

# **Pan-Africanism in Ghana**

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# Pan-Africanism in Ghana

African Socialism, Neoliberalism,  
and Globalization

Justin Williams



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# Contents

List of Abbreviations	ix
List of Images	xi
Series Editor's Preface	xiii
Acknowledgments	xv
Introduction · Pan-Africanism in One Country	xvii
Chapter I · The (Anti-)Colonial Context, Pan-Africanism, and Nkrumah (1800–1957)	3
Chapter II · The First Republic: Building African Socialism and Continental Unity (1957–1966)	33
Chapter III · Busia's Second Republic, the Cold War, Economic Crisis, and Lost Years (1966–1982)	59
Chapter IV · The Emergence of the “Model” Liberal State (1982–Present)	89
Chapter V · A “Free-Market Pan-Africanism” for the Global Age?	115
Epilogue	137
Appendix I · Map of Ghana	141
Appendix II · Map of Africa	143
Appendix III · Timeline of Important Events	145
References	149
Index	165





# List of Abbreviations

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AU	African Union
CEPA	Centre for Policy Analysis
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPP	Convention People's Party
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERP	Economic Recovery Program
EU	European Union
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NLC	National Liberation Council
NLM	National Liberation Movement
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NRC	National Redemption Council
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PP	Progress Party
SAPS	Structural Adjustment Programs
SMC	Supreme Military Council
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
UP	United Party
UN	United Nations



# List of Images

*Image gallery begins on page 81.*

- I. Gold Coast Colony stamp featuring King George VI and Christiansborg Castle (1938) (iStock by Getty Images).
- II. Ghana postage stamp with an illustration of the Ghanaian flag, and a statue of Kwame Nkrumah, first president of the Republic of Ghana (1958) (iStock by Getty Images).
- III. A portrait of the president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, during a speech made at a rally in Harlem, during a visit to the United Nations (1960) (Photo by Ted Russell/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images).
- IV. The Prime Minister of Ghana, Dr. Kofi Busia, meets Edward Heath at No 10 Downing Street (1971) (Photo by Ian Showell/Keystone/Getty Images).
- V. Ghanaian air force officer Jerry John Rawlings, Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council, addresses supporters of the AFRC 31st December 1981 revolution who have gathered at Burma Camp after parading through the streets of Accra, Ghana, January 1982 (Photo by Popperfoto/Getty Images).
- VI. US President Bill Clinton (L) shares a laugh while holding hands with Ghana's President Jerry John Rawlings (R) at the end of their joint press conference at the White House 24 February (1999) (Photo credit by STEPHEN JAFFE/AFP/Getty Images).
- VII. The Independence Square of Accra, Ghana, inscribed with the words "Freedom and Justice, AD 1957" (iStock by Getty Images).
- VIII. Cape Coast, Ghana, Africa: Cape Coast castle—artillery aimed at the Atlantic Ocean (iStock by Getty Images).



# Series Editor's Preface

The *Carolina Academic Press African World Series*, inaugurated in 2010, offers significant new works in the field of African and Black World studies. The series provides scholarly and educational texts that can serve both as reference works and as readers in college classes.

Studies in the series are anchored in the existing humanistic and the social scientific traditions. Their goal, however, is the identification and elaboration of the strategic place of Africa and its Diaspora in a shifting global world. More specifically, the studies will address gaps and larger needs in the developing scholarship on Africa and the Black World.

The series intends to fill gaps in areas such as African politics, history, law, religion, culture, sociology, literature, philosophy, visual arts, art history, geography, language, health, and social welfare. Given the complex nature of Africa and its Diaspora, and the constantly shifting perspectives prompted by globalization, the series also meets a vital need for scholarship connecting knowledge with events and practices. Reflecting the fact that life in Africa continues to change, especially in the political arena, the series explores issues emanating from racial and ethnic identities, particularly those connected with the ongoing mobilization of ethnic minorities for inclusion and representation.

Toyin Falola  
University of Texas at Austin



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## Introduction

# Pan-Africanism in One Country

*And these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion  
Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in the right,  
And all were in the wrong!*

—John Godfrey Saxe, “The Blind Men and the Elephant”<sup>1</sup>

*Pan-Africanism [is a] general term for various movements in Africa that have as their common goal the unity of Africans and the elimination of colonialism and white supremacy from the continent. However, on the scope and meaning of Pan-Africanism, including such matters as leadership, political orientation, and national as opposed to regional interests, they are widely, often bitterly, divided.*

—“Pan-Africanism,” Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia<sup>2</sup>

Since Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana, Pan-Africanism and their historic ties to African-Americans are among the most studied topics by scholars interested in modern Africa and black internationalism, an unavoidable preliminary question is: What about this book is new? As the Stalinist-inspired title of this introduction and concluding stanzas of John Godfrey Saxe’s version of the old fable “The Blind Men and the Elephant” imply, I took a decidedly multi-faceted approach to the topic of Pan-Africanist discourses in Ghana from the colonial period to the present, one that uncovers new information about pre-

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1. John Godfrey Saxe, *The Poems of John Godfrey Saxe: Complete in One Volume* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868), 260.

2. *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. Columbia University Press, 2007.

viously studied topics. Much like Joseph Stalin's doctrine of "Socialism in One Country" in the Soviet Union, Ghana's First Republic also attempted to use the development of a single nation-state as a base for exporting a set of transnational economic and political ideas. Despite the end of Nkrumah's government via a military coup in 1966, Pan-Africanist ideas have remained an important feature of Ghana's politics through the present. The ways in which these ideas were expressed, however, have been tempered by major geopolitical developments such as two World Wars, African decolonization, the Cold War and globalization. In essence, this book is novel because I chose to trace the historical trajectory of a set of transnational, multi-disciplinary ideas within the context of a single nation-state's development, while paying significant attention to the major global trends that impacted both narratives. The following paragraphs further illustrate the importance of this approach by addressing its relationship to major scholarship in the various academic fields it engages and giving an outline of its organization.

Although this is primarily a work of history, I have come to the conclusion that "feeling all the parts of the elephant" must include consultation of relevant major works of political science, anthropology, economics, and heritage tourism studies in order to place the study of a fluid set of ideas like Pan-Africanism (or Diaspora and globalization for that matter) in their proper contexts. Historians of the Pan-African movement(s) such as George Padmore, Peter Esedebe, Ronald Walters, Colin Legum, and others established a broad historical and theoretical framework for the study of Pan-Africanism that has paved the way for countless other scholars.<sup>3</sup> While this framework, with its critical provision of definitions, chronology, and transnational outlook, is indispensable, it tends to focus on developments surrounding multi-national organizations such as the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and the African Union (AU) in the period following African decolonization. While analysis of the inner workings of these organizations is certainly important, I contend that a more focused study of Pan-Africanist discourses and programs within a single African nation's political and economic history is potentially a more revealing way of viewing Africa's larger trajectory.

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3. For examples see George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism of Communism* (London: Doubleday, 1971), Peter Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776–1991* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1994), Ronald W. Walters, *Pan-Africanism in The African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), and Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976).

Historians of Ghana and scores of scholars (far too many to list here) interested in African nationalism have written extensively about the ascent of Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP government's rise and fall from power. In fact, next to Nelson Mandela, Nkrumah is perhaps the single most written about personality in African history. Yet by fixating on the life and work of Nkrumah alone, many studies divorce him from the important global historical moments that shaped his life and guided his career. In this book, I view Pan-Africanism as a force that molded Nkrumah's views, was re-shaped by his rise to prominence, and has continuously been refashioned to grapple with his legacy. A key to understanding Nkrumah's life and career is evaluating the world that produced him and how Ghana's political elite attempted to grapple with his legacy after his exile. In the first chapter of this book, titled "The (Anti-)Colonial Context, Pan-Africanism, and Kwame Nkrumah (1800–1957)," I seek to relocate Nkrumah within the larger picture(s) of global history, the Pan-African movement, and Ghanaian history. Of course, both Ghana's history and Pan-African ideas are bigger than a single personality, and ideas change over time and in different contexts. For this reason, I chose to trace the development of the Pan-African movement from the century preceding Nkrumah's entry until the present. By taking this longer view, I hope to display the importance of Pan-Africanism's origins in the New World as an anti-racist/slavery movement which was pushed across the Atlantic by global events—namely World War I—to Europe and its African colonies. Next, I engage the growing body of work on the impact of black intellectual contact with Europe and its importance in forming the basis for collaboration between educated Africans, studying primarily in France, England, and the United States. This step illuminates the link between ideas in the Diaspora, the radicalization of Africa's "new elite" nationalists, and the movements for decolonization following World War II.

The second chapter, "The First Republic: Building African Socialism and Continental Unity (1957–1966)," reviews the most studied part of Ghana's history, but does so in a manner different from that of C.L.R. James, David Apter, or Basil Davidson, who were largely concerned with questions like (and I am grossly over-simplifying here) "Who was Nkrumah, what did he do, and what went wrong?"<sup>4</sup> Instead, this chapter is more involved with evaluating how global geopolitical events such as decolonization and the Cold War had an impact on Pan-Africanism in Nkrumah's Ghana. On the topic of Diaspora, there

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4. For examples see C.L.R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (Westport: Lawrence Hill, 1977), David Apter, *Ghana in Transition* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), and Basil Davidson, *Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973).

is also an emerging group of excellent works by authors Kevin K. Gaines and James T. Campbell on the history of African American encounters with Ghana during the First Republic.<sup>5</sup> While African efforts to engage the African Diaspora and vice versa are a major subtext of both the Pan-African movement and my book, this remains a work of African history, rather than one of African American history taking place in Africa. This means that once Ghana comes into existence in my narrative, I focus exclusively on Pan-Africanism as an ongoing part of its political culture, thus the terms of African American engagement are viewed primarily as a product of local-global circumstances. In addition, like others following Jean-Francois Bayart's *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, I consider the structural weakness of new African states due to their colonial inheritances and their influence on the history of the First Republic and beyond.<sup>6</sup> By taking this longer view, I hope to ground Kwame Nkrumah in the history of the set of ideas he eventually came to represent, but also to show the trajectory of those ideas over time.

In Chapter III, "Busia's Second Republic, the Cold War, Economic Crisis and Lost Years (1966–1982)," I unconventionally trace the status of Pan-Africanist ideas after the fall of the First Republic. This means significant consideration is given to the ways in which Pan-Africanism was used or neglected during military and civilian regimes of various stripes after Nkrumah was removed from Ghana's political scene. The rationale for this is twofold: first, it moves away from fixating on a single, titanic figure in the study of a constantly evolving global set of ideas; second, it displays the surprising resonance of those ideas in the nation's political discourse. This chapter will not only address the topic of Pan-Africanist discourses in Ghana during the turbulent 1970s and 1980s, but also give greater historical meaning to Ghana's contemporary political and economic landscape. Indeed, this period of protracted economic and political crisis in Africa (in the context of the Cold War) was the impetus for the shift toward the dominant themes analyzed in the final two chapters.

Chapter IV, "The Emergence of the 'Model' Liberal State (1982–Present)," follows Pan-Africanist politics and rhetoric through major shifts to a sustained multi-party democracy and neoliberal economic reforms. In this chapter I seek to historicize the work of political scientists who produced a good deal of work

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5. See Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), and James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787–2005* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006).

6. Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993).

on the West African nation's transition from military to civilian rule under Jerry Rawlings, and that change's relationship to Ghana becoming perhaps the most studied example of Western-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in Africa. This chapter also covers major developments in the consolidation of the nation's democratic institutions in the post-Rawlings years to the present, major geopolitical shifts since the end of the Cold War, the ways in which Ghana has showed a consistent commitment to the economic program of the Bretton Woods system, and some potential consequences the spread of neoliberal democracy might hold for the Pan-Africanist project. In short, this chapter establishes the key historical context for what type of Pan-Africanism emerged after the demise of African socialist projects in Ghana and other states.

Chapter V, "A 'Free-Market Pan-Africanism' for the Global Age?," represents my largest theoretical contribution to historical scholarship by explaining how major political and economic paradigm shifts in Ghana's past led it to espouse a new form of Pan-Africanism in a globalizing world driven by neoliberal economic principles. The recent emergence of a heritage tourist market in Ghana centered on sites most often associated with the trans-Atlantic slave trade has distinct roots in Ghana's history of positioning itself as a gateway to Africa for the African Diaspora. Because the subordination/utilization of history and culture for the purpose of reinforcing recently transformed economies is not unique to Africa, I chose to cross reference Ghana's experience with the work of some major theorists specializing in Latin America. As my review of relevant theoretical scholarship from cultural anthropologists Néstor García Canclini, Charles Hale, and John and Jean Comaroff revealed, Pan-Africanist discourses deployed by contemporary Ghana are part of the larger global history of the changing relationship between culture and the marketplace under neoliberal regimes across the "developing world."<sup>7</sup> This chapter also displays the ways our present historical moment starkly contrast from the ways Pan-Africanism was conceived in previous generations. Ultimately, Chapter Five allows me to identify and define how this most recent form of Pan-Africanism functions in Ghana during the current stage of globalization and project some potential trends that might follow as a result.

To begin concluding, a review of the major themes established in previous sections, coupled with a focus on some very recent developments foreshad-

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7. See Néstor García Canclini, *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), Charles R. Hale, "Neoliberal Multiculturalism: The Remaking of Cultural Rights and Racial Dominance in Central America," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 28, no. 1 ([2005]) and John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

owing how Pan-Africanism might function across a continent where varying degrees of neoliberal reform have been adopted by a majority of its nation-states, gives a more complete picture of how the Pan-African project has evolved over time. By taking this approach, I hope to contribute to historical debates about the ways Africa and its Diaspora are shaped by, and react to, major developments in recent global history. Like Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelly, I view the African Diaspora as “a historical construction,” rather than a natural product of forced and unforced migrations.<sup>8</sup> If we agree that both Pan-Africanism and the African Diaspora are both constructions, then this book essentially takes a long-term view of the pressures that continually remold their relationship with one another.

The combination of this point of view and my interdisciplinary approach serve as a potential remedy for Fionnghuala Sweeney’s observation that American and post-colonial studies’ near exclusive focus on culture as a singular unit of analysis post-Paul Gilroy’s seminal *The Black Atlantic*, “often allowed the relationship between capitalism and imperialism and their attendant migrations to be critically sidestepped.”<sup>9</sup> I address Sweeney’s critique by moving away from intellectual or cultural history alone and illuminating the interplay between African nation-states, global political trends, local political elites, international financial institution, and transnational investors, and their critical roles in the continuous re-construction of Pan-African discourses and culture itself. While *The Black Atlantic* remains important for having laid the groundwork for the study of global black culture, Gilroy’s privileging of the black Anglo-American experience left the need for scholars to examine African geopolitics and the ways Africans themselves (most often elites) are active in constructing ideas about race and Diaspora. To think, a major blind spot of Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* is the central importance and agency of the African continent!

By building on the work of scholars across disciplines and paying a good deal of attention to Ghana’s history of engagement with the African Diaspora after the First Republic (a wide-ranging topic that is currently understudied), I hope to achieve two core objectives. First, I hope the reader will gain a greater understanding of how notions of Pan-Africanism are shaped by global and local economic and political forces. And second, I want to display how and

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8. Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World,” *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (April 2000): 13.

9. Fionnghuala Sweeney, “The Black Atlantic, American Studies and the Politics of the Post-colonial,” *Comparative American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2006), 116.

why Pan-Africanism endured in Ghana despite the demise of an iconic radical African nationalist, but also the various military governments and neoliberal democratic regimes that succeeded him. To definitively answer the original question, my interdisciplinary view of a single idea in Ghana's political history will show the interconnected nature of themes previously seen as separate narratives. In the simplest terms, I am only seeking to provide a fuller view of the elephant.

