had one branch in the Gambia, two in Sierra Leone, eight in the Gold Coast, five in Southern Nigeria, and one branch in Northern Nigeria.²³ Therefore, Britain effectively privatized the importation and repatriation of silver coins in the colonies by contracting it out to big banking interests. These Banks operated by charging merchants and traders a one percent premium for supplying them with British coinage. However, merchants, traders and other stakeholders in the colonies had contested the preferential treatment afforded the ABC and demanded a more egalitarian system. Merchants complained of the Bank’s monopoly of the currency supply, the 1% premium that they had to pay for coinage and that other banks in the colonies were ‘prejudiced by these arrangements’.²⁴ This contestation would bring about the cancellation of the contract that the ABC (and later the BBWA) had with the Government and usher in a new monetary regime under the auspices of the WACB in 1912.²⁵

It is clear from the foregoing reports of squabbling between the British

2009), 49-53.

²¹ Hopkins, “The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System,” 108–110.

²² NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 3, 15.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5, 15.

²⁵ Hopkins, “The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System,” 109–111.

colonial officials and the expatriate merchants, and the jostling for power and influence between the latter themselves, that the monetary and banking debates and the reforms enacted during this period took place above the heads of the local African populations. Helleiner's argument that the cash-poor in the colonies were only important in terms of the need to incorporate them into the cash economy as taxpayers and not as important decision makers and stakeholders in the new monetary order is therefore a plausible one. Moreover, the colonial banks, businesses and officials were also insensitive to the monetary needs of African entrepreneurs, often asserting that Africans were uncreditworthy. The British banks (namely Barclays Bank (DCO) and BBWA) operating in the colony catered mainly to the government, expatriate and non-African interests, and failed to extend adequate credit (or any at all, in some cases) to Gold Coasters.²⁶ Moreover, as Chibuike Uche explains, the colonial authorities had outlawed locally chartered banks in 1906, which removed a valuable source of credit for Africans and essentially paved the way for the establishment of the colonial common currency system.²⁷

Another major factor, which the WACC pointed out in its Report in support of monetary change, was the increasing demand for British currency in the colonies, particularly in British West Africa. It noted that there was "a direct inducement to over-issue, because new silver has, in some places, a special value for the purposes of native trade."²⁸ From 1886–1911, British West Africa had had a significant increase in the circulation of British currency, at times surpassing the coin circulation in the British Isles itself (see Table 2). The Committee speculated that, the potential for British coins to return into circulation in London, was more likely during an economic

²⁶ Chibuike U. Uche, "Credit for Africans: The Demand for a 'National Bank' in the Gold Coast Colony," *Financial History Review* 10, is. 1 (April 2003): 75-90; Eric Helleiner, "The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism," 18.

²⁷ Uche, "Credit for Africans," and Uche, "Banks and the WACB," 49-53.

²⁸ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 15.

depression, and the possibility that this could destabilize the imperial economy, made the issue of West Africa having its own independent currency more urgent. The Committee found that:

The continued issue of the silver coins of the United Kingdom to the West African Colonies is [in]compatible with the successful control of its token coinage by the Home Government without the introduction of radical changes into its financial system... the use of sterling silver in West Africa without limit of tender has now become so considerable as to contain elements of danger, which are intensified by the steady increase of the circulation, and which affect the interests both of the United Kingdom and of British West Africa.²⁹

Table II: Circulation of British Sterling Silver in the UK, West Africa & other Territories³⁰

Period	West Africa	United Kingdom	Other Territories
Average for the period 1886-1890	£ 24, 426	£ 920, 088	£ 255, 939
“ “ “ 1891-1895	116, 323	761, 039	124, 461
“ “ “ 1896-1900	257, 090	796, 425	367, 233
“ “ “ 1901-1905	262, 786	234, 150	231, 504
“ “ “ 1906-1910	666, 190	781, 073	325, 347
1911	874, 850	1, 219, 766	286, 575

Ironically, the demand for British currency in West Africa was attributed to expanding merchant activities, greater colonial penetration and opening up of the territories, and the replacement of indigenous trading practices such as barter with modern British currency, which now jeopardized the metropolis, monetarily.³¹

The profitability of a new system of currency to the Colonial Governments and mercantile classes was also a significant factor in the establishment of the WACB regime. As the Committee put it,

²⁹ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 6-7; see also Hopkins, “The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System,” 105–106. Table 2 illustrates the circulation of British sterling silver in the UK, West Africa and other territories.

³⁰ NA: CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

there will, of course, be a very large “profit” representing the difference between the bullion and face value of [special] silver currency supplied to British West Africa. That country [*sic*] has absorbed over 6 ½ million pounds (face value) in silver coin during the past 26 years, and the absorption may be expected to continue, even if not at the same rate.³²

The Committee continued that the new currency “should be a source of considerable ultimate profit to the Colonial Governments concerned.”³³ The admission that the issuance of a special colonial currency would be a profit-making venture within itself undermines the previous assertions that it was just fear that the continued circulation of British coinage in Africa posed a direct risk to the home government. Profit, in addition to the risk of loss, therefore were the main driving forces behind the establishment of the WACB. Therefore, colonial officials and British merchants in West Africa worked together to advance their own interests, which overlapped for the most part. While officials in London and their colonial counterparts in West Africa sought to protect the political and monetary interests of the home government, expatriate merchants worked to protect their commercial interests and profit-base. The latter lobbied heavily for a new monetary system in the colonies mainly because it represented direct control of the machinery of money making to augment their coffers. After outlining all the factors affecting the currency situation in the territories, the WACC concluded that, “the introduction of a distinctive silver currency... is therefore... the only practicable measure that we are in a position to suggest for removing the defects of the present monetary conditions of West Africa.”³⁴

This recommendation resulted in the creation of the West African Currency Board in 1912 and the establishment of a common colonial currency for Britain’s five

³² NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁴ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 8.

possessions in the sub-region. For a small service charge, the WACB coins and banknotes were made convertible into British sterling when presented at any of the currency centres in Accra, Bathurst, Freetown or Lagos. The equivalent amount in pound sterling would be paid into the customer's account in London.³⁵ The establishment of this colonial currency system in 1912 signalled the emergence of a new era in West African history. Whereas the pre-1912 period was characterized by the political consolidation of the colonial state at the expense of the vast majority of the peoples, the post-1912 era proved to be a major monetary victory for Britain. However, this monetary advancement would be tempered by several challenges, most notably the resilience of traditional currencies and the coming of a World War two years later. In addition to the effects of the coming war on the new monetary order, the British administration had to fight another monetary battle; this concerned the design and iconography of the new currency, which were important considerations to convince Africans to buy into the new monetary changes.

Colonial currency designs

The WACB authorities confronted several challenges to their new monopoly on money. Firstly, they had the daunting task of making the new currency popular with and acceptable to Africans. In this regard, the WACC Report had highlighted “the importance of not giving the natives any ground for discriminating between the new coins and those with which they have been familiar in the past.”³⁶ The Committee found that:

The native is suspicious of change, and that it might take a long time to overcome any prejudice on his part against the new silver...if the new coins bear the King's

³⁵ W.T. Newlyn and D.C. Rowan, *Money and Banking in British Colonial Africa: A Study of the Monetary and Banking Systems of Eight British African Territories* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 46–47; Loynes, *The West African Currency Board*, 20.

³⁶ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 10. This wish, however, would prove to be more difficult than anticipated.

head on the obverse and are of the customary denomination, size, and weight, very little difficulty need be anticipated on this score. When it is remembered that the coins now in common circulation in West Africa include five florins, five shillings, and five sixpences bearing five different effigies of three different monarchs on the obverse... the justification for this view becomes obvious.³⁷

As Cusack has argued with respect to stamp designs, the empire was “to be represented by the alternating heads of Kings and Queens.”³⁸ Therefore, minting the head of King George IV or VI on the WACB coinage (see figure 1.1) was not only meant to ensure consistency with previous designs, but also to symbolize the absolute, centralizing power around which the colonized territories and peoples would be consolidated. Similarly, Mwangi has found that, in the case of the East African Currency Board (EACB), the colonial authorities were adamant about keeping the coin and note designs consistent (by minting the effigy of the reigning British Monarch on the face of EACB coinage) so as to maintain public confidence in the money’s value.³⁹ In addition to the British Sovereign’s head, the other prominent image of the WACB coinage was of the geographical terrain mostly in the form of a palm tree (see figure 1.1).

These images subtly reinforced the Monarch’s lordship over the people and colonial landscape; there were no images of Africans. It was only after the 1948 Accra Riots, which resulted in greater agitations by nationalists for political and monetary independence, that the WACB began to include imagery of Africans on their banknotes (see figure 1.3). Nonetheless, the natives were mainly portrayed as happily engaged in export-designated cash-crop (cocoa, groundnuts, palm nuts and palm oil) production, reinforcing notions of colonial hegemony and the civilizing mission.⁴⁰

³⁷ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 11.

³⁸ Cusack, “Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology,” 592.

³⁹ Wambui Mwangi, “The Lion, the Native and the Coffee Plant: Political Imagery and the Ambiguous Art of Currency Design in Colonial Kenya,” *Geopolitics* 7, no. 1 (Summer 2002): 33.

⁴⁰ See Figs 1–5 and Helleiner, “The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism,” 23-24; Mwangi, “The



Figure 1.1. WACB One Shilling coin 1939 (King George VI, palm trees). Source: <http://www.coinnetwork.com/group/britishwestafricanumismatics> (accessed July 25, 2010)



Figure 1.2. Obverse side of WACB One Shilling banknote 1918 (with Replica of 1 Shilling coin). Source: <http://africanbanknotes.com/images/BWA1s1918.jpg> (accessed July 25, 2010)



Figure 1.3. Obverse side of WACB Twenty Shillings banknote 1955 (palm trees, river) and reverse side of 1954 Five Shillings banknote (natives harvesting palm nuts). Source: <http://www.africanbanknotes.com/jun07/BWA4.htm> (accessed July 25, 2010)

Lion, the Native and the Coffee Plant.”

There are several assumptions that the WACB made about the nature of “natives” that warrant analysis. Describing them as being “suspicious of change” and therefore needing some convincing signals a certain colonial mindset that Africans (perhaps unlike Europeans) were resistant to change, that is, traditional and averse to modernity. Secondly, the Committee overestimated the familiarity and popularity of colonial coinage among locals. While the circulation of British currency increased overtime, the majority of peasants would not have frequently used or had access to this currency. Moreover, the use of cowries, gold dust and other forms of traditional currencies showed a resilience to being eradicated that undermined the rapidity with which the colonial administration wanted its coinage to circulate.

Coins, paper money and World War I

As the previous section demonstrated, the “native question” was always one of the principal considerations and challenges for the success of the new monetary regime. On the issue of the Africans’ acceptance of the new coinage, the Committee had been quite confident; “There is little reason to doubt that coins of the proposed new currency would be well received by the native population, if certain precautions were taken.”⁴¹ Unfortunately, the new coinage issued in 1913 coincided with the beginning of the First World War. During WWI, the WACB and the Clifford colonial government faced even more difficulties in currency administration in the Gold Coast. Silver was scarce worldwide, creating a shortage of silver coinage, which severely affected trade of farm produce, cocoa, mining and other essential commodities.

The shortage of coinage was also created by the high expense of sending the Gold Coast Regiment expedition to fight on Britain’s behalf in East Africa.⁴² However, silver shortage wasn’t the only problem. The nickel-bronze coinage

⁴¹ NA-CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 18.

⁴² Wrangham, “A Changing Colonial Relationship,” 149.

introduced by the WACB in 1912 were being used in the marketplace for everything from making small change to ornaments, gambling counters and washers for galvanized iron roofing. The hole in the nickel-bronze coins also made them usable as jewellery.⁴³ The shortage of currency was further complicated by London's inability to supply the colonies with adequate coinage on the one hand. On the other, locals also tended to melt down coins for jewellery-making, hoard coins and were reluctant to put their money in the banks. Fluctuating cocoa prices also put further strains on the limited supply of coinage in the Gold Coast. Furthermore, London officials remained indifferent to the locals' disdain for, and culturally related reluctance to use, paper money.⁴⁴

If convincing the locals that the coins issued by the WACB after 1912 were just as good as the previous British coins in circulation, then the issuance of paper money was even more difficult, especially during the Great War. Coin or metallic money had intrinsic value and therefore was thought to be more "tangible" than banknotes, which depended on "real" money (gold or silver) to guarantee its value. The Committee duly recognized this challenge. "It is clear that the success of a note [paper money] issue in British West Africa must depend on the willingness of an appreciable part of the native population to use this form of currency, which is at present unknown to them."⁴⁵ But how would the WACB try to ensure this loyalty and "willingness" of the native population to use the new form of currency? There was always the option to use force, but the Committee discounted the suggestions by some witnesses to resort to force, as "the prospect of ultimate success would be prejudiced if at any early stage notes were forced on natives who preferred coin."⁴⁶ Given these challenges, Governor

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 150–151.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 144–155.

⁴⁵ NA: CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 12.

⁴⁶ NA: CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 13.

Clifford found himself in a diplomatic dilemma. On the one hand, he tried to pressure the WACB and the Colonial Office to supply more silver coinage and hold back on issuing paper money too soon in the Gold Coast. On the other, he tried to temper the wartime instability and anxieties in the colony and implored the native population to have more confidence in paper money. The Governor even initially rejected London's advice to issue paper currency to ease the coin shortage, given the locals' resistance to paper money.⁴⁷

Given the special circumstances and hardships of the War, why were ordinary Africans so picky about paper? As Elizabeth Wrangham shows, there were practical and cultural causes for their resoluteness.⁴⁸ The tropical climate made paper easy to deteriorate, susceptible to fire and to consumption by white ants. Furthermore, the typical "pocketless" cloth attire of the native population made it hard to carry around paper money; it was easier for them to tie their silver coins into knots on their cloth.⁴⁹ Despite these problems, the WACB decided to introduce non-legal tender paper currency in late 1916, but this was met with unsubstantiated success.⁵⁰ However, by War's end, a combination of the shortage and high price of silver and nickel-bronze currency forced the Clifford Government to confer legal tender status on the WACB banknotes.

Notwithstanding, the WACB banknotes were met with resistance. For example, some market places from the Northern Territories to the Coast, and even some workers in the formal sectors refused to accept paper currency as payment since many did not regard it as real money. Some farmers, for instance, would rather sell their cocoa on credit than accept paper money. Ashanti Goldfields mine workers in Obuasi

⁴⁷ Wrangham, "A Changing Colonial Relationship," 144–155.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 148–149.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

were initially paid only 15% of their salary in banknotes after the introduction of bills, and some workers for the West African Rubber Plantations company were adamant about not being paid in paper.⁵¹ Given the currency shortages during the Great War, the use of barter and cowry shells still continued, especially in the Northern Territories, Eastern Province, Ashanti and other rural zones.⁵² Moreover, in the post 1918 period, paper money continued to be unpopular with the locals. In some cases, if paper money were accepted for transactions, its value would be discounted.⁵³ However, in September 1920 the introduction of a new mixed-metal coinage contributed to a more stable currency environment, coinciding with the fluctuations of the post war economy.⁵⁴ Consequently, the British Colonial authorities formulated a massive marketing campaign to ensure the success of the new currency both within as much as outside of their colonial borders.

Decolonization, Decimal Coinage and the Decimation of the WACB

Another issue compounding the currency crisis caused by the Gold Coast Government's decision to withdrawal from the WACB upon further constitutional changes was the issue of decimal currency. The decimal coinage system increasingly became popular globally after the Second World War. Several countries started changing over to this simpler system, which divides currencies into units of 10, 100 or 1000 instead of the more "time-honoured but complicated sub-divisions of their main currency units."⁵⁵ In the mid-1950s, a new cohort of decimal-currency converts – such as South Africa, India and Cyprus, which had already adopted or considered adopting the decimal system in the near future - were "discovering that

⁵¹ Wrangham, "A Changing Colonial Relationship," 147–148.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 151–152.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁵ Lombard, "Decimal Coinage Grows More Popular," *The Financial Times*, August 13, 1955.

the handicap an over-complicated coinage system imposes on the development of their commercial life grows steadily more serious as time goes by.”⁵⁶ Such “old-fashioned currency systems”⁵⁷, characterised by currencies based on the more complicated British pound sterling system (with shilling and pence subdivisions), could not keep up with the growing demands of increasing post-War international trade.

Many of the new converts that switched to the decimal system, often changed the name of their currency at the same time, some adopting the dollar designation, with cent or similar sub-divisions. The push to decimalise may have also been influenced by an eagerness on the part of governments to tap into the growing international tourist trade. “There is little doubt that [the old currency system]...quite often operates as a deterrent to spending by foreign tourists once they have arrived. Accustomed to the simple decimal system, they can calculate the price in their own currency of goods they see displayed in the shops only with difficulty. And rather than go to this trouble, they will often hold on to their money.”⁵⁸

Despite this growing world trend towards decimalization, however, the Colonial Office was not so enthusiastic about territories within its sphere of influence deviating from the British-led monetary status quo. A Colonial Office memorandum to the Treasury complained of Mr. Gbedemah’s announcement that the Gold Coast Government intended to introduce a decimal coinage system in the Colony.⁵⁹ As with other currency considerations involving the Gold Coast and other

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ NA: T (Treasury Records) 236/3983, D.M.B. Butt of the Treasury to A.N. Galsworthy, Esq. of the Colonial Office, memorandum, “Gold Coast Currency,” June 8, 1955. The CO clearly did not like the example that the Gold Coast was setting with this precedence. In a memorandum to H.R.

territories, the people most knowledgeable about currency issues – the BOE and the Treasury – had a more progressing, practical and level-headed outlook (although often with cautious optimism) rather than the more political demeanour taken by the Colonial Office towards these developments. A Treasury official, on the one hand agreed that “the decision is very much one for the Gold Coast Government.”⁶⁰ On the other hand, he noted that, “It would certainly seem to be the case that a decimal currency would cause continuing additional work to all those engaged in international trade, and this must be quite a high proportion of the monetary transactions of the Colony.”⁶¹ Despite this caution, the Treasury quickly added that, “On the other hand, once the change over was completed there would be real economies as regards to internal trade, and these might be held to turn the scale. I do not think that we could put up much of a defence for our own highly inconvenient set of units if the local government wished to get away from them.”⁶²

Even in the face of inevitable monetary change, some colonial officials still sought to gain leverage for the British pound. The Bank of England, for example, assumed that, “any decimal system which might be adopted in West Africa would retain the pound or equivalent as the basic unit of currency. This would not in any way detract from a successful decimal system.”⁶³ Furthermore, the BOE also warned that, “The adoption of a unit of account differing from the present well-established one might well disturb confidence in the currency both at home and

Twyman, Esq. of the WACB with regard to the Nigerian Governor General’s request for the drafting of a paper on decimal currency (Paper V) for the Accra Conference, a CO official commented that he had asked “Loynes of the Bank of England if the Bank would be so good as to produce a draft on this essentially technical subject [decimal currency], which has recently reared its [ugly?] head, in a Gold Coast context also.” See NA: T236/3983, W.G. Wilson to H.R. Twyman, Esq., memorandum, “West Africa Currency Conference, July, 1955,” June 16, 1955, p. 2.

⁶⁰ NA: T236/3983, D.M.B. Butt to A.N. Galsworthy, June 8, 1955.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ NA: T236/3983, J.B. Loynes of the Bank of England (BOE), draft of Paper V, “West Africa: Decimal Currency,” June 29, 1955, p. 1.

abroad and unduly complicate trade and financial settlements with other countries.”⁶⁴ The preoccupation with the aftermath of a decimal currency system that did not pay homage to the pound sterling in African and international terms, points to the possibility that the British, even as late as 1955, were still thinking in Colonial and not independence terms, at least in the monetary sense.

Given the financial winds of change that were blowing across West Africa, the inevitability of “the virtual extinction at some future date of the West African Currency Board”⁶⁵ was not lost on some British officials. The Bank of England even recognized that in particular West African territories “a Central Bank may not be far off.”⁶⁶ However, as with political independence in the Gold Coast, some Colonial officials were neither too enthusiastic about nor did they anticipate that the WACB would be made redundant so soon. They were not ready to retreat from the financial empire so easily without a fight, and the Bank of England stressed that the WACB still had much to offer in the way of experience to whatever economic arrangement that would emerge from the ashes of the WACB in the various West African territories. “...I think it would be desirable to emphasise that the existing W.A.C.B. system can not merely cope “adequately” with the currency requirements of the territories concerned. For obvious reasons the W.A.C.B. is able to carry out its work more efficiently than any local Board is likely to be able to do at least for a long time to come. In other words, if the W.A.C.B. is replaced the new Board (or Boards) must strive to attain the standards of their predecessor.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ NA: T236/3983, J.B. Loynes to W.G. Wilson, Esq., memorandum, “West African Currency Conference,” June 29, 1955, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁷ NA: T236/3983, J.B. Loynes to W.G. Wilson, June 29, 1955, p. 1.

Weighing the Costs and Benefits of Decimalization

Reflecting its more pragmatic approach to monetary issues than the CO, the BOE weighed in on the decimalization threat. J.B. Loynes – the BOE expert - noted that, among the advantages of the decimal currency system were, that the international trend was moving towards decimal currencies, it simplified accounting and thereby lessened work, it was good for educational instruction among school children and adults alike, the decimal system facilitates the adoption of a decimal system of weights and measures.⁶⁸ The disadvantages of decimalization included the high cost of replacing the banknotes, coins, counting machines, books and other items based on the British currency system; problems involved in recalculating wages, retail prices, price gauging, and may inconvenience normal business operations in the commercial sectors; decimalization was unlikely to improve the exports of the territory in question. Many of these complexities of decimalization may generate social unrest.⁶⁹ The BOE argued, however, that decimalization would be advantageous in the long run, i.e., that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages.⁷⁰

Despite all the preoccupation about the adaptation of a decimal currency system in the Gold Coast, the Nkrumah government, at independence, based its currency on the British sterling system. Ghana did not decimalise until 1965, a year before Nkrumah was ousted from power.

Notwithstanding their loss of politico-monetary autonomy, Gold Coasters, through passive and active strategies resisted the colonial monetary regime

⁶⁸ NA: T236/3983, J.B. Loynes, draft of Paper V, June 29, 1955, p. 1. See also Lombard, “Decimal Coinage Grows More Popular.”

⁶⁹ NA: T236/3983, J.B. Loynes, draft of Paper V, June 29, 1955, pp. 1-5. See also Lombard, “Decimal Coinage Grows More Popular.”

⁷⁰ NA: T236/3983, J.B. Loynes, draft of Paper V, June 29, 1955, p. 3. See also Lombard, “Decimal Coinage Grows More Popular.”

throughout the entire period. These subversive measures included the continued use of indigenous and foreign currencies, counterfeiting colonial coins and banknotes,⁷¹ defacing currency, melting down money to make jewellery, and refusing to use bank notes. According to Mwangi, “through the medium of conflicting currencies... the Africans... without resorting to heroic political action, defied and resisted through their daily lives the ambitions of the [colonial] state.”⁷²

Political action came in 1957 when Ghana achieved independence from Britain. As I will argue next, Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah sought to establish Ghana’s status as an independent nation-state by breaking from the WACB colonial common currency and establishing the Ghana pound in 1958 and *cedi* and *pesewa* currency in 1965 – embellished with nationalistic symbols and iconography.

Nkrumah, Symbolic Nationalism and National Money

There are several significant public symbols of nationhood that are used by nationalists, political elites and intellectuals to popularise national history and culture, and for nation-building purposes.⁷³ Hobsbawm and Ranger’s treatise on

⁷¹ See Ayodeji Olukoju, “The Adisi Case: Currency Counterfeiting in Interwar Colonial Gold Coast,” in *Money in Africa*, ed. Catherine Eagleton, Harcourt Fuller and John Perkins (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 2009), 68-74.

⁷² Wambui Mwangi, “The Order of Money: Colonialism and the East African Currency Board” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 224.

⁷³ Many of these public symbols of nationhood – incidentally or coincidentally – begin with the letter “M” and are interrelated in nature and scope. I have referred to them as The “Ms” of Nationhood at conferences at the Universities of Ghana (Legon) and Cambridge in 2006. They include Money, Monuments, Memorials (of Martyrs), Museums, the Media, Music, Merrymaking, Memory, and the Man on the spot. How do these Ms of Nationhood contribute to nation-building in general? Money is circulated to millions of people at a time; busloads of school children and other “national” groups pay regular visits to national Museums where government-trained guides feed them a particular national narrative; Monuments dot key intersections in the centre of townships, tops of hills, and major road intersections in big cities for countless numbers of pedestrians and motorists to glance at or observe; Merrymaking activities such as official ceremonies, independence days, festivals and durbars entice people to watch spectacles that are not only meant to amuse and generate money, but to commemorate the deeds of national heroes and mark important historical antecedents. The state Media also plays a major role in popularising these national events. By analysing these “Ms” of nationhood we can reconstruct important historical events and highlight the centrality of historical figures such as Kwame Nkrumah – the Man on the spot – to the nation-building project of particular nation-states.

Invented Traditions, Smith's theory of Ethnosymbolism, Billig's writings on Banal Nationalism, and Igor Cusack's works on African nationalism⁷⁴, have acknowledged the importance of national symbols to the nation-building project which contribute to "the homogeneous cultural branding of . . . [the State's] flock".⁷⁵ The list includes national flags, anthems, music, coats of arms, emblems, statues, monuments, museums, national dishes, national ceremonies, parades, remembrance days, rituals, artefacts, dress, holidays, oaths, shared memories, myths, languages, etc. Noticeably absent from this list is national money, which historically has been an essential tool used by nationalists to consolidate new nation-states.

This section of the chapter analyses how national money formed an essential aspect of Nkrumah's economic and symbolic/semiotic nation-building strategy after the Gold Coast gained its independence from Britain. It will analyse the extent to which Nkrumah's monetary nationalism had been elaborated, contested, deconstructed and revived by other nationalists and political stakeholders since independence. Since every work of construction – including the nation-state – requires an architect(s), I will now examine how the main architect of the Ghanaian nation-state – Kwame Nkrumah – sought to construct Ghana in his own image and likeness through one medium of mass propaganda that has been neglected in the literature namely, national money and its associated iconography.

⁷⁴ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*; Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*; Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Cusack, "African Cuisines: Recipes for Nation-Building?" 207–225; Cusack, "African National Anthems," 235–251; Cusack, "Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology," 591–612.

⁷⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 140.

National money

Mudd notes “the act of coining or producing currency has been synonymous with an expression of independence since the earliest years of coinage in Ancient Greece.”⁷⁶

Moreover, banknotes and coins are similar to postage stamps, which “may be seen as tiny transmitters of the dominant ideologies of the state destined for the imagined community of the nation.”⁷⁷ Since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1957, money has been crucial to the nation-building project in Ghana in several ways; it was vital to economic nationalism and development; money was essential to the consolidation of the ethnically and geographically diverse nation-state; the iconography on Ghanaian currency has been used to showcase who is in charge, and to articulate a particular version of history and national identity – as Eric Helleiner would agree.⁷⁸

Helleiner identifies five ways in which national currencies contribute to a sense of national identity or nation-building: (1) they provide a vehicle for nationalist imagery that constructs a sense of collective memory and tradition, (2) they act as a common medium of social communication by which communicative efficiency and communal thought may be achieved by the people, (3) they provide collective monetary experiences that may allow members of a nation to exhibit a sense of belonging to a national community with a common destiny, (4) money contributes to notions of popular sovereignty, and (5) money enhances the somewhat semi-religious nature of nationalism.⁷⁹ The second and third notions are in line with Benedict Anderson’s postulations that the rise of print capitalism and vernacular

⁷⁶ Mudd, “Money & Sovereignty.”

⁷⁷ Cusack, “Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology,” 591.

⁷⁸ Eric Helleiner, “National Currencies and National Identities,” *American Behavioural Scientist* 41 (August 1998): 1409-1436, and Eric Helleiner, “Introduction,” 2-3.

⁷⁹ Eric Helleiner, “National Currencies and National Identities,” 1409.

language (during the sixteenth century) facilitated the spread of the imagined community that is the nation-state.⁸⁰

In *Money in an Unequal World*, Keith Hart examines the intersections between money, societies and markets. He argues that money facilitates the building of communities because of the social memories and exchanged meanings that people share through the use of banknotes, coins and electronic currencies in everyday life.⁸¹ In addition to the economic, sociological and psychological utility of money, its iconography also plays an important role in the construction and contestation of national identity. As Oliver Tappe argues, “two aspects of...paper money should be noted: First, the iconography of the banknote can not be considered separately from political and social transformations because it functions as a mirror of such developments. Second, it is an essential component of symbolic politics in order to enhance legitimacy, just as monuments or museum.”⁸²

As Gold Coast nationalists clamoured for political nationhood, they also insisted on attaining monetary independence; political and monetary freedom would be concurrent events. Baffour Ankomah asserts that Nkrumah “knew that political independence without economic empowerment was valueless.”⁸³ Political independence notwithstanding, Ghana had the option of remaining in the West African Currency Board colonial common currency system, similar to the situation of the former francophone African colonies that became part of the *Colonies françaises d’Afrique* (French colonies of Africa) or CFA franc zone after independence from France. Since 1912, as stated in previous sections of this chapter,

⁸⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

⁸¹ Keith Hart, *Money in an Unequal World: Keith Hart and his Memory Bank* (London: Texere, 2001).

⁸² Oliver Tappe, “A New Banknote in the People’s Republic: The Iconography of the Kip and Ideological Transformations in Laos, 1957–2006,” *Internationales Asienforum* 38, no. 1-2 (2007): 106.

⁸³ Ankomah, “Never Again!” 3.

the WACB had managed the issue and circulation of the West African Pounds, Shillings and Pence currency for Britain's five West African colonies up to, and in some cases beyond, independence.⁸⁴ However, the new government and its new central bank, the Bank of Ghana (BoG), opted to create its own national money – the Ghana Pounds, Shillings and Pence.⁸⁵ As the Minister of Finance of the Gold Coast had said in the Legislative Assembly on 5 April 1955, “the issue by this country of its own currency will be one of the more significant marks of its attainment of full nationhood.”⁸⁶ Hence, just as the Union Jack was lowered in Accra and some colonial administrators headed back to London after the nation-state of Ghana was inaugurated on 6 March 1957, WACB agents picked up their coins and banknotes and handed over operations to BoG officials, which fully assumed national banking functions in 1958.⁸⁷ The BoG retained the essential aspects of a central bank as practiced by the WACB; it exercised a monopoly on currency issues and wielded powers to enact and enforce monetary laws. Therefore, the WACB left behind a legacy upon which the new monetary regime was built.

On 14 July 1958, the new Ghana Pound banknotes and coins were made available to banks and post offices nationwide (see figures 1.1a and 1.1b, 1.2a and 1.2b). Ghana became a member of the IMF on 20 September 1957, and also secured membership in the Sterling Area.⁸⁸ The initial strength of the Ghana Pound was a boost to the morale of the young nation-state, given that it was equivalent to the

⁸⁴ S. Caine, “Monetary Systems of the Colonies II: West Africa,” *The Banker* (August 1948): 93-99; John M. Carland, “The Colonial Office and the First West African Note Issue,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23, no. 3 (1990): 495-502; Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*; Loynes, *The West African Currency Board*, and *A History of the West African Currency Board*; Newlyn and Rowan, *Money and Banking in British Colonial Africa*.

⁸⁵ Bank of Ghana, “Brief History of the Ghana Currency” (Accra, Ghana: BoG, July 18, 2006).

⁸⁶ WACB, *Annual Report 1954-5*, 10.

⁸⁷ BoG, “Brief History of the Ghana Currency.”

⁸⁸ NA: DO (Commonwealth Relations Office) 35/6194, “The Par Value of the Ghana Pound,” *International Monetary Fund Internal Correspondence*, October 24, 1958; BoG, “Brief History of the Ghana Currency.”

Pound Sterling currency of its former coloniser, Great Britain, almost three times the value of the America Dollar, and worth its weight on the Gold Standard.⁸⁹ With some £7–24 million of the new currency put into circulation in the first four months of the launch, the BoG reported that “the new currency has been well received and the public appear to have confidence in it.”⁹⁰ Despite this proclamation that currency decolonisation proceeded very smoothly and successfully, there were several challenges to the changeover. For example, the exchange of the old WACB coins for the national ones occurred at a slower than anticipated rate.⁹¹ There were also technical and syntactical inconsistencies and miscommunications concerning the new money, and political battles over the imagery that would appear on the coinage. These issues were tackled by a sustained public relations campaign to boost confidence in the national coins and banknotes.

Civitatis Ghaniensis Conditor

Unwin and Hewitt maintain that “banknotes are more than simply economic phenomena, and they provide an important expression of the cultural and political identities that have helped to shape the nations in the past . . . [through] portraits of key historic personalities that dominate the imagery.”⁹²

⁸⁹ NA: DO 35/6194, “The Par Value of the Ghana Pound;” NA: DO 35/6194, Washington to Foreign Office, inward saving telegram, “Monetary Distribution,” November 7, 1958; NA: DO 35/6194, “The International Monetary Fund Recognises the Ghana Pound,” The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting on Behalf of the Minister of Finance Press Release No. 986/58, November 6, 1958.

⁹⁰ NA: DO 35/6194, “Currency,” extract, *Ghana Fortnightly Summary*, July 17, 1958, p. 3; see also NA: DO 35/6194, “Ghana Bank Note Circulation,” *Financial Times*, July 21, 1958.

⁹¹ NA: DO 35/6194, PR 79/59, “Ghana Currency to be Sole Legal Tender in Ghana From 1st July, 1959,” January 23, 1959, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting on Behalf of the Minister of Finance; see also NA: DO 35/6194, Secretary of the WACB to the Under Secretary of State of the Colonial Office, letter, December 8, 1958.

⁹² Tim Unwin and Virginia Hewitt, “Banknotes and National Identity in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 1005.

(a)



(b)



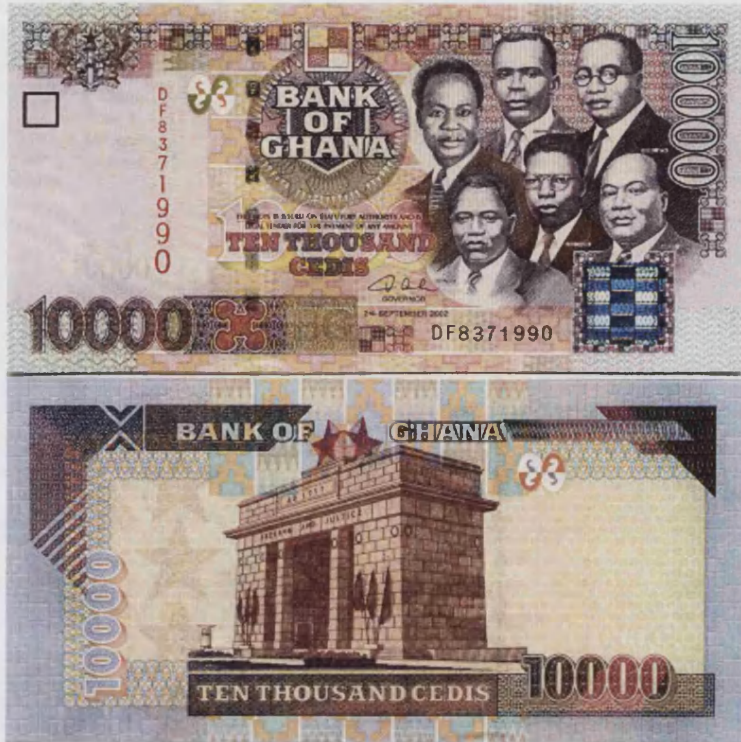


(d)



(c)

(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)



Figure 1.4. Ghanaian banknotes. (a) 1 Pound – Bank of Ghana, cocoa pods (1962). (b) 5 Pounds – Bank of Ghana, cargo ships, logs (1962). (c) 1 Cedi – Kwame Nkrumah, of Ghana (1965). (d) 10 Cedis – Kwame Nkrumah, Independence Square (1965). (e) 10,000 Cedis – The Big Six, Independence Monument (2002). (f) 20,000 Cedis – Ephraim Amu, National Theatre (2002). (g) 1 New Ghana Cedi – The Big Six, Independence Monument, Akosombo Dam (2007). (h) 50 New Ghana Cedis – The Big Six, Independence Monument, Christianborg Castle (2007). Source: Audrius Tomonis, www.banknotes.com.

In the case of Ghana's coins in the early independence period, portraits of these "key historic personalities" were replaced by that of a then living "Founding Father," in the personage of Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah. As part of his nation-building, nationalisation and Africanisation policies, Kwame Nkrumah's image appeared on Ghana's national coinage, commemorative coins and postage stamps (see figures 1.4c and 1.4d, 1.5a–d). The Latin phrase *Civitatis Ghaniensis Conditor* – Founder of the State of Ghana – was also inscribed above his image.⁹³ Nkrumah stepped onto the world stage during the era when the "cult of leadership" was a part of national identity, as evidenced by men such as Lenin and Mao who moulded nations through their own hegemonic nationalisms.

As Asiedu-Acquah argues, the CCP's press machinery engaged in the adulation, deification and promotion of the "personality cult" of Kwame Nkrumah as the only legitimate leader of Ghanaian and African liberation, at the expense of his domestic rivals.⁹⁴ This is evident from the iconography of banknotes, coins and postage stamps produced during the Nkrumah era, which did not feature any other Ghanaian political leader besides Nkrumah himself. Hence, the placement of Kwame Nkrumah's image on these state-issued media signaled the beginning of his rise to messianic dominance of the political landscape. Benjamin maintains that not all images (such as art work on banknotes) are meant to be consciously looked at, but only to be seen.⁹⁵

⁹³ NA: DO 35/6194, "Ghana's New Currency," *New Commonwealth*, August 1958.

⁹⁴ Emmanuel Asiedu-Acquah, "Elaborating Power: The CPP Press, Foreign Affairs Reportage and the Nkrumah Personality Cult 1957 – 1966" (paper presented at the annual conference of the Historical Society of Ghana, Accra, Ghana, University of Ghana, Legon, August 9-12, 2006).

⁹⁵ W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 239–240.

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



Figure 1.5. Ghanaian coins featuring Kwame Nkrumah's image. (a) Ten Shillings – Nkrumah, 'Black Star' (1958). (b) Half Penny – Nkrumah, 'Black Star' (1958). (c) Twenty-five Pesewas – Nkrumah, 'Black Star' (1965). (d) Republic Day Commemorative Gold Coin – Nkrumah, Nkrumah's personal standard (1960). Source: www.ebay.com, except 1.5(c), World Coin Collecting, <http://www.wcc.co.il/home/25%2065%20big%20n.jpg> (accessed July 25, 2008)

However, as Mwangi argues, the illustrations on paper money are both meant to be seen (passively) and looked at (deliberately), since, for example, an ordinary person should be able consciously to observe money to ascertain its authenticity.⁹⁶ The same holds true for coins; technical problems with the new Ghanaian coinage that threatened to undermine their authenticity validate Mwangi's observations. The following Ghana Government press communiqué illustrates the point:

In certain parts of the country – particularly in Kumasi and Tamale – there is apparently doubt as to the genuineness of some of the new Ghana two-shilling pieces, the public having found that, on a number of these coins, the effigy of Dr. Nkrumah is not as clear-cut as on others. The Prime Minister's hair, for example, does not show clearly on these particular coins, with the result that the head appears too smooth . . . These smooth-headed coins are perfectly genuine and should be accepted if, in all other respects, they are the same as the coins on which the hair shows clearly.⁹⁷

Despite the BoG's explanations that the "smooth-headed" coins were quite simply a result of worn out dies, there were reasons for concern about any doubt in their "genuineness" especially in the context of cities such as Kumasi in the Ashanti Region and Tamale in the Northern Region that had divergent geo-political, economic and cultural interests. These inconsistencies challenged the smooth transition from colony to nation-state, and may have been translated into doubt about the "genuineness" of the Nkrumah regime itself in Accra.⁹⁸ There were also syntactical misunderstandings about the wording on the new currency that threw the government into yet another public relations battle. The BoG expressed concerns that the public was literally interpreting the annotation on the new banknotes, which stated that they could be used "for the payment of any amount." On 25 July 1958, the Bank issued this short press release:

⁹⁶ Mwangi, "The Lion," 31–32.

⁹⁷ NA: DO 35/6194, PR 719/58, "New Ghana Coins," Governor of the Bank of Ghana, August 7, 1958.

⁹⁸ NA: DO 35/6194, PR 719/58, "New Ghana Coins," Governor of the Bank of Ghana, August 7, 1958.

There is still some confusion in the public mind regarding the wording on the new Ghana bank-notes which reads: 'This note is issued on statutory authority and is legal tender in Ghana for the payment of any amount.' What this wording means is merely that there is no limit to the amount that may be legally paid in the form of bank-notes. Each individual note, of course, is value only for the amount printed on the face of it. A ten-shilling note is worth ten shillings. A pound note is worth one pound. And a five-pound note is worth five pounds (emphasis in original).⁹⁹

Nkrumah and the Queen

The Queen or not the Queen? That was the central question and the controversy that surrounded the decision by the Nkrumah government to put the image of Ghana's first Prime Minister on the coinage and postage stamps of the new state, instead of that of Queen Elizabeth II. Nkrumah's deviation from the currency norm of minting the coinage of Commonwealth countries with the English Queen's effigy created contention in London and Accra. Top-ranking officials from the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), Crown Agents, Royal Mint, Bank of England and the British High Commissioner in Accra weighed in on the issue. For example, in 1957 correspondence written by J. Chadwick addressed to G. S. Whitehead (both of the CRO) expressed concern about the "problem" of Ghana omitting the Queen's image from its national currency after independence. "The first step is, I think, to go back to the Mint and ask for definite assurances that all coins issued by non-Republican Commonwealth Members bear the Queen's effigy. If they do not, particular cases should be quoted."¹⁰⁰ Whitehead's response to Chadwick's letter confirmed that it was common practice at the Royal Mint that the Queen's effigy appears on all the coins of non-Republican members of the British Commonwealth, except in the case

⁹⁹ NA: DO 35/6194, PR 674/58, "New Ghana Notes," BoG, July 25, 1958.

¹⁰⁰ NA: DO 35/6194, J. Chadwick to Whitehead, correspondence, February 27, 1957. An exception to this norm was Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The Royal mint had produced two commemorative coin sets for Ceylon to celebrate the Buddhist anniversary, none of which featured an image of the Queen. See NA: DO 35/6194, G.S. Whitehead to J. Chadwick, letter reply, March 5, 1957.

of perforated coins, in which case only the Queen's name is placed on the coin.¹⁰¹

Chadwick also instructed Whitehead that:

The second step would be to draft a letter to the keeper of the Mint, and clear it first with the Colonial Office. The line would presumably be that we fully support the Mint view that Ghana should adhere to Commonwealth practice; that we hope that their representative on his visit will take this line strongly, quoting other Commonwealth precedents as necessary . . . The final step would then be a letter to Mr MacLennan enclosing copies of all the correspondence, and asking him to do what he can to support the Mint representative, and if need be, to make representations himself at a high level with a view to keeping the Ghana Government on the right lines.¹⁰²

Therefore, Ghana was seen to be behaving as a renegade state by deviating from the Commonwealth currency practice and the British Government wished Ghana to be put back "on the right lines." However, while the letter expressed disapproval and annoyance that Nkrumah chose not to use the British Monarch's image on Ghana's national currency, the official recognized his sovereign right to do so. 'We must at the same time bear in mind that Ghana will be master in her own house in this respect, and has already created one undesirable precedent in the shape of an Independence stamp bearing not the Queen's but the Prime Minister's effigy.'¹⁰³

Going against the *Ga*

As a political leader and member of a minority ethnic group - the Nzima, a small ethnic group from the Easter Region - in Accra, Nkrumah was a minority in what was ethnically foreign territory. The *Ga* of Ghana is the main ethnic group in Accra.¹⁰⁴ The Ga Aborigines Society (GAS) – an organisation that represented the interests of the *Ga* ethnic group in Accra and elsewhere – also objected vociferously

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² NA: DO 35/6194, J. Chadwick to Whitehead, February 27, 1957.

¹⁰³ Ibid. Compare Figures 1c and d.

¹⁰⁴ The contributions of this group to Ghana's struggle for independence was duly recognized by former President John Kufour in the form of a huge monument in Accra, in honour of King Taki Tawia, the first Gamanye (king) of the *Ga* state. For more on the history of the *Ga* in Accra, see John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000).

against the placement of Nkrumah's likeness on the national coinage – even sending letters to various interested parties within and outside of Ghana to complain about the issue. The tone of one such letter, which was sent to the British Prime Minister in Whitehall, portrayed Nkrumah as an unreasonable, ungrateful and deceptive political opportunist who manipulated historical antecedents to fit his political agendas.¹⁰⁵ The GAS lambasted the Ghanaian Prime Minister and his Cabinet for their inconsistent rhetoric about the readiness of Gold Coasters for independence and lamented Kwame's patronising behaviour toward the Ghanaian masses. Concerned about Nkrumah's increasing tendency towards totalitarianism, the GAS also accused him of betraying his fellow patriots and of egotism, arrogance and political misrepresentation. They blasted the Nkrumah government for taking all the political credit for gaining independence and especially for having historical amnesia about the role of the Ga masses and other players in securing political freedom for Ghana.

The members and officers of the GAS declared that they “seriously disagree that the ‘head’ of Dr Kwame Nkrumah should be adopted on the new Ghana coinage.”¹⁰⁶ They cited the contradictions in Nkrumah's rationale – as expressed in the London press – that his image on the national currency was warranted because the majority of the population in Ghana could not read or write, and therefore needed symbols as evidence of their independence.¹⁰⁷ Arguing that the profound administrative changes from a colonial to a national government were sufficient proof of independence from British rule, the GAS wrote that Nkrumah's argument

¹⁰⁵ NA: DO 35/6194, Ga Aborigines Society to the British Prime Minister, letter, June 28, 1957. Copies of the letter were also sent to the Speaker of the Ghana National Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition, the Ga State Council, the Joint Provisional Council, as well as the London and Ghana press.

¹⁰⁶ NA: DO 35/6194, Ga Aborigines Society to the British Prime Minister, letter, June 28, 1957.

¹⁰⁷ See Nkrumah, “The Queen's Head,” 12.

was “illogical” and that Ghana’s “illiteracy does not in the least purport gross backwardness and want to civilisation . . . we are not in as low an estate as to be goaded only by symbolic diagrams.”¹⁰⁸ The GAS continued to articulate its disagreements with Nkrumah by stating that “an assertion as misrepresenting and unbecoming as that so obviously betrays a gross overweening spirit, which is apt to taint our precious Democracy with some corruptive hues of totalitarianism.”¹⁰⁹ Nkrumah’s initial justification for the Gold Coast gaining independence – based on the premise that it was ready for self-government now – was also called into question. “Does the Prime Minister merely mean to prove himself inconsistent before the Imperialists by saying the opposite of what he said at the time he was fighting for the front, namely that his Country was fit to govern itself?”¹¹⁰

Moreover, they maintained that Nkrumah was not the sole patriot that fought for independence and therefore was not the only one who merited the honour of being commemorated on the national coinage. Were it not for the limiting prevalence of historical circumstances and treaties such as The Bond of 1844 that was still in effect after the Second World War¹¹¹ – The Ga Aborigines Society argued – the “great and noble feats achieved by worthy [Ga] patriots throughout the years . . . could long have rescued our Country from the fetters of Colonialism.”¹¹²

This implied by default that Nkrumah’s rise to the status of Head of State

¹⁰⁸ NA: DO 35/6194, Ga Aborigines Society to the British Prime Minister, letter, June 28, 1957.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The Bond of 1844 was a treaty of political alliance between the British and a confederation of Fante states to protect the latter against Asante aggression. It was later extended to include other coastal and inland polities, and effectively signalled the beginnings of formal British colonialism in the Gold Coast.

¹¹² NA: DO 35/6194, Ga Aborigines Society to the British Prime Minister, letter, June 28, 1957. The Ga’s significance to the political history of the Gold Coast/Ghana has been acknowledged by a monument (see Figure 4) erected at the popular Makola Market in Accra to commemorate the centenary celebration of the Ga sovereign - King Tackie Tawiah I - who reigned as the 20th King of the Ga State from September 1862 until July 1902. The Ghanaian President John Agyekum Kufuor commissioned the statue on September 24, 2002, and was assisted by Nii Amugi II, President of the Ga Traditional Council, Nii Akropong III, Head of *Nii Teiko Tsuru We*, and the family of King Tackie Tawiah I.

(contentiously symbolised by his head on the national coinage) was a matter of historical luck, a mistake at best, or a result of the unrecognised assistance of the Ga and other peoples. In the latter respect, the Ga Aborigines Society agreed “that the Self-Government status of the Gold Coast has been achieved by and through a team work.”¹¹³ Nonetheless, the organisation argued that the Gas were the most active anticolonial voice after the expiration of the Bond treaty in 1944, supported by other entities such as the Movement For Colonial Freedom, to lobby for and achieve the political freedom of the Gold Coast through ‘universal demonstrations of true patriotism.’¹¹⁴ They also impressed upon the British Prime Minister that it was the Ga masses that had saved Kwame Nkrumah from being deported during his anti-colonial campaigns – a fact, which they insisted, was overshadowed by Nkrumah’s headiness.¹¹⁵ In the end, the GAS argued for the placement of a neutral image on the new Ghanaian coinage, rejecting the immortalisation of both the British Queen and the Ghanaian Prime Minister on the national money, and maintaining a political stance that was as much anti-colonial as it was counter to a despotic domestic government:

We are therefore vehemently protesting against the adoption of Dr Kwame Nkrumah’s ‘head’ to appear on our new Ghana coinage. While we are unanimously and earnestly preferring the Ghana Emblem and Coat of Arms to the ‘head’ of the Queen as being the Head of the State, Kwame Nkrumah’s ‘head’ should not at all come into the picture for consideration. Away with that!!! Away with that!!!!¹¹⁶

Lobbying London

Three months after independence, Kwame Nkrumah became the first African premier to attend a Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference, held in Great

¹¹³ NA: DO 35/6194, Ga Aborigines Society to the British Prime Minister, letter, June 28, 1957.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ NA: DO 35/6194, Ga Aborigines Society to the British Prime Minister, letter, June 28, 1957.

Britain. In a self-authored article titled, “Why The Queen’s Head is Coming Off Our Coins,” which he wrote for *the Daily Sketch*, Nkrumah sought to set the record straight regarding why he (1) replaced the Queen’s image on Ghana’s currency with his own; (2) printed national postage stamps bearing his photograph; (3) ordered a twenty-foot statue of himself to be erected in Accra; (4) moved into the Castle of Accra which was once the abode of the Queen’s representative; and (5) organised “youth camps” that, according to his British critics, resembled Nazi-like labour camps.¹¹⁷ According to the article, his detractors lamented these self-aggrandising actions and queried whether or not Nkrumah was becoming a “budding dictator” or a “pocket dictator” who was “power-drunk with success,” and proclaimed him guilty of “sedition against the Queen,” among other charges. In defence of these allegations, Nkrumah wrote:

Well, let me say at once that my Cabinet and my party have done all these things. And we are not ashamed of it. But if people think that these are the first signs that we are leading Ghana, our country, out of the Commonwealth and that they are going to make me dictator, THEN THEY ARE WRONG. I want the Queen and the people of Britain to know WHY we are doing these things. My Cabinet have decided, with my agreement, to put my head on the coinage, because many of my people cannot read or write. They’ve got to be shown that they are now really independent. And they can only be shown by signs. When they buy stamps they will see my picture – an African like themselves – and they will say ‘Aiee . . . look here is our leader on the stamps, we are truly a free people’ (emphasis in original article).¹¹⁸

The Prime Minister’s Secretary, Kofi Baako, also asserted that the Cabinet agreed to the minting of Nkrumah’s image on the national coinage to pay him homage and in “commemoration of his politically salvative [sic] achievement,”¹¹⁹ a notion that was seen as ‘puerile and unreasonable’ by the Ga Aborigines Society.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Nkrumah, “The Queen’s Head,” 12.

¹¹⁸ Nkrumah, “The Queen’s Head,” 12.

¹¹⁹ NA: DO 35/6194, Ga Aborigines Society to the British Prime Minister, letter, June 28, 1957.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

As to the status of his twenty-foot monument that would grace the landscape of the capital (further discussed in Chapter IV), Nkrumah insisted that it was being constructed “as a sign. I am sure the Queen will understand that many of my people still do not believe that we are truly independent. Some of them even expect the Queen to come and crown me.”¹²¹ Furthermore, Nkrumah insisted that he had moved into the Castle of Accra because, “to my people it is the seat of government. The Governors have lived there for centuries. Now it is logical that their Prime Minister should live there.”¹²² In defence of his “fascist, nazi” youth camps, Nkrumah maintained that they were “a mild form of National Service” necessary to fill the huge unemployment gap and contribute to the development needs of the country.¹²³

Nkrumah’s justifications for the Africanization and nationalization of money, stamps, the civil service and other aspects of the new regime was that they were proof of the country’s independence, an integral part of nation-building, national identity and to awaken the vastly illiterate population to the reality of their independence from colonialism. Furthermore, holding up Ghana’s autonomy as an example to the rest of Africa and the Third World was also one of his noted objectives. He ended the article by professing his allegiance to the Queen. “We are not doing all this because I am a vain man. We are doing it for my people. Because they wish it...That is what I wish to say to your Queen and my Queen.”¹²⁴

An elderly Ghanaian educator, the retired Reverent Dr. Francis Kumi Dwamena, who left Ghana in 1967 after the military coup against Nkrumah, recalls the controversy over the decolonisation of money in the Gold Coast/Ghana. He

¹²¹ Nkrumah, “The Queen’s Head,” 12.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Nkrumah, “The Queen’s Head,” 12.

concur with Nkrumah's own justifications for replacing the Queen's image with his own, agreeing that there was a high level of illiteracy among the population of pre-independence Ghana. Given this lack of literacy among the masses, the political parties used symbols to communicate with the population. "It was necessary for Nkrumah to replace the Queen's image with his own in order to convince Ghanaians that they in fact had become independent; the written word alone would not do it."¹²⁵

The Nkrumah government disregarded the objections from the Ga and went ahead with minting his portrait on the new Ghana banknotes and coins. Nonetheless, other issues would arise after independence, which would strain the relationship between Nkrumah and the Gas. They were also at loggerheads with the Nkrumah government because of the Preventive Detention Act, which was inaugurated in July 1958. The Act was passed partially to suppress what the Nkrumah administration believed to be a clandestine, criminal Ga organization called the *Ga Shifimo Kpee* (The Ga Standfast Organization) that had recently been established. According to June Milne, "the latter was a conspiratorial organization, advocating violence, designed to preserve the dominant position of Ga in their own community which they considered threatened by the influx of people of other tribes into the area as a result of the growth of Accra and the new port of Tema."¹²⁶ About forty-three members of the organization's Direct Action Group were detained under the Preventive Detention Act.¹²⁷

Despite Nkrumah's early run-ins with the Gas over his image on coinage, the erection of his statue in their backyard (among other things) his nation-building strategy called for the incorporation of other ethnic groups – including Gas – in his

¹²⁵ Reverend. Dr. Francis Kumi Dwamena, interview by author, Accra, Ghana, July 14, 2006.

¹²⁶ June Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 171.

¹²⁷ June Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 171.

party machinery. Such was the case of a young, educated Ga, Paul Tagoe (see figure 1.6), who is an important symbol of Nkrumah's ethnic inclusiveness, and who rose to the rank of First Parliamentary Secretary in Nkrumah's government.



Figure 1.6. CPP Minister of Greater Accra and First Parliamentary Secretary, the Honourable Paul Tagoe, on official visits to Romania and other countries. Photographs courtesy of Peter Tagoe.

Asante-NLM Resistance to Currency Nationalism

In addition to the strong disapproval voiced by the Ga leadership, the Northern Territories Council (NTC) also defended the position of their counterparts in the south. The NTC sided with the Ga State Council in protesting and condemning the erection of Nkrumah's monument in Accra (to be discussed in Chapter IV) and the minting of his likeness on the national currency.¹²⁸ However, among the strongest oppositions to Nkrumah's personalization of the national currency were his traditional and political opponents from among the Asantes. The Asante National Liberation Movement was also vehemently opposed to the minting of Nkrumah's likeness on the national currency. Despite the arguments of CPP Minister of Local Government William Offori Atta, the opposition was not convinced that the minting of Nkrumah's image on the national currency was necessary only to underscore the fact that it was Nkrumah and no one else who won Ghana's independence from Great Britain.¹²⁹ Members of the Opposition complained in the National Assembly that Nkrumah was conflating himself with the nation-state of Ghana and the minting of his image on the national coinage provided further evidence that Nkrumah was on his way to becoming Ghana's dictator.¹³⁰ Joseph Appiah also wrote editorials in the *Liberator* (under various pseudonyms, according to Hess), in which he argued that Nkrumah's actions were not only undemocratic, but that they also posed a threat to Asante identity.¹³¹

¹²⁸ *Liberator*, November 5, 1956, 1, and *Ashanti Pioneer*, August 1, 1957, 1, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 53.

¹²⁹ *Daily Graphic*, July 6, 1957, 1, and Kofi Opoku-Manu, "Currencies in Ghana's History" (PhD diss., University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, 1973), cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 52.

¹³⁰ *Daily Graphic*, July 6, 1957, 1, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 52.

¹³¹ *Liberator*, June 25, 1957, 2, and *Liberator*, June 26, 1957, 2, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 52.

Coinage, commemorations and coups

As Cusack writes of commemorative or “historical” stamps, commemorative coins also “reflect the events, peoples and places that impinge on a nation’s consciousness . . . [and are] a visual remembrance of a particular history of a country.”¹³² In this case, Kwame Nkrumah was the then living history-maker and nationalist. Kwame Nkrumah did not limit the minting of his effigy just to legal tender currency and stamps. As part of the Republic Day celebrations, the Government ordered 15,000 pieces of 22 carat gold coins from the Royal Mint in London. These commemorative coins featured on the obverse side a new effigy of Nkrumah inscribed with the words “Kwame Nkrumah First President of Ghana.” The reverse side featured the inscriptions “Republic Day, July 1, 1960” as well as Nkrumah’s personal standard (see figure 1.5d).¹³³

In 1965, a year before the coup d’état against Ghana’s first Prime Minister, the Ghana Pound gave way to a new national money – the *Cedi* and *Pesewa* currency – the former an Akan name for the traditional cowry currency, the latter the term for the smallest amount of gold dust used in traditional transactions, especially within the Asante society. The new currency was imprinted with Nkrumah’s image and other nationalist iconography (see figures 1.4c, 1.4d and 1.5c).

1965 also represents the year that the Nkrumah government adopted a decimal currency system. As previously shown, the adoption of decimalization represented a departure from the sterling currency system on which the Ghana Pound, Shillings and Pence was based since independence in 1957. Further confirming the usage of money and stamps as a form of mass media – the topic of the next chapter - the new monetary system was advertised on a special issue of

¹³² Cusack, “Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist,” 593.

¹³³ See *Liverpool Daily Post*, “Gold for Ghana,” June 30, 1960, and *Times*, “Gold Piece For Ghana: Republic Day Commemoration,” June 20, 1960.

postage stamps. British officials, however, were not so enthusiastic about its former colony also leaving its monetary sphere of influence and going the way of the United States' monetary system.

On 24 February 1966, Kwame Nkrumah was ousted by a military and police coup while he was abroad.¹³⁴ During the siege, Dr Nkrumah's more-than-life-size statue was viciously attacked and defaced by an angry mob (see chapter IV).¹³⁵ However, the desecration of Nkrumah's statue would not be the only symbolic attack on his leadership. Almost immediately after the coup, the new military leaders passed a law forbidding the people to utter or even write Nkrumah's name in public.¹³⁶ Moreover, on the On 17th February 1967 - one year after the CPP government was overthrown - the military regime issued The New Cedi (N¢) currency series, noticeably without the former President's image, to replace the 1965 cedi notes and coins.¹³⁷ In launching the new money, Colonel A. A. Afrifa, then Commanding Officer of the Second Battalion of the Ghana Army, and National Liberation Council member in charge of Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, announced to a crowd at the BoG "that the new currency was being introduced to do away with the need to have any effigy on the country's currency, particularly that of a tyrant whom Ghanaians want to forget once and for all."¹³⁸ After Afrifa's inauguration of the new currency to replace "the old cedis and coins on which the despotic ex-President Nkrumah's effigy appears," however, certain trading interests, especially in Accra, initially refused to honour the trade-ins due to various concerns,

¹³⁴ Military Museum, Kumasi, August 4, 2006.

¹³⁵ National Museum, Accra, July 25, 2006.

¹³⁶ *Evening News*, March 3, 1966, 3, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Ghana*, note 89, chapter two, 187.

¹³⁷ Bank of Ghana, "Brief History of the Ghana Currency" (Accra, Ghana: BoG, July 18, 2006).

¹³⁸ Komen-Sapanin, "C50 Notes Abolished," *Daily Graphic*, February 24, 1967, 28.

including massive counterfeiting of the old C50 and C100 notes.¹³⁹ After that time, however, the value of the national Cedi currency began a downward spiral from which it has only recently recovered in the late 2000s.

The new money order

Nkrumah's image did not appear on Ghanaian money for thirty-five years, since the "currency coup" of 1967 in which his image was symbolically "ousted" from the national money. During this period, the iconography of the national currency has been characterised by "neutral," i.e. "a-historical" and "a-political" images such as national projects (the Akosombo Dam, cocoa farming, timber extraction, etc.), and cultural images portraying the daily lives of ordinary Ghanaians. The political landscape of Ghana since Nkrumah, characterised by successive military coups and counter-coups in the 1960s and 1970s, the double decade premiership of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, and the economic roller-coaster of this era, are contributing factors to the iconographic absence of the Osagyefo from the Cedi. During this three-plus decade period, Nkrumah's legacy underwent a continuous process of re-evaluation and reconsideration, and moved from "that of a tyrant whom Ghanaians want to forget once and for all"¹⁴⁰ and a "despotic ex-President"¹⁴¹ to one of a misunderstood nationalist visionary who was just ahead of his time, according to some Ghanaians.¹⁴²

In the 2000s, Ghana became relatively calm politically and stable economically under the rule of current President John Agyekum Kufuor. In 2002,

¹³⁹ D. Tetteh, "Brawl Over New Cedi," *Daily Graphic*, March 3, 1967, 1, 3. See also Komen-Sapanin, "C50 Notes Abolished," *Daily Graphic*, February 24, 1967, 28.

¹⁴⁰ Komen-Sapanin, "C50 Notes Abolished," *Daily Graphic*, February 24, 1967, 28.

¹⁴¹ D. Tetteh, "Brawl Over New Cedi," *Daily Graphic*, March 3, 1967, 1, 3.

¹⁴² Reverend Dr. Dwamena, interview by author, July 14, 2006.

Nkrumah reappeared on the front of what was then Ghana's second highest currency denomination, the 10,000 Cedi note, the theme of which was "Nationhood." However, this time he did not appear as the sole Founding Father of the nation; on the contrary, his image was flanked by five other patriots (some of whom were Nkrumah's political rivals) that led Ghana to independence from Great Britain in 1957 (see figure 1.4e). Collectively referred to as The Big Six, they are Kwame Nkrumah (1909–72); Emmanuel Odarkwei Obetsebi-Lamprey (1902–63); William Ofori Atta (1910–88); Edward Akufo-Addo (1906–79); Ebenezer Ako-Adjei (1916–2002); and Joseph Boakye Danquah (1895–1965).¹⁴³ This single image of The Big Six is a constructed composite picture taken from individual photographs of each of the men in single file.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, the formerly highest denomination banknote – the 20,000 Cedi bill (see figure 1.4f) – also carried an image of one of Ghana's noted nation-builders, though he is not counted as a member of The Big Six. This banknote underscores the importance of national money as a mass media tool used to broadcast history and highlight those historical personalities who have contributed to nation-building and national identity. The 20,000 Cedi banknote – the theme of which was "Culture" – was released in 2002 by the Kufuor government. Its obverse side features a portrait of the internationally acclaimed artist Dr Ephraim Amu (1899–1995), who "recognized the power of music as an instrument of Nation building and his most famous work 'yen ara Asase Ni' [God Bless our Homeland Ghana] was, between 1948 [time of the Accra Riots] and 1957, Ghana's unofficial National Anthem."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ BoG, "Issue of 10000 & 20000 Cedis Banknotes" (Accra, Ghana: BoG, 2002), 2.

¹⁴⁴ Edward S. Ayensu, *Bank of Ghana: Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee* (Accra: Bank of Ghana, 2007), 224.

¹⁴⁵ BoG, "Issue of 10000 & 20000 Cedis Banknotes" (Accra, Ghana: BoG, 2002), 3.

In July 2007 the Ghanaian currency was “re-denominated”; prior to July, one US dollar was equal to almost 10,000 Cedis. After this date, however, one New Ghana Cedi (GH¢1 – see Figure 1.4g) was made equivalent to ¢10,000 of the old Cedis. Consequently, the re-denomination made the new currency worth a little more than the US dollar and currently the highest-valued national currency in Africa (at least on paper).¹⁴⁶ The new Ghana Cedis “constitute a new family of notes and coins”¹⁴⁷ whose iconography “combines artistry with wide-ranging tributes to the founders and features of Ghana’s modern nationhood.”¹⁴⁸ The obverse side of the banknotes features an image of The Big Six and the Independence Arch, a symbol of Ghana’s sovereignty. The reverse sides of the banknotes “depict symbolic landmarks of Ghana’s progress”¹⁴⁹, including prominent national monuments and concepts: The Akosombo Dam (GH¢1, symbolising socio-economic development); the University of Ghana (GH¢5, symbolising the role of education in national progress); the Headquarters of the Bank of Ghana (GH¢10, acknowledging the BoG’s guardianship of the financial system); the Supreme Court Building (GH¢20, representing the rule of law); and the Christianborg Caste (signifying the seat of Government and “good governance” on the GH¢50 note (see figure 1.4h). Moreover, the notes have been embedded with some historical designs and security features, such as a watermark of Tetteh Quashie (and a cocoa pod) who is credited with bringing the first cocoa seeds to Ghana from Fernando Po in 1879.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ See Paul Acquah, “Launching of the Ghana Cedi: Speech by Dr Paul Acquah, Governor, Bank of Ghana” (paper presented at the Bank of Ghana, Accra, Ghana, May 3, 2007), 1–7; Ayensu, *Bank of Ghana*, 224–225; and John Kufuor (keynote address given by H.E. John A. Kufuor at the launch of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Bank of Ghana, Accra, Ghana, August 1, 2007).

¹⁴⁷ Acquah, “Launching of the Ghana Cedi,” 3.

¹⁴⁸ Ayensu, *Bank of Ghana*, 224.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁵⁰ Acquah, “Launching of the Ghana Cedi,” 3–6; Ayensu, *Bank of Ghana*, 224–227.

With the Ghana Coat of Arms on their obverse sides, the Pesewa “coins also pick up on the imagery of [Ghana’s] national identity . . . hinting at natural wealth, African Freedom, Commonwealth links . . . [and] Ghana’s heritage and traditions.”¹⁵¹ The iconography of the reverse sides depicts the scales of justice (1 Cedi coin), a market woman (50 Pesewas), a cocoa pod (20 Pesewas), a book (10 Pesewas), a traditional hornblower (5 Pesewas) and the Adomi Bridge (1 Pesewa).¹⁵²

The inclusion of Kwame Nkrumah’s icon on issues of Ghanaian banknotes since 2002 may indicate that history and time have reconciled the perceptions about Nkrumah’s legacy in Ghana as it relates to many issues, especially nation-building and nationalism. It may also represent an attempt by the former Kufuor government at national reconciliation to heal the political wounds of history as the nation approached the fifty-year mark. This rewriting or re-minting of history, rather, as reflected in the iconography of the 10,000 Cedis bill and the new Ghana Cedi banknotes and Pesewa coins, takes into consideration the other history-makers and contributors to the independence cause and subsequent nation-building processes. The commemoration of Ghana’s birth as a sovereign country and a member of the family of nation-states on 6 March 1957 was duly celebrated with much fanfare and a US\$20,000,000 budget during the Ghana@50 celebrations in 2007 in Accra.¹⁵³

Conclusion

The coming of coinage to British West Africa in the first quarter of the 20th century, was occasioned by several coinciding factors. There were economic considerations including: the reduction of monetary transaction costs, between Britain and its

¹⁵¹ Ayensu, *Bank of Ghana*, 225.

¹⁵² Acquah, “Launching of the Ghana Cedi,” 3–6; Ayensu, *Bank of Ghana*, 224–227.

¹⁵³ Ghana Home Page, www.Ghanaweb.com (accessed November 13, 2006).

colonies, within its colonies; better macro-economic management, and the extraction of seigniorage profits by the colonial governments.¹⁵⁴ These reasons were especially fuelled by the increasing circulation of British currency in West Africa and the fear that unfavourable economic conditions there would cause the repatriation of coins to Britain, which could destabilize the home economy.¹⁵⁵ Hopkins also rightly claims that the WACB was established “to settle expatriate commercial rivalries in West Africa,” among the banking, shipping and other trading interests competing for the spoils of the “Scramble for Africa.”¹⁵⁶ London officials and their administrators in the colonies, on the one hand, sought to protect the monetary system of the home government from the negative effects of oversupply of British currency in the colonies. On the other hand, colonial administrators on the ground and their expatriate commercial allies viewed the establishment of a colonial currency system as a way to make a profit from seigniorage.

Ideologically and politically, monetization represented the last two projects of what missionary and explorer David Livingstone identified as the three C’s of British imperialism in Africa, namely, Christianity, Civilization and Commerce. Colonial authorities demonetised a variety of local monies (*manillas*, cowry shells, gold dust, etc.) and foreign colonial currencies (French, American, Latin Union, etc.) that circulated concurrently with the pound sterling. Colonial money was thought to be superior to African currency, and the incorporation of Africans into the world of taxation and waged labour was vital to the success of the colonial

¹⁵⁴ Helleiner, “Introduction to Special Section,” 2; Helleiner, “The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism,” 5–6.

¹⁵⁵ Helleiner, “The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism,” 10; Hopkins, “The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System,” 129.

¹⁵⁶ Hopkins, “The Creation of a Colonial Monetary System,” 130; see also NA: CO 984/2, *WACC Report*, p. 9.

machinery.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, the images of the reigning British monarchs and the territorial landscape that were minted on colonial coinage and paper money were symbolic of Great Britain's lordship over the colonized.

The convergence of British colonialism and the WACB's monopolization of currency in the Gold Coast in 1912 signalled the loss of political and monetary sovereignty for the indigenous population. The demonetisation of pre-colonial currencies "produced significant losses for Africans, especially those who held much of their fortune in these forms of money. Without a formal monetary role, cowry shells could only now be sold for their lime content at very low values."¹⁵⁸ It also forced Africans into colonial enterprises such as the production of cash crops, much of the proceeds of which went into paying taxes and other expenses that were only accepted in colonial currency.

From independence in 1957 to the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, money became an essential tool used to articulate symbolic/semiotic nationalism and to bolster national identity in a territory that was geopolitically, economically and ethnically diverse. In this chapter, I argued that the Africanisation of currency formed an integral part of Kwame Nkrumah's nationalisation policies. The premier sought to establish Ghana's status as an independent nation-state by breaking away from the West African Currency Board colonial common currency system and establishing national currencies – the Ghana Pound, Shillings and Pence in 1958 and the Cedi and Pesewa currency in 1965. The abandonment of the colonial monetary system was a nationalist and symbolic statement meant to show Britain and the new nation that Ghana was ready to be the master of its own economic destiny henceforth. This confirms Mudd's argument that the issue of coins and paper money

¹⁵⁷ Helleiner, "The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism," 22.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

has been an essential aspect of nationalist expressions since the time of the Ancient Greeks.¹⁵⁹ We should also recall Nkrumah's statement that "the community of economic life is the major feature within a nation, and it is the economy which holds together the people living in the territory."¹⁶⁰

After exiting the WACB system, Kwame Nkrumah caused controversy in Britain by substituting his image on the new Ghanaian banknotes, coins and postage stamps for that of Elizabeth II. Some British officials felt strongly that Ghana – still a Dominion in the British system between 1957 and 1960 – was deviating from the norm of maintaining the image of the British Monarch on the currency of Commonwealth member states. On the other hand, Nkrumah argued that putting his likeness on money was the only way to convince his people that they were truly free and independent, since the majority was illiterate. Nkrumah had learned from the British that coins and banknotes could be used as a symbolic media of propaganda to illustrate to the people who their masters were. Therefore, he sought to mimic this symbolism by replacing the images of British royalty on the national currency with that of his own – the new boss in town. Moreover, unlike the two-faced Roman god Janus, Nkrumah's image on Ghanaian coins faced only one direction – forward. Ironically, though, his image on the coins resembled that of a Roman Emperor, especially since it was circumvented by the Latin title – *Civitatis Ghaniensis Conditor*. The use of Latin - an ancient language symbolic of Roman and later British rule and power - on the new coins, symbolically romanticized Nkrumah as the last African Emperor with a lineage that stretched back into time immemorial.

Embellished with nationalistic symbols, the iconographic elements of Ghanaian money (and postage stamps) during this period also reflected the political

¹⁵⁹ Mudd, "Money & Sovereignty," (accessed June 22, 2005).

¹⁶⁰ Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa*, 88.

ideology of Nkrumah, with an emphasis on nation-building, economic nationalism, and pan-Africanism. These icons of independence included Independence Square (“Black Star Square”), Parliament House, the Bank of Ghana, and national development schemes such as logging, cargo shipping, and the harvesting of cocoa. Given that these currencies would pass through the hands of millions of Ghanaians, money was therefore an effective means of promoting Nkrumah’s nationalist projects and the new symbols of nationhood to the majority of ordinary Ghanaians, as opposed to just a few people that make up the literate elite class. However, this monetary regime now managed by the Bank of Ghana faced numerous challenges. In the provinces, especially among illiterates, technical problems with the minting of coins and public misunderstandings of statutory wordings on banknotes initially caused confusion and doubt in the new money. As a result, the Bank of Ghana was constantly engaged in damage control through a sustained public relations campaign to bolster confidence in the national currency.

Furthermore, the portrayal of Kwame Nkrumah as the face of the Ghanaian Revolution alienated other stakeholders who were co-contributors to the independence cause and co-builders of the new nation-state. Traditional leaders such as the Ga Aborigines Society, the Northern Territories Council, and the Asante-dominated National Liberation Movement were vehemently opposed to Nkrumah’s portrait being on the national coinage; they felt that this action necessarily negated their role in the attainment of nationhood. However, as the Nkrumah government advanced into a one-party state in 1964, these dissenting voices found less and less space to articulate their political opposition to the Osagyefo. Nonetheless, the growing dissatisfaction with the socio-economic and political realities of the Nkrumah regime partially contributed to the military coup that removed him from

power on 24 February 1966. During the coup, Nkrumah's statue that stood in front of Parliament House in Accra was demolished by a street mob and his image was subsequently removed from the currency – the name of which was changed to the New Cedi to signal the new political order.

Subsequently, Kwame Nkrumah's historical legacy has undergone a process of re-interpretation, as evidenced by several symbols of nationhood. His monument that was demolished during the coup was recovered by the National Museum of Ghana in 1975 and unveiled there on 3 March 1977, where it is currently on display (albeit with the arms missing, see Chapter IV). Moreover, after a thirty-five-year absence, Nkrumah's image reappeared on Ghanaian money – the 10,000 Cedi banknote – in 2002, as well as on the redenominated Cedi (the Ghana Cedi) in 2007. However, this time Nkrumah was not featured as the sole Founding Father of the nation, but as one of the Big Six, who are recognised in the country's historical narrative as the Founding Fathers of the Ghanaian nation-state. Since the Nkrumah era, each new regime in Ghana, whether military or civilian, has recognized the symbolic significance of the national money as a means of legitimising their administration and, through the minting or printing of targeted iconographies, send politically-motivated messages to the vast majority of the people.

CHAPTER II

Addressing the Post-Colonial State: Nation-Building and the Political Iconography of Postage Stamps



When they [Ghanaians] buy stamps they will see my picture – an African like themselves – and they will say “Aiee...look here is our leader on the stamps, we are truly a free people” (Kwame Nkrumah, “The Queen’s Head,” 12, emphasis in original article).

Most scholars dismiss postage stamps merely as jagged-edged, square pieces of gummed paper issued by governments to send and receive mail. They would conclude that postage stamps are of no value to historians and other scholars. From a purely functional perspective, they are correct. The modern postage stamp was invented in Britain in the mid nineteenth century to prepay postage. In addition to prepaying for a service equivalent to their face value, they are also collectible items of both intrinsic and extrinsic worth, which often far exceed their postal value. Moreover, there are two main kinds of postage stamps. Definitive postage stamps are issued purposely for posting letters and for sale to philatelists. They are also called permanent stamps because they are put into circulation for between five and ten years. Commemorative postage stamps are issued to mark special occasions, events and anniversaries. They are also valuable collectable items that are normally

withdrawn shortly after the celebration for which they were issued but can stay in the postal system for up to one year.¹

Despite their seeming mundane nature and the intellectual scepticism that many academics hold about their scholarly utility, a growing number of researchers now recognize that postage stamps (and other philatelic material and archives) are a valuable resource for documenting national history in general. More specifically, they acknowledge the importance of postage stamps in recording the process of nation-building and the legitimization of nationalist movements in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Yu-chin Huang has stated that, "Countries in the international community have utilized postage stamps as propaganda to proclaim their legitimate status and, if necessary, to attack their enemies and protect their rights as part of ongoing ideological conflict."² Agbenyega Adedze has argued, "The images on postage stamps are not chosen at random...the choice of many images...is politically motivated."³ Jack Child argues that postage stamps carry important cultural, nationalistic and propagandistic messages in Latin America.⁴ Michael Kevane has analysed the iconography of postage stamps issued by regimes in Burkina Faso and the Sudan, arguing that postage stamps illustrate how the two countries have pursued divergent models of national representation.⁵ Jessica Levin asserts that Gabonese stamps "opens a window to local politics and global participation."⁶

¹ Ghana Post Company Ltd., July 2007.

² Yu-chin Huang, "Making a China of One's Own."

³ Agbenyega Adedze, "Commemorating the Chief: The Politics of Postage Stamps in West Africa," *African Arts* 37, 1 (2004a): 68-73.

⁴ Jack Child, "The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture: Latin American Postage Stamps," *Latin American Research Review* 40, no. 1 (February 2005): 108-137.

⁵ Michael Kevane, "Official Representations of the Nation: Comparing the Postage Stamps of Sudan and Burkina Faso," *African Studies Quarterly: The Online Journal for African Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 1-17, <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v10/v10i1a3.htm>.

⁶ Jessica Levin, "Sculpted Posts: Architectural Decoration on Gabonese Stamps," *African Arts* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 62-67.

But why are postage stamps (as well as banknotes and coins) such an effective means of spreading political propaganda to the populace of a country and internationally? They are issued and controlled solely by the central government (who has strict laws against perpetrators who dare to breach them); they are cheap to produce; they can be graphically imprinted with considerable detail, despite their small size; they circulate among millions of people both within and outside of the country's borders (also amongst philatelists, numismatists, traders, through private letters, etc.); they do not require a high degree of literacy (or none at all) to understand the messages, unlike state-run newspapers and other media; and they do not require state-sponsored violence to be effective, unlike more draconian methods of nation-building in developing countries such as the use of the military.⁷

African and Ghanaian Postage Stamps

The trajectory of stamps issued in African states since independence followed a general pattern. As Merrick Posnansky has observed, the prevailing symbols portrayed on African stamps immediately after independence included symbols of nationhood, freedom, national flags, monuments, as well as advancements in education, health care, agriculture and industrial development.⁸ A decade after independence, the iconography of African definitive postage stamps mainly reflected geographical, cultural and economic themes such as indigenous flora, fauna and natural resources. Moreover, African governments issued commemorative postage stamps to mark special events including visits by foreign government

⁷ Adedze, "Commemorating the Chief;" Hugo Dobson, "Japanese Postage Stamps: Propaganda and Decision Making," *Japan Forum* 14, no. 1 (2002): 21-39; Huang, "Making a China of One's Own;" Robert A. Jones, "Heroes of the Nation? The Celebration of Scientists on the Postage Stamps of Great Britain, France and West Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 3 (2001): 403-422; Posnansky, et al., "Postal Images of Africa," and Merrick Posnansky, "Propaganda for Millions: Images from Africa," *African Arts* 37, no. 2 (2004b): 53-57;" David Scott, "National Icons: The Semiotics of the French Stamp," *French Cultural Studies* 3 (1992): 215-34.

⁸ Posnansky, "Propaganda for the Millions."

dignitaries, the birth of Pan-Africanist organizations, to celebrate the anniversaries of United Nations agencies operating in Africa, to highlight cultural heritage and to venerate other special events.⁹ In the regional context, African postage stamps issued above and below the Sahara also show market differences. In the Islamic North African countries, national postage stamps feature more political and cultural iconography than their southern counterparts.¹⁰ Posnansky sheds further light on the regional and ideological differences in African postage stamp issues by stating that:

“Unlike the colonial issues, all the African countries began to proclaim their heroes from their own and the rest of Africa's past and from the struggle against colonialism...They also demonstrated their political allegiances, with Marx and Lenin on Guinean stamps and Kennedy and American figures on those from anglophone and Americanophile countries. The stamps of North Africa proclaimed pan-Arab unity and solidarity with the Palestinian cause.”¹¹

Kwame Nkrumah had a keen interest in the symbolism associated with philately and museum exhibitions. In June of 1951, as Leader of Government Business, Nkrumah and then Minister of Education Kojo Botsio travelled to the United States for Nkrumah to accept an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Lincoln University.¹² While in Philadelphia, Nkrumah writes, “I visited the Philatelic Museum at Temple University, which I thoroughly enjoyed, as I was not only interested in philately but had a strong passion for museums of any kind.”¹³ It was no surprise then, that during Kwame Nkrumah’s time as leader of Ghana from 1957 – 1966, the government issued millions of postage stamps as a mass-media tool to spread political and ideological messages, especially regarding African liberation and independence. These messages were intended for both national and international audiences. The iconography of postage stamps that were issued

⁹ Merrick Posnansky, “Propaganda for the Millions.”

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 157-158.

¹³ Ibid., 160.

featured nationalist themes such as “National Founder’s Day” and nation-building projects such as the “Volta River Project.” They illustrated Pan-Africanist themes such as the “First Conference of Independent African States” and “Africa Freedom Day.” There were also themes related to the Cold War and the Non-Aligned Movement, including stamps issued “In Memory of John F. Kennedy,” those commemorating the “Conference of Non-Aligned Countries Belgrade” and the “World Without the Bomb” stamps. Examining postage stamps and related archival documents addressing the latter three issues can help us better understand the challenges that Kwame Nkrumah faced in building a new post-colonial nation-state juxtaposed to the competing demands of post-independence Anglo-Ghanaian relations, Pan-Africanism, Cold War alignment and non-alignment. This chapter will focus on how the Kwame Nkrumah government used postage stamps as a political tool for nation-building purposes and the expression of nationalist sentiments.

The Postage Stamps Committee

In the autumn of 1955, as Gold Coast independence was being considered by Whitehall, Gold Coast government officials considered the issue of the new nation’s first postage stamps. Their first order of business was to identify and commission an advisory board of government and private-sector professionals to comprise the membership of a new Postage Stamps Committee. Initial membership of the new Stamps Committee comprised both former British colonial officials and Ghanaian nationals, including Kofi Antubam, Senior Art Master of the elite Achimota School (see figure 2.1).¹⁴

¹⁴ The other members of the Postage Stamps Committee included A.R. Boakye (chairman), Ministerial Secretary, and J.R. Wallis, M.O. (secretary), Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Communications; R.J. Moxon, Director of Information Services; and F.E.B. Clark, Deputy Director of the Department of Posts & Telecommunications. See GPA (Ghana Postal Archives) S4/24, Permanent Secretary, MOC to F.E.B. Clark, Deputy Director, P&T, September 15, 1955; GPA S4/24,



Figure 2.1. Kofi Antubam in traditional Ghanaian regalia, presenting a traditional chief's stool to the U.S. Postmaster General on his visit to the United States as a guest of the State Department, circa 1962. Courtesy of Peter Tagoe.

Antubam was perhaps one of the most important members of the Postage Stamps Committee. As a state artist, member of the Arts Council of Ghana and the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, Antubam would develop as one of Ghana's and Africa's most pioneering and established artist, art scholar and stamp designer. He created several symbols of Ghana's statehood, including the Ghana State Sword, the Ghana State Chairs (used by Kwame Nkrumah and the Speaker of Parliament), the Mace of Parliament, mural relief in the new Parliamentary buildings, the Presidential Coat-of-Arms, and made decorations on the state-owned Black Star Line shipping vessels. In 1963, he published an authoritative book surveying the aesthetics of modern art forms and culture in Ghana titled *Ghana's Heritage of*

F.E.B. Clark to Permanent Secretary, MOC, September 16, 1955; GPA S4/24, "Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," minutes of a meeting, September 24, 1955, p. 1.

Culture.¹⁵ Although they did not always agree with each other, Kofi Antubam's philosophy of graphic design and his grasp of traditional and political symbolism made him very well placed to carry out the Nkrumah government's goals of creating a unique national identity for Ghana. He wrote, "One of the main purposes of existence is the establishment of a name, a distinctive identity. About whether it is necessary today to seek to establish an identity for one's self or not there is no need to quarrel."¹⁶ Furthermore, he understood and acknowledged the importance of using graphic symbols in the public domain to forge this sense of national coherence and Pan-African solidarity. His views on the need to perpetuate a new post-colonial *African Personality*, "a new personality or distinctive identity which should be neither Eastern nor Western and yet a growth in the presence of both with its roots deeply entrenched in the soil of the indigenous past of Africa,"¹⁷ were in line with Nkrumah's articulation of the term. Antubam also believed that Africans shared certain cultural trends in common, including "his tendency to clothe all cherished ideas and values of life in verbal and graphic symbols...his priceless possession of a great love for colour...[and] the meaningfulness of artistic expressions."¹⁸ As a stamp designer, he saw postage stamps as a vehicle for expressing the symbolism of the peoples of Ghana and Africa:

Stamps are a marvellous means of transmitting ideas to vast numbers of people, of educating them, but this must be done through symbolisms which have meaning to them...Africans in general, but certainly Ghanaians, are fond of symbolism...The artist has to use symbols which express ideas. It is often said that Africa did not produce a written language, but this is not so. We may not use individual letters or syllables, but we have a rich range of 'written' expressions – ideogrammes, kente patterns, stool designs and so on. Even colours are used for the purpose of specific expressions. So you can see

¹⁵ Kofi Antubam, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1963), 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

that I have many more tools for designing stamps than the ordinary stamp designer.¹⁹

The first meeting of the Postage Stamps Committee was held the morning of Saturday 24 September 1955 at the Ministry of Communications (MoC), which had jurisdiction over the Posts & Telecommunications Department. The Postage Stamps Committee was to be established to carry out the following functions:

1a) To make recommendations for the designs of a) a special Commemorative Issue of stamps to be released on Independence Day, the date of which had not yet been finalized. These Commemorative stamps were to be issued in four denominations or values – 2d, 2½d, 4d and 1/3d, and were to be placed on sale for one year only;

1b) A Permanent Issue of stamps to replace the colonial ones, to be issued one year after Independence Day:

2) To make recommendations for the commissioning of artists who would design the new national stamps: and

3) To make regular reports on the new stamp issues to the Minister of Communications.²⁰

In particular, the Minister of Communications considered the Commemorative Issue of stamps to be an urgent matter that was to be prioritised by the new Committee²¹, given that Independence Day was on the horizon.

The issue of a national postage stamp in an African territory of the British Empire was unprecedented, and therefore the Gold Coast government had no African example that it could emulate. However, examples could be found in Britain's former colonies in South Asia. This unfamiliarity with the way forward for the new stamps of an independent Gold Coast would produce some controversy

¹⁹ *The Stamp Magazine*, stamp-K5, "Kofi Antubam," November 3, 1962, 1.

²⁰ GPA: S4/24 (Stamp Advisory Committee – Postage Stamps to Commemorate Attainment of Full-Self-Government), Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communications to F.E.B. Clark, Deputy Director, Posts & Telecommunications Department, letter no. GB.28/383, September 15, 1955; GPA S4/24, File GB.28, "Minutes of a Meeting Held in the Conference Room of the Ministry of Communications on Saturday 24th September 1955 to Consider Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*

among the interested parties in terms of the themes, wording and iconography of the stamps. This was especially illustrated by an exchange between A.R. Boakye, a senior politician in the Nkrumah government and Kofi Antubam. The Committee could only agree that the independence stamps should be similar in size and shape as the colonial Gold Coast postage stamps.²²

In order to solve the dilemma of the lack of an African precedence, Clark produced a Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue²³ and directed the Committee's attention to Ceylon (which was renamed Sri Lanka in 1972) that had declared independence from Britain on 4 February 1948 and had issued a commemorative set of stamps in that same year. He suggested that the Gold Coast independence commemoration stamps should emulate the wording of those of Ceylon, "Independence commemoration (followed by date)".²⁴ However, Kofi Antubam was more in favour of Gold Coast-inspired themes and iconography. He suggested that the Committee "draw from traditional symbols denoting stools, proverbs, architectural features, cloths etc. etc."²⁵ On the other hand, Boakye, the Chairman of the Stamps Committee, "suggested the map of Africa with Gold Coast left blank out of which an eagle was arising – Africa being held in the hands of the Prime Minister [Nkrumah]."²⁶ Popularised in a proverb recited by Dr. James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey - one of the Gold Coast's most acclaimed educators of the early twentieth

²² GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 1.

²³ Headquartered in London, Stanley Gibbons produces an annual illustrated list of postage stamps issued by the government of each country, and contains valuable information such as dates of issue, denominations and brief information about the imagery appearing on the stamps. Like its American counterpart - Scott's Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue – Gibbons' catalogs are an essential reference resource for national post offices, stamp dealers, philatelists, researchers and other stamp enthusiasts.

²⁴ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 1.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 2.

century - the eagle was a recognized traditional icon that carried symbolic and proverbial meaning.²⁷ Aggrey had written:

My people of Africa, we were created in the image of God, but men have made us think that we are chickens, and we still think we are, but we are eagles. Stretch forth your wings and fly! Don't be content with the food of chickens.²⁸

Proposing to depict the image of the eagle on the postage stamps of an independent Gold Coast, therefore, would symbolise a nation that was once confused about its identity and place in the world and led to believe that it was of a lesser stature than other nations. Through hard struggles along the way, and with the coming of a "liberator" in the personage of Kwame Nkrumah, it would finally discover its true identity and was ready to leave behind the colonial state and soar among the family of independent nation-states.

As mentioned previously, however, Antubam was not in favour of depicting the head of a living political figure on the national stamps – be it the Prime Minister's or not - and countered that it "might not be acceptable to everybody."²⁹ As a trained artist, Antubam believed that "art which is merely representative is...vulgar."³⁰ Boakye insisted, "The commemorative issue [of independence stamps] should have a political motif but that the 1st anniversary permanent issue should portray national motifs."³¹ However, "Moxon then pointed out in relation to the Ceylon issue that the head of...[Prime Minister Don Stephen] Senanayake appeared on the [commemorative] issue and then he resigned a month or two after

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ <http://www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/ads/21.html> (accessed November 30, 2007). As Aggrey's fame grew in Africa, the United States (where he pursued tertiary education) and elsewhere, he also became known as "Aggrey of Africa." It was Aggrey, who, along with the Reverend A.G. Fraser and Sir Gordon Guggisberg, the colonial Governor, founded Achimota College (later Achimota School) in 1927, in Accra. Aggrey became its Assistant Vice-Principal. See this note.

²⁹ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 2.

³⁰ *The Stamp Magazine*, stamp-K5, "Kofi Antubam," November 3, 1962, 1.

³¹ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 2.

the stamps were issued.”³² Moxon’s seeming superstitions about the ill fate of independence leaders who portray themselves on national postage stamps is not without merit. Adedze reveals, “It is ironic...to remark that over 99% of those postindependence leaders who put their images on postage stamps were either overthrown in military coups or were forced to quit the government.”³³ Moxon warned that Nkrumah’s views on the issue be sought before a final decision on the design was made. Disagreement also followed as to the role that the general public should play in the selection of themes for the independence stamps. Whereas Chairman Boakye thought that the public, through the national press, should be invited to suggest stamp themes, Clark, drawing on previous experience, felt that public participation was “not very helpful.”³⁴ Moxon came up with an intermediary solution, advising, “that members in private conversation might speak to as wide a public as possible and get ideas that way.”³⁵

The Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee

Despite its initial success in bringing together a team of government officials and a renowned local artist to generate designs for both the commemorative and the definitive issues of postage stamps for independence, the original Postage Stamps Committee failed to stay together. There were several problems with the original Committee that had been brewing since it was convened in the autumn of 1955, and which had caused it to finally collapse. By November of 1956 – four months before Independence Day – the Postage Stamps Committee was suddenly dissolved, its name changed and almost all of its original members replaced with new government

³² Ibid.

³³ Adedze, “Commemorating the Chief,” footnote 4, 68-73.

³⁴ GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp,” p 2.

³⁵ Ibid.

appointees. Old divisions over artistic direction and money between members such as Moxon who supported Kofi Antubam's designs and new government appointees of the reconstituted Committee would resurface in the new Committee, causing it to get off to a rocky start. In addition, some members of the new Committee were adamantly opposed to suggestions made by their predecessors that, given the ever-increasing stamp denominations, the same design might be used on several denominations.³⁶ So much symbolism of the emerging nation-state was there to be represented and the more stamps there were to reflect the identity of the new nation, the better.

What explains this sudden turn of events and how was it manifested? Firstly, in November 1956 the name of the Committee was changed from the Postage Stamps Committee to the (Reconstituted) Stamp Advisory Committee. Secondly, all but one of the original members was replaced – the new membership reflecting new appointees in the Gold Coast Cabinet. The only member of the original Committee to remain on the reconstituted Committee was R.J. Moxon, who retained his post as Director of Information Services.³⁷ Noticeably absent from this cohort is Kofi Antubam. In May 1956 at one of its meetings, the Cabinet expressed dissatisfaction with the twelve designs submitted by the previous Committee and “had directed that additional designs more of a modernistic nature should be submitted...the Cabinet wished to consider alternatives portraying the trend of modern development.”³⁸

³⁶ GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of the 2nd [sic, 3rd] Meeting of the Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee at the Ministry of Communications on the 26th of March 1957,” p. 2.

³⁷ The new members were, R.O. Amuaku-Atta, chairman and Ministerial Secretary in the Ministry of Communications; R.D. Pead, member and Deputy Director of Posts & Telecommunications; and Wing Commander J.E. Stuart-Lyon, Committee Secretary and Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Communications. See GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of Meeting of the Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee held in the Ministry of Communications on the 20th November 1956,” p. 1.

³⁸ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of Meeting, 20th November 1956,” p. 1. See also GPA: S4/24, “The Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee Final Report and Recommendations,” p. 1.

It appears that the government wanted to move away from the traditional and overtly ethnic symbolism that the Antubam designs portrayed and to focus more on symbols of national development and modernity. Chairman Amuako-Atta pointed out that, while the government had neither accepted nor rejected the previous designs, “the Cabinet wished to consider alternatives portraying the trend of modern development.”³⁹ Sixteen designs that symbolized the theme of modern development were initially considered. They included a photograph of the Assembly in session, portraying both Government and Opposition benches, as well as the Official Ceremonial Opening of Parliament by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent on Independence Day, 6 March 1957; the Volta or Adomi Bridge (which was still under construction at that time); Memorial Arch (which was also under construction at that time); the production of Cocoa (drying the beans), the design being similar to that featured on the reverse of the new Ghana £1 note; timber exportation, including the loading of logs from Takoradi Harbour to an awaiting ship and the process of transporting the logs from timber trucks to railway cars; mining in Obuasi (showing the head and shoulders of a miner and underground drilling); education - showing students at the entrance to Commonwealth Hall at the University College (Legon University); health (Kumasi Hospital); communications (Tamale Post Office with V.H.F. mast); sports, including footballers on the field or runners completing a race while spectators look on at the stadium; aviation, showing Accra International Airport with the main runway, operations block with radio masts, as well as an African air crew in uniform with an aircraft in the background; broadcasting, showing a female speaker at a microphone.

³⁹ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of Meeting, 20th November 1956,” p. 1.

The Committee agreed that this stamp issue should not feature living personalities given that it was a permanent issue. Instead, they recommended a historical character such as the late Mrs. Prah to be portrayed at the microphone; farming (livestock vaccination); friendship amongst children of the world, featuring a photograph of children of a variety of races holding up a globe in a classroom at the Accra International School; and the Ghana Coat of Arms.⁴⁰

Not all members of the Reconstituted Committee agreed whole-heartedly with the selection of themes, though, and old differences between those who preferred artistic versus political icons resurfaced. After the new committee had later agreed to dispense with the “International Child Friendship” stamp, Amuaku-Atta suggested that its replacement should be an image of traditional Kente cloth weaving. Antubam, in an apparent effort to show that he was not just in favour of “traditional” images, suggested the portrayal of the affluent Sekondi-based merchant and nationalist George Alfred “Pa” Grant. However, Clark countered the suggestion of issuing a “Pa” Grant stamp by stating his disapproval of stamps portraying either living or deceased people. He suggested that an image of the Commercial Bank of Ghana should be depicted instead.⁴¹

The majority of the Committee was in fact in favour of representing commercial activity by depicting “Pa” Grant on a 5/- postage stamp, although the minority maintained its disapproval of putting any image of a living or deceased

⁴⁰ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of Meeting, 20th November 1956,” p. 2; GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee at the Ministry of Communications on the 17th January 1957,” pp. 1–3; GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee,” pp. 1-2; GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of 3rd [sic, 4th] Meeting of the Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee at Ministry of Communications on the 10th April 1957,” pp. 1-2; GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of 4th [sic, 5th] Meeting of the Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee at Ministry of Communications on the 15th April 1957,” pp. 1-2; GPA: S4/24, “The Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee Final Report and Recommendations,” p. 2.

⁴¹ GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of 4th Meeting, 10th April 1957,” p. 2; GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of 5th Meeting, 15th April 1957,” p. 1.

person on the stamps.⁴² Because of the plethora of new designs proposed at each Committee meeting and the oscillating meetings for approval of changes with the Cabinet, the proposed designs seemed to be constantly changing. Even after the new Committee submitted its “Final Report,” (which, in fact, was not the final report) it held several other meetings to consider changes to the first issue of permanent postage stamps. For example, the Committee suggested issuing new stamps with designs depicting the Bank of Ghana (5/-), banana farming or ploughing (2½d), fishing (3d), and the War Memorial in Accra (1d).⁴³ Table 2.1 presents the final themes and designs (primarily designed by Kofi Antubam) that the Reconstituted Committee suggested for the permanent independence postage stamps (which the Cabinet approved) as well as their corresponding denominations.

The table reveals some consistency between the old and the new Committees with regards to the representation of the cultural, political, commercial and industrial aspects of Ghanaian society. However, the selection or reselection of themes, rather, for the permanent postage stamps reveal the government’s desire to break away from tradition and underdevelopment, and to focus on symbols of an African-adapted modernity that were thought to be important to build a new nation-state; the development of a modern, British-style parliamentary state with both major parties working together, physical infrastructure, communications and transportation, the adoption of foreign technology, export-led industrialization through the development of agricultural, mineral and other natural resources, economic

⁴² GPA: S4/24, “The Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee Final Report and Recommendations,” p. 3.

⁴³ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/672, B.F. Bolt to F.E.B. Clark, memorandum, “Stamp Advisory Committee,” July 5, 1957; GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of the 8th Meeting of the Stamp Advisory Committee 5th July 1957;” GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of the 9th Meeting of the Stamp Advisory Committee 16th July, 1957,” p. 1.

development, higher and technical education focusing on the arts, sciences and technology, modern medicine, national symbols, etc.

Table 2.1. Final Designs for Permanent Independence Stamps proposed by the Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee⁴⁴

Denomination	Design
½d	Volta Bridge (Adomi Bridge)
1d	War Memorial by the Supreme Court Building, Accra
1½d	Kumasi Hospital
2d	Animal Husbandry (Northern Territories)
2½d	Cocoa Production
3d	Timber Export
4d	Kente Cloth Weaving
6d	Ghana Coat of Arms
8d	Accra Stadium
1/-	National Monument (Memorial Arch)
1/3	State Opening First Ghana Parliament
2/-	Tamale Post Office
2/6	Mining (Obuasi)
5/-	Bank of Ghana
10/-	Legon University

Moreover, the selections of symbols from the different regions of the country – Kumasi, Tamale and the Trans-Volta Region specifically – indicate the central government’s continuing strategy to symbolically incorporate these politically hostile territories into the Accra-administered national agenda. Curiously, the inclusion of only one female image for the broadcasting postage stamp might be an indication of the government’s attempt to underline the role of women in the process of nation-building, although it is quite a tenuous one.

The new secretary Wing Commander J.E. Stuart-Lyon, on the other hand, insisted that the composition of the reconstituted Committee was the same as the old

⁴⁴ GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of 5th Meeting, 15th April 1957,” p. 2; GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of 6th Meeting, 25th April 1957,” pp. 1-2; GPA: S4/24, “The Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee Final Report and Recommendations”; GPA: S4/24, GB.28, R.O. Amuaku-Atta to the Minister of Communications, memorandum, “Report and Recommendations of the Stamp Advisory Committee,” p. 1, July 13, 1957.

one, despite the fact that almost all of the previous members had been replaced.⁴⁵ Moxon was also displeased with the sudden turn of events. He complained that he had not been officially notified that the previous Committee had been disbanded and also expressed regret that Kofi Antubam - an artistic authority - had been excluded from the new Committee.⁴⁶ However, Antubam had his own reservations about the practices of the previous Committee, which may have pushed him to distance himself from the reconstituted one. He refused to submit new designs to the Committee because "he did not agree with the subject chosen for portrayal."⁴⁷ Despite Moxon's constant defence of Antubam's work in the new Committee, not everyone shared his enthusiasm for the artist's indispensability, initially.

Moxon eventually succeeded in persuading the new Committee to compensate Antubam for his previous designs and to re-invite him to become a member of the body once more, if he was inclined to accept.⁴⁸ In January 1957, he was finally paid 100 guineas for designing the commemorative postage stamp and for submitting preliminary designs for the permanent issues.⁴⁹ Antubam joined the reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee at its second meeting on 17 January 1957 and subsequently received formal acknowledgment and gratitude for his work on designing Ghanaian stamps from the chairman and members of the new Committee in its final report.⁵⁰ Over time, Antubam understood that his services as a creator of CPP state symbolism on stamps, while not always appreciated, prevailed in the end:

⁴⁵ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of Meeting, 20th November 1956," p. 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁹ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/568, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communications to R.D. Pead, memorandum, "Independence Issue - Postage Stamps," January 3, 1957; GPA: S4/24, S.4/23(6), R.D. Pead to Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communications, memorandum, "Independence Issue - Postage Stamps," January 10, 1957.

⁵⁰ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee," p. 1; GPA: S4/24, "The Reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee Final Report and Recommendations," pp. 1, 4.

I would not say that I have had an easy road convincing the officials in charge of stamp designs of my ideas. I was first asked to prepare Ghana's definitive stamps in 1955, two years before our independence. Unfortunately, my advice was ignored then, but it was fortunate that our definitives came out only in 1958 when we had been independent for some time, and so Ghanaian symbolism was incorporated into the set.⁵¹

The Ghana Government Designers' Panel (Stamp Design Committee)

Although the tense situation between Antubam and the Committee had been resolved, there might have been other motives for sidelining Ghana's premier stamp designer in the first place. As plans went underway to issue postage stamps for what would become the first nation-state in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence, foreign stamp designers and organizations wanted to get it on the action; there were tremendous profits to be made. Given the complexity and amount of time it was taking to choose from all the designs being considered, perhaps the committee wanted to seek outside expertise. In January 1958, Nkrumah ordered the Ministry of Communications to urgently employ a firm of stamp designers and philatelic marketing consultants to comprise a new Stamp Design Committee – otherwise referred to as the Ghana Government Designers' Panel. Their term of employment would be for one year with a £100 retaining fee per designer for the year, in addition to a fee of £50 being paid for each design accepted for placement on a postage stamp.⁵² Nkrumah wanted the foreign firm to dispatch a design expert immediately to Ghana to create a "stock-pile" of special-issue postage stamp designs, to recommend the frequency and duration of these special stamp issues based on world market practices, and to offer advice regarding the definitive postage stamps. Several national and international designers, including Kofi Antubam, answered Nkrumah's call by submitting designs and applications for appointment to the new

⁵¹*The Stamp Magazine*, "Kofi Antubam," p. 2.

⁵² GPA: S4/24, "Extract from the Minutes of the Sixteenth Meeting 1957/58 of the Standing Development Committee Held on 19th May, 1958," p. 2.

Stamp Design Panel.⁵³ The assembly of international designers that Nkrumah ordered to be put together from Britain, the United States, Israel and Uruguay shows that he was not ideologically tied to working with people from socialist states. It appears that he was content with working with non-Ghanaian designers, as long as they were able to undertake the designs that he wanted for the new nation-state.

Nkrumah also changed the bureaucratic channel through which new stamp designs were brought to the Cabinet for approval; whereas before they came through the Ministry of Communications, Nkrumah now suggested that new stamp designs should be channelled first from the Committee, next to the Ministry of Communications, then to the Standing Development Committee (SDC) for final approval by the Cabinet.⁵⁴ The SDC would recommend that the Cabinet authorize seven new themes for the permanent issue of stamps, including (1) animals and birds; (2) flowers; (3) sports; (4) fish; (5) folklore; (6) traditional religious subjects; and (7) raw materials or products.⁵⁵ The need to increase the number of political stamps issued annually eventually clashed with the economics of the philatelic business. Between 1958 and 1961, an average of five postage stamps were issued per year.⁵⁶ However, in 1962, the SDC had originally approved nine postage stamps to commemorate events, given the larger variety of political and socio-economic issues that the government wished to illustrate on the stamps. However, the

⁵³ They included Michael Goaman (Britain), Anthony S.B. New (Britain), Willie W. Wind (USA), R. Hegeman (USA), M. Shamir (Israel), Mariam Karoly (Israel) and Angez Medina Medina (Uruguay). See GPA: S4/24, "Extract from the Minutes of the Sixteenth Meeting 1957/58 of the SDC, 19th May, 1958," p. 2; GPA: S4/51, GB.28/SF.22/43, F.E.B. Clark to stamp designers, et al., memorandum, "Commemorative Issue of Ghana Postage Stamps – 1962," September 15, 1961.

⁵⁴ GPA: S4/24, GB. 28/728, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communications to F.E.B. Clark, memorandum, "Ghana Postage Stamps Committee," January 16, 1958; GPA: S4/24, SCR.10400/73(3), F.E. Taylor to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communications, memorandum, "Development of Philatelic Services," January 2, 1958.

⁵⁵ GPA: S4/24, "Extract from the Minutes of the Sixteenth Meeting 1957/58 of the SDC, 19th May, 1958," p. 1.

⁵⁶ In 1958 and 1959, five commemorative postage stamps were issued. Six were issued in 1960 and five in 1961. See GPA: S4/50, First Anniversary of Heads of State Meeting Casablanca, S.D.C. Memo No. 2365, "Commemorative Issues of Ghana Postage Stamps: 1962," p. 1.

Economic Planning Secretariat opposed the issuing of more than six political stamps annually because they thought it would jeopardise the sale of Ghanaian stamps in the very important international political market. “We must be careful not to curtail demand by having too many issues...if we put too many issues on the market philatelists will tend to loose interest and buy a smaller proportion.”⁵⁷ The SDC subsequently cut the number of stamps down to six for 1962.

Commemorative Issue of Postage Stamps

As Adedze asserts in the case of Africa, the study of postage stamps is a study in the symbolism inherent in the State’s appropriation of historical characters for purposes of rewriting public history in the context of anti-colonial nationalism. He writes:

The images represented on the stamps convey the symbolic image of the master narrative of the ruling elite with the hope that the masses of the people will rally behind these narratives and thereby suppress alternative interpretations of history...one has to comprehend the symbolic value of the postage stamp as a preeminent tool of government propaganda showing the metamorphosis of a historical event into an object worthy of remembrance and ultimate commemoration.⁵⁸

This explanation helps us to understand how the Postage Stamps Committee of the soon-to-be-independent Gold Coast came about recommending that the image of the “historical character” of Kwame Nkrumah be placed on the independence commemoration postage stamps. His success in the “historical event” of resisting British colonialism and winning independence for the Gold Coast then became a “master narrative” that was worthy of commemoration on the national postage stamps that were to be issued on independence day. This historical narrative, following Adedze’s argument, was meant to become the undisputed national

⁵⁷ GPA: S4/50, S.D.C. Memo No. 2365, “Commemorative Issues of Ghana Postage Stamps: 1962,” p. 3.

⁵⁸ Adedze, “Commemorating the Chief.”

narrative of the population for which it was (re)written. As I will argue later, however, this Nkrumah-centred narrative was highly criticized by other powerful political and ethnic parties, including the Ashantis and the Gas.



Figure 2.2. The first commemorative postage stamp of Ghana's independence, featuring an image of Kwame Nkrumah, Aggrey's Eagle and the location of Ghana on the map of Africa.

The first stamp designed issued to commemorate the independence of the Gold Coast featured a vignette of Nkrumah's face, Aggrey's eagle and a map of Africa with the location of Ghana identified (see figure 2.2). Initially, however, Kwame Nkrumah stated at a Cabinet meeting that he did not endorse the idea of his head being depicted on a commemorative postage stamp. However, the Ministerial Secretary in the Ministry of Communications and Chairman of the Stamp Advisory Committee, A.R. Boakye persuaded him that a number of people were of the opinion that the Prime Minister's head should be represented on the independence commemoration postage stamp, and he consequently agreed.⁵⁹ The Committee

⁵⁹ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of a Meeting Held in the Conference Room of the Ministry of Communications on Monday 3rd October 1955 to Consider Issues of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 1.

therefore decided to draft a design for the commemorative stamp bearing Nkrumah's head and submit it to him for approval.

To this end, Kofi Antubam subsequently presented the Committee with a stamp design sample of an eagle breaking its chains and taking flight. While the Committee was pleased with the basic design, it recommended four changes. Antubam was instructed to design the stamp with the Prime Minister's face in an oval vignette; to include an annotation describing the image, such as "eagle spread they wings and fly", the eagle portrayed being a specie native to the Gold Coast; The words "Gold Coast Independence Commemoration 195-" was to be substituted for "Gold Coast Independence Day"; and that the stamp should be of a standard shape and size.⁶⁰ In addition, Boakye suggested and the Committee agreed that the border of the stamp should be designed with the colours of Nkrumah's CPP party and that each of the four denominations of the commemorative stamp – twopence (2d), twopence halfpenny (2½d), fourpence (4d) and one shilling and threepence (1/3d) - should bear a different inside colour. Antubam added that the colours to be used should have meaning for the people. He suggested yellow representing the traditional colour for festivity, red for blood, green for fertility, and white symbolizing purity.⁶¹ Of course, encircling the stamps with the colours of the CPP – Nkrumah's party – clearly identified the state as the domain of the CPP and no other party, which would bear out over Nkrumah's reign as the country increasingly became a single-party state. Antubam agreed to return to the Committee with several alternative designs reflecting their recommendations while keeping in mind the

⁶⁰ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of a Meeting 3rd October 1955," p. 1.

⁶¹ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 2.

differing demands of the two main technological processes used to print stamps – the engraving and photogravure techniques.⁶²

On the 17th and 20th of October 1955, the Stamps Committee convened meetings to consider Antubam's revised designs for the independence commemoration stamps. In addition to suggesting some minor changes regarding the placement of the wording and denomination on each stamp, the Committee wanted the words "Date, Month 1956" to appear beneath "Gold Coast Independence Commemoration."⁶³ This underscores three points; firstly, that the Gold Coast was expecting independence to be granted by Britain at sometime in 1956, and not in March 1957, which was the official date for the Gold Coast to become independent. Secondly, that the name "Ghana" had not been decided upon yet as the new name for an independent Gold Coast. The Committee also decided to choose the engraving process for reproducing the stamps, which would maximize the use of multicolour⁶⁴ – an important element of the symbolism on the postage stamps; the colours of the Convention People's Party – red, white and green, would border each of the four denominations of the commemorative stamps. Moreover, the stamps would have an illustration of a tree shaded in brown as well as Aggrey's eagle coloured in black and white.⁶⁵

On 20th October 1955, Antubam returned to the meeting of the Postage Stamps Committee with the final commemorative stamp designs, which the Committee approved for printing by the Government Printer.⁶⁶ However, as discussed below in greater detail, Prime Minister Nkrumah was not pleased with

⁶² GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of a Meeting 3rd October 1955," p. 2.

⁶³ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Stamps Committee Held in the Conference Room at the Ministry of Communications on the 17th and 20th October 1955," p. 1.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Antubam's designs and ordered him to make major changes to simplify them. After having carried out Nkrumah's wishes, Antubam resubmitted the revised stamp designs to the Committee on 13th January 1956, and they were finally approved.⁶⁷ One of the final issues to be discussed at the first meeting of the Stamps Committee was the name of the country to be placed on the commemorative stamps. "It was generally agreed that so far as the commemorative issue was concerned the name would have to be Gold Coast as it was only after independence that any new name would be known."⁶⁸ However, this decision would become quite contentious, as we shall see later.

Although a local artist – Kofi Antubam – designed both the commemorative and definitive issues of postage stamps, security printers in the United Kingdom tendered the final production. As the previous chapter demonstrated with respect to the national coins and banknotes, the British Royal Mint, Crown Agents and currency printers had the experience and technology to produce the national coins and banknotes as well, as the Gold Coast government would continue to use them for some time after independence. As previously shown, even as late as September 1955 the new name for an independent Gold Coast had not yet been determined. However, by late February 1956, the name "Ghana" had been chosen and the Gold Coast government eagerly requested that security printers in the United Kingdom be contacted to submit final offprint samples of the commemorative stamps.

The Department of Posts and Telecommunications also sent the Crown Agents extra copies of Prime Minister Nkrumah's photographs, which they were to

⁶⁷ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Stamps Committee Held in the Ministry of Communications on Friday 13th January [1956] at 2:30 P.M."

⁶⁸ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp," p. 3.

supply to the security printers in the UK to use on the final stamp designs.⁶⁹ These sketches should feature “The eagle to carry an outline map of Africa in its beak with the word ‘Ghana’ in the position of the Gold Coast.”⁷⁰ In accordance with previous Committee mandates that the eagle chosen for the commemorative stamps was to be one that inhabited the Gold Coast, the specie selected was the “Palm nut Vulture”, the ornithological name being *Gypohierax Angolensis*.⁷¹ The Cabinet finally approved Kofi Antubam’s design for the commemorative issue of postage stamps in March 1956:

The general design for an eagle soaring in flight was accepted by the Cabinet as a basis for a final design subject to the incorporation in it of an outline map of Africa being carried in the mouth of the eagle with the Gold Coast bearing the name ‘Ghana’ clearly shown on it.⁷²

However, while the idea of the Palm Nut Vulture carrying the map of Africa in its beak resounded symbolically with the Cabinet, it did not make sense in practice – at least not to a prominent bird expert. The author of *Birds of Tropical West Africa*, Dr. Bannerman, would later offer the officials his professional advice on the pragmatic and symbolic aspects of the proposed stamp design. On the practical side, Bannerman informed the Crown Agents that the Palm Nut Vulture normally carries prey in its claws and not its beak. He recommended that the graphic could be rearranged so that the bird carries the map of Africa in its talons, or that it is superimposed over the map of Africa, with the position of the Gold Coast clearly

⁶⁹ GPA: S4/24, S.4/23(1), F.E.B. Clark to D.W.F. Clark, memorandum, “Commemorative Issue of Postage Stamps to be Released on Independence Day,” March 11, 1956.

⁷⁰ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/452, (Sgd.) J.R. Wallis to F.E.B. Clark, memorandum, “Commemorative Issue of Postage Stamps,” February 29, 1956. See also GPA: S4/24, S.4/23(1), F.E.B. Clark to D.W.F. Clark, March 11, 1956.

⁷¹ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/452, J.R. Wallis to F.E.B. Clark, February 29, 1956. See also GPA: S4/24, S.4/23(1), F.E.B. Clark to D.W.F. Clark, March 11, 1956; and David Armitage Bannerman, *The Birds of Tropical West Africa* 1 (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1930), 271.

⁷² GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Postage Stamps Committee Held in the Ministry of Communications on Thursday 8th March, Monday 12th March and Wednesday 28th March 1956,” p. 1.

visible. However, in support of the symbolic intent of the stamp, the ornithologist acknowledged that, in the same way that the proverbial dove carries an olive branch in its beak, it was acceptable for the stamp to be designed with the Palm Nut Vulture carrying the map of the continent in its bill.⁷³ Moreover, Bannerman also pointed out that the bird might not have been shown correctly in flight because it was depicted with its feet stretched out while in flight. He noted that birds of this kind normally carried their feet beneath the tail while in flight, and that they stretched out their feet when they were about to alight.⁷⁴

As the bird in flight was meant to symbolize the new nation taking off in flight from its colonial parent, an alighting vulture would not convey this intended meaning. However, Bannerman suggested that the graphic showing the bird's legs pointing down might be interpreted as it just having left the ground and soaring, but not yet in comfortable flight, which "may be the effect that the Gold Coast Government require."⁷⁵ Moreover, while a name had now been selected for an independent Gold Coast by that time, a date had not yet been determined for the transfer of power, and British security printers were instructed to leave the date blank on the samples.⁷⁶ In the meantime, the four denominations of independence stamps (2d, 2½d, 4d and 1/3d) were to be placed on sale on Independence Day, whenever it was announced.⁷⁷ The Department of Posts and Telecommunications was to order one year's supply of the first batch of commemorative postage stamps, produced in sheets of 60 stamps – twopence (330,000); twopence halfpenny (6,500); fourpence (8,000); and one shilling and threepence (23,000) – through the Crown

⁷³ GPA: S4/24, G.9/Gold Coast P&T 1778, D.W.F. Clark to F.E.B. Clark, memorandum, June 27, 1956.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/452, J.R. Wallis to F.E.B. Clark, February 29, 1956. See also GPA: S4/24, S.4/23(1), F.E.B. Clark to D.W.F. Clark, March 11, 1956.

⁷⁷ GPA: S4/24, S.4/23(1), F.E.B. Clark to D.W.F. Clark, March 11, 1956.

Agents.⁷⁸ The committee also suggested the following commemorative postage stamps to be considered for issued after independence:

Table 2.2. Suggested Annual Commemorative Postage Stamps⁷⁹

Design	Year
Inauguration of Air Ghana (Ghana Airways)	1958
United Nations Day	1958
The Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights (possibly)	1958
Independence Day (6 th March)	1959
The Opening of Tema Harbour	1959
Africa Freedom Day (April 15)	1959
United Nations Day	1959
The Prime Minister's Birthday (possibly)	1959
Visit of the Queen and Head of the Commonwealth (Autumn 1959)	1959

The Individual Commemorative Stamps

With respect to the stamps, the CPP government invited the national and international members of the Ghana Government Stamp Designers' Panel to submit entries for its commemorative postage stamps. But not all themes submitted were approved. For example, the Committee rejected a recommendation to issue a postage stamp to commemorate the opening of the UNESCO building in Accra.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, some of the stamp themes that were accepted addressed more international issues such as the XVII Olympic Games of 1960 and the United Nations Human Rights Day. The stamp themes also reflected Nkrumah's personal convictions about what was important to the building of a nation, including sportsmanship. During his time as a teacher at Achimota, Nkrumah "discovered that sportsmanship was a vital part of a man's character, and this led me to realise the

⁷⁸ GPA: S4/24, S.4/23(1), F.E.B. Clark to D.W.F. Clark, memorandum, March 20, 1956. See also GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of the Meeting, 8th March, 12th March and 28th March 1956," p.1.

⁷⁹ GPA: S4/24, "Stamp Advisory Committee Minutes of the Meeting of the 17th of March [1958]," p. 2; GPA: S4/24, draft memorandum for Standing Development Committee by the Minister Responsible for Communications, "Future Arrangements for Ghana Stamps," April 22, 1958, p. 3; GPA: S4/24, "Stamp Advisory Committee Third Meeting: 7th June, 1958" Agenda.

⁸⁰ GPA: S4/24, "Future Arrangements for Ghana Stamps," p. 3.

importance of encouraging sport in the development of a nation.”⁸¹ The design panel was therefore instructed that, “designs should indicate the history and/or the purpose of the Games; or healthy competition among nations in the field of sports: or combinations of these; or symbolic expressions of the ideals of the Games.”⁸² But even these designs were to portray some Pan-African and nationalistic symbolism. There were to be two distinct designs for the Olympic Games stamp, one showing the Olympic Torch, the other design depicting “the athlete against the background of the map of Africa...then the athlete should be shown in the colours of the Ghana Athletic team [red, yellow and green with black star].”⁸³ The commemoration of national sports also featured prominently in the commemorative issues of postage stamp, especially when the national team was victorious. In 1965, a stamp was overprinted with “Black Stars Retain Africa Cup 21st Nov. 1965” when Ghana won the African Soccer Cup Competition in that year (see figure 2.3).

For the United Nations Human Rights stamp, designers were advised “designs should portray the principles of the United Nations with emphasis on human rights or symbolic expressions of the rights of man.” On the other hand, those commemorative postage stamps designated to inspire nationalist sentiments and to promote the Ghanaian national identity were unique. For example, beginning in 1959 on his birthday – 21st September – stamps were placed on sale in Accra and New York to pay homage to Nkrumah for leading the Gold Coast to independence from Great Britain.⁸⁴ The design team was instructed to submit designs for the

⁸¹ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 16.

⁸² GPA: S4/39 (Stamps Olympic Games June 1960), GB.28/SF.22/52, Ministry of Transport & Communications to Designers, “Commemorative Issues of Ghana Postage Stamps – 1960,” September 3, 1959, p. 2.

⁸³ GPA: S4/39, GB.28/SF.25/18, Ministry of Transport & Communications to Director of Posts and Telecommunications, “Olympic Games Commemorative Stamps,” March 18, 1960.

⁸⁴ GPA: S4/45 (National Founder’s Day 1964), A/cs.3.I, E.A. Okraku to the CEO - Ghana Supply Commission, “Issue of Stamps to Commemorate the National Founder’s Day 21st Sept. 1964,” June

“National Founder’s Day” stamps – the 21st September - Nkrumah’s birthday (see figure 2.4):

Designs should indicate the birth of the Ghana Nation or the part played by the Founder in the emergence of the new nation; or the significance of the Day in the history of Ghana; or symbolic expressions of an appeal for the support of the National Founder’s Day Trust Fund for charities.⁸⁵

Over two million (exactly 2,015,000) of the “National Founder’s Day 1964” postage stamps in four denominations (including some souvenir sheets for collectors) were ordered from Harrison and Sons Ltd in London in June 1964.⁸⁶ These stamps were made available on 21st September 1964 nationally and internationally. For the Third Independence Anniversary (6th March 1960) stamp issue, designers were told that:

Designs should indicate historical events relating to Ghana’s independence; development in agricultural, industrial, educational, or political fields or in communications; mass education or self-help in urban and rural areas; or combinations of these with symbolic designs indicating political, social or administrative advancement.⁸⁷

For the Africa Freedom Day (15th April) issue, designers were told, “Designs should indicate co-operation between independent African States, peaceful associations, economic, social or cultural exchanges, the emergence of Africa and African peoples or symbolic indications of the idea of racial co-operation.”⁸⁸ In July 1961, almost two million (1,920,000) of the “1st Anniversary of the Republic” stamps were issued to celebrate the first anniversary of Ghana’s rejection of its status as a British Dominion into a republic.⁸⁹

22, 1964. See also GPA: S4/45, ‘Notes on the Issue of Postage Stamps to Commemorate “National Founder’s Day (1964).”’

⁸⁵ GPA: S4/39, GB.28/SF.22/52, Ministry of Transport & Communications to Designers, “Commemorative Issues of Ghana Postage Stamps – 1960,” p. 2.

⁸⁶ GPA: S4/45, Indent for Urgent Requirements on the Ghana Supply Commission, No. PAT A/cs.10/63-64, June 15, 1964, p. 1.

⁸⁷ GPA: S4/39, GB.28/SF.22/38, Ministry of Transport & Communications to Designers, “Commemorative Issues of Ghana Postage Stamps – 1960,” July 14, 1959, p. 1.

⁸⁸ GPA: S4/39, GB.28/SF.22/38, Ministry of Transport & Communications to Designers, “Commemorative Issues of Ghana Postage Stamps – 1960,” July 14, 1959, p. 1.

⁸⁹ GPA: S4/44, Indent for Urgent Requirements on the Ghana Supply Commission, No. PAT 4239/6, May 6, 1961, p. 1.



Figure 2.3. Postage stamp commemorating the victory of the “Black Stars” (Ghana’s national soccer team) in the African Soccer Cup Competition, 1965.



Figure 2.4. “National Founder’s Day” (Kwame Nkrumah’s birthday) stamps, 21st September 1962.



Figure 2.5. “Third Anniversary of Independence” stamp series, 1960.



Figure 2.6. “Africa Freedom Day” commemorative postage stamp, 15 April 1961.



Figure 2.7. “First Anniversary of the Republic” commemorative postage stamps, 1961.

Permanent Issue of Postage Stamps

In addition to creating a commemorative issue of independence postage stamps, the Committee was also tasked with designing and issuing permanent issues of national stamps, also called definitives. The latter, Mr. Clark suggested, should be comprised of twelve denominations – ½d, 1d, 1½d, 2d, 2½d, 4d, 6d, 1/3, 2/-, 2/6d, 5/- and 10/-. The twelve permanent stamp denominations were to be divided equally into cultural, economic and geographical groups, that is, four per category.⁹⁰ These themes had an overarching concern with depicting the new nation in a positive light that highlighted the natural, human and historical wealth of the country and encouraged unity throughout the geo-political landscape of the Gold Coast.

In the first meetings of the Postage Stamps Committee, getting consensus among Committee members with regard to the specific designs of the permanent issues of postage stamps for an independent Gold Coast would prove to be problematic. On the one hand, some members of the Committee such as Clark wanted to maintain the colonial status quo by recycling some of the colonial designs and issuing some of the new national stamps in the same number of denominations

⁹⁰ GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955,” p. 3; GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of a Meeting 3rd October 1955,” p. 2.

as the colonial ones. Moxon, Antubam and Boakye on the other hand, argued, “a complete change would be more acceptable.”⁹¹ While Clark also wanted to increase the number of stamp denominations from twelve to fourteen, Moxon suggested that that decision should be left up to the Department of Posts & Telecommunications to decide, “as they were in a position to know which stamps were more widely used than others.”⁹² Moxon advised that the economic iconography of the stamps should show the major revenue earners of the country, namely the cocoa, timber, mining, agriculture and fishing industries. Antubam added “that the cultural theme should consist of symbols representing chiefs, p Allanquins, skins, stools etc.”, an example for which he “undertook to provide a design showing a stool consisting of a crescent moon as the seat, supported by two uprights representing man with the sun in the centre. This would denote Gold Coast society.”⁹³

The divergent sentiments of stamp designs among the Stamp Committee members reflected a larger debate that an independent Gold Coast needed to have a distinct identity from its colonial predecessor. However, basing at least some of the designs and themes of the national postage stamps on the colonial ones was not such a bizarre idea, since a complete break from the colonial past was not a feasible or practical endeavour immediately after independence. In fact, the new postal service would inherit many leftovers from the colonial regime; the building that served as the headquarters of the colonial postal service of the Gold Coast, located in the centre of Accra itself would be kept as the headquarters for the national postal service after independence. Postage stamp orders for both the commemoratives and the definitives were also initially placed through the British Crown Agents for

⁹¹ GPA: S4/24, “Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955, Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamp,” p. 2.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 3.

Overseas Governments & Administrations and produced by British security printers.⁹⁴

Kofi Antubam was again selected to come up with design sketches for the definitives. Antubam compiled a four-page paper titled, “Some Court Symbols, Their Uses, Proverbs and Significance” which had a list of thirty traditional stool emblems/symbols and their meanings, written in both Akan and English. He circulated this report to the Committee along with several stamp sketches depicting cultural themes. After examining these materials, the Committee selected four emblems from Antubam’s list to illustrate the cultural theme to be portrayed on the permanent issue of independence stamps: 1) A chief on a palanquin; 2) *Tikoranpam* - a two-headed linguist stick; 3) *Akyekyere* (tortoise); and 4) *Obarima-Ntowabofu* – a hunter or a man wearing a hunting outfit.⁹⁵

The first of the four cultural symbols – a chief on a palanquin – is significant because it communicated the idea that there was still a role for traditional chiefs to play in the building of the modern nation-state, albeit in the cultural as opposed to the political context. The *akyekyere* (tortoise) is a symbol that has two uses: *Bamkyim abosode* – ornamentation on the top of the large umbrellas used to shade chiefs/royalty and *Afena abosode* - used as an ornament for swords. In addition, *akyekyere* has the following traditional proverb associated with it: *akyekyere mpe abusua nti na oden’ adakaa nam* (because the tortoise does not like to belong to any clan, it always bears its coffin along with it). This signifies the idea of independence and self-sufficiency. Moreover, the use of the symbol of the ‘clan-less’ tortoise sought to promote the idea of a detribalised nation-state where loyalty would no longer be to the clan, but to the nation-state. *Obarima-Ntowabofu* – symbol for the

⁹⁴ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/452, J.R. Wallis to F.E.B. Clark, February 29, 1956.

⁹⁵ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of a Meeting, 3rd October 1955,” p. 2. See also Kofi Antubam, “Some Court Symbols, Their Uses, Proverbs and Significance” (Achimota, Ghana, 1955), 1-2.

hunter or a man wearing a hunting outfit – was traditionally used as a design for an *aberambo* (gold weight) and also *Akyeame pomatir* (the top of a linguist's staff). The proverb – *Obarima na obo ntowa* – is associated with *Obarima-Ntowabofo*, and means, it is a man who wears a hunting outfit. The significance of this proverb is that the mark of a man is to always be prepared against difficulties.⁹⁶ This symbol was meant to prepare the new nation to be aware that hardships lay ahead and that they should be ready, like a hunter, to tackle them.

The use of cultural symbols of traditional symbolism were a key element to the fomentation of a symbolic nationalism in the new nation state, given that the masses of the people would understand their meanings. Moreover, the symbols were taken largely from the Akan ethnic groups, which collectively comprised the majority of the country's citizens. Furthermore, given that Nkrumah did not demand that his own ethnic group – the small Nzima minority – be represented on stamps, it can be argued that the representation of largely Akan symbols on postage stamps was an appeasement strategy to the powerful Akan (more specifically Asante) groups. Despite the exclusion of symbols from 'minority' ethnic groups, the Committee was always conscious of the need to encourage national unity through the iconography of stamps:

It was agreed that material for the designs for the stamps should as far as possible be drawn equally from the four regions comprising the Gold Coast; the hunter would be dressed in Northern Territories smock and the other 3 stamps would generally represent Akan culture in the Colony, Ashanti and Trans-Volta/Togoland.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of a Meeting, 3rd October 1955," p. 2. See also Antubam, "Some Court Symbols," 1 - 2.

⁹⁷ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of a Meeting, 3rd October 1955," p. 2.

With regard to the two other themes to be illustrated on the postage stamps – economic and geographical, the Committee gave Antubam time to go back to his workshop and prepare sketches for another meeting. However, they instructed him to use cattle (representing the Northern Territories), cocoa, timber and mines as the economic themes for the stamps, after reluctantly excluding fishing from the list. For the geographical themes, the Committee selected major landmarks found throughout the territory - Lake Bosumtwi in the south-central part of the country (17 miles or 27 kilometres southeast of the Ashanti capital of Kumasi), a chief's house at Wa in the Northern Territories, Scarp, Minarets and Parapets further representing the North, the Adomi Bridge in the Gold Coast Colony, and the Amedzofe Mountains in Togoland. R.J. Moxon, Director of Information Services, supplied Antubam with several photographs from which the latter would make these designs.⁹⁸

Antubam had also designed three of the permanent stamps with borders featuring drawings of stools used traditionally by particular ethnic groups. The 2/- stamp (Northern Palace or Chief's House at Wa) depicted stools that were Northern in origin. The stools on the 4d stamp (Lake Bosumtwi) were of Kokofu origin. Finally, the 2/6d stamps (Royal Palanquin) featured stool designs that were used generally by the Akans.⁹⁹

The Problem of Chieftaincy

The Stamps Committee sought to represent traditional leadership and the ethnic diversity of the new nation-state by electing to depict "a chief's house at Wa" in the Northern Territories, despite the fact that the Northern Liberation Movement (NLM) was the major opposition to the CPP party in the Northern Territories. The hotly

⁹⁸ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of a Meeting, 24th September 1955," p. 3; GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of a Meeting, 3rd October 1955," pp. 2-3.

⁹⁹ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of the Meeting, 8th March, 12th March and 28th March 1956," p. 2.

contested general elections of 1954 revealed the sharp geo-political and ethnic divisions among CPP, NLM, and NPP. However, there were more practical reasons for choosing to depict a generic chief's residence than an actual chief. In the case of Asante royalty, the exclusion was more obvious. Adedze writes:

“It would have been absolutely impossible to issue a postage stamp of an Asante king during the initial years of Ghana's independence. Not only was there only one chief in "town," in the person of the president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, but also the National Liberation Movement (NLM), the opposition party to Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP), was predominantly Asante. The bitter rivalries between the two parties left a trail of bloodshed, detention, imprisonment, and exile between the two camps...”¹⁰⁰

This argument is in line with Rathbone's assessment of the tensions between Nkrumah's CPP party and the Asante-based NLM.¹⁰¹ Nkrumah viewed the chiefs as backward tribal people who were allied with the colonizers and counter to national unity.

There were also other contenders of images to be illustrated on the permanent issues of stamps. Previously on 13th July 1954, the Cabinet had decided to feature the urban development project Tema Harbour - a model residential and industrial area that the government was undertaking – as well as the main Ministry edifice on the proposed 1/3d and 2/6d issues of postage stamps.¹⁰² However, the Cabinet later rescinded on those designs in favour of the ones that the Postage Stamps Committee had selected.¹⁰³

The table below shows the denomination, design, monthly quantity and category of permanent issues of postage stamps proposed by the Stamps Committee.

¹⁰⁰ Adedze, "Commemorating the Chief," footnote #4, 68-73.

¹⁰¹ "Ashanti" and "Asante" are used interchangeably. The former is the spelling that was used by the British during the colonial period, while the later came into use by the Asantes as a politicised way of "correcting" what they held to be the British misspelling of the word, and their misappropriation of Asante history and culture.

¹⁰² GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Stamps Committee, 17th and 20th October 1955," p. 2.

¹⁰³ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, March 8, 12 and 28, 1956, p. 1.

The table contains several important revelations about the ways in which the Stamps Committee intended to use postage stamps for purposes of nation building, the scope of the first issues of stamps, and the relative importance given to particular categories. Firstly, the distinct denominations of permanent stamps to be issued amounted to over 2.1 million stamps per month, not including the 6d and 2/6d stamps, for which figures were not given at that time. Counting the commemorative issues would naturally increase this amount.

Table 2.3. Proposed Permanent Issues of Independence Postage Stamps

Denomination	Design	Monthly Issues of Sheets of 60 Stamps	Category
½d	Adomi Bridge	8000	Geographical (the Colony)
1d	Cattle	5000	Economic/ Geographical (Northern Territories)
1½d	<i>Akyekyere</i> (tortoise)	500	Cultural
2d	Cocoa	18000	Economic
2½d	Northern Territories Hunter	350	Cultural/ Geographical (Northern Territories)
4d	Lake Bosumtwi	450	Geographical (Ashanti)
6d	<i>Tikoranpam</i> (two-headed linguist stick)	New stamp	Cultural
1/3d	Mining	1/- 1200 3d 1800	Economic
2/-	Chief's House at Wa (or Northern Palace)	300	Geographical (Northern Territories)
2/6d	Royal Palanquin	New stamp	Cultural
5/-	Mt. Amedzofe	60	Geographical (Trans-Volta/ Togoland)
10/-	Timber	50	Economic

Sources: GPA: S4/24, GB.28, Minutes of the Meeting, Friday January 13, 1956, pp. 1–2; GPA: S4/24, GB.28, Minutes of a Meeting, October 3, 1955, pp. 2 - 3.

The number of these tiny transmitters of nationalist ideology¹⁰⁴ would rival the circulation of “traditional” means of state propaganda such as government-run newspapers. Moreover, these postage stamps were not just destined for the domestic sphere, unlike national newspapers, television and radio broadcasts (to some

¹⁰⁴ Cusack, “Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology.”

degree), but also for the international market; locals and expatriates sending letters within the Gold Coast, other national regions as well as internationally, and philatelists and other collectors buying Gold Coast independence stamps would contribute to the wide circulation of these national stamps and their associated messages. Furthermore, the decision as to which design would be illustrated on a particular denomination of independence stamp rested on colonial stamp precedence. "Designs were allocated also bearing in mind the degree of popularity of the existing denominations both locally and overseas."¹⁰⁵ Moreover, as Nkrumah himself had argued before, postage stamps had the advantage of being understood by the large population of illiterates in the country¹⁰⁶, whereas traditional print media could only be read and understood by people with at least a basic education.

The 2d stamp featuring cocoa was the largest number of postage stamps issued monthly (1.1 million pieces) and represented about one half of the total number of stamps issued. This underscores the importance of the cocoa industry - the country's major export commodity and foreign exchange earner. The lowest denomination stamp of the Adomi Bridge (1/2d) was the second-most issued postage stamp (8000 per month) may have been one of the most widely used stamps and suggests the government desired to highlight the centrality of the Gold Coast Colony within the new nation-state. Moreover, there are three stamp issues (1d, 2½d and 2/-) that feature images from the Northern Territories, suggesting the government's desire to represent the most far-flung and a politically problematic region as a key part of the new nation.

¹⁰⁵ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of the Meeting, Friday 13th January 1956," p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Nkrumah, "The Queen's Head," 12.

Nkrumah and Antubam

The Stamps Committee was pleased with the design sketches that Kofi Antubam had submitted for both the commemorative and permanent issues of independence stamps. Consequently, they recommended that the Ministry of Communications appoint him as the official designer for those stamp series, with a suitable contract.¹⁰⁷ The Committee also agreed to recommend to the Cabinet to pay Kofi Antubam a fee of fifty pounds (£50) for the commemorative issue and two hundred and fifty pounds (£250) for the permanent issue.¹⁰⁸ Prime Minister Nkrumah showed a key interest in the entire designs of the new postage stamps. His interests however were as much political as they were aesthetical. Nkrumah was “not satisfied” with Antubam’s designs or the Stamps Committee’s accompanying interim report and demanded some major and minor changes before they could be presented to the Cabinet. Firstly, while Nkrumah was now in favour of his head being depicted on the stamps, he wanted his title and name (“Dr. Kwame Nkrumah”) to be omitted.

Secondly, Nkrumah ordered that the C.P.P. colours should be removed from the border. He also wanted the annotations “Date, Month 1956,” “Gold Coast Independence Commemoration” and “Eagle stretch forth thy wings and fly – Aggrey” to be omitted. On what appears to be more aesthetical and design considerations, Nkrumah suggested that the background designs of mountains, trees, waves, chains and other images be left out and that each stamp should have only one colour.¹⁰⁹ Antubam and the Stamps Committee members were duly instructed to revise the designs considering the Prime Minister’s suggestions for simpler stamps

¹⁰⁷ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Stamps Committee, 17th and 20th October 1955,” p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of the Meeting, 8th March, 12th March and 28th March 1956,” p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/431, Secretary, Ministry of Communications to Kofi Antubam and Stamps Committee, “Postage Stamps,” December 15, 1955. See also GPA: S4/24, GB.28, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Stamps Committee Held in the Ministry of Communications on Friday 13th January [1956] at 2:30 P.M.,” p. 1.

and to resubmit the changes at their next meeting.¹¹⁰ With independence hovering on the political horizon, the Ministerial Secretary wasted no time in reminding both Kofi Antubam and the Stamps Committee about the urgency of submitting the new designs as soon as possible, sending them a letter immediately after the New Year had started.¹¹¹

In March 1956, at which point the name 'Ghana' had already been chosen as the name for an independent Gold Coast, the Postage Stamps Committee advised Antubam to substitute the word 'Ghana' for the 'Gold Coast' on all twelve denominations of the permanent issues of independence postage stamps, similar to the Cabinet's mandate for the commemorative issues.¹¹²

The Cabinet later decided to remove the representation of human figures from the university and mining stamp designs.¹¹³ Moreover, the Ghana Philatelic Agency proposed that the Ghana Government issue new designs to replace three of the fifteen permanent issues of independence postage stamps, using the same from designs which the Agency recommended to commemorate the Independence Anniversary Celebrations - State House, the Avenue of Royal Palm at the Botanical Gardens in Aburi, Takoradi Harbour and Station Road.¹¹⁴ In addition, the Stamp Advisory Committee wanted to issue a postage stamp of Prime Minister Nkrumah with Parliament House in the background, as well as one promoting the Ghana timber industry (see figures 2.8 and 2.9). The Committee believed that Ghana's timber economy was threatened by the United Africa Company's (UAC) campaign

¹¹⁰ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/431, Secretary, MoC to Kofi Antubam and Stamps Committee, December 15, 1955; GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of the Meeting, Friday 13th January 1956," p. 1.

¹¹¹ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/432, Secretary, MoC to Kofi Antubam and Stamps Committee, "Postage Stamps," January 3, 1956.

¹¹² GPA: S4/24, GB.28, "Minutes of the Meeting 8th March, 12th March and 28th March 1956," p. 1.

¹¹³ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/689, B.F. Bolt to Kofi Antubam, memorandum, July 31, 1957.

¹¹⁴ GPA: S4/24, "Minutes of the Meeting [of the Stamp Advisory Committee] held on 11th February 1958," p. 1.

the [British] sovereign's head it is not necessary to submit to the [British] Secretary of State for prior approval."¹¹⁷ Other political figures in British also publicly criticized Nkrumah for deciding to print his portrait on the new nation's national postage stamp. A British Conservative M.P., Norman A. Pannell, published a scathing letter in the London *Daily Telegraph* condemning Nkrumah's postal plans. Pannell cited that this was evidence of the Prime Minister's megalomaniac tendencies and his intentions of dominating the future political landscape in Ghana. The British M.P.'s letter was used as political cannon fodder against Nkrumah by his Ghanaian detractors, and was re-published on the front page (in its entirety) of the Opposition Party-leaning *Ashanti Pioneer*:

The statement that the new Dominion of Ghana (Gold Coast) will issue stamps bearing the portrait of Dr. Nkrumah, the Prime Minister, is most disturbing. Dr. Nkrumah is the leader of a political party, which is in sharp conflict with the opposition parties on constitutional issues. The Ashanti and the Northern Territories, where these parties enjoy a majority of the seats in the Legislative Assembly, fear domination by the more progressive South (or Colony), where Dr. Nkrumah commands all the seats. These fears can only be increased by such a presumptuous gesture of self-aggrandisement that must be unique in the annals of the British Commonwealth, of which the new State of Ghana aspires to be a member. The impression on the minds of the largely illiterate electorate in the Gold Coast will be that Dr. Nkrumah is head of the State, whereas the proposed constitution provides for a Governor General appointed by the Crown. This could be decisive in any future General Election and represents a gross abuse of political power. It is to be fervently hoped that wiser counsels will prevail to prevent such an unfortunate step.¹¹⁸

In June 1957, three months after the independence ceremonies, Nkrumah visited London to attend the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of State as the first leader of an independent Sub-Saharan African country to do so. During his visit, the *Daily Sketch* - a London newspaper - approached him to write an article in their paper responding to his critics' disapproval of his nationalist policies, including the

¹¹⁷ GPA: S4/24, GB.28/452, J.R. Wallis to F.E.B. Clark, February 29, 1956.

¹¹⁸ *Ashanti Pioneer*, "Stamps with Nkrumah's Portrait Condemned: It's Gross Abuse of Political Power, Says M.P.," February 18, 1957, 1, 7.

postage stamp issue. Nkrumah argued that putting his image on the national postage stamps was necessary for nation-building purposes. “When they [Ghanaians] buy stamps they will see my picture – an African like themselves-and they will say “Aiee...look here is our leader on the stamps, we are truly a free people...”¹¹⁹

The NLC, PP, NRC and Nkrumah

As they did with the national currency after deposing Kwame Nkrumah in February 1966 (see Chapter I), the National Liberation Council military junta banned all other displays of Nkrumah’s image, including on postage stamps. Similar to Nkrumah, they sought to use postage stamps as political propaganda to promote the new regime, discredit Nkrumah and rewrite the national historical narrative. However, the decommissioning of national postage stamps in independent Ghana was without precedence, and the NLC was forced to seek external advice on the matter. Eight months after the coup against Nkrumah, postal authorities in the National Liberation Council administration sought the advice of Great Britain for “hints on procedure” that it followed when demonetising postage stamps. Just weeks before retiring from the civil service, Joseph M. Aggrey, Deputy Director of Postal & Accounting Services in the Department of Posts and Telecommunications of Ghana sent an urgent memorandum to Kenneth Hind of the Postal Services Department, General Post Office, London. “It is the desire of Government to demonetize stamps...bearing effigy which cannot be now [sic] considered as being compatible with the policy of Government.”¹²⁰ A quick reply from the Postmaster General’s office indicated that Britain did not demonetise stamps for political reasons, but “only when their use has

¹¹⁹ Nkrumah, “The Queen’s Head,” 12.

¹²⁰ British Postal Museum and Archive (BPMA), 122/6490, File 9, *Demonetization of Postage Stamps – Enquiry from Ghana*, Joseph M. Aggrey to Kenneth Hind, memorandum, “Postage Stamps – Demonetization of,” October 24, 1966.

become so infrequent that postal workers are unlikely to recognise them as valid for postal purposes...we have never been faced with quite the same situation as the one you describe.”¹²¹ Not receiving a definitive answer from London, the NLM went ahead anyway with removing all postage stamps bearing the image of Kwame Nkrumah and replacing them with other images of symbolic importance to the new military state.

A common feature of these political stamps was restoration of the original colours of the Ghana flag (red, yellow and green), which Nkrumah had replaced with the colours of the CPP party (red, white and green). In 1967, the National Liberation Council issued a commemorative issue of postage stamps marking “Ghana’s Revolution of 24th February 1966 1st Anniversary 1967.” In deliberate contrast to the first independence commemorative stamps issued by the CPP in 1958 depicting Kwame Nkrumah and Aggrey’s eagle flying freely, the NLM stamps depicted an eagle with broken chains, indicating that the era of bondage under which Kwame Nkrumah had placed the nation had been broken through their military intervention (see figure 2.10).¹²² Similarly in the following year, a set of four postage stamps commemorating the “2nd Anniversary of the 24th February Revolution” was issued to mark the ouster of the Nkrumah government (see figure 2.11).

¹²¹ BPMA: S.4/1, 27602/64, S.T.B. Johnys to Joseph M. Aggrey, memorandum, October 31, 1966, pp. 1-2.

¹²² GPA: S4/75 (Castles and Monuments of Ghana), GB.28/SF.22/Vol.7, (SGD) E.P.O. Kwafo, Ministry of Communications, to the Director, Department of Posts & Telecommunications, “Issue of Commemorative Postage Stamps for the First Anniversary of the 24th February Revolution,” December 1, 1966.



Figure 2.10. NLM commemorative postage stamp marking “Ghana’s Revolution of 24th February 1966 1st Anniversary 1967.”



Figure 2.11. NLM commemorative postage stamp series, “2nd Anniversary of the 24th February Revolution.”



Figure 2.12. NLM “Human Rights Year” 1968 postage stamp series, featuring Dr. J.B. Danquah and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Figure 2.13. NLM postage stamp series, “First Anniversary of the Death of Lt. Gen. E.K. Kotoka 17th April 1968.”



Figure 2.14. Progress Party postage stamps inaugurating the Kotoka International Airport, 17 April 1970.



Figure 2.15. Progress Party postage stamp commemorating the First Anniversary of the Second Republic 1970.



Figure 2.16. Progress Party postage stamp highlighting “The Official Opening of Parliament of the Second Republic 1970.”



Figure 2.17. Progress Party postage stamp – “Unity is Strength,” with doves symbol

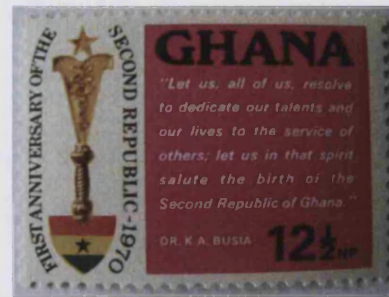


Figure 2.18. Progress Party postage stamp – “Busia Declaration.”

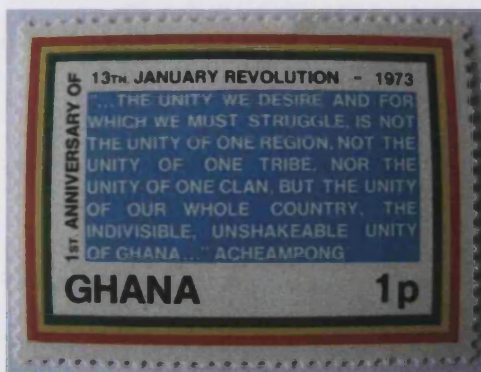


Figure 2.19. National Redemption Council postage stamp – “Acheampong Declaration,” marking the “1st Anniversary of the 13th January Revolution 1973.”

The symbolism of the stamps’ iconography was unabashedly meant to justify the NLC’s intervention”. These stamps featured images implying that it was the masses of the people, the workers and rank-and-file military personnel who rose up against the Nkrumah regime. This was meant to legitimise the new regime by casting it in the light of a popular movement. The same year, the NLC issued another stamp series – “International Human Rights Year 1968” – with two different images featuring the American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as Ghana’s native son and Nkrumah’s principal political rival, Dr. J.B. Danquah (see figure 2.12).

The NLC’s depiction especially of Danquah who died in an Nkrumah jail cell in 1965 was meant to exonerate Danquah and highlight Nkrumah’s violation of human and political rights in Ghana. As the next chapter will show, the NLC also

introduced a motion to build a monument in honour of Danquah – again to challenge that which was build by Nkrumah of himself. Moreover, and as will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, the NLC also honoured their fallen comrade General Kotoka who lead the charge against Nkrumah, but who was subsequently killed in a failed, pro-Nkrumah counter-coup against the regime. The stamps depicted Kotoka in his military attire as well as in a suit and tie – as a statesman.

Kotoka was honoured on a set of four postage stamps titled the “First Anniversary of the Death of Lt. Gen. E.K. Kotoka 17th April 1968” (see figure 2.13). In 1969, the year in which the National Liberation Council allowed for general elections to be held, heralding in the Busia government’s Progress Party (PP), the junta issued a final set of stamps commemorating the third anniversary of their revolution. In contrast to their previous stamps depicting military themes, these postage stamps features more civic images of “Constituent Assembly Building,” the Ghana coat of arms, flag and reference to the new constitution, symbolising the nations return to civilian rule. Busia’s Progress Party also issued a set of stamps commemorating the renaming of Accra International Airport, which was inauguration on 17th April 1970 as the Kotoka International Airport (figure 2.14).

The Progress Party also issued a series of four postage stamps marking era of the “Second Republic,” over which Busia presided as a result of the 1969 general elections. Stamps issued for the first anniversary of the Second Republic in 1970 featured an image of National Liberation Council officers saluting march past of the country’s newly elected civilian leader, Dr. Kofi A. Busia (see figure 2.15). Another stamp (figure 2.16) showcased the official opening, or reopening, rather, of a civilian Parliament in the Second Republic.

In a nation divided regionally, tribally and politically since independence, the Busia government attempted to govern on a platform of national unity, issuing a third stamp in the First Anniversary of the Second Republic series titled “Unity is Strength,” which also images of doves - the universal symbol of peace. The final stamp in this series (figure 2.18) was printed with what is know as “the Busia Declaration,” underscoring his attempts at portraying and beseeching for national unity. The Busia Declaration read, “Let us, all of us, resolve to dedicate our talents and our lives to the service of others; let us in that spirit salute the birth of the Second Republic of Ghana.” Despite this postal plea for national unity, peace and democracy, civilian rule under the Progress Party would not last very long. In 1973, General Acheampong staged a coup against the Busia government and took power as head of the National Redemption Council (NRC).

As I will argue in the following chapter, Acheampong was symbolically and substantively sympathetic to Kwame Nkrumah. Upon assuming power, Acheampong immediately issued a set of postage stamps directly challenging the “Busia Declaration” on the national stamp with one of his own, which we can call “The Acheampong Declaration” (figure 2.19). In an extract from one of his speeches written on a commemorative postage stamp marking the “1st Anniversary of the 13th January Revolution 1973,” Acheampong accused Busia (while not by name) of not being a true nationalist, but one who had fanned the flames of tribalism, regionalism and nepotism. “...The unity we desire and for which we must struggle, is not the unity of one region, not the unity of one tribe, nor the unity of one clan, but the unity of our whole country, the indivisible, unshakeable unity of Ghana...” (figure 2.19).

Conclusion

A symbiotic relationship exists between national postage stamps and money. Both are issued exclusively by the state and have been used as alternative forms of mass media to spread political and other state-sponsored messages in Ghana. For example, in 1965 when the Nkrumah government changed from the sterling pound to the decimal currency system based on the American dollar, the new monetary system was advertised on commemorative issues of postage stamps. Moreover, postage stamps can be a reliable indication of the effects of currency devaluations on a nation's economy, as stamp denominations normally increases noticeably with inflation. Igor Cusack has argued that postage stamps are "tiny transmitters of nationalist and colonial ideology" in his analysis of the postage stamps issued in the former Portuguese Empire.¹²³ Keith Jeffrey has agrees that the "philatelic evidence" can be used as a valuable source of documenting British imperial history.¹²⁴ He contends "...the British empire as a working world system was underpinned by the Imperial Penny Postage and the production and use of postage stamps bearing the images of successive British monarchs and other British imperial iconography."¹²⁵ Adedze (2004a) has written on the issue of commemorative postage stamps honouring the institution of chieftaincy in Anglophone and Francophone West Africa.

This chapter argued that postage stamps were used to transmit Nkrumah's nationalist sentiments and nation-building projects to the Ghanaian populace. By analysing the national postage stamps issued before, during and immediately following the fall of the Nkrumah government, I argued that stamps served as

¹²³ Cusack, "Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology," 591–612.

¹²⁴ Keith Jeffery, "Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post: Stamps, the Monarchy and the British Empire," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34, no. 1 (March 2006): 45–70.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

“ideological battlegrounds”¹²⁶ among successes civilian and military leaders in Ghana. Throughout the nine years of Kwame Nkrumah’s regime, the CPP government issued an annual allotment of commemorative postage stamps that represented political themes regarding nationalism, Pan-Africanism, internationalism, Ghana’s Commonwealth links, the Cold War, pro-American as well as pro-socialist sentiments. In the post-Nkrumah era, postage stamps were used once again to legitimise the military (and civilian) regimes that out-ousted each other. Busia’s Progress Party and General Acheampong’s National Redemption Council that removed Busia from power were engaged in a war of words and symbols on the postage stamp issued by their government. While both parties appealed for national unity on their stamps, Acheampong alluded to the notion that the previous regimes (excluding Nkrumah) were not truly serving the nationalist cause; they were engaged in regionalism, tribalism and nepotism.

¹²⁶ Jonathan R. Walz, “Archaeopolitics and Postage Stamps in Africa,” *African Arts*, Summer 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0438/is_2_38/ai_n15753080 (accessed May 13, 2007).

Chapter III

Displaying the Nation: Museums and the Nation-Building Project



"I...had a strong passion for museums of any kind."¹

The scholarship on nations and nationalism was established in the early 1980s. Very few of the pioneers at that time paid attention to the linkages between national museums and national identity. Benedict Anderson had only briefly commented on this relationship in his groundbreaking work, *Imagined Communities*.² Since the mid-1980s, however, a small body of work has slowly been building up to examine how the development of national museums relates to the construction of national identity and nationalism.³ The general consensus is that museums are vanguards of

¹ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 160.

² See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 184.

³ See, for example, A.E. Afigbo and S.I.O. Okita, eds., *Museums and Nation Building* (Imo State: Nigeria, New African Publishing Co., 1985); Ann Anagnost, "The Nationscape: Movement in the Field of Vision," *Positions* 1, 3 (1993): 586-606; Annie E. Coombes, "Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities," *The Oxford Art Journal* 11, 2 (1988): 57-68; Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 88-103; Flora Edouwaye S. Kaplan, ed., *Museums and the Making of "Ourselves": The Role of Objects in National Identity* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994); Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, 2 (1989): 217-236; Brian Wallis, "Selling Nations," *Art in America* (September 1991): 85-91.

national history and the material culture of a nation. They serve many social, cultural and nationalistic purposes. In the case of post-colonial Africa, museums became contested sites of ethno-regional, colonial and national displays to construct a new, homogenous national identity and to promote nationalism.⁴

The African museum as a public institution, according to Agbenyega Adedze, is a legacy of colonialism, which, like the colonial state itself, existed for a relatively short period of time. The colonial museum preserved and exhibited African material culture for a European audience. Similar to European trade and colonial exhibitions that were held in the early 1900s, the objects in the colonial museum exhibited and emphasized European ideas about African racial, socio-cultural, economic and political inferiority, and justified the need for a European civilizing mission to redress these ills.⁵ Adedze concludes that the national museums created in Africa as the inheritors of colonial museums largely failed as sites of promoting nationalism and political unity out of cultural diversity. He attributes these failures to the over-representation of objects of material culture of one ethnic group over others, resulting in the lack of a truly “national” representation.⁶

Adedze argues that both the colonial museum as well as the national museum exhibited objects that were largely associated with one large, powerful or influential ethnic group, as well as the cultural policies of the ruling political party. Hence, Akan objects dominated the Ghana National Museum, and the Fon and Yoruba

⁴ The use and display of material culture as symbolic of a nation and to inspire nationalist pride is not a post-colonial construction in Africa. As Adedze notes, powerful, pre-colonial states such as the Asante nation used the Golden Stool, while the Kingdom of Benin used the Benin “bronze” heads to symbolize pride and unity in their respective nations. See Agbenyega Adedze, “Museums as a Tool for Nationalism in Africa,” in “Museums and the Politics of Nationalism,” theme issue, *Museum Anthropology* 19, is. 2 (Fall 1995): 59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

material culture are over-represented in the *Musée Ethnographique Alexandre S. Adande* in Porto Novo, Benin. There are some notable exceptions, however. The National Museums of Nigeria exhibited objects, which represented the peoples and locations where these objects were obtained. The Museum of African Art in the French colony of Senegal, for example, exhibited objects that represented the material culture not only of Senegal, but also of the wider Francophone West Africa. This practice was in line with the French colonial rhetoric of African assimilation into a Greater France.⁷

Christopher B. Steiner agrees that the central contradiction in African national museums is the sense of distance that the population feels toward objects on display, which are supposed to symbolize the material culture and history of the people who inhabit the nation-state. This disjuncture is mainly the result of the divisive and contested role that ethnicity plays in the symbolic construction of a museum that is supposed to represent the entire nation.⁸ Further, the display of symbols of the nation in African museums has highlighted and generated tensions between tradition and modernity.⁹ In this chapter I will analyse how the Nkrumah administration embraced the construction of museums, as part and parcel to the other symbolic projects of nation building. I will examine four museum projects, namely, the National Museum, the Ghana National Science Museum (GNSM), the Ghana Armed Forces Museum (GAFM), and the Nkroful Museum/Shrine.

⁷ Adedze, "Museums as a Tool for Nationalism in Africa," 60-62.

⁸ Christopher B. Steiner, "Museums and the Politics of Nationalism," *Museum Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (1995), 3.

⁹ Steiner, "Museums and the Politics of Nationalism," 4.

Museums in Ghana

The National Commission on Culture acknowledges that Ghanaian museums are “repositories of our past and contemporary achievements...[and] sources of inspiration to the present generation...museums...[are] part of community life and [are an]...invaluable resource for the teaching of social and cultural history, as well as the arts and sciences.”¹⁰ “National” Museums not only store the nation’s past and present through cultural artefacts, but displays items that exemplify a particular political philosophy of the state, such as nation-building, the codification and display of national identity, and Pan-Africanism.

The Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) - the governmental agency in charge of the National Museum – also professes that the National Museum is “the only place where the true identity of a people can be seen and the cultural hub for the preservation and presentation of the material cultural heritage...[a museum is] a medium for identity and diversity. It is trite knowledge that the museum houses the cultural soul of a nation.”¹¹ This national “soul” is a primary building block of identity, which is itself an important tenet of nation-building.

The location of the National Museum in the capital city of Accra, and especially in the former colonial area of Accra-Central was an important consideration for the GMMB. Accra-Central would be a focal battleground for Nkrumah’s ultimate goal of dredging the “colonial mentality” from the people in thinking that Africans did not have a rich history and culture worthy of preservation. The centrally-located National Museum would be but another of Nkrumah’s symbols of nationhood designed to homogenize the nation-state.

¹⁰ *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*, 34.

¹¹ *National Museum of Ghana*, “Cultural Bridges in Perspective – The Museum Experience,” exhibition, July 25, 2006.

The location of the new museum was also ideal given its proximity to other government offices and the business and trading hub of the nation. Men, women and children from all over the country who had to come to Accra-Central to conduct commerce, engage in bureaucratic business or on school trips would have the opportunity to visit the National Museum to learn about “their” history and culture, as well as that of other Africans and the ancient European world. The CPP hoped that upon seeing the exhibits depicting Ghana’s rich heritage, people would leave with a new sense of patriotism and enthusiasm for their newfound Ghanaian-ness. Furthermore, Accra would be the first stop for foreign visitors to the nation, and they too could visit the National Museum and learn more about the history and culture of this newly-independent African nation-state.

Moreover, a network of sub-national museums in the major cities across the country (Cape Coast, Ho, Kumasi and Tamale) would also serve the same purpose as the National Museum; being a hub for the preservation and display of Ghana’s history and culture, and serving as a catalyst for replacing tribal and regional loyalties for national patriotism. These nationalist ideals and expectations of the National Museum owed a lot to its colonial predecessors, which also sought to preserve and exhibit the material culture of the British Empire in the Gold Coast and West Africa as part of the imperial project of “creating” colonial subjects.

The Colonial Origins of the Ghana National Museum

The National Museum of Ghana started out with a “triple heritage,” to borrow a term often used by the African scholar Ali Mazrui; archaeological objects inherited from the British colonial state; objects donated by (mainly Akan) chiefs and other traditional leaders; and objects of modernity, including the very building in which

these objects were housed.¹² The first set of objects was an assemblage of material cultural items deposited by British military commander and explorer, Sir James Willocks in the administration building at Achimota College.¹³ Willocks donated several items from his private collection that he had acquired from the Gold Coast, Africa, Burma and India. In 1929, he donated weaponry such as spears, swords, cutlasses and guns to the Gold Coast colonial administration.¹⁴ Other cultural, material and archaeological finds from the Gold Coast and Dependencies, such as minerals, rocks, Asante goldweights, pottery, calabashes, spears and photographs, were later added to the Achimota Collection. Many of these other exhibits came from the Museum of Archaeology (in the Department of Archaeology at the University of College of the Gold Coast, later renamed the University of Ghana), which was established in 1951 and placed under the governance of the Ministry of Education.¹⁵

In the post World War Two period, British colonial and museum officials such as Julian Huxley conceived of a Central Museum not just for the Gold Coast, but also for the rest of the West African sub-region. They envisaged this central museum similar to the issue of a common British West African colonial currency (see Chapter I), postage stamps (see Chapter II) and a central university to be an embodiment of all of West African material culture and history, but including the material culture and history of the French colonies as well.¹⁶

¹² Mark Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display: The National Museum, Ghana," *Journal of the History of Collections* 13, no. 2 (2001): 231-232; Adedze, "Museums as a Tool for Nationalism in Africa," 60-61.

¹³ Achimota was an elite, private British colonial institution established in 1927 to educate Africans for mid-level administrative positions in the British colonial service.

¹⁴ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 234.

¹⁵ As a research museum commissioned to investigate and display archaeological objects found in the Gold Coast, the Museum of Archaeology's collections included ceramics, terracotta, beads, iron, brass and stones. See Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 233; and ICOM Ghana, http://www.ghana.icom.museum/24024_e.html (accessed July 14, 2009).

¹⁶ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 237.



Figure 3.1. Billboard sign in front of the Ghana National Museum

Huxley proposed a federated system of museums throughout the Gold Coast, having a central museum, and regional and local ones. These museums would acquire, curate and display the antiquated and contemporary archaeological and ethnographic objects not only of the Gold Coast, but also of French West Africa, as well as Liberia, Cameroon, Spanish and Portuguese Guinea and Angola, as well as the Belgian Congo.

While the diversity of objects was meant to emphasize the organic connectedness of African cultures across time and space, the British colonial possessions in West Africa, however, would have a more prominent display arrangement in the museum than objects of material culture from French and other colonial territories.¹⁷ The curatorial arrangement of artefacts was symbolic of the “superiority” of British colonial administration over other (particularly French and

¹⁷ Crinson, “Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display,” 237.

Belgian) ones. This concept of a Pan-West African central museum would also be expanded upon by the Nkrumah state as a Pan-African national museum.

During the new administration of 1951 when Kwame Nkrumah became Leader of Government Business, the Gold Coast government approved plans to construct a National Museum, the creation of which was recommended by a commission led by Dr. J.H. Braunholz, Head of the Department of Ethnography at the British Museum. Braunholz's proposal for a colonial museum system in the Gold Coast included a central or national museum in Accra with collections largely reflecting the archaeology and ethnology of local groups such as the Akims and Fantes, and regional branch museums in Kumasi, Takoradi and Tamale with exhibits pertinent to those groups. As Mark Crinson suggests, Braunholz and other contemporary British social anthropologists of the period envisioned the African museum as a "stabilizing force in the face of the disorientations of modernity...to show Africans where the sources of their identity and their nation-hood lay."¹⁸

Braunholz reasoned that:

In the political and educational spheres [relics] are the indispensable means of creating in the African a balanced perspective of his own place in history. Properly interpreted they should be the means of giving him a sense of pride in and continuity with his own past, from which will spring confidence in his future progress. The realization that he has a solid background of indigenous culture should help to counteract the bewilderment and instability engendered by the sudden impact of alien values and ideals.¹⁹

The Achimota Collection was incorporated into the National Museum in 1953. From that time until independence, the Department of Archaeology at the University of Legon was put in charge of directing the National Museum.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁹ H.J. Braunholz, quoted in Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 239.

The National Museum and the Nkrumah Administration

When Ghana attained independence in 1957, the Nkrumah administration created the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board to take over the functions of the new National Museum.²⁰ The Nkrumah administration expressed that the immediate goal of the National Museum was to inculcate a sense of historical consciousness among the people of the Gold Coast as a way of harnessing the development of national consciousness.²¹ Through relevant exhibits, the National Museum was to anchor the heterogeneous new nation in a common, homogeneous ancestral past, where the national values and projects took precedence over ethnic or regional ones. Moreover, the emphasis on exhibits predating and going beyond the boundaries of the colonial state also conformed to the nationalist rhetoric that the nation had deep historical roots (in Ancient Ghana), and that these roots were far more important than either those of the British administration or the loyalties of ethnic groups in the Gold Coast.²² The museum was built in an area of Central Accra that had been zoned for buildings having a national and cultural significance as well as for central government offices. The London architectural firm Fry, Drew, Drake and Lasdun, designed the modern eighty-foot aluminium dome (with concrete a reinforced concrete structure) that constituted the main museum building (see figure 3.2). The modernist-functionalist dome was manufactured in Britain and then shipped to Accra. On the eve of Ghanaian independence, the British Duchess of Kent officially opened the National Museum of Ghana.²³ By this time, it had housed collections of

²⁰ A.W Lawrence and Ralph Merrifield, "The National Museum of Ghana," *Museums Journal* 57, no. 4 (July 1957): 88, and S.K. Adjei, "Inside the Museum," *Ghana Review* 1, no. 1 (1994): 26, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, note 38, chapter 1, 182.

²¹ Lawrence and Merrifield, "The National Museum of Ghana," quoted in Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 235.

²² Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 235.

²³ See *The Times*, "National Museum for Ghana: 80ft. Aluminium Dome," March 11, 1957, 8; Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 232; and ICOM Ghana, http://www.ghana.icom.museum/24024_e.html (accessed July 14 2009).

historical and ethnographic objects, bead works, wooden objects, musical instruments, personal adornments, maps, currency and jewellery. A contradiction in the symbolism of the national museum as a repository of the soul of the new nation was its modernistic design. As Mark Crinson shows, a European modernist style of architecture began to be exported to the city of Accra in the 1950s. Therefore, the aluminium dome shape of the main museum building reflected more European than Ghanaian or African architectural traditions and symbols of nationhood. In Britain, for example, the Dome of Discovery was built in 1951 as a people's palace symbolizing modern post-Second World War British nationhood.²⁴ Crinson sees the National Museum as at once being disconnected from African architectural traditions and also alien to the masses of the new nation:

The dome, its location and materials mark out the museum as a separate and special kind of institution, a pantheon of the new nation, but they also distinguish it as both a symbol of modernization and an image without an indigenous history, the preserve of an educated urban elite.²⁵

Crinson also understands the dome design as symbolic of the museum's principal public and nationalist image on the one hand, and on the other, symbolizing a "transhistorical and transcultural figuring of those Modernist values of formal abstraction, enlightenment, and internationalism."²⁶ But rather than viewing the triple heritage of the new National Museum as a site of contradictions and competition among the traditional, the colonial, and the modern, it can be seen as a melting pot of all three. After all, it is in the rhetoric of the nationalist to not only lay claim to the traditional as a source of legitimacy, but to build on the leftovers of the colonial state and at the same time, represent an image of the nation as moving forward, that is, as being modern.

²⁴ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 233.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 236.



Figure 3.2. The main, dome-shaped building of the Ghana National Museum

In contrast to its colonial predecessor, the exhibits of the National Museum reflected Nkrumah's policies and projects of the consolidation of a homogenous nation-state, the promotion of Pan-Africanist ideals as well as representing more elements from the "ancient" (European) world. While the permanent collection included photographs and plaster of Paris replicas of objects from Greece, for example, it also had reproductions of objects from Cameroon, Roman North Africa and original objects from Ghana. The "national" collection represented Nkrumah's desire for *Janus* – attempting to anchor the nation in a glorious historical past, while looking toward a bright future of national unity. As Steiner attests, 'In many cases...the glorification of past and future—or what may be called "forward-looking" versus "backward-looking" regimes of representation—often co-exist, complement, and even contradict one another in the nationalist agenda of state museums.'²⁷

The opening display in the new National Museum - "Man in Africa" (see figure 3.3) - was a collection of objects mainly from Ghana, but also from other

²⁷ Steiner, "Museums and the Politics of Nationalism," 5.

African cultures. It reflected Nkrumah's simultaneous project of building a Ghanaian national identity as well as encouraging Pan-African solidarity. "The First Ghanaians and their Stone Technology" exhibit, for instance, featured a collection of archaeological objects that symbolized the ancient history of the Ghanaian nation-state. These were in addition to items of traditional culture, mainly Asante chief's stools and objects from other traditional African societies. This focus on Asante memorabilia as the centrepiece of the new National Museum may have been inherited from the colonial status quo. The new national museum inherited Asante brass gold-weights, gold containers, spoons and other metalwork from the museums at Achimota College and the University of the Gold Coast, and displayed them as central exhibits.²⁸ Portraits of several African independence leaders and freedom fighters that Nkrumah admired also accentuated the main exhibition. The main attraction, which was physically located in the middle of the Museum dome, was a collection of sixty Akan stools positioned on four platforms of a circular stand (see figure 3.3). "The hub of the museum space, and of its imagining of the nation, was thus the symbol of power amongst one of the four ethno-linguistic groups in Ghana."²⁹ The collection of objects also emphasized Ghana and Africa's relationship with Europe. Therefore, there were objects and reproductions of objects from Ancient Egypt, Nigeria, southern Africa, as well as Greek, Carthaginian and Roman North Africa and representations of Islam in Africa.³⁰

²⁸ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 244.

²⁹ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 244.

³⁰ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 241-242; *Ghana Today* 1, no. 17, October 16, 1957.

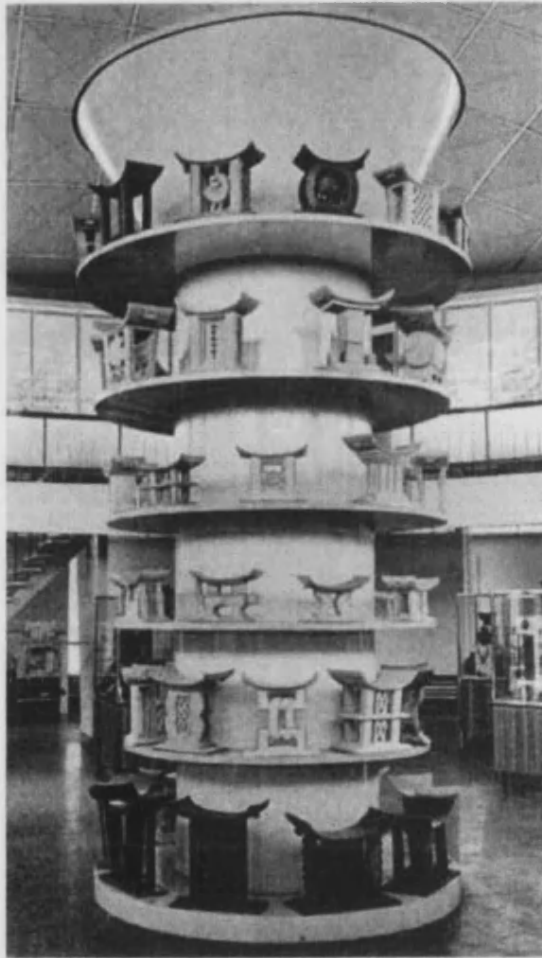


Figure 3.3. “Man in Africa” the central display at the National Museum of Ghana - 1957.
Source: *Museums Journal*, July 1957, as illustrated in Crinson, 2001, p. 244.

The National Museum and the “Ghana Hypothesis”

Given Nkrumah’s focus on the consolidation of a new, homogenous nation-state that was distinct from the colonial one, the question remains as to why the permanent collection of a national museum in a new nation-state would not focus on just objects from the country in question. ‘The rationale for the eclecticism of the collection was stated by British consultants Lawrence and Merrifield: “the ancestors of the existing population must...have originated elsewhere.”’³¹ This archaic belief conforms to the “scientific” racism theory called the Hamitic hypothesis. The latter

³¹ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, note 39, chapter 1, 182.

claimed that black Africans (considered to be the people inhabiting Sub-Saharan Africa) were descendants of the Hamitic race of North and East Africa as well as South Arabia. The Hamite race was itself supposedly an inferior subgroup of the Caucasian race. The theory claimed that the major achievements of the more “advanced” African peoples below the Sahara Desert (such as those of Ancient Ghana and Zimbabwe) could be attributed to the work of their Hamitic ancestors who migrated to Sub-Saharan Africa sowing the seeds of civilization and technological advancements to their Negroid descendants.³² Similarly, the “Ghana hypothesis” asserted that the ancestors of the Akan ethno-linguistic group of modern Gold Coast/Ghana originated in the far-away gold-trading African Empire of Ancient Ghana – which existed from the 8th to the 13th centuries on the fringes of the Sahara Desert in West Africa. Other scholars placed the origins of the Akans in the pharaonic era of Ancient Egypt. This hypothesis was predominantly based on the work of Gold Coast scholars, especially J.B. Danquah as well as the Jewish anthropologist Eva Meyerowitz, who was a member of faculty at Achimota College.³³

Danquah had visited the British Museum, where he had conducted research pertaining to the Ancient Ghana Empire, the precursor to the Mali and Songhay Empires in West Africa. He is credited, in addition to Nkrumah, in choosing the name “Ghana” as the name of an independent Gold Coast. Crinson argues that the Ghana hypothesis was an essential element of British colonial attitude and

³² For more insights into the Hamitic theory, see, for example, the writings of the British ethnologist Charles Gabriel Seligman (1873 – 1940), especially *The Races of Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, [1930] 1966).

³³ See Joseph B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God: A Fragmentation of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944); Eva Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions of Origin* (London, 1952); Eva Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana, Their Ancient Beliefs* (London, 1953); Eva Meyerowitz, *The Divine Kingship in Ghana and Ancient Egypt* (London, 1960); and Eva Meyerowitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan* (London, 1951). For further analysis on the Ghana hypothesis, see also R.A. Mauny, “The Question of Ghana,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 24, no. 3 (July 1954): 200-213.

museological policy in the inter-War period. During this era, British officials had gradually shifted away from trends in the previous century, where African artefacts, war booty and royal regalia were routinely pilfered and sent directly to Europe. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, however, both British and African authors sought to retain and utilize African artefacts and museum collections as part of a larger effort to acquire knowledge and teach the history of the West African sub-region. They sought to legitimize the modern state of Ghana by linking it with its glorious pre-colonial “predecessor” – the Empire of Ghana.³⁴ It is doubtful that Nkrumah viewed Ghanaian or African history and achievements subservient to European or North African ones. Rather, the inclusion of objects from other African and European countries in the permanent collection of the National Museum were meant to educate and unify the nation through objects of the national and world patrimony, and to situate Ghana into a broader Pan-African and international cultural and historical paradigm. In this light, the Museum acted as both a nationalistic and Pan-African store-house of history, memory and culture.

Crinson underscores the overrepresentation of Asante displays in the National Museum – in terms of their numbers, spatial arrangements, value and aesthetic qualities. The apparent hegemony of Asante displays and the conflation of Asante culture with Ghanaian national culture, he argues, came at the expense of representations of other cultural traditions. In this, he finds some irony, given that the Asante’s view their history and culture as dominant to other Ghanaian cultures on the one hand, and on the other, their ambivalent relationship with the government-run National Museum. Moreover, the representation of Asante culture through museum exhibits has also been problematic. As evidenced by important

³⁴ Crinson, “Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display,” 233.

Asante relics such as the Golden Stool, the Asantes attach significance to objects that are imbued with a living memory, as well as those of functional importance to the Asante state. They see objects displayed in museums as dead and disconnected from their present way of life.³⁵ However, Crinson believes that the overrepresentation of Asante cultural objects in the national museum may have also been a double-edged sword. It served to “undercut any suggestion of Asante cultural hegemony” as well as “acknowledging or giving to the Asante objects a special cultural presence based on their aesthetic appeal to a putative visitor while at the same time downplaying what this might imply about separate or federated national status outside the museum.”³⁶

Among the other principal objects of culture to be exhibited in the National Museum under Nkrumah’s premiership, in addition to the collection of Asante stools, were ethnic fabric and dress such as Kente cloth and northern smocks. While Nkrumah and the CPP sought to utilize the medium of museums and other projects of nation building to create an image of one nation and to discourage “tribalism” and regionalism, they also embraced traditional and regional ways of life. Nkrumah and his functionaries adopted the Akan kente cloth and the northern smock as “national” dress (see Chapter V). This explains why scholars point to the overrepresentation of the institution of Chieftaincy at the national museum. Chieftaincy is characterised by “traditional regalia and cultural artefacts, sacred stools, jewellery, religious objects, stool houses, graveyards, mausoleum and sacred groves...[which are] national treasures.”³⁷ Some forms of “traditional regalia”, such as textiles, carry historical weight, especially in the case of Kente fabrics. “In the cultural context of use, Kente is more than a clothing item. It is a visual representation of history, philosophy,

³⁵ Crinson, “Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display,” 244-245 and note 78, 250.

³⁶ Crinson, “Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display,” 245.

³⁷ *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*, 33.

ethics, oral literature, religious belief and political thought”.³⁸ They argue that the display and prominence of chiefly regalia undermined Nkrumah’s rhetoric of trying to build *one* nation, and that he was usurping Asante traditions and customs for his own nationalistic purposes. Thus, by giving chieftaincy such a prominent display in a museum that was supposed to represent a *national* identity, Nkrumah was in fact giving more national credence to chiefly leaders and to Ashanti history and culture in particular.

Nkrumah’s relationship with the powerful Asante sub-national group is much more nuanced and complicated than what most scholars would profess. The overrepresentation of Asante sub-national objects in the national museum did not necessarily mean that Nkrumah wanted the nation to identify with Asante history and culture, for example. When convenient, Nkrumah sought to promote Asante history and culture as an important part of national culture, and when not, he was ambivalent to Asante political pressures. During the period of transition to independence (1951 – 1956), Nkrumah was also suspicious of the Museum leadership and its closeness to the Asante federalist cause. As Crinson reveals, the British-trained Gold Coast anthropologist, Professor Kofi A. Busia was a prominent member of the NLM and a close associate of A.W. Lawrence, the first director of the Museum of Archaeology at the University of College of the Gold Coast (the predecessor institution to the National Museum). “This indicates at least that Nkrumah might have regarded the [National] Museum with some equivocation...Nkrumaist political ideology regarded the wealth of traditional cultures as tribalism, whose diversity might be signalled when the political moment

³⁸ The National Museum of Ghana.

demanded tokens of affiliation, but otherwise was best consigned to museum shelves.”³⁹

“Federalist” Alternative to the National Museums

In order to monopolize the display of objects of the “national” patrimony, the Nkrumah administration took drastic measures to prevent other groups from competing with the National Museum. As with other restrictions such as those placed on the display of flags, emblems and other insignia that were identified with particular tribes and regions (see Chapter V), the Nkrumah administration issued regulations that curtailed the formation of self-governing, regional museums.⁴⁰ The Avoidance of Discrimination Act of 1957 was the legal embodiment of these regional restrictions. But why did the CPP government enact such limiting laws to retard regional museums, which, after all, were edifices that housed important cultural and material culture? Janet Hess asserts that the Nkrumah government deliberately paid little attention and gave minimal funding to regional museum displays, particularly in the northern and western regions, in order to develop the National Museum as the sole home for the material culture of a homogenous nation.⁴¹ The founding of the National Museum and the discouragement of other museums dedicated to specific tribal or regional identities went hand in hand with Nkrumah’s nationalist policies. These were seen to be subservient to the overall Ghanaian national identity. The CPP also insisted, “it is not enough to know the heritage of your own individual tribe grouping; it is not enough. We must expand and be true exponents of Ghanaian culture *in toto*.”⁴²

³⁹ Crinson, “Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display,” 240.

⁴⁰ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 21.

⁴¹ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 24.

⁴² Quoted in Crinson, “Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display,” 241.

This was most evident in the case of the Asante Cultural Centre, which was inaugurated in Kumasi in 1951. Privately managed and funded, the Asante Cultural Centre was the product of collaboration between the Oxford-educated Gold Coast national and cultural enthusiast Dr. Alex Yaw Kyerematen, the Asantehene Otumfuo Sir Osei Tutu Agyeman Prempeh II, and the Asanteman Council.

The Centre housed the small Prempeh II Jubilee Museum (opened in 1956), a modern craft gallery, an open-air theatre, and was dedicated to the preservation of and research into Asante customs and culture.⁴³ Nonetheless, Crinson asserts that the construction of the Asante Cultural Centre was contrary to what Braunholz had in mind for a regional museum."⁴⁴ This may explain why the Nkrumah administration forcefully nationalized it in 1963 and renamed it the Centre of National Ghanaian Culture.⁴⁵



Figure 3.4. Asante Cultural Centre (renamed Centre of National Ghanaian Culture and then Ghana National Cultural Centre)

⁴³ Francis Boakye Duah, "Community Initiative & National Support at the Asante Cultural Centre, Ghana," in *Museums & the Community in West Africa*, ed. Claude Daniel Ardouin and Emmanuel Arinze (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 105-106, 110; Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 240.

⁴⁴ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 240.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 240; Francis Boakye Duah, "Community Initiative & National Support at the Asante Cultural Centre, Ghana," 112; Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 24.

Nkrumah's nationalization and re-branding of the Asante Cultural Centre was symbolic of his opposition to Asante federalist sentiments that had threatened to derail Ghanaian independence in the 1950s. The Asantes in return, lost interest in the Accra-administered Centre of National Ghanaian Culture.⁴⁶

There was an implicit difference in how the colonial officials and the Nkrumah state understood the role of museums in the Gold Coast. On the one hand, Colonial museum officials "saw the accumulation of collections and the establishment of a museum as ways of restoring cultural identity and preserving cultural stability in the face of modernization."⁴⁷ On the other, Nkrumah saw the National Museum as a means of navigating between the traditional past of tribes and chiefs and that of a modern, unified nation-state and ultimately the supranational United States of Africa.

Nonetheless, scholars such as Crinson and Adedze do not believe that the goals of the National Museum of Ghana during the Nkrumah period were achieved. On the one hand, it was dominated by Akan material culture, as well as being an Accra-focused entity. Despite the curator's efforts of carefully selecting objects to display and symbolize the traditions of the colony or the oneness of the nation, the National Museum played a marginal role in Ghanaian life, according to Crinson. Ghanaians hardly visited the National Museum, which they regarded as being the abode of tourists, a situation that is shared with other museums throughout Africa. Moreover, these museums were often under-funded, not well preserved, under-visited by the local populations, and their collections were subjected to theft, neglected or deterioration. Crinson also believes that the National Museum appealed mostly to the privileged Ghanaian middleclass and intellectuals, such as those who

⁴⁶ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 240.

⁴⁷ Crinson, "Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display," 241-242.

were products of an Achimota College education, “forming further evidence of the Museum’s purpose of reinforcing the cultural and political identity of the educated middle-class.”⁴⁸

Adedze finds that the African curators who took over the museums started by their colonial counterparts made few changes, if any, to the existing exhibits, which by and large were unrepresentative of “national” material culture.⁴⁹ On the other hand, its collections went beyond the boundaries of the nation-state of Ghana, reflecting the history and culture of other African nations, as well as Europe. This resulted in a failure to promote nationalism and to build a truly, unifying national culture. However, there was another kind of museum – the onsite museum - that, according to Adedze, had been more successful in other African nation-states. These successful “on-site museums” included the National Museum of Nigeria, Benin and the Historical Museum of Abomey, Benin. The latter was constructed by the French colonial government and the local population, and became a tourist attraction as well as a sacred shrine for the people.

The administrators of the museum respect the rules and regulations that bind the local population in visiting sacred places. Religious ceremonies-libation or sacrifices-are held in the palace amidst tourist sightseeing. Thus, the Historical Museum of Abomey serves a dual purpose: religious center and tourist attraction.⁵⁰

While the “national” experiment may have been a failure, the CPP administration proposed to convert Nkrumah’s birthplace in Nkroful into just such an on-site museum-shrine, where personal items belonging to Nkrumah would be put on display. As we shall see later in this chapter of this chapter, the Nkrumah Museum/Shrine at Nkroful was to serve the dual purpose of being a tourist attraction

⁴⁸ Crinson, “Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display,” 242.

⁴⁹ Adedze, “Museums as a Tool for Nationalism in Africa,” 60.

⁵⁰ Adedze, “Museums as a tool for Nationalism in Africa,” 63.

as well as a pilgrimage site for Ghanaians/Africans and foreigners. They would pay homage to Nkrumah, who the CPP promoted as the Father of Ghanaian and African Nationalism.

Ghana National Science Museum⁵¹

In the post Second World War, postcolonial world, new nation-states in Asia and Africa saw the embracement of science and technology as a way to rapidly industrialize their nations and to achieve economic development. Just as Nkrumah acknowledged the importance of material culture to fomenting national and Pan-African unity (by establishing a National Museum), he also thought that Ghana could join the family of advanced nation-states by embracing science and technology. To this end, the Nkrumah government established a variety of science-related museums in the 1960s. These included the Geology Museum, a national research museum based in the Department of Geology at the University of Ghana (1964), which exhibited a collection of fossils, minerals and rocks found in Ghana and other countries. The CPP also constructed the Museum of Ethnography in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana (1964), which displayed ethnographic and archaeological items.⁵²

Independence was also a technological turning point in the history of the nation. Prior to independence, Ghanaian blacksmiths, for example, manufactured basic farm tools such as hoes and cutlasses for farmers to cultivate their crops. In the immediate post-independence era, Ghanaian engineers embarked on an ambitious program to cultivate indigenous scientific and technological innovations, which

⁵¹ The name was changed to The Museum of Science and Technology after Nkrumah was ousted.

⁵² ICOM Ghana, http://ghana.icom.museum/24016_e.html (accessed July 13, 2009).

included the manufacturing of vehicles that were branded “Boafo” and “Adom.”⁵³ Since “classical” museums such as the National Museum were generally dedicated to exhibiting the ancient history and culture of the nation-state, other kinds of museums were needed to emphasize the contemporary history and future direction of society. This need for a modern perspective of the nation-state was especially pertinent given the rapid pace of industrialization and scientific innovations that characterized the developing world of the twentieth century.

By the 1930s (or in the inter War period), another kind of museum had been added to the foray of national museums in the developed world: the science museum. “The primary goal of a modern science museum is then to communicate to the public – in clear and easily understandable terms – the advances in science and technology, and their impact on man and society.”⁵⁴ In Europe and North America, museums exclusively dedicated to the exhibition of science and technology objects that were of importance to the educational, economic and scientific-technological advancement of their nations (and to put their level of modernization on display) had been another addition to museums in the industrialised countries. These included the Science Museum in London, the “Evoluon” in the Netherlands (built in 1966), Deutsch Museum in Munich, Tekniska Museet in Stockholm, Sweden, the Swiss Museum of Technology, and the Canadian Centennial Science Centre in Toronto.

Science museums were established to achieve three primary objectives; 1) to collect, preserve and store objects, artefacts and specimens that are important to the history and development of science of technology; 2) to conduct scientific research on the museum’s collections and publish the results of such inquiry; and 3) to

⁵³ See *Think Ghana*, “Ghana at a scientific standstill,” November 22, 2007, <http://news.thinkghana.com/science/200711/12125.php> (accessed July 21, 2009), 1.

⁵⁴ E.S. Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum* (Paris: UNESCO 597/BMS.RD/CLT, May 1968), 1.

exhibit representative objects contained in the museum's collects to educate and inform the public. An essential aspect of educating and holding the interest of the public, Strandh insists, is for the science museum to emphasize the contemporary history of science and technology. This can be achieved not only through permanent exhibits at the museum itself that are open to the general public, but also through travelling exhibits and the development of programs with formal educational institutions.⁵⁵

Origins and Functions of the Ghana National Science Museum

Nkrumah was keenly interested in utilizing science and technology to achieve rapid industrialization, economic growth and to advance the standard of living of the Ghanaian nation. Following the European and North American examples, he saw the establishment of a national science museum as one of several steps in the popularisation of science and technology in Ghana. In 1965, the Nkrumah government established the Ghana National Science Museum (GNSM). It was built on Liberia Road as an extension of and in close proximity to the National Museum, and likewise governed by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board. The idea to construct a National Science Museum in Ghana began around 1961/62 in the Physics Department of the University of Ghana, where Professors Alan N. May and Wright (both lecturers at the University) discussed the project. May and Wright subsequently presented the proposal for the museum to both Nkrumah as well as the Ghana Academy of Arts and Science.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 2-3.

⁵⁶ Professor May served as Chairman of the Interim Executive Committee of the GNSM in 1964. The Committee comprised of authorities from governmental, educational, scientific and research institutions, including the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Academy of Sciences, the University of Ghana, the University of Science and Technology, the University College of Cape Coast, etc. See Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 4.

In 1963, the Nkrumah administration invited a British scientist, Dr. Frank Greenaway – Deputy Keeper of the Department of Chemistry at the Science Museum in London – to conduct a feasibility study for the National Science Museum.⁵⁷ Greenaway recommended that the GNSM should establish branches and outreach operations all over the country, providing permanent (or fixed) and mobile (or travelling) exhibitions and educational displays on the physical and life sciences, focusing on their real-life applications to human welfare. The fixed exhibitions would represent about fifty different science and technology topics, while a similar number of travelling exhibitions (based on the permanent ones) would visit secondary schools and other places across the country. In addition to international exhibitions, the Ghanaian National Collections would display the historical and contemporary developments in science and technology in Ghana. This would also include a collection of instruments and apparatus; a national history collection; exhibitions highlighting the climatic and geophysical aspects of equatorial Africa; a lake in which to conduct hydromechanical and marine experiments; and a planetarium. The latter had increasingly become a popular feature of science museums around the world. In addition to the central science museum, and in order to make the GNSM truly national in scope, Branch Museums were to be built in the major centres within the University College of Cape Coast, the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, as well as in Tamale in the North. The branch museums would be dedicated to specific aspects of science and technology, such as science teaching, engineering and the history of technology.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 3-4. See also Gilbert Boyefio, "Does Ghana Need a Museum of Science and Technology?" *The Statesman*, July 27, 2006, http://www.thestatesmanonline.com/pages/news_detail.php?section=7&newsid=103 (accessed July 13, 2009).

⁵⁸ See Frank Greenaway, "Proposed Ghana National Science Museum," May 1963, 4, 5, 10. See also Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 9-13.

In the summer of 1963, following the recommendations outlined in the Greenaway Report, the CPP government allocated eight acres of land in Accra to serve as the site for the GNSM. The architectural firm of Kenneth Scott Associates was hired to undertake a two-phase plan to design and construct the multi-million cedi Museum, which was to include a sixty thousand square feet (60,000 ft sq) Exhibition Hall, two Lecture Theatres – with a companioned capacity to seat over eight hundred (800) persons, as well as other spaces for stores, workshops and offices. However, given the slow pace of the appropriations process to fund the Museum, a temporary edifice was built in 1964, having a much-reduced indoor exhibition area of three thousand square feet (3,000 sq ft), outdoor exhibition space, and a small open-air cine-theatre. Despite these setbacks, the GNSM opened its space to the public in December 1965. The collections consisted mainly of objects related to the advancement of science and technology, especially those produced or utilized by the nation. These objects included biological and natural history specimens and metals, to showcase the nation's biological, natural and mineral wealth and resources. Moreover, the museum housed a library of science-related books and sponsored activities for children to partake in and learn about scientific and technological topics.⁵⁹ The first exhibition was entitled, "Electric Power in Africa."⁶⁰ Clearly, the theme of the first exhibition was chosen to publicise and coincide with the upcoming 23rd January 1966 inauguration of Nkrumah's most important (and most expensive at GBP £70,000,000.00) industrial endeavour - the Volta River (or Akosombo) Hydroelectric Project. Reminiscing about the moment, Nkrumah wrote:

"On that day at Akosombo...when I switched on illuminating lights signifying the official opening of hydro-electric power from the Volta, one of my greatest dreams had come true. I had witnessed the wide-scale

⁵⁹ ICOM Ghana, http://ghana.icom.museum/24016_e.html (accessed July 13, 2009).

⁶⁰ Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 4.

electrification of Ghana and the breakthrough into a new era of economic and social advance.”⁶¹

With an initial output of 512,000 – 588,000 kW of power, an ultimate output of 768,000 – 882,000 kW, five hundred miles of transmission lines, and 161,000 volts of electricity on the main grid, Volta was to increase the electrical capacity of Ghana by almost six hundred percent (600%) thereby significantly increasing the potential for national economic growth.⁶² Half of its electricity would directly power the bauxite-producing aluminium plant smelter in Tema. In the spirit of encouraging Pan-Africanism and economic development, Nkrumah also offered to share the electricity reserves from the plant with neighbouring countries Togo, Dahomey (Benin), Ivory Coast and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso). With the power provided by the dam for electricity and crop irrigation, “Ghana was all set for a tremendous march forward into a new industrial era, and a great expansion in our food growing capacity.”⁶³ It was also designed to demonstrate that Nkrumah was ready, willing and able to embrace and utilize modern technology for the socio-economic development of the Ghanaian nation-state and its neighbours in West Africa. In addition to providing electricity to the nation and its neighbours, the lake formed from the dammed Volta River was stocked with fish that would be caught with fishing trawlers bought in the Soviet Union, and later processed for national consumption.

The first exhibition, “Electric Power in Africa” was therefore an integral, and symbolic aspect of Nkrumah’s programs for a larger technological great leap forward, represented by the Volta River Project. It was followed by a biological display titled “How Your Body Works” in early 1966. Despite the coup taking place

⁶¹ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 83.

⁶² Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 83.

⁶³ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 52.

against Nkrumah in the first months of that year, the GNSM continued to carry out its functions. With the assistance of UNESCO, the involvement of university and secondary school science teachers and the private sector, plans were put forth for the Museum to engage in extra-mural activities including the coordination of science clubs, special exhibitions, scientific film screenings, industrial and scientific conferences.⁶⁴

There were three major objectives in establishing the National Science Museum: 1); to acquire, display and preserve objects that demonstrated the world's and Ghana's historical and contemporaneous achievements in the areas of science and technology; 2) To educate and demonstrate to the public about the application of science and technology in the industrial and social life of the nation; 3) and to stimulate interest in science and technology in the nation, especially the youth, who would hopefully be inspired to pursue careers in these areas for the future benefit of the nation.⁶⁵ Coupled with library holdings on the biographies and discoveries of major world scientists, and technological advances in history and contemporary society, science was to be demystified and presented in a palatable, accessible way to the youth of the future. There was general agreement that the science museum's primary goal was to entice young boys and girls that science was fun, which would hopefully push them into careers as engineers and scientists instead of pursuing courses perceived to be easy.

However, there was disagreement about the kind of science-related exhibitions that the museum should house. While Greenaway proposed displays that stressed both pure and applied sciences, Strandh felt that only the more hands-on applied sciences exhibits lent themselves "to lively and thought-provoking

⁶⁴ Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 4.

⁶⁵ Boyefio, "Does Ghana Need a Museum of Science and Technology?" 1-2.

demonstrations...[than] the often...more static exhibits of pure science.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, Greenaway wanted the executive committee of the science museum to be restricted to faculty of the universities and the academy of science, while Strandh argued for a more popular and inclusive advisory council that also included members of the Science Teachers Association, the Trade Union Congress and the Association of Ghanaian Private Businessmen. This approach, Strandh thought, ‘will most certainly spread the idea of the G.N.S.M. into circles where important practical and financial support will be found. It is an obvious advantage if as many elements possible in society consider the GNSM as “Our Museum”.’⁶⁷ Strandh also suggested a radio amateur station, a small botanical garden planted with the most common Ghanaian bushes, plants and trees to landscape the museum, and Science Clubs (modelled on the systems in the US and Western Europe) be attached to the main branch of the G.N.S.M. He also recommended a special exhibition called “Communications in Ghana, Past, Present and in the Future (see figures 3.5).”⁶⁸



Figure 3.5. Training young Ghanaians in the use of communications technology. Source: British Postal Museum and Archive

⁶⁶ Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 8. See also Greenaway, “Proposed Ghana National Science Museum,” 3.

⁶⁷ Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 6.

⁶⁸ The Communications in Ghana exhibition would have displays on land, sea and air transportation systems in Ghana, including the first railway, the first aeroplane in the Gold Coast, the first telegraph and telephone in the Gold Coast, the first radio station, and samples of Gold Coast/ Ghanaian stamps. See Strandh, *Ghana: The National Science Museum*, 16-17.

Nkrumah's Embrace of Science and Technology

Taking into account the founding of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, the establishment of a science and technology museum demonstrates the significance that the President placed on scientific development and his belief that Africans could compete with the West on equal footings. What is significant about science museum and its collections is how they related to Nkrumah's larger project of incorporating scientific training and development into the youth of Ghana so that they could go out and engage in literal and figurative scientific nation-building.

Nkrumah's embrace of science and technology was a familiar one amongst anti-colonial nationalists in Africa; they argued that decades of colonialism and exploitation by foreign firms in Africa had drained the natural resources, stunted the training and growth of a local working class and technocrats in favour of European expatriates, and caused stagnation in the economy. Therefore, a scientific and technological revolution and great leap forward would be necessary to level the playing field. According to Nkrumah, scientific knowledge and technological know-how could be harnessed for an economic great leap forward for the economy and for industrial innovation. New schools (from primary to tertiary), technical training centres and laboratories would be build to inculcate the youth with an appreciation for science and technology at an early age, and to give the proletariat the tools necessary to yield maximum production from Ghana's natural and human resources. According to Nkrumah, the number of new factories, roads, hospitals and schools, the New Tema Harbour and Town, the Volta and Teffle Bridges and the Volta River Dam were "obvious evidence of the modernisation and industrialisation of Ghana"

under his administration.⁶⁹ These schemes were part and parcel to his fast-track, socialist model of development as embodied in the Five Year Development Plans (1951 – 1956 and 1959 – 1964) and the Consolidation Plan (1957 – 1959). “Under these Plans the foundations were to be laid for the modernisation and industrialisation of Ghana. A skilled labour force was to be trained and an adequate complement of public services built up such as transport, electricity, water and telecommunications.”⁷⁰ Technology would reverse the colonial orientation of Ghana’s economy that was anchored to a single cash crop (cocoa) and deliver concrete fruits of independence and development. Amongst the modernisation projects that Nkrumah claims to his government’s credit by his last years in office were the building of a railway link between Accra and the major port of Takoradi, and the expansion of the latter; the construction of the new, man-made Tema harbour (said to be the largest in Africa at the time); the construction of “one of the most modern network of roads in Africa” and the development of a public transportation system interlinking the regions of the country; the construction of schools, clinics and hospitals, the expansion of potable water supplies; a modern network of telecommunications; the diversification and mechanisation of the agricultural sector; and the most significant technological and industrial prize of them all – the Volta River Hydroelectric Project, “which was designed to provide the electrical power for our great social, agricultural and industrialisation programme.”⁷¹

From 1951 to 1961 – the first ten year of the Nkrumah administration - there was a significant increase in the number of educational facilities built and the student enrolment from primary to tertiary schools. During this first decade, there

⁶⁹ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 75.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

was also a significant increase in the number of hospitals and clinics, doctors and nurses, post offices, telephones and electricity installed.⁷²

With the declaration of a single party state in 1964, the Government of Ghana also ramped up its programs of scientific and technological awareness and development to achieve rapid socio-economic development. A 1964 UNESCO Week commemorative postage stamp series was issued in various countries (including Ghana) depicting world famous scientists.⁷³ In addition to the more known European or American scientists, the Ghana Cabinet instructed the Academy of Science and the stamp designers that stamp “designs featuring the portraits of some eminent scientists of African descent should be submitted for consideration.”⁷⁴ The approved Ghanaian issue depicted the German-born physicist Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955), the symbol of the atom as well as his revolutionary Theory of Relativity as expressed in the mass and energy equation, “ $E = mc^2$.” It also depicted the prominent African-American botanist/agricultural chemist George Washington Carver (1864 - 1943) and the peanut plant, from which his scientific researches yielded more than three hundred products. Carver’s story as the son of slaves from the American South whose career as a scientist brought him and his family fame and fortune and which also brought benefits to the poor black farmers of the South resonated well with the Nkrumah government’s program to inspire the Ghanaian youth to pursue careers in the sciences. While one of the scientists depicted – Carver

⁷² Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 78–79.

⁷³ GPA: S4/61, Manfred R. Lehmann, Ghana Philatelic Agency to Ministry of Communications & Works, letter, “UNESCO Week 1964,” September 24, 1964. The theme of science, technology and research as important aspects of national development and modernization can be found throughout the postage stamps issued during the Nkrumah era. These stamp issues include the inauguration of the Black Star Line Shipping Company (1957); the inauguration of Ghana Airways (1958); the Volta River Project (1966); the opening of the New Town and Tema Harbour (1962), and the Tema oil refinery (1964); the 60th anniversary of Ghana Railway (1903 - 1963); and the centenary of the International Telecommunications Union (1865 – 1965).

⁷⁴ GPA: S4/61, GB.28/SF.6/15 (UNESCO Week 1964), Ministry of Communications & Works to Director of Posts and Telecommunications, memorandum, “UNESCO Week Commemorative Issue,” October 8, 1964.

– was on African descent, he was not African born. This was nonetheless in line with Nkrumah’s record of forging alliances with blacks from the United States, the Caribbean as well as Africa and was in line with his Pan-Africanist and Diasporic rhetoric.⁷⁵ It also sent a message to Ghanaian youth that the realm of high scientific achievements was not the exclusive domain of whites, but also of blacks. Although the Nkrumah Cabinet and the Academy of Science could have chosen to depict any European or American scientist, their choice of the man whose theory led to the invention of the atomic bomb symbolises Nkrumah’s plan to convert Ghana into the first nuclear nation in West Africa. By 1964, the CPP government was already in the advanced stages of developing nuclear capabilities.

Therefore, the premise of adding a Museum of Science and Technology to the National Museum system was so that Ghanaian society, especially the youth, would go there and witness the advancements that Ghana was undertaking in these fields. They would leave with an inspiration to want to become engineers, mechanics, scientists, etc. The socialist state would pay for the pupils to enrol in schools and training centres to prepare a new generation of nationalists versed in the sciences and with technological know-how to run the engines of the nation.

There was also another reason for the establishment of the science museum. It was a form of “show and tell,” to display to the nation and the world that Ghana was an industrializing nation-state, and to display the achievements of Nkrumah’s

⁷⁵ The other African American that was featured on a Ghanaian postage stamp was the Civil Rights icon Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who (along with the Ghanaian lawyer and opposition politician Dr. J.B. Danquah) appeared on the United Nations “International Human Rights Year 1968” issue. The NLC government, which issued the stamps must have wanted to achieve the dual purpose of honouring the memory of Danquah (who died in a Nkrumah jail cell) and King, who had been assassinated in April of 1968. The NLC also wanted to assure the African American community that had been such an integral part of Nkrumah’s nation-building project that they were still willing to reach out to them. Relations between the NLC leadership and African American leaders had been strained, since the latter accused them of helping Nkrumah to pillage and mismanage Ghana, while the former accused the NLC of stemming the advance of the African/Ghanaian revolution headed by Nkrumah.

premiership as a modernizer and ultimately to legitimate his power. While the use of science and technology was promoted as a means of achieving social and economic progress for the nation, the technology and the funds for development were largely acquired from foreign sources.

Nuclear Nation

The dawning of the nuclear age in the developed world also had a tremendous impact on Nkrumah's visions for Ghana's future. And the future propulsion of Ghana's social and scientific revolution, as Nkrumah saw it, lied not only with the capacity to generate hydroelectric energy, but also in its ability to harness the power of the atom. In addition to the public school system, which did offer basic theoretical introductions to the world of science, the GNSM was to be the main "hands-on" conduit for Ghana's future scientists. The young Ghanaian boy or girl who visited the GNSM and became fascinated by the power of science and technology to change human society, would be an ideal candidate for state sponsorship and training to become a future Ghanaian nuclear scientist.

One of the most important and controversial show of Nkrumah's power and embracement of science and technology was therefore his active quest to construct an atomic reactor in Ghana. Ironically, Nkrumah initially resisted the development of nuclear energy in Africa, especially as a weapon of war for the colonial powers. In 1959, along with an alliance of Western pacifists, Ghana embarked on a campaign to stop France from detonating its first nuclear bomb in Algeria (its North African colony) the following year. When this alliance failed, Nkrumah financed and hosted a disarmament assembly in 1962, set in Accra and dubbed "The World Without the

Bomb,” issuing a postage stamp to commemorate the event (see figure 3.6).⁷⁶ Nkrumah also promised to “support wholeheartedly the efforts of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations to make Africa a Nuclear Free Zone.”⁷⁷ However, concurrently with the disarmament campaign Nkrumah was embarking on a nationwide campaign to harness nuclear power. The failure to prevent the French military from imposing its power on African soil might have turned Nkrumah from nuclear peacemaker to nuclear non-pacifist.

Nkrumah’s commitment to follow the Western model of development was underscored by the promotion of research and practice in science and technology began in earnest in 1959. In that year, the Nkrumah government founded the Ghana Academy of Learning - the first such organization in postcolonial black Africa. The main objective of this organization was to organize and coordinate scientific research for national development. In 1961, the Ghana Academy of Learning was renamed the Ghana Academy of Sciences.⁷⁸ The Nkrumah government also established the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission in 1961. This was perhaps to counter the march forward of his arch enemy – Apartheid South Africa – which, since the Second World War had embarked on a clandestine nuclear weapons program and which had established an Atomic Energy Board (AEB) in 1959 to achieve that end. In the 1960s, South Africa had experimented with the development

⁷⁶ Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954–1970*, vol. 2 of *The Struggle Against the Bomb* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 265–271; Lawrence S. Wittner, “The Forgotten Alliance of African Nationalists and Western Pacifists,” *History News Network*, March 19, 2007, <http://hnn.us/articles/36279.html> (accessed January 9, 2009).

⁷⁷ Linda Asante Agyei, “Nkrumah Lays Foundation for Atomic Reactor...in 1964,” *Ghana Home Page*, April 11, 2007, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=122255&comment=2779732#com> (accessed January 15, 2009). Originally published in *Ghana Review International*, iss. 120, March 2007.

⁷⁸ After the 1966 coup, the organization was once again renamed. In 1968, it became two entities – the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences (GAAS) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). While retaining its broad philosophical objectives of promoting science and technology, references to its more nationalist goals were abandoned by the NLC. See Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, <http://www.gaas-gh.org/>.

of Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (PNEs) supposedly for mining and engineering only, but in the early 1970s, Prime Minister Johannes Vorster authorized the construction of a limited nuclear deterrent program.⁷⁹ The African nuclear arms race had begun in earnest.

Nkrumah understood that the very notion of an African country experimenting with nuclear energy would make the Western powers nervous. He acknowledged, "Science can be applied for good ends, for the betterment of the human race, or for bad ends, for the making of weapons of [mass] destruction. In no field of science is the contrast between these two aspects so great as it is in atomic energy."⁸⁰ With regard to the worries of the West, he added, "We were fully aware then that our motives might be misconstrued, for the setting up of an Atomic Reactor is the first practical step to building an atomic bomb. We have always stood for the use of fissionable material exclusively for peaceful ends. We have consistently stood against the unnecessary proliferation of weapons of mass destructions, and with equal consistency for the abolition of such weapons."⁸¹ Despite opposition from his detractors, Nkrumah laid the foundation stone for the construction of the Ghana Atomic Reactor Centre at Kwabenya in November 1964.⁸² At the project's inauguration, Nkrumah gave a speech in which he touted how "Science City" would place Ghana at the forefront of modernity by utilizing atomic science, technology, research and development, as a means to solve development problems and provide material benefits to the people of Africa. This

⁷⁹ David Albright, "South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Program," Institute for Science and International Security, March 14, 2001, http://web.mit.edu/ssp/seminars/wed_archives_01spring/albright.htm, 1 (accessed August 23, 2009); Nuclear Threat Initiative, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/SAfrica/ (accessed August 29, 2009).

⁸⁰ Agyei, "Nkrumah Lays Foundation for Atomic Reactor," April 11, 2007.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

scientific revolution and technological great leap forward was envisioned to allow Ghana and Africa “to break even with more advanced economies” and to achieve the utopian goal of constructing an “industrialized socialist society.”⁸³



Figure 3.6. “World Without the Bomb Postage Stamp”

During this period, Ghana was in the crossfire of the Cold War rivalry between the USSR and the United States to gain spheres of influence in the newly-independent states of Africa and to win the nuclear arms race. On the one hand, the Americans had funded Nkrumah’s Volta River Hydroelectric power station. To build an atomic reactor, however, Nkrumah turned to the communists. Although the atomic reactor, monitoring station and radio-chemical laboratories were still under construction, a cohort of Ghanaian scientists and engineers had already been trained in the Soviet Union and re-dispatched to Ghana where housing facilities had been constructed for these “skilled specialists in nuclear science.”⁸⁴ Several educational, scientific and government organizations, including the Ghana Academy of Sciences; the University College of Science and Education; the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the Nuclear Research Reactor; the Radio Chemical Laboratory; and the Radio Isotope Centre were to be involved in research on nuclear and atomic sciences as well as the development of “peaceful uses of

⁸³ Agyei, “Nkrumah Lays Foundation for Atomic Reactor,” April 11, 2007.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

nuclear explosives.”⁸⁵ These institutions were also responsible for training and inculcating an appreciation for science and technology in the general population, especially among the youth. The Ghana National Science Museum was to be an important centre of scientific learning in this endeavour.

In addition to the Soviet Union, the Nkrumah administration signed several reciprocal agreements of friendship and cooperation with other communist states in Eastern Europe and Asia, to assist it with the training of Ghanaian scientists and technicians. Three such treaties were signed with the Hungarian People’s Republic, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and the Polish People’s Republic in 1964. The 1964-65 Hungarian-Ghanaian agreement on cultural exchanges reinforced the Agreement on Cultural Co-operation and the Scientific, Technical and Cultural Aid Plan signed between the two countries in 1961. In addition to reciprocal sharing of socio-cultural and political information, Ghana would benefit from a Hungarian commitment to share its scientific knowledge and practices with the Ghana Academy of Science, the National Museum of Science and the National Library. Hungary promised that up to twenty Ghanaian students would be given one-year and longer university scholarships to study science, technology and culture-related topics (including museology), which were to be determined by Ghana. A team of Hungarian scientists would also visit Ghana for advising and training purposes. “Exhibition and Propaganda Materials” relating to life and development in both countries were also to be displayed.⁸⁶

The 1964-5 Working Plan of Cultural Co-operation between Ghana and the PRC would involve cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries. It also provided for five to seven Ghanaian scientists to visit China for several weeks

⁸⁵ Agyei, “Nkrumah Lays Foundation for Atomic Reactor,” April 11, 2007.

⁸⁶ PRAAD, “Protocol for the Realization of the Cultural Agreement Between the Hungarian People’s Republic and the Republic of Ghana,” July 11, 1964, pp. 1-4.

after the 1964 Peking Science Symposium had concluded.⁸⁷ The Chinese government also offered to sponsor Ghanaian students to study technical subjects in Chinese institutions, as well as to exchanged books and periodicals between the Peking Library of China and the Accra Central Library of Ghana.⁸⁸ A similar Agreement on Cultural Co-operation, designed to promote bi-lateral educational, scientific and cultural relations was also realized between Ghana and the Polish People's Republic in 1964. Ghanaian students and professionals would be given one to two-year funding to conduct educational, scientific or cultural studies and research in Warsaw, while Polish delegates would be likewise accommodated in Accra.⁸⁹

Notwithstanding the Soviet and Eastern support, Nkrumah's goal of utilizing science and technology for political ends (to realize his dream of a United States of Africa) never came true. In 1966, when the nuclear reactor and research centre were expected to be operational, he was ousted by a US-endorsed military and police coup while on his way to Vietnam to broker a peace treaty between them and the Americans. Washington and Whitehall officials may have suspected that Nkrumah was covertly pursuing a nuclear program for militaristic purposes, or that the Soviet

⁸⁷ The Peking Science Symposium was held in Peking, China from 21-31 August 1964. It was attended by 367 delegates from 44 Asian, African, Latin American and Oceanic countries. Several Western scientists attended the Symposium in the capacity of observers. The symposium was sponsored by the Chinese Association for Science and Technology and the Peking Centre of the World Federation of Scientific Workers. The Peking Symposium was preceded by the *International Conference on the Organisation of Research and Training in Africa in Relation to the Study, Conservation and Utilisation of Natural Resources*. Convened in Lagos, Nigeria from 28 July to 6 August 1964 and sponsored by the Economic Commission in Africa and UNESCO, the conference aimed at organizing the scientific resources (both human and material) of African governments and the training of African scientists, technologists and researchers. The Lagos Conference was attended by delegates from 29 African and 10 non-African countries and the way forward for scientific and technological cooperation among African states left to the Commission for Scientific Research, an arm of the Organization of African Unity. See "Chronicle," *Minerva* 3, no. 1 (September 1964): 131; and UNESCO, *Final Report of the Lagos Conference, 28 July-6 August, 1964* (Paris, 1964).

⁸⁸ PRAAD, "1964-5 Working Plan to the Agreement of Cultural Co-Operation Between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and the Government of People's Republic of China," July 17, 1964.

⁸⁹ PRAAD, "Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and the Government of the Polish People's Republic on Cultural Co-operation," July 17, 1964.

Union was using Ghana as a gateway for developing a nuclear arsenal in Africa to preempt the West.

In 1974, the Acheampong government changed the name of the National Science Museum to the Museum of Science and Technology. By that time, the museum had on exhibit samples of the first automobile, locomotive and airplane that were used in Ghana. Nonetheless, the science museum has become an abandoned relict of the Nkrumah regime that inaugurated it in 1965. It has not kept pace with the promises of its founders nor has it fulfilled the primarily goal of enticing young Ghanaians to become interested in the study and application of science and technology. Although successive governments have pledged funding to reconstruct the museum and to build on the collections, those promises were frequently unfulfilled and construction work to finally finish the museum has been haphazard or non-existent. This has left the museum in a dilapidated state and rendered it all but invisible to the passing public, except for societal outcasts and scatters who have made it their home.⁹⁰

Militarising the Nation: The Ghana Armed Forces Museum

For Nkrumah, a national or thematic museum was not merely a place to preserve and display cultural objects from the past that had no significance to the present. His policies toward museums showed that he saw them as sites to display objects relating to historical and contemporary events that he cared about, including the socio-political issues affecting Ghana and Africa of the day. The museums that were constructed or improved upon by the Nkrumah regime contained objects that symbolized his nationalist, Pan-Africanist and international ideals and projects.

⁹⁰ Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, "Science and Technology Museum abandoned," May 26, 2009, <http://gbcghana.com/news/26214detail.html>.

Among those issues that Kwame Nkrumah cared deeply about were the importance of popular militancy and an organized national military force in defence of the nation and national ideals. Nowhere else was this link between the nation-state and the military better displayed than at the Ghana Armed Forces Museum (GAFM) in Kumasi.⁹¹ The GAFM houses exhibits and relics of importance to the military history of the Gold Coast/Ghana, primarily on the British-Asante (or Yaa Asantewaa) War of 1900-01, the Gold Coast Regiment and artefacts documenting the Modern military history of the Ghana Armed Forces. Nkrumah was supportive of the Ghana Armed Forces Museum, having made two donations of African-made arms for exhibition in 1960 and 1965, respectively. These gifts were a shield and two spears (painted with gold and an embossed symbol of the Conquering Lion of Judah) from Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia (figure 3.10), and an Egyptian manufactured sub-machine gun (figure 3.12), which he received from former Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser. The regime also wanted to propagandise the role of Ghanaian soldiers and commanders in the United Nation's regional peacekeeping mission that was despatched to the Democratic Republic of Congo during the Congo Crisis in 1960. To this end, a Peacekeeping Hall was also installed in 1960 in the GAFM. These exhibits highlighted Nkrumah's ideals regarding anti-colonial militancy and military nationalism, the establishment of an African Military High Command to defend the nation-states and continent of Africa from domestic and foreign threats, and the significance of Ethiopia and Egypt to African nationalism and political sovereignty.⁹²

⁹¹ The GAFM is one of only a handful of museums in Africa dedicated to military history. See International Council of Museums (ICOM), http://ghana.icom.museum/24001_e.html (accessed November 21, 2006).

⁹² Retired Major Maxwell O. Tweneboa-Kodua, Curator, GAFM, e-mail message to author, August 26, 2009; Emmanuel Quainoo, Senior Museum Guide, Ghana Armed Forces Museum, interview by author, Kumasi, Ghana, July 27, 2006.

When the GAFM was inaugurated in 1952, one of the first exhibitions opened to the public was the jail cell, the kind of rifle and personal relics of Yaa Asantewaa (~1832 – 1923). Yaa Asantewaa was a Queenmother from the Asona Royal Family who took up arms to prevent the British from capturing the legendary Asante Golden Stool in 1900 during the last Asante War of Resistance. Cannons used during the British-Asante war of 1900 were also put on display. But the GAFM had African and not British origins. The Ghana Armed Forces Museum was originally known as the Kumasi Fort - built in 1820 by the Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwamina as a replica of the British-built Cape Coast Castle.⁹³ During one of the four British-Asante military conflicts in the 19th century, British forces destroyed the Kumasi Fort in 1874. However, it was later rebuilt in 1897 and used by the British District Commissioner as a military launching ground for the final offensive to incorporate the Asante Empire into the expanding British Empire.⁹⁴ After the Second World War, the Colonial government decided to designate a place to warehouse its war relics used or captured by British forces during their campaigns against the Asantes, in WWI, WWII and Abyssinia (Ethiopia). These items included military hardware and ammunition, historical photographs, colours, letters, maps, medals of honour and other war memorabilia. An assortment of allied and axis-made weaponry, including mortars, rifles, automatic guns, bayonets, equipment and materials used and captured in both World Wars were also on display at the GAFM during the Nkrumah period. There were also colonial ceremonial drums, trumpets and jackets, as well as colonial and independence flags or colors. In 1952-

⁹³ Ghana Armed Forces Museum, and International Council of Museums (ICOM), http://ghana.icom.museum/24001_e.html (accessed November 21, 2006).

⁹⁴ International Council of Museums (ICOM), http://ghana.icom.museum/24001_e.html (accessed November 21, 2006).

1953, the old Kumasi Fort was taken over by the Armed Forces and converted into the Museum of the Gold Coast Regiment, where these items were exhibited.⁹⁵

Since much of the exhibits were contributed by the Imperial War Museum in London,⁹⁶ the Museum of the Gold Coast Regiment reflected British interpretation of history. For the British, the Museum of the Gold Coast Regiment represented the various victories of the British Military might against hostile Asantes in the Gold Coast, Nazi Germans in East Africa and Fascist Italians in Abyssinia. The British colonial government had also controlled the narrative of Yaa Asantewaa after she lost the war and was exiled to their Indian Ocean colony. They portrayed her as a “dangerous subversive,” allowed no statues of her to be erected, and rewarded those who had betrayed her with royal appointments and paraphernalia. Songs also vilified and portrayed her as a coward who had ran away from the battlefield and vanquished by the British.⁹⁷

In the aftermath of Ghanaian independence and the rise of African nationalism across the continent, there was a new climate that made possible a radical reinterpretation of this history. The narrative of Yaa Asantewaa now turned into one of symbolic victory out of physical defeat. The popular story of Yaa Asantewaa promoted by African nationalists now became that of a heroic Pan-African and anti-colonial military and cultural leader who raised an African army to challenge the most powerful colonial force on earth.⁹⁸ In Nkrumah’s Ghana, a national and Pan-African heroine had been resurrected or re-invented to serve the cause of African liberation. Therefore, when the Nkrumah administration gained control over the museum, the government changed its name to the Ghana Armed

⁹⁵ GAFM and ICOM, November 21, 2006.

⁹⁶ GAFM.

⁹⁷ Lynda R. Day, “Long Live the Queen!” 1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Forces Museum, but kept the artefacts bequeathed it by the British. The CPP also changed the colonial narrative of the museum to a nationalist one. The museum was now to underscore the *spirit of resistance and resilience* of the Ghanaian people in times of “national” challenges.⁹⁹ The GAFM then became a site of national resistance against British colonial aggression. The exhibits and tour guides were then emphasizing the critical participation of Gold Coast and other African soldiers and servicemen in the defence of European and African freedom from tyranny in the twentieth century World Wars and civil conflicts in Africa.

The first and only individual to serve as Curator for the GAFM while Nkrumah was in office was Bukari Moshie, a former Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) in the Gold Coast Regiment. He served as Curator from 1952 until 1966, which spanned almost the entire time that Nkrumah presided over the Gold Coast/Ghanaian government (1951 – 1966). His long custodianship indicates that Nkrumah must have had much faith in his loyalty to CPP ideology and his capabilities to develop exhibits designed to promote nation-building. One key aspect of nation-building was the inclusion of narratives about exemplary women whose values and deeds were to be admired and emulated by other Ghanaian women. In the “Midnight Speech,” delivered on the eve of independence at the Old British Polo Grounds, Nkrumah thanked “the chiefs and people of this country, the youth, the farmers, the women who have so nobly fought and won this battle [for independence].”¹⁰⁰ Although he did not specifically mention her by name in the independence speech, Nkrumah acknowledged Yaa Asantewaa as a model of

⁹⁹ GAFM.

¹⁰⁰ Nkrumah, “The Midnight Speech,” track #2, *Africa’s Man of Destiny*.

African resistance to colonialism in other speeches that he made on anti-colonial nationalism.¹⁰¹



Figure 3.7. Jail cell where the British imprisoned Yaa Asantewaa in 1901. Source: Ghana Armed Forces Museum

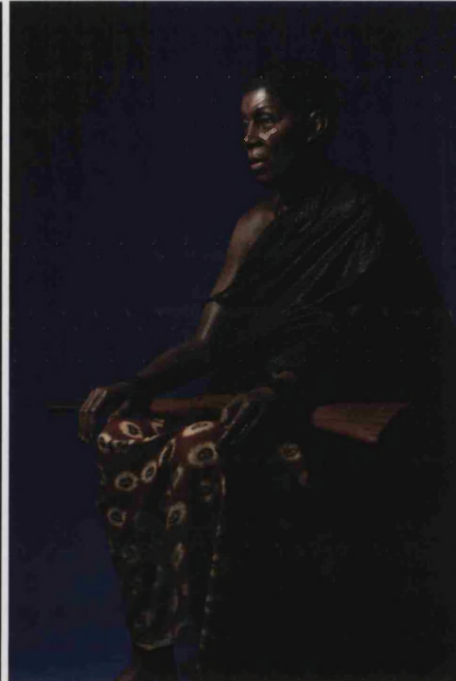
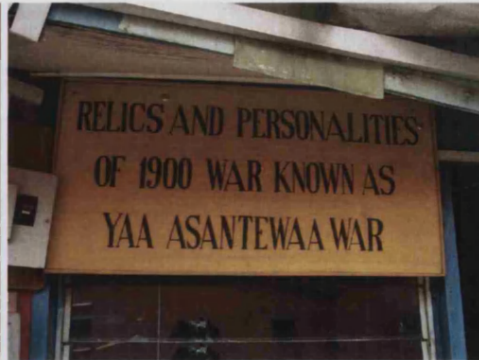


Figure 3.8. Wax Replica of Yaa Asantewaa with rifle at Manhyia Palace Museum. Source: Manhyia Palace Museum



Figure 3.9. Emmanuel Quainoo, Senior Museum Guide, shows a group of school children the exhibits of the museum, including the Yaa Asantewaa cell and relics. This would have been a similar tour given to schoolchildren at the museum during the Nkrumah period. Source: GAFM



When the GAFM was opened in 1952, ex-RSM Moshie converted Yaa Asantewaa's jail cell into a public exhibit (see figures 3.7 and 3.9).¹⁰² Various relics

¹⁰¹ Ivor Agyeman-Duah, presidential biographer and researcher, e-mail message to author, August 30, 2009.

such as a rifle similar to the one that she would have used in the war (see figure 3.8) were also put on display for the public, forming part of the “national memory” of Yaa Asantewaa as an anti-colonial warrior. In addition to the opening up the jail cell to the public, the relics and the building itself all performed the function of being repositories and sites of memorialising and remembering the bravery and unity of the “nation” against a common colonial enemy. This was despite the fact that it was the Asante and not the Ghanaian nation (which did not yet exist) that fought for the preservation of its empire and survival. Nonetheless, the narrative of Yaa Asantewaa possessed all the ingredients of triumphs, tribulations and sacrifice for a good cause that is the substance of which national heroes, heroines and legends are made, even in ultimate defeat. That history is worth retelling here, briefly.

In the late nineteenth century, the mighty Asante Empire stood between the great British Empire and its quest to consolidate the Gold Coast colony while keeping its European rivals at bay. After several battles with the Asantes, the British finally captured and imprisoned the Asantehene Nana Prempeh I. He was later sent into exile in the British-administered Seychelles Islands in the Indian Ocean. British Governor Sir Frederick Hodgson also demanded that the defeated Asantes turn over the Golden Stool - the symbol and soul of the Asante Kingdom - to him in March 1900 upon his arrival in Kumasi.¹⁰³ Governor Hodgson had realised that it was the Golden Stool itself and not the person who occupied it to which the Asantes owed allegiance. He also understood that any person who occupied the Golden Stool would automatically have authority over the Asante nation, commanding their full

¹⁰² Retired Major Tweneboa-Kodua, e-mail message to author, August 26, 2009; Quainoo, interview by author, July 27, 2006.

¹⁰³ Asante history maintains that the sacred Golden Stool was commissioned from the heavens by the 17th Century Priest-Prophet Okomfo Anokye, who warned the Asantes that, without the sacred Stool, the unity of Asanteman would disintegrate and their empire would crumble. See Asirifi Danquah, *Yaa Asantewaa: An African Queen who led an Army to Fight the British*, 2nd ed. (Kumasi, Ghana: Asirifi-Danquah Books Limited, 2002), xi, xiii.

obedience and cooperation.¹⁰⁴ Disillusioned by the banishment of their King, members of the royal family and senior war officials, the men of Asante were unwilling to take on the British militarily. Yaa Asantewaa took up the mantle as Commander-in-Chief, raising an army of some 20, 000 Asante warriors to confront the British and their allies on the coast.¹⁰⁵ The main highlights of Yaa's military campaign were the blockade of all routes leading to Kumasi to prevent the British from capturing the Asante capital, and the seven-month-long entrapment of the British Governor and several hundred of his entourage inside the Kumasi Fort, where many died as a result.

The seizure of the Kumasi Fort was only broken when Governor Hodgson managed to escape and returned with greater guns and reinforcements from the Gold Coast Colony, Lagos, and Sierra Leone. After Yaa Asantewaa was captured in 1901, the British retook the Kumasi Fort, imprisoned her and members of her War Council in the fort, and later exiled them to the Seychelles Island to join the Asantehene Prempeh I and the rest of the revolting royals.¹⁰⁶ Emmanuel Quainoo argues that Yaa Asantewaa was betrayed by a local turncoat, which resulted in the military defeat of the Asante alliance. "Had it not been for this betrayal, Ghana's and Africa's history would have been different today."¹⁰⁷ The last major Asante War of Resistance against British imperialist expansion had ended in the military defeat of the Asante Empire and its incorporation into the British Empire as a dependency of the Gold Coast Colony. Defeat notwithstanding, the British-Yaa Asantewa War of 1900-01 symbolised a kind of *victory in defeat* to Ghanaian intellectuals and nationalists, including Nkrumah. "Although militarily, Yaa Asantewaa lost the war,

¹⁰⁴ GAFM and Manhyia Palace Museum.

¹⁰⁵ Danquah, *Yaa Asantewaa*, xiv.

¹⁰⁶ Danquah, *Yaa Asantewaa*, xiv; *Yaa Asantewaa Festival Brochure*, 10; GAFM; Manhyia Palace Museum.

¹⁰⁷ Quainoo, Senior Museum Guide, GAFM.

psychologically her resistance against the British attempt to dispossess Asante of the precious Golden Stool symbolises a resounding victory for Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante Kingdom as the Queen of England could not capture the Golden Stool.”¹⁰⁸

By re-designating Yaa Asantewaa’s jail cell and relics as public exhibits, the Nkrumah regime attempted to convert an Asante warrior into a Ghanaian national heroine. In 1960, moreover, the Ghana Educational Trust financed the construction of the Yaa Asantewaa Girl’s Secondary School in Kumasi to facilitate the education of young girls and to cultivate future female leaders to follow in the footsteps of Yaa Asantewaa. It was Nkrumah who ensured that the school was named after the Asante warrior queen.¹⁰⁹

However, not all of Nkrumah’s efforts at appropriating the memory of Yaa Asantewaa for nationalist ends were as successful as the museum exhibit and the naming of the school in her honor. During his administration as Leader of Government Business of the Gold Coast in the early 1950s, Kwame Nkrumah had attempted to appropriate Yaa Asantewaa, “as a part of the symbolic and/or revolutionary construction of womanhood.”¹¹⁰ However, this project met with limited success given the resistance of Asante officials to allow Nkrumah and his CPP functionaries in Asante, especially Krobo Edusei, to steal this important symbol of Asante resistance. After the 1951 election, James Owusu and other CPP members of the Kumasi Town Council in Ashanti proposed a motion to erect a statue of the “anti-colonial heroine” Yaa Asantewaa in Ejisu or her home town of Boankra. The animosities between Nkrumah and the Asante chiefs were steadily building up after the 1951 election. Asante representatives rejected the CPP’s initiative and viewed it rather as an affront to their history and sovereignty. The meeting of the Kumasi

¹⁰⁸ Danquah, *Yaa Asantewaa*, xii.

¹⁰⁹ Day, “Long Live the Queen!” 1; Agyeman-Duah, e-mail message to author, August 30, 2009.

¹¹⁰ McCaskie, e-mail message to author, September 1, 2009.

Town Council “ended in uproar when the anti-CPP members said Yaa Asantewaa was an Asante not a Ghanaian, and that the 'southern tribes' had never fought the British.”¹¹¹ Despite this utter rejection of his initial attempt at “nationalizing” the symbolism of Yaa Asantewaa, Nkrumah did not give up on the issue. He subsequently contemplated the creation of a “women's garden” in Accra, honouring heroic Ghanaian “resisters” like Yaa Asantewaa with statues to be made in China or Yugoslavia.¹¹² This initiative, like the one before it, was unfulfilled.

Ethiopia’s Military Significance to Nkrumah

Culturally, militarily and politically, Nkrumah and other African nationalists viewed Ethiopia in high esteem as a very significant African nation that had much relevance to the struggle against European racism and colonialism. Culturally, Ethiopia had a long and rich tradition of African Christianity that went back as early as the 4th century A.D. The sacred thirteenth century Ethiopian text called the *Kebra Nagast* (Glory of Kings), written in the Ge'ez language, is an account of the Solomonid or Solomonic lineage of Ethiopian Emperors. The Solomonids claimed descent from the biblical King Solomon of Palestine (King David’s son) and the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba, and that the sacred Ark of the Covenant was located in Ethiopia. Solomon and Sheeba had a son, Menelik I, a member of the Tribe of Judah who founded the Solomonid Dynasty. The Emperors of Solomonid Dynasty, from Menelik I until the last, Emperor Haile Selassie I, took on many honorific Ge'ez titles, including *Mo`a 'Anbessa Ze'imnegede Yihuda* (The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah) and “King of Kings.”¹¹³ The imperial insignia of the Conquering Lion of Judah became a

¹¹¹ McCaskie, e-mail message to author , September 1, 2009.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ See Miguel F. Brooks, ed., *A Modern Translation of the Kebra Nagast (The Glory of Kings)*, 1st ed. (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1996).

national symbol of the Ethiopian nation-state and was used on shields, the imperial flag, currency, and postage stamps. Militarily, the shield (with the Conquering Lion of Judah symbol) and two spears the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I gave to Nkrumah, and which he donated to the GAFM, were symbols and proof to Ghanaians that an African nation could and had successfully defended itself against a more powerful European aggressor.



Figure 3.10. Shield (embossed with the Conquering Lion of Judah symbol) and spears given to Nkrumah by Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia. Nkrumah donated them to the GAFM in 1960.

The Ethiopians had indeed “conquered” and inflicted humiliating defeats on the Italians at the Battle of Dogali in 1887 and the Battle of Adwa in 1896. In the latter battle, the Ethiopian army of Emperor Menelik II used traditional spears and shields (like those given to Nkrumah and donated to the GAFM) as well as modern guns bought from French and Italian traders. The Ethiopian forces killed some seven thousand Italian (and Eritrean) soldiers, wounded one thousand five hundred of them, and took three thousand prisoners while they were fleeing back to the Italian colony of Eritrea. Moreover, the Italian forces left behind eleven thousand rifles, as well as artillery and transportation equipment, which now became part of Menelik’s war arsenal. This represented the only case during the “Scramble for Africa” where a European imperial power ultimately failed to colonize an African nation or territory. This victory resonated loudly and was celebrated across the African

continent and in the Diaspora. It created anxieties among the imperial powers, which sought to suppress the news of an African victory over a European nation-state. Nonetheless, the Battle of Adwa had a lingering effect on early Pan-African and nationalist movements and congresses. Furthermore, the example of Adwa continued to be a symbol of inspiration and hope for the next generation of African nationalists and Pan-Africanists who came of age in the Inter-War and the Second World War periods. It gave them the confidence that Africans could regain their lost sovereignty from Europe if they fought hard enough.¹¹⁴

In the early twentieth century, Ethiopian military history would once again prove to be a major motivator of African nationalists, including Nkrumah. While Adwa had thwarted Italy's colonial aspirations in the late 19th century, this time, however it was the successful Italian defeat of the Ethiopian forces that provided the inspiration to Nkrumah and other nationalists to take political action. According to the Ghanaian scholar, A. Adu Boahen, in the 1930s, the resistance movements against European colonialism lacked effective coordination between the educated, urban elites, the rural masses and farmers. However, the 1935 invasion of Abyssinia/Ethiopia by the fascist Italian leader Benito Mussolini was a watershed moment that became the most significant catalyst for African nationalism. With the European powers turning a blind eye and only offering verbal admonitions to the Italian invasion, the fascist forces easily bombarded their way to Addis Ababa. Rome finally had its revenge for the humiliating loss at Adwa in 1896. However,

¹¹⁴ Haile Gerima, *Adwa: An African Victory*, DVD (Washington, DC: Mypheduh Films, Inc., 1999). For a complete history of the Battle of Adwa, see Maimire Mennasemay and Getachew Metaferia, eds., *The Battle of Adwa, 1896: Exposition and Analysis of Ethiopia's Historic Victory Against European Imperialism* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2006); Paulos Milkias and Getachew Metaferia, eds., *The Battle of Adwa Reflections on Ethiopia's Historic Victory Against European Colonialism: Interpretations and Implications for Ethiopia and Beyond* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2006); Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876 – 1912* (London: Abacus, 1992); and Fassil Yirgu and Pamela S. Brown, eds., *One House: The Battle of Adwa 1896, 100 Years* (Chicago: Nyala Publishing, 1996).

this caused tremendous outrage among blacks in Africa and worldwide, who took the Italian assault personally. They felt that the sovereignty of one of the only two independent countries in Africa at the time (the other being Liberia) was being undermined. “Ethiopia was looked upon as the symbol of the revival and the regaining of the independence and sovereignty of Africa. And therefore when this invasion took place, it meant the complete snuffing out of this last beam of hope.”¹¹⁵ For some six years from 1935 until the Allied Forces defeated it in 1941, Rome revelled in its successful conquest of Ethiopia. However, Mussolini’s victory was probably the single most important event in modern African history to spark and sustain the physical and emotional insult and injury that would encourage budding African leaders to take action and become staunch nationalists and anti-imperialists.

The Italian invasion had a profound and transformational effect on Nkrumah himself, who, in 1935, was on his way to Lincoln University in the United States by way of London. He vividly remembered the impact of this event on his political activism. In his autobiography, he wrote:

But just as I was feeling particularly depressed about the future, I heard an excited newspaper boy shouting something unintelligible as he grabbed a bundle of the latest editions from a motor van, and on the placard I read: ‘*MUSSOLINI INVADES ETHIOPIA*’. That was all I needed. At that moment it was almost as if the whole of London had suddenly declared war on me personally. For the next few minutes I could do nothing but glare at each impassive face wondering if those people could possibly realise the wickedness of colonialism, and praying that the day might come when I could play my part in bringing about the downfall of such a system. My nationalism surged to the fore; I was ready and willing to go through hell itself, if need be, in order to achieve my object [sic].¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ A. Adu Boahen, in Basil Davidson, *This Magnificent African Cake*, prog. 6 of *Africa: The Story of a Continent*, VHS (Chicago, IL: Home Vision Select, 1986).

¹¹⁶ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 22-23.

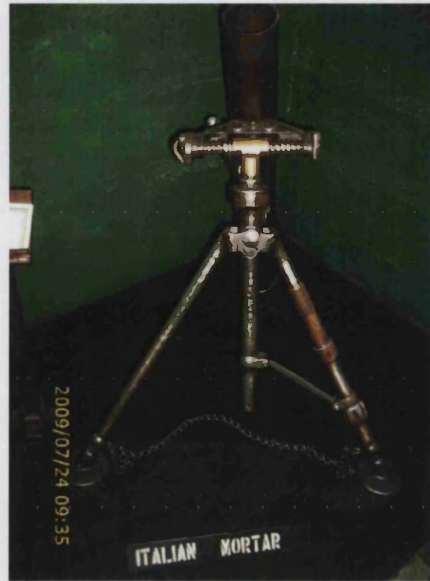


Figure 3.11. Italian mortar captured in WWII and put on display at the GAFM. Other Italian weapons and supplies from both World Wars and from the East Africa Campaign (WWII) was also kept on display during the Nkrumah period.

As figure 3.11 shows, a variety of weapons, supplies and other war memorabilia captured from the Italians in both World Wars and in the East Africa Campaign, were kept on display at the GAFM during the Nkrumah period. These military exhibits served to remind the nation of the valiant role that the Gold Coast Regiment played in securing the sovereignty not only of Europe, but also of independent African nation-states such as Ethiopia.

The leaders of Ethiopia as well as Egypt were also close political allies of Nkrumah, especially in the latter's efforts to create a union government for the continent. On 15 April 1958 (which was declared Africa Freedom Day), both Ethiopia and Egypt were among the eight independent African nation-states present in Accra for the Conference of Independent African States conference. In addition to pledging cooperation on cultural, educational and economic issues, the eight countries promised to provide military training and material assistance to other

African nationalists fighting to rid their territories of European colonialism.¹¹⁷ Moreover, It was in Addis Ababa on 25 May 1963 that the conference, which inaugurated the Organization for African Unity (OAU), was held, under the auspices of Emperor Haile Selassie I. The founding of the OAU in Ethiopia, while achieving a general consensus on the need for African political and economic unity, failed to establish an African High Command, which Nkrumah proposed as a necessary step for African to solve its security concerns.¹¹⁸ Throughout his presidency, Nkrumah and Emperor Haile Selassie would remain close allies, each paying diplomatic visits to the other's country and corresponding on a frequent basis about Africa's political and security concerns.

Gamal and Ghana

Nkrumah and Nasser also had an amicable relationship as heads of state. When the Ghanaian Prime Minister decided to get married, he turned to Gamal Abdel Nasser for an Egyptian bride. Through this arranged marriage, Nkrumah wedded Fathia Rizk (Nkrumah) in December 1957 at Christiansborg Castle. Their eldest son, Gamal, was named after the Egyptian president.¹¹⁹ Along with Nkrumah, Nehru, Tito and Sukarno, Nasser was one of the recognized leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), formed at the 1955 Bandung Conference. Egypt also hosted the All-African People's Conference in 1961 and the Summit Conference of the OAU in Cairo (the Cairo Conference) in July 1964, where the sentiments of African solidarity non-alignment were reinforced.¹²⁰ After the 1966 coup, Nasser also

¹¹⁷ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 126-130; Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 83-84.

¹¹⁸ June Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 95-97.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 137-139.

invited Nkrumah to seek refuge in Cairo, although he decided to accept Sékou Touré offer in the end.

In the National Museum of Ghana, displays of Egyptian archaeology, history and culture had already highlighted Nkrumah's admiration and acceptance of Egypt relics as belonging to all of Africa. Militarily, the Israeli, British and French attack on Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis underscored Nkrumah's calls for an African High Command to defend the sovereignty of already independent countries as well as those fighting for liberation. Around 1965, Nasser gave Nkrumah a Swedish-designed, Egyptian-manufactured Carl Gustav M/45 Series 9mm submachine gun as a gift, which he donated to the GAFM (see figure 3.12). Both the "Swedish K" and the Egyptian version of the gun, dubbed the "Port Said," were later used in the Congo Crisis, the Arab Israeli Conflict and the Vietnam War. This modern African-manufactured weapon was symbolic of Nkrumah's dreams of developing a continental military strategy to defend African sovereignty.



Figure 3.12. The "Port Said," a Swedish-designed, Egyptian-manufactured Carl Gustav M/45 Series 9mm submachine gun, given to Nkrumah by Egyptian President Nasser around 1965. Nkrumah later donated it to the GAFM (Source: GAFM).

The 1960-1965 Congo Crisis was probably the most significant saga in the decolonization of Africa, which affected Nkrumah at a deep, personal level. In January 1960, the Belgians hastily decided to grant independence to their colossus and mineral-rich Congo colony. Parliamentary elections were held in May 1960 to decide who would lead this newly-independent nation-state in the heart of Africa. However, fighting along ethno-political lines broke out and the peaceful independence of the Congo on 30 June 1960 was undermined. On one side of the war was the *Force Publique* or Armed Police – Congolese troops who had mutinied against their white Belgian commanding officers. Moïse Tshombé, a politician from the mineral-wealthy Province of Katanga who was backed by the Belgians, white mercenaries and mining interests, declared Katanga an independent republic. On the other was the democratically elected government of Patrice Lumumba, leader of the *Movement National Congolais* (MNC), who appealed to the United Nations to send peacekeeping troops to uphold his leadership. President Nkrumah contributed Ghanaian soldiers for the UN effort. However, the fighting factions as well as Cold War superpower interference in the Crisis undermined the United Nations' forces. Colonel Mobutu Sésé Seko then staged a military coup, and with his acquiescence, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was relieved of his duties, tortured and murdered between the 11 and 12 February 1961. Moreover, United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld was mysteriously killed in a plain crash on 18 September 1961, while on his way to the Congo to address the Crisis. Mobutu staged a second military coup on 24 November 1965, becoming President from then until 1997 when he was forced to resign.¹²¹

¹²¹ For more on the Congo Crisis, see Cruise Conor O'Brien, *To Katanga and Back* (London, Hutchinson, 1962); Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2001); Howard Epstein, ed., *Revolt in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Armor Books, 1974); Ch. Didier Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Greenwood Press, 2002); Thomas Kanza, *The Rise and Fall of Patrice Lumumba*

The inability of the United Nations with Ghanaian and other African troops under their command to stop the torture and murder of Nkrumah's protégé, Patrice Lumumba, was deeply troubling to Nkrumah.¹²² The deteriorating situation in the Congo was the focus of many of his public speeches at the United Nations, Pan-African and non-aligned meetings and to the media. Before Lumumba's assassination, Nkrumah had met with him several months before to try and solve the rapidly developing Congo Crisis and to bolster relations between both countries. During one such meeting in August 1960, a secret politico-military agreement was signed between President Kwame Nkrumah and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. This pact established the short-lived Union of African States (UAS) and proposed the establishment of an African High Command that would consolidate all of Africa's professional armies and liberation fighters to intervene in and end the Congo Crisis. The African High Command would also provide support to liberation movements across the continent and defend independent African countries from domestic and foreign threats.¹²³

In January 1961, African heads of state and leaders from the Casablanca Powers (consisting of the Algerian FLN, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Libya, Egypt and Morocco) met in Casablanca, Morocco. In their published report, *the African*

(Schenkman Books, 1979); Colin Legum, *Congo Disaster* (Penguin Books, 1961); René Lemarchand, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); Patrice Lumumba, *Congo, My Country*, trans. Graham Heath (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962); Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years Since Independence* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005); Kwame Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo* (New York: International Publishers, 1967); Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, *Africa since 1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Herbert Weiss, *Political Protest in the Congo: The Parti Solidaire Africain during the Independence Struggle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Stephen R. Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974); and Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

¹²² After his death on the 11 or 12 of February 1961, the Ghana postal authorities issued commemorative stamps including the 12 February 1962 stamp with his photograph and inscription, "1st Anniversary of the Death of Patrice Lumumba Premier of the Congo."

¹²³ See Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*, 86, 89, 107, 110, 115-116, 173, 193 and 266; and Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 94-95.

Charter of Casablanca, they adopted Nkrumah's recommendation for the establishment of a joint African High-Command that was to comprise the Chiefs of Staff of the independent African nation-states, and the withdrawal of African troops under UN command in the Congo. This decision was taken primarily because of the worsening crisis in the Congo and the impending doom that awaited Lumumba. Nkrumah's arguments in favour of an African Military High Command were later reiterated due to developing disputes between the neighbouring states of Ethiopia and Somalia, Kenya and Somalia, Algeria and Morocco, as well as the liberation wars of independence in southern Africa.¹²⁴ The year after his exile, he published an entire book on the Congo situation, titled *Challenge of the Congo: A Case Study of Foreign Pressures in an Independent State*.¹²⁵ In *Challenge of the Congo*, Nkrumah argued those Congolese reactionary forces and their neo-colonial sponsors, as well as the compromised United Nations forces undermined Lumumba's government. He was also more adamant about the need for the continent to establish an African High Command to prevent a repeat of the situation in the Congo and elsewhere in Africa.

Although the war was ultimately lost, a series of exhibitions in the GAFM indicates that Nkrumah wanted the Ghanaian public to know that Ghanaian soldiers had performed gallantly in trying to protect the sovereignty of a newly-independent African nation-state. One such exhibit (figure 3.13) captioned, "Captured from the Congolese in the Congo, 1962" displays two "native" shotguns, a pistol and a spear, as well as a Belgian bayonet and sword. Another exhibit, captioned "Juju and Mask"¹²⁶ displays a ritual mask and other religious items said to have been captured

¹²⁴ See Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 91-92, 97, 144-150, 159, and 175-176.

¹²⁵ See Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*.

¹²⁶ A "juju", synonymous with "voodoo" and "fetish," is an object(s) traditionally used as a charm, a fetish or amulet in many parts of Africa (particularly West and Central Africa) and the Diaspora. These charms are believed to possess or be able to channel ancestral and spiritual powers that can be used to achieve desire outcomes in the living world.

from Congolese tribes headed by chief Mutobo Mukulu in a village that also bears his name. The mask, meant to camouflage its wearer, was covered with cowry shells – traditionally used as an object of divination in African (and Diasporic) rituals and religions. It also carried a horn in which “juju” was placed to prevent bullets from hitting its wearer. The caption stated that the Second Battalion of the Ghana Armed Forces had captured the mask in Mutobo Mukulu Village during the Congo operation in the Kaniama District of the Province of Katanga.



Figure 3.13. Belgian Weapons and Congolese “Juju Mask” and Guns Captured by the GAF in Congo

The juxtaposition of Belgian-made guns and other weapons, in addition to Congolese guns and “fetish” masks in the GAFM was symbolic of Nkrumah’s political beliefs about the Congo situation. He thought that it was an alliance of neo-colonial (in this case, Belgian) governments, foreign corporations, reactionary African elites and traditional (perhaps backward) chiefs who were subverting African independence. The displays were meant to inform Ghanaians about the

Congo situation as much as to warn them about the dangers of this unholy alliance in Ghana itself. In 1960, the Nkrumah regime installed a Peacekeeping Hall in the GAFM with military exhibits highlighting the participation of the Ghana Armed Forces under the command of the United Nations during the Congo Crisis.¹²⁷

The variety of weapons (including spears and shields, fetish masks and muskets, mortars and cannons) retained from the British period or donated to the GAFM by Nkrumah himself symbolizes the two military traditions of Ghana and Africa. They represented on the one hand, the traditional aspect of Africa's military history and on the other its capabilities of manufacturing modern weapons for its own defence. They underscored Nkrumah's calls for the establishment of an African joint military high command to defend the sovereignty of African nation-states and the continent at large. The 1960 Congo Crisis which resulted in the murder of Nkrumah's protégée Patrice Lumumba and the destabilization of a colossus and mineral-rich African nation-state only added to the sense of urgency regarding Africa's need to defend itself from domestic and foreign threats. After the coup against Nkrumah, the Curator was replaced, a modified narrative was reflected by changes in the exhibition and new ones added. The NLC also removed the photographs of Commander-in-Chief Nkrumah, which hung in the halls of the GAFM.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Later on in the 1990s, former Curator Lt. Col. Donkor expanded the Peacekeeping Hall exhibits to include other UN and OAU/AU peacekeeping missions in which Ghanaian soldiers took part since the Congo Crisis, including in Rwanda, the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, as well as internationally in Burma, Indonesia, etc. GAFM; ICOM, http://ghana.icom.museum/24001_e.html (accessed November 21, 2006); Quainoo, Senior Museum Guide, GAFM, July 23, 2009.

¹²⁸ In 2007, the GAFM created new displays of Heads of State in Ghana, and Nkrumah's pictures were put back in the display. Quainoo, Senior Museum Guide, GAFM, August 13, 2009.

The Nkroful Museum and National Shrine

In addition to the National Museum, the Ghana National Science Museum, and the Ghana Armed Forces Museum, Nkrumah's birthplace in Nkroful in the eastern part of the country became the site of a personal museum that housed objects from Nkrumah's life. These objects included his former prison handcuffs and clothing, as well as photographs and portraits that glorified his status as the Father of the Nation.¹²⁹ In 1961, parliament decided to declare the Nkroful museum a national shrine to Nkrumah as a result of a motion brought forward to be debated by the CPP representative from Nkroful (Eastern Nzima Axim), Mr. J.A. Kinnah. On the floor of Parliament during the debates regarding the designation of the site as a shrine, Kinnah compared the birthplace of Nkrumah to holy sites including Mecca and Bethlehem.¹³⁰ As Bethlehem was the birthplace of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the World, Nkrumah had earned the title of *Osagyefo* from his supporters, an Akan honorific which means "redeemer." At public events, Nkrumah was also introduced by other politico-religious titles, including *Katamanto* – "man whose word is irrevocable" - *Asomdwehene* – "prince of peace" - and *Nufenu* – "strongest of all."¹³¹ The deification and associations of Nkrumah with Jesus Christ and other religious figures put him at odds with many members of the church in Ghana, as John S. Pobee argues in *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana, 1949 – 1966*.

In order to justify the designation of Nkrumah's birthplace not only as a museum but a shrine, his political life had to be cast in a religious light, making him appear to be a modern Messiah of a political religion for the African peoples of the

¹²⁹ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 24.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24–25; *Ghana Parliamentary Debate* 23, 6, cited in John Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana: 1949 – 1966* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1988), 148.

¹³¹ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 35; Kwesi Yankah, "The Making and Breaking of Kwame Nkrumah: The Role of Oral Poetry," *Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 86–92.

world, but especially for Ghanaians and Africans. During the parliamentary debates, comparisons were made between Nkrumah and Jesus Christ, Mohammed, St. Francis of Assisi, Confucius, Buddha, etc.¹³² In his speech to Parliament, which at times paralleled a religious sermon about the life and times of Jesus Christ who rose out of a humble manger to become the redeemer of mankind, Kinnah reminded the members of parliament of Nkrumah's long personal and political struggles to prepare himself to rid Ghana/ Africa of European imperialism. As Kinnah put it in his motion, "Nearly 52 years ago, in a mud house at Nkroful, a little village in Nzima...the great leader was born of poor parentage. Could any prophet have prophesied that this child would some day be the liberator of Ghana, and the torch bearer of Africa's emancipation?...Osagyefo was a sage at birth."¹³³

A long list of other appellations was said to have been given to him throughout his life were highlighted throughout the motion, including "Nwia Kofi Ayen," (Nwia Kofi the genius), "sage," a great leader and teacher of religion, a prophet and the most successful African politician of all time.¹³⁴ C.E. Donkoh, CPP member from Wenchi West, called Nkrumah "a great man of history" and the "architect" of modern Ghanaian history.¹³⁵ Comparing him to the Hebrews who were persecuted by the Egyptians, Donkoh further affirmed, "I venture to call this man the greatest African of our present generation...[Nkrumah] lead a God-chosen race to cross a Red Sea of foreign domination of his people, he deserves a mention in his predecessor Moses' Book of Books. Does not he?"¹³⁶ Supporters of the motion argued that Nkroful should be preserved as a historic site, similar to what

¹³² See, for example, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 883.

¹³³ J.A. Kinnah, "Private Member's Motion: Birthplace of Osagyefo," in *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 23, Official Report, First Series (Accra: Government Printing Department, May 24, 1961), 878.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 878, 83, 887.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 882.

¹³⁶ See Donkoh, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 882.

had been done for holy and cultural sites such as Bethlehem where Jesus Christ was born, Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed – father of Islam, and Stratford-on-Avon, the cradle of Shakespeare. Kinnah, said that Nkroful “played a leading role in the liberation of Ghana from imperialist domination; for the Star of Africa rose out of her and a sceptre sprang up from Nzimaland to crush the head of imperialism. Yet Nkroful, in her old age, seems to be forgotten...Should Nkroful be left in this plight until the end of time? In order to save her from falling into oblivion it is imperative that Osagyefo’s birthplace should be fittingly preserved.”¹³⁷

Members supporting the motion recounting, with religious and nationalist fervour, a historical narrative of the events which led to the rise of Nkrumah to power as a selfless nationalist and Pan-Africanist: It began with the “British Imperialists” who had oppressed the people of the Gold Coast for over one hundred years, essentially since the Bond of 1844 until independence in 1957; the story of Nkrumah’s life and times, including his birth in the humble hamlet of Nkroful; his early schooling and life as a teacher in the Gold Coast and how he later left his mother in the village to voyage to the United States and Britain to further his education and gain experience, and the many hardships he faced abroad; his return to Ghana in 1947 to work for the UGCC and his ultimately departure from the UGCC to form the CPP at Saltpond on June 12, 1949. “The birth of the C.P.P. was the beginning of the end of imperialism. With the full support of the masses, Osagyefo set the ball rolling--the torch of Africa’s emancipation was lit. Full of enthusiasm, the leader declared that he had sworn before the altar of God that he would agitate [for independence] and agitate until he could agitate no more.”¹³⁸ Then his incarceration, along with other members of the Big Six, by the British

¹³⁷ Ibid., 880-81.

¹³⁸ Kinnah, “Birthplace of Osagyefo,” 879.

colonial officials, was recalled. After Nkrumah had “outwitted” the imperialists and won the political kingdom for Ghana in March 1957, Kinnah maintains, he continued to be a relentless champion of African liberation from European imperialism. In the rhetorical interludes of his speech praising Nkrumah, Kinnah demonstrated ignorance of Nkrumah’s warnings about the reality of neo-colonialism, and pronounced the death of imperialism as a *fait accompli*:

Imperialism is weighed in the balance of African politics and is found wanting; and I could see that imperialism once the victor is now the victim and it bleeds profusely on the purple altar of the political struggle of Africa. In no time it will be no more, giving way to a free and untied Africa. During the struggle, the Osagyefo on many occasions exhorted the masses to seek first the political kingdom and all else would be added unto it; and in fact his dream come true.¹³⁹

Furthermore, Nkrumah had worked to rapidly modernize and develop Ghana as “a show-piece on the African continent...The achievements of some great men are only known after their death; but Osagyefo, in his life-time, has been acclaimed by the whole world as one of the greatest statesmen that have ever lived.”¹⁴⁰ To the cheers and encouragement of fellow parliamentarians, Kinnah further interrogated parliament of the need to create the shrine/museum to Nkrumah:

Can the masses of the nation afford to remain passive on-lookers of the achievements of this great son of Africa?...Can hon. Members afford to forget so soon the sufferings Osagyefo encountered and the sacrifices he made in his bid to achieve independence for the chiefs and people of Ghana?...We know that monuments have been erected in recognition of his great achievements and institutions have been named after him. But are these enough? Hon. Members will agree with me that Ghana cannot afford to ignore preserving the birthplace of the Founder of the Nation.¹⁴¹

The justification for the preservation of Nkrumah’s actual place of birth and his village of birth as a shrine/museum, Kinnah and others argue, would achieve several

¹³⁹ Ibid., 880.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

purposes. In addition to reminding the nation about the sacrifices of the Founding Father of the Nation, it would also be a site that would attract tourist revenue. Kinnah argued, “Tourists to Ghana who do not succeed in meeting the Leader could visit his birthplace to be imbued as if they saw him. Nkroful could serve as the Mecca of African Politics.”¹⁴² Kinnah recommended improvements to Nkrumah’s birthplace, which would attract foreign visitors to the site. These attractions and improvements included:

1. The Mud house in which Osagyefo was born should be improved.
2. A Shrine should be erected on the spot on which Osagyefo was first laid when he was born and a fairly good size of his portrait displayed in front of it.
3. In a specially designed room next to the shrine the following articles should be kept and labelled:- (a) The Dress and the Sandals the Osagyefo wore when he was arrested after staging the historic Positive Action; (b) The handcuffs (*Aban Nkabah*) which were used to grip his two hands together; (c) The small piece of pencil he used to write messages when he was in prison; (d)The blanket on which he slept in prison; and (e) Copies of the court proceedings of his various trials..
4. His great sayings should be displayed on the walls of his birthplace.
5. Important historical pictures connected with the life history of Osagyefo should also be displayed on the walls.
6. Besides all these the area surrounding the birthplace could also be made a holiday resort with a restaurant and recreation grounds attached so that tourists could be well entertained apart from gaining inspiration.¹⁴³

Another member thought that, being comparable to holy grounds, visitors to the Museum-Shrine should have to remove their shoes before stepping onto it. He also suggested that a statue of Nkrumah pouring water onto the ground be erected at his birthplace to symbolise that Nkrumah had brought peace not only to Africa, but also to the world at large.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 881.

¹⁴³ Kinnah, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 881-882.

¹⁴⁴ See R.M. Abbey’s comments, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 905-906.

Mumuni Bawumia, Ministerial Secretary to the Minister of Works and Housing, and who confessed to formerly being an adversary of Nkrumah¹⁴⁵, wanted parliament to invest in turning the entire village of Nkroful into a modern village-city. He wanted the government to rebuild the room in which Nkrumah was born, and to build a hotel and holiday resort.¹⁴⁶ Clearly Kinnah and other parliamentarians wanted the government to capitalize off of the phenomenon, which was Nkrumah. Thus, the focus of some CPP officials was not only on the deification of Nkrumah but also on the development of his village into a revenue-generating venture.¹⁴⁷

It is evident from the parliamentary proceedings on the Motion brought forward to designate and develop Nkroful as a museum/shrine and tourist attraction that it was also a litmus test to identify those in government and in the general population who did not give their total loyalty to Nkrumah. As Bawumia expressed it, “There should not be in this country today anyone who will not acknowledge the good things that the Osagyefo has brought to this country and indeed to Africa as a whole.”¹⁴⁸ Apparently, the debates were full of emotional jockeying and flattering language to Nkrumah from members who were attempting to outdo their counterparts as to who was most loyal to Nkrumah. Such expression of public loyalty to the leader of Ghana needed to be more explicit in 1960. This was the year in which Ghana became a republic as well as that in which the budding African leader Patrice Lumumba, Nkrumah’s protégée, was assassinated by an alliance of his Congolese rivals in Katanga, Belgian forces and Cold War powers.

However, not all members of parliament, including those who supported the motion, agreed with these measures as presented. Some, like CPP member from

¹⁴⁵ *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 888.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 887.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 888.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 889.

Bibiani, J.K. Essien, agreed that Nkrumah's birthplace should be preserved, but wanted it improved and modernized so as to have a greater appeal to tourists. He recounted how, in 1958 he visited Nkrumah's birthplace and met two white men who were taking pictures of the then Prime Minister's village to show to people back in Europe. Essien stressed the imperativeness of suitably developing this area to capitalize on the anticipated visits from Europeans and other visitors. "It should be provided with the necessary modern amenities so that during the celebration of the Osagyefo's birthday, all of us may go there and enjoy ourselves."¹⁴⁹

H.S.T. Provençal (CPP member from Accra Central, the centre of national government bureaucracy) was ridiculed in parliament for suggesting that the Motion, brought forth by the representative from Nkrumah's place of birth, was designed to take Kwame Nkrumah away from the people of Accra and send him back to Nkroful. He argued that the birthplace of the Osagyefo should be preserved not in Nkroful, but in Accra, "Because all the works of the Osagyefo are known in Accra...if I had my own way, I would remove his birthplace from Nkroful to Accra."¹⁵⁰ Provençal also rejected the idea of developing Nkroful as a tourist attraction, arguing that it should rather be preserved as a place where future generations of Ghanaians could go to for inspiration.¹⁵¹ Other members stressed the need to think of Nkrumah as belonging to the Ghanaian nation and to Africa as a whole, rather than to a particular locality, and another pointed out that a statue of Nkrumah had already been erected in the capital.¹⁵² J.D. Wireko (CPP member from Amansie East) agreed that the original hut and village in which Nkrumah was born

¹⁴⁹ J.K. Essien, "Birthplace of Osagyefo," in *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates*, 885.

¹⁵⁰ H.S.T. Provençal, "Birthplace of Osagyefo," in *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates*, 885-886.

¹⁵¹ *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23, 887.

¹⁵² *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23, 886.

should be kept (with minimum maintenance) and not modified, in order to preserve its authenticity.¹⁵³

Nkrumah, the Church and the Museum-Shrine

The most vocal critic of the Nkrumah Museum/ Shrine motion in parliament was P.K.K. Quaidoo - an outspoken CPP member representing Amenfi Aowin and a devout Roman Catholic. He was already suspected by some to be “a Catholic slave and a hypocrite” for criticising the President and some of his policies in Parliament.¹⁵⁴ His opinion about the matter was expressed with extreme caution in order not to give the impression that he was not fully behind Nkrumah. During his deliberation, he repeatedly asked Parliament to be patient enough while he outlined his cautious opinions on the matter. Notwithstanding this cautious approach, he stated in no uncertain terms that the conversations in the parliamentary debate regarding the merits of Nkrumah cast the President too much in the light of a saint and a god-figure. Moreover, the flattery that was being given to the President, could, he argued, be a guise for those who were seeking favours from Nkrumah, but who were really not his true allies, referencing the infamous betrayal of Caesar by Brutus.¹⁵⁵ “There are unfortunately amongst us those who want to play the role of the Vicar of Bray. Everyone that comes on is prepared to serve and sing his tune. We have Vicars of Bray among us...It is very, very difficult for any one of us to know who is speaking the truth and sincerely from the heart.”¹⁵⁶

Members such as Kofi Baako, Speaker of the House, disagreed with Quaidoo that Ghanaians were afraid to speak what was really on their minds and offer

¹⁵³ Ibid., 890-891.

¹⁵⁴ See P.K.K. Quaidoo, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 895, 896.

¹⁵⁵ *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 894.

¹⁵⁶ See Quaidoo, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 892.

constructive criticism to Nkrumah. “The truth is that people see things and when things are going the way they like they lend their support.”¹⁵⁷ Acknowledging that those who speak with sincerity and truth are often suspected and misjudged, he warned that parliament should allow for the people and posterity to favourably judge and honour Nkrumah and not the living. He cautioned parliament not to allow “sentiment”, rather than good judgement to colour its decision.¹⁵⁸ “There are so many people who think that by saying, Osagyefo, Osagyefo, they can earn their daily bread. It is the duty of all of us, Members of Parliament, who feel we have a sacred duty to the country, to stick to our guns and speak nothing but the truth, and give honour where honour is due and praise where praise is due.”¹⁵⁹ Nkrumah himself had also acknowledged that not everyone in his party and among the people who was signing his praise were really being honest with him about their true stance of matters of importance.¹⁶⁰

Patrick Quaidoo outlined what he considered to be some “basic principles” regarding the motion. He saw the Motion as another example of “an able cause” that had “bad reasons advanced in favour of it.”¹⁶¹ Quaidoo continued, “The first point that I will touch...is Kwame Nkrumah as a citizen of Ghana and as a man. I hope none of those time-servers will misconstrue my words--in fact, I do not care if they misconstrue my words because my conscience is the only dictator to that end...” On the one hand, Quaidoo argued that Nkrumah, like a few others before him, was a man whose ideas and intellect were too advanced for the times in which he was born. However, Nkrumah owed his success to his Gold Coast predecessors such as

¹⁵⁷ See Baako, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 894.

¹⁵⁸ *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 892.

¹⁵⁹ Quaidoo, “Birthplace of Osagyefo,” *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 892.

¹⁶⁰ See Baako’s statement, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 894.

¹⁶¹ See Quaidoo, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 892.

George Ekem Ferguson and J.E. Kwegyir Aggrey who had laid the intellectual and political foundations for Nkrumah to flourish when he entered modern Ghanaian politics, in addition to his contemporary comrades who helped him to implement his policies.¹⁶² After spending the entire time of his deliberation assuring the Parliament that his loyalty was so strong for Nkrumah that he would even give his own life for him, he stated his main objection to the Motion.

“I say it would have been better for us to wait and express this sincere appreciation for this man [Nkrumah] when he is no more—and when he is no more with us there would be no chance of his changing, and there would be no chance of anybody having a different opinion about him...if we want to do anything to honour him, we must first of all make sure that what we do to honour him is not short-lived. It would be hypocritical on the part of Ghana, while the Doctor is alive with us, to pay him all the tributes from high Heaven, but the moment he is no ore then he is forgotten...if he is great, he will be greater still when he is dead...and posterity will honour him.”¹⁶³

Quaidoo expressed an understanding of and experience with the fallibility of man, a fate, which he hoped, would not befall Nkrumah and disappoint those who were so eager to immortalize and honour him while he was still alive. Like Napoleon Bonaparte of France, Quaidoo argued, Nkrumah would be remembered as a great man who brought glory to his nation. Great museums and other structures housing his mortal remains, personal and state paraphernalia, and inscriptions of his wise utterances would be erected in his honour posthumously in the capital of his birth.¹⁶⁴ Quaidoo was also concerned that the deification and immortalisation of Nkrumah in the House of Parliament “might make people think that we are only playing up to the gallery. I agree we must do something to honour him. I should very

¹⁶² See Quaidoo, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 893-894.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 897.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 898.

much like to have his walking stick preserved at Nkroful. But how can we do that whilst the man is alive?”¹⁶⁵

Perhaps Quaidoo, like many other critic-admirers of Nkrumah also feared that Nkrumah would inevitable become Ghana’s dictator, as symbolized by the many symbols of nationhood (currency, stamps, monuments, etc.) and the motion proposing to make him into a living martyr. Perhaps he was aware that the image of Nkrumah in many circles in the West was slowly but surely becoming a negative one, and that it would only be a matter of time before he was brought down. Furthermore, his numerous references to Nkrumah dying before his being honoured by Ghana was quite disturbing to the other CPP members who apparently saw Nkrumah in the light of a sage. As soon as he made his point about honouring Nkrumah in death and not in life, the Speaker of the House, Kofi Baako gave him a few minutes to wind up his talk. Quaidoo lent his support to the Motion, but not fully, advising that the time to do so was not now but after the Osagyefo had died. Moreover, he wanted Nkrumah’s birthplace to be preserved in its original state and not remade with modern building materials. He also wanted the mandate to “preserve” taken out of the hand of Parliament and given to the Monuments and Relics Commission, which he argued was more capable of undertaking the task.¹⁶⁶

Quaidoo’s questions about the motion also underscores a subtle but evident sentiment among some parliamentarians (both CPP and otherwise) that, although they had not achieved as much as Nkrumah had for the country and Africa, they too had contributed to Ghana’s and Africa’s history and liberation. During Quaidoo’s

¹⁶⁵ See Quaidoo, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 898.

¹⁶⁶ *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 898-899.

speech to parliament on the motion, a United Party member from Wala South interrupted, saying, "I too have done something [for the country]."¹⁶⁷

In order to comprehend the Catholic and parliamentarian Quaidoo's quarrels with the Nkrumah Museum-Shrine, we must put it in the context of the tenuous relationship between church and state in Nkrumah's Ghana. Nkrumah defined himself as "a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist" who did not find "any contradiction between the two."¹⁶⁸ However, all was not well between church and state during the Nkrumah period. Although a professed Christian, he saw the Church as an instrument for the colonization of the African and Christians as agents of oppression and the dilution of the African way of life.

This topic is addressed by John S. Pobee, a Ghanaian Christian scholar whose book *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana, 1949 – 1966*, explores the relationship between the Nkrumah government and the Protestant Christian churches in Ghana. Pobee acknowledges that Nkrumah's cabinet had many devout Christians and that the CPP partnered with church institutions for many social and cultural programs.¹⁶⁹ However, Pobee argues that the Nkrumah government committed gross abuses against the church and persecuted church officials for criticizing government policies and programs, such as the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement. The CPP went so far as to expel high-level church officials from the country, such as had happened in the early 1960s.¹⁷⁰ Pobee writes of the deification of Nkrumah and asserts that the Church in Ghana had accused Nkrumah of claiming to be divine.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ B.K. Adama, "Birthplace of Osagyefo," *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates*, 891.

¹⁶⁸ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 10.

¹⁶⁹ John S. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana 1949-1966: A Study in the Relationship Between the Socialist Government of Kwame Nkrumah, the First Prime Minister and First President of Ghana, and the Protestant Christian Churches in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1988), 178-179.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 7, 128.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

Nkrumah's claim to divinity stemmed from and was manifested in a variety of ways. He was considered to be a living martyr because of the persecution and incarceration of UGCC and CPP members by the British colonial authorities for agitating for Ghanaian independence; popular highlife songs and praise poetry were composed to honour the Osagyefo; Nkrumah's appropriation of chieftaincy, and the many appellations and honorific titles which were given to him and propagated in the government-controlled newspapers, some of which were misinterpreted by church officials as being titles befitting of god; and comparisons of Nkrumah and the Buddha, Jesus Christ and Mohammed.¹⁷² "The biblical parallels and echoes are unmistakable. The persons of both Jesus and Nkrumah constituted such enigma that many were puzzling it out. Nkrumah is Messiah and redeemer of mankind just as Jesus was. Nkrumah is Messiah after the order of Jesus...He is Kwame Nkrumah of Africa as he put it later, Messiah of Africa, who, nevertheless, started from humble beginnings as Jesus came from a carpenter's house."¹⁷³ Pobee believes that, while it was Nkrumah's followers, CPP comrades and the media that propagated these ideas about his divinity, he failed to redress these ideas in person or through the media, and actually seems to have condoned them. "Surely, Kwame Nkrumah as early as 1957 when the *Autobiography* was published was supporting the view that he was supernatural...Kwame Nkrumah, on the evidence of his honorifics and his *Autobiography*, approved of society looking on him as Messiah after the order of Jesus and as a charismatic leader like the traditional chief."¹⁷⁴

Pobee therefore sees the government funding and designation of his place of birth as a Museum-Shrine as "The most telling example of the deification of Nkrumah...The establishment of the shrine shows that the C.P.P. sought to accord

¹⁷² Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Africa*, 140-144.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

Nkrumah the status of an object of worship and to deify him even before he was dead.”¹⁷⁵ This situation further put the President at odds with the Church in Ghana. Moreover, despite the placement of various personal artefacts and political paraphernalia in the Nkroful Museum-Shrine, Pobee believes that many of them might have been fabricated. He expressed doubts that items such as the blanket, handcuff and pencil that Nkrumah used while in James Fort Prison were the original items, given the time that had elapsed since his incarceration, asserting that the items could not be differentiated from similar items used by other inmates.¹⁷⁶

Expectedly, members of the opposition, especially those with strong religious convictions such as Dr. K.A. Busia (a Methodist) registered strong protests against the deification of Nkrumah as soon as he gained political power in the early 1950s, according to Pobee.¹⁷⁷ Opposition member, Joseph Appiah (a vocal critic of Nkrumah) also expressed his strong reservations about the Museum-Shrine. He thought that Parliament was setting Nkrumah up to be embarrassed and disgraced, should the President ever commit actions that dishonoured his office or unbecoming a leader of whom the people had high expectations.¹⁷⁸

However, less expected but nonetheless important were reservations coming from his own party, such as those expressed by Quaidoo. Although Quaidoo received political and media admonition for his contestations of the Museum-Shrine, he gave voice to those in the Christian community that did not believe in the deification of man, even if that man was considered to be the Founder of the Nation. Given his lone stance against the Nkrumah regime’s convulsion of religion and politics, Pobee considers Quaidoo to have acted as a courageous confessor of

¹⁷⁵ Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Africa*, 147-148.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁷⁸ See Appiah’s comments, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 907-908.

Christian values in the face of an authoritarian government that showed lack of respect for the true gospel.¹⁷⁹

Quaidoo's defiance of the deification of Nkrumah was not effective enough to convince the CPP to abandon the plans to enshrine Nkrumah in the Nkroful Museum. This was primarily because the leadership of the Church was silent on this particular issue and seemingly unwilling to confront the Nkrumah regime in general.¹⁸⁰ While some clergymen spoke out against it, other followers of the faith believed and preached that Nkrumah was some sort of African Messiah. However, the major denominations of churches were split in their official response to the Nkroful Museum-Shrine and the CPP's attribution of God-like qualities to Nkrumah. According to Pobee, the Christian Council and the Protestant Churches failed to issue an official letter of protest or file a grievance with Parliament regarding the Nkroful Museum-Shrine and the deification of Nkrumah. On the other hand, according to Pobee, the Catholic Churches were vociferous in their official objections against what they believed to be Nkrumah's blasphemy against god. On Palm Sunday, 1960 Archbishop William Porter declared this sacred day a national day of reparation for Nkrumah's alleged blasphemy. He then climbed the stairs of the Cape Coast Cathedral with Bishop John Amissah to publicly pray and atone for the sins of the regime. Moreover, Archbishop Porter circulated a pastoral letter that was read in Catholic Churches nationwide, admonishing the CPP government for the deification of Nkrumah and condemning the latter's usurpation of the persona of Jesus Christ.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana*, 150.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 149-150.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

At the end of the Motion, both opposition members such as Joseph Appiah as well as CPP officials like House Speaker Kofi Baako acknowledged that Nkrumah (who was not allowed by Parliament to be present during the Motion) would not have been in favour of Parliament creating a Museum-Shrine in his honour. This stance was consistent with his objection to the Cabinet's decision to mint his "effigy" on the coins. As Baako admitted, "He [Nkrumah] resisted, but we did not allow him; and that is the very thing we are doing here today."¹⁸² Supporters of the Motion agreed with Ministerial Secretary of the Development Secretariat, W.K. Aduhene who expressed optimism that "in every freedom-loving country, popular imagination will be caught by Ghana's addition to the age-old story of the poor boy who rises up to be a giant amongst his contemporaries, and a legend even in his own time."¹⁸³ Therefore, the designation of the Museum-Shrine was meant not only to recognize Nkrumah for his contributions to the freedom of Ghana and his efforts to achieve African unity, but also to elevate and promote his stature as a statesman on the world stage. It also had economic motives – to create a national landmark to which tourists could be ushered to learn more about the Founder of Ghana, while spending their much-needed monies for the education. With the Government acceptance of Kinnah's motion, the Ghana Tourist Board was authorized to acquire the mud hut and compound in which Nkrumah was said to have been born and to institute a plan to develop Nkroful as a popular tourist destination pilgrimage site to Nkrumah.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² See Baako's comments, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 908.

¹⁸³ See Aduhene's comments, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 910-911.

¹⁸⁴ *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 911-912.

Conclusion

As with most policies that Nkrumah enacted, successive governments and non-governmental organizations in Ghana have sought to react to, rewrite or reinforce his legacy with their own initiatives. Since the National Museum, many argue, focused too much on Asante/ Akan archaeology and cultural history, other ethnic groups felt excluded from the process of nation-building and felt that their histories were not being adequately displayed and their contributions to national identity were not recognized by the regime. Other regional and ethnographic museums have therefore been established over the years, including the Volta Regional Museum (1973), the Upper East Regional Museum (1991), and the W.E.B. Dubois Memorial Centre for Pan African Culture (1985). In 2004, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Museum was also established in Kumasi as a community/university museum displaying ethnographic material, Asante gold weights, ceramics, fine art, photographs as well as an archive.¹⁸⁵ As with the latter, many of these entities have library and archival holdings that allow academics and researchers to (re)assess the history and culture of the individuals, ethnic group or region in questions.

After the Museum-Shrine was set up, various CPP politicians sought to fulfil its mission as the political Mecca of Africa. For example, on 16 April 1960, Asare Okyere Asok, the chief priest of the League of African Patriots of Ghana, went on a pilgrimage there with his congregation. In August 1962, one hundred members of various branches of the Ghana Young Pioneers, Nkrumah's militant youth group, also went on a pilgrimage there where they held an all-night vigil and a processional

¹⁸⁵ ICOM Ghana, http://ghana.icom.museum/24016_e.html (accessed July 13, 2009).

march.¹⁸⁶ After the coup, Nkrumah's personal museum-shrine in Nkroful was desecrated in an effort to show that Nkrumah was no god. A mob stormed the Nkroful museum, and "pulled down the hut in which the deposed tyrant Kwame Nkrumah was said to have been born [, and]...furniture and wooden boxes alleged to have been in possession of Kwame Nkrumah during his school days...[were] burned to ashes."¹⁸⁷

Ironically, the mausoleum and museum commissioned at the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park in Accra (see Chapter IV), some two decades after Nkrumah's death, came to serve the purpose for which the Nkroful Museum-Shrine did not fully get a chance to fulfil; it became a site where people from all walks of life who had an interest in Nkrumah could visit or go on a "pilgrimage." The Rawlings regime that built the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Museum gave it the status of a national museum, governed by the National Commission on Culture. The collection was imbued with displays showcasing many personal effects of Nkrumah, including books that he authored, audio-visual and written material on Nkrumah, official photographs, a photo archive, and the metal coffin given by Sekou Touré in which he was buried in Nkroful. Government functionaries also hold official state events there, including independence anniversary celebrations, Emancipation Day (an African-Diaspora holiday marked on the 1st of August annually) and wreath laying ceremonies to commemorate Nkrumah.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ See Pobee, *Ghana: National Assembly Parliamentary Debates* 1, 23: 148.

¹⁸⁷ *Evening News*, March 14, 1966, 6, quoted and cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Ghana*, note 91, chapter two, 187.

¹⁸⁸ ICOM Ghana, http://ghana.icom.museum/24015_e.html (accessed July 13, 2009).

Chapter IV

Deconstructing Colonialism, Constructing the Nation: The Monumental Task of Nation-Building



“What we want is small statues [sic] of prominent citizens of this country and of Africa which will be placed in selected towns and cities of Ghana, and in museums...such as you have done of our President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.”¹

A monument is “the permanent structure, building, erections etc made at the place to mark the memory of a historical event, action, place or person etc.”² As physical structures, monuments are the embodiment of foundational myths, memories and philosophies, and serve as official sites for the commemoration of war victories and the martyrs who died for the state, among other functions.³ The proliferation of statuary to memorialise a certain socio-political version of the past occurred

¹ GMMB, Statues File No. 0244, Executive Secretary, GMMB to Professor Nicola Cataudella (Rome), memorandum No. 0244/6, March 14, 1963.

² <http://www.legal-explanations.com/definitions/monument.htm> (accessed March 6, 2009).

³ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, 3 vols., trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Yvonne Whelan, “The Construction and Destruction of a Colonial Landscape: Monuments to British Monarchs in Dublin Before and After Independence,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 28, 4 (2002): 508-533; James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory,” in “Constructions of Memory: On Monuments Old and New,” special edition, *Harvard Design Magazine* 9 (1999): 6.

throughout late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe and the Americas.⁴ However, the official casting of the nation's history and culture through bronze or stone statues, shrines, public buildings, museums, street and square names, school textbooks, national holidays is often the polar opposite of popular memory or the recollections of oppositional groups, which may codify their memories through music, film, poetry, literature and folklore, and family narratives.⁵ The relationship between monuments, collective memory and nationalism has interested scholars for as long as they have seriously taken up the study of nations and nationalism. This includes the seminal work by William Wood, *An essay on national and sepulchral monuments* (London, 1808) and Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in political bondage 1870-1997* (London, 1998). However, scholars have examined this relationship mainly in the context of Western and Eastern European and North America, as the overrepresentation of books and articles on these regions show.⁶ To

⁴ Stephen Heathorn, "The Long Retreat of Stone Generals," 47; Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham: NC, Duke University Press, 1998); Michael North, "The Public as Sculpture: From Heavenly City to Mass Ornament," in *Art and the Public Sphere*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁵ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans., ed. L. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Heathorn, "The Long Retreat of Stone Generals," 46; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London, Verso, 1994); Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, "Setting the Framework," in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. J. Winter and E. Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶ David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove, "Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870-1945," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, 1 (March 1998): 28-49; Kirsten Belgum, "Displaying the Nation: A View of Nineteenth-Century Monuments through a Popular Magazine," *Central European History* 26, no. 4 (1993): 457-474; Avner Ben-Amos, "Monuments and Memory in French Nationalism," *History and Memory* 5, 2 (1993): 50-81; Daphne Berdahl, "Voices of the Wall: Discourses of Self, History and National Identity at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *History and Memory* 6, no. 2 (1994): 88-124; Matti Bunzl, "On the Politics and Semantics of Austrian Memory: Vienna's Monument Against War and Fascism," *History and Memory* 7, no. 2 (1996): 7-40; Güldem Baykal Büyüksaraç, "Conquering Istanbul: The Controversy over the Taksim Mosque Project," *Anthropology in Action* (February, 2005): 1-12; Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andrew Mycock, eds., *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts* (Oxford; New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Sighe Bhreathnach-Lynch, "Commemorating the Hero in Newly Independent Ireland: Expressions of Nationhood in Bronze and Stone" in *Images, Icons and the Irish Nationalist Imagination*, ed. Lawrence W. McBride (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 148-165; Patrice Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Indiana University Press, 2004); Linas Eriksonas, "The National Hero: A Scottish Contribution", *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*

a lesser extent, academics have analysed the intersections of public monuments and nationalism in the Middle East (Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Turkey).⁷

However, far much less research has been conducted on the parity between monuments and nationalism in the African contest, though there are a few. The removal of imperial monuments from African territories and the construction of new, national ones, was an important but controversial task for the new rulers of Africa who wanted to commemorate their own, national heroes. This is clearly evident from Stephen Heathorn's study of the controversy generated when the first independent government of the Sudan (1956) asked Britain to remove the statues of

XXX, no.1-2 (2003): 83-102; Linas Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identities: Scotland, Norway and Lithuania* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2004); Michael E. Geisler, ed., *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative* (Middlebury College Press, 2005); Andras Gero, *Imagined History: Chapters from nineteenth and twentieth century Hungarian symbolic politics* (Boulder, CO, 2006); John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); K.S Inglis, "Entombing Unknown Soldiers: From London and Paris to Baghdad," *History and Memory* 5, 2 (1993): 7-31; Nuala Johnson, "Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography, and Nationalism," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13, 1 (1995): 51-65; Nuala C. Johnson, "Mapping Monuments: the Shaping of Public Space and Cultural Identities," *Visual Communication* 1, 3 (2002): 293-298; Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory: 1870-1990* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2000); Mara Kozelsky, *Christianizing Crimea: Shaping Sacred Space in the Russian Empire and Beyond* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009); Mara Kozelsky, "Ruins into Relics: The Monument to Saint Vladimir on the Excavations of Chersonesos, 1827-57," *Russian Review* 63 (October 2004): 655-672; George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Hans A. Pohlsander, *National Monuments and Nationalism in 19th Century Germany* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008); Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Garviel D Rosenfeld, "Monuments and the Politics of Memory: Commemorating Kurt Eiser and Bavarian Revolutions of 1918-1919 in Postwar Munich," *Central European History* 30, no. 2 (1997): 221-253; Sven Saaler, "Men in Metal: Representations of the Nation in Public Space in Meiji Japan, 1868-1912," in *Comparativ – Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende* 19, 2/3 (2009): 27-43; Levinson Sanford, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Chapter two of Eric Beckett Weaver's *National Narcissism: The Intersection of the Nationalist Cult and Gender in Hungary* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006): 67-90, offers a semiotic analysis of Hungarian nationalist imagery as presented in monuments, paintings and postcards; Theodore R. Weeks, "Monuments and Memory: Immortalizing Count M. N. Muraviev in Vilna, 1898," *Nationalities Papers* 27, no. 4 (1999): 551-564; Yvonne Whelan, "The Construction and Destruction of a Colonial Landscape: Monuments to British Monarchs in Dublin Before and After Independence," *Journal of Historical Geography* 28, 4 (2002): 508-533.

⁷ Mara Kozelsky, Philip Kohl and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, eds., *Selective Remembrances: Archaeology in the Construction, Commemoration, and Consecration of National Pasts* (University of Chicago Press, 2008); Don Handelman, *Nationalism and the Israeli State: Bureaucratic Logic in Public Events* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004), Chapter 8, "The Presence of Absence: The Memorialism of National Absence:" 147-170.

Gordon and Kitchener from Khartoum, which they saw as “the most obvious material symbols of former colonial rule.”⁸ Janet Hess’s publications have also considered the construction and contestation of national statues, museums, monuments, nationalist and anti-nationalist art in newly-independent Ghana, Tanzania, post-apartheid South Africa and the African Diaspora.⁹ Similar scholarship has also focused on the relationship between monuments and national memory in the African Diaspora.¹⁰

Even in the African context, the majority of the scholarship on the relationship between monuments and the construction and contestation of collective memory, national identity and nationalism has focused on southern Africa in general, and South Africa in particular.¹¹ Henrika Kuklick analyses the politics of monuments in southern Africa in general, and Lawrence J. Vale considers, in part, the contestations between white Rhodesian colonialists and African (Zimbabwean) nationalists over the origins and significance of the ruins of Great Zimbabwe.¹² In apartheid-era South Africa, the ruling white minority regime constructed museums and monuments and utilized other symbols of nationhood to articulate Afrikaner

⁸ Stephen Heathorn, “‘The Long Retreat of Stone Generals’: Imperial Memory, Decolonisation and the Repatriation of Imperial Monuments from Sudan, 1956-60,” in “Nation and Empire,” special issue, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2005): 43.

⁹ See Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*; “Exhibiting Ghana,” “Imagining Architecture,” and “Spectacular Nation.”

¹⁰ See, for example, Laurence Brown, “Monuments to Freedom, Monuments to Nation: The Politics of Emancipation and Remembrance in the Eastern Caribbean,” *Slavery & Abolition* 23, 3 (December 2002): 93-116(24).

¹¹ Annie E. Coombes, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994); Annie E. Coombes, “Translating the Past: Apartheid Monuments in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” in *Hybridity and its Discontents: Politics, Science, Culture*, ed. A. Brah and Annie E. Coombes (New York: Routledge, 2000): 173-197; Pamela Dube, “Monument Will Honor Steve Biko,” *Sowetan*, August 12, 1997, 6; Sabine Marschall, “Forging National Identity: Institutionalizing Foundation Myths Through Monuments,” *South African Journal of Cultural History* 19, 1 (2005): 18-35.

¹² Henrika Kuklick, “Contested Monuments: The Politics of Archaeology in Southern Africa,” in *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, ed. George W. Stocking (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991): 135-170; Lawrence J. Vale, “Mediated Monuments and National Identity,” *Journal of Architecture* 4 (1999): 391-408.

nationalism. Andrew Crampton examines the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, arguing that it became a significant site for the production of a unique Afrikaner ethno-political identity. When it was constructed in the late 1940s, the monument became part and parcel to the creation and legitimisation of the apartheid regime and its racialized policies.¹³ These symbols have increasingly come under scrutiny in the post-apartheid era as popular calls to reverse the cultural and political legacy of apartheid to reflect the multi-cultural and black African version of the national historical narrative and new national identity intensify.¹⁴ Monuments have also been put up in Cape Town in honor of former ANC president and Nobel Prize laureate Albert Luthuli, as well as several monuments of the “Father of the Nation” Nelson Mandela (including a giant statue at Mandela Square in Cape Town). The statues were erected to commemorate these men who led the charge against the apartheid regime and led to the founding of the new “rainbow nation” in 1994.

The public commemoration of wars depicting “the nation in arms” is a typical feature of the construction of modern nationhood. Through a variety of national monuments of historic battles, fallen soldiers and other structures, wars are showcased as communal experiences of collective sacrifice that were waged to defend or give birth to the new nation-state. These monuments commemorate wars that are considered as “key episodes in the nation’s past.”¹⁵ Moreover, the erection of statues of nationalist leaders, heroes and “Founding Fathers” of the nation are also

¹³ Andrew Crampton, “The Voortrekker Monument, the Birth of Apartheid, and Beyond,” *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 221–246.

¹⁴ For an analysis of the contentions over national memory, multiculturalism and museum displays in post-apartheid South Africa, for example, see chapter six of Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*.

¹⁵ “Nations and their Pasts,” 16th annual ASEN Conference, March 28-30, 2006, LSE.

essential projects in the construction of nationhood.¹⁶ Throughout the modern world, there are concrete examples of various war monuments that have been constructed as a part of the national narrative and the idea of nationhood. There are monuments celebrating victories in war, among them the gilded Victory Goddess on top of Siegestsäule in Berlin, built to commemorate Prussia's victories over Denmark, Austria and France; the *Arc de Triomphe* (originally commissioned by Napoleon) and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris; the Swords of Qādisiyyah (or The Hands of Victory) commissioned by Saddam Hussein in Baghdad to commemorate Iraqi war victories over Iran; and finally the Mamayev Kurgan Monument in Russia, built to commemorate Soviet victories at the Battle of Stalingrad in WWII. The rise of nationalism worldwide was also followed by an age of mass warfare.

In the aftermath of the First World War, nations and nationalists increasingly engaged in a “cult of the fallen soldier” where they willed the entire nation to commemorate their fallen, but not forgotten fighters by constructing special monuments in their honour.¹⁷ National memorial or remembrance days and other events are often held at these monumental sites and usually involve the participation of the general population, school children, military and political officials and international parties. Examples of these kinds of monuments include the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens; the Latvian Brethren War Cemetery (Brāļu Kapi); the American Cemetery in Normandy; Amiens War Memorial in France; the Royal London Fusiliers' War Memorial in London; the National War Memorial and the Canadian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa; and the ANZAC (Australia New Zealand Army Corps) Monument.¹⁸

¹⁶ As we will see in the case of Ghana and other socialist or communist states, statues may be constructed of living leaders, which is contrary to the practice in the capitalist countries of the West.

¹⁷ “Nations and their Pasts,” 16th annual ASEN Conference, March 28-30, 2006, LSE.

¹⁸ “Ibid.

Related to the later are Cenotaphs for the War Dead. Existing since antiquity but becoming more popular after the unprecedented death tolls arising since the Great War, these monuments represent an empty tomb that memorialise those who have died in war in defence of the nation. Cenotaphs such as the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London, the War Memorial in Hampstead Heath, London and the Tugu Negara (National Monument) and Cenotaph in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia provide a more abstract and symbolic way of honouring the nation's "glorious dead" and are the centres of National Remembrance Day ceremonies and similar events.¹⁹

The declaration, achievement and commemoration of independence from a foreign imperial (or domestic) potency also occasioned the construction of national independence monuments throughout the modern world, especially since the independence of the United States of America from Great Britain. These independence monuments are a visual symbol and reminder to the nation of their achievement of nationhood out of the collapse (or ouster) of the colonial state and a call for national unity for the various sectors of the country. The best examples of these monuments are the Statue of Liberty in New York; the Latvian Freedom Monument; the Liberty Monument at Liberty Square in San Salvador; the Freedom Monument in Rousse, Bulgaria; the Bangladesh Liberation Monument; the Monument of the Martyrs (Maquam E'chahid) in Algiers, Algeria; and the statue of a woman lifting a child in her arms in Kampala, Uganda.²⁰

After independence, it became clear that the Nkrumah government preferred to construct monuments that broke from the colonial past and emphasized Ghana's newfound freedom and nationhood. In 1957 for example, the new Ghanaian Parliament rejected a plan for the British government to present a special statue to

¹⁹ "Nations and their Pasts," 16th annual ASEN Conference, March 28-30, 2006, LSE.

²⁰ Ibid.

Ghana to honour its attainment of independence. The statue was to be a design of Queen Elizabeth II holding Ghana's Black Star symbol in her outstretched right hand. The Cabinet chose instead a design of "Mother Ghana" holding up in her right hand a flaming torch²¹, not unlike New York's statue of liberty. Since independence in Ghana, several monuments of important themes, events and political figures in the nation's history have been commissioned and erected at popular points in the nation's capital. These monuments are often erected at a major road intersection, otherwise known as a roundabout or "circle."

The decision as to which monuments to erect and to whom was decided mainly by special government committees established to maintain, debate and make recommendations on such matters. The consortium of local and national agencies that make these decisions include the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB), the National Commission on Culture, the Ministry of Local Government, and the Town and Country Planning (Accra) Department. Their decisions give us tremendous insight into what was politically, philosophically or economically important to the government in power at that time. The major national monuments in Accra include the Independence or Black Star Square Monument, Independence Arch, the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, a statue of Dr. J.B. Danquah at Danquah Circle, Tetteh Quarshie Circle, the Monument of the Unknown Soldier and the 28th February Cenotaph, and Nkrumah's statue at Parliament House.²²

²¹ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 30 and note 75, chapter 1, 184; Cabinet Minutes, May 14, July 30, and October 29, 1957.

²² In addition to the national monuments erected in the early independence period, there were broader, international moves to recognize and safeguard certain existing monuments in Ghana and other African countries that had as much national as well as international importance for humanity as a whole. These programs included the international "Save the Monuments of Nubia" campaign spearheaded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1962. UNESCO partnered with the International Postal Union and several African countries to simultaneously issue a special "Save the Monuments of Nubia" postage stamps designed to bring awareness to and raise funds for the international campaign to safeguard the Nubian monuments that were threatened by the waters of the Aswan dam. See GPA: S4.41 Vol. 2 (15th Anniversary of the

Independence Monuments and Memorials

Two of the most important national and nationalist monuments constructed in Ghana to symbolize the new-found independence and triumph over British colonialism were the Independence or Black Star Monument and Independence Arch (figures 4.1 and 4.2, respectively). Constructed with as much symbolism as the *Arc de Triomphe*, the National Monument stands as a rectangular gateway of “Freedom and Justice” atop of which sits the “Black Star,” symbolising the nation of Ghana as the black pioneer (“star”) of African independence. The Independence Monument was unveiled on Tuesday 5th March 1957, the day preceding the Independence Day celebrations, in a special ceremony officiated by Nkrumah, British royalty and other dignitaries. The evening ceremony was complete with British-imported pyrotechnic art displays (the fireworks lasting about three quarters of an hour), shining floodlights and the playing of the new Ghanaian national anthem. Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent (in the presence of His Excellency the Governor Sir Charles, Lady Charles Arden-Clarke and Prime Minister Nkrumah) opened the National Monument - throwing a switch to illuminate it.²³ The Duchess also unveiled the commemorative tablet, bearing the new Coat of Arms, on the inner wall of the National Monument, which read:

Ghana’s Independence 6th March A.D. 1957. Let this monument hold sacred in your memory the liberty and freedom of Ghana. The liberty and freedom which by our struggle and sacrifice the people of Ghana have this day regained. May this independence be preserved and held sacred for all time.²⁴

Declaration of Human Rights, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt), International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union to Ghana Posts & Telecommunications, Memorandum T12/83A(42) 1962, “Issue of Special Postage Stamps Devoted to the International Campaign for Safeguarding Nubian Monuments” April 10, 1962.

²³ PRAAD: ADM 14/6/99, “Ghana Independence Celebrations: Ceremonial Opening of the National Monument by Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Kent” Program.

²⁴ Ibid.



Figure 4.1. Independence Square (Black Star Square) Monument. Photo: Author



Figure 4.2. Independence Arch Monument. Photo: Author.

For the British, the opening of the National Monument represented the closing of what Britain held to be their successful stewardship and illumination of the Gold Coast. Britain handed over the reigns of nationhood to what it hoped was the capable management of an independent Ghanaian Government lead by Kwame Nkrumah. Independent Ghana was also opened to becoming a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. To Nkrumah, as epitomised by the words on the commemorative tablet and the national motto “Freedom and Justice” (etched across the top of the Monument), it represented a changing of the guard; the “regaining” of the lost sovereignty of the peoples of the Gold Coast and Dependencies; liberty from what Nkrumah believed to be the exploitations and injustices of British imperialism. The Monument further symbolized Nkrumah’s vision of creating a new national identity, which would increasingly be characterised by socialist ideals and programs or “justice.” These two ideals – Freedom and Justice – also symbolised Nkrumah’s uncompromising political stance in dealing with the two world superpowers of the time. Despite his adulation for what Arne Westad calls ‘the empire of liberty’ – the United States -Nkrumah was also enamoured with its archrival ‘the empire of justice’ – the Soviet Union.²⁵ Nkrumah would solicit and receive economic aid for his modernization and industrial development schemes from both blocs.

Black Star Square was also used by the Nkrumah administration as a site to orchestrate or to stage the nation’s support for his presidency and to showcase national pride. These public parades included the participation of school children as well as adults. During the fifth anniversary of independence in 1962, for example, seven thousand marching school children were amassed at the National Monument

²⁵ See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chapters 1 and 2.

to greet President Nkrumah.²⁶ The recruitment and deployment of children and young adults for nationalist and nation-building purposes was an important aspect of Nkrumah's nationalist projects. No other group of children epitomised this than the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement. The Young Pioneers were uniformed, school-aged children who were officially organized by the Nkrumah government into youth brigades that pledged allegiance to Nkrumah.

'Young Pioneers were required to pledge to "live by the ideals of Kwame Nkrumah, founder of the State of Ghana and Initiator of African Personality," and assert their belief that "The Dynamic Central People's Party is always supreme"; in their inaugural charge, the Young Pioneers pledged to uphold the aims of the movement "in the name of Osagyefo, Kwame Nkrumah..."...To the refrain, "Nkrumah does no wrong," children responded, "Nkrumah is our leader," "Nkrumah is our Messiah," and "Nkrumah never dies."²⁷

Edmund Abaka further reveals that Young Pioneer "volunteers" comprised of boys and girls between the ages of eight and sixteen. The CPP recruited party loyalists and intellectuals from the local to the regional level to train and inculcate a strong sense of patriotism, discipline and duty to country in the minds of these young children. Young Pioneer branches were set up in districts across the country, and Pioneer members had the honour and privilege of travelling abroad (to both communist and capitalist countries), as well as participating in official ceremonies to welcome foreign dignitaries to Ghana.²⁸

²⁶ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 23.

²⁷ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 182, note 35, chapter 1.

²⁸ Edmund Abaka, "Youth and Development: Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and The Ghana Young Pioneer Movement" (paper presented at the "Ghana in Africa and the World: A Symposium Commemorating the Centenary and Legacy of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (First President of Ghana), 1909 – 2009" conference, Connecticut College, New London, CT, November 6, 2009).

Monuments of Known and Unknown Soldiers

At Independence Square, in close proximity to the Christiansburg Castle in Osu (a suburb of Accra where the Government is headquartered), various memorials, and monuments have been erected in memory of significant historical antecedents. The key themes that dominate these official structures suggest a concentration on enlightenment virtues such as freedom and justice (as inscribed on the Independence Monument itself), the agency of Africans in national, Pan-African and world affairs, and Ghana's social and military mileposts, such as protests in defiance of the colonial administration, independence itself, coups and counter-coups. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the literature on nationalism highlights the importance of memorials such as "the tomb of the unknown soldier" and martyrs of the nation's freedom from tyranny and oppression to national identity and the official historical narrative. These monuments tell us a lot about how the state chooses to commemorate the nation's fallen heroes as well as which aspects of national history are thought to be most important to the national memory.

Another national monument in Accra - The Unknown Soldier Cenotaph otherwise known as The Tomb (or Statue) of the Unknown Soldier - is situated around the central part of the Independence Square Monument on a terrazzo floor (figure 4.3). It is a high, cream-coloured marble slab monument on top of which stands a statue of a soldier in military fatigue, hat, and a rifle in his right hand. The Statue of the Unknown Soldier was erected in honour of Gold Coast and Ghanaian soldiers who served and died in international conflicts, including the World Wars and the Congo Crisis. Close to this cenotaph stands another monument of nine black marble slabs sitting atop a slightly raised pedestal. Each slab is embossed with

metal-lettered citations of the ranks, names, heroic deeds, dates and places where each soldier served and died.

Another monument constructed by the Nkrumah regime to symbolize the “national” struggle for independence was The Three-Marble Slab Cenotaph at Independence Square (figures 4.4 – 4.7). The Three-Marble Slab Cenotaph is a cream-coloured structure, which stands atop a white marble floor and is constructed with a central concrete support surrounded by three marble slabs, featuring metal-lettered citations dedicated to the memory of Ghana’s fallen soldiers. One slab is “dedicated to the memory of the unknown Ghanaian who died in the cause of freedom and justice for Ghana” (figure 4.5). You will notice that the memorial was created in honour of “the unknown Ghanaian” and not “the unknown [Ghanaian] soldier” which probably implies that the struggle for “freedom and justice” was a popular effort that includes and goes beyond the reaches of the armed forces. It also connotes a timeless sacrifice of individuals throughout the country’s history. A second slab (figure 4.6) is dedicated to the memory of the three known soldiers whose deaths signalled the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back of British colonialism in the Gold Coast. The shooting of these three ex-servicemen sparked the Accra Riots that lead to more popular protests and demands for independence.



Figure 4.3. 'The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier' memorial-monument mounted tall atop a concrete stand, between Black Star Square and the Independence Arch. Photos: Author.



Figure 4.4. The Three Marble Slab Cenotaph at Independence Square. Photo: Author



Figure 4.5. Slab of Plaque-monument “Dedicated to the memory of the unknown Ghanaian who died in the cause of freedom and justice for Ghana.” Photo: Author.



Figure 4.6. Memorial plaque-monument dedicated to the three Gold Coast ex-servicemen whose deaths sparked the 1948 Accra Riots. The plaque reads, “Dedicated to the memory of Sgt. Adjeitey, Cpl. Attipoe, Pte. Odartey Lamptey who died at the Christianborg Crossroads on 28th February 1948”.

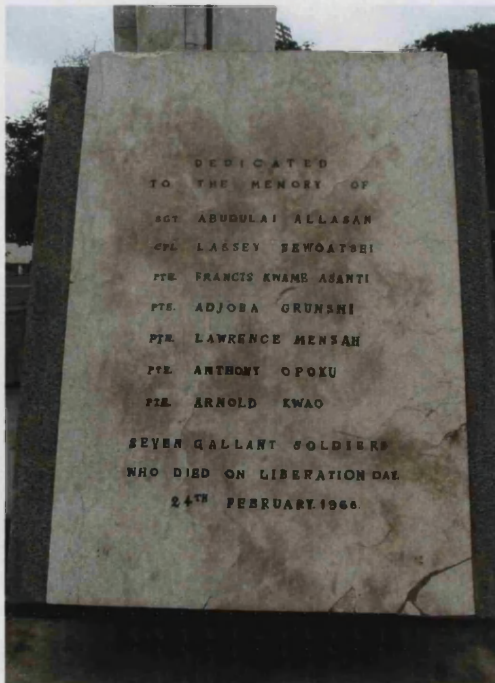


Figure 4.7: Memorial plaque-monument “Dedicated to the memory of Sgt. Abudulai Allasan, Cpl. Lassew Sewoatsei, Pte. Francis Kwame Asanti, Pte. Adjoba Grunshi, Pte. Lawrence Mensah, Pte. Anthony Opoku, Pte. Arnold Kwao, seven gallant soldiers who died on Liberation Day, 24th February 1966.”

The slab reads, “Dedicated to the memory of Sgt. Adjeitey, Cpl. Attipoe, Pte. Odartey Lamptey who died at the Christianborg Crossroads on 28th February 1948.” Inscribed in the stone plate of the third concrete slab (figure 4.7) - built by the NLC that ousted Nkrumah - are the words, “Dedicated to the memory of Sgt. Abudulai Allasan, Cpl. Lassey Sewoatsei, Pte. Francis Kwame Asanti, Pte. Adjoba Grunshi, Pte. Lawrence Mensah, Pte. Anthony Opoku, Pte. Arnold Kwao, seven gallant soldiers who died on Liberation Day, 24th February 1966.”

The Cenotaph of the seven gallant soldiers demonstrates how monuments can also be sites of contestation and competing historical narratives for different regimes. On the one hand, the monument commemorates “Liberation Day,” which refers to the coup against a “tyrant,” as the NLC frequently referred to Kwame Nkrumah. On the other, Nkrumah viewed the coup and the death of these soldiers as a betrayal by his own armed forces, frequently referring to the NLC “as the Notorious Liars Council, a name I gave them when I spoke to the people of Ghana on Radio Guinea’s Voice of the Revolution soon after my arrival in Conakry.”²⁹ Nkrumah dedicated his book *Dark Days in Ghana* (published in 1968 while he was in exile in Guinea) to “Major General Barwah, Lieutenant S. Arthur and Lieutenant M. Yeboah and all Ghanaians killed and injured resisting the traitors of the 24th February 1966.”³⁰ In the book, Nkrumah gave his assessment of the causes and consequences of the coup and wrote about the fate of the seven regular soldiers whose deaths would later be commemorated by the Cenotaph at Independence Square:

The first object of the military operation was to force the surrender of Major-General Barwah, Army Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, who was in command of the Ghana Army...Barwah could not be

²⁹ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 34.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

intimidated. Woken from his sleep in the early hours of the morning of the 24th [February 1966] by the arrival of Kotoka and some 25 men, he courageously refused either to join the traitors or to surrender. Thereupon, Kotoka shot him dead at point-black [sic] range in cold blood in the presence of his wife and children. The seven security officers who were stationed at Barwah's house were also murdered on the spot on Kotoka's orders...In an attempt to wipe the blood from their hands the so-called "N.L.C." gave Barwah and the security officers a military burial a few days later.³¹

Father of the Nation: The Nkrumah Statues

The fate of Kwame Nkrumah's presidency was symbolically and ironically reflected in the fate of his two giant bronze statues, one of which – standing at twenty feet (six metres) tall - his government erected in front of the Ghana Parliament House in Accra, shortly after independence (figure 4.8). The giant statue of Nkrumah was unveiled in 1956 by Chief Justice Sir Arku Korah. "Nkrumah maintained that the monumental statue erected in front of the Ghanaian Parliament...was, like the portrait on the stamps, necessary in order to demonstrate the nation's independence to the people of Ghana."³² Another CPP official (the Minister of Communications) maintained that the statues of Nkrumah would stand as concrete proof that Africans now held the reigns of power that Europeans once controlled.³³ The Nkrumah government commissioned and paid fifteen thousand pounds (£15,000) to Professor Nicola Cataudella and Sergio Barbeski, two renowned Italian sculptors, to create the bronze statue of Kwame Nkrumah. Sergio Barbeski also provided artistic services to the Liberian government, as the Chief Architect for the Department of Public Works and Utility.³⁴ In 1965, a second statue was created by a Polish sculptor, Madam Alina Slesinska at a cost of fifteen thousand Ghanaian Cedis (¢15,000) and mounted

³¹ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 22-23.

³² Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 52-53.

³³ *Daily Graphic*, July 2, 1957, 16.

³⁴ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 30 and note 77, chapter 1, 184.

at the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute at Winneba.³⁵ There were four declarations engraved on all four sides of the Parliament House statue (figure 4.8), which epitomises the nationalist and Pan-Africanist philosophies and opinions of Kwame Nkrumah:

- 1) Kwame Nkrumah Founder of the Nation (on the front of the statue)
- 2) We prefer self government with danger to servitude in tranquillity
- 3) Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto it
- 4) To me the liberation of Ghana will be meaningless unless it is linked up with the liberation of Africa

Essentially, these statements that were etched in the stone statue of Nkrumah represented the three cornerstones of *Nkrumaism* – the political philosophy and ideology that Nkrumah developed and espoused in theory and practice as a leader:

1) political emancipation, which he saw as the prerequisite for economic independence – itself necessary to attain true sovereignty; 2) The complete liberation and unification of the African continent under a union government; and 3) the refashioning of society under socialist ideals of justice. Nkrumah believed that these objectives were to be pursued concurrently and as a matter of urgency in order to erase the hold of European imperialism and colonialism on Africa and to quicken the pace of African liberation and unification.³⁶ However, there were challenges to Nkrumah's nationalist worldview, manifesting themselves in the form of assaults on his stone likenesses.

³⁵ Sammy Kango, "Nkrumah Statue Sent to Museum," *Ghanaian Times*, September 19, 1975; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, G. Amegatcher, Assistant Keeper-Art GMMB, to the General Manager of Railway and Ports Authority, memorandum # 0739/60, "Restoration of Bronze Statues of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah," June 15, 1981; GMMB, Statues File No. 0244, Professor R.B. Nunoo, Director of the Ghana Museums & Monuments Board to the Producer, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, memorandum 0739/51, "Late Ex-President Nkrumah's Statue," August 5, 1980. See also See Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 30 and note 77, chapter 1, 184.

³⁶ Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 216.



Figure 4.8. Monument of Kwame Nkrumah at Parliament House, Accra. Photos courtesy of Photographic Section, Information Services Department of Ghana.³⁷

³⁷ Information Services Department of Ghana, Photographic Section reference numbers for photographs from top to bottom, left to right, R\5406\2, R\5406\7, R\5406\8, R\5406\10 and R\5406\9, respectively.



Figure 4.9. Monument of Kwame Nkrumah at the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute at Winneba. Photo courtesy of Photographic Section, Information Services Department of Ghana.³⁸

³⁸ Information Services Department of Ghana, Photographic Section reference number G/2014/5.

The NLM, GSC, NTC and the Nkrumah Monuments

Asante nationalists and opponents of the Nkrumah regime were outraged at what they perceived as Nkrumah's self-aggrandizement and dictatorial leanings, evidenced by the Parliament House and other statues that he planned to erect across the country. In the years immediately before and after independence, Asante-backed newspapers including the *Ashanti Pioneer* and *Liberator* ran editorials using ethnic slurs, accusing Nkrumah of casting himself as a god and inciting the people to worship him as such.³⁹ As Chapter III highlighted, the CPP government authorized the preservation and upgrade of Nkroful, Nkrumah's place of birth, as a museum/shrine and pilgrimage site to honour Nkrumah. Writers and critics such as Joseph Appiah, who Janet Hess describes as "perhaps the most vehement opponent of iconography associated with Nkrumah,"⁴⁰ were disgusted by Nkrumah's statue and viewed him as Ghana's Stalin.⁴¹ Appiah caricatured Nkrumah as a devilish Fuehrer who "wants his statue erected so that all in the independent Gold Coast will swear by it as the Great Oath after he has seen to it that Chieftaincy...has been uprooted" and instigated that his statue would suffer the same fate as "Joe Stalin's statue in Hungary, where the people with an insatiable desire to free themselves from the thralldom [sic] of the Kremlin are today on the warpath."⁴² However, the Asante resistance to Nkrumah's statues was not confined to harsh words and graphics in newspaper editorials and illustrations; the NLM and its supporters also resorted to violence and the threat of physical conflict. On the 3rd of November 1961, the Nkrumah statue in Accra was bombed, but not utterly destroyed. CPP

³⁹ See, for example, *Liberator*, August 10, 1956, 3; *Liberator*, October 23, 1956, 1; *Liberator*, November 21, 1956, 2

⁴⁰ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 53.

⁴¹ See, for example, *Liberator*, November 16, 1956, 1; *Liberator*, December 13, 1956, 1; *Ashanti Pioneer*, May 2, 1956, 2.

⁴² *Liberator*, January 15, 1957, 2, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 53.

Minister of the Interior Kwaku Boateng blamed the NLM for the explosive attack on Nkrumah's monument, prompting a "Massive Police Hunt for [the] Statue Bombers."⁴³ In addition to the pulling down of his monument in Accra, a mob also destroyed the life-sized statue of the president that was erected at the Asante Regional Secretariat of the Convention People's Party in Kumasi.⁴⁴

In Kumasi, plans to erect yet another Nkrumah statue in Kejetia Square were greeted with threats from Bafou Osei Akoto, who vowed to put up resistance even if the military were brought in to enforce the construction and promised to persecute any civilian who collaborated with the project.⁴⁵ The symbolic bombing of Nkrumah's statue in Accra and the threat of further violence against another monument in Kumasi followed a pattern of personal assassination attempts against Nkrumah himself. In his post-coup memoirs *Dark Days in Ghana*, Nkrumah recalls that "members of the police and Special Branch have been involved in each of the six attacks made on my life, and have frequently ignored, and sometimes aided, the activities of people they knew were plotting to overthrow the government."⁴⁶ One such assassination attempt occurred nine months after the bombing of his statue in Accra. On 1 August 1962, according to Nkrumah and June Milne, a grenade attack orchestrated by "leading police officers" in collusion with Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lamprey, "one of the ringleaders in the plot to kill me," was made on Nkrumah's life in Kulungugu in northern Ghana. During this unsuccessful attack, several people lost their lives, including a child.⁴⁷ Other attempts on and conspiratorial plots against

⁴³ *Daily Graphic*, November 6, 1961, 1, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, note 77, chapter 2, 186.

⁴⁴ *Daily Graphic*, March 4, 1966, 5.

⁴⁵ *Ashanti Times*, July 6, 1957, 1, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 53.

⁴⁶ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 41.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 41; Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 173. In October 1962, Obetsebi-Lamprey was arrested and jailed under the Preventive Detention Act in the condemned section (special block) of Nsawam Prison by the CPP government. He died in detention in January 1963, as did Danquah in 1965. Honoured as one of "the Big Six" who led Ghana to independence along with Nkrumah and

Nkrumah's life and coup plots were carried out beginning with the bombing of his residence on 10 November 1955 (attributed to NLM supporters); 1958 (pinned to various Opposition party officials, including J.B. Danquah, Reginald Reynolds Amponsah, Modesto Apaloo, Joe Appiah, Kofi Busia and Victor Owusu); and on 1 January 1964 when a policeman stationed at Flagstaff House fired four shots at the President.⁴⁸

The GSC, in addition to the Asantes, the Ga State Council (GSC) in Accra also vehemently protested against the placement of Nkrumah's statue in "their" territory. For its part, the GSC heard accusations that CPP policy makers tried to bribe the *Ga Manche* (the king of the Ga state) for permission to erect the Nkrumah monument in Accra. Furthermore, many Gas felt that the erection of a statue in honour of Kwame Nkrumah in Accra would be a grave offence to the chiefs and subjects of the Ga state. The GSC received symbolic support from the Northern Territories Council (NTC), who passed a resolution expressing disapproval for the construction of the Nkrumah monument in Accra.⁴⁹

The NLM, the Nkrumah Monuments and the Coup

In addition to charges of corruption, mismanagement of state resources and the violation of human rights, the construction of statues of Kwame Nkrumah and the placement of his likeness on the national currency and stamps provided evidence to the Army and Police that Nkrumah had become Ghana's dictator for life. On 24 February 1966, the National Liberation Council (NLC) staged a coup against the Nkrumah regime. In *The Rebirth of Ghana: The end of Tyranny*, the NLC declared:

Danquah, a "circle" or traffic roundabout was subsequently named after Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lamptey in Accra.

⁴⁸ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 41-42; Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 169-174.

⁴⁹ *Liberator*, November 5, 1956, 1, and *Ashanti Pioneer*, August 1, 1957, 1, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 53.

The Ghana Armed Forces, in co-operation with the Police, took over the Government of Ghana on February 24th, 1966. The first announcement of the take-over was made over Radio Ghana by Colonel E. K. Kotoka of the Second Infantry Brigade, who told the nation that Kwame Nkrumah had been dismissed from office and that the myth surrounding him had been broken...The intervention of the Armed Forces and the Police means the death of tyranny in Ghana. The people of Ghana have been freed from the great burden which was imposed on them by the corrupt government of Kwame Nkrumah. For more than a decade, Ghanaians in all walks of life were denied their fundamental human rights, subjected to arbitrary rule, injustice and undemocratic practices of a so-called people's party which in effect [was] a one-man party backed by unscrupulous hirelings and hangers-on...We in Ghana have taken our destiny into our own hands, and under the liberating might of the Armed Forces and the Police, we have broken once and for all times the tyranny of Kwame Nkrumah.⁵⁰

The two statues of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah were attacked and severely macerated by a mob during "Operation Cold Chop" - the 24th February 1966 military *coup d'état* that toppled Nkrumah's government. These attacks on the Nkrumah statues illustrate the contested history of the nation as articulated by Nkrumah as well as on the philosophy of Nkrumahism. Similar occurrences of contesting history by pulling apart the statues of leftist leaders can be found elsewhere; in Budapest, demonstrators dismantled and knocked off the sculpted head of Stalin's statue during the 1956 revolution. Amidst the ruins of the Chancellery in Berlin lies a bust of Adolf Hitler. On 8 March 1966 former members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) blew up the Nelson's Pillar monument that was constructed in Dublin, Ireland in 1808 to honour the British naval hero Lord Horatio Nelson.⁵¹ The statues of Nkrumah were meted a similar fate. The nose was dented, the forehead badly damaged, and both arms and the right foot were broken off of the Parliament House statue in Accra (figure 4.10). It was then "dumped at the backyard

⁵⁰ National Liberation Council and the Ministry of Information, *The Rebirth of Ghana: The end of Tyranny* (Accra-Tema: State Publishing Corporation, Printing Division, 1966), i.

⁵¹ "Nations and their Pasts," 16th annual ASEN conference, March 28-30, 2006. The symbolic attack on the policies of political leaders through the decimations of monuments that they erected is still evident in more recent times. In 1992, Ethiopian workers in Addis Ababa dismantled the statues of communist leaders such as Lenin erected by the exiled Colonel Mengistu. See Meredith, *The State of Africa*: chapter 22, plate 15.

lawn of the Central Police Station in Accra”⁵² where playing children were apparently able to pelt it with stones, iron bars and other hard material causing further damage to the surface of the statue. On the other hand, the head, the left hand and part of the right leg were ripped of the Winneba statue.⁵³



Figure 4.10. Original Parliament House statue of Kwame Nkrumah, which was damaged by an angry mob during the National Liberation Council military coup on 24 February 1966. The statue was recovered and re-erected in the courtyard of the National Museum in 1977. A Ghanaian flag was tied around the neck of the statue for the Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2007. Photo: Author.

⁵² Kango, “Nkrumah’s Statue,” January 5, 1977.

⁵³ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Gilbert Amegatcher, Assistant Keeper of Art, Ghana Museums & Monuments Board to A. Akator, Head of the Sculpture Section, College of Art, University of Science & Technology, Kumasi, memorandum 0739/31, “Restoration of Nkrumah Statues,” June 20, 1978; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Nunoo to GBC, memorandum 0739/51, “Late Ex-President Nkrumah’s statue,” August 5, 1980; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, G. Amegatcher, Assistant Keeper-Art GMMB, to the General Manager of Railway and Ports Authority, memorandum # 0739/60, “Restoration of Bronze Statues of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah,” June 15, 1981; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, “Observation of Bronze statues of the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.”

The missing “body parts” of both Nkrumah statues were never recovered⁵⁴ and one can only speculate that, at the time of the coup or subsequently, they were acquired by collectors and sold on the international black market.

In *Dark Days in Ghana*, Nkrumah alleged that the attacks on his statues were part of a larger program of “staged demonstrations” and “rigged press interviews” perpetrated by the military coup plotters, their Western backers and the imperialist press to make it appear as if it were ordinary Ghanaians rebelling against the Nkrumah government:

Much publicity was given in the imperialist press and on T.V., to the pulling down of the statue of myself in front of the National Assembly building in Accra. It was made to appear as though angry crowds had torn the statue from its pedestal and had carried off chunks of it. But it was not for nothing that no photographs could be produced to show the actual pulling down of the statue; and the few women seen carrying away portions of the statue on their heads were photographed backview. In fact when the statue was pulled down the Parliament building where it stood had been cordoned off by the military and no unauthorized person was allowed into the area. All those who were there at the time had been those brought in by the military, who had closed to all civilians the whole of the High Street onto which the statue faced.⁵⁵

In *The State of Africa*, Martin Meredith illustrates a photograph (titled “feet of clay”) of eighteen children standing around the downed, decapitated statue of Nkrumah outside parliament. In the caption, he writes, “Youth groups brought up on the slogan ‘Nkrumah is the new Messiah’ marched through the streets of Accra carrying placards proclaiming ‘Nkrumah is NOT our Messiah.’”⁵⁶ Nkrumah further decried media pictures such as that published by Meredith as nothing but fabrications of the imperialist media:

⁵⁴ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, sub-File No. 0739, Custodian Superintendent to Assistant Director, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, memorandum, “Conveyance of Statues,” September 19, 1975.

⁵⁵ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 31.

⁵⁶ Meredith, *The State of Africa*, chapter 22, forth plate.

When the statue had been pulled down about half-a-dozen terrified young children were forced to sit on it as it lay on the ground. Even the jubilant imperialist press evidently saw nothing strange in publishing photographs of bewildered toddlers, tears running down their cheeks, sitting on a headless statue, while the same imperialist press extolled what it described as a “most popular coup.” Since even the women shown carrying away pieces of it on their heads were photographed from behind, it is impossible to be certain whether they were from a group of the market women condemned by the Abraham Commission or, as was widely rumoured in Accra, “soldiers dressed up as women.”⁵⁷

In addition to the felling of his statues, Nkrumah also alleges that ordinary Ghanaians were killed by the military for even displaying his picture in public in the aftermath of the coup. “In the Makola market, a woman who had a large picture of myself above her stall was shot dead by an army officer after refusing three times to hand it over for destruction.”⁵⁸ It seems conceivable that this incident could have occurred, given the NLC’s fervent proclamation after the coup forbidding anyone from displaying Nkrumah “propaganda” material in public. “Following the take-over, the Convention People’s Party...[was] proscribed. It is therefore illegal for any person to carry out political activities of any description, including rallies, processions, propaganda campaigns and the use of party slogans and labels.”⁵⁹

Nkrumah blamed the coup in Ghana and others throughout Africa on “neo-colonialists” (primarily British, American and West German) and small domestic “reactionary elements” that desired to “sabotage our great struggle for economic independence, and our efforts in the African Revolution to achieve the total liberation of the continent and a Union Government of Africa.”⁶⁰ Chiefly among the “reactionary elements” in Ghana were certain members of the armed forces. Nkrumah alleged that, since he became Head of Government Business in 1951 and

⁵⁷ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 31.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ NLC, *The Rebirth of Ghana: The end of Tyranny*, i.

⁶⁰ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 36.

during his presidency of Ghana, he had been the target of certain branches of the police, military, Opposition leaders and neo-colonialist hostilities and conspiracies to assassinate him six times. Of the eight leaders of the NLC that ousted Nkrumah, four were members of the army and four from the police force; all of them were trained in Britain.⁶¹ Consequently, he accused them of having a colonial, elitist mentality and of being prone to insubordination and rebellion.⁶²

He also blamed the resilience of tribalism in national politics as culpable for the coup. As a nationalist, Nkrumah tried to downplay tribalism in Ghanaian politics and stressed regional and tribal unity as necessary for nation-building. Having fought an uphill battle against tradition chiefs (particularly the Ashantis) during and after independence, he recognized that there had always been a close Ewe-Ashanti relationship, exemplified by the tribal alliance between Harley (an Ewe), Kotoka (an Ewe) and Afrifa (an Ashanti) who headed the coup against him. At the time of the coup, Nkrumah had not yet confirmed Colonel E.K. Kotoka's appointment as Commander of the Second Infantry Brigade Group of the Kumasi garrison. Nkrumah further asserts that in 1965, he was forced to dismiss Ankrah for being "lazy, incompetent and unreliable" and for plotting with others to overthrow his government.⁶³ In his memoirs, however, Nkrumah has admitted some failure in his attempts to eliminate the scourge of tribalism that threatened to undermine his nation-building policies and ideals:

I had to combat not only tribalism but the African tradition that a man's first duty was to his family group and that therefore nepotism was the highest of all virtues. While I believe we had largely eliminated tribalism as an active force, its by-products and those of the family system were still with us. I could not have chosen my government without some regard to tribal origins

⁶¹ See NLC, *The Rebirth of Ghana: The end of Tyranny*, 6-20.

⁶² See Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, Chapter 3 "the National Liberation Council," 33-51.

⁶³ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 21, 34, 44.

and even, within the Party itself, there was at times a tendency to condemn or recommend some individual on the basis of his tribal or family origin.⁶⁴

During the failed counter-coup against the NLC, headed by Lieutenant Moses Yeboah on 17 April 1967, Kotoka was killed at the Ghana International Airport in Accra. Not long after the attempted counter-coup took place, the NLC decided to rename Accra airport the Kotoka International Airport.⁶⁵ A memorial monument of Kotoka was also erected at the very spot where he was killed (figures 4.11 and 4.12). An annotation on one side of the statue read, “Lieutenant General Emmanuel Kwesi Kotoka, O.S.G., G.S.O. Led the Revolution of 24th February 1966. Here on this spot fell but now stands this Soldier of Destiny son of our Fatherland.” A second caption on another side of the monument read, “General Officer commanding the Ghana Armed Forces. Member of the National Liberation Council. Born 26th October 1926. Died 17th April 1967.”⁶⁶

In *Dark Days in Ghana*, Nkrumah rejoiced about the death of Kotoka, who he accused of siding with the “reactionary elements” within Ghana and the “neo-colonialists” abroad for temporarily thwarting the process of Ghanaian nation-building:

Kotoka subsequently boasted of his killing of...[Nkrumah loyalist Major-General Barwah, Army Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Defence Staff] but said because he was protected by a “juju” he was able to catch the bullets which Barwah fired in his defence and to throw them back at him. When the counter coup of April 1967 took place Kotoka’s “magic” could not save him. Unlike Barwah he surrendered without protest or struggle to those who had captured him at his headquarters. His “juju” did not prevent him being shot in his turn.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 66.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶⁶ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, photographs of original Kotoka statue at Kotoka International Airport. The Kotoka statue was moved from the airport to the grounds of the National Museum in October 2000 to make repairs to it and to facilitate renovation works to modernize the airport.⁶⁶ However, the statue was never returned to the airport and currently stands behind the statues of Nkrumah in the fore court of the National Museum – an ironic juxtaposition given that Kotoka was “behind” the coup against Nkrumah and highlights Kotoka’s “backstabbing” of Nkrumah.

⁶⁷ Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 22.



Figures 4.11. Monument of General E.K. Kotoka being removed from the Kotoka International Airport in 2000. Photos courtesy of the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board.



Figures 4.12. Front and rear view of Statue of General E.K. Kotoka at the National Museum, Accra. Photos: Author.

Back to Africa: General Acheampong and the “Return” of Nkrumah

The restoration and display of Nkrumah’s statues at the National Museum in the late 1970s could only have been possible because the political environment had changed significantly in favour of Nkrumah’s legacy. A new atmosphere of reverence for Nkrumah began to become evident only a few years after the physical and symbolic return of his remains to African and then Ghanaian soil after his death in 1972. While he was living in Guinea Conakry between 1966 and 1971, Nkrumah and his allies within and outside of Ghana tried but failed on several occasions to stage counter-coups to return him to power.⁶⁸ However, as his health began to fail him (under suspicious circumstances) toward the end of 1969, it became apparent that he was not in a position physically to preside over Ghana once more even if he had the opportunity to do so.⁶⁹ In August 1971, Nkrumah’s health situation was so adverse that he had to leave Guinea to seek further medical help in Bucharest, where he would eventually die the following year.⁷⁰ Moreover, Nkrumah’s objective of returning to Ghana to continue where he left off in 1966 after the NLC coup was further undermined by the July 1969 elections that ushered in the civilian government of Kofi A. Busia. However, civilian rule in Ghana did not last long; while on a state visit to Britain, Busia’s government was overthrown on 13 January 1972 by yet another military *coup d’état*, this time headed by then General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong of the National Redemption Council (NRC).⁷¹ Acheampong became Chairman of the National Redemption Council until 9 October 1975, when

⁶⁸ Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*. See Part Two, “The Conakry Years,” especially Chapter 13, “Villa Syli.”

⁶⁹ Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 245–247.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

(now elevated to the rank of General), he became Chairman of the Supreme Military Council.⁷²

Given that the prospects of a return to power in Ghana were slipping further away from him as political developments in Ghana ensued, as well as his worsening health in a foreign land, Nkrumah now wished to be in Ghana to live out the rest of his days with his family. June Milne, Nkrumah's executrix and biographer writes:

"At the time, Nkrumah wanted above all to return to Ghana, not for reinstatement in any political role. He was far too ill for that. But just to be on Ghanaian soil and to see his mother once more. She was then in her nineties and in very poor health...Nkrumah was clearly a dying man who would have posed no threat to the regime in Ghana, but who simply wanted to return to the land of his birth, the country which owed its independence to him."⁷³

In 1971, President Sékou Touré had tried to negotiate with the Busia government to allow the ailing Nkrumah to return to his country to live out the rest of his days, to no avail.⁷⁴ However, Touré was successful in persuading the Acheampong government to allow the remains of Nkrumah (who died on 27 April 1972 in the Romanian capital) to be flown to Ghana from Guinea for final burial in July 1972 in Nkroful, Nkrumah's birthplace.⁷⁵ As with his first state burial in Guinea, Nkrumah received a second (but not final) state funeral in his native Ghana that reflected the Acheampong government's reluctant acknowledgement of his legacy and continuing appeal even in death:

In Ghana, General Acheampong headed a long queue of people who filed past the coffin at the lying-in-state at State House. He and other members of the NRC were also present at a memorial service held in Accra. Flags flew at half mast until 6 p.m. on Sunday, 9 July. On that day, the coffin was taken to

⁷² On July 5, 1978, General Acheampong himself was later ousted in a palace *coup d'état* and replaced by Lieutenant-General Frederick W.K. Akuffo. It seems plausible to speculate that Acheampong's public enthusiasm for Nkrumah's legacy was among the factors that led to his own ouster from government.

⁷³ Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 259.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 259, 265-266.

Nkroful. There it was placed in a tomb on the site of the dwelling in which Nkrumah was born...that arrangement suited the Acheampong government, as well as successive regimes which felt threatened by a revival of Nkrumaism.⁷⁶

The National Museum and the Nkrumah Statues

The death of Nkrumah in Bucharest in 1972 and the return of his remains to Ghana that same year ushered in a renewed public fervour for all things Nkrumah. Since then, successive governments – both military and civilian – have sought to appropriate or capitalize on Nkrumah’s popularity for their own purposes or at least to manage the renewed interest of Ghanaians and foreigners alike in the legacy of Kwame Nkrumah. Even the police force, elements of which took part in the 1966 coup against Nkrumah, sought to exonerate itself from what had increasingly become a blot on Ghana’s history. In June 1975, the Commissioner of Police, J.E. Tibiru, wrote to the Director of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, notifying him that, “The statue of ex-President Kwame Nkrumah which was removed after the coup in 1966 and placed at the Central Barracks is still lying there, in the open...Since this will definitely be of interest to you, you may arrange to have it removed for preservation.”⁷⁷ On Thursday 18 September 1975, P.G. Awuah, Chief Engineer of Plants at the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board recovered both of the Nkrumah statues from the Central Police Barracks in Accra and transported them first to the Central Museum; they were subsequently lifted by a crane, loaded into a truck and sent to the National Museum.⁷⁸ The Board also recognized that the restoration of Nkrumah’s statues would elicit a variety of emotions throughout the

⁷⁶ Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 266.

⁷⁷ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, J.E. Tibiru, Commissioner of Police/ADMN, Ghana Police to the Director, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, memorandum ref. no. 194/SF.2/61, “Statue of Ex-President Kwame Nkrumah,” June 6, 1975.

⁷⁸ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, (unclear signature), Ghana Museums & Monuments Board to the Managing Director, S.C.C., Accra, memorandum 0739/16, “Mounting of Nkrumah’s Statue,” February 28, 1977.

country – both positive and negative. Therefore, since October 1976, it decided to step up security measures at the National Museum to protect the Nkrumah statues on the museum grounds as well as other valuable national collections inside the museum; armed police guards were stationed at the National Museum, and similar security measures were undertaken at museum sites in Ho and Cape Coast, especially after a German national was arrested and convicted for attempting to illegally export Ghanaian antiques.⁷⁹

There were other pressures on the Museums and Monuments Board to restore the statue to an acceptable state in a timely manner. Such pressures, for example, took the form of other individuals or entities that desired to capitalize on the resurgence of Nkrumah's legacy or to appeal to a growing mass sentiment for Nkrumah by honouring him with monuments. This was the case of General Acheampong, who allowed Nkrumah's body to be re-buried in Ghana after his death in Bucharest in 1972. Acheampong's "party" – the NRC - included the word "Redemption" – the verbiage of the root word that was given as a title to Kwame Nkrumah - *Osagyefo*, Akan for Redeemer. This reveals why, on 20 August 1975 "the Government of the National Redemption Council announced its intention to honour the memory of the late Dr Nkrumah, Ghana's First President and the torchbearer of Africa's freedom and unity."⁸⁰ The Military Council had appointed a ten-member Committee headed by Archie Casely-Hayford (son of the leading Gold Coast Pan-African nationalist Joseph Ephraim Casely-Hayford who founded the National Congress of British West Africa), the Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Nkrumah's government, to propose suitable ways of honouring the

⁷⁹ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, unrecognisable signature, handwritten memorandum 0739, March 26, 1977.

⁸⁰ Kango, "Nkrumah Statue," September 19, 1975.

memory of Kwame Nkrumah. The Committee's report recommended the commissioning and erection of another monument to honour Nkrumah's legacy.⁸¹

On 19th November 1976, the Daily Graphic reported that the Supreme Military Council had imported a brand new giant (three metres high) bronze statue of Kwame Nkrumah into Ghana. The 750-kilogram statue was once again made in Italy and shipped from the Italian port city of *Livorno* (Leghorn) in Tuscany to Takoradi Harbour, Ghana. "The good stevedores in close co-operation with all the ship's officers performed the operation "in a respectful manner as if Kwame Nkrumah were really present and alive."⁸² The Acheampong government had decided that the statue would be erected at the Old Polo Grounds on or close to the very spot where Kwame Nkrumah declared Ghana's independence from Great Britain.⁸³ During this period of the renewal of Nkrumah's image, various stakeholders, including within the government itself, competed with each other over being the first to properly commemorate Nkrumah. Incidentally or coincidentally, news of the new Nkrumah monument was revealed at the same time when officials at the National Museum were considering proposals to erect and unveil the original Nkrumah statue(s) at the first ever *Ghana Museums and Monuments Week* programme slated for early 1977. An official urged that 'an early decision on this will be appreciated in order for the gov't [sic] or any other organization connected with the "new" statue not to take the wind out of our sails.'⁸⁴ Another Museum official, worried that this would overshadow their unveiling of the old, macerated (albeit historic) Nkrumah statue and undermine all the work and publicity that they

⁸¹ Kango, "Nkrumah Statue," September 19, 1975; Kwamena Apponsah, "Nkrumah's Statue In," *Daily Graphic*, November 19, 1976.

⁸² Apponsah, "Nkrumah's Statue In," November 19, 1976.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, (sub) File No. 0739, handwritten note, no title, unrecognisable signature, November 19, 1976.

had put in already, declared, “it seems we have to be a little faster with our plans or perhaps chase this new one for our purpose so that the two [statues] we have could be preserved as real museum pieces.”⁸⁵

The statues were later renovated for exhibition at the *Ghana Museums and Monuments Week*, held from 27 February to 7 March 1977. *Museum Week* was scheduled to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of Ghana’s independence, which included activities highlighting some of the major aspects of national culture in the new nation-state since independence. K.A. Myles, then Acting Director of Ghana Museums and Monuments Board revealed that the events included “lectures, symposia, slide and motion film shows to enlighten the public on the importance of museums and monuments in national development.”⁸⁶ During *Museum Week*, in an “historic undertaking,” the Parliament House statue was mounted and unveiled (with minor restorations done to the right foot and nose) on the grounds of the National Museum (close to the Shrine) on 3rd March 1977 by Mr. E. Owusu Fordwor, then Commissioner for Education and Culture.⁸⁷ The Government had widely publicized the unveiling of the Nkrumah statue in Ghana as well as overseas to attract tourists and Nkrumah enthusiasts who were expected to be very elated about the restoration of *Osagyefo’s* image in Ghana. In the local press, Myles argued that the statue was “exhibited as it was when it was retrieved from the Central Police Station in Accra because as a museum, the interest is on the originality of an item and any repairs will make it lose its historical importance.”⁸⁸ Other museum officials agreed that the

⁸⁵ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, hand written note, File No. 0739, December 8, 1976.

⁸⁶ Kango, “Nkrumah’s Statue to be on Show,” *Ghanaian Times*, January 5, 1977.

⁸⁷ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, (unclear signature), Ghana Museums & Monuments Board to the Managing Director, S.C.C., Accra, memorandum 0739/16, “Mounting of Nkrumah’s Statue,” February 28, 1977; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Ag. D/CM/WDC-Executive,/AK, “Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (1909 – 1972),” December 20, 1982; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, “Observation of Bronze Statues of the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.”

⁸⁸ Kango, “Nkrumah’s Statue,” January 5, 1977.

statue should not be fully restored because “it is hoped that its value as a museum piece will be preserved.”⁸⁹

However, not everyone agreed with that rational. Foreign tourists, members of the Ghanaian public and admirers of Nkrumah who went to the National Museum to see the resurrected monument of their leader were outraged that the bronze likeness of Ghana’s first president was displayed with both arms and the right foot broken off and, through public media outlets such as the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), pressured the government to completely restore the statue.⁹⁰ One concerned citizen later wrote a letter to the GBC chastising the Director of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board for the deplorable state of Nkrumah’s statue:

Is it true that you left Nkrumah’s statue in that deployable [sic] state because its armlessness [sic] is an art you are exhibiting at the Museum?...how do you compromise with this view? I personally feel Nkrumah is crying for you to mend his brutally chopped off arms. He has also, in his highs [sic, eyes], bleeding wounds which could draw tears. His sunburnt, cracked and heavily webbed face depicts not only ingratitude, but also, it shows gross negligence of duty of your Board. Do not say I am exaggerating. These are true psychological reflections of your ARMLESS NKRUMAH...[Is] The Armless Nkrumah...meant to express the fact that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah no longer has arms to plan for Akosombo Dam, Tema Harbour, the Motto-way [sic] etc.? Dear Director, do you suscribe [sic] to this view? The Director, what is your personal feeling about [the] ARMLESS Dr. Kwame Nkrumah at the focal National Museum you are directing?⁹¹

The then Director of the Ghana Museums & Monuments Board, Professor R.B. Nunoo, replied to the above letter (through the GBC) by stating:

The two statues...were destroyed when Dr. Nkrumah’s government was overthrown during the military and police revolution of 24th February 1966. In order to uphold the historical facts relating to the statue on display and

⁸⁹ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, “Observation of Bronze statues of the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.”

⁹⁰ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, AG.K. (Centre Museum), “Restoration of Kwame Nkrumah Bronze Statue,” memorandum, November 1, 1980; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Nunoo to GBC, memorandum 0739/51, “Late Ex-President Nkrumah’s Statue,” August 5, 1980.

⁹¹ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Newell Elymas to the Producer, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, letter, “Armless Nkrumah on Exhibition at the Ghana Museum,” June 12, 1980.

also to ensure that its historical value is not entirely lost, the Museums and Monuments Board decided to restore it in a special way. The Board has initiated plans to carry out restoration works which will fill in the damaged parts or replace the missing ones...We are actively pursuing this and expect that the faults as seen on the statue about which Mr. Elymas complains will soon be eliminated.⁹²

A few political or philosophical issues are apparent from Nunoo's response to Elymas's complaint. Firstly, the Director referred to the coup against Nkrumah as a "revolution," which implies the overthrow of a malevolent dictator or state with a benevolent leader(s), as opposed to a coup, which may imply the overthrow of a legitimate government or leader by power-hungry military dictators. The former was the position held and encouraged by the coup leaders and some Ghanaians at the time and since then. This may indicate a subtle political persuasion that the ouster of Nkrumah from power was in the best interest of Ghana and therefore signifies his agreement with the coup makers. As a matter of policy therefore, this belief may have contributed to the decision by the Director and the Board to leave the statue in its macerated state to serve as proof of the fall of Nkrumah. Whether or not this premise is true does not take away from the historical rationale given by the Director, that the statue was left limbless to preserve the historical facts and antecedents of the 1966 coup.⁹³ Nonetheless, although the first label drafted for the mounted statue was to state that it was "Damaged During Military Revolution of 24th February, 1966,"⁹⁴ the final version of the accompanying plaque read that it was "Attacked by a Mob in the Wake of a Military and Police Coup D'Etat on 24th February, 1966." Public

⁹² GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Nunoo to GBC, "Late Ex-President Nkrumah's Statue," August 5, 1980.

⁹³ Despite the promises made by the Museums and Monuments Board that the monument of Nkrumah would be fully restored, the statue still remains displayed at the National Museum with both of its arms broken off to this day.

⁹⁴ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, text of plaque label, "Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (1909 – 1972)."

pressure on the GMMB had paid off, and Nkrumah's legacy had been symbolically rewritten through his restored statue.

In addition to the missing arms and foot, the Nkrumah statue displayed at the National Museum had other problems. In the early 1980s, the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board completed an inspection of the monument, and found major structural problems with the Nkrumah statue and base, that warranted immediate attention. They found three major problems with the monument; (1) "The concrete wall which serve as supports for the infilling concrete on which the statue stands do not have any reinforcement or it has inadequate reinforcement. These could fall apart at anytime as they age because of the heaviness of the dead load (the statue) on the infilling concrete;" (2) "The strength of the infilling concrete on which the statue stands direct seems to be far below a recommendable one to carry such a heavy load;" and (3) "There seems to be no reinforcement at the base of the concrete support. This can contribute to the collapse of the statue when there is soil settlement."⁹⁵ Moreover, it was found that the supporting concrete pedestal was constructed of substandard material instead of the more reliable solid granite. Given that the weightiness of Nkrumah's statue was too much for its base, the committee "recommended that the statue be lifted off the concrete support and an adequate reinforced concrete support constructed to replace the former one."⁹⁶

The sinking of Nkrumah's statue due to its weightiness as well as the weakness of its supporting base offers us a striking metaphor for the collapse of his government. The vision that Nkrumah held for his country and the sheer number of simultaneous projects that he pursued made his administration top heavy and thus

⁹⁵ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, "Kwame Nkrumah Statue Investigation Report," December 6, 1984, p. 1.

⁹⁶ Ibid. See also GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Principal Keeper, Dr. I.N. Debrah, memorandum, "Restoration of the Kwame Nkrumah Statue," October 11, 1984.

put pressure not only on his party infrastructure, but also his people. Implicated in the fall of Nkrumah were deficiencies and inadequacies in key agencies of his administration, including state-run corporations and enterprises and the civil service; the failure of party officials to adequately convey the economic sacrifices necessary for development and the socialist policies of the state to the party base and the people; the flirtation of some party officials with capitalist philosophies and practices. Moreover, the efficiency of Nkrumah's administration was found to be lacking and Nkrumah himself was too irregularly involved in the day-to-day operations of the Party Executive.⁹⁷ Elements outside of, but critically important to the CPP party apparatus also contributed to the gradual breakdown of the Nkrumah state. The Trade Union Congress (TUC) had:

'failed to work in the interest of the workers', and misused funds. There was mismanagement of state farms. Waste of equipment and lack of technical advice. The Farmer's Council, the Women's Council, the Civil Service, Young Pioneers, Workers' Brigade all came in for criticism for their inefficiency and lack of political orientation. Failures in the Security Services were noted...[by] Nkrumah.⁹⁸

The NLC, sensing this weakness in Nkrumah's political and popular bases, moved to remove him from his political pedestal. However, while his statue was to be removed, the base repaired and put back when strengthened, the NLC had no plans to replace Nkrumah after his ouster.

The National Statues Project

In 1963 and subsequently, Kwame Nkrumah began meeting with CPP government officials to discuss an urgent and ambitious program of erecting nationalistic statues across the length and breadth of Ghana. He discussed this national statues project

⁹⁷ Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 203-204.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 204.

with the Chairman of the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board, Nene Annorkwi II, the Director of the GMMB, R.B. Nunoo, and the Minister of Education A.J. Dowuona-Hammond.⁹⁹ As a result of these discussions, the GMMB was “authorized to have a small section charged with responsibility for making statues and statuettes of Africans.”¹⁰⁰ Having already designed the Nkrumah statue at Parliament House, the Government sought to retain the Italian Professor Cataudella for a period of two years to be the chief consultant on the statues project.¹⁰¹ The Government sent a letter to Professor Cataudella urging him to visit Ghana to assist it with implementing the national statues program as soon as possible. “What we want is small statues [sic] of prominent citizens of this country and of Africa which will be placed in selected towns and cities of Ghana, and in museums...such as you have done of our President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The statues will be in bronze.”¹⁰² This letter did not indicate specifically who or what those statues would commemorate, whether or not those citizens would be living politicians or dead patriots. It also gives no indication as to the extent to which those programs would be supported or opposed in other major parts of the country, particularly in Ashanti and the Northern Region. However, given the precedence of extensive representation of particular political figures on the national currency, postage stamps and monuments issued since independence, we can reasonably assume that Nkrumah would have made only statues of himself or other important political figures outside of Ghana, such as Patrice Lumumba or other Pan-African nationalist individuals and themes.

⁹⁹ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, memorandum No. 0244/17, “Draft Memorandum on National Statues,” May 27, 1964.

¹⁰⁰ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Executive Secretary, GMMB to Professor Nicola Cataudella (Rome), memorandum No. AM.064/45, February 8, 1963.

¹⁰¹ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, R.B. Nunoo, Director of GMMB to A.J. Dowuona-Hammond, Minister of Education, memorandum No. 0244/3, February 11, 1963.

¹⁰² GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Executive Secretary, GMMB to Professor Nicola Cataudella (Rome), memorandum No. 0244/6, March 14, 1963.

Nunoo had earlier visited Professor Cataudella in Rome to discuss the statues project. During his visit to Italy, Cataudella gave Nunoo a tour of a famous Italian foundry and committed himself to facilitating the training of Ghanaian artisans at suitable Italian foundries when the Ghana government was ready. Moreover, the CPP government had also invited the eminent Polish sculptor Madam Alina Slesinska to visit Ghana to give the GMMB advice on the selection and training on Ghanaian artisans to build national statues. The training of “Ghanaian talents in this field on a regular basis...would be both desirable from the national point of view and also economical in comparison with the present system of calling for the services of experts from overseas as and when the occasion arose.”¹⁰³ Until those talents were honed, however, the Government would still have to rely on foreign expertise; in 1965, Slesinska designed and erected a statue of Kwame Nkrumah at the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute at Winneba.

The idea to create an army of national statues and monuments around the country was “a novel one a precedent of which does not already exist in Ghana...[and involved] specialised work.”¹⁰⁴ The Government was responsible for instructing the GMMB to make statues and to specify the number and destined location of statues to be set up around the country. In turn, the GMMB would commission suitable sculptors to create the statues according to government specifications. The Director of the GMMB in the summer of 1964 had requested that the Cabinet include a line item amount in the 1964/65 Development Estimates budget to hire a Statues Officer, Foundry Technician, construct a workshop and to purchase workshop equipment to undertake this extensive nationalist statues

¹⁰³ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, memorandum No. 0244/17, “Draft Memorandum on National Statues,” May 27, 1964.

¹⁰⁴ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Mark D. Abloh, Executive Secretary, GMMB to the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Education, memorandum No. 0244/21, “Statues,” July 2, 1964.

program.¹⁰⁵ The Board stressed the need for cultivating and commissioning Government Sculptors “for working on projects aimed at enhancing as well as conveying a message to the people.”¹⁰⁶ Officials envisioned training these Government Sculptors by emulating the practice of socialist countries through the formation of a Fine Arts Commission or a Central Academy of Art as part of the general national planning programs.¹⁰⁷

In March 1965 a meeting was held at the GMMB, where Professor Cataudella was present. Professor Cataudella and his party had previously visited the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in the Ashanti Region (Kumasi) to meet officials, artisans and to inspect the facilities there for foundry and works of sculpture. At the meeting, R.B. Nunoo, Director of the GMMB reminded the participants, “sometime ago Osagyefo, the President, had conversation [sic] with Nene Annorkwei [Chairman of the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board] concerning commemorative STATUES which it is proposed to erect all over the country.”¹⁰⁸ Nkrumah also wanted to erect a statue at his birthplace in Nkroful, which was being renovated as a national shrine to the President (see Chapter III).¹⁰⁹ The Board then decided to set up a committee “whose functions will be to advise the Board on subjects of the statues, e.g., any individuals whose statues the committee requires to be made. When the Board has been so advised, it will then proceed to commission artists to produce the likeness of the persons or of the particular objects

¹⁰⁵ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Mark D. Abloh, Executive Secretary, GMMB to the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Education, memorandum No. 0244/21, “Statues,” July 2, 1964; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, T.K.A. Duodu, Ministry of Education to Director, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, memorandum ZF.23/Vol.III/447, “Statues,” October 19, 1964.

¹⁰⁶ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, “Government Sculptor,” May 27, 1964.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, ‘Notes of the Meeting on “Statues” held in the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board on Monday, 22nd March, 1965 at 10.45 A.M.,’ p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, memorandum No. 0244/17, “Draft Memorandum on National Statues,” May 27, 1964.

required.¹¹⁰ Professor Cataudella was consulted on how best to carry out such a large-scale project and to take on one or two Ghanaian apprentices in Rome to train them on the foundry techniques required for making such monuments. Rather than sending Ghanaian artisans to Rome to enrol in an academic or scientific program in the high arts such as sculpturing, the Italian professor and the Director of the Board agreed that the former would accommodate the Ghanaians in Rome to be given practical training as foundrymen. The trainees were to be in Rome for two years to give them adequate time to learn the Italian language – the language of instruction – and to ground them in modern foundry techniques.¹¹¹

Reconciling the Past: The Nkrumah and Danquah Monuments

The cautious endorsement of the legacy of Nkrumah would be continued between the 1980s and the new millennium by successive Ghanaian governments. The government of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, who first assumed power in a military coup on 4 June 1979, completed the third and final burial of Kwame Nkrumah. On 1 July 1992 - the 32nd anniversary of Republic Day (begun by Nkrumah on 1 July 1960) – Nkrumah’s remains were reinterred at a mausoleum specially built for him in Memorial Park.¹¹² The latter was the old colonial polo ground where Nkrumah proclaimed Ghana’s independence from Britain on 6 March 1957. Nkrumah’s mausoleum features a marble statue designed with similar symbolic gestures like the ones that he had erected of himself in Accra and Winneba. Standing on top of a pedestal, the statue of Nkrumah is designed with a traditional cloth draped over his left shoulder and around his body, with his right

¹¹⁰ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, memorandum No. 0244/17, “Draft Memorandum on National Statues,” May 27, 1964.

¹¹¹ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, ‘Notes of the Meeting on “Statues” held in the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board on Monday, 22nd March, 1965 at 10.45 A.M.,” p. 1.

¹¹² Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 268.

hand stretched forward symbolising the CPP slogan, “Forward Ever, Backward Never” (figures 4.13 and 4.14). The architecture and design of the other statues surrounding Nkrumah’s suggest the recognition of Nkrumah as a sort of constitutional or political chief. June Milne aptly describes the serenity and magnitude of the final burial of Kwame Nkrumah at Memorial Park on that day, which mirrors his first state burial in Guinea:

The coffin was lowered to rest in a deep vault within the massive mausoleum made of Italian marble, symbolizing a giant tree with a fluted base, the top cut-off like a half-felled tree. Around the mausoleum, and leading up to it, are many fountains, so that the music of falling water is always there. In the near distance is the restless pounding of the sea...The ceremonies were a spectacular blend of traditional funeral procedures and military ceremonial. The Ghanaian Navy, founded by Nkrumah played the central role escorting the gun carriage draped with the Ghanaian flag, and presiding over the lowering of the coffin into the vault of the mausoleum.¹¹³

There were numerous notables present at Nkrumah’s re-interment, which reflected Nkrumah’s support for and appeal to African nationalists and Pan-Africanists worldwide. They included the widow of Malcolm X (Betty Shabazz), Julia Wright, daughter of the African-American scholar Richard Wright, the Namibian President and nationalist leader of the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO) Sam Nujoma, and then African National Congress (ANC) Chairman Oliver Tambo.¹¹⁴ Milne asserts that, although it was the Rawlings government – the National Democratic Congress (NDC) - and Rawlings himself who organised and presided over the final re-interment of Nkrumah, Rawlings:

Had never claimed to be an Nkrumaist...Among some of those listening there was speculation as to whether it was opportunism, from strength, or from weakness that the NDC regime had decided to respond to Nkrumaist pressures from Ghanaians and from PanAfricanists to accord Nkrumah the long overdue recognition of his greatness. Perhaps a clue may lie in the failure to arrange for the funeral procession to pass through the streets of Accra before entering the Memorial Park, which was closed to all but

¹¹³ Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 268, 270.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 268.

authorized groups and invited guests. Such a procession would have allowed the thousands of Ghanaians who had gathered in the capital to demonstrate their deep affection and nostalgia for Osagyefo. Perhaps it was thought Nkrumaism could be finally buried with the man.¹¹⁵



Figure 4.13. Front, back and lateral view of the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum - “The Tree Cut Short.” Photos: Author.

¹¹⁵ Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography*, 268, 270.



Figure 4.14: Panoramic views of the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum. Photos: Author.

The Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum now serves as a pilgrimage site for people from Ghana, Africa and the African Diaspora who have a personal or academic interest in the life and legacy of Nkrumah. The mausoleum also has a small museum (with guided tours) showcasing a variety of Nkrumah memorabilia, including furniture that he owned, photographs of Nkrumah and other world leaders, as well as books he authored and audio-visual material of Nkrumah's speeches.

Reconstructing the Past: The Danquah Monument

The ouster of Kwame Nkrumah from power opened up the door for his political opponents to redress the Nkrumah-centred historical narrative and symbolism of the Ghanaian nation-state. This was the case of supporters of Obetsebi Lamptey and Dr. J.B. Danquah who were both imprisoned by Nkrumah under the Preventive Detention Act. Danquah died in jail in February 1965 – one year before Nkrumah was overthrown. Before handing over power to a civilian government in 1969 as they had promised¹¹⁶, the NLC had formed a Cabinet sub-committee to consider creating a monument to honour Danquah. Moreover, in February 1970, while Nkrumah was exiled in Conakry and before his death in Budapest two years later, parliamentary members would debate a motion to erect a monument honouring J.B. Danquah and Obetsebi Lamptey. What is striking about this parliamentary motion is that it was not proposed by Kofi A. Busia's ruling Progress Party (PP), which was the political heir to Danquah's legacy. On the contrary, it was the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) – the opposition party led by Nkrumah's former Minister for

¹¹⁶ In their 1966 manifesto *The Rebirth of Ghana: The end of Tyranny*, which was published immediately after the coup, the NLC declared that "they have no political ambitions and are anxious to hand over power to a duly constituted representative civil government as soon as possible...This Council will ensure that genuinely free and fair elections are conducted under it and the N.L.C. will gladly relinquish their powers to any government formed in accordance with...[the] constitution and as a result of the elections." See page 21.

Finance Komla Agbeli Gbedemah that brought forward the motion.¹¹⁷ According to *The Statesman* newspaper, Samuel Okudzeto, NAL Member of Parliament for North Tongu brought forward and debated the motion in parliament to erect memorial monuments to honour Danquah and Lamptey.¹¹⁸ Okudzeto's motion garnered cross-party support from both sides of the House; the various Members of Parliament reviewing the motion agreed in principle on the need to officially and symbolically commemorate the contributions of Lamptey and Danquah to the attainment of Ghana's independence and the democratic process.¹¹⁹ However, the debates unearthed the history of violence committed by Nkrumah against Danquah and Lamptey in the name of national and political oneness and reminded the parliament that those old wounds were still quite open. On 25 February 1970, Samuel A. Okudzeto outline his motion, hailing Danquah as the true nationalist and freedom fighter who suffered at the hands of a tyrannical Nkrumah:

Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God. Dr Danquah, during his life, stood for what was just, for what was necessary so that Ghanaians might be free. He died in the hands of the tyrant. He died because he had to oppose the tyrant's power...He was a great man...We had an equally-important figure like Obetsebi Lamptey who died in a callous manner unbecoming a son of Ghana...Dr Danquah has left seeds for this country. He made contributions to politics, he made contributions to philosophy and some contribution to law. But I think the greatest contribution and the greatest legacy he left to this country is the inspiration for the fight for freedom, and it is in this regard that I wish him to be remembered...my humble and simple request is that a fitting monument should be erected to his memory, so that all who will behold that monument may be inspired to fight for freedom, to fight for individual liberty, to fight against tyranny in any shape or form.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *The Statesman*, "National Alliance of Liberals Proposed Memorial Monument to JB Danquah and Obetsebi Lamptey," February 28, 2007, 1, www.thestatesmanonline.com/pages/news_detail.php?newsid=2665§ion=1 (accessed March 23, 2007). After loosing grace with Nkrumah and going into exile, Gbedemah returned to Ghana and founded the NAL in the 1969 general election year, winning a seat in the National Assembly. However, he was barred from holding the seat in parliament due to the standing NLC ban on former CPP officials from holding public office for a decade.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*; and *The Statesman*, "Okudzeto's Motion for a Fitting Monument for JB," February 28, 2007), www.thestatesmanonline.com/pages/news_detail.php?newsid=2670§ion=17 (accessed March 23, 2007).

¹¹⁹ *The Statesman*, "National Alliance of Liberals," February 28, 2007, 1.

¹²⁰ *The Statesman*, "Okudzeto's Motion for a Fitting Monument for JB," 1-2.

C.T. Nylander, another NAL member representing Ablekuma, endorsed Okudzeto's motion. Although Nylander had been an Education Minister in the CPP government, he condemned Nkrumah's imprisonment of Danquah and Lamptey and urged parliament to commemorate their deaths by constructing monuments in their honour: "There must, therefore, be a fitting monument to their honour so that posterity may see concrete signs of the value we place on the work they did."¹²¹ Members of Parliament from the ruling Progress Party also supported the motion to erect the monuments. Saki Scheck, the MP for Takoradi had served under Danquah in the UGCC as well as the Ghana Congress Party (GCP).¹²² Scheck, however, took a more sobering view of the need for a monument to be built in Danquah's honour. He lambasted not only Nkrumah, but also those Members of Parliament (presumably Komla Gbedemah and others) who may have participated in, were sympathetic or apathetic to Nkrumah's treatment of his political opponents:

Perhaps we have to remind ourselves that the responsibility for what happened to the late "J.B." cannot be placed only at the door of those who actively and directly committed those enormities against him, or those who actively encouraged them. Many of us must share in that responsibility if only by our silence, or by our indifference or by our cowardice. And yet now that he is dead and gone we mourn and moan, we resolve to build monuments to his honour, and seek to write his name in letters of silver and gold...it does not do good to anybody to join in destroying those who play leading roles in rebuilding this nation, persons who devote their lives to the service of their fellow men, those who do great things and live great lives, only to turn round when they are dead and gone to shower post-mortem praises and honours on them.¹²³

¹²¹ *The Statesman*, "Okudzeto's Motion for a Fitting Monument for JB," 2-4.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

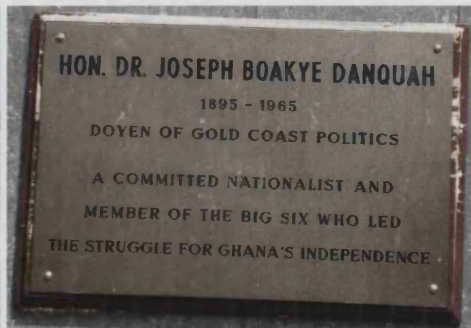


Figure 4.15. Danquah Circle and Statue. Photos: Bright Kojo Botwe.

B.K. Owusu, Progress Party member from Atwima-Mponua, had met Danquah while being detained by Nkrumah in Ussher Fort Prison from 1959 to 1962. He recalled how Nkrumah had jailed him and others in Ussher Fort Prison who criticized the government, including farmers and village folks who did not endorse the CPP. "I would humbly ask all Members, when the question is put, to support the motion wholeheartedly, that a monument be erected in memory of the late Dr J.B. Danquah. I support the motion."¹²⁴

Although Okudzeto's motion to construct a fitting monument for Danquah and Lamptey received wide support in Parliament, it was Danquah's own son, J.B. Danquah Jr., who would be successful in getting the government to construct a national monument to honour his father. According to Danquah Jr., it was he who had petitioned General Acheampong in the 1970s to name the parcel of land that the latter's government had appropriated from Dr. Danquah for the construction of a dual carriageway after his father. The renowned sculptor Saka Acquaye was commissioned to create the statue of Danquah for the site, but the Acheampong government was overthrown in 1978 before the statue could be erected. In 1990, Danquah Jr. asserts, Jerry Rawlings agreed to erect the statue at the Danquah Circle.¹²⁵ Finally, the John Kufuor government's New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the 2000's embarked on a Romanesque improvement and remodelling of the Danquah Circle and the creation of a new Danquah statue, which was unveiled in time for the Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2007 (see figures 4.15).

¹²⁴ *The Statesman*, "Okudzeto's Motion for a Fitting Monument for JB," p. 5.

¹²⁵ *The Ghanaian Times*, "J.B. Danquah's Son Petitions," February 15, 2007, cited on *Joy Online*, <http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/200702/1632.asp> (accessed December 14, 2008).

Conclusion

During the Nkrumah period, the only monuments erected to honour political patriots in Ghana were those of the *Osagyefo* himself. Subsequently, other political, civic and ethnic leaders have sought to rewrite the historical narrative and redefine the Nkrumah-centred political landscape of the nation. Demolishing monuments created by Nkrumah and erecting other monuments of those who had opposed Nkrumah and those whom Nkrumah had persecuted often did this. After Nkrumah was deposed, the NLC and other political leaders began plans to create monuments to honour J.B. Danquah, Obetsebi Lamptey and General Kotoka in the 1970s.

Between the 1980s and 2000s, other sectors of Ghanaian society (both governmental and non-governmental) sought to suggest or create other monuments to commemorate significant national events and individuals. Each statue or monument tells a story of the individuals' role in the creation of the Ghanaian nation-state and in national identity. During the almost two-decades period of PNDC rule under Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, several monuments were erected to honour national and international figures that were deemed important to Ghana's history, development, and international relations. These included a plaque commemorating Kofi Antubam (the pre-eminent artist and designer of Ghanaian national stamps during the Nkrumah period) at the Central Library in Accra; the Tetteh Quarshie Circle; and Dr. J.B. Danquah Statue at Danquah Circle.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ See GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, E.G.A. Don-Arthur, PNDC Secretary/Technical Co-ordinator, NAM Conference Planning Secretariat, Office of the Provisional National Defence Council, to the PNDC Secretary/Chairman, National Commission on Culture, memorandum No. PNDC/NSA/364/SF.2, "Dr. J.B. Danquah Statue," January 9, 1991; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, David Cornelius, Acting Director of Library Services, Ghana Library Board to D.J. Cofie, GMMB, memorandum No. LB: 13, "Estimate for Restoration of Antobam [sic] Plaque at the Central Library Accra," October 23, 1989; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Reverend Osofo Kwasi D. Quarm, for PNDC Secretary / Chairman, National Commission on Culture, to Professor Joe Nkrumah, GMMB, memorandum No. 1C 47/V.II, "Development of Tetteh Quarshie Circle," February 28, 1991.



Figure 4.16. Monument of the Ga King (Gamankye) King Tackie Tawiah I - 20th King of the Ga State (September 1862 – July 1902) sitting in state. Makola Market, Accra. Photo: Author.

The private sector also sought to play a role in commemorating important figures in Ghana's national history as well as prominent international politicians and cultural figures. In a ceremony at the National Museum in 1986, Sammy Williams & Co. Ltd., a private manufacturing firm of pulp-craft and statues, presented a donation to the GMMB of twelve busts of prominent world figures and thirteen other statuettes to improve the museum's collections. The busts including those of Kwame Nkrumah, Jerry Rawlings (then Chairman of the PNDC), Nii Amugie II (the Ga Mantse), Nana Osei Agyeman Prempeh (late Asantehene) and Otumfuo Opoku Ware (then current Asantehene), Captain Thomas Sankara (leader of Burkina Faso),

Comrade Samora Machel (late Mozambican leader), Colonel M. Ghadafi (Libyan leader), Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.¹²⁷

In 2002, the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the John Kufuor government set up the Committee for the 9th May Disaster Monument that worked with the GMMB to erect a monument commemorating the May 9 Disaster.¹²⁸ Other sub-national ethnicities, such as the Gas and the Ashantis also desired to immortalize their chiefs, heroes and patriarchs in the public sphere, through suitable monuments. In Kumasi, statues were erected of great Ashanti chiefs in Adum, the highest hill in the capital. In 1995, the leaders of the Ga State, through the King Tackie Tawiah Memorial Trust, petitioned the GMMB and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly “to enable us erect [sic] the statue of our Late Illustrious [sic] Ancestor, King Tackie Tawiah I.”¹²⁹ In addition to the giant monument, a major overpass in Accra was also named after the Gamantse.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Managing Director, Sammy Williams & Co. Limited, to the Director, GMMB, memorandum No. SWC/VI/12/86, “Presentation of Statues,” December 10, 1986; GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, I.N. Debrah, for Director, GMMB to the Managing Director, Sammy Williams & Co. Ltd., memorandum No. 38, “Donation to the National Museum of Busts and Statuettes.”

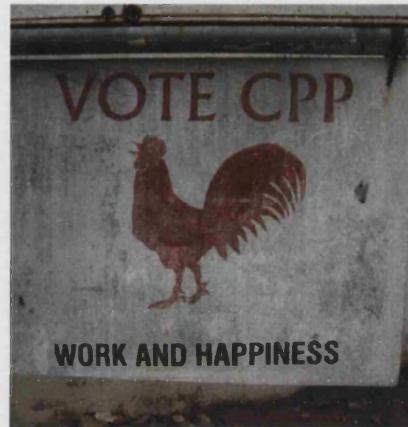
¹²⁸ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, E. Owusu-Ansah, Acting Chief Executive, National Sports Council, to the Director, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, Memorandum No. G40/SF.V/1, “Evaluation of Design Proposals for the 9th May Disaster Monument,” April 30, 2002.

¹²⁹ GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, Vincent Okunor, Honorable Secretary, King Tackie Tawiah Memorial Trust, to the Director, GMMB, Memorandum No. KTTMT/BT/95/5, “Erection of Statue at General Post Office Square :- (Near G.N.T.C.),” March 29, 1995. See also, GMMB: Statues File No. 0244, G.Y. Addo for Director of Administration, Accra Metropolitan Assembly, to Nii Kpobi Tettey Tsuru III, La Mantse, King Tackie Tawiah Memorial Trust, Memorandum No. A.013/4/512, “Erection of statue at General Post Office Square (near G.N.T.C.),” March 27, 1995.

¹³⁰ See N. Cooper, “King Tackie Tawiah I: Hundred Years On,” *Ghanaian Times*, September 28, 2002.

Chapter V

Emblematic Nationalism: National and Party Symbols, Emblems and Insignia



From the very moment that Nkrumah returned from London to join the ranks of Danquah's UGCC, the two politicians had symbolic disagreements over how to represent the anti-colonial movement. Nkrumah and Danquah disagreed over the appropriate emblem to adopt for the organization. Nkrumah wanted the UGCC emblem to represent an emergent Ghana, symbolised by a soaring eagle. As shown in Chapter II, the first commemorative postage stamp issued in Ghana after independence was based on the legend of "Aggrey's Eagle." The stamp was designed with the image of an African eagle taking flight out of the location of Ghana on a map of Africa. A vignette with a victorious Nkrumah looking toward the eagle symbolized that Ghana had arrived on the world stage, and was ready to spread its wings and fly like an eagle, with Nkrumah as the pilot of the new nation-state. Nkrumah did not approve of Danquah's idea for an emblem representing an independent Ghana:

I was completely taken aback when I saw it, for he had depicted an animal with two heads and one stomach which, according to the African, symbolises selfishness, lack of interest in others and, in short, was hardly in keeping

with what I imagined the U.G.C.C. had been formed for. Fortunately there was a division of opinion and they failed to come to an agreement, so the hideous monstrosity was never adopted.¹

The issue over the UGCC emblem further highlights the tensions between Nkrumah and Danquah. By writing that Danquah chose a European-inspired mythical creature to be depicted on the emblem of the new state of Ghana, he was arguing that Danquah was more European (Euro-centric) in thinking and therefore less in his commitment to African nationalism. However, the most important fights over the symbolic representations of the new nation-state took place between the CPP and the NLM, and later the NLC. The symbolism of the CPP's red cockerel logo and the cocoa tree logo of the NLM, as well as the national and party flags, the anthem and the Black Star would also prove to be most contentious.

The CPP government cabinet proposed, commissioned and supervised the design and selection of official symbols of the party and nation. These included the coat of arms, national crest, public seal, national anthem, pledge of allegiance, the National Assembly speaker's chair and desk, national and flags, police officers' badges and insignia.² Despite Nkrumah's rhetoric regarding the national over the regional, the tribal or the religious interests, great care was taken in the designs of these national symbols so as to balance the goals of nation-building and regional representation:

The design for the coat of arms represented a careful balancing of regional and national interests; a heraldic shield supported by eagles was emblazoned with juxtaposed images of the linguist staff and ceremonial sword, and Christiansborg Castle, a symbol of the national government; a cocoa plant, traditional source of Asante wealth, was also integrated into the design, and

¹ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 73.

² Other government-ordered memorabilia included a fountain to be installed at Kwame Nkrumah Circle, an honorary medallion engraved with the bust of Nkrumah and encircled by the words "First Prime Minister of Ghana / Dr. Kwame Nkrumah," and even down to the crockery to be used at State House and the Prime Minister's residence. See Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 29-30, 32.

the shield was surmounted by the national symbol of the Black Star (“lodestar of African freedom”).³

The coat of arms also included other symbolisms, which reflected Ghana’s relationship with its colonial past, its new relationship with Britain as a member of the Commonwealth, and its relationship with traditional authority. For example, the two golden eagles, the golden lion, ribbon and golden trims around the Black Star symbolized Ghana’s former colonial name of the Gold Coast, or its status as the land of gold. The St. George’s Cross that divides the shield into four sections and the golden lion icon of the United Kingdom symbolized Ghana’s new status as a semi-sovereign member of the British Kingdom and Commonwealth. The imposition of a large Black Star of African freedom on top of the crest is significant. It epitomized Nkrumah’s nationalist ideology that placed the free, united Ghana over the baggage of British colonialism, the economic and neo-colonial trappings of belonging to the Commonwealth, as well as the backwardness of tribalism and regionalism, as Nkrumah saw these. It was a statement that, while the nation-state must exist with traditional authority and the omnipresent but declining British Empire, it is superior in importance to both. The two golden eagles (presumably the Aggrey’s Eagle that was represented on the postage stamps) are also holding a ribbon with the national motto “Freedom and Justice.” The motto ribbon forms the base of the coat of arms and also underscores that the new nation must be rooted in the latter nationalist ideals.

³ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 184, note 72, chapter 1.



Figure 5.1. The Ghana Coat of Arms

The Red Cockerel, the Cocoa Tree and the Golden Stool

Nkrumah's government had developed a series of symbols designed to reflect his personal political convictions as well as to construct national identity. Some of these symbols were synonymous with the CPP party. The red cockerel, for example, was the CPP party logo that represented work, happiness and progress as symbolized by the slogan "Forward Ever" (see figure 5.2). There are striking symbolic similarities between the CPP's red cockerel symbol and the use of the cockerel and the hen symbols by traditional ethnic groups in Ghana. This seeming "appropriation" of a traditional symbol is consistent with Nkrumah's adoption or endorsement of other traditional emblems and insignia.

The cockerel is also a symbol often found on the staffs of "linguists" who represent traditional leaders. Typically in Ghana, a chief or king sits on a stool (in the south) or a skin (in the north), equivalent to the Queen of England who sits on a throne as a symbol of tradition, power and authority. Each skin or stool employs the services of a linguist to convey and interpret the chief's ideas and messages to his people – similar to a press secretary of a modern statesman. The job of a linguist as the chief's "ambassador" and "courtier" is an important one. His ability to convey

the chief's messages in parables, proverbs, poetry and eloquent language has a tremendous impact on the ruler's fame and authority. The linguist's staff (made of wood wrapped with gold or silver leaf or solid gold or silver metal) is engraved with a variety of symbols reflecting the aspirations and beliefs of the state that he represents. These symbols include depictions of animals, birds, human forms, abstract shapes and the like.⁴

There are several Adinkra symbols used by the Akans relating to cockerels to ideas of leadership, power and authority. The "Crowing Cockerel" symbol signifies the Akan phrase, "*Obi nnto n ' akokonin mma onnkobono obi kuroso,*" which translates as, "No one buys a cock to let it crow for another person's town." In the Ga language, the Crowing Cockerel signifies a state of alertness - "*Wuo gbee, La gbee*" (La crows with the cockerel). Another Adinkra symbol, "A Cockerel and a Hen," relates to the Akan saying, "*Akoko bedee nim adekyee nanso otie no akokonini ano,*" or "The hen knows it is dawn but it leaves the announcement to the cockerel."⁵ It also connotes knowing one's position or status in society. We can extend the symbolism of these two sayings and place them in the context of Kwame Nkrumah being "summoned" from Britain by the UGCC in 1947 to lead the charge of Gold Coast self-government. On the one hand, the UGCC expected Nkrumah to carry out their gradualist program of self-government, that is, "self government in the shortest possible time." However, Nkrumah's goal of achieving "self government now" collided with this gradualist approach of the UGCC.

⁴ E. Ablade Glover, "Linguist Staff Symbolism," 2nd ed. (Kumasi, Ghana: Design Press, University of Science and Technology, February, 1992).

⁵ Ibid.



Figure 5.2. CPP Red Cockerel sign.

Nkrumah conceived that he was the right man for the task and that the UGCC and later the NLM should step aside as independence dawned and allow him to “announce” Ghanaian self-determination.

The CPP’s choice of a cockerel over a hen can also be interpreted as an expression of a gendered form of nationalism, given that the hen is equally associated with power and authority, but was not used as a party symbol. The CPP thought of itself as a masculine cockerel that takes charge while the UGCC, NLM and other opponents of Nkrumah were relegated to the status of the “weaker” entity, a feminine hen that acquiesces to the power of the male. The Ga symbol of *Wuo nane egbee ebi* - “A hen stepping over her chicks,” for example, asserts that “A hen steps on her chicks not to hurt them but to prevent them from being trampled upon by some one else which might be harmful.”⁶ Another symbol related to the hen is “A hand holding an egg,” which states, “Power is like an egg, when held too tightly it might break, or falls and breaks when held loosely. A successful ruler must be both

⁶ E. Ablade Glover, “Linguist Staff Symbolism,” 2nd ed. (Kumasi, Ghana: Design Press, University of Science and Technology, February, 1992).

firm and sympathetic.”⁷ These sayings equate to the idea of “benevolent dictatorship” which the Nkrumah administration believed was necessary in building a new nation-state under demanding circumstances. The government-sympathetic *Evening News* concurs with this assessment of the symbolism of the cockerel. It stated that the red cockerel symbolized:

A masculine expression of the energy and seriousness of the forces of Kwame Nkrumah...[and] the virility and initiative with which the herald of the Common People’s Salvation (CPP) is calling on all oppressed black people to rise and fight for freedom...All the other symbols represent opportunism, reaction, tribalism, separatism, imperialist divide and rule and national betrayal.⁸

There is a lot to digest and decipher from the words of praise about Nkrumah and the harsh words of resentment and contempt for his opponents in this quote. The quote makes clear the symbolic equivalence of Nkrumah with a cockerel as masculine, fiery and fierce and ready for the fight against his enemies, as someone who takes the lead. The official view of the CPP regarding the party symbol reveals a patronizing view of Nkrumah as that of a saviour of the black African and Ghanaian masses from both the colonial oppressors and their reactionary allies on the continent.

While many positive sayings and symbolisms were associated with roosters and hens, Nkrumah’s adversaries chose to highlight and publicize some fowl adages that were not so noble. The NLM and other political entities, for example, held contrary views than the CPP regarding the symbolic merits of the red cockerel:

The NLM depicted the symbol of the CPP (the cockerel) as an extension of Nkrumah’s self-aggrandizement: Ansah Koi, leader of the Ghana Action Party (predecessor to the NLM) invoked a popular adage which stated that when a fowl was fed to its satisfaction, “it rubs its beak against the ground, pretending that it has not eaten anything at all.”...The selfishness of the cockerel was contrasted with the linguist staff of the G.A.P., which signified

⁷ E. Ablade Glover, “Linguist Staff Symbolism,” 2nd ed. (Kumasi, Ghana: Design Press, University of Science and Technology, February, 1992).

⁸ *Evening News*, May 10, 1954, 1, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 34.

“the mandate of the electorate to fight for the cause of chieftaincy and tradition,” the clenched fist of the N.P.P., a symbol of unity and a “very, very useful member of the body,” and the moon and stars of the M.A.P., which “shine[...]their] soft glorious light to both rich and poor alike, without any discrimination whatsoever.”⁹

The NLM had its own party symbol identified by the icon of a cocoa tree. Cocoa production was of course one of the main agricultural commodities of the Ashanti region, the business classes and intelligentsia that supported the NLM. Indeed, the Nkrumah government criticised and admonished this symbol as evidence of his rival’s focus on regional and material possessions. The pro-Nkrumah media also highlighted CPP electoral victories over the NLM through editorial cartoons pitting the former party’s symbol against that of the latter’s. “A cartoon featured in the *Ghana Star* shortly after the election of CPP members to the Kumasi Municipal Council...features a red cockerel attacking the figure of an NLM member crouched by the broken trunk of a cocoa tree.”¹⁰ However, the CPP did not rely just on mocking illustrations in government-friendly newspapers or rhetorical attacks on the NLM cocoa logo. The CPP attempted, at least on one occasion in 1956, to legally prevent any party from using “national” symbols such as the image of the cocoa tree for party propaganda. The rationale given by Aaron Ofori Atta - CPP Minister of Government - was that the symbol was of strategic economic importance to the nation and therefore should not be capitalized on by any sub-national entity. The then British Governor Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, however, rejected Atta’s demands.¹¹

⁹ *Ashanti Pioneer*, May 24, 1954, 1; and *Ashanti Pioneer*, June 8, 1954, 1, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, note 66, chapter 2, 186.

¹⁰ *Star*, February 15, 1958, 1, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 35.

¹¹ *Ashanti Pioneer*, June 10, 1956, 1, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, note 88, chapter 1, 184.

The CPP's red cockerel was not the only symbolic opposite to Asante-NLM traditional power. As a "forest kingdom" that once ruled a large and powerful portion of what came to be the Gold Coast and stretching into other parts of West Africa (including parts of *Côte d'Ivoire* and Togo), the Asantes had one other powerful symbol of their authority; the Golden Stool. According to Asante history, the Asante nation was forged in the eighteenth century when the high priest Okomfo Anokye summoned the Golden Stool from the heavens, which fell into the lap of one of the chiefs - Osei Tutu. The latter became the first Asantehene (Asante King) and leader of a united and powerful new confederation that traded in gold, slaves, cloth and other commodities.¹² During the Nkrumah era, Otumfuo Nana Sir Osei Agyemang Prempeh II, who ascended the Golden Stool in 1931, was Asantehene.¹³



Figure 5.3. The legendary Golden Stool. Courtesy of Manhyia Palace Museum.

¹² Michael T. Kaufman, "Opoku Ware II, King of the Asante, Is Dead at 89 [sic, 79]," *The New York Times*, March 4, 1999, Section B, 8. It was in defence of the Golden Stool after the British had arrested and banished King Prempeh II to the Seychelles islands that the last British-Asante war was waged. As Chapter III showed, Yaa Asantewaa, a courageous female leader emerged to challenge the British in a military campaign that lasted some nine months. The war was waged to prevent Britain from capturing the Golden Stool and therefore defeating the Asante nation. This episode in Gold Coast/Ghanaian history was often invoked by nationalists, including Nkrumah, as a precursor to the eventual attainment of nation sovereignty in 1957.

¹³ At the death of Agyemang Prempeh II in 1970, a new monarch, Otumfuo Opoku Ware II became the fifteenth Asante King when he ascended to the Golden Stool. The latter passed away in 1999, at the age of 79. The current *Asantehene* is Otumfuo Osei Tutu II. See Kaufman, "Opoku Ware II," 8.

As Janet Hess explains:

For the Asante NLM, the iconography associated with the CPP was perceived as an affront to the Asante cultural legacy. Nkrumah's support for ordinances that restricted the authority of chiefs to constitutional and civil matters related to customary law, and his public statements that suggested redefinition and circumscription of chiefly authority, constituted a challenge to the political and cultural hegemony signified by the Golden Stool. Representations of Asante authority – an integral aspect of ideology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – also served to construct and express opposition in the independence era.¹⁴

Therefore, the NLM evaluated the policies of the CPP and the actions of Nkrumah in particular vis a vis the regard for (or lack thereof) the authority or sanctity of the Golden Stool. Far from being a cultural relic, the Asantes believed that the Golden Stool had “powers” to inflict physical harm on their enemies. For example, as Hess reveals, the Asantes believed that in 1956, the spirit of the Golden Stool was responsible for overturning the vehicle in which eight CPP supporters were travelling after they allegedly bombed the Bremang Mausoleum – the “cemetery” for deceased *Asantehenes*.¹⁵ Therefore, the power of the Golden Stool, in the eyes of its adherents, was both symbolic and substantive.

Flagging the Nation

The symbolism associated with flags, whether national, regional or ethnic ones, has been a very contentious issue in the history of nations-states. The flying of the flags of political or ethnic groups who have tried and failed to secede from a dominant group to create their own nation, such as the Confederate States of America, has often been a politically charged, emotional issue for the parties involved. In Northern Ireland, for example, the symbolism of flags and anthems has been a

¹⁴ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45, cited in *The Liberator*, March 13, 1956, 1. Traditionally and even in contemporary times, it is considered a taboo to refer to deceased chiefs or *Asantehenes* as being “dead”. The Asantes typically say that the king or chief has “gone to the village.”

contentious issue.¹⁶ The representation of the new nation in the form of party and national emblems became an issue of contention for the major figures in Gold Coast politics. These symbolic battles were waged over the potential emblems of the UGCC as well as emblems that would represent the nation as a whole. One of the most important symbols of nationhood is the national flag. Even before the design, colours and symbolism of Ghana's independence flag was considered, Nkrumah had previously faced the challenge of creating a suitable flag for the organization of his former political sponsors. As General Secretary of the UGCC, Nkrumah thought that the organization should have its own flag. However, his ideas were met with scepticism and outright rejection, which put him at odds with J.B. Danquah and his cohorts, especially over the colours suggested for the UGCC as well as a design for its flag. While the UGCC's lawyers argued it was illegal to fly a party flag in the Gold Coast, Nkrumah cited examples in other colonies where this was allowed and convinced them to adopt a party flag with the colours red, white and gold.¹⁷

From 1877 until 1957, the Gold Coast Colony and Dependencies were represented by a version of the British Union Flag, sometimes referred to as the "elephant and palm tree" flag (see figure 5.4). In the upper left hand corner of this blue colonial ensign was a smaller British Union Flag hovering over a symbolic representation of the Gold Coast in the lower right hand corner. The latter was depicted with a composite image of a brown elephant standing in front of a palm tree with rolling, green mountains and a sunrise or sunset in the background. In the

¹⁶ See Clem McCartney and Lucy Bryson, *Clashing Symbols: A Report on the Use of Flags, Anthems and Other National Symbols in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: The Institute for Irish Studies for The Community Relations Council, 1994). For other discussions on the relationship between national flags and the politics of nationalism in the developing world, see Igor Cusack, 'African National Anthems: "Beat the drums, the red Lion has roared,"' *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (December 2005b): 235-251; Jack Child, "The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture: Latin American Postage Stamps," *Latin American Research Review* 40, no. 1 (February 2005): 108-137; National Anthems, www.national-anthems.net/ and www.national-anthems.org/history.htm; and David National Anthems www.david.national-anthems.net/index.html.

¹⁷ Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 73.

foreground were two tufts of grass, representing the natural vegetation, and the land upon which the elephant stood. The abbreviation “G.C.” for the Gold Coast was also printed beneath the elephant.¹⁸ The position of Gold Coast below the Union Jack may have reflected its lower status as a colony of a superior imperial power, while its location in the right hand corner of the ensign may have signified the economic and symbolic importance of the colony to British homeland. This is a plausible assessment of the symbolic iconography of the colonial flag, given that the images of the palm tree, an important agricultural commodity for production of palm oil, as well as the elephant, land and agriculture were important commercial commodities.

In 1957, a national flag of Ghana (see figure 5.5) was created to replace the British colonial flag. However, the national flag had a contentious beginning. Each colour of the flag (which was designed by a Ghanaian woman named Mrs. Theodosia Salome Okoh) had a symbolic, meta-physical and nationalistic meaning; red symbolized the struggle for independence, green stood for its beauty and agricultural abundance and yellow or gold represented the mineral wealth of the nation.¹⁹ The importance of the national flag as an unwavering symbol of Ghanaian nationhood is flagged by frequent references to it in the various versions of the Ghanaian national anthem. The latter was written once at independence and then rewritten twice subsequently (see Tables 5.1 – 5.3). All three variations of the national anthem featured a salutation to the national flag. In the anthems, the Ghanaian flag was thought to represent the hope of a new nation and of African

¹⁸ The British used the same flag design for its other possessions and colonies in West Africa, but used a different abbreviation for each colony. For example, the Gambia was designated by a “G,” Lagos Colony with an “L,” and Sierra Leone with a “S.L.” See H. Gresham Carr, *Flags of the World*, rev. ed. (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1961).

¹⁹ <http://www.nationalanthems.us/cgi-bin/forum/YaBB.pl?num=1153445087> (accessed September 12, 2006), and <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/living/flag.php> (accessed September 12, 2006).

liberation. Line seven (verse I) of the Independence anthem referred to “the shining golden band” of the nation’s flag.



Figure 5.4. The “elephant and palm tree” flag of the Gold Coast, 1877 - 1957



Figure 5.5. The Ghana national flag



Figure 5.6. The CPP party flag

As the last verse of the Republican (1960) anthem says, “Where the flag of Ghana freely flies, That's where the way to freedom lies.”

In the year of the independence of the Gold Coast, the Nkrumah government issued decrees and laws to establish the national flag as the sole identifier of the nation-state, and by extension, the Convention People's Party. The Avoidance of Discrimination Act of 1957 and similar regulations restricted the legality of political entities from establishing parties based solely on tribal, regional or religious bases and from displaying flags and emblems identifying such entities.²⁰ Moreover, the Nkrumah government embarked on a campaign of distributing the new national flag throughout the country, with the backing of the police force to enforce these decrees. The Minister of the Interior was to draft legislation upholding the integrity and legality of the national flag and making it a punishable offence to denigrate or desecrate the flag. This was in part due to threats from opponents of the new flag, particularly from the Asante region, that they would resist the flying of the national flag in Kumasi.²¹ As Janet Hess illustrates, the Nkrumah-friendly press used newspaper cartoons to draw parallels and to equate Nkrumah with the Ghanaian nation, and it with Nkrumah. An editorial cartoon published in the *Guinea Times* on 3 March 1958 by *Daily Graphic* and *Evening News* cartoonist Yaw Boakye Ghanatta caricatured Nkrumah “striding from the Independence Arch toward the new House of Parliament, his torso wrapped in the national flag and his head shaped in the form of the contours of Ghana.”²²

In 1964, the CPP became the only official party of the state; the CPP and the nation-state of Ghana were to be synonymous political entities. Nkrumah replaced the yellow band of the national flag with a white one in January 1964, to

²⁰ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 21; Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 377–380.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32, cited in *Cabinet Minutes*, January 8, 1957.

²² Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 32, 33.

synchronise the colours of the latter with that of the banner of his CPP party. Nkrumah personally created the party flag. The image of the CPP-flag, now the national one, was placed on postage stamps, etc.

After successfully carrying out the coup while Nkrumah was abroad, the National Liberation Council immediately issued a decree suspending the 1960 constitution (and subsequent amendments) of the republic, dismissing Kwame Nkrumah as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ghana, dissolving and prohibiting future membership in the Convention People's Party.²³

Moreover, the NLC decided that:

Following the disbandment of the Convention People's Party, the dissolution of the National Assembly and the suspension of the Constitution, the Convention People's Party flag which was so whimsically imposed on the country as the National Flag shall cease forthwith to be the National Flag of Ghana. The National Liberation Council is accordingly taking the necessary steps to restore the original National Flag of Ghana consisting of three equal horizontal stripes, the upper stripe being red, the middle stripe yellow and the lower stripe green with a black star in the centre of the yellow stripe.²⁴

Therefore, the NLC did not entirely reject the new Nkrumah CPP flag. Rather, it rejected the CPP colours but kept the black star icon. The inclusion of the black star as the centrepiece of the national flag, however, was also a point of contention during the early independence period, which will be analysed later.

The NLM and the National Flag

The NLM flew its own sub-national banners, one of which incorporated the *Asante Kotoko* (porcupine) symbol of warfare (see figure 5.7). Another version of the NLM's flag featured an image of a stool, symbolic of the traditional power of the kings and chiefs (see figure 5.8). Other organizations that were affiliated with the

²³ NLC, *The Rebirth of Ghana*, 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

NLM, such as the *Asante Kotoko* Football Club, shared the same symbol and mantra, “*wokum opem a, opem be ba,*” which means “if you kill a thousand, a thousand more will come.”²⁵ Both the NLM and the football club saw themselves as representatives of the Asante nation, taking the symbols and motto of the Asante state. This symbolizes the tenacity and unity of the Asante nation to defeat its enemies, as much as in politics as in sports and other aspects of life. Thus, as a porcupine replaces the quills that it sheds, so is the Asante nation bountiful in terms of its support base and loyalty to the Asante state. The Asantes also abide by another saying, “if you greet us with peace, we will greet you with peace. But if you greet us with war, then we will greet you with war.”

It is intriguing that the porcupine was used as a symbol of the Asante warrior spirit (Asante warriors will shake their bodies to mimic the porcupine “firing” its quills at its enemies) and of resistance to Nkrumah’s symbolic nationalism. Found in the forests of Asante, porcupines are the third largest kind of rodents, whose coats are covered with clusters of quills or needle-sharp, spiny hairs. These long-living, bulky, slow-moving animals use their quills as a defence against predators. The backwards-facing barbs on the tip of a porcupine’s quills will be embedded in the skin of a predator who comes in direct contact with the porcupine, or the quills shaken loose by the rodent, which can sometimes be lethal.²⁶ As the animal symbol of the Asante nation, one saying about the porcupine states, “*Kotoko rennko a hwe n’amiade,*” that is, “You can tell from the quills whether the porcupine is ready to fight or not. You can easily tell when the porcupine is serious.”²⁷

²⁵ Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine*, 16.

²⁶ For more information about porcupines, see Sybil P. Parker, ed., *Grzimek's Encyclopedia of Mammals 5* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1990).

²⁷ Glover, “Linguist Staff Symbolism,” February 1992.



Figure 5.7. The *Asante Kotoko* Football Club logo



Figure 5.8. Flag of the Asante Nation

In addition to the representation of a porcupine, the *Asante Kotoko*-NLM party flag featured three bands of colours; green, which symbolized the lush Asante forest; gold, which represented the Asante all-purpose currency, source of wealth and prestige; and black to memorialise the ancestors and chiefs, whose stools have

been blackened by the pouring of libation.²⁸ The NLM flag was synonymous with the flag of the Asante Nation, and also resembled the logo of the Asante Kotoko Football Club also known as *the Porcupine Warriors*. An Ashanti - Kwasi Kumah - founded the club in 1935, with the *Asantehene* Otumfuo Nana Sir Osei Agyemang Prempeh II as the first Life/Chief Patron of the organization.²⁹

Perhaps as a subversive tactic to diffuse political tensions, or a tactic to show national unity by reaching out to a sports team in the rival (political) camp, the Nkrumah administration provided some funding to the Asante Kotoko team in the 1960s. “Kotoko has also had the good fortune of being able to count on great benefactors and philanthropists who did not serve on the club’s Management or Board of Directors, but contributed immense financial and material support. They include...Mr. Krobo Edusei (a Minister of State in the First Republic Government of Ghana), and his wife Mrs. Mary Edusei (nee Mary Akuamoah).”³⁰ On the shield of the football club’s logo is the Twi-language motto, “*Wu Kum Apem A, Apem Beba*” which means “Men do not fail, they give up trying. The only failure is failing to try.” Like the militaristic slogan of the *Asante-Kotoko-NLM* flag, the Asante Kotoko Football Club’s mantra attested to the resilience and determination of the NLM to defeat Nkrumah, sometimes at bloody costs.

²⁸ Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine*, 16.

²⁹ Asante Kotoko FC, <http://www.asantekotokofc.org/history/index.htm> (accessed March 20, 2009). Subsequent *Asantehenes*, including the present one – Otumfuo Osei Tutu II – act as Life Patron for the club. In Nkrumah’s Ghana, sports became politicised as the major parties through their backing behind specific teams associated with Accra, Kumasi, the Ghana, etc. Nkrumah set up a team called the Ghana Real Republicans Football Club in the 1960s primarily to rival Asante Kotoko FC. However, the Porcupine Warrior’s main rival is the Accra Hearts of Oak Sporting Club, founded in 1911. It is worth noting that the Asante Kotoko Football Club has outlived and survived its political counterpart of the Nkrumah period only in name. In 1969, the NLM and some of its chief members morphed into the United Party, which itself subsequently became the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The NPP was headed by John Kufuor, who was president from 2000 – 2008. The NLM, UP and NPP maintained a consistency as a centre-right party that promoted elite self-interests and allied with the intelligentsia, chiefs, business classes and capitalists and embraced trickle-down economics.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The Battle of the Black Star

The changing colours of the national flag were not the only contested issues on the political spectrum of nationalistic symbolism. After the overthrow of Nkrumah, the political opinion of the country was again divided over the literal and esoteric symbolism and relevance of the words “Black Star” which appeared for the first time in the lyrics of the national anthem in 1966 (verse three, line three). This issue was hotly debated in the annals of the national media. An article appearing in the *Daily Graphic* editorial opposed the inclusion of a “Black Star” in the national flag and anthem was published during the one-year anniversary of the 1966 NLC Revolution.³¹ The writers of the articles engaged in a philosophical battle over whether or not “Black” or “Black Star” should be removed and/or replaced with another emblem. The debates were centred on issues of tradition, history, religion, superstition, race, science, national prestige and progress. Some of the writers outright rejected and ridiculed the inclusion of the words “Black Star” in the new national anthem. One Kumasi writer, quoting the late Gold Coast nationalist J.B. Danquah who also negated the existence of a “black or dead star,” cynically asked:

What hope does black generate? And what honour does ‘Black Star’ proclaim? Surely the day one sees a black star in the firmament will be the last day; it will be dooms day. Pray, if it is for fear of the colour of our skin (which has been dubbed black), that we want to insert the word BLACK by all means in our National Anthem (for prestige reasons, perhaps), then let us despatch a high powered delegation to the United Nations tomorrow to protest vehemently that our skin henceforth is not BLACK but BROWN.³²

The writer went on to suggest that gold be used instead of black because, “GOLD conjures up...all that is noble and bright and beautiful, than the word BLACK which, from the time of Aristotle, nay, from time immemorial, has been associated

³¹ *Daily Graphic*, “Is There a Black Star?” February 22, 1967.

³² See Paul Tuffuor, “Substitute Gold for Black,” *Daily Graphic*, March 1, 1967.

with all that is evil and ignoble and gloomy...We should not allow only one unhappy word to destroy the beauty and charm and inspiration of our new National Anthem.”³³ The opposition to the design of a black star on the national flag was brewing even before Ghana gained independence. Another critic from Accra, Dzenkle Dzewu, congratulated the Daily Graphic for its “true and loyal service to the nation of Ghana at this period of reconstruction...” and for its “admirable stand against this deadly ‘black star’ menace in the sole interest of the nation.”³⁴ The *Graphic* reprinted an excerpt from *A challenge to Kwame Nkrumah*, a pamphlet written by Dzewu, which was sent to Kwame Nkrumah in November 1956 suggesting that the black star of the new flag be changed to a white star:

It is absolutely dangerous and ridiculous for a young nation like Ghana being led by a ‘black star’ into a state of utter confusion and misery. All efforts must be made to avoid regrets...Black is the reverse of white. White indicates the spirit. Black indicates extreme materiality...the antithesis of spirit. Black indicates the disintegration which leads to annihilation. Black is repressing, depressing, and suppressing. It represents the negative conditions of gloom, fear, error, disease, ignorance, pessimism and hopelessness. Black...is the emblem of death, oblivion and annihilation.³⁵

In further defence of whiteness, or the substitution of the white star for a black one, Dzewu insisted:

White...[is] the colour of hope, peace and power. [The] White Colour is the sign of unity. It is in fact, the very essence of balance. It is the star of hope which typifies cleanliness, purity and symbolises power. It is the language of knowledge, expression and spirituality. Lastly, it is the emblem of peace and suggests victory to all mankind.³⁶

In direct opposition to the Black Star detractors, a Legon (Accra) contributor complained that the negative connotation of the word “black” that is a part of the

³³ See Tuffuor, “Substitute Gold for Black.”

³⁴ See Dzenkle Dzewu, “Black – It’s Symbol of Gloom and Fear,” *Daily Graphic*, March 2, 1967.

³⁵ The entire pamphlet was published in July 1957, according to Dzewu.

³⁶ Dzewu, “Black – It’s Symbol of Gloom and Fear.”

national flag and anthem was introduced into Africa by the Portuguese. C.G. Baeta argued that:

The superstitions of Europeans regarding the colour black, particularly that which makes it the colour of the devil, have been responsible for immeasurable havoc wreaked throughout the centuries, and possibly continue even now to be a major psychological barrier to true and sympathetic understanding of black peoples.³⁷

He agreed that Black was the appropriate colour to choose for an emergent African nation-state so 'that black peoples everywhere may now take their rightful place in the world-firmament and "shine" along with all others already there.'³⁸ G.K. Odonkor, writing from Akuse, concurred that, "It sounds ridiculous to suggest that because the colour black is associated with evil, the black star signifies the devilish nature of Ghanaians...The black star must be retained in our national flag for it inspires us all."³⁹

As history would have it, the Nkrumah government sided with those supporting the development of the black star as one of the central symbols of Ghanaian nationhood. The black star became (and still is) a permanent part of the National Monument, the national flag and is mentioned in the national anthem.

Antagonistic Anthems

Igor Cusack asserts that "National anthems whether sung by African children or at state ceremonial occasions play a significant role in this process of national indoctrination and the 'branding of the flock.'"⁴⁰ In the context of Ghanaian nationalism, Dr. Ephraim Amu (1899-1995) 'recognized the power of music as an

³⁷ C.G. Baeta, "Retain the Black Star," *Daily Graphic*, March 1, 1967.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ G.K. Odonkor, "A Source of Inspiration," *Daily Graphic*, March 1, 1967.

⁴⁰ Igor Cusack, 'African National Anthems: "Beat the drums, the red Lion has roared,"' *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (December 2005): 239.

instrument of Nation building and his most famous work “yen ara Asase Ni” was, between 1948 and 1957, Ghana’s unofficial National Anthem.’⁴¹ Kwame Nkrumah commissioned Philip Gbeho to write the first official national anthem for the independence ceremonials. Since that time, however, the lyrics of the Ghanaian national anthem – “God Bless our Homeland Ghana” - have been changed twice. When Ghana opted to become a Republic as opposed to a Dominion in the British Commonwealth in 1960, the original (1957) anthem was customized to make indicative references to Kwame Nkrumah’s role in the founding of the nation. The lyrics were changed again in 1966 after the military command ousted Nkrumah from power, and have not been altered by subsequent governments (see Table 5.1 – 5.3).⁴²

In general, all three versions of the Ghanaian National Anthem are similar in content (although the original is longer and can be said to be more nationalistic in tone): They idealize virtues such as freedom, justice, self-sacrifice, peace, unity, and hope. The anthems’ verses express reverence for the Fatherland and Founding Fathers⁴³, praise, adulation, and eternal indebtedness to the National Heroes and gratitude to the Ancestors who died so that the nation could live. They encourage a readiness to make the ultimate sacrifice for the survival of the nation-state if necessary. They highlight the bountifulness and beauty of the land, of which the living citizens are custodians for the future generations. Moreover, the Anthems have an underlining religious (Christian) tone, which implies that God sanctions the nation’s past, present and future - its very existence.

⁴¹ See Bank of Ghana, “Issue of 10000 & 20000 Cedis Banknotes,” 3. Many ordinary people and officials in Ghana have questioned the rationale behind minting *The Big Six* on the second highest denomination note rather than the first, given the historical significance of the former group, and especially since both banknotes were issued at the same time in 2002.

⁴² <http://david.national-anthems.net/gh-60.txt> (accessed September 12, 2006).

⁴³ The 1966 version does not make any reference to the “Founding Father(s).”

Table 5.1: Ghana National Anthem (1957, original)⁴⁴

Verse I

Lift high the flag of Ghana,
The gay star shining in the sky,
Bright with the souls of our fathers,
Beneath whose shade we'll live and die!
Red for the blood of the heroes in the fight,
Green for the precious farms of our birth-right,
And linked with these the shining golden band
That marks the richness of our Fatherland.

Verse II

We'll live and die for Ghana,
Our land of hope for ages to come!
Shout it aloud, O Ghana,
And beat it upon the drum!
Come from the palm-lined shore, from the broad northern plain,
From the farm and the forest, the mountain and mine.
Your children sing with ancient minstrel lore:
Freedom for ever, for evermore!

Verse III

God be with us in Ghana
And make our nation great and strong,
Brave to defend for ever
The cause of freedom and of right.
For ever the flag of Ghana proudly flies
In distant seas or else beneath our skies.
Let peace and fellow-feeling be our might,
And may our name be a radiant light.

Verse IV

This be our vow, O Ghana,
To live as one, in unity,
And in your strength, O Ghana,
To build a new fraternity!
Africa waits in the night of the clouded years
For the spreading light that now appears
To give us all a place beneath the sun:
The destined ending of a task well done.

⁴⁴ <http://david.national-anthems.net/gh-60.txt> (accessed September 12, 2006).

Table 5.2: Ghana National Anthem (1960 Republican version)⁴⁵

Verse I

Hail the name of Ghana
Praise the heroes of our fight;
Raise in the sky her banner
Of Freedom, Hope and Might –
Hail our Nation's Founder for whom we pray;
Cherish his Faith from day to day;
*Arise with joy, ye sons of Ghanaland,
And let Africa shine evermore.*

Verse II

Lift high the flag of Ghana,
The Lodestar shining in the skies,
Bright with the hope of our fathers
Alight with glory where it flies;
Make the flag of Ghana stand for right,
Let this ever be our constant might;
*Arise with joy, ye sons of Ghanaland,
And let Africa shine evermore.*

Verse III

God be with us in Ghana
And make our nation great and strong;
Brave to defend her honour,
Against oppressor's wrong;
Where the flag of Ghana freely flies
That's where the way to freedom lies;
*Arise with joy, ye sons of Ghanaland,
And let Africa shine evermore.*

⁴⁵ <http://www.nationalanthems.us/cgi-bin/forum/YaBB.pl?num=1153445087> (accessed September 12, 2006). See also Paul Nettl, *National Anthems*, 2nd ed., trans. Alexander Gode (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1967).

Table 5.3: Ghana National Anthem (1966 – present)⁴⁶

<p>Verse I God bless our homeland Ghana, And make our nation great and strong, Bold to defend for ever The cause of Freedom and of Right, Fill our hearts with true humility, Make us cherish fearless honesty, And help us to resist oppressors' rule With all our will and might for evermore.</p> <p>Verse II Hail to thy name, O Ghana, To thee we make our solemn vow: Steadfast to build together A nation strong in Unity, With our gifts of mind and strength of arm, Whether night or day, in mist or storm, In ev'ry need, whate'er the call may be, To serve thee, O Ghana, now and evermore.</p> <p>Verse III Raise high the flag of Ghana And one with Africa advance; Black Star of hope and honour To all who thirst for Liberty; Where the banner of Ghana freely flies, May the way to freedom truly lie, Arise, arise, O sons of Ghanaland, And under God march on for evermore!</p>

However, there are some marked differences in the three Anthems, which reflect the changing political climate of the nation-state and the growing power and predominance of Nkrumah. Specifically, the Independence (1957) anthem expresses pride and joy in the founding of the new nation, and mentions the issue of land (their ancestral “birth-right”) and the mineral wealth that it contains - which the heroes bravely and unselfishly defended. The second verse of the Independence anthem highlights the beauty of the land, for which citizens should “live and die,” so

⁴⁶ <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/living/anthem.php> (accessed September 12, 2006).

that the present and future generations can reap the fruits of its bountifulness in perpetual freedom and joy. The last verse expresses the wish to build a nation founded on unity and camaraderie, and for the future independent countries of the African continent to take their rightful place as new members of the family of nation-states.

The Republican (1960) Anthem is similar to the first in its praise for the heroes of the anti-colonial struggle and for freedom and hope. The addition of the word “Might” in line four may suggest a confidence in Ghana, which, at only three years of nationhood, had a burgeoning economy and was seen as the loadstar of the African independence movement. Alternatively, the “Might” may have stood “for right” over the wrongs of oppression as the fifth line of verse II suggests. On the other hand, it may also have referred to the increasing “Might” of Kwame Nkrumah, whose political power was growing ever unchallenged. Whereas the original version was quite inclusive in its content, with emphasis on the role of the founding fathers (plural) in the creation of the Ghanaian state, the first verse of the 1960 national music singled out Nkrumah as the main figure in the founding of the nation and the captain of African leadership:

Hail the name of Ghana,
Praise the heroes of our fight...
Hail our nation's founder for whom we pray;
Cherish his faith from day to day [bold added]

The Republican version is also more African-centric, all verses ending with the pan-Africanist verse, “*Arise with joy, ye sons of Ghanaland, And let Africa shine evermore,*” where Ghana is positioned as the beacon of (black) African liberation, or the “Black Star of hope and honour To all who thirst for Liberty,” as the Revolutionary (1966) version puts it.

In the same spirit of its predecessors, the Revolutionary anthem – “God Bless our Homeland Ghana” - urges national unity, brotherhood, and the selfless use of physical strength and brainpower for the development of the Fatherland. It also advances the pan-Africanist ideals of the past anthems, maintaining that Ghana is the “Black Star of hope and honour” for African independence. However, this version has a distinct tone of its own which reflects the developments of the historical period and political circumstances under which it was written. This anthem contains lines invoking the blessings of God in defence of “Freedom and of Right,” “true humility” and “fearless honesty.” Although it did not make any references at all to Founding Fathers or a Founding Father, the seventh line of verse I which begs God to “help us to resist oppressor’s rule” has the makings, albeit subtle, of an anti-Nkrumah stance, even though it could have equally been directed at the colonial past. As would be expected, the reference to Nkrumah as the sole saviour of the nation (“our nation’s founder” in the Republican anthem) was removed from the 1966 version by the military junta. Nonetheless, the last revised national anthem was not without controversy, as will be illustrated later.

Fabric of the Nation

The CPP administration, and Nkrumah in particular, also appropriated what is typically considered to be the Asante “national” dress, the *kente* cloth, and presented it “as an emblem of Ghanaian [national] culture.”⁴⁷ In the independence period, Nkrumah and many of his elected officials wore traditional kente fabric at the United Nations, during other foreign visits, in the Ghanaian Parliament, on visits to

⁴⁷ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 22.

the Asante regions and other rural areas.⁴⁸ The intent of Nkrumah's "nationalization" or "appropriation" of kente can be seen as an attempt to anchor himself and his party to a particularly strong ethnic group that embodied Ghana's traditions, without necessarily legitimising the Asantes. Moreover, kente, in addition to traditional chief's stools were the government's gifts of choice to visiting foreign diplomats as well as for government hosts who receive Ghanaian officials outside of the country.⁴⁹



Figure 5.9. Official photograph of Nkrumah wearing traditional *kente* cloth and "socialist" shirt

Nkrumah's image appeared on the national coins and postage stamps dressed in *kente* and *batakali* as well, including the first independence commemorative stamp (see Chapters I and II). He also wore kente often, but not always when he met with foreign leaders and representatives of the African Diaspora. The importance of

⁴⁸ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* See also Figures X and Y in Chapter 3, and X, Y, X in Chapter 4.

national dress to the legacy of Nkrumah as a nation-builder is also evident in the statue constructed of him in traditional/national dress at his mausoleum in Accra (see Chapter IV). Nkrumah's official use of *kente* as a national as opposed to an ethnic (mainly Asante) symbol can be traced back at least to 1951. On 12 February 1951, he wore a *mmeeda kente* cloth upon his release from James Fort Prison to head the new Gold Coast government.⁵⁰ That the *mmeeda kente* symbolized virtues of perfection, uniqueness and exceptional achievement⁵¹ highlights the message that Nkrumah must have wanted to send to his supporters and the world; that he had achieved success in overcoming British colonialism and had set the Gold Coast on a path to liberation.

Hess writes, "In the official presidential portrait disseminated by the Nkrumah administration...President Nkrumah's shoulder and lower body are draped in *kente*; yet his shirt is neither a Western collared business shirt nor a shirt from northern Ghana...but a collarless garment of the type associated with socialist leadership."⁵² Figure 5.9 depicts Nkrumah's combination of the traditional *kente* cloth and the "socialist" shirt. Hess's reference to the "socialist shirt" (although not her exact words) represented in the official independence photograph of Nkrumah is important in deciphering the symbolism of nationalism during the Nkrumah era. It demonstrates the degree to which many of the leaders of newly-independent African states "looked" toward the East and the Soviet Union for cultural cues, ideological guidance and material assistance as a counter-balance to those offered by the West. It also shows that they were willing to achieve nation-building by any means necessary, including befriending the enemies of the West, regardless of the political and economic costs that they would have to pay – and did pay – later on. The

⁵⁰ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, note 29, Chapter 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 141.

overlaying of traditional African and socialist garb is symbolic of the ideals of “African socialism” that Nkrumah spoke and wrote about.

The iconic and symbolic photograph of Ghana’s declaration of independence from Great Britain on 6 March 1957 shows an emotional and gesturing Prime Minister Nkrumah, along with some of his senior ministers who were all dressed in the “traditional” smock typically worn by men in the Northern Territories (see figure 5.10).⁵³ Such a symbolic gesture of dress put on by the new leaders of Ghana was meant to emphasize the need for national unity to the far corners of Ghana – from the Northernmost capital of Tamale to the southernmost and national capital of Accra – that all tribal and regional groups in the country were an integral part of the new Ghana. The message of the importance of national solidarity as symbolically expresses in dress was also meant for the powerful Asantes, but also for ideological partners external to Ghana.

However, Nkrumah also dressed in Western attire to signal the modernity of the Ghanaian state. The ideal of achieving modernity in colonial and postcolonial Africa by speaking Western languages, acquiring a Western education and embracing Western modes of dress was quite an appealing one. From laymen to lawyers, businessmen to bureaucrats, and even nationalist politicians including Nkrumah, the Western wardrobe symbolized their embracement of modernity and projections of authority.

⁵³ These ministers included A. Casley-Hayford (Minister of Communications); K.A. Gbedemah (Minister of Finance); N.A. Welbeck (Minister of Works); Kojo Botsio (Minister of Trade and Labour); and Krobo Edusei (Minister without Portfolio). Some original photographs of the event only show Nkrumah along with two of his ministers. The actual date that the photograph was taken and when Nkrumah actually declared independence is recorded differently in different sources, although it seems to be just the typical confusion of ascertaining the correct date at midnight. Hess attributes the photograph to March 5, 1957. See Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 141.



Figure 5.10. Nkrumah and his ministers, in Northern dress, declaring Ghana's independence

As Hess notes, "Early representations of Nkrumah, showing the CPP candidate in a Western-style suit and tie, reinforced these attributes of Westernization and modernity."⁵⁴ However appealing to these Western modes of modernity might have been during the colonial era, they were, at the same time, the very symbols against which many rebelled, especially during the late colonial period. Moreover, the wearing of Western attire must not be taken as a complete acceptance of Western symbols of modernity and a rejection of African traditions. On the contrary, Nkrumah, like many other nationalists and intellectuals at the time, frequently alternated between or combined their Western suits and ties and traditional attire such as the Northern smock or the kente dress of the Akans. This changing or convergence of garments depended on the occasion, the location and the individual

⁵⁴ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 141.

in question, and whether they wanted to “look” traditional or modern in Ghana or abroad. In other words, modernity and traditionalism were not mutually exclusive and in fact coexisted and blended together more often than not.

Ghana also developed a unique tradition characterized by the use of what can best be described as “political dress” or “propaganda attire” made of fabric imprinted with political, social, religious and cultural motifs and images. This “employment of visual culture [was used] for propagandistic as well as nation-building purposes.”⁵⁵ Women played a central role in the edification of the Nkrumah personality cult, by way of their modes of dressing. In 1956, “independence clothes” (see figure 5.11) were distributed to attendees of the CPP Women’s National Delegates Conference to promote both the coming of independence and the nationalist leader. During the Independence Day and Independence Anniversary celebrations, the CPP also distributed these propaganda textiles or “independence cloth” that bore the iconic image of Kwame Nkrumah to party supporters (see figure 5.12). At political rallies, public parades, social and political events, jubilant women dressed in garments made from foreign-made fabrics imprinted with Nkrumah’s portrait were frequently photographed and these pictures were published in the government-friendly newspapers.⁵⁶ These imprinted textiles were manufactured mainly by British companies such as ABC Textiles in Manchester, providing an important stream of revenue.

As would be expected, Nkrumah’s main political rival, the NLM, had its own system of dress, which symbolized its political stance and ideology. A majority of supporters who attended the founding of the NLM in Kumasi in 1954 wore the *kuntunkuni* dress.

⁵⁵ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29, 141.



Figure 5.11. "Independence" fabric imprinted with Nkrumah's picture. Courtesy, British Museum



Figure 5.12. CPP supporter wearing a Nkrumah "independence cloth"

Moreover, during the visit of Sir Charles Arden-Clarke (British Colonial Secretary) to Kumasi in 1957, members of the Asante Kotoko Society and the Asante Youth Association wore *kuntunkuni* as a way of expressing their commitment to the political goals of the NLM.⁵⁷ And similar to the “independence cloth” imprinted with images relating to Nkrumah worn by his female supporters, NLM women activists also had a rival “political cloth.” Women members of the NLM in Obuasi wore garments jeeringly dubbed *Kwame Nkrumah aka bankye dua kon mu*, meaning Kwame Nkrumah is entangled in the branches of the cassava tree.⁵⁸ They also had cloth imprinted with the photographs of key NLM leaders.

Conclusion

Part of the nation-building process entailed the design and promotion of national and CPP party emblems, symbols and other insignia. These included a national flag, an ensign for the CPP, a coat of arms, national crest, seal, as well as an anthem and a pledge of allegiance. Many of these national symbols had to reflect not only the nation as a whole, but also its socio-cultural, regional and ethnic components. For example, the design of the national coat of arms included an image of Christiansborg Castle as the seat of national government, but also an image of a gold mine and a cocoa plant – representing the source of traditional Asante wealth and power.⁵⁹ The Asantes took great exception to Nkrumah’s representation and appropriation of what they considered to be *their* agricultural commodities on the coat of arms, which lied in their rich forested region. The coat of arms also included other symbols linking Ghana to the British Commonwealth, although this relationship became ever

⁵⁷ Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine*, 16; and *Liberator*, January 19, 1957, 1, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 45.

⁵⁸ *Ashanti Pioneer*, December 21, 1954, 1, cited in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 45.

⁵⁹ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 184, note 72, chapter 1.

problematic due to Britain's objections to some of Nkrumah's practices. These unfavourable practices including Nkrumah's substitution of his images on the national coinage and postage stamps for that of the British Monarch.

The symbol of the Convention People's Party, the red cockerel, also epitomized Nkrumah's professed progressive political agenda and benevolent dictatorship. His nationalist mantras of "work and progress" as well as "Forward Ever, Backwards Never," always appeared alongside the red cockerel logo. The cockerel was also a design used by Asante, Ga and other traditional chiefs to symbolize freedom, respect for authority and masculinity. CPP propaganda dismissed the competing symbols of the opposition parties, including the cocoa tree logo of the NLM, as representing reactionary politics, tribalism, a colonial mentality and betrayal of the nation-state.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the NLM saw the CPP's red cockerel logo as synonymous with Nkrumah's self-aggrandizement, unpopular leadership, authoritarianism and ungratefulness. They were outraged by Nkrumah's appropriation of gold as a part of the national emblems and insignia, given that gold was seen as the domain of Asante politico-economic autonomy, wealth, royalty and was a symbol of the sacredness of the Golden Stool. The NPP also contrasted the symbolism of unity and importance embodied in its "clenched fist" logo, and the MAP distinguished its celestial, egalitarian "moon and stars" symbol from that of Nkrumah's nationalist party symbols.⁶¹

The three colours of the national flag all had significance to the political and economic history and future of the new nation-state. The red signified the blood that was shed for the liberation of the homeland from colonial rule. The green and gold represented the agricultural and mineral resources, chiefly cocoa, and timber and

⁶⁰ *Evening News*, May 10, 1954, 1, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 34.

⁶¹ *Ashanti Pioneer*, May 24, 1954, 1; and *Ashanti Pioneer*, June 8, 1954, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, note 66, chapter 2, 186.

gold that Nkrumah claimed as national assets. Nkrumah tried, through laws such as the 1957 Avoidance of Discrimination Act, to ban other political parties from flying flags that were associated with particular tribes, regions or religions. This was partially in response to the Asante leadership, which initially refused to recognize the national flag of Ghana in “their” territory. The Asante-NLM on the other hand, defied Nkrumah’s policies by flying flags that featured an image of a chief’s stool, and other flags with an image of the *Kotoko* (porcupine), an animal that symbolizes the aggressiveness and resilience of the Asante people in times of war. However, in 1964, Nkrumah replaced the national flag with the ensign of the CPP, which had a white instead of a gold band in the middle. In 1966, the CPP flag was banned by the NLC, who restored the original national flag.

The national anthem, with its frequent references to the symbolism of the national flag as a beacon of hope and liberty, was rewritten on two occasions - once by Nkrumah in 1960 and again by the NLC in 1966. Moreover, the inclusion of references to the Black Star in the national anthem and on the national flag was also a point of contention between the CPP and his detractors. While CPP propaganda maintained that the Black Star was a symbol of African liberation, other groups in the public and the media associated the Black Star with doom and despair. They rejected it on the basis of its negative association of the word “black” (evil, hopelessness, and misery) and the reference to Africans as “black people.” Supporters of the inclusion of the Black Star in the national anthem and on the flag of the nation insisted that the negative association of the word black with all that was bad was a result of European prejudice against and ignorance about Africans. Their arguments, which prevailed in the end, contended that the Black Star symbol represented the hopes and aspirations of African-nation states to become

independent from colonial bondage. In 1960, when Nkrumah declared Ghana a republic, he changed the national anthem to include indicative references to himself as Father of the Nation. This signalled his increasing turn toward authoritarianism and the exclusion of other nationalists who had fought for the independence of Ghana, such as J.B. Danquah.

The elaboration of a “national” dress code was also an important project of national-building. CPP officials, including the president, also adopted the traditional dress codes of the Asantes, the kente cloth, as well as the smock worn by the Muslims of the Northern Region. The elevation of ethno-regional dress to a national status was meant to both symbolize the incorporation of powerful groups into the nation-state, and, at the same time, their subjugation under the umbrella of the nation-state. Nkrumah’s ethno-national attire was often accentuated with a “prison graduate” cap, which reminded Ghanaians of the personal sacrifices that he had to make to achieve national independence.

Conclusion

Facing the Janus: The Symbolism and Legacy of the Nkrumah Years



“In Ghana, Nkrumah is constantly reborn.”¹

During the African Revolution, one of the primary projects that nationalists faced was the issue of the (re)construction of national identity. This re-invention of African identity was not only targeted toward creating a unique national identity that was distinct from colonial notions of who Africans were, but also the pre-colonial past, in most cases. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah grappled with both the theoretical and practical implications of nations and nationalism, which has preoccupied nationalists (and scholars) before and after him. It is important, therefore, to briefly review some of the major theories on the nature of these twin pillars of identity in order to understand how a practicing nationalist attempted to reconcile them. This is important because there is often a disconnection between how the nation or nationalism is conceptualised by political leaders (practicing nationalists) and scholars who study these issues, as Roger Brubaker has argued. However, Eric

¹ Kwame Nkrumah Information & Resource Site (<http://64.23.117.42/800-index.html>) (accessed May 11, 2007).

Kaufmann cautions that scholars must “step back” from the concepts of nationhood used by actors and instead come up with more rigorous understandings and definitions of these concepts. Kaufmann finds that “‘Nation’ has been used to refer to states, to ethnic groups, even to religions (ummah nation) and sexual orientations (queer nation). Semantic similarity does not ensure conceptual similarity.”²

John Breuilly argues that nationalism is a political movement designed to seize or maintain political power. However, the attainment of political power by nationalists is just the beginning of the process of nation formation, which can continue to be contentious. In *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, John Hutchinson argues that nations are not culturally uniform, but rather that they have roots in older, more diverse ethnic identities. Moreover, he argues, the plurality and adaptability of nations to the unpredictable challenges of the modern world makes them prone to cultural wars, the erosion of national sovereignty and cultural unity. Hutchinson also redefines the process of nation-state formation, arguing that it is the result of infinite and reversible processes. This dynamism of the nation-state creates conflicts and poses problems for nationalist governments who have to contend with it being but one of many actors in the modern era that significantly impact the lives of the citizenry.³ Benedict Anderson’s classic work, *Imagined Communities*, has given us a set of frameworks with which to understand how nations were conceived and created in the modern era. He argued that the development of print capitalism, including newspapers, television sets, school books and museums provided a media where people could imagine themselves as belonging to a collective imagined

² See Eric Kaufmann, comment on ‘Definitions of “Nations” and “Nationalism”,’ H-Net Network on Nationalism Studies, comment posted January 8, 2010.

³ See John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (Sage Publications Ltd., 2004).

political community - the nation - that was homogenous, sovereign and unique from all other nations.⁴

In this thesis, I argue that symbols of nationhood are effective tools of spreading political propaganda, because they are within the public domain and therefore get noticed by a very large number of people. I argue that other forms of “print” capitalism accessible by a large, diverse number of people within a geographical area, which have not been paid much attention by scholars, also facilitated the building of an imagined African community, namely Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah pioneered the use of these alternative kinds of print capitalism and symbolic nationalism to construct the image of a homogenous nation-state in newly independent Ghana. His nation-building strategies encompassed the propagandistic use of political iconography and idioms, expressed through what I have termed “symbolic nationalism.” Symbolic nationalism is understood to mean the political and propagandistic use of money, postage stamps, monuments, museums, dress, non-verbal maxims (Adinkra symbols), the national anthem, emblems, and both national and party flags to articulate nationalist ideals and projects. There were five interrelated themes expressed through the iconography of these symbols of nationhood: (1) Nation-branding, national identity and the declaration of Ghanaian independence; (2) the cult of personality, party and change in leadership; (3) national unity and homogenisation; (4) economic nationalism, modernity and progress through African Socialism and scientific rationalism; (5) and the nation’s glorious historical past, rich cultures and traditions.

My research on the use of symbolic nationalism to build the newly independent nation-state of Ghana fits into the broader paradigm of the construction

⁴ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

of national identity and nationalism in post-colonial Africa and the Third World. Therefore, this thesis provides a framework for the debate as to whether or not Third World forms of nationalism and nation-building differ markedly from that of the industrialized nation-states of Western Europe and North America. I argue that this is the case. I also argue that, while Nkrumah was the first statesman in post-colonial Africa to express these themes through national symbols, the example of Ghana was largely similar to other nationalist projects not only in Africa, but also throughout the Third World. Among the African nationalists who most closely mirrored Nkrumah in terms of their use of symbolic nationalism were Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, Mobutu Sésé Seko in the Democratic Republic of the Congo/Zaire, Hastings Banda in Malawi, Félix Houphouët-Boigny in the Ivory Coast, Sylvanus Epiphanio Olympio and Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo, President Nnamdi Azikiwe and General Yakubu Gowon in Nigeria, Maurice Yaméogo and Thomas Sankara in *Haute Volta* (Upper Volta, Burkina Faso).

Other scholars have expanded on Anderson's argument that credits print capitalism for providing a platform for national imagining. They have discussed the theoretical underpinnings of many of the symbols of nationhood, which form the basis of this thesis. Michael Billig, John Breuilly, Igor Cusack, Emily Gilbert and Eric Helleiner, Keith Hart, Eric Hobsbawm, Terrence Ranger, Anthony D. Smith (through his "ethno-symbolism" approach), Tim Unwin and Virginia Hewitt, argue that nationalists utilize various tools or "institutions" to inspire the nation and boost the national moral. These tools include symbols, emblems, ceremonies, anthems, rituals, speeches, languages, rallies, flags, oaths of allegiance, public parades, music, remembrance days, holidays, dress, national dishes, national currencies, postage

stamps, artefacts, museum exhibitions, monuments, statues, shared values, myths, memories and traditions.⁵

In the Third World, particularly in Africa and Latin America, the ubiquitous stamps (and currency) of newly independent nation-states were issued with the necessary symbols of nationhood to brand the flock, forge a national identity separate from its colonial past, signal the change to a republic, the establishment of a new government after a military coup or civilian election. As Jack Child notes, these national symbols include emblems, national flags, colours, crests, mottos, freedom torches, maps demarcating or contesting the national boundary, national flora and fauna, literature, art, folk dances and music.⁶ Although produced by the government as official documents in the public domain, Child argues that stamps (and national currencies) are “icons of popular culture...[because they] are seen and handled repeatedly by large numbers of people.”⁷ Adedze agrees with Child that postage stamps are within the public domain. He argues that the study of postage stamps belong to:

The realm of public history, where the histories of certain...individuals were appropriated by the state and rewritten to become symbols of resistance against colonial rule. The images represented on the stamps convey the symbolic image of the master narrative of the ruling elite with the hope that the masses of the people will rally behind these narratives and thereby suppress alternative interpretations of history.”⁸

⁵ See Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 66, 67-8; Cusack, “African Cuisines: Recipes for Nation-Building?” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 13, (2000): 207–225; Cusack, “African National Anthems,” 235-251; Gilbert and Helleiner, *National-States and Money*; Gilbert, “Ornamenting the Façade of Hell,” 57-80; Hart, *Money in an Unequal World*; Helleiner, “National Currencies and National Identities,” 1409; Helleiner, “Introduction to Special Section,” 1–4; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, ch. 4; and Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, ch. 7; Smith, “Nations and History,” 11, 13, 23; and Unwin and Hewitt, “Banknotes and National Identity in Central and Eastern Europe,” 1008.

⁶ Posnansky, “Propaganda for Millions,” 54; Jack Child, “The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture: Latin American Postage Stamps,” *Latin American Research Review* 40, no. 1 (February 2005): 119-20.

⁷ Child, “The Politics and Semiotics,” 136.

⁸ Adedze, “Commemorating the Chief,” 68.

Similarly, Igor Cusack argues that:

Postage stamps may be seen as tiny transmitters of the dominant ideologies of the state destined for the imagined community of the nation. The issuing of stamps, starting in the nineteenth century, and the postal reforms that accompanied this, greatly contributed to the 'communicative efficiency' of national communities and made a significant contribution to nation-building. The imagery of stamps promotes the dominant discourses of a particular nationalism, recalls historical triumphs and myths and defines the national territory in maps or landscapes.⁹

But why are postage stamps, banknotes and coins in particular such effective means of spreading political propaganda to the populace of a country and internationally? They are issued and controlled solely by the central government (who has strict laws against perpetrators who dare to breach them); they are cheap to produce; they can be graphically imprinted with considerable detail, despite their small size; they circulate among millions of people both within and outside of the country's borders; they do not require a high degree of literacy (or none at all) to understand the messages, unlike state-run newspapers and other media; and they do not require state-sponsored violence to be effective, unlike more draconian methods of nation-building in developing countries such as the use of the military.¹⁰ Michael Kevane argues that the dominance of state-nationalism over opponents of the central government is explained by the monopoly that the former has over the production and use of symbols of nationhood, as well as the legitimacy that the state derives from the international community:

"Part of the power of states comes from the massive resources, reach, and organization available in its image production. States can mandate an image

⁹ Cusack, "Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology," 591.

¹⁰ Adedze, "Commemorating the Chief;" Hugo Dobson, "Japanese Postage Stamps: Propaganda and Decision Making," *Japan Forum* 14, no. 1 (2002): 21-39; Huang, "Making a China of One's Own;" Robert A. Jones, "Heroes of the Nation? The Celebration of Scientists on the Postage Stamps of Great Britain, France and West Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 3 (2001): 403-422; Posnansky, et al., "Postal Images of Africa," and Posnansky, "Propaganda for Millions;" David Scott, "National Icons: The Semiotics of the French Stamp," *French Cultural Studies* 3 (1992): 215-234.

of the president in every office, a national icon on every postage stamp, the national emblem on every piece of currency, national colors on the airline, statuary in the roundabouts, and music on the airwaves. Few other organizations can compete: ethnic groups may be able to produce music, masks, clothing, and dances; churches and mosques use their rituals, architecture, and vestments; opposition groups may carefully choose a color and symbol for public manifestations. But as these examples suggest, their resources, reach, and organization are limited compared with that of most states. Another part of the power of the state flows from an international order that naturalizes states as expressions of the will of the people. The international legitimation of states adheres even to illegitimate states, making their icons have unwarranted effects.”¹¹

Being an avid reader and the author of over twenty books, Nkrumah took a keen interest in questions of nation-building and the rules of governing a multi-ethnic state. His views on nationhood were different from the prevailing European notions of what constituted it. As Nkrumah himself put it:

The notion that in order to have a nation it is necessary for there to be a common language, a common territory and a common culture, has failed to stand the test of time or the scrutiny of scientific definition of objective reality. Common territory, language and culture may in fact be present in a nation, but the existence of a nation does not necessarily imply the presence of all three. Common territory and language alone may form the basis of a nation. Similarly, common territory plus common culture may be the basis. In some cases, only one of the three applies. A state may exist on a multinational basis. The community of economic life is the major feature within a nation, and it is the economy which holds together the people living in the territory. It is on this basis that the new Africans recognise themselves as potentially one nation, whose dominion is the entire African continent.¹²

Nkrumah understood that a nation did not necessarily have to be based on a homogenous national experience. However, while he agreed that a nation could be multi-dimensional, he insisted as a matter of pragmatism that all the various tribes, regions and political groups within it should see themselves as belonging to one nation, and not a group of sub-nations within the nation-state. Moreover, Nkrumah knew that national consciousness was not organic, and that people would not

¹¹ Michael Kevane, “Official Representations of the Nation: Comparing the Postage Stamps of Sudan and Burkina Faso,” *African Studies Quarterly: The Online Journal for African Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 13, <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v10/v10i1a3.htm>.

¹² Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa*, 88.

automatically think of themselves as Ghanaians first, then Ashantis or Muslims second. He understood that the Ghanaian had to be made to think as one in the first instance. He felt that the nation-state had to be created, albeit in his own image.

Nkrumah's use of symbolic nationalism to achieve nation-building was unique in that there was virtually no precedence or model in Sub-Saharan Africa for how to create a new, modern nation-state out of a formerly colonized territory. Therefore, he had to look mainly (but not exclusively) outside of his own national and continental boundaries for clues on how to build a nation. From his studies of the African, Asian and European past, his readings of socialist and capitalist literature, and his time spent in Britain and the United States, Nkrumah came to gain an adequate understanding of how nation-states were constructed symbolically.

He would have seen Ethiopian dollars and coins minted with images of Emperor Haile Selassie I. He spent British pound sterling and American dollars, and used postage stamps from both nations bearing the images of Queen Elizabeth II and Benjamin Franklin (respectively), and other European and American Founding Fathers and rulers. These coins, currencies and stamps were also imbued with iconography featuring historical-nationalist vignettes such as the American Declaration of Independence from Great Britain, and objects of the national patrimony such as scientific discoveries, national projects and other images of socio-cultural, historical, political and economic importance. Moreover, Nkrumah had seen Chinese and Soviet currencies and postage stamps imprinted with socialist images of Lenin and Mao as iconographic leaders of their respective nation-states.

He must have also visited the British Museum and the Science Museum in London, as well as the Smithsonian Museum in the United States, where those nations' histories, cultures and scientific-technological discoveries were on display.

Nkrumah knew of the monuments commemorating the war dead, such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris and the Royal London Fusiliers' War Memorial; monuments symbolizing freedom and nationhood, such as the Statue of Liberty in New York City and the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris; he also saw or read about the African ruins and monuments erected in Ancient Egypt, Ancient Ghana and Great Zimbabwe; he visited the sites of statues built in the name of transformational leaders such as the Lincoln Memorial. He studied the design and symbolism of the Union Jack and Old Glory, and listened to the lyrics of the Star Spangled Banner and God Save the Queen. Moreover, Nkrumah understood the socio-cultural, spiritual and political symbolism associated with the Adinkra symbols of the Akans. Finally, he wore the traditional dress of African cultures, including the Akans and the Northern Muslims in Ghana.

At the time of independence, Nkrumah rhetorically spoke of the "nation" as one entity as if all the people in the geographical territory of Ghana saw themselves first and foremost as belonging to that nation-state (as Ghanaians). However, he faced many challenges of building a homogenous nation-state for most of his time in office, particularly from the powerful Asantes who wanted to either have a separate nation-state or a more autonomous territorial status under a federal one. When it was his turn to govern an independent African "nation-state" Nkrumah therefore already came to the table with an African, international and historical set of ideas on how to express and promote a sense of nationhood: He concluded that every nation must have a Founding Father(s), whether living or dead – to plant the seed of the nation's birth. Every modern, sovereign nation-state issued its own money and postage stamps to proclaim their sovereignty and foster economic development and monetary independence. Independent nations must have a national flag, anthem,

coat of arms, dress and other insignia and emblems to distinguish them from other nation-states. Nations construct museums to preserve and display their glorious historical past, material culture and traditions for the citizenry and the world to memorialise and celebrate. Nations construct monuments to commemorate important historical antecedents such as victorious (and sometimes lost) battles and the attainment of independence, which are often the site for nationalistic milestones. Modern nations embrace science and technology in order to achieve socio-economic development and build a future for the youth. They elevate their war dead to the status of national icons through the erection of monuments such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and honour their Founding Fathers by building statues in their likeness. These stone or metal structures are often solemnly respected by the nation.

Postage stamps and national currencies serve to legitimise new nation-states for both domestic and international consumption. As Unwin and Hewitt argue, “paper money is...not only a way of reinforcing internal cohesion and identity, but it is also a way of depicting that identity to the outside world in a very tangible, and often beautiful, form.”¹³

National flags and anthems are two symbols of nationhood that reinforce each other’s messages and purpose to brand the flock. As Cusack reveals, almost one third of all African national anthems make mention of the national flag as a sacred banner to be revered.¹⁴ The three versions of Ghana’s national anthems includes verses such as “lift high the flag of Ghana” and “for ever the flag of Ghana proudly flies.” Child argues that a country’s flag is “the simplest icon of national identity.”¹⁵ In 1957, the Nkrumah government debuted the tri-coloured national flag, which was designed to symbolize the blood that was shed and sacrifices made (red),

¹³ Unwin and Hewitt, “Banknotes and National Identity in Central and Eastern Europe,” 1026.

¹⁴ Cusack, “African National Anthems,” 236.

¹⁵ Child, “The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture,” 119.

the agricultural resources (green) and mineral wealth (gold) of the nation. It also included an image of the “Black Star” of African freedom. The Asante-dominated NLM defied Nkrumah’s ban on “tribal” flags by openly flying its own flags, which featured icons of a chief’s stool and an image of the *Kotoko* (porcupine). In 1964, Nkrumah made the CPP flag, with its white instead of a golden stripe, the national flag of Ghana. However, the National Liberation Council restored the original national flag after their 1966 coup.

The symbolism of the national flag has also been used to build national identity by other Third World nationalist movements. Laotian nationalists designed a tri-coloured flag in 1945 (with two red stripes on either side and a blue one in the middle), which symbolized the emergence of the new nation state born in sacrifice yet blessed with nature’s bounty. The red was a universal colour symbolizing that the people fought and bled for their independence. Blue stood for the fertility of the Lao land, while an image of a white full moon in the middle of the blue stripe symbolized purity.¹⁶

Lutz Marten and Nancy C. Kula also acknowledge that, in addition to the national flag and anthem, “a national currency provides a pervasive symbol of official discourses of national identity, carried by and expressed through designs of coins and banknotes which incorporate images and texts, as well as through the names of currency units.”¹⁷ Although the authors do not address the symbolism of monetary iconography in their article, their analysis of the semantics of currency terms mainly in Zambia and Tanzania nonetheless provides valuable insights into

¹⁶ Tappe, “The Iconography of the Kip” 105.

¹⁷ Lutz Marten and Nancy C. Kula, “Meanings of Money: National Identity and the Semantics of Currency in Zambia and Tanzania,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 20, 2 (2008): 183. Tim Unwin and Virginia Hewitt have reached similar conclusions in the case of the new nation-states that emerged out of the demise of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. See Unwin and Hewitt, “Banknotes and National Identity in Central and Eastern Europe,” 1005, 1010.

the role that money and language played in discourses on nation-building in post-independence Africa. They reveal that while different African governments took divergent approaches to the naming of and language(s) on their currencies, they shared the same desires to construct a post-colonial, national identity that sought to brand and unify the nation-state.

At the time of independence, the Kaunda government chose an exoglossic colonial language (English) as the official language, which had little symbolic value to national identity given that it was not any of the forty African languages spoken there. However, endoglossic currency terms were chosen for the national currency, which had a high level of symbolism. In Tanzania on the other hand, Swahili was chosen as the national language, it being symbolic of a written African idiom that has been used in East Africa and the Indian Ocean trade for centuries. Swahili was seen as important for Tanzanian national identity. The Tanzanian currency, on the other hand, adopted English-based terms and texts as a matter of practicality. Marten and Kula argue that the historical, cultural and socio-political circumstances of each of these countries accounts for this inverse relationship between currency terms and language policies. The choice of both English in Zambia and Swahili (and English) in Tanzania as official languages reflected efforts to combat tribalism, so as not to favour one local language or ethnic group over others.¹⁸

After independence, Nigeria continued to use the non-decimal currency name and system inherited from the British, namely, pounds, shillings and pence until 1973. Thereafter, the government adopted a decimal system and changed the names of the currency to *kobo* (an English loan word meaning copper) and *Naira* (an invented word that was inspired by the name of the country). This change in

¹⁸ Marten and Kula, "National Identity and the Semantics of Currency" 183-184, 188-189.

currency terms, Marten and Kula argue, was representative of an increased sense of Nigerian national consciousness and identity, especially when the concurrent discovery of oil in the early 1970s brought prosperity “and a further break away from the British colonial past, which the old currency terms represented. A similar symbolic aspect can probably be seen in the change from left-hand side to right-hand side driving which took place a year earlier, and other instances of creating a symbolic distance from the colonial past are found in other African countries during this period.”¹⁹ One such country was Ghana. In 1965, the Nkrumah government had completed the Volta River Hydroelectric plant that was to power the Ghanaian industrial revolution. Feeling confident in Ghana’s industrial and financial potential, Nkrumah left the British non-decimal system and changed the name of the Ghana pound, shillings and pence to the *cedi* and *pesewa* currency. The *cedi* is an Akan name for the cowry shell money, a traditional currency that was a source of wealth, medium of exchange and an article used in religious divinations in West Africa until the British colonial authorities demonetised it in the early twentieth century. The *pesewa* was the smallest unit of gold dust, which, according to McCaskie, the Asante Empire used the precious metal as currency and a symbol of wealth and authority.²⁰

In addition to Ghana and Nigeria, a minority of other African countries, especially in the southern part of the continent, used indigenous or invented names for their national currencies as symbolic meanings relating to historical events, political developments, and cultural and national identity. These included Zambia, where in 1968, the government changed from the pound, shillings and pence currency to a new decimal currency system of the *ngwee* (a Bemba/ Nyanja term

¹⁹ Marten and Kula, “National Identity and the Semantics of Currency,” 187.

²⁰ McCaskie, “Accumulation, Wealth and Belief in Asante History: I,” 23–43; and McCaskie, “Accumulation, Wealth and Belief in Asante History: II,” 3–23.

meaning “shiny” or “bright”) and *kwacha* (meaning dawn or beginning). “Not only were the terms African language based, they also included a direct reference to the independence movement, as during rallies and demonstrations before independence ‘*kwacha*’ – ‘*Ngwee*’ was a popular political chant.”²¹ Others include Botswana (*thebe* and *pula*), Lesotho (*loti*), Swaziland (*lilangeni*), Angola (*kwanza*), Madagascar (*iraimbilanja* and *ariary*) and South Africa (*rand*).²²

Nonetheless, as Marten and Kula reveal, most independent African nation-states issued currencies bearing the same names and language terms as their former colonial masters, including shilling, pound, cent, dollar, dinar, centavo, and escudo, mainly for pragmatic reasons.²³ However, I argue that while they may have chosen colonial language titles and terms for their national currencies, the iconography of most of these monies showed similar concerns for nation-building, economic development and the cult of personality. After independence, fourteen mostly French-speaking countries belonging to the two common currency CFA franc zones of Central and West Africa used the French-backed CFA franc currency. According to Marten and Kula:

The use of the French currency terms in the CFA countries is motivated by, and symbolically related to, the close tie between the CFA and the French franc...with which it has a fixed exchange rate. It also symbolized African regional economic collaboration, transgressing colonial and linguistic boundaries, as neither Equatorial Guinea nor Guinea-Bissau are former French colonies, and French is not the major language in either country.²⁴

However, I have found that despite their close political and economic links with France and the symbolism of regional economic partnerships in Africa, the iconography of the CFA franc currencies, similar to most other African countries

²¹ Marten and Kula, “National Identity and the Semantics of Currency,” 189.

²² *Ibid.*, 187-188.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.

and Ghana, portrayed themes relating to nation-building and post-colonial, national identity. In other words, the leaders of independent “Francophone” West Africa, including Sékou Touré, Houphouët-Boigny, Olympio, Keita and Senghor were no less nationalistic or Pan-Africanist in their views than most leaders of “Anglophone” Africa, save Nkrumah. The main difference between these two blocs was how they went about trying to achieve African unity and development. Moreover, even Ghana under Nkrumah, who was the most fervent nationalist and Pan-Africanist, still maintained somewhat of a good relationship with the former colonial power, Great Britain, in terms of trade, cultural exchanges and the political legacies of colonialism in Ghana. Nkrumah’s relations with Britain, however, became increasingly strained as he moved further to the left and became more critical of the “Neo-Colonial” powers, in which he also included the United States.

The same utilization of national currencies for propagandist messages such as the symbolic declaration of independence, sovereignty and the establishment of national identity is also evident in the imagery of postage stamps, which are “probably the most common pictorial device in Africa.”²⁵ During the colonial period, the European powers utilized the iconography of postage stamps to portray native Africans and their environment as the racialized and exotic other, “brand” their colonies and to legitimise their rule over Africans. As Merrick Posnansky argues, “the earliest [colonial] stamps of Africa depicted European symbols of authority: the ruler’s head, the Kaiser’s yacht, or the allegorical symbols of freedoms and values that imperial powers failed to provide for their African subjects.”²⁶ As Mwangi has shown in the case of colonial East Africa, and Cusack in the case of the Portuguese Empire, European powers utilized the iconography and language on

²⁵ See Posnansky, Adedze and Levin, “Postal Images of Africa,” 52.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

colonial currencies and postage stamps to represent their notions of Africa as exotic, childlike, wild and ready to be tamed by the monarch whose head overlooked the African terrain over which s/he presided.²⁷

After the independence period, African statesmen would copy their former European colonial masters by utilizing postage stamps to proclaim and legitimise their own authority and to build national identity. The CPP government constructed a variety of nationalist symbols and structures in order to declare the birth of and brand the new nation-state, including postage stamps. The iconography of the stamps included images of the national (and later the CPP) flag, coat of arms, Independence Square, the new decimal currency (the Cedi), and the national monuments. Some of these images had a more direct reference to the idea of nation-building, including the stamp that graces the cover of this thesis. It has an image of an African whose hand holds a brick inscribed with the word "Ghana," while his other hand clutches a trowel ready to build the nation brick by brick. Other stamps celebrated national events such as the anniversary of independence and the republic, and the victory of the national soccer team (the Black Stars) in the African Soccer Cup Competition.

In Asia, regimes have also utilized postage stamps to declare their independence, build national identity, and establish national and international legitimacy. Yu-Chin Huang has shown this in the case of the conflict and competition between the Chinese Communist Party, which established the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the Chinese mainland, and the Republic of China (ROC) established by the Nationalist Party on the island of Taiwan. Since 1949, the "two Chinas" have been involved in endless propaganda warfare as evidenced by the

²⁷ Mwangi, "The Order of Money;" and Cusack, "Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology."

issuance of separate postage stamps designed to build their individual national identities among ordinary citizens as well as to seek recognition from other countries. Huang identifies five sets of themes prevalent on the iconography of postage stamps issued by the PRC and the ROC, namely national leaders and other people, anniversaries, international relations, sports and Diasporic Chinese. The iconography of these themes was designed not only to assert legitimacy over each other, but to build a complex and unique Chinese national identity that encompassed territorial, historical, ethnic, political, geographical and cultural considerations.²⁸

Regimes that have formed from a military coup as well as territories that have seceded from nation-states have also utilized symbols of nationhood, particularly the national currency and postage stamps, to proclaim their independence. The iconography of some Latin American and African postage stamps, for example, have included depictions of an “iconographic sign illustrating the country’s views and the semiotics of a powerful national symbol (the map of the country).”²⁹ The National Liberation Council not only removed Nkrumah from power in 1966, but also his image from stamps and currency. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the province of Katanga successfully seceded between 1960 and 1963 to become the State of Katanga under President Moïse Tshombe. In 1961 the State of Katanga issued postage stamps, which included a photograph of President Tshombe, the colours of the new Katangese flag and images of the Katanga cross, a cast copper cross ingot that was used as a form of currency in parts of the DRC in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Similarly, the short-lived secessionist Republic of Biafra that broke off from recently-independent

²⁸ Yu-Chin Huang, “National Identity and Ideology in the Design of Postage Stamps of China and Taiwan, 1949-1979” (PhD diss., Department of Art and Archaeology, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, June 2007).

²⁹ Child, “The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture,” 127. See also Cusack, “Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology,” 591.

Nigeria between 1967 and 1970 issued a national currency called the Pound and Shillings. The currency did not feature images of the military leaders. However, it was issued as a declaration of Biafran independence from Nigeria, and the iconography featured images of the Biafran landscape such as the palm tree, the rising sun, Biafran girls, a man carving traditional arts, a girl weaving, coat of arms and an oil refinery.³⁰ These were meant to illustrate that Biafra had a unique culture, traditions and an economy on which to build a separate and financially independent nation-state from Nigeria.

The Nkrumah administration also built national monuments, particularly in the capital, as the concrete embodiment of the new nation's history, the independence struggle and national identity. These physical structures included Nkrumah's statue at Parliament House, the Independence Monument (Black Star Square), Presidential Stand and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. They became the sites of both the nationalist construction and the oppositional destruction of the imagined Ghanaian community. The physical attacks against and demolition of Nkrumah's monuments in Accra and Kumasi also reflected both historical and contemporary trends by anti-government movements to remove or desecrate monuments that were seen as the symbolic representations of imperial occupiers or domestic regimes, including post-colonial Khartoum, pre and post-apartheid South Africa and states within the former Soviet Union.³¹

³⁰ N. Shafer and G.S. Cuhaj, eds., *Standard Catalog of World Paper Money: General Issues 1368 - 1960*, 10th ed., 2 (Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 2003), 122; see also <http://www.banknotes.com/bia.htm>.

³¹ See, for example, Coombes, *History After Apartheid, Reinventing Africa*, and "Translating the Past: Apartheid Monuments in Post-Apartheid South Africa;" Andrew Crampton, "The Voortrekker Monument, the Birth of Apartheid, and Beyond;" Pamela Dube, "Monument Will Honor Steve Biko;" Heathorn, "The Long Retreat of Stone Generals;" Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, "Exhibiting Ghana," "Imagining Architecture," and "Spectacular Nation;" Kuklick, "Contested Monuments: The Politics of Archaeology in Southern Africa;" Lewis and Mulvey, *Disgraced Monuments*; Marschall, "Forging National Identity;" Vale, "Mediated Monuments and National Identity;" Whelan, "The Construction and Destruction of a Colonial Landscape."

Third World nationalists have also utilized symbols of nationhood to promote the cult of personality and signal changes in leadership. Ghana's second national anthem, for example, made indirect references to Nkrumah as the beneficent Founding Father, ruler and protector of the nation ("Hail our Nation's Founder for whom we pray; Cherish his Faith from day to day"). The only other African national anthem, which appears to make self-references to the Father of the Nation was Senegal's anthem, which was written by President Senghor. The anthem used the syllables "I" and "me" ("I am still young at heart", "O people of Sénégal, more than brothers to me, arise!"), which could be a reference to Senghor himself.³²

Similar to their former European colonial masters, African nationalists have utilized material culture to build national identity, establish authority, encourage unity and express nationalism. They constructed modern architectural structures including national monuments, museums, banks, works of art and urban development spaces, as a means of creating national consciousness, legitimacy and an imagined community rooted not just in a glorious historical past but a modern future for the homogenous nation-state.³³

The Nkrumah regime had built a giant statue of him at Parliament House. One side of the statue was inscribed with the words "Kwame Nkrumah Founder of the Nation." The statue was designed with Nkrumah's right hand raised with his palm facing forward, Nkrumah's sign for "freedom." His left hand clutched a staff (akin to the rod of Moses) ready to correct the misdeeds of the nation and the main threats against nation-building, which he determined to be tribalism, regionalism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Other statues were erected in Winneba and

³² Cusack, "African National Anthems," 243.

³³ See Lawrence Vail, *Architecture, Power and National Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 51, 54; Hess, "Spectacular Nation," 16; Nnamdi Elleh, *African Architecture: Evolution and Transformation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997).

Kumasi. These statues were occasionally bombed and finally pulled down by the National Liberation Council in the coup. After the symbolic defeat of Nkrumah through the literal desecration of his bronze likeness, the Asantes replaced other Nkrumah statues and monuments with symbols of their own royal traditions. The main symbols replacing Nkrumah's statue in Kumasi were those of the *Asantehene* Otumfuo Sir Osei Agyeman Prempeh II (who reigned from 1931 - 1970), the Golden Stool and a statue of the priest Okomfo Anokye who is believed to have summoned the Golden Stool from the heavens to create the Asante nation.³⁴ Other African nationalists followed Nkrumah's example by building giant statues of themselves in the capital; in Nairobi, Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta constructed such a monument to himself to solidify his authority.³⁵

Moreover, the newly-independent African nation-states created national museums as storehouses to exhibit the material culture of their glorious historical past. As Adedze notes, "every capital city in West Africa today has a national museum. This is considered an imperative because cultural institutions are believed to be a powerful medium to reclaim the glories of the African past."³⁶ These include the National Museums of Ghana; the *Musée National des Arts et Traditions du Gabon*; the *Musée Ethnographique Alexandre S. Adande* and the *Palais Royal Honme* in Porto-Novo, Benin; the Museum of African Art in Dakar, Senegal; and the National Museums of Nigeria (in Jos and Ife). Although postcolonial African museums were designed to create national identity, they were equally sites of cultural contentions, ethno-national mis(representations) and the cult of personality. Adedze argues that Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo were the

Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

³⁶ Adedze, "Museums as a Tool for Nationalism in Africa," 59-60.

archetypes of the personality cult in Africa whose cultural policies were almost exclusively focused on the material culture of the dominant ethnic group:

During the economic boom of the 1970s, and the euphoria of *authenticité* cultural policy, both Mobutu and Eyadema dropped their foreign Christian names for African names and obliged their citizens to do the same. To enhance their cultural image further, they both created national museums. Mobutu attached the offices of the National Museum of Zaire to the President's Office, whereas Eyadema opened his new National Museum of Togo in the RPT (political party) headquarters. Lifesize portraits of both rulers were lavishly displayed in the museums as emblems of authenticity and national unity. In the case of the National Museum of Togo, the material culture of Eyadema's own ethnic group, the Kabye, enjoyed extensive exposure.³⁷

This was also the case in Ghana, where parliament had designated Nkrumah's birthplace in Nkroful as a national museum/shrine (with exhibits of objects from his personal and political life). Some members of parliament and religious leaders who viewed it as the deification of Nkrumah unsuccessfully opposed the motion, but the museum was nonetheless constructed shortly after. Rampaging soldiers burnt it down during the NLC coup. The National Museum of Tanzania was constructed in Dar es Salaam in 1961 by the Nyerere administration. Not only did it replace the colonial King George V Memorial Museum, but it featured prominent displays of the president and his philosophy of the African social collective or *Ujamaa*. Other monuments were constructed to symbolize *Ujamaa*, including the *Uhuru* (freedom) Monument and *Jamburi* Foundation, which were erected in Dar es Salaam to replace a statue of the German imperial official Herman von Wissman.³⁸ Hess asserts that:

Like Nkrumah, Nyerere sought to advance a vision of nationalism and pan-Africanism through architectural modernity, specifically through the erection of architectural monuments and the redesign of the nation's capital. Unlike Nkrumah, Nyerere turned aside a colonial architectural legacy of racial segregation, establishing a new capital focused not upon an idealized construction of his leadership but upon his unfulfilled vision of the social

³⁷ Adedze, "Museums as a Tool for Nationalism in Africa," 62.

³⁸ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 120-121.

collective (*Ujamaa*)...The heroicizing monuments to charismatic political leaders so characteristic of other nations - the monuments to Kwame Nkrumah in Accra and to Jomo Kenyatta in Nairobi...are noticeably absent in Dar es Salaam and in Dodoma, replaced by abstract representations of national unity.³⁹

However, the differences between Nkrumah and Nyerere are not so pronounced in terms of their symbolic self-aggrandizements, as Hess suggests. As she admits, prominent among the exhibitions at the National Museum of Tanzania were portrayals of Nyerere.⁴⁰ Moreover, his “heroicizing” image was a fixed vignette on the national currency, which implies that he, like Nkrumah and most other postcolonial leaders, utilized symbols of nationhood to promote and consolidate their authority as the only legitimate leaders of the new nation-states. Here again, we see that money became an important tool for promoting strong leadership and the personality cult.

This has been the case since pre-colonial times, where the powerful kings, most notably the *Asantehenes*, literally adorned themselves with representative money (gold) as a symbol of their authority, power and to display their wealth.⁴¹ In the colonial and post-colonial eras, while the form of money changed, the effect and symbolism remained unchanged. Both the British monarchies that were the overlords of the Gold Coast and Kwame Nkrumah, the Prime Minister/President of independent Ghana minted their heads on modern fiat money (coins and banknotes) also to symbolize their authority over their subjects, and as a sign of their wealth and power. Therefore, while the pre-colonial potentates put on their monies, colonial and postcolonial authorities were on their monies.

³⁹ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 114, 121.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

⁴¹ See McCaskie, “Accumulation, Wealth and Belief in Asante History” parts I and II.

One of Nkrumah's first orders of business when he became Prime Minister of Ghana in 1957 was to send a clear message to the new nation-state that he was the new man in charge and to make the Nkrumah personally cult a truly national phenomenon. One important way of doing that was through the national currency. Following both ancient and modern traditions, the new legal tender and commemorative coins (and postage stamps) were minted with an image of the head of the ruler – in this case Nkrumah. Encircling Nkrumah's head was the Romanesque rank of *Civitatis Ghaniensis Conditor* – Founder of the State of Ghana – a title that Nkrumah assumed to emphasize that he, and no one else, was Ghana's Founding Father. Although Nkrumah argued that putting his likeness on money was the only way to convince his people that they were truly free and independent, the British, Ga and Asante traditional leaders strongly disagreed. After the February 1966 coup, the National Liberation Council removed Nkrumah's image from the Cedi currency, the name of which was changed to the New Cedi to signal the new political order.

Several of Nkrumah's closest comrades in the struggle against colonialism followed his pioneering example by printing currency with their pictures as the "Founding Father" of their respective nation-states as the main vignettes. The Zambian *kwacha* and *ngwee* featured Kenneth Kaunda's photograph dressed in traditional garb. In Tanzania, the *shilingi* currency carried a photograph of Julius Nyerere attired in traditional as well as "socialist" clothing. The Kenyan *shilingi* currency similarly featured the photograph of President Jomo Kenyatta dressed not in traditional garments, but in a western three piece suite and tie, although a 100

shillings bill (1974-77) carried an image of Kenyatta statue where he is draped in traditional attire and hat, and carrying a cane inscribed with African arts.⁴²

Nigeria, Ghana's giant neighbour to the East that also had very influential nationalists, became independent from Great Britain as a federation of the northern, western and eastern regions in 1960. Similar to Ghana, Nigeria had also inherited a very diverse territorial state from the British. In addition to the geographical diversity, independent Nigerians spoke some two hundred and fifty to five hundred languages, with Islam the predominant religion in the North and Christianity widely practiced in the south. The iconography of Nigerian banknotes during the first two decades of independence did not feature any of its civilian or military leaders, that is, they did not try to build national identity through a cult of personality. The predominant themes on Nigerian banknotes during this period were cultural and economic images, including the Bank of Nigeria, subsistence agriculture, stacking grain, cocoa production, logging, and a hydro-electric dam. It was mainly after 1979, with a new issue of currency, that the Nigerian government began to include the photographs of national leaders on the currency. These included, for example, a 1 Naira bill issued between 1979 and 1984, with the image of Herbert Macaulay, one of the fathers of Nigerian nationalism and founder of the Nigerian National Democratic Party; a 5 Naira banknote issued from 1979 – 1984 featured a photograph of Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa; a 10 Naira note featured an image of A. Iyemba (issued 1979 – 1984); and a 20 Naira note with General M. Muhammed (issued 1977 – 1984).⁴³ The 1979 – 1984 series of banknotes also features cultural images that are synonymous with Nigerian national identity, such as the Benin Bronze (currently in the British Museum), traditional dancers and

⁴² Shafer and Cuhaj, *Standard Catalog of World Paper Money*, 485-488, 774-776, and 899-903; see also <http://www.banknotes.com>.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 609-612; <http://www.banknotes.com/ng.htm>.

women carrying bowls on their heads. Hence, whereas the Ghanaian national currency featured only Nkrumah's image, the Nigerian currency initially featured none, but subsequently, a variety of leaders of national importance were commemorated on the national currency.

Unwin and Hewitt has offered us more recent yet similar examples of how newly independent governments, in their case central and eastern Europe, issued national currencies with imagery that portrayed national identity after emerging from the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. They conclude that "banknotes are more than simply economic phenomena, and they provide an important expression of the cultural and political identities that have helped to shape the nations in the past."⁴⁴ In the case of central and eastern Europe, the iconography of the national currencies focused on the portrayal of key (masculine) historical personalities for the construction of contemporary national identities.⁴⁵ Unwin and Hewitt reveal that:

The most obvious and significant feature to note about these images [on central and eastern European currencies] is the dominance of human faces. Some 81% of all of the banknote fronts thus had human faces as their dominant image, with the vast majority (92%) of these being of men. Of the people depicted on the fronts of the notes, 18% were kings or princes...12% were writers, 11% poets, 8% statesmen or politicians, 7% priests or monks, and 5% painters or artists. The lack of representation of politicians and statesmen from the recent past on banknotes from all the countries examined reflects a widespread feeling that the people chosen to be depicted on the notes should reflect wider interests than those of any one political party. As one person interviewed concluded, present day politicians change too quickly to be included, and only represent a transient impression of national identity.⁴⁶

Therefore, the European continent as a whole, including eastern, central and western Europe, as well as North America, has differed from African, Asian and Latin

⁴⁴ Unwin and Hewitt, "Banknotes and National Identity in Central and Eastern Europe," 1005.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1005.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1018.

American nation-states in terms of their expression of the cult of living personalities on banknotes. The former has stressed the representation of the glorious historical and cultural past and of famous, dead men (the backward gaze of Janus), while the latter has focused on living statesmen, politicians and modern development (the forward face of Janus) in the construction of national identity and the nation-building project. However, the depiction of history and national identity on European banknotes is not completely uniform. As Unwin and Hewitt explain, “a Christian urban identity” forms the single most dominant imagery on the backs of central and eastern European banknotes. “Such representations of national identity are notably different from those found on banknotes in western Europe, and may well reflect the longstanding repression of Christianity under communism, as well as the role played by Christianity in shaping the national identities of these states in the past.”⁴⁷ African nationalists also employed postal iconographies to legitimise their rule, something that they had learnt from the departing European imperial powers.

British colonial stamps typically featured the head of the reigning monarch overlooking the scenery that represented the colonial territory and people. The Universal Postal Union had agreed that England and no other country could use the bust of the British monarch to represent the nation on postage stamps.⁴⁸ “The British thus established the convention of showing the monarch on postage stamps.”⁴⁹ The colonial office extended this policy to include the colonies of the empire. In the post-colonial era, newly designed and overprinted postage stamps were deployed as an essential tool “to proclaim and legitimize the authority of [new] rulers”⁵⁰ and to broadcast the transition of governance from the European colonial masters to the

⁴⁷ Unwin and Hewitt, “Banknotes and National Identity in Central and Eastern Europe,” 1020.

⁴⁸ Adedze, “Commemorating the Chief,” note 2, 96.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵⁰ Posnansky. “Propaganda for the Millions.”

leaders of newly independent states in Africa. For example, an examination of the iconography of postage stamps issued in the former British colonies in the immediate post-independence period reveals that “they all carried busts of the first presidents or prime ministers. This was very important because for many of these new rulers, a new era had arrived and a new monarchy, emulating the British, had replaced the old ones in the liberated states.”⁵¹

Nkrumah would take a cue from the colonial convention, where only his image was printed on postage stamps and minted on the national currency as coterminous with the Ghanaian nation-state. Therefore, it was in Nkrumah’s Ghana where this trend began in postcolonial Africa. In addition to colonial presences, pre-colonial customs greatly influenced the ways in which African nationalists would represent and legitimise their authority. In the case of many of the premiers of independent African states, including Nkrumah, Sylvanus Epiphonio Olympio and Sekou Touré who were not of royal stock, they had to associate themselves with and ‘transform themselves into “kings” to legitimize themselves in the rivalry between the elitist nationalists and the traditional rulers in the struggle for independence in West Africa...[by imitating and associating] their leadership with legitimate monarchs.’⁵² As Adedze argues, the attainment of leadership positions in much of pre-colonial Africa depended on whether or not the person came from royal stock. Ghanaian stamps, for example, were focused on the personally cult of Kwame Nkrumah. They depicted him as the charismatic founder and leader of the nation-state and the saviour of Africa from tribalism, colonialism and neo-colonialist exploitation. Janet Hess explains how public art was used to promote the personality cult of Nkrumah:

⁵¹ Adedze, "Commemorating the Chief," 68-73.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 70.

Countless depictions of “Osagyefo” – Father of the Nation, Leader and Teacher – surrounded by workers and farmers with spades and hoes and smiling Young Pioneers, all looking happily forward to a brighter future, appeared on canvas and the walls of public building...The happy image of the nation, confidently striding into the wonderful tomorrow, appealed to the unsophisticated masses, and, with its uncompromising message and exaggerated optimism, served as effective political propaganda.⁵³

As I have argued previously in this thesis, portraiture of Nkrumah as the charismatic president of the nationalist party leading a happy nation of proletariats into a bright future was not restricted to murals on walls, but was also shown on national postage stamps as well. Furthermore, the messages and illustrations depicted on Ghanaian postage stamps were not meant merely for the “unsophisticated masses,” but also for intellectuals and CPP aficionados who shared in Nkrumah’s nationalist and Pan-Africanist ideologies. The first stamp issued to commemorate the attainment of independence showed an image of Nkrumah looking at Aggrey’s Eagle taking flight out of Ghana. Symbolically, this stamp was sending the same message to the world that Nkrumah proclaimed at the Independence Monument on 6 March 1957: “Today from now on there is a New African in the world. That New African is ready to fight his own battle and show that after all, the Black Man is capable of managing his own affairs.”⁵⁴ Another stamp featured an image of Nkrumah’s statue at Parliament House, with his right arm commanding the rising of the sun. This was symbolic of Nkrumah being the Founder of the Nation who consciously and perhaps metaphysically commanded the new nation (symbolized by the rising sun) to be born. Between 1957 and 1966, the Cabinet authorized the Stamp Advisory Committee to issue millions of postage stamps featuring portraits of Nkrumah as the Father of the Nation. For the 1964

⁵³ Natalie Yowles, *Modern Art and Artists in Ghana: A Cultural Development* (PhD diss., University of Legon, Ghana, 1981), 44-45, quoted in Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 28, note 61 (on page 183), chapter 1.

⁵⁴ “The Midnight Speech,” *Africa’s Man of Destiny*.

National Founder's Day, for example, the government issued over two million postage stamps nationally and internationally to commemorate Nkrumah's birthday.⁵⁵

After ousting Nkrumah from power, the National Liberation Council issued stamps depicting an eagle with broken chains on its feet carrying the restored Ghanaian flag. They also issued others commemorating the "24th February 1966 Revolution," with iconography depicting the people celebrating the removal of Nkrumah by marching through the streets. Therefore unlike Nkrumah, NLC stamps did not include photographs of the military leaders. They were trying to send a message that the revolt was by the people and for the people, and not about a megalomaniac dictator. However, the NLC did issue a stamp series commemorating "The First Anniversary of the Death of Lt. Gen. E.K. Kotoka 17th April 1968," one of the leaders of the coup. In 1970 the NLC handed over power to the civilian government of K.A. Busia. In order to inform the masses that he was now the new leader of the nation, Busia's Progress Party issued a postage stamp commemorating the re-opening of parliament and the inauguration of the Second Republic, with an image of the military junta saluting its civilian leader (although the country would shortly return to military rule after Acheampong's coup).

Although he was the first, Nkrumah was not the only African premier to place his image on postage stamps to commemorate the attainment of independence as well as to proclaim himself as the new ruler of the nation. An independence postage stamp of Togo, for example, carried an image of a smiling Prime Minister Sylvanus Epiphonio Olympio dressed in traditional cloth and holding the national

⁵⁵ See, for example, GPA: S4/45 (National Founder's Day 1964), A/cs.3.I, E.A. Okraku to the CEO - Ghana Supply Commission, "Issue of Stamps to Commemorate the National Founder's Day 21st Sept. 1964," June 22, 1964. See also GPA: S4/45, 'Notes on the Issue of Postage Stamps to Commemorate "National Founder's Day (1964);"' see also GPA: S4/45, Indent for Urgent Requirements on the Ghana Supply Commission, No. PAT A/cs.10/63-64, June 15, 1964, p. 1.

flag with the appendage, “Indépendance du Togo 27 Avril 1960.” A Guinean independence stamp featured an image of Sekou Touré in “Muslim” dress and headwear, with the map of Guinea out of which flew a white dove with olive branches in its mouth, with the appendage, “République de Guinée Proclamation de L’Indépendance 2 Octobre 1958.”⁵⁶ Similarly, the banknotes of Guinea featured an image of President Touré while those of Togo, which belonged to the West African CFA zone did not.⁵⁷

In examining the iconography of postage stamps issued in Sudan and Burkina Faso since independence, Michael Kevane has found that the regimes in both countries have pursued very different paths in the official representation of their respective nations. In the case of the former, the imagery of national postage stamps focused on the northern governing regime and dominant politicians in Khartoum, as well as Arab and Islamic identity. For example, after the 1969 military coup in Sudan, for example, Colonel Gaafar Nimeiri who assumed power issued a “May Revolution” stamp the following year featuring himself heroically leading the people. In the latter case, stamps focused more on popular social themes including artists, the multi-ethnic nation and development projects.⁵⁸

Symbols of nationhood were also used to signal a change of government after a revolution, coup or other drastic changes in leadership. In 1965, the single-party regime of President Maurice Yaméogo in *Haute Volta* (Upper Volta) issued a stamp with his image – only to be ousted the following year.⁵⁹ When Thomas

⁵⁶ See Adedze, “Commemorating the Chief,” 68-69. This stamp is similar to the first independence stamp of Ghana with Aggrey’s Eagle, although the dove of the Guinean stamp is a peaceful bird while the eagle is symbolic of a prey and aggressiveness.

⁵⁷ See <http://www.banknotes.com/gn.htm>.

⁵⁸ Michael Kevane, “Official Representations of the Nation: Comparing the Postage Stamps of Sudan and Burkina Faso,” *African Studies Quarterly: The Online Journal for African Studies* 10, 1 (Spring 2008): 1, 4-6, 9, <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v10/v10i1a3.htm>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

Sankara seized power through a military coup in Upper Volta in 1983, he changed the name of the country to *Burkina Faso* (loosely translated as the integrity of my father's house) to reflect a more multi-cultural national identity. He also rewrote the national anthem to cast the coup as a popular revolution and to reflect his stance against neo-colonialism and imperialism.⁶⁰ 'Sankara also prominently featured himself on a stamp commemorating the first anniversary of his regime. The stamp featured a typical heroic-sized portrait of the president in front of "the people."⁶¹ On Tanzanian stamps in 1965, Mozambique and Somalia in the late 1970s, "national heroes and new public monuments are depicted as a way of sending a message of nationalistic fervor in the struggle against imperialism, both to the country's own people and to the outside world."⁶²

Similar to Ghana and other African nation-states in the post-colonial era or after a military coup, Latin American leaders also utilized symbolic nationalism to send political messages to the people and to show who is in charge. Jack Child argues that postage stamps are "the smallest manifestations of popular culture in Latin America...[which] carry significant messages, including expressions of nationalism, politics (national and international), propaganda, and cultural identity."⁶³ Totalitarian Latin American regimes, including the Somozas in Nicaragua and Stroessner in Paraguay, capitalized on the use of postage stamps for political and propagandistic purposes. President Violeta Chamorro, who had won power over the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua in 1990, issued a postage stamp commemorating her assassinated husband and journalist Pedro Joaquín Chamorro as a "Martyr of public liberty." Similar to post-colonial Africa and Indochina, several

⁶⁰ Cusack, "African National Anthems," 245.

⁶¹ Kevane, "Official Representations of the Nation," 4.

⁶² Posnansky, "Propaganda for Millions," 57.

⁶³ Child, "The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture," 108.

nation-states in Latin America that have experienced violent revolutions, including Mexico, Cuba and Nicaragua, have also utilized post-revolutionary postage stamps to proclaim the new political order. This is often done through the cult of living and dead personalities and revolutionary heroes. "Cuba's first stamp after the 1959 victory of Castro's forces portrayed a triumphant bearded guerrilla brandishing a rifle...The Sandinistas in Nicaragua followed much of the same pattern, issuing a commemorative stamp almost each year...extolling the achievements of the revolution."⁶⁴

General Jorge Ubico who ruled Guatemala from 1931-1944, placed his image on postage stamps in order to legitimize and popularize his regime. His successors, Presidents Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Arbenz issued postage stamps with iconographies celebrating the Guatemalan Revolution of 1945, labour, the national flag, the democratic elections of 1950 and the passing of the constitution from Arévalo's to Arbenz's hand. The latter was ousted by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas in 1954. The new regime immediately issued postage stamps with images of a Mayan warrior grasping the symbol of the 1954 "Liberation Movement" (a dagger and a cross), an axe demolishing the communist hammer and scythe symbol, as well as the slogan "Dios-Patria-Libertad" (God-Fatherland-Liberty). In 1957, the assassination of Castillo Armas was also commemorated with a black-framed postage stamp of him dressed in military attire. In Chile, the military regime headed by General Augusto Pinochet issued postage stamps commemorating his ouster of Salvador Allende in 1973.⁶⁵

The nation-states that emerged from the collapse of the French Empire in French Indochina (Southeast Asia) also demonstrated a similar pattern in the use of

⁶⁴ Child, "The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture," 120-121.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 115-117.

symbols of nationhood to build and contest national identity and nationalism. After Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh forces defeated France in Vietnam in 1954, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam gained their independence. As Oliver Tappe shows, "for years, the iconography of the [Vietnamese] Dong was characterised by the dominant image of Ho Chi Minh accompanied by icons of development."⁶⁶ Tappe also analyses the representation and reconstruction of Lao national identity through the iconography of banknotes. After independence, the Royal Lao Government (RLG) introduced a national currency called the *Kip*, which replaced the *Piastre* of French Indochina. The iconography of the kip currency (which may have been influenced in part by the Thai banknotes of Thailand, a constitutional monarchy), depicted the political ideology and history of the RLG, with images of the living King Sisavang Vong, his successor Sisavang Vatthana, their royal emblems, and other symbols of traditional Buddhist practice, community and a modern statehood.

"This iconographic composition represents the constitutional monarchy rooted in traditional Buddhist kinship"⁶⁷ and the symbolic distancing of the new state from the colonial past. The *Pathet Lao* staged a communist revolution in 1974 and inaugurated the one-party Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) state the following year. Although no museums or monuments were constructed to honour the LPDR revolutionary leader and president Kayson Phomvihane, the LPDR promoted itself as the only legitimate representative of the nation. Moreover, the kip currency was used to signal the change in governmental authority and a new era of socialism, (largely) secular traditions, modernization and prosperity. Through public rhetoric, displays in the Lao National Museum, a stupa of the Unknown Soldier and other state-controlled platforms of propaganda, the LPDR's historical narrative

⁶⁶ Tappe, "A New Banknote in the People's Republic," 103.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

depicted “the image of a small nation permanently fighting for sovereignty” against hostile neighbours, foreign (mainly American) imperialists and their reactionary allies in Laos. In the face of this chaotic environment, the LPDR adopted the motto “Peace, Independence, Democracy, Unity, Prosperity,” which became a part of the new national coat of arms (along with the star, hammer and sickle). Its pledge to “protect and build up the nation” was symbolized on a banknote, which showed *Pathet Lao* troops shooting down an American aircraft.⁶⁸

In the Third World, symbols of nationhood have also underscored the importance of economic development, science and technology to the nation-building process. In order to promote his economic development projects, Nkrumah relied not only on state newspapers, radio and television, but also on currency, postage stamps and other iconographic media. For example, Ghana’s national anthems reflected economic themes that were tied to the bounty of the “fatherland,” which upholds national traditions and feeds the people (“precious farms of our birth-right,” “Our land of hope for ages to come!” “Come from the palm-lined shore, from the broad northern plain, From the farm and the forest, the mountain and mine.”)⁶⁹ A cocoa plant and gold mine also formed part of the design of the coat of arms. The colours of the national flag (reproduced on the postage stamps, coat of arms, and flown beside all the national monuments and museums) also symbolized the mineral wealth of the nation-state; the green symbolized the agricultural and the gold the mineral wealth of Ghana. The adoption of gold to represent Ghana’s mineral wealth was especially seen as an affront to the Asante nation, whose power and wealth were based on the tremendous reserves of gold (in addition to cocoa trees and timber) located in their forests. Moreover, the power of the Asante nation was represented

⁶⁸ Tappe, “The Iconography of the Kip and Ideological Transformations in Laos,” 92, and notes 15-17.

⁶⁹ Cusack, “African National Anthems,” 235-236, 240, 248, 250.

by the sacredness of the Golden Stool and the adornment of their king (the *Asantehene*) and chiefs in gold. The symbolism of cocoa was also a problem for the Nkrumah state. To emphasize that cocoa was an Asante and not a national commodity, the NLM used the image of a cocoa tree as its official logo. However, this action became contentious, given that Nkrumah saw cocoa as a national commodity of strategic economic importance to national development, whereas the NLM saw it as an Asante resource for the development of the Asante region. Nkrumah often accused the NLM of being regionalist and materialist because of their adoption of the image of this commodity to represent the Asante state. He attempted but failed to prevent them from using the symbol prior to independence.

The Third World has also typically issued postage stamps and currency to showcase or promote economic nationalism, development, the march toward modernity and progress through African Socialism and scientific rationalism. The imagery often depicted education, agricultural and mineral products (largely for export), industry (building construction, hotels, shipping, state factories, steel mills, tire factories, airports and national airlines and nationalized foreign enterprises) and health-care projects (the eradication of malaria and national vaccinations, for example). As Keith Hart argues, “Money has two sides, symbolised as heads and tails. It is the product of social organisation both from the top down (‘states’) and from the bottom up (‘markets’). It is thus both a *token* of authority and a *commodity* with a price.”⁷⁰ In African countries, the general model followed since independence was the state’s intervention in and direction of the market and the means of production, that is, state-led industrialization and modernization. This monetary and symbolic dichotomy is represented on the banknotes and coins of Ghana and other

⁷⁰ Keith Hart, “Heads or Tails? Two Sides of the Coin,” *Man, New Series* 21, no. 4 (December 1986): 637.

nation-states, which featured the picture of the president or Head of State (representing the state) on one side, and images of the market on the other.

The iconography of both the colonial and national currency also reflected the importance of cash crops, natural resources and development projects to the economy of the Gold Coast. The WACB coinage such as the 1913 two shillings coin featured a standard image of a palm tree, an important source of income and trade for the colonial government. The West African palms were also used to produce soaps and palm oil, the latter being an important lubricant to oil the machinery of European factories in the post-industrial revolution era. Similarly, WACB banknotes such as the 1953 twenty shillings note were imprinted with images of palm trees and Africans happily harvesting cocoa - the colonial government's chief cash crop. Scenes of rivers were also depicted on the colonial paper currency. Rivers were an important means of transporting cocoa crops, timber and other commodities from the interior to the coast for export to Britain.

Ghana's divorce from the WACB colonial currency system and its issuance of a national currency was as much of a symbolic as well as a substantive declaration of independence and sovereignty. One of the critical aspects of independence for Nkrumah was the attainment of a vibrant economic system that would generate wealth for the well-being of the nation, without relying too heavily on outside aid. In a book chapter titled "Building a New Nation" in *I Speak of Freedom*, Nkrumah declared that "with the achievement of Independence...I began to concentrate on the long-term objectives; economic freedom for Ghana, and African emancipation and Unity."⁷¹ Nkrumah pursued a socialist policy that was characterized by government control of the means of generating money, through

⁷¹ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 111.

rapid industrialisation, indigenisation of industry, and small-scale businesses. As

Nkrumah stated in his book *Africa Must Unite*:

In the industrial sphere, our aim has been to encourage the establishment of factories where we have a natural advantage in local resources and labour, or where we can produce essential commodities required for development or for domestic consumption. During 1961, over 60 new factories were opened in the country. Among them were a distillery, a coconut oil factory, a brewery, a milk-processing plant, and a lorry and bicycle plant.⁷²

However, he sought to balance his domestic monetary policies under the banner of nationalism with the need for direct foreign investments. Despite being a staunch nationalist and Pan-Africanist, Nkrumah pretended not to be indifferent to the fact that, in order to build the nation, Ghana needed outside financial assistance, often from many of the same companies that were a part of the British colonial establishment. He acknowledged that, "...unless we attain economic freedom, our struggle for independence would have been in vain, and our plans for social and cultural advancement frustrated."⁷³ He concluded, "In regard to investment from abroad, it would be ungenerous if we did not acknowledge the great value to Ghana of the investments already made here by foreign companies and individuals. It is the intention of my Government, and the wish of the country, to do all we can to encourage such investments, to protect the interests of those who have already invested, and to attract new investors..."⁷⁴ Therefore, under his international monetary strategy, "agreements were signed for a large modern oil refinery, an iron and steel works, a flour mill, sugar, textile and cement factories."⁷⁵ Nkrumah's embracement of European science, technology and ideas for the development of "his" African nation-state gives credence to Michael Adas's arguments, which credit

⁷² Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (London: Panaf Books, 1985).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 111 - 112.

⁷⁵ Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*.

these elements of European civilization for its dominance of the world since the last hundred years.⁷⁶

Child asserts, "Postal themes stressing industrialization and modernization can also carry a message of the economic pride a country has in its status as an emerging developed country."⁷⁷ During the colonial period, for example, French colonial stamps depicted economic themes such as minerals, precious metals, agricultural commodities such as cocoa, coffee, foodstuffs, palm oil, rubber, and public works.⁷⁸ This is also true for the British, Portuguese and other colonial stamps. The postage stamps issued during the Nkrumah era depicted nation-building projects such as the Volta River Hydroelectric plant, the inauguration of the modern Tema Harbour, the Black Star Line shipping company, Ghana Airways, and images relating to agricultural production, including the growing and harvesting of cocoa, logging and fishing. In Latin America, stamps from Argentina displayed images of agricultural products, Chile and Bolivia showed mineral deposits and extraction, Venezuelan stamps had images of petroleum production, and stamps from Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador had images of coffee production and harvesting.⁷⁹ Various postage stamps were issued with themes relating to public health, engineering, telecommunications, agricultural science and the hard sciences. These included "Kumasi Hospital," "The World United Against Malaria," "Animal Husbandry," "Volta River Project," "Centenary of the International Telecommunications Union,"

⁷⁶ See, for example, Michael Adas, *Machines As the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁷⁷ Child, "The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture," 123.

⁷⁸ Agbenyega Adedze, "Re-presenting Africa: Commemorative Postage Stamps of the Colonial Exhibition of Paris (1931)," *African Arts* 37, 2 (2004b): 58-60. See also Adedze, "Commemorating the Chief," 69.

⁷⁹ Posnansky, "Propaganda for Millions," 54; Child, "The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture," 122-123.

and “UNESCO Week,” the latter celebrating the achievements of both European and black scientists, including Albert Einstein and George Washington Carver.

The embracement of modernity and the promotion and exhibition of science and technology were also key ingredients in Nkrumah’s nation-building plans. In the 1960s, Nkrumah embarked on an ambitious plan to rapidly industrialize Ghana, even going ahead with soviet-backed plans to build a nuclear reactor as part of Ghana’s energy supplies. During this time, Nkrumah also collaborated with British experts to construct the Ghana National Science Museum (GNSM), which was finally opened in late 1965. The GNSM opened with an exhibition on electrical power in Ghana, which also coincided with the opening of the Volta River Hydroelectric plant. Nkrumah intended for the GNSM to be an inspiration to the Ghanaian youth to become interested in pursuing studies in science and technology (particularly agricultural, medical and engineering sciences), and for the general public to appreciate the importance of said to Ghana’s past and future. The museum therefore housed objects showing Ghana’s arrival on the technological and scientific scenes, such as the first rubber tire produced and the first car driven in Ghana.

The establishment of the Bank of Ghana as the central bank responsible for issuing the national currency and regulating monetary policy was an important step in Nkrumah’s economic nationalism. The Ghana pound and Cedis banknotes were imprinted with images of the Bank of Ghana as well as the important cash crops and other symbols of the Ghanaian economy. These included cocoa pods, logs and cargo ships (The Black Star Line). Similarly, Zambian banknotes carried images of modernization and economic development such as miners, a mining tower, conveyers for its mineral deposits (chiefly copper, zinc, lead, cobalt), wildlife and environment, including the Victoria Falls of Zambezi river, black-cheeked Lovebird,

wildebeest, antelopes, which is also an important source of tourist revenue, education (school children), workers picking cotton, African Fish Eagle, and a hydroelectric dam. On Tanzanian banknotes, similar images relating to economic development were shown, including Mount Kilimanjaro, wildlife, a sisal farm, a cotton knitting machine, farming, education, a tire factory, and a brick factory. Kenyan bills featured vignettes of women picking coffee beans and tea, a sisal plant and a train transporting the crop, men picking cotton below Mount Kenya, workers at pineapple plantation, a cattle farm, lions in the wild, and a skyscraper in Nairobi.⁸⁰

The iconography of the new “Liberation Kip” banknotes of communist Laos, while they did not portray images of President Phomvihan (while he was alive), featured images such as an ox-drawn cart, high voltage power lines, a hydro-electric dam, rice cultivation, public health, a factory and a bridge. They also depicted symbols of the nation such as the national flag and map, a utopian socialist society dominated by the proletariat, peasants, primary school children and their teacher, ethnic minorities wearing traditional dress, Buddhist monks, nurses, women, trade unionists and soldiers and bureaucrats working to build the new nation.⁸¹ Tappe argues that this iconography “represents technological development...Like in other developing countries, these...[national projects] are mythically glorified representations of modernity, progress, and civilisation.”⁸² He further asserts, “All in all, the iconographical configuration of the whole [LPRP banknote] series tells the myth of a socialist, egalitarian and prospering national community whose reproduction is based upon socio-economic and technological development.”⁸³

⁸⁰ Shafer and Cuhaj, *Standard Catalog of World Paper Money*, 485-487, 774-776, 899-903; see also <http://www.banknotes.com/ke.htm>.

⁸¹ Tappe, “The Iconography of the Kip,” 89-97, 99, 102-106.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 96.

The creation of national currencies, postage stamps, museums, monuments and emblems in post-colonial Africa had other symbolic and propagandistic purposes, namely, to promote the consolidation and homogenisation of multi-ethnic and otherwise diverse “nations.” This was reflected in the lyrics of African national anthems, one of the main themes of which was nationalist call for people to “arise,” for national cohesion and unity as essential to build the nation. This is evident in the pan-Africanist and nationalist anthems such as Ghana’s (“to live as one, in unity”, “to build a new fraternity!”, “A nation strong in Unity”).⁸⁴ In the post-colonial era, African nationalists pursued largely similar linguistic, monetary, territorial and other policies in order to prevent tribalism and unify their newly-independent nation states. In Africa some 2000 languages are spoken, most Africans are multilingual and many African governments have several official languages. Even where there is only one, multilingualism is still practiced in those countries in a variety of settings. In this diverse setting of artificially constructed borders and the multiplicity of language usage, newly-independent African nation-states were faced with tough choices as to how to brand and build the nation-state so that they would not disintegrate into hundreds of smaller nations within states. They also wrestled with which language to use in education, government, the media and for national identity and nation-building.⁸⁵ With the rare exceptions of countries like Tanzania and Somalia, as Marten and Kula reveal:

“The most common trend during the early period of African nation building was to adopt a monolingual and exoglossic policy: the use of only one language as a national and official language was seen as a means to prevent ‘tribalism’, which was seen as threatening national unity, and the use of an ex-colonial language (English, French or Portuguese) was often regarded as being politically more neutral than the use of one, often out of many other, African languages.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Cusack, “African National Anthems,” 240, 242-243, 248, 250.

⁸⁵ Marten and Kula, “National Identity and the Semantics of Currency” 184.

⁸⁶ Marten and Kula, “National Identity and the Semantics of Currency,” 184.

The language policies undertaken in post-colonial Africa is also closely related to the issuance of national currencies, given the symbolic nature of both money and language. As Marten and Kula point out, the Naira currency of post-independence Nigeria used mainly English text to designate the issuing authority and value of the banknotes. This was done with similar motives as choosing English as the national language - in order to homogenize and unify this multi-lingual territory where Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba were just the three most widely spoken of the five hundred Nigerian languages, as well as not to give the impression that one ethno-linguistic group was given preferential treatment over the others.⁸⁷ On the other hand, the value of the banknotes was also written in the Arabic ajami script, which “acknowledges the Islamic tradition of the country, rather than Hausa as a language, as standard Hausa orthography is based on roman script.”⁸⁸

In Kenya, the value of the currency was also written in Arabic numerals and letters, although this was discontinued starting with the 1969 issue of currency. The Ghana pound, shillings and pence currency had its values in ajami numerals and letters as well, which was dropped from the new *cedi* and *pesewa* currency in 1965.⁸⁹ Zambia became independent in 1964 as a land-locked territory that was surrounded by hostile neighbours. Therefore, national unity was an essential aspect of Zambia’s nation-building projects, and its national motto “One Zambia, One Nation” was minted on its currency, coat of arms, and stamps.

As Jack Child argues, “well-designed postage stamps are a natural semiotic vehicle for circulating symbols and icons of national identity and unity.”⁹⁰ The CPP administration attempted to visually express and encourage national unity by

⁸⁷ Ibid., 185-186.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 186.

⁸⁹ Shafer and Cuhaj, *Standard Catalog of World Paper Money*, 352-353, 485-486; see also <http://www.banknotes.com>.

⁹⁰ Child, “The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture,” 119.

embellishing postage stamps with a variety of nationalistic symbols and iconography. For example, the Stamp Advisory Committee recommended that the new designs for the permanent independent stamps should reflect all the regions and major ethnic groups of the nation-state, in addition to Accra. These stamp images and themes included the “Volta Bridge” (Volta Region); “Animal Husbandry,” “Northern Territories Hunter,” “Tamale Post Office” and “Chief’s House at Wa” (Northern Territories); and “Kente Cloth Weaving” (Asante). The call to achieve national unity was also expressed on the iconography of postage stamps in other parts of the Third World.

Latin American postage stamps similarly feature images of national heroes and heroic acts from the independence and contemporary eras. “Since these are events and people which every schoolchild learns to identify and which are also commemorated with public statuary and art, the postage stamp serves to reinforce the impact of the icon” promoting national unity.⁹¹ Nation-states in Latin America, particularly those with a strong pre-Columbian ethnic heritage such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru, have typically used their Aztec, Incan, Mayan or other relevant ancestry to forge a sense of national unity and identity. This representation can be found in the iconography of postage stamps⁹², as well as currency, statuary, museum exhibits, national emblems and in slogans.

In Ghana, the design of the coat of arms included national images such as the Black Star and Christiansborg Castle. It also included an image of the cocoa plant (a source of Asante wealth and power), a traditional linguist’s staff and an *okyeame* ceremonial sword, a symbol representing the regional governments. These designs were supposed to symbolize the co-existence between the regional and national

⁹¹ Ibid, 120.

⁹² Ibid., 121.

governments, as well as the close relationship between Ghana and Britain in the framework of the Commonwealth. As we have already seen, the Asantes and other ethno-regional groups did not welcome the incorporation of “their” symbols as part of the symbolism of the nation-state. Rather, they perceived it to be an attempt by Nkrumah at appropriating their cultural, historical and socio-economic symbols for the benefit of the CPP and its supporters.

The National Museum was also created with the aim of preserving and displaying the material culture and history of Ghana’s diverse groups as part of “national” culture and history. During the colonial period, the British had established museums at Achimota College and other specialized museums, which focused mainly on Asante material culture and the objectification of Africans as traditional peoples and subjects of European scholarly study. Nkrumah attempted to transform a colonial museum that reflected British values into a new entity to educate a new nation about its own and the rest of Africa’s glorious history. The opening of the National Museum on Independence Day in 1957 was an important milestone in Nkrumah’s long-term nation-building project. The Minister of Education commented that “the Government is keenly interested in the preservation and demonstration of the character and traditions of the people of Ghana...the establishing of the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board and the recent opening of the Ghana National Museum are evidence of this interest.”⁹³ The first exhibit at the National Museum was entitled “Man in Africa.” It featured a large collection of traditional Akan stools as well as relics and replicas from Ancient Egypt and Europe. There were also portraits of African nationalist leaders and freedom fighters. Some scholars have suggested that the museums established in independent

⁹³ Quoted in Crinson, “Nation-building, Collecting and the Politics of Display,” 241.

African states exhibited displays that highlighted, rather than blurred the boundaries of the various groups within the country, while reinforcing the hegemony of the government. Other scholars have pointed out the contradictions in the displays of the material culture of powerful sub-national group in museums that were supposed to reflect “national” culture:

African museums have...served as “repositories for contradictory desires and identities,” and...nationalization efforts have led to the assertion and construction of cultural values and allied expressions of state hegemony. The architectural incarnations of the struggle between the Asante and Ghanaian states within Kumasi, Ghana, and the exhibition practices located in the Kumasi Fort Museum, the Ghana National Cultural Center, and the Manhyia Palace Museum reveal a tension in values and nationalist objectives. The juxtaposition of hierarchical representations and nationalist objectives in ceremonies associated with the latter museum suggest that the hegemonic functions of display is characteristic of postcolonial museums in Africa in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁹⁴

In essence, these scholars maintain that the “national” museums failed to reflect a homogenous national identity and a united people. However, Nkrumah’s own ethnic group, the Nzima, was considered to be a part of the larger Akan tribe (to which the Asantes belong), and therefore the displays might have been targeted toward representing the largest ethnic group in the country. Nonetheless, Nkrumah’s problems with traditional leadership are undeniable – and this rocky relationship compounded his efforts at nation-building. He may have thought that the inclusion of objects of Asante material culture in the National Museum was a symbol of national inclusion. However, his Asante opponents (and many scholars) frequently criticized him for appropriating or even suppressing their history and culture in the name of “nation-building.” These dissenting voices found it difficult to challenge Nkrumah’s cultural policies while he was in office. Nkrumah, for example, had nationalized the Asante Cultural Centre and renamed it the Centre of National

⁹⁴ Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa*, 11.

Ghanaian Culture. Nkrumah's nationalization of the Asante Cultural Centre was a part of his policy to subsume the rich Asante history, culture and traditions as part of the glorious national history and culture. After his death in the 1970s, the Asantes were able to construct their own museums and monuments to represent their unique history in Ghana and West Africa. In Kumasi, the capital of the Asante Kingdom, various royal and historical museums, monuments, street sculptures and centres of culture were erected to highlight the contribution of the Asante Empire to the Ghanaian nation-state, especially in terms of the legacy of the various Asante kings and the lesser chiefs.⁹⁵

Similarly, the Organization of African Unity in 1963 decided that newly independent African nation-states should maintain the borders established by the colonial governments so as to prevent the balkanisation of the countries, although this policy failed to prevent the numerous intra and inter-border wars that has plagued the continent since independence. Likewise, I argue, leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta who minted their images on the national banknotes, coins, postage stamps and erected statues of themselves in city centres did so in order to achieve national unity coalesced around only one leader. These countries also chose leaders who had acquired a "neutral" western or foreign education (Nkrumah at Lincoln University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the LSE and Kenyatta at the LSE), instead of traditional chiefs with outmoded knowledge, and who were often accused of being allied with the colonial masters and too steeped in tradition. The language policies chosen were also often reflected in the monetary policy. Therefore, the general policy of one language, one leader

⁹⁵ These include the Manhyia Palace Museum, which was established in 1995 as a royal museum dedicated to the history of the Asante Kings, the Prempeh II Jubilee Museum, the New Juaben Palace Museum, and the Centre for National Culture (formerly the Kumasi Cultural Centre). See http://ghana.icom.museum/24002_e.html (accessed November 24, 2006).

and one territory was a part of the larger project of homogenizing the nation-state in order to prevent tribalism and to encourage national unity.

Postcolonial African nation-states also utilized the symbols of nationhood to reverse the colonial neglect of their rich heritage and to demonstrate their nationalist and Pan-Africanist ideals. "All the African countries began to proclaim their heroes from their own and the rest of Africa's past and from the struggle against colonialism."⁹⁶ African nationalists used the continent's past as a source of legitimacy, cultural integrity, and socio-economic benefit for their governments, which they insisted was rooted in a long and glorious history. Hence, several countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Chad, Botswana, South Africa, Senegal, Nigeria and Ghana constructed or modified national museums, which exhibited important archaeological finds, antiquities, monuments and cultural relics.⁹⁷ Many of these relics also found their way onto national stamps. As Posnansky argues, "Stamp images of monuments, rock art, antiquities, and fossils emphasized the historical depth of culture in newly minted nations."⁹⁸ Gabon, Guinea and Mozambique issued stamps with images of traditional masks. Stamps from Togo and Dahomey (Benin) featured images of traditional architecture such as the *Tamberma* and *Somba* houses typical of both countries, and the *Musée d'Abomey* or royal palace of Dahomey (Benin) issued stamps in 1970 celebrating "Dahomean Kings." Guinea-Conakry issued stamps in 1962 with the theme, "Martyrs and Heroes of Africa."⁹⁹ A 1978 stamp from Niger featured an image of a traditional Griot - Africa's oral historians, praise singers and royal publicists who

⁹⁶ Posnansky, "Propaganda for Millions," 54.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54-56.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁹⁹ Posnansky, "Propaganda for Millions," 54 and note 2, 94.

retold and translated the exploits of African kings from generation to generation to the people.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, Nkrumah had attempted (but failed) to appropriate the memory of the Asante Queen Yaa Asantewaa as a brave anti-colonial woman who resisted British Colonialism. He sought to achieve this by proposing to build a statue in her honour, as well as commissioning the relics from the British-Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900-01 to become permanent displays in the Ghana Armed Forces Museum. In addition, he appropriated Asante traditional material culture as part of national culture in the National Museum. Nonetheless, unlike other West African states (such as in Benin, Guinea and the Côte d'Ivoire) that did depict traditional chiefs on their postage stamps, Nkrumah did not put chiefs, whether dead or live ones on stamps, currency, or commemorate them in stone monuments as a symbolic form of power-sharing. Other West African leaders were willing to share the symbolic spotlight with martyred chiefs or national heroes, but not Nkrumah. As Adedze argues:

“It would have been absolutely impossible to issue a postage stamp of an Asante king during the initial years of Ghana’s independence. Not only was there only one chief in “town,” in the person of the president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, but also the National Liberation Movement (NLM), the opposition party to Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP), was predominantly Asante. The bitter rivalries between the two parties left a trail of bloodshed, detention, imprisonment, and exile between the two camps (Awooner 1990).¹⁰¹

Nkrumah thought that the Asante warrior-queen Yaa Asantewaa epitomized these virtues of bravery and sacrifice for the nation. At the Ghana Armed Forces Museum, the narrative of her resistance to British annexation of Asante as part of the Gold Coast Colony in 1900-01 was reframed as the stance of a brave “Ghanaian” woman and freedom fighter against colonialism. This historical narrative was told through a

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 56-57.

¹⁰¹ Adedze, “Commemorating the Chief,” 73.

number of relics and memorabilia that had been preserved from the war. Moreover, the richness of Ghanaian traditional culture was also demonstrated by wearing traditional clothing in public. Nkrumah and other CPP officials re-designated the traditional kente cloth of the Akans and the northern *batakali* overshirt as national dress, as opposed to ethno-regional ones. Nkrumah's image was also draped in kente on the Pesewa coinage and postage stamps, and his statues depicted him in kente as well. Therefore, Nkrumah and the CPP sought to build the Ghanaian nation-state by inclusion, as opposed to excluding important segments of the population. He sought to appropriate the legacy of a warrior woman, because he understood that this would appeal to the women of Ghana who played important socio-economic, cultural and political roles as keepers of tradition, farmers, trade unionists and political surrogates. The National Council of Ghana Women, for example, was made an integral part of the Convention People's Party apparatus. His adoption of both northern Muslim dress and traditional Asante clothing were critical to his program of trying to convince peoples of different religious, geographical and ethnic backgrounds that they should sacrifice those loyalties for the greater unity of the nation-state.

Again, part of Nkrumah's nation-building project also entailed presenting Ghana as a nation-state with a glorious history, rich traditions and cultures. In addition to appropriating the glorious Asante past (as a vast trading and warrior kingdom in West Africa) through museum exhibits and postal iconography, the Nkrumah administration also identified with other great African civilizations as a means of anchoring the regime to a great historical legacy. An example of this is the 1963 UNESCO "Save the Monuments of Nubia" stamp issue, with images of Rameses II at Abu Simbel, Queen Nefertari, and the Sphinx at Sebua. Ghana and

other African countries issued these stamps to bring awareness to the destruction of these monuments by the building of the Aswan Dam in Egypt. The Ghanaian stamps in this series featured the name of the country as well as the flag adjacent to the Nubian monuments, perhaps to equate the glories of Ancient Nubia with (Ancient) Ghana.

In a 1962 stamp series titled *Héros et Martyrs de L'Afrique (African Heroes and Martyrs)*, "Guinean president Ahmed Sekou Toure reminded the world of his anti-colonial ancestry by issuing a stamp with the image of his great-grandfather Almany Samori Toure [1840-1900], who had led the Malinke kingdom in rebellion against the French at the end of the nineteenth century."¹⁰² The *African Heroes and Martyrs* postage stamp series also featured an image of Samori Toure's contemporary in Mali, King BaBemba (1855-1898) of Kenegedougou-Sikasso, as well as Chief Alfa Yaya (1850-1912) of the Labe in the Fouta-Djalou. This was a sign of Pan-Africanism and historical reconciliation, which was meant to bolster his own leadership and to instil a sense of nationalism and national pride among Guineans who were experiencing economic and political uncertainties.¹⁰³ These selected nineteenth century traditional chiefs were presented and represented as the first "nationalists" who bravely fought against and were punished (through imprisonment, exile or death) by the European imperial powers for resisting the onslaught of colonialism, although they were ultimately unsuccessful in their bid to resist the might of the Europeans offensive. This was done to placate to the contemporary chiefs and their large followers, who made up part of the voting public. "The particular experiences of such people were revisited to become part of

¹⁰² Adedze, "Commemorating the Chief," 68-69.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 68-69, 71.

the national historical narrative, which needs to be remembered and commemorated.”¹⁰⁴

In the Côte d’Ivoire, President Houphouët Boigny also used symbolic nationalism to build national identity by highlighting the nation’s glorious historical past and myth of creation. In the eight anniversary of independence in 1968, his government issued a postage stamp to commemorate the “Sacrifice of Queen Abla Pokou,” which memorialised the creation legend of President Boigny’s own ethnic group – the Baoulé.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, as Steiner argues, Boigny had failed in other attempts at building the nation through symbolic means. His attempt to use the *Festimask* festival of traditional Ivoirian masks and other traditional symbols of Ivoirian-ness on Francs CFA banknotes and coins to create national identity and unify the multi-ethnic nation-state was unsuccessful.¹⁰⁶ The images on the banknotes of newly-independent Zambia portrayed a nation rooted in tradition (such as a woman carrying a basket on head), while other symbols show modernity such as technology and education. Tanzanian banknotes depicted images of Masai herdsman with animals, and the *Uhuru* (Freedom) Monument in Arusha.¹⁰⁷

The three versions of the Ghanaian national anthem immortalize the ancestors and the National Heroes who died so that the nation-state could be born (“praise the heroes of our fight”), a common theme in African national anthems. They also promoted the idea that the nation’s birth and development were ordained by divine intervention, a quasi-religious entity blessed and sanctioned by God (“your children sing with ancient minstrel lore,” “And under God march on for evermore!” “God be with us in Ghana” “God bless our homeland Ghana,” “And in your

¹⁰⁴ Adedze, “Commemorating the Chief,” 70.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 70-72.

¹⁰⁶ Steiner, “The Invisible Face,” footnote 2, 672.

¹⁰⁷ Shafer and Cuhaj, *Standard Catalog of World Paper Money*, 774-776, 899-903; see also <http://www.banknotes.com>.

strength, O Ghana”). Ghana’s anthem also implored the people to replicate the heroic deeds of their forebearers - readily giving their lives for the nation if necessary, to safeguard it for future generations (“We’ll live and die for Ghana”). As Cusack argues, these themes are typical of African national anthems.¹⁰⁸

There are noticeable differences in the ways in which Third World and Western nation-states have used symbols of nationhood to express nationalism and build national identity. For example, one of the dominant themes on European postage stamps (and currency) has been the portrayal of prominent scientists, particularly in Britain, France and Germany. This implies that “older” European nations have placed more emphasis on scientists whose discoveries have shaped European (and world) cultures and societies more so than in the Third World, where the emphasis, although highlighting great men (and a few women) of the past, focus more on contemporary political figures.¹⁰⁹ There is another major difference between the Third World and the industrialized nations when it comes to the images of heads of state on the currencies. In the Third World, the iconography of national currencies is preoccupied with the cult of living personalities, including Presidents, Prime Ministers, military officials and monarchs (where they existed). These governments are more concerned with the portrayal of strong authority and populist leaders who are themselves living institutions with the power to make decisions and have discretion to allocate or withhold resources to their supporters, opponents and/or the nation at large. Furthermore, the portrayal of a future embodied in modernization and development schemes through symbols of nationhood was more pronounced than in Eastern and Western Europe and North America. In the latter regions, with the exception of reigning monarchs who are featured on circulating

¹⁰⁸ Cusack, “African National Anthems,” 235-236, 238-40, 243, 248, 250.

¹⁰⁹ See Jones, “Heroes of the Nation?” 403-22, “Science in National Cultures,” 75-81.

currencies and stamps in the metropolis and the commonwealth for example, the designs of banknotes and coins typically bear the heads of dead presidents. In the West, therefore, the myths and memories of the Founding Fathers, in addition to the strength of the institutions of government (the executive, judiciary and legislative branches) that they created are more salient symbols of the nation than that of the current office holders who may disgrace themselves, their office and the national prestige while they are still alive. Therefore, an inverse relationship exists between the Third World and the West with regard to the construction of national identity and nationalism, at least in the dominant ways in which they are produced and imagined. Independent Asian nation-states are somewhere in between these two extremes.

Kevane also raises a critical question regarding how the legacy of colonialism may have created differences in the expression of nationalism and national identity in francophone and anglophone Africa.

“The consistency across regimes raises the interesting possibility that the pre-colonial and colonial experience may have shaped the iconography of post-independence African states. Did French colonies, more exposed to an ideology of inclusiveness (even if quite hypocritical) find themselves transmuting that discourse into an iconography of multi-ethnic inclusiveness? Did former British colonies take an opposite tack, and create images consistent with ideas of a superior or civilizing group [or leader] standing above the rest and being responsible for the nation? These sorts of questions can only be answered by a broader statistical analysis of the imagery on all African stamps in the post-independence era.”¹¹⁰

I argue that in Francophone Africa and Eastern Europe, where the individual nation-states emerged out of assimilationist, imperial powers (France and the Soviet Union, respectively), these nation-states followed Paris and Moscow in terms of looking back to a glorious past as a form of nation-building. This is reflected on the

¹¹⁰ Kevane, “Official Representations of the Nation,” 13.

iconography of their currencies, postage stamps, museum exhibits and other symbols of nationhood. However, in less-assimilationist colonies such as in Anglophone and Lusophone Africa, these nation-states could not count on a glorious national past without referring to specific ethnic identities, and so they chose to start mainly from the present (with the picture of the current president) and project into the future. Moreover, the assimilationist territories at the time of independence in the case of Eastern Europe for example, became dominated by one ethnic group and thus could go back to historical times to reclaim and portray their heroes on the banknotes. However Ghana, Nigeria and other African nation-states became independent with a very multi-ethnic citizenry, even though they did have dominant ethnic groups. In essence, therefore, they became smaller nations within the nation-state, and therefore could not choose to represent the historical personalities of one ethnic group over another, without risking (more) ethno-political conflicts. In the age of African independence after the Second World War, the Ghana ruled over by Kwame Nkrumah for almost two decades provided the most salient example of this.

On 6th March 2007, over fifty foreign dignitaries and heads of state convened in Accra to witness the 50th anniversary celebration of the first African nation-state south of the Sahara to gain independence from a European colonial power. According to the Ghana @ 50 Secretariat, there were three main objectives for the Golden Jubilee celebrations: (1) "To celebrate and commemorate Ghana's landmark achievement as the first country in Black Africa to attain independence from colonial rule;" (2) "To reflect on the evolution, development, achievements and drawbacks of our country over the past fifty (50) years;" and (3) "to look forward to the future, to our vision of excellence in all fields of endeavour in the next fifty (50)

years toward our centenary birthday as a nation.”¹¹¹ All three of these objectives have implications for how Kwame Nkrumah is remembered by past, present and future generations of Ghanaian, Africans and scholars who are interested in studying his legacy.

The year-long Golden Jubilee celebrations had been planned by the Kufuor Government to the tune of U.S. \$20 million dollars, part of which went towards the renovation of monuments erected to the Founding Fathers.¹¹² Most of these national monuments, including the Independence Monument (Black Star Square), the Monument of the Unknown Soldier and Kwame Nkrumah Circle were built by the Nkrumah administration, and became the centre of Ghanaian expressions of national pride during the celebrations (see figures 6.1 and 6.2). For example, a Ghanaian flag was draped around the neck of Nkrumah’s statue in the courtyard of the National Museum (see figure 6.4), as a symbol of the country’s renewed pride in the legacy of the Founder of the Nation. In the 1990s, the Rawlings regime removed Nkrumah’s body from where it had been buried in his birthplace of Nkroful and re-interred it at the purpose-built mausoleum in Accra called the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park. The mausoleum has become a major tourist attraction for visitors to Ghana, especially those from the African Diaspora who view Nkrumah as an important symbol of Pan-Africanism.

¹¹¹ <http://www.ghana50.gov.gh/ghana50/> (accessed March 16, 2007).

¹¹² Ken Amankwah, Events Coordinator, Ghana @ 50 Secretariat, interview by author, Accra, Ghana, September 15, 2006; Ivor Agyeman-Duah, Information Officer, Ghana High Commission, and biographer of President John Kufuor, interview by author, London, November 16, 2006.



Figure 6.1. Adults and children celebrate Ghana's 50th year of independence at Black Star Square



Figure 6.2. Ghanaian flags surround the Monument of the Unknown Soldier at Black Star Square in Accra during the Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2007



Figure 6.3. Crowds honour Kwame Nkrumah during the Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2007 and the centenary of Nkrumah's birth in 2009 at the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum



Figure 6.4. Nkrumah's statues at the National Museum and the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum draped with the colours of the national flag of Ghana, 2007 and 2009

During the Ghana @ 50 celebrations and the festivities held to commemorate the centennial of Nkrumah's birth in 2009, Ghanaians and tourists flocked to the Nkrumah Memorial Park to pay tribute to him and to revel in traditional and modern Ghanaian entertainment and culture. Fabric with the colours of the Ghanaian flag was draped over the forward-pointing arm of Nkrumah's statue at the mausoleum (see figures 6.3 and 6.4).

Since 21 September 2009 (Nkrumah's birthday), there have been several academic conferences held in Ghana, Europe and North America to commemorate and debate the centennial of the birth of Kwame Nkrumah as an important icon of Pan-Africanism. The Ghanaian government has sponsored one such conference in Accra, and even members of the United States Senate have passed a bill to commemorate Kwame Nkrumah. Undoubtedly, scholars will continue to debate the legacy of Kwame Nkrumah's almost two-decades long premiership of the Gold Coast/Ghana, as well as the implications of this legacy for the Silver Jubilee of Ghanaian nationhood. With the revaluation of the Ghanaian Cedi; plans to institute a regional, West African common currency (the Eco); the continual utilization of Ghanaian and African postage stamps to express nationalism; the building on new monuments of Nkrumah and other Founding Fathers; the exhibition of museum objects to reinterpret Ghana's and Africa's past; and the changing symbolism of Ghanaian and African national emblems and insignia, scholars will have more opportunities to analyse the changing role of symbolic nationalism in the continuous and contentious project of nation-building in Ghana, Africa and the "Third World."

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