Union College
Union | Digital Works

Honors Theses   Student Work

6-2011

Kwame Nkrumah and the Making of National Identity in Ghana

Amanda B. Powers
Union College - Schenectady, NY

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalworks.union.edu/theses

Part of the Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons

Kwame Nkrumah and the Making of National Identity in Ghana

By
Amanda Powers

Senior Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for Graduation

Department of History
Union College
March 2011

Abstract

Powers, Amanda

Development of national identity in post-colonial Ghana in terms of political identity, religion, and the Pan-African movement.

This thesis examines the role of national identity in the development of modern Ghana. It uses secondary and primary sources in order to determine the role that political identity, ethnicity, religion, and Pan-Africanism played in nation-building following independence. In exploring the making of the Ghanaian state in the post-colonial period, this thesis argues that political identity and its growth during this time was central.

More specifically, the focus of this thesis is the relationship between Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, and the various bases of political identity. In the 1960s Nkrumah attempted to implement a socialist state, and although he was eventually overthrown in an army coup, his efforts left a strong legacy of socialism. Also, during this time, Nkrumah sought to subordinate religious and ethnic identities to the needs of the state. Nkrumah's greatest success was his promotion of the Pan-African movement, which resulted in a strong nationalist movement in Ghana, allowing for a cohesive identity to develop.

Ultimately, this thesis concludes that the political, religious, ethnic, and sociological changes occurring in the 1960s and 1970s were critical to the creation of the post-colonial state and future development of Ghana. Ghanaian identity, though not entirely cohesive, was greatly affected by the political adaptations that took place during this time. The Pan-African movement and its ideology was specifically important in developing a national identity in Ghana, and creating a socialist and nationalist legacy of Nkrumah.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In 2007 Ghana commemorated its fiftieth year of independence from colonial rule. For the monumental celebration the national government chose the theme "Championing African Excellence" in honor of Kwame Nkrumah's leadership in the post-colonial period. Under Nkrumah, "Ghana was the guiding light of African independence and solidarity." The pride that Ghanaians have for their important role in African history was cause to have the Golden Jubilation, "to re-tell the story of Ghana, and ignite and regenerate the national vision, pride, dignity, and passions." Ghana wanted to enter into its next fifty years promoting continued progression, social evolution, and to help the African community to recognize its potential in the world community, all of which Nkrumah had worked towards in the 1950s.[1]

Ghana led the movement towards independence and the later efforts to develop politically, socially, and economically in the 1950s and 1960s largely due to Kwame Nkrumah's efforts to create a unified national identity. In his book *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion*, Ebenezer Obiri Addo writes, "Underlying the process of nation building in Africa is a problem that has haunted virtually all post-independence African leaders, including Nkrumah. The problem can be stated as: How can we unite a nation of immensely diverse groups without resorting to repression and dictatorship?"[2] In short, Kwame Nkrumah and the national government would ultimately succeed in uniting Ghana under a national identity promoted by the Pan-African movement.

The goal of this thesis is to assess the relationships between politics, ethnicity, and religion in processes of nation building. The association between the national government and these three identifying characteristics of Ghanaians was not always positive, but it was the

---

[1] "Ghana At 50" Ghana at 50, 2007. March 15, 2011. < http://www.ghana50.gov.gh/ghana50/>
[2] Ebenezer Obiri Addo, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1997, 1999) p. 21

transitions that the state and politics, ethnic affiliation in the government, and religious involvement in the state went through that determined the country's national identity that emerged in the 1970s.

The analysis of the development of a national identity in Ghana is significant to the understanding of post-colonial nation building throughout Africa. Many other countries struggled with the legacies of colonialism that often left them politically and economically vulnerable. They were therefore forced to build social, political, and economic structures in adverse circumstances. However, as Addo notes, it was often impossible for the government to unite the people without becoming authoritarian. In Ghana, the national government was successful in creating a unified identity for Ghanaians, which has contributed greatly to the peaceful status of the country in the post-colonial period.

In order to accurately assess the political and social developments in Ghana in the 1960s and 1970s it is necessary to discuss the historiography of the topic as well as the sources used in this analysis and discussion. For the most part, these sources provide opposing opinions of Nkrumah's influence on Ghana's development and his legacy. David E. Apter presents a case study of the transfer of political power and institution in Ghana in his book *Ghana In Transition*, printed for the first time in 1955 and then again in 1963. Apter perceives Ghana as "a symbol of national achievement and African enterprise" and as an inspiration to African nations who were still under colonial control in 1957. Apter divides modern Ghanaian history into six political stages of transition. The phases pertaining to this thesis are the mobilization phase beginning with independence in 1957 and ending in 1961, the next stage is described as the failure of mobilization beginning in 1961 and ending in 1966 when Nkrumah was overthrown by a military coup, the phase that can be described as a return to a reconciliation system with Kofi Abrefa

Busia as head of the government, and then the final transition in which there was a return to the bureaucratic system. Apter declares Nkrumah's greatest accomplishment to be creating an early mass nationalist movement that demanded self-government from the British. Apter characterizes the rest of Nkrumah's involvement in the state as a relative failure as he was not able to sustain the mobilization phase and was overthrown as a result.[3]

Beyond Apter, many other scholars have presented Nkrumah's early political involvement in Ghana to be much more positive than his involvement in the 1960s. Nkrumah had been politically and socially involved on an intense scale when he became the prime minister of Ghana in 1952 and had promoted mass movements throughout the country to promote self-governance. During his time as president though he became narcissistic, his political party became increasingly corrupt, and his plans for economic prosperity failed. In his article, "Nkrumah: The Leninist Czar" written in 1966 Mazrui Ali compares Nkrumah's political theories and time in office to that of Lenin. Both figures played significant roles in the political development of their states and both based their personal ideologies on that of Marxism. Nkrumah developed a personal ideology similar to Leninism, called "Nkrumahism." This however, did not serve to benefit Nkrumah and his party, the Convention People's Party (CPP). Rather, his general theory turned into a personality cult, having negative consequences on the effectiveness of his political strength in the newly independent state. Ali writes, '…the Nkrumah cult in Ghana first served a useful purpose, then helped to weaken the efficiency of the CPP, and then aggravated the tendency towards intolerant authoritarianism."[4] This personality cult, which made Nkrumah paranoid and weary of competition, greatly affected his relationships with local,

---

[3] David Apter, *Ghana In Transition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955, 1963, 1972) p. xi, xxi-xxiii.
[4] Ali Mazrui, "Nkrumah: The Leninist Czar" <u>Transition</u> 1966: 17.

ethnic governments and religious leadership within the country. Therefore, this source is extremely pertinent to the overall assessment.

Despite the biases of scholars emitted in the late 1960s, James A. McCain went on to prove the impact that Nkrumah ultimately had on the future political atmosphere in Ghana and political opinions of Ghanaians. In his 1979 article "Attitudes Toward Socialism, Policy and Leadership in Ghana," McCain analyzes the results of a study conducted in Accra, the capital city. McCain finds that not only is Nkrumah's political ideology still important to Ghanaians, as there was a sort of rebirth of Nkrumahism, but in the early 1970s "Nkrumah filled the role of a political folk hero" for Ghanaians who "[felt] a need to resurrect a 'modern usable history'" in order to improve their nationalist morale under the military regime in power during the time. McCain concludes that Nkrumah's legacies are his socialist ideologies and his ability to make Ghana "important in the eyes of the rest of the world." When Ghana became independent it became a beacon of hope for other countries still under colonial rule. Later, Nkrumah and Ghana were at the center of the Pan-African movement, which was affecting Africans and promoting change throughout the entire world.[5]

These authors illustrate the divide in opinion on Nkrumah, both the weaknesses and strengths of his politics, and his legacy in Ghana. However, in Nkrumah's own writings between 1957 and 1973, there is no hesitancy in declaring his importance in the growth and development in post-colonial Ghana. In *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, Nkrumah reaches a similar conclusion to McCain's findings in that he claims wide influence on the rest of Africa by his political and social developments in Ghana. Nkrumah writes,

> I have never regarded the struggle for Independence of the Gold Coast as an
> isolated incident but always as a part of a general world historical pattern. The

---

[5] James A. McCain, "Attitudes Toward Socialism, Policy and Leadership in Ghana" <u>African Studies Review</u> April 1979: 167-168.

African in every territory of this vast continent has been awakened and the struggle for freedom will go on. It is our duty as the vanguard force to offer what assistance we can to those now engaged in battles that we ourselves have fought and won. Our task is not done and our own safety is not assured until the last vestiges of colonialism have been swept from Africa.[6]

This passage illustrates Nkrumah's perception of the importance of Ghana in starting the trend towards independence that occurred in the 1960s throughout Africa. Not only this but he places a significant amount of responsibility on Ghana to protect countries following Nkrumah and Ghana's lead. Nkrumah's high opinion of himself, his ideology, and his party becomes apparent when he is discussing the opposition party led by Kofi Abrefa Busia and the relationship between the two. Nkrumah writes, "There can be few – if any – governments in the world who have exercised so much tolerance and devoted so much valuable time to considering the whims of such an un-cooperative minority, as my Government did during these years." In actuality, the CPP and Nkrumah showed little tolerance towards Busia and the Ghana Congress Party. Nkrumah became especially harsh towards opposition in the 1960s at the height of his personality cult and during the 1950s he refused to acknowledge an organized opposition party, therefore inhibiting others from running for government offices.[7]

Nkrumah's *Revolutionary Path*, is a compilation of writings by Nkrumah ranging from 1942 to 1970. In his description of the economic atmosphere in 1966 it is made clear that Nkrumah was irrationally blinded by his obsession with power and Nkrumahism when he writes, "In Ghana, at the beginning of 1966, we were at a critical point in our struggle to win economic independence…Ghana was developing the resources to become a power house of the African Revolution."[8] In actuality, as discussed by multiple authors in the late 20th century and early 21st, during this time Ghana was failing economically, contributing to the frustrations that led to the

---

[6] Kwame Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957) p. 288.
[7] Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, 278, 212.
[8] Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, 359.

coup of 1966. In his book *Ghana: A Political History from Pre-European to Modern Times*, Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor describes the economic failures of Nkrumah and his socialism between 1960 and 1965. Awoonor states that economic failure "affected the popular mass attitude towards the government and prepared the ground for the coup d'etat of February, 1966." Essentially, it is clear that Nkrumah was focused on his own success, and not necessarily that of his people and country prior to is overthrow. Within the context of this thesis, these authors shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of Kwame Nkrumah and describe his role in developing the political atmosphere of post-colonial Ghana.[9]

In terms of organization, the first chapter will analyze the development of political identity in Ghana in the 1960s and how this identity influenced the growth of the state. A significant element of this discussion is Kwame Nkrumah's ideologies and his role in the national government. Then, chapter two considers the relationship between ethnic groups, local governments and Nkrumah. The CPP dealt with continuing conflicts with local governments as there was a transition from a more traditional form of government to one in which local governments had less power. The third chapter examines the role of religion in the development of the state. Similar to the struggle between traditional forms of government and Nkrumah, religious leadership and involvement in the state's affairs were minimized under the CPP, resulting in a continuous struggle between religion and government. The last chapter discusses Kwame Nkrumah's involvement in the Pan-African movement and how this positively affected the development of Ghana. Ultimately, this study determines that despite conflicts between religion, ethnic groups, and opposing political groups, the political adaptations that took place

---

[9] Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor, *Ghana: A Political History from Pre-European to Modern Times* (Accra: Sedco Publishing Limited and Woeli Publishing Services, 1990) p. 185-186.

during this critical time of development, left a legacy of socialist belief and nationalist principle, uniting the people of Ghana.

Chapter 1

Political Identity Following Independence

Kwame Nkrumah

Prior to independence from colonialism, Kwame Nkrumah began to emerge as a leader for the first independent state of Ghana. Nkrumah began his political career in the 1940s while he studied abroad in the United States and England. His years abroad had a critical impact on his political views concerning Ghana as well as Africa as a whole. Upon his return to Ghana in 1947 Nkrumah began working for political organizations. In 1952 Nkrumah became the first African prime minister in the colonial state, and in 1957 he became the first African president in the independent state. Nkrumah held the office until 1966 when he was overthrown by a military coup. Nkrumah's leadership within Ghana was critical to the initial success of the post-colonial state. Furthermore, Nkrumah's socialist beliefs influenced identity within the early state of independent Ghana.[10]

Kwame Nkrumah was born in 1909 in the western region of the Gold Coast, what became Ghana, and named Francis Nwia-Kofi Nkrumah. He was a member of the Nzima ethnic group and lived in a small village but had the privilege of attending the Half Assini Catholic primary school in the village his father lived in. Following the completion of primary education Nkrumah became a "pupil teacher" at the Half Assini School. Nkrumah showed promise in his teaching abilities and was sent to Achimota College to be trained as a professional teacher. While at Achimota Nkrumah was influenced by the assistant vice-principal Kwegyr Aggrey, a self-proclaimed nationalist who was educated in the United States. Aggrey's education and political stances motivated Nkrumah to study in the United States and England. In the early 1930s

---

[10] A.B. Assensoh, *African Political Leadership: Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius K. Nyerere* (Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 1998) p. 95.

Nkrumah enrolled in Oxford's Wolsley Hall after failing the London Matriculation Exam.[11]

Once arriving in Great Britain Nkrumah seemed to suddenly change his mind about wanting to

study in London and instead began efforts to study in the United States as his mentor Aggrey had

done. [12]

Despite leaving for the Unites States somewhat soon after his arrival in Great Britain,

Nkrumah's experience in the U.K. had a lasting effect on his political beliefs. For example,

Nkrumah became involved in organizations concerning African nationalism. He was greatly

influenced by the writings of Nnamdi Azikiwe, an outspoken nationalist author, professor, and

Nigerian politician. The influences of Azikiwe and Aggrey inspired Nkrumah to go to the United

States to study law and political science. In 1935 Nkrumah began his studies at Lincoln

University near Philadelphia. In her book *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad, 1935-1947*,

Marika Sherwood writes, "He was taking with him a legacy of intellectual, commercial, and

political ferment from the Gold Coast; the legacy from his mentors the nationalists and pan-West

Africanists…it is what formed him and must have shaped his thinking about the future Africa."

Nkrumah was beginning to develop his own concepts concerning how to affect the future of

Africa and in what direction he wanted to see Africa develop into. Studying in the United States

allowed Nkrumah to be further affected politically and in turn influenced the concepts he would

bring back to the Gold Coast.[13]

Kwame Nkrumah arrived in the United States at a time when racism was rampant, and as

African Americans were becoming more politically active. While studying at Lincoln University,

Nkrumah spent time in New York City where he found himself in the midst of minority groups

---

[11]Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad, 1935-1947* (Legon: Freedom Publications, 1996) p. 17-19.
[12] Assensoh, 77-79.
[13] Sherwood, 20-21, 25.

making efforts to protect and gain rights. During his time in New York in the summer of 1936 Nkrumah was a member of The Blyden Society, which advocated for the study of African history and he became involved with the Congress of African Peoples of the World, organized by his friend Thomas Dosumu-Johnson. The "Congress" promoted mass education and commercial industrial development in Africa and fought for Ethiopian independence from Italian occupation. Nkrumah's involvement in the Congress began his push for African independence as well as unity.[14]

After receiving his undergraduate degree from Lincoln, Nkrumah began studying theology in September 1939 at the Lincoln University Theology Seminary. Following graduation and receiving his license from the Chester Presbytery in Pennsylvania, Nkrumah began preaching in Philadelphia, New York, and Washington. Sherwood writes that Nkrumah often preached about Africa, and his sermons were politically rather than religiously oriented. In 1939 Nkrumah also enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania to earn his Master of Science in Education and in 1941 earned his degree. In January 1942 the University of Pennsylvania admitted Nkrumah to study for his Master's degree in Philosophy. Nkrumah's dissertation was titled "The Philosophy of Imperialism, with Special Reference to Africa" indicating his continuing interest in the African continent, its history and its future. However, as Sherwood describes, the University refused to let Nkrumah continue on his dissertation because his topics concerning colonialism held too much pro-communist sentiment. Despite the University's perception of his topic, it cannot be stated that Nkrumah was developing communist political views, although he did become a socialist, his dissertation topic simply shows his growing interest and dedication to the decolonization of Africa.[15]

---

[14] Sherwood, 40-41.
[15] Sherwood, 51, 63-64.

Nkrumah's studies and social activities in the United States reflected his growing interest in socialist ideology and how to apply it in the context of African colonial politics. While at the University of Pennsylvania Nkrumah helped to found the African Student's Association of America and Canada (ASAAC) which promoted Pan-Africanism, unity, and nationalism throughout African students in the United States. In his book *African Political Leadership: Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius K. Nyerere*, A.B. Assensoh notes that "It is very interesting that most of the ASAAC leaders at the time…returned to their African nations to play very significant roles in the quests for their independence from colonial rule." For African students in America the ASAAC allowed them to share a general interest in African independence.[16]

Kwame Nkrumah left the United States in May 1945 and returned to England to continue his studies. While in London, Nkrumah wrote three pamphlets "Education in the Colonial Liberation Movement", "Nationalism and Education in West Africa", and "Toward Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle Against World Imperialism" for the Pan-African Federation's paper *Pan-Africa*. Nkrumah stated that he was writing these articles with knowledge he had gained from studying in the United States along with his involvement with various organizations in America and England. These included: Council on African Affairs, the Committee on Africa, the Committee on War and Peace Aims, the Committee on African Students, the Special Research Council of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, and the Urban League. Also, Nkrumah made it clear that he tried to give himself access to differing political views such as those of the Democrats, the Communists, and the Trotskyites. From all of these different organizations and parties Nkrumah was able to develop his own opinion concerning the "colonial question". As Nkrumah said, "'the whole policy of the colonizer is to

---

[16] Assensoh, 81-82.

keep the native in his primitive state and make him economically dependent.'" This argument of Nkrumah's initial writings concerning independence from colonialism became the basis for Nkrumah's political policies once he returned to Ghana to push for independence from British colonial rule.[17]

In 1947 Kwame Nkrumah began his political career in the Gold Coast after he was invited to serve as general secretary for the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), a nationalist movement organization. Nkrumah's experiences in London and the United States clearly influenced his involvement and political activities in the Gold Coast. Assensoh writes, "his presence did arouse the political consciousness of the common men and women in the street, especially because his organizing skills made sure that even the countryside of the Gold Coast was not left untouched by the UGCC." At the time, the UGCC's goal was to have the colonial government pass control of the state into the hands of Africans and their chiefs. The specific goal of the organization changed over time as the involvement of African chiefs proved itself to be complicated. However, the overall purpose of the UGCC was to promote and achieve independence. Nkrumah and the party took a proactive stance on achieving independence, which led to increased tensions within the state between Ghanaians and colonial authorities. [18]

In 1948 the demonstrations against the British were so violent that the colonial government put out arrest warrants for Nkrumah and five other nationalist leaders. Since the time Nkrumah took the post of secretary for the UGCC he had encouraged the group to become more involved in anti-colonial street demonstrations. As the state investigated the UGCC's involvement in the bloody riots it became clear that Nkrumah had a profound influence on the organization and its strategy to achieve its goals. The nationalist leaders appeared before a

---

[17] Assensoh, 83-85.
[18] Assensoh, 87-88.

commission of inquiry which ascertained that, "'from internal evidence of the Minute Book of the Working Committee [of UGCC], the Convention did not really get on to business until the arrival of Mr. Kwame Nkrumah…and his assumption of the post as Secretary.'" In other words, Nkrumah brought to their attention the importance of spreading their nationalist perspective throughout the Ghanaian population, and this included more radical ideas such as becoming involved in protests and demonstrations. The commission also accused Nkrumah of having communist affiliations, made during his time in the United States, and spreading his own political ideals through the UGCC. As a result the entirety of the blame for the violent protests in the Gold Coast during this time was placed on Nkrumah and the UGCC was eager to expel him from their organization, also blaming him for pushing his radicalism into their goals and ideologies.[19]

In 1949, after continued disagreements with the other UGCC leaders, Nkrumah founded his own political party, the Convention People's Party (CPP), to further spread his nationalist ideals. Through his party Nkrumah pushed forms of Gandhian nonviolent protest, called Positive Action. With the implementation of Positive Action Nkrumah began his first mass movement in which the goal was to achieve independence. In his book *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology*, Nkrumah writes,

> It had become evident that unless we organized our potential more vigorously, the granting of Independence might be delayed indefinitely. The Coussey Committee was taking a long time to do its work. It was therefore necessary to adopt a definite programme of political action. I explained what I meant by Positive Action. It was, I said, the application of constitutional and legitimate means to cripple the imperialist forces in the country, based upon the principle of non-violence.[20]

---

[19] Assensoh, 89-91.
[20] Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1961) p. 17-18.

The Coussey Committee that Nkrumah refers to was set up in 1949 to begin drawing up a new constitution for the Gold Coast as an initial step towards independence.[21] This was when Nkrumah first showed his ability to motivate Africans into mass organizations and movement. This capability would be one of the future president's greatest strengths. Nkrumah's Positive Action form of protest relied heavily on youth organization for support. By the time the Positive Action campaign was officially launched in 1950, awareness surrounding the movement had brought attention and followers to the CPP.[22]

Nkrumah was able to further promote his party through the newspaper he founded in 1948 called the *Accra Evening News*. Nevertheless, in 1950 with both the CPP and the UGCC gaining strength throughout the colony, British officials resorted to arresting Nkrumah and other nationalists for inciting Africans to rebel against the colonial authorities. Nkrumah was sentenced to two years in prison, yet the CPP prospered due to heavy campaigning and using Nkrumah's arrest as propaganda for their cause. Through CPP media Nkrumah took on the form of a martyr for many Africans, therefore gaining a stronger following for the party.[23] In the elections of 1950 six of the party's members were elected in the Accra municipal election. Nkrumah's largest success up to this time was in 1951when Nkrumah himself, while still in prison, was elected in the general elections. Nkrumah won 22,780 out of 23,122 votes. Then in February of 1951 the British governor of the Gold Coast gave Nkrumah the task of organizing the first African government of the colony. At this point Nkrumah would not be considered prime minister, but a more informal leader of the state's affairs. The formation of this new government and the growing strength of the CPP continued to push for independence, though

---

[21] *I Speak of Freedom*, 13.
[22] David E. Apter, *Ghana In Transition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) p. 171-172.
[23] Apter, 171-172.

colonial appointed administrators stayed involved in the indigenous government until formal independence in 1957.[24]

Nkrumah took his new appointment as head of the first African government in the Gold Coast under colonial rule as an opportunity to further the promotion of his socialist and nationalist ideals. Nkrumah gained a better foothold in the government in March of 1952 when he officially became prime minister. On July 10, 1953 Nkrumah brought the "Motion of Destiny" in front of the Legislative Assembly of the Gold Coast. The motion's purpose was to ask for full independence. Then, in 1954 the CPP once again won overwhelmingly in general elections and proceeded to again in 1956 general elections held in order to determine the next indigenous leader of independent Ghana. Because the CPP was so greatly supported by the people of Ghana in three consecutive general elections the colonial governor of the Gold Coast determined that following the general elections of 1956 the colonial state would become independent. On March 6, 1957 Ghana was granted independence and Kwame Nkrumah became the first president of the new state with a new constitution.[25]

Kwame Nkrumah's years abroad as well as his early political involvement were critical to his future impact on Ghanaian political culture and identity. Nkrumah's exposure to a plethora of political philosophies while in the United States allowed his ideologies concerning nationalism and socialism to develop. Indeed, understanding the background of his political life is critical to analyzing how and why he took a socialist approach to independent Ghana. I now turn to explore Kwame Nkrumah's political philosophies following independence from colonial rule and during this important period of nation building

---

[24] Assensoh, 94-95.
[25] Assensoh, 95.

Nkrumah and Socialism

"Capitalism is too complicated a system for a newly independent nation. Hence the need for a socialistic society." Kwame Nkrumah

In his autobiography Kwame Nkrumah introduces his socialist ideas and his reasons for implementing them in the post-colonial state of Ghana. During his years abroad in the United States and London, Nkrumah developed his political ideas. He was influenced by many different political movements while abroad, yet took a strong interest in socialism. As the leader of free Ghana his political beliefs impacted the national identity that began to form in the 1960s and 1970s.

Although Nkrumah began forming a socialist perspective during his abroad years and Ghana's quest for independence, socialism was not formally implemented until 1961 when, after a visit to the Soviet Union, he thought socialism to be a realistic and efficient solution to the failing Ghanaian economy.[26] During this time the economy in Ghana was still struggling from the legacy of colonial rule, especially from the exploitation of materials and their export to Europe. Both political and economic changes were necessary if the newly independent nation was to succeed. James A. McCain believes that Nkrumah's promotion and adoption of socialism was not necessarily one of true Marxist belief or implemented out of concern for the economic welfare of the country. Instead McCain implies that it was a vehicle by which Nkrumah could help Ghanaians to transition into an independent and modern state while also extending his political control over the state and people.[27]

Prior to the rise of the Convention People's Party there was no dominant political force in the Gold Coast. Indeed, the UGCC did have a strong presence, although it had not been able to achieve a large following among the masses. Using the CPP as a vehicle for transition of the

[26] Awoonor, 183.
[27] McCain, 150.

state into a socialist one meant educating the masses. By this time Nkrumah understood that there was a critical need to implement socialism within the economy as well. A large portion of Nkrumah's socialist state focused on building the economy and infrastructure of the state. A.B. Assensoh states that between 1954 and 1966,

> …Nkrumah's regime had made remarkable development progress, which included laying the groundwork for a viable socialist state. There were visible signs of development, including the construction of houses for Ghanaian workers, schools and hospitals, while the existing roads…were greatly improved so that farmers and other producers could bring their agricultural products to urban areas for sale…Ghana had over sixty state-controlled enterprises.[28]

Despite these extensive efforts to build infrastructure, hopefully resulting in economic success, Nkrumah's economic reforms were exhausting the state's budget and eventually led to massive debt. His failure to improve the economy was one factor contributing to Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966. However, there were some state improvements, developments, and advancements in education and the status of women that would remain despite the state's eventual economic collapse. Nkrumah founded an institute dedicated entirely to African Studies and established the Encyclopedia Africana, the purpose of which was to reinterpret and strengthen African history from the Pan-African perspective. Throughout Nkrumah's political career in Ghana he served as an influential leader of Pan-Africanism, and therefore founded these educational organizations in order to strengthen the movement. With regards to the status of women in the post-colonial state, Nkrumah incorporated women at cabinet-level positions. He also promoted education and equal opportunity for women throughout Ghana. One of his most significant contributions to the economic situation was an influx in employment opportunities. In the early 1960s, there was a significant increase in employment availability, which enhanced and improved the lives of many Ghanaians. Awoonor writes, "In four years…Ghana's industrial

---

[28] Assensoh, 102-103.

production doubled. There were 75,000 workers employed in industry and mining." A large part

of Nkrumah's Seven Year Development Plan of 1961 brought the issue of labor to the forefront

of national investment and development. Despite the ultimate failure of Nkrumah's development

initiative, during the early 1960s, as described by Assensoh, Ghana went under positive

economic and social changes, which greatly affected the political and social atmosphere.[29]

Regardless of the improvements Nkrumah made to the infrastructure of the state, the

growing deficit between 1960 and 1965 halted the progress of his socialist aspirations for Ghana.

In order to accomplish the Seven Year Plan, the Ghana Commercial Bank made inflationary

credit grants to the public sector of the government every year for five years before 1965. This

was coupled by a rising foreign debt that caused the reserves to decline. Also during this time

there was a large growth in population that was faster than the growth of the economy resulting

in a decline in the standard of living. Despite the increase in industrial production and the

increase in employment opportunities, because of the rapid increase in population, especially in

urban areas, there was only a 2% growth in the job market over the five-year period leading up to

1965 while there was a 25% increase in urban population. The deterioration of Ghanaian

standards of living in urban areas and the state's significant deficit contributed to the political

decline of Kwame Nkrumah and the eventual coup d'etat of 1966. [30]

Despite the failure of Nkrumah's socialism in the economic realm, as well as the negative

social effects it had on society such as unemployment, the impacts of socialism on Ghanaian

identity and culture cannot be diminished. In his article McCain summarizes his findings from a

study conducted in Accra in 1979. The author concludes that in the mid and late 1970s socialist

beliefs were still prevalent among Ghanaians. He attributes this to Kwame Nkrumah's socialist

---

[29] Awoonor 103-105, 183-184.
[30] Awoonor, 185.

foundation in the early 1960s. McCain writes, "elites…generally 'agreed' that 'African scientific socialism, specific to the needs of Africans, is the only answer for our people. The presuppositions and purposes of capitalism would be a betrayal of our personality and conscience.'"[31] The elites McCain refers to are made up of one hundred and eighty-seven second and third-year political science students at the University of Ghana. This indicates that students who are politically aware and educated believe socialism to be a critical part of the Ghanaian political identity. From McCain's study it is clear that Nkrumah's efforts to create a socialist state left a strong political legacy in Ghana and played a critical role in the identity of Ghanaians in the 1960s and 1970s.

Kwame Nkrumah's primary goal in Ghana was to initiate a mass movement in order to build and sustain a socialist society. In his attempts to inspire Ghanaians to join his socialist movement, a process began in which a unified identity emerged within Ghana and among other Africans as well. A large-scale movement was not possible prior to independence because it may have hindered the progress made towards achieving independence. In *Revolutionary Path* Nkrumah remarks on the issues that hindered the mobilization of Ghanaians prior to independence: "it was essential to include bourgeois nationalists in the national liberation movement, and in the interests of unity in the fight against colonial power, ideological differences which might bring division within our ranks had to be avoided."[32] However, now that Ghana was independent and the socialist CPP was in power, Nkrumah's plans for organization of the masses was much more viable. Therefore he took advantage of the political atmosphere that was evolving in the early 1960s to aggressively push Ghana into socialism.

---

[31] McCain, 156.
[32] Nkrumah, 161.

The initial success of Nkrumah's efforts to instill socialism is debatable. First, Nkrumah's socialism was not a pure form of Marxism because it was molded by African culture. But it was also part of the personality cult that began to develop around Nkrumah. In his book *Ghana in Transition*, David E. Apter discusses Kwame Nkrumah's growing fame with the words of a Ghanaian author:

> To us, his people, Kwame Nkrumah is our father, teacher, our brother, our friend, indeed our very lives, for without him we would no doubt have existed, but we would not have lived; there would have been no hope of a cure for our sick souls, no taste of glorious victory after a life-time of suffering. What we owe him is greater even than the air we breathe, for he made us as surely as he made Ghana.[33]

These words seem fanatical, yet many Ghanaians shared this perception during the 1960s with the growth of Nkrumah's personality cult. However, as Ali Mazrui, believes, the personality cult led to the demise of the CPP and Nkrumah. "The Nkrumah cult in Ghana, first served a usefel purpose; then helped to weaken the efficiency of the CPP, and then aggravated twaords intolerant authoritarianism."[34] Essentially the personality cult that Kwame Nkrumah began to promote later in his career first increased his following, however it then began to lessen his own socialist views and entirely diminished the effectiveness of the CPP. Paired with the failing economy, the weakened CPP contributed to the atmosphere that allowed for the coup d'etat of 1966.

Needless to say, socialism was a large part of Ghanaian identity in the years following independence. Nkrumah believed that socialism would be an effective way to get the masses politically involved in the government and that it would be instrumental in developing a successful economic policy. Despite driving the economy into debt due to overly ambitious projects, the political ideology of Nkrumah's beliefs seemed to be popular. Evidence of this was

---

[33] Apter, 325.
[34] Mazrui, 17.

Nkrumah's Ideological Institute at Winneba where Nkrumah claimed hundreds of men and

women from African and the world attended between 1961 and 1966. The purpose of the

institution was to:

> …Provide ideological education for party members and for all from Africa and the world who wished to equip themselves with knowledge for the great freedom fight against colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism. The Institute provided not only theoretical education but also practical instruction in a Positive Action training centre.[35]

This is written from Nkrumah's perspective concerning his beliefs and policies therefore

a bias must be assumed. Additionally, it is well known that Nkrumah began to develop what

many call "Nkrumahisms", which refers to an integration of his personality cult into his socialist

beliefs creating a unique and authoritarian approach to socialism. With these points in mind, it is

difficult to determine if his installation of socialism in Ghana was successful. However, in

McCain's study he is able to confirm that socialism was a prevalent belief in the 1960s and

1970s. More than half of the masses polled during his study agreed with the statement, "'What

we desire is the creation of free men – physically, intellectually, and spiritually integrated. Our

first goal, therefore, must be a fully developed socialist economy. Without this economic base,

we cannot advance our freedom.'"[36] This study was conducted in 1979 and correlated with a

previous 1973 survey that yielded similar results. Despite Nkrumah's and the CPP's gradual loss

of power, it is clear that socialism was the favored ideology of many Ghanaians, both elites and

masses, during this time.

Political Identity After 1966

Deterioration in Nkrumah's leadership ability and efficiency along with a decline in the

public's support for the CPP's led to the coup d'etat of 1966. Nkrumah had cut himself off from

---

[35] *Revolutionary Path*, 161-162.
[36] McCain, 154.

the Ghanaian people, the economy plummeted, and he essentially became an authoritarian

dictator. He had ultimately failed at turning Ghana into a successful socialist state. However,

socialism was still central to political identity. During the 1960s and 1970s many Ghanaians did

not believe in a capitalist form of economy and supported a true socialist perspective. Yet, as

with any political party Nkrumah and the CPP had opposition and in 1966 Kofe Abrefa Busia,

leader of the United Party of Ghana, and Lt. Gen. J.A. Ankrah of the army planned a coup.

In his book *Ghana: A Political History From Pre-European to Modern Times*, Kofi

Nyidevu Awoonor purports that the CIA had been instrumental in helping to plan the coup.

Following the change in regime political life in Ghana was greatly affected by United States

involvement. Prior to the coup the CIA kept a close eye on Nkrumah because they viewed him as

a communist with widespread ambitions for Africa. In discussing American interest in Ghanaian

political affairs Awoonor writes, "Ghana, the Americans decided, was the centre of communist

subversion in West Africa and Nkrumah was a dangerous revolutionary who should not be

allowed to get away with it." The National Liberation Council (NLC) was the formal name of the

government that was run by military and police forces along with civilian commissioners. Under

this government the Republican Constitution of 1961 was suspended and the NLC called for the

creation of a new political structure developed by their own party members. The new

constitution instituted the NLC as the highest law-making institution in Ghana. Despite the

enormous amount of power acquired through the coup, the NLC's affects on Ghanaian politics

and economics were not superior to Nkrumah's.[37]

To avoid retaliation and continued support for Nkrumah and socialism the NLC detained

many members of the CPP and began efforts to discredit Nkrumah. Awoonor's personal political

beliefs appear when he describes the efforts of the NLC. "It is the filthy depth to which

_____

[37] Awoonor, 206-211.

imperialism and its hirelings are always prepared to sink in order to destroy genuine nationalist and anti-imperialist fighters."[38] Many Ghanaians perceived the NLC's political and economic approach as moving farther away from true independence. Because of the economic failure of the CPP, the new government depended largely on Western aid in attempting to improve the situation. However, this allowed for foreign influence on the politics of the state and Ghana's new allies, the United States, United Kingdom, and West Germany called for the expulsion of communist and socialist presence. Therefore, state infrastructure projects that had been connected with the Eastern bloc were suspended, contributing to the suffering economy. Despite, these setbacks and the political turmoil following the coup, foreign aid from Western nations began to increase. Ghana was also able to reconnect with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank who had both cut ties during Nkrumah's reign. Due to the suspension of the projects supported by the Eastern Bloc, the NLC needed to supplement the economy resulting in the sale of state-owned enterprises such as salt, mining, laundry, bakery, and flourmill industries. Two groups bought these: Ghanaian businessmen, many of whom were involved in the government and would become the financial backers of the new Progress Party, and overseas investors.[39]

The Progress Party consisted of Busia supporters who were involved in the coup. This party went on to win the elections of 1969 when the National Liberation Council determined the country fit for civilian rule. Between 1966 and 1969 political parties were banned by the NLC and there was no working constitution. In 1969 a political committee was given the responsibility of writing a new constitution the purpose of which was to restore democratic rights to Ghanaian citizens. Yet the constitution could not be considered wholly democratic as it

---

[38] Awoonor, 212.
[39] Awoonor, 213.

prohibited large numbers of CPP politicians from running for or holding any public office. The NLC had immediately banned all other political parties in 1966 and with the addition of the disqualification clause the government under the Progress Party allowed little freedom for democratic political institutions to develop. As a result of the lack of political progress between 1966 and the early 1970s under the Progress Party little was contributed to the political identity of Ghana. There was not a cohesive political ideology present to affect the masses as Nkrumah and socialism had prior to the coup of 1966.[40]

The Progress Party held office until 1972 when a second coup occurred overthrowing the party on the basis of a failing economy. As a result of the coup Col. I.K. Acheampong became the head of state and the government was officially a military regime. In 1975 power was transferred to the Supreme Military Council (SMC) and Acheampong remained as head of state. The SMC held power until 1979 when a group called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) acted on pressures to return to civilian rule and staged a violent coup. Colonel Acheampong was executed along with other former military leaders after being found guilty of corruption in a court designed by the AFRC to deal with charges against the former government. Awoonor contributes this coup not to political differences but states that it was "the direct result of the disintegration of the Ghana Armed Forces."[41] The breakdown of the military was due to a worsening of the economic situation, which led to the revolution that called for a return to civilian rule. On June 4, 1979 a military mutiny occurred surrounding the release of Flight Lt. Jerry Rawlings who was arrested for a previous attempt to initiate a revolt. His attempts did not fail the second time as soldiers broke into the prison, released Rawlings, and brought him to a Ghanaian radio station where he announced the overthrow of Acheampong's regime. Ghana then

---

[40] Awoonor, 215.
[41] Awoonor, 235.

entered a period of "housecleaning" as Awoonor terms it consisting of the confiscation of property and the imprisonment and execution of military officers. These efforts were aimed at the armed forces but left civilians at the mercy of the AFRC as well. Acheampong's unruly economy and government had left soldiers feeling that they needed to be harsh in response to even the smallest discrepancies. For example, women who were selling goods above the control price were beaten in public. Despite the violence and harsh attitudes of the soldiers in the AFRC the state was able to overcome. The AFRC allowed for the June 18, 1979 elections and the government was handed over to the elected president Dr. Hilla Limann, a member of the People's National Party (PNP).[42]

In the elections of 1979 the PNP won in every region and became the only national party of Ghana. Ironically, the PNP's platforms were based on those of Nkrumah and the CPP, proving that Nkrumah still had influence over the political atmosphere. Despite having the public's support and extensive efforts to improve the political and economic status of Ghana, the PNP and Hilla Limann, like all of the governments to come before, failed to overcome the economic challenges that had been intensifying since 1966. The PNP was also not able to avoid party corruption, which grew in response to the consistent economic deterioration. These weaknesses and failures resulted in the coup of 1981 led by Jerry Rawlings of the AFRC. On December 31, 1981 Rawlings made an announcement to the nation that "what was taking place was not a coup, but the beginning of a revolution, a holy war on the total system of corruption and mis-use of power and authority." The government was turned over to the Provincial National Defense Council (PNDC) whose main goal was to rebuild the economy that was on the verge of collapse. In order to do this the government was forced to re-establish a relationship with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank who encouraged other foreign entities to invest in Ghana. Many

---

[42] Awoonor, 235-250.

Ghanaians hesitated to and disagreed with becoming financially connected to Western nations, however at this point the state did not have any other option. The PNDC was not entirely successful in rebuilding the economic structure of the state, however they managed to keep the state from collapsing entirely.[43]

The only lasting political ideologies to be found from this period are that of Kwame Nkrumah and his socialist philosophies. Many of the groups failed due to the political structure instituted after the 1966 coup. It was difficult for many of the individuals acting as head of state to affect the political atmosphere and create mass organization as Nkrumah had due to corruption and the threat of economic collapse. It is not possible to determine if Ghana would have ever become an economically stable nation under Nkrumah, but has it not been for his personality cult Nkrumah would have undoubtedly provided the people with a stable political identity.

Nkrumah's ambitious goals and philosophies for Ghana in the wake of independence were not fitting for the political atmosphere at the time, resulting in continuous political and economic instability throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and on. However, Nkrumah would not only be challenged by the Ghanaian economy, but also in developing a policy in dealing with traditional local governments, that had been deeply involved in the infrastructure of the colonial state. Nkrumah's approach to managing the relationship between the national government and local, ethnic based governments was one constituted by repression and a reorganization of the Ghanaian power structure. Nkrumah's policies towards local governments, particularly chieftaincies throughout Ghana, set a precedent for future governments as well. This ultimately resulted in a significant weakening of the power of local government, leaving the central structure unthreatened.

---

[43] Awoonor, 250-256.

<center>**Chapter Two**</center>

<center>**Ethnicity and Traditional Politics in the Postcolonial State**</center>

Ethnic Identity in Ghanaian Politics Through Independence

A contributing factor to the identity of Ghanaians before, during, and after the colonial period was ethnicity. There are about five major ethnic groups in Ghana, based, for the most part, on region. These groups consist of the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbane, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe. Prior to colonialism, ethnicity was the basis of political membership. The majority of governments in the Gold Coast were decentralized, creating a challenge for both the British and the future political leaders of Ghana. The modernization of political identity in Ghana posed a threat to the role of local governments and chieftaincies in Ghana. The transition of power from local to national governments affected the development of a national identity in Ghana under Nkrumah and his successors as political and social structures shifted from traditional arrangements to a more centralized structure.

In his book *Nkrumah and the Chiefs*, Richard Rathbone discusses the relationship between ethnic politics, and the various forms of government in place since independence. Rathbone's main focus is the struggle between the CPP and the chieftaincies in Ghana. The Pan-African ideals that Kwame Nkrumah was promoting while in office, along with the socialist form of government he was working to impose, clashed with the long standing traditions of ethnic cultures and political traditions. Pan-Africanism advocated for the unification of all African people. In order to achieve this however, throughout most of Africa, many pan-African leaders denounced the use of so-called tribal affiliation as an aspect of identity and Nkrumah saw the different ethnicities as a threat to the unification of Ghanaians as well as a threat to the power of the CPP.

With the development of nationalist movements in Africa and especially since gaining independence, the chieftaincy in Ghana was battling the modernization of Ghanaian identity and society. Clashes between ethnic groups and more centralized forms of governments began in the 16th century with the arrival of European powers. At this point ethnic groups heavily resisted colonial presence and rule. However, with the formalization of the Gold Coast as a British colony in 1874 there was a shift in the relationship between local and national government. For the first half of the 20th century the British were able to effectively control Ghana through indirect rule and established a positive relationship between the local chieftaincies and the central government.

However, not all Ghanaians supported indirect rule through chiefs. In the early 20th century, urbanization led to a more modern form of political affiliation. As this occurred the professional elite who occupied cities such as Accra and Cape Coast came to disagree with the relationship between the colonial and local governments. A divide emerged between urban and rural Ghanaians. As Rathbone explains, "It was understandably galling for [coastal African professional elite] to see their colonial rulers looking to mostly pre-literate chiefs rather than to educated men and women like themselves as stakeholders and auxiliaries in the evolving colonial enterprise."[44] With the modernization of society and politics in the post-independent period complications between urban and rural groups increased. As a result ethnic politics became stigmatized within the more modern urban society, leading to efforts to end the chieftaincy's involvement in state politics and adding to the development of the nationalist movement.

---

[44] Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs* (Oxford, Accra, Athens: James Currey, F. Reimmer Book Services, Ohio University Press, 2000), p. 11.

When the CPP was founded in 1949 tensions between nationalists and chiefly rule were coming to a head. Individuals of the CPP were clashing directly with chiefs who were supported by the British and this was simply fueling the CPP's desire for a more socialist state. The CPP began publicly attacking chiefs on the radio and in their national newspaper. At one point Nkrumah said, "'Those who join forces with the imperialists…there shall come a time when they will run away fast and leave their sandals behind them; in other words Chiefs in league with imperialists who obstruct our path…will one day run away and leave their Stools.'" Nkrumah's use of the word stool refers to the thrones of chiefs that symbolize the traditional power of ethnic politics and traditional society. This is obviously extremely threatening language against chiefly and imperial rule in Ghana. In response to these threats, chiefs throughout Ghana began to openly resist the CPP and their goals. In the summer months of 1950 chiefs gathered to establish an initiative designed to protect what they saw as their inherent right to lead their own people. At the same time, the CPP spread their opinion among other nationalists that the chiefs' claim to a fundamental right to power was not acceptable in the political atmosphere of the time. With the modernization of politics nationalists perceived chiefdoms as counterproductive to the development of Ghana.[45]

From1951 to1959, tensions between the local and national governments persisted in response to a shift in the purpose and power of the chieftaincy. Following the elections of 1951, the CPP continued efforts to deprive the chiefs of authority and influence in the government. These efforts began with trying to limit daily administrative powers and then moved on to restrict the Native Courts system. Prior to the central government's intervention in the local courts, chiefs were responsible for handling cases involving property and customary law. By 1957 the CPP had removed chiefs from local courts entirely. Rathbone writes, "The removal of

[45] Rathbone, 22-27.

chiefs from courts undermined them by denying them a formal role in conciliation and the maintenance of the ethical basis of customary law." Prior to the growth of the nationalist movement and the CPP coming to power, the Native Courts, run locally by chiefs, heard thousands of customary law cases and those involving minor offenses. By 1957 there were still local courts hearing similar cases, however of 139 Ghanaians serving on courts, only eight were considered chiefs, and these were undoubtedly "pro-CPP" chiefs according to Rathbone. [46]

Beginning in 1949 a transition of power took place between the local and national government. Despite the chief's loss of power, what they symbolized was not altered by the CPP's efforts to remove the chieftaincy from political involvement. Rathbone writes, "Chiefs had, however, always exemplified place and identity for many Ghanaians. Despite or possibly because of the onrush of modernization in the Gold Coast, people retained strong loyalties to their places of origin."[47] As more Ghanaians moved out of rural areas they held onto their ethnic identity, therefore allowing the chieftaincy and traditional government to continue as a symbolic structure. The chieftaincy may have lost power in the government but ethnicity continued on as a major basis of identity. Because of this, achieving a national identity, which was one of the main goals of the Nkrumah and the Pan-African movement, may have been hindered by Ghanaians' connections to ethnic affiliations and their histories.

Ethnic Identity in Social Relations Post-Independence

As previously stated, the breakdown of the relationship between central and local governments in the 1950s and 1960s did not replace the ethnic identity of Ghanaians. With the modernization of Ghanaian politics and social structure a dual system of life began to emerge in Ghana, consisting of a transitional relationship between traditional and modern structures.

---

[46] Rathbone, 48, 57-58.
[47] Rathbone, 65.

Rathbone refers to the development of a dual political system consisting of an ever-changing relationship between central and local governments. In the Library of Congress' country study of Ghana they refer to Ghana's social system as being "dual but interrelated in nature."[48] The study illustrates the differences between traditional society, modern society, and contemporary society, and how they correspond to each other. This section will discuss the affects that these three societies have on how Ghanaians identified themselves and built relationships in the post-colonial state.

In the 1960 census there were roughly 100 different linguistic and cultural groups recorded throughout Ghana. These groups can be divided between the five major ethnic groups listed previously. To the south and west of the Black Volta River the Akan ethnic group dominates, the Ewe group occupies southwestern Ghana, as well as the southern parts of Togo and Benin, the Guan have spread out over Ghana since 1000 A.D. and can now be found near the Black Volta and to the south along the southern plains of Ghana, the Mole-Dagbane group resides to the North of the Black Volta, and lastly the Ga-Adangbe inhabit the Accra Plains in the south. In traditional Ghanaian society, relationships and interactions were based upon ethnic groupings and an individual's tribe and ethnicity often determined ones involvement in society. However, with modernization occurring in the post-colonial period, there was a change in social interactions, the defining characteristics of relationships, and the defining aspects of one's role in society.[49]

The Library of Congress' country study on Ghana states, "Traditional society is one based on ancestral beliefs, customs, family relationships, and inherited status."[50] These communities were dictated by local and ethnic politics and can be defined more specifically by

---

[48] La Verle Berry, ed. *Ghana: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994) p. 90.
[49] *Ghana: A Country Study*, 79-88.
[50] *Ghana: A Country Study*, 90.

familial hierarchy. The beliefs, customs, family relationships, and status of individuals that defined traditional society did not disappear with the social and political developments in the 1950s, 60, and later. However, the defining characteristics that society adapted during political and social modernization, left traditional society to blend with modern, creating a contemporary Ghanaian identity.

Prior to the development of a more modern political system, Ghanaians' identity was based on ethnic affiliation. As discussed before, under British rule there was a positive and cooperative relationship between the colonial government and local ethnic governments. The colonial government was responsible for economic and political affairs on a large scale and chieftaincies were responsible for the same on a local scale. However, the modernization of Ghana after the independence period, changed relationships between Ghanaians politically and socially. To quote the country study, "In modern society, relationships are determined by achieved status, formalized education, membership in professional associations, and ethnic affiliation." This change was seen in the migration to urban areas, where life was no longer based on ethnic group or family hierarchy. Ethnic affiliation did play a role, however it no longer determined one's whole identity or role in society. For example, in traditional society, one's birth status could determine their role in the community. The modernization process created a new society "grafted onto traditional roots" and as a result "even those who [lived] primarily in the modern urban setting [were] still bound to traditional society through the kinship system and [were] held to the responsibilities that such associations [entailed]." The country study on Ghana defines this blend of societies as a "contemporary society".[51]

The transition from a traditional to modern society that took place throughout urban Ghana caused severe stress on the relationships between rural Ghanaians involved in local

---

[51] *Ghana: A Country Study*, 90.

government and urban professionals and politicians promoting nationalism. One of the greatest struggles of Ghanaians following independence would be to find a way to unite modern and traditional identity. A critical point to analyze and understand is how traditional culture and the chieftaincy survived the post-independence period and continued to play a role in Ghanaian identity.

Survival of Traditional Society and Ethnic Identity Post-Independence, 1960s and 1970s

Richard Rathbone introduces his book with a conversation on the resilience of the chieftaincy and ethnic identity in Ghana. Scholars' and historians' arguments concerning the survival of Ghanaian traditional society provides a dichotomy for the analysis of the changing role of and persistence of the chieftaincy. Rathbone believes that the chieftaincy is tenacious shown by its survival of the nationalist government's efforts to remove them from power completely. But he goes on to argue that that the survival is somewhat of a paradox.[52] David Apter, on the other hand, suggests that the presence of traditional society in modern Ghana can be attributed to the innovation and mutation of traditionalism.[53] In response Rathbone writes, "Just like the nationalists, [many first-rate scholars, both African and non-African] were convinced that chieftaincy was every bit as anachronistic as colonialism."[54] Yet traditionalism survived the post-independence period and continues to shape the identity of Ghanaians.

A more in depth analysis of the attacks on chieftaincy and the relationship between traditional society and modern government is necessary to understanding the survival of traditional society. In his article "The Role of Traditionalism in the Political Modernization of Ghana and Uganda" David Apter gives a comprehensive definition of traditionalism while

---

[52] Rathbone, 3.
[53] David Apter, "The Role of Traditionalism in the Political Modernization of Ghana and Uganda," <u>World Politics</u> Oct. 1960: 40.
[54] Rathbone, 3-4.

comparing and contrasting the experiences of traditional politics during the modernization in both countries. Apter defines traditionalism "as validations of current behavior stemming from immemorial prescriptive norms." He continues on to state that, "It is not that traditionalist systems do not change, but rather that innovation – i.e., extra-systemic action – has to be mediated within the social system and charged to antecedent values."[55] Essentially, the traditionalist society can exist as long as transformations take place within the new social system while keeping traditionalist perspective in tact. However, in Ghana the CPP was not willing to allow for traditionalist society to exist in the new socialist state, due to their efforts to develop a national Ghanaian identity. Yet, as Rathbone and Apter have made clear, traditional culture, and especially the chieftaincy, not only survived nationalist attacks, but it was able to transform itself to fit into the emerging contemporary society.

Apter believes that much of the struggle between the CPP and the chieftaincy was based on "which emerging group thought itself destined to inherit political power."[56] The opposing factions were the nationalists, the educated elite who believed they should have come into power after independence, and the chiefs who felt they had long-standing rights to inherit the power of the country. The focus of this discussion is the struggle between the chieftaincy and the CPP. The largest source of opposition to the new central government was from the Ashanti kingdom that helped to organize the National Liberation Movement (NLM). Although the NLM never overthrew the CPP and Kwame Nkrumah, it rose to become the third largest party in Ghana and after 1957 when Nkrumah made it illegal for political parties to be based on ethnicity, the NLM became the United Party, which continued to oppose the nationalist movement.

---

[55] Apter, "The Role of Traditionalism", 46.
[56] Apter, "The Role of Traditionalism", 55.

Apter's article, written in 1960, has a unique view of the struggle between the

modernizing politics of Ghana and the traditional politics of the pre-colonial and colonial state.

Apter writes,

> What, then, has political modernization meant in Ghana? Attacking
> tradition has resulted in the development of an 'organizational weapon'
> type of party which, constantly on the attack, probes for weaknesses in the
> system. It seeks to jostle the public into functionally useful roles for the
> pursuit of modernization. To prevent the loss of power, and to modernize
> as rapidly as possible, are the basic goals of those who have inherited the
> mantle of British power. Modernization has come to require a host of
> attitudes of mind and social organizations antithetical to traditional ways
> of doing things. Political modernization attacks head-on traditional ways
> of believing and acting.[57]

The paradox surrounding the survival of the chieftaincy is at the heart of Apter's discussions of

Ghana. Apter is critical of the government's inability to use ethnic identity as a tool to further the

modernization of Ghanaian culture, similar to the fusing of modern and traditional cultures in

order to develop a contemporary society as described in the country study. During the initial

years following independence, traditional society and local politics may have hindered the goals

of the CPP, nationalists, and pan-Africanists, however as Rathbone and the country study show,

the survival of traditional culture and society contributed to the eventual development of a

cohesive identity.

In the post-independent period the new government actively increased their central

control over the state. This included targeting opposition originating from farmers, other rural

groups, and especially the NLM. By 1958 the government was removing Ghanaian citizens who

they saw as a threat to the "public good" and in 1958 a formal draft of the Preventive Detention

Act was voted on by the cabinet. The CPP's official policy behind deportations was to rid the

country of illegal immigrants, however it became clear that the deportations were not only

---

[57] Apter, "The Role of Traditionalism", 58.

racially and ethnically biased, but also politically. Rathbone writes, "There is no doubt whatever that the party had resolved to destroy…the NLM by using deportation wherever it had even the merest excuse to do."[58] Because the CPP was increasing the power of the national government they began taking advantage of their newfound authority and repressing any and all opposition groups. This was a direct attack on chieftaincies and local politics because many of the opposing groups were founded on ethnic affiliation. Throughout the late 1950s the NLM and chieftaincies were under constant attack from the ruling government, yet eventually, instead of ceasing to exist, the chieftaincy evolved with an understanding from the state.

Despite the CPP's destructive efforts, the state realized a need for a different form of chieftaincy in the 1960s. Rathbone attributes this realization to the perseverance of the chieftaincy. Although this traditional form of government was not going to be done away with completely Rathbone writes, "This was to be a chieftaincy entirely dependent upon the government for its legitimacy, maintenance and survival and hence a chieftaincy that was to be a subset of the government itself."[59] With this compromise the chieftaincy would be more of a symbolism of ethnic affiliation and traditional society. Despite its dependency on the national government, this understanding allowed the chieftaincy to continue as a remnant from traditional society and affect the development of a new contemporary society that would affect the nationalization process in Ghana under the CPP.

The repeated attacks against the chieftaincy under the CPP allowed for a somewhat more positive relationship to exist between the national government and traditional local governments following the coup d'etat of 1966. Under the CPP's government, some chiefs were promoted, as a form of patronage, because they were loyal to Nkrumah. But when the NLC took over the state

---

[58] Rathbone, 106.
[59] Rathbone, 161.

they demoted and destooled chiefs that had been promoted by the CPP, and replaced them with the chiefs that had been in place prior to changes made by the CPP. The NLC did not reinstitute traditional chieftaincy though. Rather, the NLC established new district councils that could work with local governments controlled by the chiefs. The most important part of the NLC's relationship with the chieftaincy was that the central government no longer felt at all threatened by local government. Rathbone writes, "The CPP had left the NLC and later governments with a battered chieftaincy from which national politicians had little to fear. Chiefs were no longer a force on the national stage."[60] The CPP's relationship with the chieftaincy set the precedent for future governments on dealing with the merging of traditional society with modernization, and how to incorporate, or not incorporate, the chieftaincy into the developing government.

The transition of power from local to national governments and the cultural symbolization of the chieftaincy was one of the many ways power was centralized by the state in the wake of independence. Regardless of the attacks on traditional government, Apter and Rathbone show how traditional society survived and was incorporated into the developing contemporary society. Despite the eventual incorporation of ethnic identity into contemporary society, it continued to stand in the way of developing a national identity, hence the necessity to make it a weakened institution. Because of the lessened power of traditional government in the 1960s and 1970s, the nationalist movement was able to overcome the challenge ethnic identity presented, mainly by the reemergence and promotion of Pan-Africanism led by Nkrumah.

The consolidation of power by the CPP and the symbolization of ethnic identity also occurred in the national government's relationship with religious institutions in Ghana. Similar to Nkrumah's perceptions of the chieftaincy, he viewed Christian involvement in the state as a challenge to the implementation socialism, as well as a remnant of colonial rule. And analogous

---

[60] Rathbone, 162.

to the symbolization of the chieftaincy, stripping it of power but not cultural importance, Nkrumah personified his own power through the use of religious symbols. The modification made to the relationship between religion and the state was critical to the development of a national identity because it allowed both Nkrumah and Acheampong to acquire stronger followings and demonstrate their power. Though the two leaders treated religious involvement in the state very differently, both of their approaches illustrate religion's affect on the development of a national identity.

Chapter Three

Religion in the Development of the State

The role of religion in Ghanaian society and government has evolved enormously since the creation of the colonial state. Prior to the arrival of Europeans and missionaries as far back as the 15th century, traditional forms of religion were extremely integrated into political institutions. Local governments based on ethnicity were often merged with the religious leadership of the ethnic groups because the concept of a secular state had not yet developed in these communities. Once missionaries began spreading Christianity there was an amalgamation of Christian and traditional beliefs, creating a unique role for religion in society. Islam was present in the region around the 9th century creating a large following in the North. There have rarely been conflicts between Christian and Muslim followers, though they have played separate roles in the political culture. With the evolution of traditional society and the blending with modern, the role that religion played in the governments under Nkrumah and Acheampong varied, similar to the changes occurring with the chieftaincy. Nkrumah viewed traditional and formal religions as a threat to the development of his nationalism, and similar to his attempts to remove local governments from having a role in the national government, he attempted to resymbolize his own power, in order to replace the presence of traditional religion within the state. On the other hand, Acheampong depended on religious backing to demonstrate the strength of his administration. Due to its ever-changing role in the state, an analysis of the relationship between state and religion in the wake of independence is critical to understanding the development of a national identity.

Religion and its Role in Development

According to Clifford Geertz in his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, religion is capable of unifying a state because as a cultural subsystem, religion is able to affect the social relations within other social systems. In other words, religion seems to be at the center of a web of cultural subsystems. Geertz's definition includes chieftaincy due to its role in society and the religious symbolism that is often involved. Author Ebenezer Obiri Addo agrees with Geertz in his book *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion*, and states that chieftaincy itself is a religious symbol in Ghanaian culture. Parts of the chieftaincy were in fact seen as sacred, and almost godly. In order to assess the role of religious aspects of the chieftaincy in the development of a national identity accurately, it is necessary to evaluate the evolution of the relationship between society, religion, and the chieftaincy during the 1950s and 1960s. In th development of the nationalist movement the chieftaincy was struggling against the modernization of the state and was threatened by modern political developments, while the church was aiming to transform native culture to be more similar to Christian culture. More than being the center of cultural subsystems, religion was critical to the political and social development of the Ghanaian state in the late 1950s and through the 1960s, because it acted as a vehicle for the development of the nationalist movement.[61]

Religion and Politics in the 1960s

Kwame Nkrumah was faced with many challenges in the wake of the independence period in Ghana. He took it upon himself to transform Ghanaian social and political culture. Part of this process was determining the future role of with religious identity in Ghana. While ethnic identity partially opposed Nkrumah's goals to modernize and unite Ghana, religion was a basis

[61] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) p. 90.

of identity that Nkrumah could utilize in these efforts. Addo argues, "Religion is…a key variable that fuels Ghanaian politics, guides its direction and generates its successes."[62] As Nkrumah had to develop a strategy in dealing with ethnic politics and traditional society, he also needed to generate a way of incorporating and handling religion in Ghanaian culture. However, religion and the chieftaincy are deeply connected, therefore religion may not have been as great an asset to Nkrumah's plans as Addo believes. Yet, his research and arguments are critical to understanding the role of traditional religion in post-independence Ghanaian identity.

As a young child Kwame Nkrumah was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. Though his father was not associated with an organized religion, his mother had joined the Catholic Church as an adult. Nkrumah believes his political ideologies and religious beliefs to be unrelated: "Today I am a nondenominational Christian and a Marxist socialist and I have not found any contradiction between the two."[63] Nkrumah felt that the Christian and socialist ideologies did not conflict. However, traditional religions' connection with chieftaincies did oppose the development of a socialist state and the nationalist movement. In his efforts to dismantle the chieftaincy in order to build a stronger central government Nkrumah realized he could use the widespread religious views, especially traditional beliefs, of Ghanaians to help in his nation-building campaign. Religious symbolism eventually played a part in Nkrumah's personality cult taking on a role similar to that of religion in the chieftaincy.

Addo makes three main points pertaining to Nkrumah and religion. The first is "that Kwame Nkrumah's leadership and his management styles were based on his understanding of Ghanaian culture." Although this point is specific to religious culture in Ghana, the results of his misuse of the chieftaincy in the political evolution of the state proves that Nkrumah did not

---

[62] Addo, xi.
[63] Kwame Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957) p. 13.

necessarily understand his people, their needs, or the most efficient way of running the newly

independent nation. Addo's second point is that Nkrumah was successful very early in his

political career "due to his ability to resymbolize Ghanaian politics through religious symbols."

This process of resymbolization included using religious titles and comparing himself to

indigenous gods. However, Nkrumah's early success cannot simply be contributed to this. The

political atmosphere at the time was volatile and Nkrumah filled a void in society. Addo's third

point may be his most valid. He writes, "although he was far from perfect, on balance he made a

contribution that is lasting, one on which the future politics of Ghana can be based." This is

confirmed in James A. McCain's study of attitudes toward socialism in Ghana. He found that

both Ghanaian elites and the masses believed that socialism was the right type of government

and society for their country and their people. Kwame Nkrumah clearly left a strong political

legacy that survived in Ghana through the 1970s.[64]

Addo's general points pertain to this argument because they show that religion was such

a large part of Ghanaian identity that it allowed Kwame Nkrumah to use it in order to win

political popularity. Therefore, religion clearly played a role in the nation's development in the

1960s and 1970s. However, it is critical to understand whether or not there was a change in

religious identity during this period, and how this change may have influenced the future state of

Ghana. It is clear that political identity probably played the largest role in affecting the

development of a national culture, while the chieftaincy played against this. But according to

Addo, religion may have played just as large a role in determining the development of the

state.[65]

---

[64] Addo, 2.
[65] Addo, 99.

In his efforts to develop a unified state in the 1950s and 1960s Nkrumah dealt with many challenges. The modernization of Ghana after World War II led to developments in many political beliefs, which stood in opposition to Nkrumah's socialist perspectives and also created a negative relationship between the chieftaincy and modern politics. Addo sums up Nkrumah's challenges stating, "The problem can be stated as: How can we unite a nation of immensely diverse groups without resorting to repression and dictatorship?"[66] In order to succeed in developing a successful political and social state Nkrumah felt that it was necessary to overcome these challenges. In doing so he used religion and the Pan-African movement to benefit his political and social aspirations.

Religion as an institution was not being threatened by the new state like the chieftaincy and local governments were. Therefore, Nkrumah could use the religious structure to gain political authority and popularity. Addo states, "Nkrumah's ingenuity lay in his ability to capture the diverse religio-cultural reality of Ghanaians so these religions could act in concert 'to establish…a general order of existence' in the new political order." From Addo's perspective, using religion to benefit politics created a unified identity, however Nkrumah's use of religion also gave him power, while leaving in place a traditional form of identity. Religion was therefore critical to the success of Ghana in the post-independent state.[67]

Nkrumah's use of religion in the development of the state led to the emergence of a civil religion. Addo defines this as a "set of beliefs and practices designed to inspire and sustain the nation-state." A large part of the civil religion in Ghana was the pan-African movement but there was also a clear blending of traditional and modern societies emerging, including religious beliefs and structures. Addo claims that "one way to understand Nkrumah's leadership style is to

---

[66] Addo, 21.
[67] Addo, 18.

perceive him as resymbolizing Ghanaian traditional politics." However, the CPP's relationship and attempted destruction of the chieftaincy makes it difficult to see this as simply "resymbolizing" when he was in essence restructuring the entire political state and cultural identity of the masses. Through these changes, a conflict between Nkrumah and the church emerged.[68]

In 1929 the five leading Christian churches in Ghana formed the Christian Council. This institution promoted unity amongst Ghanaian Christians yet under British colonial rule it took on another function. With indirect rule in place the British took advantage of all leadership structures that could benefit the effectiveness of their control. Hence, the Christian Council became an active part of Ghanaian legislature. With the rise of Nkrumah and the CPP in the late 1940s and early 1950s, they perceived the Christian Council as a remnant of colonialist ideology. Once Ghana was officially independent in 1958 Nkrumah and the CPP began an attack against the Christian Council. In 1958 the Preventive Detention Act became law and stated that the government had the power to "arrest and detain any enemy of the state or any person who was a threat to state security, for up to five years." The CPP used this for political opponents but also for Muslim and Christian leaders within Ghana. This was shocking to the Christian Council who had been a large part of the political scene and legislature until Nkrumah became prime minister in 1951.[69]

In 1960 Nkrumah founded the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement (YPM) that "intended to replace the Boy and Girl Scout Movements which were regarded as relics of colonialism." Nkrumah states that the foundation was to ensure the present and future roles of young people in

---

[68] Addo, 47, 29.
[69] Addo, 136, 140-142.

Ghanaian affairs. However, the code and pledge of the institution raised concerns among many

groups that were already critical of the CPP. The code of the YPM stated:

> I sincerely promise to live by the ideals of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah,
> Founder of the State of Ghana and Initiator of the African Personality…. I believe
> that the dynamic Convention People's Party is always Supreme and I promise to
> be worthy of its ideals.[70]

The promotion of the supremacy of the CPP was a concern to political opponents as well as the

Christian Council. What the church found to be more alarming, however, was the divinization

and worship of Nkrumah as illustrated by the pledge of the YPM.

> Nkrumah is our Messiah…Karl Marx demonstrated the Christ, and so did Lenin
> of USSR, Ghandi of India, Mao of China and in our midst is Kwame Nkrumah.
> When our history is recorded, the man Kwame Nkrumah will be written of as the
> Liberator, the Messiah, the Christ of our day, whose great love for mankind
> wrought changes in Ghana, in Africa and in the world at large.[71]

It became very clear that the Preventive Detention Act of 1958 was created in order to

intimidate and dissuade criticism of this movement in particular. The use of deification was

shocking to the church, the chieftaincy, and others opposed to the CPP because the central

government had been secular since the arrival of the British. Traditional chiefs were often deified

and Nkrumah was using this in order to promote his own beliefs within the nation. One man in

particular from the Christian Council spoke out against the YPM. Bishop Reginald Rosevere

stated, "Not only myself, but all heads of churches in Ghana, are shocked by the godlessness of

this movement and by some of its phrases…" The CPP responded by deporting Rosevere in 1962

stating that "his 'presence in Ghana was not conducive to the public good.'" Nkrumah's

relationship with the church displayed the lack of tolerance he had for anything that may

challenge the nationalization of the state or the power of the CPP. The leader's use of religion to

gain political strength and help in nation-building efforts was specifically a use of the deification

---

[70] Addo, 143-144.
[71] Addo, 144.

process of the chieftaincy, rather than the incorporation of religious identity into the national

identity of the state. Nkrumah's conflicts with religion as well as the chieftaincy show he

intended on wiping society clean of all traditional and colonial forms of identity, attempting to

give all Ghanaians one national identity.[72]

Nkrumah failed in creating a stable political and economic state for many reasons. His

inability to incorporate all forms of identity, both modern and traditional, into the new society

that was forming was one of these reasons. In his article "The Castle and the Umbrella: Some

Religious Dimensions of Kwame Nkrumah's Leadership Role in Ghana" Darrell Reeck

discusses the challenges Nkrumah faced and why he failed in overcoming them. He writes,

"Nkrumah's downfall was precipitated in part by his inability or unwillingness to relate

government to the dominant value centers of politically relevant actors in Ghana in such a way as

to reduce value conflict and maximize legitimation." The "value centers" that Reeck refers to

consist of ways in which to legitimize the government by including cultural values of Ghanaian

society into the political state. Reeck describes eight possible sources of legitimization that were

available to Nkrumah: aspects of traditional culture including traditional religion, formal

religions (Christianity and Islam), values of the Ghanaian independence movement, aspirations

to material progress and development, common law traditions, pan-Africanist views of history,

Marxist views of human life and economy, and charismatic leadership. Nkrumah's relationship

between many of these sources was defined by conflict, especially with aspects of traditional

culture and traditional and formal religion. His inability to connect the development of the state

to traditional forms of government and furthermore his intense focus on charismatic leadership,

---

[72] Addo, 145.

Marxist ideology, and the pan-African movement in his attempt to legitimize his government led

to his failure to create a successful socialist state.[73]

Religion and Politics after Nkrumah

Conflicts with traditional and formal religion persisted throughout Nkrumah's time in

power, but then took on a new role in the political atmosphere of the state with the rule of

General Acheampong following the coups beginning in 1966. During Busia's rule from 1966 to

1972 religion did not play a large role in Ghanaian politics and the state. However, when

Acheampong took control after the coup that ousted Busia, formal and traditional religions began

to play a role in politics once again. In his article, "Religion and Politics in Ghana, 1972-1978:

Some Case Studies from the Rule of General I.K. Acheampong", John S. Pobee discusses the

rise in religious symbolism, mysticism, and religious terminology during Acheampong's time in

power.

Pobee discusses the role that religion played in the coups. The concept of predestination,

or the belief that God will intervene if necessary, was very popular throughout Ghana in

traditional African religion. Following the independence period Ghanaian masses were put

through tyrannical forms of government, yet the people did not revolt. Pobee attributes this lack

of protest to Ghanaians' beliefs in predestination. Pobee writes, "The concept of predestination

in traditional African religion and society seems to me, therefore, to contribute in a substantial

way to the apparent inactivity and inability of Ghanaians to act promptly to check tyranny."[74]

Ghanaians' belief in predestination hindered them from overthrowing governments because they

---

[73] Darrell Reeck, "The Castle and the Umbrella: Some Religious Dimensions of Kwame Nkrumah's Leadership Role in Ghana," <u>Africa Today</u>, Vol. 23 No. 4, Civil Religion in Africa (Oc.-Dec., 1976) p. 8-9.
[74] John S. Pobee, "Religion and Politics in Ghana, 1972-1978: Some Case studies from the Rule of General I.K. Acheampong", <u>Journal of Religion in Africa</u>, Vol. 17, Fasc. 1 (Feb., 1987), p. 45.

believed that it was God's business and that what was meant to be would be. Beliefs such as this

may have kept masses from protesting but there were attempted coup d'etats during

Acheampong's rule that were backed by spiritual advisors. Pobee believes that many groups who

planned to overthrow the government felt the need for spiritual backing. He writes, "The

impression is that when all the planning, military, financial, or otherwise has been done for a

coup d'etat, there was also need for a religious and metaphysical input or backing, as if to say a

coup d'etat was fought not only at the military and political levels but also at the spiritual

level."[75] Traditional religious beliefs therefore persisted throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s

when they were used as explanations and justification for political action.

In Africa, Christianity and Islam often mixed with traditional religions. Africans

incorporated their belief systems. This can be illustrated by General Acheampong's Catholic

faith that was laced with traditional beliefs. Acheampong's father was a devout Roman Catholic

and Acheampong attended two Roman Catholic schools during his education. He could therefore

be described as Christian in the formal sense, but was also inspired by traditional African

religious beliefs. When Acheampong overthrew Busia in 1972 he was a member of a "mystical

circle" that would serve as the "spiritual powerhouse behind the coup d'etat, praying for its

success and fighting it on the spiritual level."[76]

Once he assumed office on January 13, 1972 Acheampong stated, "'With effect from

today, I have taken over the administration of this country. I have support, both spiritual and in

men.'" The importance of the spiritual support was apparently critical to Acheampong and the

success of his coup. Many of the moves he made militarily and politically were due to advice

taken from spiritual advisors and going forward he believed spiritual backing to be essential to

---

[75] Pobee, 46.
[76] Pobee, 46.

the new government. One of the most noticeable inclusions of spirituality and religion in the new government was the name that the Acheampong's administration adopted. Colonel Acheampong chose to call his government the "National Redemption Council" (NRC). This had clear religious connotations and Pobee argues that he chose this in order to legitimize his government by stressing the religious backing of the military rule. Further proof of this is Acheampong's referral to his coup as a "sacred trust" during a speech he delivered to chiefs and other Ghanaians in 1972. Along with these, the advisors that Acheampong met during his time in the mystical circle ended up becoming heavily involved in the new government. One of the individuals became director of the Special Branch and used visions and meditations in telling them the administration to act. Pobee writes, "…the spiritual powerhouse was retained in the corridors of political power." In other words, as the new government officially took power following the coup, spiritual backing became a part of the new political system.[77]

Although Acheampong had a much clearer understanding of the role of religion in Ghanaian society than Nkrumah, Acheampong also had conflicts with religious institutions. For example, in May of 1977 Acheampong's military administration clashed with the three main universities in Ghana, resulting in the closure of the universities and strikes against the government. The students attending Ghanaian universities demonstrated against the government and were joined by teachers, lawyers, doctors, and others calling for a return to civilian rule in Ghana. Following the civil disruptions Acheampong declared a Week of Repentance for the country. This event raised many issues within the religious organizations. As Pobee writes, "Presumably General Acheampong thereby declared himself the conscience of the nation and thereby usurped the role of the religious institutions, especially the church." Ghana has always

---

[77] Pobee, 46-47.

been a secular state, yet the government appeared to be filling the role of a spiritual or religious ministry.[78]

The response of the church to the declared Week of Repentance was divided. Some churches took advantage of the week to discuss the issues of sin among their parishioners. In sermons many churches stated that the failing economy and the struggles of the nation were due to the "nation's departure from the Christian path." This response from the church added to the strength of Acheampong's administration and his own religious beliefs. Pobee writes,

> …their stance diverted attention from the economic causes of the nation's woes and to that extent, unconsciously absolved the government from responsibility for the nation's troubles…such preaching did not only fail to influence the government in its practical policies but also indirectly encouraged the religious and superstitious indulgences of General Acheampong by strengthening him in the belief that what was at stake was not the government, corrupt as it was, but the moral condition of the people.[79]

The role of religion in this issue complicated the political situation by drawing attention away from the matter at hand, the failure of the government. On the other hand, many church leaders resisted this concept, as Ghana is a secular nation and they saw it as a mockery of true religion and religious values. Outside of the capital city the Week of Repentance seemed to be largely ignored and both churches and Ghanaians were cynical of Acheampong's religiosity and his use of power. This event was undeniably a controversial issue between the church and the NRC administration.[80]

Following the protests by students and others in Ghana, the NRC realized the need to begin a process to return the country to civilian rule. Acheampong developed the idea of Union Government (referred to as Unigov by Pobee) to begin on this endeavor. In his article "Politics Without Parties: Reflections on the Union Government Proposals in Ghana" Maxwell Owusu

---

[78] Pobee, 49.
[79] Pobee, 49.
[80] Pobee, 49-51.

analyzes the concept of Unigov. Owusu writes, "The idea of a Union Government addresses the need for a constitutional 'third way,' for a representative democracy based neither on the Westminster-style two-party system nor on military rule, but on the tradition, values, and indigenous political beliefs, ideals, and practices of Ghanaians."[81] In promoting this new form of government Acheampong relied heavily on support from both Muslim and Christian leaders. Acheampong achieved support from essentially the entire Muslim nation of Ghana whose leaders stated, "'We overwhelmingly embrace the proposed Union Government which is in line with the basic principles of the Islamic concept that all men are equal and united.'"[82] This support was not necessarily purely religious as some of the Muslim chiefs promoting Unigov were involved in the NRC administration and therefore had a political agenda. Christian support of Unigov was not as widespread, though Acheampong did have a strong support system in Reverend Brother Charles Yeboah Korie who was the founder of the F'Eden Church. According to the church hierarchy, the church and its members were not supposed to join a political party or include promotions for political parties during sermons. Despite this, Reverend Korie was associated with Colonel Acheampong and his administration. In 1974 Korie served on a committee for the Charter of Redemption and throughout the next few years he heavily promoted Unigov, even appearing on TV to do a sermon in which he told all Christians to endorse the proposal. During this time opponents of Unigov and SMC were silenced using intimidation and harassment. These opponents were both political and religious, however leaders such as Kofie were given a seemingly unfair voice in the matter.

Nkrumah versus Acheampong

---

[81] Maxwell Owusu, "Politics Without Parties: Reflections on the Union Government Proposals in Ghana" African Studies Review, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Apr., 1979), p. 89.
[82] Pobee, 52.

When discussing the role of religion as a basis of identity in Ghana during this critical period, it is important to discuss the differences in use of religion between the Nkrumah and Acheampong administrations. Both of these leaders had unique relationships with religion and handled the challenges that religion presented very differently. In one case, religion was perceived as a barrier to the creation of a cohesive political state based on socialism, while in the other case religion was used in order to promote political strength. The relationship between religion and politics was very complex and undoubtedly affected the development of the state during the post-colonial period. What is critical to this paper overall is the knowledge that neither Nkrumah nor Acheampong were able to effectively change the religious identity of Ghanaians, rather they used this basis of identity to manipulate political power.

Nkrumah wanted to use the traditional deification methods of the chieftaincy to create a personality cult. Following independence, government in Ghana needed to be legitimized in order to take efficient control over the state. As Ebenezer Obiri Addo argues, "Religion can only exercise a powerful and effective function if its symbols are rooted in the dominant culture. Because Nkrumah perceived his leadership challenge in terms of national integration he cast himself as a chief with all the rites, pomp, ceremony, and splendor…"[83] Nkrumah perceived the chieftaincy as a thing of the past and attempted to remove it, yet all the while resymbolizing traditional Ghanaian politics and religion in order to benefit himself. Darrell Reeck believes Nkrumah did not accurately assess the importance of certain value centers, or identity factors, in his process of legitimizing political power. If he had, he may not have suppressed religion within the political realm and allowed for a more open voice of religion, rather than a relationship in which he took advantage of traditional beliefs in order to deify himself.

---

[83] Addo, 40.

Acheampong, who had stronger religious beliefs than Nkrumah, depended on religious backing to demonstrate the strength of his administration. Acheampong was able to realize the importance of religion in the everyday lives of the Ghanaian masses. Although the relationship between church and state should have been more separate in Ghana, as it is a secular nation, Acheampong did not try and suppress religion. Despite his clashes with the church due to his use of religious rhetoric in order to try and dissuade the public from criticizing his failures as a political figure, he allowed Ghanaian religion to continue on as a major form of identification and recognized its value to Ghanaians.

The differences between Kwame Nkrumah and Colonel Acheampong illustrate the extent to which religion was important within both the secular and sacred realms of Ghana. Religion is a major part of Ghanaian society, as almost the entire population is a member of some sort of religious belief system. With the modernization of the state, religion served more as a belief system than as a way of life, compared to its role in more traditional times and within the chieftaincy. Though religion was still critical, as shown by its role in the political development of Ghana in the post-colonial period.

Nkrumah's efforts to remove power from the chieftaincy and minimize religious involvement in the central government were motivated by his goal to develop a cohesive national identity in Ghana. Although he failed in implementing a successful socialist state, Nkrumah was able to achieve the development of a national identity due to his promotion of the Pan-African movement. Ghana's involvement in Pan-Africanism allowed for a unified state identity to evolve, despite the state's attacks against other cultural forms of identity.

Chapter Four

Pan-Africanism and Nkrumah

Origins of the Pan-African Movement

In the post-colonial era, newly independent nations and their leaders were challenged with determining how to liberate their states from weakness, dependence, and conflict. Kwame Nkrumah was one of the first leaders to try and approach these issues from a more global perspective. He believed that if Africa could become one global African community with a focus on common heritage and history, the nations within Africa could begin to strengthen in the wake of independence. This philosophy originated from the Pan-African movement, which Nkrumah promoted throughout Africa and allowed him to succeed in creating a cohesive national identity in Ghana.

The Pan-African movement is important in the understanding of identity in Ghana in the post-colonial period because it affected the ideology of both political leaders and the masses. Pan-Africanism is based on developing a sense of unity, while promoting community and organization, which were foundations of Nkrumah's socialist and nationalist movements as leader of the new independent state of Ghana. The Pan-African movement may have greatly altered the concept of an African identity amongst Ghanaians, who served as an example for Africans throughout the continent who were attempting to achieve independence.

In his book *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa*, German author Imanuel Geiss attempts to give readers a comprehensive definition of the movement and to help readers understand more fully its affects in the 20th century based on a concrete historical foundation. Geiss believes that the Pan-African movement as it is today began to evolve between 1900 and 1945 and from then on became even stronger as African nations saw the potential to achieve independence from colonial rule becoming more of a reality. The period of 1900 to 1945, and even more so after was a spark for the Pan-African movement mostly due to the process of decolonization. Geiss writes, "…[rising interest in the history of Pan-Africanism] is a product of history itself, especially Africanism to achieve its first successes, which in turn led people to inquire into the historical roots of a movement which seemed to have appeared from nowhere."[84] Pan-Africanism had originated wherever diasporas of Africans occurred. For example, in the United States there was a growing support of the Pan-African movement throughout slavery. Despite its long history, Pan-Africanism did not become a mainstream philosophy and movement until the decolonization period in Africa. Under leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, and others, the Pan-African movement was able to take a firm hold throughout Africa and the western world.

Geiss states that Africans did not have an image of one cohesive African identity or a concept of a shared geographic location because many Africans did not have widespread contact, and identity was formed on a smaller more local scale. The concept of having one identity for all Africans was a foreign notion. The concept of this widespread identity derived from Afro-American slaves. Geiss writes, "The Afro-Americans adopted the image of Africa held by their White masters, who as outsiders recognized a unity in Africa and Africans which was all but

---

[84] Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1968), p. 425.

hidden from those who actually lived on that continent."[85] The evolution of Pan-African philosophy may have began developing first in America under the notions of racism, however the concept of a unified identity, would soon have a greater effect on Africans than on the African American population.

The origins and development of Pan-Africanism in Ghana

Nationalism was a strong movement in Ghana prior to independence in 1957. It began as a local phenomenon in the late nineteenth century as ethnic groups such as the Fanti developed nationalist ideals and clashed with British colonial rule. Through the early and mid-twentieth century nationalism became a more widespread idea and was one of the major contributing factors to the development of Pan-Africanism in West Africa. Immanuel Geiss attributes the growth of Gold Coast nationalism and the establishment of an atmosphere beneficial to the growth of Pan-Africanism, to Fanti nationalism.

The first political group founded on nationalist ideology emerged in 1889 by the Fanti, called the Fanti National Political Society. Nationalism first emerged during this time as tribal nationalism, but it gave the nation a basis for a greater form of nationalism to develop as they moved out of the colonial period. Coinciding with political developments there was also a change in social values that contributed to the rise of African nationalism as well. At the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth ethnic groups stopped using European names and reverted to African ones, showing a break in colonial identity for Africans in the Gold Coast colony. There was also a movement to return to traditional clothing. Geiss refers to this as a

---

[85] Geiss, 26.

59

romantic reaction to culture and politics, as opposed to an Europeanization of society in the Gold Coast.[86]

Pan-Africanism and Culture in Ghana

In the book *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered*, the editors and contributing authors compiled speeches, papers, and comments from the Third Annual Conference of the American Society of African Culture in June 1960. A majority of the contributing authors and speakers discussed education, social thought, art, and other aspects of African culture, as opposed to focusing on the political and economic aspects of the early 1960s and their relationship with the Pan-African movement. The Pan-African movement originated as a cultural movement to unify African people based on race, a common history and common goals for the future, however with the complexity of the decade surrounding independence, the cultural value of the Pan-African movement seemed to have been lost. *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered* sheds light on the cultural aspects of the movement as it was occurring in the early 1960s.

A large topic of discussion at the Third Annual Conference of the American Society of African Culture was the issue of the "Africanization" of higher education in African nations. Scholars and other educational leaders throughout Africa recognized the changing needs of nations that were newly independent, and saw this reflected in a need to change parts of the educational system, which had been institutionalized by colonial powers. The most important part of the development of African education was to be able to provide nations with skilled professionals and civil servants in order to support the progress of the state. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah felt threatened by the state universities as he felt there was an anti-government attitude

---

[86] Geiss, 61.

emerging from its students. For Nkrumah, politics and education were directly connected as he used education to promote his own ideologies and to benefit the Pan-African movement.[87]

Similar to Nkrumah's establishment of an institution to promote his political ideologies in Ghana, a large part of Nkrumah's involvement in the Pan-African movement was to develop a significant African Studies program. In December of 1962 African scholars from all over the world were invited to Accra to discuss "how best to set about [the] great task of promoting scholarship and research into Africa's history, culture, thought and resources." During this time, Nkrumah and other Pan-African leaders were trying to find ways to incorporate Africa into the global economic and political realm. It was their goal to unite Africa in order to create a strong "United States of Africa." Part of this process was improving the knowledge and education of Africans with an emphasis on their own common history. During his speech at the Congress of Africanists in 1962 Nkrumah stated, "Education must enable us to understand correctly the strains and stresses to which Africa is subjected, to appreciate objectively the changes taking place, and enable us to contribute fully in a truly African spirit for the benefit of all, and for the peace and progress of the world." Nkrumah's push for widespread independence from colonialism during the 1950s and 1960s allowed him to play a large role in the Pan-African movement. He used the common colonial experience as a building block for a common background throughout Africa in order to develop a shared identity.[88]

At the Third Annual Conference of the American Society of African Culture Kwa Owuna Hagan, the National Secretary of the People's Education Association in Ghana agreed with the importance of stressing the Africanization of education that Nkrumah implies. However, he distinguishes his beliefs from Nkrumah's stating,

---

[87] *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered*, ed. American Society of African Culture (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962) 223.
[88] *Revolutionary Path*, 206, 212.

> When our own university started in Ghana there was a Department of African Studies. But soon the question arose: What are you doing with a separate department for African studies? The university belongs to the country, and it should concern itself with the life of the country in all phases of study.[89]

Hagan encouraged the Africanization of all education in African universities as opposed to creating an institution or department solely for the purpose of African Studies. Despite the differing opinion concerning how to accomplish improving African education, Ghana was a leader in this part of Pan-Africanism, a lot of which can be attributed to Nkrumah's efforts.

The philosophies and ideologies of the Pan-African movement were clearly developing in Ghana and were promoted by Nkrumah's institutions for the youth of Ghana. Nkrumah perceived the most important philosophy behind Pan-Africanism as the "strong disapproval of colonization" which led to questions such as: should there be a return to traditional or indigenous politics and culture? Is African nationalism and communism undemocratic and how are they related? Pan-Africanism directly promoted an acknowledgment of traditional culture in modern African society. As shown by Nkrumah, there would not be a return to indigenous political rule or culture, but the movement would be used to attempt to unite the people of Africa. African culture and social thought was what led to the resurgence in the Pan-African movement. With Nkrumah leading the movement and Ghana's strong nationalism and anti-colonial sentiment, these aspects inspired the movement and massive decolonization.[90]

Pan-Africanism and Politics in Ghana

Throughout the beginning of the twentieth century Pan-Africanism continued to develop throughout Africa, Europe, and the United States. The movement was affected by the struggle for equality by African Americans as well as by Africans in European colonies. From 1900 to

---

[89] *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered*, 223.
[90] Pan-Africanism Reconsidered, 244.

1945 Pan-Africanism fully evolved into the movement that was used by leaders throughout Africa to push for independence and unity. Beginning with the Pan-African Conference of 1900 the movement took shape as effective and organized and this progress continued as shown by the creation of the Pan-African Congress, the French Negritude movement, and the "reawakening" of Pan-Africanism in the 1940s. This reawakening and reemergence of the Pan-African movement was led by Kwame Nkrumah, and directly affected the experiences of Ghana in the post-colonial period.

A critical piece of Kwame Nkrumah's political leadership and power was his ability to mobilize and organize the masses in Ghana. He did this by using the changes going on in Ghana during the independence period to instill new ideas and concepts throughout the people. Part of his socialist and nationalist movement was his promotion of Pan-African ideology. In his book *Revolutionary Path* he describes the idea of an "African Personality" that was emerging during the colonial and post-colonial period. He writes,

> An important aspect of Pan-Africanism is the revival and development of the 'African Personality', temporarily submerged during the colonial period. It finds expression in a re-awakening consciousness among Africans and peoples of African descent of the bonds which unite us – our historical past, our culture, our common experience, and our aspirations.[91]

Following independence in Ghana, Nkrumah turned his attention to the rest of Africa. He wanted to unify Africans culturally and spiritually, as well as politically under the banner of socialism. The concept of the unification of Africans according to the Pan-African movement was positive, yet the results of his promotion of the ideology may not have been effective or positive in Ghana or the rest of the continent.

Following the coup of 1966 Nkrumah was associated with despotism, economic failure, and his unique ideology. However, now his legacy is as the first president of an independent

---

[91] *Revolutionary Path*, 205.

African nation and as a leader of the Pan-African movement. His son, Francis Nkrumah, spoke to the *Global Post* in 2006 and said, "'As the years have gone by and Ghanaians have realized the depth of what he was trying to achieve, not only for Ghana but for the rest of Africa, his image has undergone a resurgence…'"[92] The effectiveness of the Pan-African movement under Nkrumah's leadership was minimized by his authoritarian rule and self-obsessed image. Geiss writes, "'Nkrumahism'…[was] too obviously designed to further the Pan-African glorification of Nkrumah. They were, so to speak, an extension of the cult of personality to the Pan-African plane, and thus failed to yield the desired effect."[93] Throughout the 1960s Nkrumah became more focused on promoting himself and his social and political ideologies. It is difficult to know if the overarching goals of Pan-Africanism could have been successful under better leadership. However, the impact of Pan-Africanism with regards to Ghanaians and others at the time of independence was significant, explaining why Nkrumah's reputation has become positive once again.

In 1958, Nkrumah held a conference in Accra attended by the leaders of Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia. These eight countries represented the self-governing states present in Africa who accepted invitations to the meeting to call for African independence. Nkrumah was not only promoting African independence, but he was also pushing for unity and nation-wide peace in order to give newly independent African nations an environment in which they could develop according to their own ways of life, customs, traditions, and cultures. This meeting was referred to as the Accra Conference of 1958 and was the first time "African cooperation was discussed at governmental level and the first time that African governments…called on the colonial authorities to apply the principle of self-

---

[92] Ken Maguire, "Ghana re-evaluates Nkrumah", Global Post, October 21, 2009. February 1, 2011.
<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/ghana/090925/ghana-honors-nkrumah-statue-moammar-gadhafi>
[93] Geiss, 423.

determination to their African possessions."[94] Going into the 1960s was a critical time in Africa as many more nations approached independence from their colonial powers, and throughout all of this Nkrumah, Ghana, and her people would be the guiding example for a successful independence.

Following the Accra Conference of 1958 a meeting of the All-African People's Conference (AAPC) was held in Accra as well. Nkrumah spoke of the importance of other African nations following in the footsteps of Ghana and stated "the independence of Ghana would be meaningless unless it was linked up with the total emancipation of the continent." During the reemergence of Pan-Africanism in the late 1950s and 1960s Ghana, especially Accra, served as a home to Pan-African leaders and symbolized what all nations were trying to achieve. At the meeting in 1958 Nkrumah also preached "achieve first 'the political kingdom: all else [will] follow'" which was the motto of Nkrumah's socialist movement while Ghana was trying to achieve independence. All together sixty-two nationalist groups were represented at the conference and returned to their countries with motivation to achieve independence. Following the meeting of the AAPC, Ghana and in particular Nkrumah, helped countries begin to move towards independence by supporting them financially and influencing them politically. In particular, Ghana financially supported the newly independent Guinea, as they struggled to succeed in the wake of the removal of colonial powers. Sekou Toure, the president of Guinea was clearly inspired by Nkrumah and the movement. Esedebe writes, "On his return to Conakry, the capital of Guinea, Sekou Toure claimed that his visit had blazed a trail for African independence and solidarity that he hoped would be translated 'into a common co-operation and action in all fields to realize rapidly a United States of Africa.'" Moving into the 1960s the

---

[94] P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991* (Washington, Howard University Press, 1980) p. 167.

cooperation between African nations working to achieve a common goal of independence and unity increased. However, during the coming decade weaknesses would emerge in the movement, some originating from Nkrumah himself, while others developed from within the movement.[95]

One of the weaknesses of Pan-Africanism began to emerge in 1960 as a polarization developed between leaders of the movement. Between 1958 and 1960 unions emerged between Guinea and Ghana and then again between Guinea, Ghana, and Mali. Nkrumah, Toure, and Modibo Keita, the president of Mali at the time, proclaimed their "states as the nucleus of a future United States of Africa" This union became the foundation for the Union of African States (UAS) which moved to support the anti-colonial struggle specifically in Algeria, the Congo, and Angola and to cooperate amongst each other politically and economically. The political and economic goals of the UAS were especially complicated as the official languages of the union were French and English, they did not have a common currency, and following independence the three states had "widely differing levels of development." The results of the UAS in trying to achieve their goals fell below the hopes of the union, however it is undeniable that the founding of the UAS was politically significant "for it represented the first attempt to bridge the gap between French-and-English-speaking territories in West Africa and by extension the entire continent." Despite the positive aspects of the UAS, the union ended up leading to a rift in the Pan-African movement during the 1960s. The era of independence was politically complex and led to disagreements between leaders of Pan-Africanism.[96]

The polarization between leaders of the movement emerged among Nkrumah, Toure, and Keita of the UAS and the president of Liberia, William Tubman on the other end of the

---

[95] Esedebe, 168-169.
[96] Esedebe, 171-172.

spectrum. When developing their goals and mission statement, the UAS took an aggressive stance on achieving independence. Nkrumah especially promoted "rapid decolonization and speedy unification of the fatherland." Tubman, along with others, believed in a "cautious and gradual approach." This is not to say that Tubman and those who agreed with him were any less committed to the Pan-African movement and unification of Africa. However, the volatility of the independence era made it difficult for countries to accomplish rapid decolonization resulting in political and economic stability. This divide in the movement led to the overall failure of accomplishing the goal of unification stated by the Pan-African movement. The goals of the Pan-Africanism may have been unrealistic from the time that Nkrumah took a leadership position, as all African nations were at such different political and economic states during the 1950 and 1960s.[97]

The split in the movement surrounding the general approach to gaining independence led to opposing opinions concerning the best ways to achieve unity between African nations, and how relationships should be developed between independent states and countries still under colonial control. Nkrumah played a large role in magnifying these divides as he became hungry for more power. In 1960 Nkrumah tried to convince the Ewe ethnic group in Togo to join with the Ewe in Ghana, therefore in Nkrumah's opinion adding to Ghanaian strength and solidarity. However, this was in direct opposition to Togo's attempts to maintain cohesion within their own state. Yusuf Mataima Sule of Nigeria interpreted Nkrumah's aggressive approach to Pan-Africanism as a "device to make Nkrumah ruler of the entire continent" and contributed the growing weakness of the movement to "'individual ambition and greed for power.'" This opinion corresponds with the developments occurring in Ghana surrounding Nkrumah's growing

---

[97] Esedebe, 172.

personality cult. As Nkrumah's personal aspirations weakened Ghana in the 1960s, they seemed to have the same effect on Pan-Africanism.[98]

Throughout the early 1960s Ghana continued to serve a controversial role in the movement. As the 1960s went on it became clear that there would not be one unified Africa, mainly due to opposing political positions of developing states and new governments. The main point of difference was around rapid decolonization or a more gradual approach, as Tubman recommended. As time went on, Ghana and Togo were still at odds over the situation with the Ewe, and other nationalist leaders became frustrated with Nkrumah's selfish efforts. In his book *A History of Postwar Africa*, John Hatch writes,

> Many fellow nationalists resented the impression that Nkrumah was staking a claim to lead the whole continent, particularly when his diplomacy seemed to be interfering in their international affairs and considerable groups of their younger generation looked to him as their militant inspiration.[99]

At the beginning of the reemergence of the Pan-African movement Nkrumah took a leadership role in order to promote African unity, yet as time went on, Nkrumah used his leadership position within the CPP as well as the movement to gain power and influential scope. Nkrumah's involvement in the movement during his time as president may have contributed to his downfall, as his opposition became more frustrated with his attempts to gain more power.

The two Pan-African groups that emerged just before 1963 were the conservative Casablanca group and the radical Monrovia-Brazzaville group. At a meeting in Addis Ababa in 1963 a compromise was reached between the two groups with the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Nkrumah accepted the formation of the OAU as a settlement between the two for the time being and stopped promoting the idea of a union government for the entire

---

[98] Esedebe, 175.
[99] John Hatch, *A History of Postwar Africa* (New York and Washington, 1965), 400.

continent. However, as time went on Nkrumah began to lose influence over newly independent states and Giess writes:

> Nkrumah became more and more isolated in Africa, since his Pan-African programme was all too obviously designed…to satisfy his personal ambition. He was suspected of trying to promote the unification of Africa by subversive means, so that he alienated all his neighbors near and far.[100]

Other nationalists' opinions of Nkrumah demonstrate the lack of solidarity in the Pan-African movement. Between 1960 and 1962 dozens of African nations were decolonized, therefore adding to the political and economic complexity of the period. The leaders of Pan-Africanism were unable to come to a common platform, therefore weakening the movement as a whole. Geiss believes that the Pan-African movement collapsed with the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966. This was preceded by a collapse of the All-African Trade Union Federation, which was too dependent on the Ghanaian economy, which failed during the 1960s. While Nkrumah's failure in Ghana was due to internal and domestic reasons, it directly led to the disintegration of Pan-Africanism as a political movement. Along with poor leadership, Pan-Africanism was challenged by the modernization of society and politics that accompanied decolonization.

Pan-Africanism and National Identity in Ghana

To the people of Ghana, Pan-Africanism served as a way of promoting their successes and freedom, and their goals for the future. Nkrumah's relationship with Ghanaians was both positive and negative, as he was supported by the masses of youth but misunderstood by elites and traditional leaders alike. However, the Pan-African movement could be supported by all, and was therefore a vehicle for Nkrumah to promote himself but also a way for Ghanaian people to feel proud of what they had accomplished, as well as connected to the rest of Africa.

---

[100] Geiss, 421-422.

Pan-Africanism was the most significant factor in developing a Ghanaian national identity in the wake of colonialism. Despite Nkrumah's conflicts with instituting a socialist state, trying to improve the economy, trying to remove the chieftaincy and traditional culture, and removing religious influence in the government, the first president of the independent state of Ghana ultimately created a cohesive state with a shared identity. In his midnight speech from the pronouncement of Independence on March 6, 1957 Nkrumah stated:

> We must realize that from now on we are no more a colonial but a free and independent people. But also, as I pointed out, that entails hard work. I am depending upon the millions of the country, the chiefs and people to help me to reshape the destiny of this country…We are going to see that we create our own African personality and identity…[101]

Nkrumah perceived independence from colonialism as just the first step in creating a new state. The next was promoting independence throughout the rest of Africa so Ghanaian independence would not be meaningless, and during all of this the nation would attempt to find a cohesive identity to promote Africanism throughout the world, and to make Ghana culturally and politically stronger than ever before.

Regardless of Nkrumah's political, economic, and social failures, Ghana succeeded in inspiring other African nations to push for independence, and promoting unity throughout the continent. This would not have been possible had Nkrumah not been an advocate of the Pan-African movement and nationalism. Ghanaians' opinions of Nkrumah during the 1960s did become negative due to his clashes with local government, the collapse of the economy, and the growth of his personality cult. However, during the 1970s a positive image of Nkrumah and his political and social efforts in Ghana reemerged. Although Pan-Africanism struggled with internal divisions and ultimately failed in creating a United States of Africa, its impact cannot be disregarded. Pan-Africanism created a social atmosphere in which nationalism could prosper and

---

[101] *Revolutionary Path*, 121.

due to Nkrumah's involvement Ghanaians especially benefited from the movement and its philosophies.

In his article "The Pan-African Movement: The Search for Organization and Community" Charles F. Andrain analyzes the goals of the Pan-African movement and how they were not realistic due to the status of African states in the post-colonial period. Similar to the necessity of uniting a nation's groups that Addo believes is the largest challenge facing post-independence African leaders, Andrain states that, "The problem facing Pan-African leaders consists of integrating diverse African elements into a transterritorial community." The goals of the African nations involved in the Pan-African movement, were very diverse, and they were all subject to different political and economic factors. Different factions, such as the UAS, the Monrovia-Brazzaville group, and the Casablanca all had differing approaches to Pan-Africanism, therefore leading to rifts within the movement. Andrain classifies the different Pan-African motives as: "the desire to attain economic and social progress though pragmatic, or functional unions," to "establish a sense of cultural heritage of a pre-colonial past," and groups motivated by ideological considerations. Ghana falls into the classification of promoting the ideology of the Pan-African movement. Andrain believes that the resurgence of Pan-African ideology in the 1950s and 1960s emanated directly from Nkrumah and Ghana.[102]

Nkrumah's beliefs of an African consciousness drew directly from the universal philosophies of Pan-Africanism. Derived from the identity that Afro-Americans developed in response to the perceptions that whites had of Africans, Nkrumah took this and expanded upon it. Nkrumah's approach to Pan-Africanism was to spread the ideology that had been developing since the 19th century fused with political motivations for independence. Andrain writes, "After

---

[102] Charles F. Andrain. "The Pan-African Movement: The Search for Organization and Community." Phylon 1960: 6-9.

the Gold Coast became independent in 1957, Nkrumah associated that former colony's independence with the more universal mission of spreading the ideology of a Pan-African political consciousness."[103] Achieving independence became directly associated with Pan-Africanism, allowing Ghana to come to the forefront of the movement.

Nkrumah's involvement in the Pan-African movement directly affected nationalism and the development of identity in Ghana. The challenges that Nkrumah and his successors faced were typical of a post-colonial state, yet Ghana was able to achieve a unified community due to the nationalist movement and Pan-Africanism. The process of nation building in Ghana was undoubtedly hindered by Nkrumah's attempts to implement a socialist state, but the connection he developed between nationalism and the central government allowed for Pan-African ideologies to progress in Ghanaian society.

---

[103] Andrain, 8.

Conclusion

In this thesis I analyze the relationships between politics, ethnicity, and religion in the processes of nation building. Following independence Kwame Nkrumah was faced with the challenge of helping Ghana modernize politically, economically, and socially. Through this process, Nkrumah aimed to build a national identity through the promotion of nationalism and the Pan-African movement, though the difficulties of incorporating traditional culture and other elements of society into the new political and social atmosphere proved to be a restriction on modernization and the development of a unified nation. Despite the challenges facing Nkrumah and his successors, Ghanaian identity was directly affected by the political and social developments of the 1950s and 1960s.

The changes Nkrumah made to the state of Ghana can be generally described as a transition of power and political restructuring. In his implementation of socialism, Nkrumah attempted to redefine the political identity of Ghana. Although this was unsuccessful due to his personality cult and the volatile political atmosphere present in the wake of independence, socialism failed Ghana both politically and economically. However, Nkrumah's successors did

not develop a political culture based on any particular ideology, therefore leaving socialism to be the most prevalent political ideology in the 1960s and 1970s.

Similar to his restructuring of the political identity in Ghana, Nkrumah initiated a transition of power from local to national government. Nkrumah's attack against the traditional form of government, the chieftaincy, was in order to give the central government more power, and promote political and social nationalism in Ghana. The removal of power from the chieftaincy by the CPP allowed for the central government under both Nkrumah and his successors to be unthreatened by local government. This process also illustrates the cultural and religious resymbolization of the chieftaincy under Nkrumah. Similar to the transition of power from the chieftaincy under Nkrumah, he also removed all political power from the church and used traditional religious symbols in order to deify himself. The relationship between religion and state changed under Acheampong however as he realized he could use religion in order to increase the power of the central government, and himself without stripping the church and chieftaincies of cultural value.

Nkrumah's relationships with Ghanaian cultural elements in the post-colonial period were dictated by his desire to spread nationalist ideals throughout society. In doing so, he did not realize what including traditional cultural values could contribute to the national identity, and therefore attacked both religious and traditional institutions. However, in the 1970s there was a reemergence of support for Nkrumah, and socialism and nationalism still persisted as popular ideologies. This indicates that although Nkrumah may not have succeeded in instituting a socialist state, and undoubtedly tried to replace traditional culture with modern elements, the nationalist ideology that he promoted succeed in creating a unified identity for Ghanaians.

In Addo's case study of Nkrumah and religion in Ghana the author analyzes the role of

Ghanaian culture in nation building. He writes,

> "Nation building…'emphasizes the cultural aspects of political development. It refers to the process by which people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller tribes, villages, or petty principalities to the larger central political system.'"[104]

Nkrumah's approaches to excluding the chieftaincy and traditional culture, and removing

religion from political involvement in Ghana, were attempts to transfer loyalty from smaller

political and social systems to the national government. However, his conflicts in doing this may

have hindered the nation building process initially. The political and social complexity of the

1950s and 1960s served as an obstacle in the overarching goals of nationalism and Pan-

Africanism, yet eventually, it appeared that more than any of the cultural and social

developments occurring post-colonialism, Nkrumah's leadership made the most significant

impact in Ghanaian identity and culture.

---

[104] Addo, 21.

Works Cited

Addo, Ebenezer Obiri. *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion*. Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1997, 1999.

American Society of African Culture, ed. *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962.

Andrain, Charles F. "The Pan-African Movement: The Search for Organization and Community." <u>Phylon</u> 1960.

Apter, David E. *Ghana In Transition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Apter, David E. "The Role of Traditionalism in Political Modernization of Ghana and Uganda." <u>World Politics</u> October 1960.

Asante, Kojo Pumpuni. "Kwame Nkrumah: A Pan-African Theoritician." Modern Ghana. July 1, 2003. October 2010. <http://www.modernghana.com/news/112221/1/kwame-nkrumah-a-pan-african-theoritician.html>

Assensoh, A.B. *African Political Leadership: Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius K. Nyerere*. Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 1998.

Awoonor, Kofi Nyidevu. *Ghana: A Political History from Pre-European to Modern Times*. Accra: Sedco Publishing Limited and Woeli Publishing Services, 1990.

Berry, La Verle, ed. *Ghana: A Country Study*. Washinton: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994.

Commander, Michelle D. "Ghana at Fifty: Moving Toward Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-African Dream." <u>American Quarterly</u> June 2007.

Esedebe, P. Olisanwuche. *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991*. Washington: Howard University Press, 1980.

"Ethnic Groups." Ghana Web. February 25, 2011. January 2011.
<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/tribes/>

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Geiss, Imanuel. *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa*. New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1968.

"Ghana." New York Times. July 17, 2009. October 2010.
<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/ghana/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=ghana&st=cse.>

"Ghana At 50." Ghana at 50. 2007. March 15, 2011. < http://www.ghana50.gov.gh/ghana50/>

Hatch, John. *A History of Postwar Africa*. New York and Washington: Deutsch, 1965.

"Know More about Ghana." Ghana Government Portal. February 25, 2011. October 2010.
<http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1237:know-more-about-ghana&catid=92:ghana-at-a-glance&Itemid=238>

Maguire, Ken. "Ghana re-evaluates Nkrumah." Global Post. October 21, 2009. February 1, 2011.
<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/ghana/090925/ghana-honors-nkrumah-statue-moammar-gadhafi>

Mazrui, Ali. "Nkrumah: The Leninist Czar." <u>Transition</u> 1966.

McCain, James A. "Attitudes Toward Socialism, Policy and Leadership in Ghana." <u>African Studies Review</u> April 1979.

Nkrumah, Kwame. *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1961.

Nkrumah, Kwame. *Revolutionary Path*. London: Panaf Books Ltd., 1973.

Nkrumah, Kwame. *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957.

Osei, Akwasi P. *Ghana: Recurrence and Change in a Post-Independence African State*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1999.

Owusu, Maxwell. "Politics Without Parties: Reflections on the Union Government Proposals in Ghana" African Studies Review April 1979.

Pobee, John S. "Religion and Politics in Ghana, 1972-1978: Some Case Studies from the Rule of General I.K. Acheampong." Journal of Religion in Africa Feb. 1987.

Rathbone, Richard. *Nkrumah and the Chiefs*. Oxford, Accra, and Athens: James Currey, F. Reimer Book Services, Ohio University Press, 2000.

Reeck, Darrell. "The Castle and the Umbrella: Some Religion Dimensions of Kwame Nkrumah's Leadership Role in Ghana." Africa Today Oct.-Dec., 1976.

Sherwood, Marika. *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad, 1935-1947*. Legon: Freedom Publications, 1996.