

Living with Nkrumahism

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Introduction

Decolonization and the Pan-African Nation

Our Independence means much more than merely being free to fly our own flag and to play our own national anthem. It becomes a reality only in a revolutionary framework when we create and sustain a level of economic development capable of ensuring a higher standard of living, proper education, good health and the cultural development of all our citizens.

—Kwame Nkrumah, undated speech¹

In the building of a new society on liberation socialist lines, the people must be taught to help themselves.

—Report by George Padmore, 1952²

IN MARCH 1957, the relatively small West African country of Ghana—previously known as the Gold Coast—attained its independence. It was the first sub-Saharan colony to emerge from European colonial rule.³ The world into which the young Ghanaian state entered was one of transition. Much as the First World War had done a generation earlier, the Second World War had had a devastating impact on each of Europe's major powers. In doing so, it threatened an international political order constructed around European imperial power. In Great Britain and France in particular, Europe's two most dominant imperial powers, the governments of both states struggled in the war's aftermath to make sense of the changing political world. Burdened with the obligation of paying off their war debts and the need to rebuild, they each scrambled to find ways to balance pressures at home with the maintenance of their massive empires abroad. Furthermore, the war's end also ushered in the seemingly unchecked rise of the American and Soviet superpowers and of the bipolar world they would spend the greater part of the next half century constructing. Meanwhile, in Africa and Asia, the postwar story has long been one of a rising set of demands for colonial reform and agitation, shifting to a period of nationalist



Ghana, ca. 1960. Produced by the Smith College Spatial Analysis Lab.

mobilization, followed by independence and, in many cases, postcolonial decline. The narrative that arose in these world regions was therefore one centered on not only the foundation of the twentieth-century postcolonial nation-state, but, just as importantly, its political, economic, and civic demise.

In the decade following Ghana's independence and beyond, many sought to position the Ghanaian story within this prototypical narrative structure. However, through much of the 1950s and even into the 1960s, few inside or outside the country took such a narrow view of the country's independence and the experiences of self-rule. Both locally and internationally, Ghanaian independence came to represent more than the simple addition of another nation-state to a rapidly growing postwar international community. Rather, to many, Ghana was to be the harbinger of the next phase in Africa's political, social, and historical development. For them, the Ghanaian path to self-rule and postcolonial development was often envisioned as *the* African path. Describing this sentiment in a circa 1957 essay, for instance, the American journalist and novelist Richard Wright portrayed the newly independent Ghana as "a kind of pilot project of the new Africa."⁴ Ghana's status as the first postcolonial state in sub-Saharan Africa was of particular importance in cultivating such an image. In breaking the country's bond to Great Britain, Ghana was perceived as leading the way for the rest of the continent. In doing so, many viewed the new country as unleashing a wave of transformation in Africa that would guide the rest of the continent not only to independence, but, just as importantly, to a seat at the table in the emerging postcolonial international community. This transformation, however, was not simply to be political, but rather was to effect a wholesale political, social, cultural, and economic revolution in Africa. Moreover, it was also to be as much a personal project as it was to be a national or continental one, for at its core was a consciousness-raising enterprise guiding Ghanaians and Africans individually and as a whole toward a shared nation- and continent-building project.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the figure of Kwame Nkrumah as an individual and as a symbol stood at the center of these imaginings in both Ghana and Africa at large. Drawing on his organizing experience in the United States and Great Britain, Nkrumah—starting even before he came to power in 1951—had long celebrated both what he and others viewed as the shared struggle of African liberation and the Gold Coast's/Ghana's perceived leadership role in that struggle. In 1957, independence would offer Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party (CPP) government he led new opportunities for exploring this shared struggle, providing them

with the political and institutional space from which to advance their own continentally collaborative model for African anticolonial activism. By early 1958, the exploration of this space had come to include the convening of the first of a series of pan-African and intra-African conferences in the Ghanaian capital of Accra. These conferences both revived and redefined the pan-African tradition of the early twentieth century by providing a space in which African politicians, activists, and others could adapt this early pan-African tradition to African postcolonial realities. Likewise, as 1958 came to a close, Ghana would again take the lead in the testing of African postcolonial possibilities as it came to the aid of Sékou Touré's fledgling republic in weeks-old independent Guinea. Albeit fraught with its own set of contradictions and administrative inconsistencies, the resultant Ghana-Guinea Union represented independent Africa's first postcolonial, supraterritorial confederation, a confederation whereby each member state was to cede portions of its sovereignty to the greater union. By the end of 1960, the union would also include Modibo Keita's Mali, while Nkrumah claimed that he had also signed a similar agreement with Patrice Lumumba prior to the Congolese leader's assassination.⁵

In Ghana itself, Nkrumah and the CPP positioned decolonization and the mechanisms of postcolonial rule at the center of both a new type of disciplined, socialist, modern, and cosmopolitan citizenry and the "Nkrumahist" ideology constructed to support it. In doing so, they simultaneously, and often contradictorily, looked back to and distanced themselves from a long tradition of anticolonial agitation with deep roots in the Gold Coast and elsewhere, as they turned to a range of party- and state-sponsored institutions in the cultivation of this Nkrumahist ideal. For many Ghanaians living in the heady days of the 1950s and 1960s, this experiment in postcolonial reinvention became a defining part of their political and social lives. Not only were they asked to join—or, in some cases, charged into—the civic initiatives of the Nkrumahist government; but, more importantly, their experiences—as interpreted by the CPP governmental apparatus—became the vehicles through which the CPP and its allies inside and outside Ghana read the successes and shortcomings of the Nkrumah-led postcolonial project on the Ghanaian and continental stage. If, for the CPP and its allies, Ghana was to be Africa's "city upon a hill" replete with modern cities, rapid industrialization, and a politically and ideologically disciplined citizenry, this book argues that Nkrumahist ideology and the massive changes that followed from it emerged as terrains of negotiation in themselves for those living through this transition. Moreover, the book also

argues that these terrains of negotiation were fundamentally tied to the intersections of both the citizenry's aspirations, ambitions, and frustrations with the promises of life in a new world partly forged by an independent Africa and the often tragic realities of a world the CPP itself understood as still intimately rooted in the legacies of capitalist imperialism. The result was a state-citizenry relationship, premised on hope and ambition, that was often constrained by and filtered through the realities and politics of the postcolonial state itself. It was also a relationship that, over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, became increasingly uneven.

This book is about postcolonial visions and the popular reactions to them. The book thus counters a literature on African decolonization overrun by the pessimistic hindsight of the last four to five decades of African self-rule. The pessimism of this literature is not unique to the Ghanaian case, but instead has framed much of the way that both scholars and the public have engaged with the idea of an independent Africa. In contrast, *Living with Nkrumahism* celebrates the ambiguity and contradictions surrounding the continent's transition to self-rule, as it centers the tenuousness of the decolonization process and Africa's uncertain place in the postcolonial Cold War world in a broader reflection upon, to borrow from Frederick Cooper, the "possibility and constraint" that characterized the first decade of African self-rule.⁶

In this respect, "Nkrumahism" plays multiple roles in the text. Foremost, it stands as a philosophy of decolonization developed out of a worldview blending ideologies of African socialism, global anti-imperialism, and the promises of African unity—a version of pan-Africanism. However, within this book, Nkrumahism also acts as a historically contingent term, one rooted in a shifting array of contested, experimental, and often contradictory ideas, practices, and policies put forward by Nkrumah and the CPP—a term that therefore belies a consistent and, at times, even clear definition. Historically, it is a term that, throughout the decade and a half of CPP rule, was in constant development and continuous negotiation among individuals and groups, including Nkrumah, local and national party officials, the intellectuals and journalists operating the state-run press, the diverse community of expatriate activists who made Ghana home during the 1950s and 1960s, and even segments of the populace at large, albeit most often filtered through the instruments and discourse of the state.

More than a term, "Nkrumahism" provided a language with which Ghanaians and others could talk through and proactively and reactively address the changing role of Ghana and Africa in the construction of the

postcolonial international community. As such, threats of neocolonial subversion, Cold War intervention, alternative nationalisms, and internal dissension were much more than challenges to a particular set of political ambitions in midcentury Ghana within the CPP imagination. They imperiled a worldview. They also reflected the intrinsic diversity of the political, social, cultural, and economic realities in which that worldview operated. *Living with Nkrumahism* thus offers a historical deconstruction of this particularly vibrant moment in Ghana's recent past. However, it does so by framing its analysis of Nkrumahism not simply as an intellectual history of Nkrumah's and the CPP's thought. Much more importantly, the book argues that Nkrumahism served as the epistemological backdrop for many of the contestations surrounding Ghanaian political and social life in the Nkrumah era. To this end, I take seriously the aims of Nkrumah and the CPP, on their own terms, as well as the interpretations of those aims on the popular level. As a result, in a political sphere in which Nkrumah and the CPP ultimately saw themselves as creating a new world, one in which Africa and the rest of the formerly colonized peoples of the world would have an equal seat at the table in the emerging postwar community of nations, key aspects of everyday Ghanaian life—work, family, community—became subsumed in the transformative and disciplining project of creating this postcolonial world.

NKRUMAH AND THE GOLD COAST

The political and academic fascination with Nkrumah, the Gold Coast, and the CPP began almost as early as Nkrumah's 1947 return to the colony. Descending upon the colony in the early 1950s, prominent activists and intellectuals, including George Padmore and Richard Wright, joined early Africanist scholars like Thomas Hodgkin, David Apter, and Dennis Austin in the Gold Coast's towns and cities as they sought to make sense of the uniquely successful message and politics of the CPP.⁷ Hodgkin, for his part, presented the CPP as a party of firsts, foremost emphasizing the party's unprecedented ability to mobilize at a national level. As early as 1951 he predicted that the CPP's success would force both Africans and Europeans to turn their attention to what just half a decade earlier colonial officials had considered to be Britain's "model colony."⁸ By the middle of the decade, Hodgkin would incorporate what he observed in the Gold Coast into his broader study of the sociology of postwar African nationalism.⁹ Likewise, political scientist and modernization theorist David Apter held the CPP and the Gold Coast up as models of African modernization.

In one of the first monograph-length academic studies of the postwar Gold Coast political order, Apter constructed a narrative around the Gold Coast that positioned the decolonizing colony as well along the path toward a form of parliamentary democratic governance. Key for Apter was a reading of the CPP's electoral and legislative successes that, in his mind, exemplified the Gold Coast's gradual move away from what he presented as a complex array of ethnic allegiances and institutions, toward the national.¹⁰ The result was the emergence of a political and intellectual milieu, where an often externally driven set of narratives were infused within the particularities of the CPP and the Gold Coast political scene. Moreover, this milieu was one that Nkrumah and the CPP rarely felt shy about further cultivating themselves.

Nkrumah's own story helped advance much of the early fascination with midcentury Gold Coast politics. Born in the far western Gold Coast village of Nkroful, Nkrumah was among the first to attend Accra's famed Achimota Secondary School upon its opening in the late 1920s, from which he graduated in 1930. Later, he would travel to the United States to study at the historically black Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania before leaving for the United Kingdom in 1945. Working in the anticolonial and pan-African circles associated with George Padmore during his time in the United Kingdom, Nkrumah would play an integral role in the organization of the fifth Pan-African Congress, held in Manchester in 1945. Following the congress, he would align himself with the radicalism of the West African National Secretariat (WANS), of which he would become the organization's secretary. Through the WANS, Nkrumah joined an array of West African activists with direct ties to the Gold Coast—most notably including I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson and Kojo Botsio, who would become the future CPP's first general secretary—in reiterating the Congress's call for an immediate end to colonial rule in Africa, while also putting forward their vision of a united, socialist West Africa. However, as J. Ayodele Langley points out, for Nkrumah specifically and for those aligned with him in the WANS, the foremost mission of the Secretariat rested with the organization of the masses. All else was to follow.¹¹

Nkrumah's ability to swiftly adapt his message and strategies to the political and economic realities of the Gold Coast following his return to the colony only further burnished his radical reputation in the late 1940s. Politically and economically, the immediate postwar years were a time of rapid transition and increasing uncertainty for the Gold Coast, both

triggering and fed by widespread reforms in the colony. These reforms included the extension of male suffrage in municipal elections, an increased governmental commitment to the Africanization of the civil service, and the further centralization of colonial governance with the full integration of Asante into the colony's legislative apparatus.¹² Meanwhile, popular support for the war effort had overshadowed a volatile economy that would come to a head in the last half of the decade. Between 1939 and 1947, for instance, the urban cost of living had more than doubled, with prices for locally produced items rising to nearly twice their prewar levels. The inflationary pressures were even more extreme for many imported goods, which saw price increases in the neighborhood of five to eight times their prewar levels during the same period. As the 1948 Watson Commission reported, the bulk of these price increases had occurred in 1946 and 1947 alone, further adding to the immediacy of the economic pressures felt by the Gold Coast populace.¹³

In Accra, the economic pressures brought by rapid inflation raised the ire of the city's residents throughout late 1947, culminating in a month-long boycott of European and Levantine firms in January and February 1948. Organized by Nii Kwabena Bonne II, an Accra chief and businessman, the boycott emerged independent of the nationalist activists who would later try to coopt it, as Nii Bonne and his allies mobilized against what they considered the predatory pricing practices of the colony's foreign firms.¹⁴ As Nii Bonne reportedly explained to his audiences during the boycott, white sellers had made themselves adept at manipulating the market so as to generate profits often well in excess of what it cost to produce the goods they sold.¹⁵ Nii Bonne's message quickly gained the support of many chiefs, who, to the frustration of colonial officialdom, constructed "a system of fines" for punishing those who broke the boycott.¹⁶ By late February 1948, just as many of the Gold Coast's African sellers were also beginning to feel the effects of the boycott with shortages in their own shops, Nii Bonne and his allies declared victory. In doing so, they touted their success in securing (temporary) concessions from many of the colony's foreign firms in their pricing and profit structures.¹⁷

As the boycott ended in late February, the colony's military veterans—many of whom had been left unemployed with the Second World War's conclusion—set out to march on the seat of the colonial government at Christiansborg Castle. As with the boycotters, it is difficult to argue that most ex-servicemen were driven by nationalist political ideals in their protests, as they too emphasized economic issues—back pay, the status of

their pensions, postwar inflation, and a lack of employment opportunities—in their protests and petitions as opposed to nationalist concerns.¹⁸ The march on Christiansborg was thus foremost to be an assertion of their rights to that which was owed to them as veterans of the war effort. As the marchers proceeded to Christiansborg, the colonial police stopped the ex-servicemen and their supporters and ordered them to disperse following the protesters' deviation from the government-approved route. After a baton charge and the release of tear gas on the crowd, the police opened fire on the unarmed crowd, killing two. Riots quickly broke out in Accra and then spread throughout the colony, with deaths and injuries reported in Kumasi, Koforidua, and elsewhere.¹⁹ Meanwhile, in Accra, many of the major European firms that had been the focus of the boycott became the primary targets of the rioters, as emotions brought on by the police killings and boycott erupted throughout the city's commercial district.²⁰

For Nkrumah in particular, the volatile nature of the Gold Coast's postwar political and economic realities provided an opening upon his return to the colony. Invited back to serve as general secretary of the newly created United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), Nkrumah attempted to bring the lessons of Manchester to the Gold Coast. Specifically, in his writings and organizing he presented the colony and its struggles as part of a larger colonized world decimated by European imperial rule and global capitalism.²¹ As he had pursued with the WANS, the goal Nkrumah envisioned for the Gold Coast was the organization of the masses—the colony's youth, workers, peasants, market women, and others. Only through such mobilization, the future Ghanaian president would argue throughout the late 1940s and well into the 1950s, could Gold Coasters and Africans more broadly escape the exploitative and extractive trap of capitalist imperialism. Moreover, as his compatriots in Manchester did just a few years earlier, Nkrumah insisted that at the heart of this path to liberation had to be immediate self-government.²²

Over the course of the rest of 1948 and the first half of 1949, a UGCC-affiliated Nkrumah drew support from wide-ranging groups of Gold Coasters with his message of self-government. In doing so, he and the group of young men, market women, school leavers, returnees from abroad, and others who joined his organizing efforts attracted the ire of both the colonial administration and the UGCC's largely middle-class leadership as they established their own schools, "party" offices, newspapers, and, ultimately, a radical wing—the Committee on Youth Organization (CYO)—under the UGCC umbrella. By July 1948, historian Richard Rathbone

argues, Nkrumah and his allies had become so emboldened by their successes that the Nkrumahist wing of the UGCC increasingly operated as its own “party within a party.”²³ The formal break between Nkrumah and the UGCC would occur nearly a year later in the coastal town of Saltpond. There, before a purported crowd of sixty thousand, Nkrumah announced the inauguration of the Convention People’s Party under the uncompromising banner of “Self-Government Now.”²⁴ By 1951, the CPP would win its first major electoral victory, nearly sweeping the colony’s first popularly contested election and taking control of its Legislative Assembly. In doing so, the CPP formed the Gold Coast’s first African-led government, with Nkrumah taking the mantle of “leader of government business.” By 1952, he would gain the title of prime minister, while he and the CPP maintained wide-reaching powers over the colony’s internal affairs in a diarchic CPP-British power-sharing agreement at a time in which the details of the colony’s transition to self-rule were being worked out.

As will be seen, the realities Nkrumah and the CPP confronted in the Gold Coast were much more complicated than both the future president’s worldview and even the CPP’s organizing successes indicated. Throughout the decade and a half of CPP governance, competing loyalties of class, ethnicity, generation, and occupation simmered underneath the popular responses to the anticolonial imaginings articulated by Nkrumah and the party he led. Moreover, even as wide-ranging groups of Gold Coasters gravitated toward the CPP’s message of self-government, tensions quickly arose within the colony surrounding not only the mechanisms by which to formally achieve and then administer the CPP’s proclaimed goal of self-government, but also the long-term meaning of self-government itself. For many of those scholars and activists writing about the Gold Coast experiment in the 1950s, it was this tug-of-war—often cast as a struggle between the “modern” and the “traditional,” in the case of modernization-minded figures like Apter and Wright, or as one of revolutionary versus reactionary, as portrayed by individuals like Padmore—that drew them to the Gold Coast. To them, the Gold Coast and the successes and pitfalls of the CPP provided the means for understanding the prospects for Africa’s decolonization as a whole. Even more importantly, it would give others a narrative through which to theorize the decolonization process itself.

DECOLONIZATION, MODERNITY, AND POSTCOLONIAL IMAGININGS

Among scholars and activists at both the local and global levels, decolonization was envisioned as a moment of opportunity and redefinition. The

question that arose in the mid-twentieth century was that of what decolonization and, by extension, independence was to look like both locally and globally beyond the actual granting of self-rule. Among those who would begin to theorize the meaning of decolonization in the 1950s, decolonization and independence had to be understood not as singular events, but rather as a set of processes aimed at renegotiating the colonized's place in the world. For some, it even included a reorientation of the colonized individual him- or herself. It was in this vein that Frantz Fanon argued in 1961 that "decolonization is the veritable creation of new men."²⁵ The transformation implicit in decolonization, at least according to Fanon, was as much ontological as political. It was to be a restorative process that, through the actions and mobilization of the colonized, erased the realities and legacies of the colonial situation and the epistemic and systematic violence, exploitation, and racism embedded within them. The result was envisioned to be the birth of a new civilization freed from the legacies of colonial rule and capitalist extraction; it was also to be a civilization bound to the will of decolonization's new social order.²⁶

Historians of decolonization have tended to shy away from the Manichean historical and theoretical models put forward by figures like Fanon.²⁷ However, throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, Fanon was not alone in propagating such a vision of decolonization. Neither was Nkrumah, who, not entirely dissimilar from Fanon, advocated for a theory of decolonization rooted in a dialectic of destruction and rebirth.²⁸ Such attempts to theorize the process of decolonization in turn reoriented discussions around African anticolonialism away from perspectives that characterized independence as the imagined end result of decolonization. What was put forward instead by the likes of Nkrumah, Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, and others was a set of anticolonial imaginings that did not simply seek to replace a generically conceived colonial infrastructure with an African alternative. Much more significantly, they each sought to emphasize the emergent—incomplete, yet transforming—nature of the liberated, decolonized individual and society. For those with a state-centered orientation like Nkrumah, mass institutions like the CPP thus carried a special responsibility that extended beyond that of the organization of the populace. For, just as fundamentally, they also had the additional duty of creating the political, social, economic, and cultural conditions necessary for bringing about the process of collective growth, emancipation, and renaissance at the envisioned root of the decolonizing process. At least in Ghana, such a framework for thinking about decolonization would come to have wide-reaching effects on the lived

experiences of many of the country's peoples over the course of the first decade of self-rule.

The extended timeframe between the CPP's 1951 electoral victory and Ghana's 1957 independence in many ways ensured the development of a procedural notion of decolonization within the Gold Coast/Ghana and particularly in the CPP. As the CPP entered into official negotiations with the British about the transfer of power to an independent Ghana in the early 1950s, the Nkrumah-led party took to its press and public meetings in its attempts to reframe its seemingly straightforward ultimatum of "self-government now" as more than a political demand. Instead, self-government became a first step in an envisioned civic project that, at its essence, required a new type of citizen. Through such a formulation, the CPP created for itself an obligation to bring about the conditions not only for the establishment of the independent country, but, more importantly, for that country's ability to grow and prosper in a highly competitive and often uncertain international environment. At one level, this required a commitment to such infrastructural projects as the rise of new planned cities, hydroelectric power, industrialized manufacturing, advanced communication and transportation systems, social welfare projects, and the wide-ranging extension of government-sponsored social services, most notably in education and healthcare. Each of these, the CPP insisted, was essential to the operation of a modern, independent country. Just as importantly, though, the party would argue, the citizenry itself had to be reoriented, if not modernized, so as to meet the assumed realities of the postwar world. Here, the labor movement, the nature of work itself, family and gender relations, youth culture, ethnicities, and relationships between urban and rural life, among others, all came under the purview of the CPP's long view of decolonization. At the same time, these political and social phenomena also tended to reflect longstanding traditions of political and economic contestation within the Gold Coast. As a result, the CPP found it necessary to consistently return to and redraft as its own everything from the colony's vibrant history of anticolonial and nationalist agitation to the colonial government's own developmentalist ideology and traditions, to the eclectic compilation of ideas, networks, and movements Nkrumah himself had sought to connect to during his decade-plus abroad.

The CPP's civically focused decolonization project only intensified as the party and government consolidated their power and sought to stem off an array of opposition movements over the course of the 1950s.

Independence forced a slight shift in the focus of the CPP's decolonization project and in its vision of decolonization, as it highlighted an independent Ghana's vulnerability on the international stage. Whereas prior to 1957 the concern was how best to bring together the colony's diverse peoples and constituencies in the shared political and social project of achieving self-government, the postindependence project was one of acceleration and adaptation to what were increasingly perceived as the dangers—internal and external—of the postcolonial condition. Here, fears of political disorder and subterfuge, neocolonial intervention in the activities of the state, and extranational allegiances threatened to cast a pall over the hopes and ambitions embodied in the sense of new beginnings—nationally and continentally—ushered in with Ghana's independence. Nkrumah and the CPP in turn presented it as their obligation to protect Ghana and, by extension, Africa from these challenges. For them, the issue was about more than just Ghana's or Africa's political independence. The real concern was a potential backslide into what they perceived to be a colonial mentality that would have ripple effects on deeper issues of African social, economic, and cultural independence.

Key to this framing of both Ghana's and Africa's decolonization was an emphasis on the emergent or burgeoning nature of Ghana as a country and Africa as a continent. A necessary optimism was embedded in this idea of emergence. Furthermore, for many inside and outside of Africa, this view of an emergent continent in the 1950s and 1960s was not a question; as James Ferguson has suggested, it was an expectation.²⁹ What needed sorting out, then, as Jean Allman later noted in her analysis of Ghanaian antinuclear activism, were the details. As Allman presents the expectations of the period, at the time, they did not represent the “pipe dream” they seem to do today or even did by the end of the 1960s. Rather, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they appeared to many as simply “a plan just shy of a blueprint.”³⁰ As Allman's analysis illustrates, such a framework for thinking about the ambitions of the decolonization moment provides a lens through which to map the histories of Ghanaian pan-African and anti-imperial politics onto the larger landscape of transnational anticolonial and anti-imperial histories that dot the broader global historiographical terrain—many of which only pay lip service to African experiences and perspectives. Even more importantly, such a method for thinking through Africa's decolonization opens the space through which we can begin to historicize alternative African postcolonial futures. As Allman, Meredith Terretta, Kevin Gaines, Klaas van Walraven, and others have

shown, it was this sense of opportunity and innovation that, throughout the 1950s and into much of the early 1960s, drew activists, freedom fighters, journalists, and the curious, among others, to the country.³¹ Figures including Fanon, who had served as the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale's ambassador to Ghana until his cancer diagnosis in 1961, George Padmore, Richard Wright, Robert Mugabe, W. E. B. Du Bois, Shirley Graham Du Bois, Patrice Lumumba, Che Guevara, Malcolm X, Félix Moumié, and many others, all, at various times, converged upon the country during the period.³² Furthermore, many of them—none more important ideologically than Padmore—played a key role in helping to shape the policies and ideological agenda of the CPP both continentally and within Ghana itself.

As Padmore would argue in his published works on the Gold Coast and in his communications with Nkrumah and others in the CPP, Ghana's ultimate success depended upon its ability to construct a modern society independent of European imperial and capitalist subversion. For Padmore in the 1950s, this ultimately entailed a model of pan-Africanism that blended "black nationalism plus socialism."³³ Over the course of the 1950s, aspects of this message seeped into the CPP's own local imaginings as it was framed and reframed by Nkrumah himself, contested in the CPP-led government's various development projects, and reflected in the expectations and ambitions of those Ghanaians responding to the promises of decolonization's new society. Here, the CPP rooted its political, social, and economic programs in a midcentury modernism that held up the industrialized West—absent its capitalist extravagances—as the developmental model toward which a decolonizing Africa should strive. In at least one sense, Nkrumahism was very much a form of anticolonial modernism. It was also not alone in promoting such an ideal, with similar ideological projects playing out in Egypt, India, and elsewhere.³⁴ At the root of such thinking, Donald Donham has remarked in reference to revolutionary Ethiopia, was a teleology that placed countries, continents, and peoples on an imagined ladder of modernity.³⁵ Ferguson goes even further in his reflections on midcentury modernism, as he argues that such teleological thinking not only infected governments and politicians, but also the social scientists and technocrats brought in to study and interpret the successes and failures of African postcolonial modernization.³⁶ Likewise, political scientist Leander Schneider, writing on Tanzania, emphasizes the importance of the machinations of government, at least in its imagined state, in guiding a particular country up this ladder.³⁷

In the Ghanaian case, Schneider's emphasis on the centrality of government in the modernizing process is particularly instructive. For Schneider, working with the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, it was through an intricate analysis of the practices of government—the actions, decisions, and logics—that scholars could come to understand not just the objectives of the development enterprise, but also how the practices themselves produced and reproduced the authority of the government.³⁸ The specificities of the Tanzanian experience with villagization frame Schneider's analysis. In important ways, though, the concerns driving the Tanzanian government's and specifically Julius Nyerere's advocacy of villagization were similar to those guiding Nkrumah and the CPP in Ghana. For both Nkrumah and Nyerere, the exploitative and extractive dimensions of colonialism were undeniable. Moreover, they insisted that the effects of colonial exploitation had major political, social, and cultural ramifications on African life. Self-government thus unleashed for both leaders and their governments a responsibility for, in Schneider's words, creating "a free, egalitarian, and more prosperous society" in colonialism's wake.³⁹ Whereas Nyerere focused on an updated, rural communalism in Tanzania, Nkrumah and the CPP emphasized the urban, industrial, and mechanized in Ghana's postcolonial development. However, as in Tanzania, Nkrumah and the CPP viewed it as the obligation of the government and party in Ghana to create the conditions necessary for this developmental and liberation model to come into being. In doing so, though, they did not simply seek to reinforce the power and authority of the emergent state. Rather, at the same time, they also sought to create an environment where all other alternatives could be cast as unmodern, un-African, or neocolonial.

Yet, at least in the Ghanaian case, it is too simplistic to merely frame the Nkrumah-era decolonization and postcolonial projects, if not worldviews, as another example of what James Scott has referred to as the high-modernist view of "seeing like a state."⁴⁰ In contrast to Scott's model, the Nkrumah-era programs and worldviews were historically contingent and site-specific. In other words, they necessarily reflected the changing realities of a world in transition and the wide-ranging aspirations and anxieties of an independent Africa's place in that world. The postcolonial imaginings and projects coming out of Ghana during this time—in all their inconsistencies, incongruities, and, at times, seeming pie-in-the-sky nature—cannot be taken out of this context. Fears of neocolonialism were real. Anxieties over the implications of the country's and continent's continued dependency on foreign markets were also real. Similarly, concerns

over the solidification of African backwardness in relation to the Global North weighed on those inside and outside the CPP government committed to envisioning Ghana's and Africa's postcolonial future. Moreover, deep-seated questions existed as to what forms of governance were wanted and needed in order to meet the realities of the postcolonial world. For Western scholars like Apter in the mid-1950s, projecting negotiated constitutional formalities onto the society writ large, the apparent answer was an African-born parliamentary democracy.⁴¹ Three decades later, Michael Crowder would ponder the implications of assuming that what Africans strove for with independence were such liberal democratic institutions.⁴² A historicized emphasis on Nkrumahism ultimately allows for reflection on what the alternatives may have looked like at the time and how they may have changed and been contested over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, linking both local and international idioms of nation, nationalism, modernity, development, decolonization, and liberation, among others, into a vibrant analytical framework.

VISIONS OF NKRUMAHISM

The challenge of writing such histories of Nkrumahism rests in the nature of the CPP's decolonization project itself. Few things did more to cloud the political, social, and cultural dynamism of Nkrumah-era Ghana than the actions and rhetoric of the Nkrumahist state. Like the nation the CPP viewed itself as representing, the state as the governmental embodiment of the nation was also envisioned as an entity under constant construction. In the 1950s, as the CPP and the British entered into a period of shared governance, the key question facing the CPP was how best to create the institutions, policies, and procedures necessary for a burgeoning Ghana to ensure a smooth transition to self-rule. As alluded to earlier, in their negotiations with the British, Nkrumah and his new collection of ministers and advisors had little choice but to cede to the logistical and bureaucratic constraints put on them by the British and the realities of administering a modern government. Most importantly, these included an acceptance of the liberal democratic institutions celebrated by Apter, along with a slowed Africanization of the Gold Coast/Ghanaian civil service and the maintenance of a postcolonial British governor-general in the newly independent country. Outside the formal mechanisms of government, the concern over how best to prepare for self-rule moved to the qualities of the citizenry itself. Here, the CPP promoted not only a continued "mobilizing of the masses," to borrow Elizabeth Schmidt's phrasing, but, more

importantly, the coalescence of the citizenry around a very specific CPP-defined idea of the Ghanaian nation.⁴³ In this regard, the party press, exemplified by the Nkrumah-founded *Ghana Evening News* (previously the *Accra Evening News* and later the *Evening News*), sought to cultivate a sense of nationhood that civically centered on the party itself. Party rallies and public awareness campaigns further promoted such a party-centered idea of the Ghanaian nation, while, along with the press, mapping for the nation the envisioned centralization of political power in the Accra-based, CPP-run government.

Independence and, even more so, the 1960 inauguration of the republican constitution only intensified the process of CPP centralization. Even more importantly, the freedoms manifested in independence provided the CPP with the room necessary to test and invest in new forms of institutions designed to cultivate the type of citizenry it believed was required for meeting the needs of the postcolonial world. Here, ideals of discipline, order, political and civic awareness, and collective national and continental development combined with a socialist and pan-African ethos rooted in a transnational anti-imperialism. As in the 1950s, the party press—the *Evening News*, the *Ghanaian Times*, the *Ghanaian*, the *Spark*, and other publications—took the lead in articulating and theorizing this envisioned citizenry. Moreover, as the CPP consolidated its influence over the press in the early 1960s—taking over or shuttering most newspapers that deviated from the party line—the party- and state-run press largely became the only publications in which interpretations of the postcolonial citizenry and nation could be publicly debated.⁴⁴ Journalists, authors, editors, letter writers, politicians, petitioners, and others had little choice but to write within the epistemological constraints imposed on them by what was increasingly emerging, from within the party itself, as an attempt to create a sense of orthodoxy around the eclectic set of ideas broadly comprising “Nkrumahism” in the postcolonial state.

Meanwhile, on the ground, party and governmental institutions such as the Ghana Young Pioneers, the Ghana Builders Brigade (later renamed as the Ghana Workers Brigade), the Trades Union Congress, the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW), the Young Farmers’ League, and others set out to embed within the citizenry an emergent Nkrumahist way of life. Both the party and state were central to this envisioned way of life and to how interpretations of it were disseminated throughout the populace. Together, these institutions were thus to provide the discipline, regimentation, and foresight needed to embark upon not

only the complicated infrastructural task of nation-building, but, more foundationally, the much deeper, ontological burden of creating new, decolonized citizens. As a result, those involved in institutions such as the Ghana Young Pioneers and the Builders Brigade engaged in a range of activities including drill instruction, athletic competitions and displays, marching in public parades and rallies, self-help projects, and citizenship classes and lectures. From the late 1950s on, nearly all of these activities—either overtly or covertly—aimed to position the individual, through his or her performance of Nkrumahism’s pan-African and socialist anti-imperial ideal, as the embodiment of the new Ghana and Africa. Moreover, together with the time investments required of their members and the relationships forged through participation, the practices and programs put forward by the Young Pioneers, Builders Brigade, and similar organizations pressured, if not challenged, longstanding notions of belonging in midcentury Ghana—including family, chieftaincy, community, gender, and generation—as the CPP sought to reorient the populace’s worldview toward the mission of the state.

Through the enactments of the Nkrumahist way of life exhibited in the formal and informal rituals of the CPP’s various wings and institutions, the Nkrumahist state therefore emerged as much as a performative enterprise as a conventional instrument of governance. Moreover, the Nkrumahist state was not alone in such a construction, for the rituals and expectations of what postcolonial life should be in Ghana shared many similarities with several other midcentury socialist and postcolonial states, including those of the Guinean state as studied by Mike McGovern and Jay Straker. Examining the Guinean Demystification Program, McGovern describes a political and cultural initiative specifically and necessarily designed to reach into the most intimate aspects of Guinean *forestières*’ lives, including family relations, spirituality, and ethnic belonging.⁴⁵ At least in terms of intention and philosophy, the program would not have looked unfamiliar in Ghana, as Guineans—willingly and semi-willingly—incorporated aspects of Guinean revolutionary ideology into their lives in both the public and private performance of what McGovern describes as a state-sponsored cosmopolitanism. Here, an uncomfortable merging of a pan-African gesture toward Africa’s precolonial past with scientific socialism’s anticapitalist modernism culminated in an iconoclastic program that at once positioned the country’s *forestières* as “negative examples, stereotypes of savagery” and emergent “modernist national citizens.”⁴⁶ Straker, also writing on the Guinean *forestières*, similarly relates that it is impossible

to understand “the complexities of life histories, political sentiments, and cultural imaginings” in postcolonial Guinea without centering “the workings of state power in the cultural realm.”⁴⁷

In Ghana, for the thousands formally integrated into the party apparatus and the many more who had little choice but to live alongside it, party activities and pressures became a key component of their daily lives and relationships. As we will see in the third chapter in the case of the Ghana Young Pioneers, the national organization for school-age children, its time commitments, teaching, and leadership structure severely strained relationships within families and communities. As a result, in certain instances, parents, elders, and other community members came under the suspicion of some of the Young Pioneers in their lives, while many Young Pioneers themselves were similarly held in suspicion by the adults around them. At the same time, the movement also—both in reality and perception—held the potential for opening new pathways to political and social mobility for both its members and possibly their families. The Builders Brigade, with its built-in public employment program, offered even greater potential for mobility for its membership. However, in many cases, it also catalyzed increasingly caustic relationships with the communities that lived alongside the Brigade’s many camps. In such communities, the granting of local lands for Brigade use, the supposed unruliness of brigaders, and the Brigade’s (real and perceived) influence in local and national politics roused significant tensions. Yet, as we will also see, for many of the brigaders and their family members with whom I spoke, their experiences in the Brigade were defining moments in their lives, opening up new avenues for their transition into a socially recognized adulthood.

Similar stories played out in other CPP organizations as well. In the Trades Union Congress (TUC), for instance, workers encountered an institution that, over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, would transform its mission from worker advocacy to the state organization of labor. Guiding the TUC and the CPP’s labor politics more broadly was a calcifying socialist ideology of work that sought to decenter the individual’s personal ambitions in favor of the assumed shared goals of the nation. As a result, ideologically, productivity reigned supreme. This not only alienated many workers from an institution ostensibly established to serve their interests, but also distanced them from the fruits of their labor as they were increasingly asked to do more for less. Likewise, in the Bureau of African Affairs (BAA)—the most important of the CPP government’s pan-African institutions—the party’s expanding ideology of work, with its celebration

of productivity and sacrifice, was embedded in the daily work lives of the Bureau's employees. Among those most affected were the many young female employees who made up the Bureau's typing, bookbinding, telephony, and clerical staff. The result was the emergence of an often turbulent workspace in which the party's modernist celebrations of women in the workplace collided with the gendered and generational prejudices of the government officials and high-ranking administrators put in place to run the Bureau's operations at home and abroad.

For scholars, the question of how Ghanaians themselves engaged with and understood the mushrooming Nkrumahist state and Nkrumahism more broadly has proved difficult to answer. Scholars in the late 1960s and 1970s in particular—representing the last significant wave of scholarship devoted to the CPP—have largely assumed that most Ghanaians simply ignored the party's rhetoric and endured its policies.⁴⁸ The bottom-up ethos of the social-historical tradition—which has fruitfully guided African historical and social scientific scholarship for at least two generations—has likely contributed to such conclusions regarding the state-citizenry relationship. Additionally, the very real disappointments of decolonization—culminating, in Ghana, with the economic hardships of the 1960s and the CPP's establishment of a quasi-police state—further justified a way of viewing the African postcolonial experience as an experience mired in what Mahmood Mamdani has described as “decentralized despotism.”⁴⁹ Through such a perspective, however, the state and its discourse often emerge as alien forces acting upon the people, thus positioning the populace as subjects of the new state. The result in such readings of the African postcolonial state, to invoke Jean-François Bayart's powerful idiom of the “politics of the belly,” is a vision of the state that largely exists for the sole purpose of feeding itself.⁵⁰

Historian Frederick Cooper has pointed to the dehistoricized, if not ahistorical, nature of many of these arguments. In the case of Mamdani specifically, Cooper has accused the political scientist of “leapfrogging” Africa's history of decolonization and early postcolonial encounters with self-rule in an attempt to show an artificial continuity from the violence and exploitation of the colonial past to the corruption and iniquities of the postcolonial present.⁵¹ However, even Cooper's reflections on decolonization—with their tendency to deemphasize the importance of various forms of African nationalism in people's lives—often overshadow a significant reality: the fact that, at least in the case of Ghana, Ghanaians who lived through Nkrumah have a lot to say about both African nationalism

and living with Nkrumahism. Few may have become the ardent anticolonial socialists—literate in the theoretical and practical intricacies of Marxist anti-imperialism—that Nkrumah and many of the CPP’s most virulent ideologues imagined. Regardless, many welcomed and even sought the opportunity to discuss their experiences with the CPP and its ideology, reflecting on its hopes, disappointments, and, for some, oddities. Marxism, communism, and, as one man put it, the “Eastern forms of psychology” that in his opinion afflicted the CPP were prominent subjects of debate among those I interviewed.⁵² So, too, were Nkrumah and the CPP’s pan-Africanism, development projects, and extension of social services. The Nkrumahist state may not have been the defining feature of their lives, but it was one that made significant and often unanticipated incursions into those lives. Remembrances of opportunities created by the party’s and government’s various institutions and policies intersected with ones of deep-seated anxieties manifested through persistent fears of local spies, political and social backstabbing, and, most ominously, preventative detention. In this regard, Nkrumahism was something more than the systematized political and social program articulated by the Nkrumahist state apparatus: it was something that had to be lived through, negotiated, and constantly reinterpreted.

Living with Nkrumahism argues that such a framing of Nkrumahism helps reorient how we understand Ghanaians’ relationships not only to the postcolonial state, but also to the expectations and ambiguities that characterized Ghana’s transition to self-rule. Indeed, we can begin to think of multiple “Nkrumahisms” in Nkrumah-era Ghana. Some (but only some) of these clearly had direct connections to the rhetoric and worldview put forward by the institutions—governmental, party and party-affiliated, press, and others—of the Nkrumahist state. Other individuals, meanwhile, invoked the language of Nkrumahism as a means through which to articulate their personal aspirations or frustrations with their current political, social, or economic status, often as a mechanism through which to make claims on the new state. For others, this language served as a way of connecting oneself directly to Nkrumah himself, even if only in rhetoric or performance. Still others manipulated the language of Nkrumahism, and particularly a refashioning of its symbols—the red cockerel, Young Pioneers and Builders Brigade uniforms, and CPP songs—to distance themselves from a party and government from which they felt alienated, a party and government which, to some, was actively seeking to break down the family, community, ethnic, gender, and generational relationships they so prized.

What the archival, social-scientific, and journalistic record of the CPP era does, though, is seemingly ossify a very specific and orthodox interpretation of Nkrumahism that purports to explain the presumed successes, failures, and realities of the Nkrumahist project. Among the social scientists of the mid- to late 1960s and 1970s—who, in many ways, have had the last word on the CPP, at least among academics—such a perspective served to highlight both the deficiencies of the CPP government itself and the ruptures between theory and praxis. However, such a framework privileges state orthodoxy, even as it seeks to refute it, in that a state-centered image of the state-citizenry relationship emerges as the primary or even single reference point for understanding the Ghanaian postcolonial experience. This mode of analysis is not unlike the one that guided the CPP’s own quest to systematize Nkrumahist thought and politics in the 1960s. With its centralization of political and ideological power, embodied first in the republican constitution and later in the one-party state, the CPP sought to set the terms of debate, nationally and internationally, on how best to understand the process of decolonization. This included how to interpret what the party characterized as the antiquated, “tribalist” oppositions that, in the 1950s, persistently vexed the CPP, along with the potentialities and shortfalls of the decolonizing citizenry and the power of the state itself. In other words, a relatively static interpretation of the CPP’s own ambitions, aspirations, and deficiencies has often become the guiding construct through which Ghanaians’ postcolonial imaginings are not just engaged with, but understood. *Living with Nkrumahism* aims to contextualize and historicize the process by which this orthodoxy came together and in turn increasingly came to represent the political, social, economic, and cultural terrain of the early Ghanaian postcolonial experience.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The study of Nkrumah’s Ghana rests at the interstices of the colonial and postcolonial archive. In doing so, it forces the historian to confront the pronounced shift from the relative wealth of the colonial archive to, as one proceeds through the years after independence, the increasing paucity of the postcolonial archive. In the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) office in Accra, for instance, the pre-1957 archival record provides a relatively ordered and somewhat detailed accounting of the political actions and decision-making processes undertaken in the lead-up to independence, particularly in the form of cabinet minutes and memoranda. As with much of colonial African history, an

even more robust archival record detailing the Gold Coast's transition to self-rule exists in the colonial metropole, most notably in the British National Archives.⁵³ For researchers interested in the 1950s, the late-colonial archive thus provides insight into debates over subjects including the priorities of the CPP government (and particularly its cabinet) as the colony sought to become a country, British perspectives on Gold Coast decolonization, the changes in administrative infrastructure necessary for the soon-to-be independent state, and, to a lesser extent, the operation of several of the colony's ministries. In some cases, these records continue into the early postcolonial period. However, increasingly as one advances through the 1960s, any semblance of a stable documentary record begins to evaporate. Files and narratives often lack context. Some are missing. Others may be dispersed or intermingled with unrelated material. Still others have found their way into catch-all collections, two of which dominate PRAAD-Accra's material on Nkrumah-era postcolonial Ghana: the Files on Ex-Presidential Affairs (RG 17/2/-) and those of the Bureau of African Affairs Papers (RG 17/1/-, formerly SC/BAA/-).⁵⁴

The state of the Ghanaian postcolonial archive may in part be the result of the nature and decisions of the CPP government at the time, possibly reflecting the changing priorities of the government as it confronted the prospects of self-rule in the age of Cold War. It is also a consequence of the 1966 coup, when the new military government destroyed or confiscated many of the country's CPP-era files, particularly in Accra.⁵⁵ The result is a postcolonial archive in Ghana that is fragmentary and dispersed. However, it is also one that, despite the best efforts of the highly skilled and dedicated archivists who oversee its various sites throughout the country, regularly offers occasion to reflect upon the realities of post-colonial governance and the near-continuous budget shortfalls that have plagued this and other Ghanaian governmental institutions over much of the last half century.

At the heart of this book, then, is a struggle to make sense of this fragmentary archival record and put it into conversation with the changing political and ideological framework of Nkrumahist thought, the mechanisms of CPP governance, and the lived experiences of Ghanaians during the period. State- and party-run newspapers and magazines—most notably including the *Evening News*, the *Ghanaian Times*, and the *Ghanaian*—serve as another key resource in this endeavor, augmenting the formal archive with other, public expressions of the institutionalized worldview of the Nkrumah-led government. Moreover, the party- and state-run press

was not static. It also was not necessarily Gramscian in its quest for discursive hegemony, but it did continually seek to set the terms of political and social debate in the country through a consistently shifting discursive practice operating under the rubric of Nkrumahism. In contrast to a scholarship that has limited the prominence of Nkrumah-era ideology in mid-century Ghanaian life, I argue that an evolving Nkrumahism served as the backdrop to many Ghanaians' experiences, as they had little choice but to operate in a political and social sphere in which the CPP increasingly sought to intrude into their political, social, cultural, and economic lives.⁵⁶ On a day-to-day level, the result was an environment in which many had to gain familiarity not only with the language and vocabulary of Ghanaian pan-Africanism and socialism, but also with its hidden assumptions, values, and norms. In many ways, it was in the press that these assumptions and values were most clearly articulated. In fact, it could be argued that the press—via most newspapers' daily coverage and editorials—often better exemplifies the moving target that was Nkrumahism during the decade and a half of CPP rule than do the speeches and writings of Nkrumah and other prominent CPP figures themselves. In these party and government publications we find the CPP's in-the-moment readings of and adaptations to a changing array of local, continental, and international phenomena, including strikes, attempts on Nkrumah's life, and Cold War intervention in Ghana and elsewhere on the continent.

Juxtaposed with my analysis of the Ghanaian state- and party-run press are a collection of forty-four oral interviews with Ghanaians who were both inside and outside the CPP's formal party apparatus. Among the most prominent figures interviewed were J. K. Tettegah (d. 2009), who for much of the Nkrumah years served as the general secretary of the TUC, K. B. Asante, K. S. P. (formerly J. E.) Jantuah (d. 2011), Kofi Duku, and Dr. M. N. Tetteh. Among these figures, only K. B. Asante remained an active and prominent presence in Ghanaian public life throughout the duration of this book's research and writing, while most others had retired and/or were still sidelined from any serious political work in the country. The majority of the book's interviews, however, are with an array of nonelite Ghanaian men and women who participated in either the CPP or opposition politics of the first decade of self-rule. Most notably, these interviews include oral narratives from and focused life histories of individuals associated with such Nkrumah-era organizations as the Ghana Young Pioneers, the Builders Brigade, and other political and social appendages of the CPP and its opposition. Most of these interviews took place in the particular

individual's home or workplace and were conducted in English, Twi, or a mixture thereof. In some cases, interviewees generously took the time to sit for more than one interview. Meanwhile, a research assistant, who had been integral in locating potential interviewees, was present for most interviews and another aided in the translation and transcription of many of the non-English interviews.

Lower-profile regional archives and those of institutions like the George Padmore Research Library on African Affairs in Accra further reinforced the project's emphasis on the interactive relationship between the ideological and lived experiences of African decolonization and Ghanaian postcoloniality. The Padmore Library's Bureau of African Affairs collection (GPRL, BAA/RLAA/-), for instance, not only helped outline the Nkrumah government's pan-African agenda inside and outside the country, but also—through the personnel files it contained—provided a view into the day-to-day work life of those employed in the institution.

PRAAD's regional archives in Sekondi, Kumasi, Sunyani, and Cape Coast—all of which contain a rich array of material on Nkrumah-era Ghana—offered similar snapshots of life under Nkrumah and the CPP. For, in these often overlooked archives, at least in terms of understanding the national political scene, we find much more than the correspondence of a set of sycophantic bureaucrats attempting to carry out the orders of the central government in Accra. Rather, the records, correspondence, and minutes of the party's district and regional branches provide the intellectual and bureaucratic artifacts for understanding how the Accra government's policies, orders, and ideology were both interpreted at the local level and, in many cases, haphazardly implemented. They thus offer a complicated view of both local governments' and the populace's day-to-day engagement with the often-changing face of Nkrumahism, as each tried to make sense of local issues, including chieftaincy, labor, land ownership, development, political representation, and state loyalty, in the context of the emergent Nkrumahist state. As a result, in combination with the amorphous set of transnational "shadow archives," as Jean Allman refers to them—in the United States, Great Britain, and elsewhere—these regional archives represent some of the most valuable repositories for understanding the contradictions and complexities of Ghanaian political life in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly outside of Accra.⁵⁷ Even with these institutions, however, the types of questions one can usefully answer necessarily face a range of constraints connected to the contemporary realities and current state of a postcolonial archive that was originally

constructed within the increasingly tightening political and social arena of the Nkrumahist state, and that subsequently, over nearly sixty years, has suffered periods of governmental and structural neglect.

ORGANIZATION

The methodological challenges faced in engaging the postcolonial archive inform the organization of this book, for each of its chapters engages both the possibilities and the frustrations elicited by the archive. As a result, the book's first two chapters reconstruct the mutually interacting local and global contexts framing both Nkrumah's political and intellectual development and the Gold Coast's transition to self-rule. In doing so, they place the anticolonial politics of Nkrumah and the CPP at the center of a growing set of transnational debates at the time over the structure and meaning of African self-rule. Central to this discussion is a rereading of the narratives and debates surrounding postwar pan-African anticolonial politics in relation to both the rise of the CPP and the resistance to it. These debates, however, were not just about institutional formations or territorial control. Rather, they were part of a process of contestation that integrated questions concerning everything from the ideological, civic, and moral makeup of the new Ghana to its physical and infrastructural landscape. Chapter 2, in particular, provides a framework for understanding the political, social, and institutional changes to an emergent Nkrumahism in relation to the wide array of expectations and allegiances that comprised the midcentury Gold Coast/Ghanaian political, social, and cultural scene. In doing so, it details the process by which Nkrumah and a range of other local and transnational actors set out to sketch a path for Ghana's future and its role in an anticipated soon-to-be liberated Africa alongside a competing set of alternative visions for the new country—local, regional, and national—that challenged the young but maturing CPP.

The following four chapters detail the process by which the evolving CPP-led state aimed to instill into the Ghanaian populace the pan-African and socialist consciousness that it saw as at the heart of a truly independent Ghana and Africa. Each in turn examines aspects of the variety of paths differing groups of Ghanaians took as they navigated this emerging political and social reality. Chapter 3, for instance, with its focus on Ghanaian youth, especially those involved in state- and party-run organizations like the Builders Brigade (later, Workers Brigade) and the Ghana Young Pioneers, emphasizes the immediate postcolonial period as one of internal political construction and international redefinition and experimentation.

Symbolizing the blank slate of decolonization's "new men," the country's young men, women, and children embodied the hope, aspirations, and presumed malleability of the nation. As a result, the chapter shows how organizations like the Brigade and the Young Pioneers placed youth at the center of a CPP-led process of national inculcation in the values and ideals of an envisioned pan-African and socialist citizenry constructed around an ethics of discipline, order, and civic activism. The chapter also reveals the tensions and arenas of contestation that surrounded these organizations as they set off waves of popular unease—some of which became subjects of public debate, while others (out of individuals' fears of detention) did not—over the state's role in everything from the attempt to alter Ghanaian familial and generational relations to the regimentation and perceived militarization of Ghanaian youth.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on themes of work, productivity, and service to the nation, each key to the Nkrumahist worldview. Chapter 4 builds upon the previous chapter's discussion of an idealized pan-African and socialist citizenry through a social and cultural dissection of the politics of "work" in Nkrumah-era Ghana. Linked to issues of discipline, order, and productivity was to be a national conception of work tied to the collective good. In contrast to being a mechanism for personal economic gain and accumulation, work emerged as a nexus point of moral and civic discourse defined through obligations of sacrifice to the nation and the concomitant process of consciousness-building that was to follow these sacrifices. As presented within the context of party ideology, socialist work and production were thus to be a liberating experience, freeing the Ghanaian (and African) worker from real and imagined subjugation to the global capitalist system, even as the CPP used the idiom of socialist work to weaken and ultimately co-opt the country's previously vibrant labor movement. The result was a political and social environment surrounding work, production, and development that not only increasingly demanded more from the country's workforce, but which eventually, through many Ghanaian workers' reactions to it, forced the CPP into reframing its relationship with the broader populace in the early 1960s.

Similar themes of sacrifice and devotion to the nation, along with those of secrecy and subversion, intersect in chapter 5. Specifically, this chapter presents an international history of Ghanaian readings of the prospects of African decolonization during and after the so-called "Year of Africa," alongside an analysis of the institutional labor and gender politics of a specific Nkrumah-era state institution: the Bureau of African

Affairs. No Ghanaian institution had a greater role in the pursuit of African liberation than the Bureau, as it bore the responsibility of collecting, interpreting, and disseminating to audiences at home and abroad news and intelligence on the advancement of the Nkrumahist revolution. As a workplace, though, the Bureau was also the locus for an evolving set of institutional norms, assumptions, and, not surprisingly, gender politics. The chapter thus interrogates the interactions between the exceptional and the banal in the day-to-day work lives of the Bureau's employees, and particularly its female employees—highlighting the ways in which they sought to navigate their positions and interests as employees in relation to the changing institutional and political realities of employment in one of the most highly politicized institutions of the Nkrumahist state. The chapter in turn brings to the fore the growing gender, generational, and class anxieties that, by the early and mid-1960s, were often associated with the perceived stalling of the Nkrumahist revolution at home and abroad.

Issues of belonging, uncertainty, and attempted political and community self-redefinition frame chapter 6 as it unpacks the political and institutional construction of the one-party state. At the heart of the chapter are the ways in which Ghanaians sought to renegotiate their relationships with this emergent one-party state. Intellectually and structurally, the one-party state was a multifaceted and often volatile entity demarcating political, social, and economic life in the country. For Ghanaians, the political and institutional volatility that surrounded the country's one-party politics, and, more importantly, the mechanisms for policing the country's revolutionary purity and stability (e.g., political detention), led to the rise of an eclectic array of tools for popular self-redefinition and self-preservation. These included activities ranging from petitioning for pay raises and promotions in the language of Nkrumahism, to disengagement from politics, to even supposed displays of state and party loyalty that included reporting on one's neighbors and others. Foremost, the chapter argues that these activities were relationship-building exercises. As such, they were methods of self-preservation and promotion through which certain Ghanaians sought out—often with very troubling effects—new ways to connect to (or, for others, disentangle themselves from) a postcolonial state and ideology that, by the eve of the 1966 coup overthrowing Nkrumah and the CPP, had, for many, become distant and alien shadows of the populist, mass movement they claimed to embody.