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# Father of the Nation: Ghanaian Nationalism, Internationalism and the Political Iconography of Kwame Nkrumah, 1957 - 2010

HARCOURT FULLER

**Abstract:** This article addresses the ways in which Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's prime minister and president, sought visually to propagandize the complementary, yet competing demands of nation-building, Pan-Africanism, and internationalism (most notably Cold War politics and Third World non-alignment) from 1957 to 1966. In order to illustrate the complexities inherent in juggling these three main pillars of his presidency, this article examines the iconography and symbolism of the postage stamps, and to a lesser extent, the national currencies produced during the Nkrumah era. It also notes how every regime that has succeeded Nkrumah, from the National Liberation Council that ousted him from power in a military coup in 1966, to the John Atta Mills administration that came to power in 2010, utilized postage stamps and currency to reevaluate and reinterpret the major milestones in post-colonial Ghana's history. These "symbols of nationhood" and the archival documents that were generated as a result of their production provide scholars with another frame of reference to judge Nkrumah's legacy in the first decade after the centenary of his birth, which was marked in 2009.

## Introduction

When seeking to position newly-independent Ghana as a non-aligned African nation-state in the midst of the Cold War, Kwame Nkrumah would frequently use the populist refrain, "we face neither East nor West: We face forward" at political rallies and in public speeches, such as that delivered at the Positive Action Conference for Peace and Security in Africa, held in Accra on 2 April 1960.<sup>1</sup> Ghana, however, like other newly independent nation states in Africa, and indeed other countries in the Third World with strong nationalist leaders, could not escape the political, cultural, military, and economic ramifications of the ideological battle between the United States and the Soviet Union in the post-World War II era. This article analyzes the complementary, yet competing demands of nationalism or nation-building, Pan-Africanism, and internationalism during Kwame Nkrumah's nine years in office as Prime Minister and later President of Ghana from March 1957 to February 1966. It also considers how post-Nkrumah administrations have reconstructed and reconsidered his projects and legacy, beginning with the military coup that ousted him from power in 1966, until the yearlong commemoration of his birth centenary in 2009-2010.

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At first glance, it might appear that the history and legacy of the Nkrumah era within and beyond Ghana's borders have already been exhaustively covered in the literature; that would not be an incorrect statement. Previous scholars of Ghana's national and international history and politics under Nkrumah have relied on traditional written sources of information such as those found at the national archives of Britain and Ghana, among other countries, in addition to the myriad of books, academic articles, and writings published in the popular press, as well as first-hand and biographical accounts of the Nkrumah state.<sup>2</sup>

Methodologically, this article takes a different approach to analyzing and evaluating the history and political legacy of Nkrumah by utilizing visual sources that have either been understudied or outright neglected by other scholars. The article's arguments are validated by archival material and secondary sources related to these visual documents. In previous publications, I argued that Nkrumah's expressions of his nationalist, Pan-Africanist, and internationalist projects, ideologies, and strategies encompassed the propagandistic use of political iconography and idioms, which I have termed "symbols of nationhood," "symbols of nationalism," or "symbolic nationalism."<sup>3</sup> This is defined as the political and propagandistic use of symbols including money, postage stamps, monuments, museums, dress, non-verbal maxims (such as the Adinkra symbols used in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire), the national anthem, emblems, and both national and party flags to articulate a particular political philosophy. Yet these symbols of Ghanaian nationhood also had trans-national implications, as they were embellished with iconography emphasizing the politics of the Cold War, the promotion of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the creation of a United States of Africa (Pan-Africanism), and support for international organizations such as the United Nations. An increasing number of scholars from a variety of disciplines have argued for the use of visual, semiotic sources in academic works as legitimate and useful forms of historical evidence.<sup>4</sup>

While the majority of these visual sources were produced during the Nkrumah era, many were issued immediately after he was ousted by the National Liberation Council (NLC), while others were developed by the Limann (People's National Party—PNP), Rawlings (Provisional National Defence Council—NDC, and the National Democratic Congress—NDC), Kufuor (New Patriotic Party—NPP), and Mills (National Democratic Congress) administrations. Nonetheless, very few scholars have examined these rich and revealing visual archives, including those of the Ghana Post Company Limited (GPC), which houses primary archival documents and images relating to the issuance of national postage stamps dating to as early as 1955. The holdings of the GPC Archives demonstrate how the iconography of postage stamps was an essential aspect of Nkrumah's nation building, Pan-Africanist, and Cold War political propaganda machine. While a small number of academics have conducted research in these archives, most may not have been aware of, or had access to the hundreds of documents previously thought lost, which I uncovered in the philatelic vaults of the Ghana Post Company. These finds cover the critical years of Nkrumah's rule.<sup>5</sup> In addition to stamps and associated archival material, I will also tangentially analyze how the iconography and symbolism of Ghana's national currency reflects upon and problematizes Nkrumah's record and legacy over the last fifty plus years.

## Nation-Building

After becoming Prime Minister of Ghana, one of Nkrumah's major, but daunting tasks was to achieve national unity and construct a singular national identity. The years that he spent living and traveling overseas, particularly in the United States and Britain, as well as his studies of modern nations and nationalism gave him a detailed level of understanding about the symbolism and substance involved in nation-building. He found that there were certain basic tenets of nationhood, which modern nation-states had in common, and which they used to iconize their ideals, independence, sovereignty, development, promise, and uniqueness among nations. Nkrumah felt that Ghana would have to emulate these traditions, albeit in an Africanized way. This included constructing a national narrative that centered on having a glorious historical past and rich traditions, as well as having Founding Father(s), national heroes, a currency, postage stamps, a flag, an anthem, a coat of arms, museums, and monuments. While this article is confined to the examination of postage stamps and currency, which were the most frequently used and widely circulated symbols of nationhood, I have analyzed the full breadth of visual sources in greater detail in other publications.<sup>6</sup>

As a priority, the Nkrumah government sought to express Ghana's economic independence and solidify his image as the country's Founding Father, by establishing a national bank and national currencies. After being inaugurated in 1958, the Bank of Ghana immediately issued Ghana's first national currency, the Ghana Pound. A new monetary system and currency name-change were introduced in 1965, with the launch of the Cedi. Both national currencies were used to market Ghana's independence, autonomy, and hoped-for national unity, and to promote the Nkrumah cult of personality, through a variety of nationalist iconography. For example, Nkrumah's head was minted on Ghanaian banknotes and coins (including commemorative coins) throughout his presidency.

To underscore his self-promoting and self-aggrandizing claim that he was Ghana's sole Founding Father, the honorific Latin title *Civitatis Ghanienensis Conditor* (Founder of the State of Ghana) encircled the image of Nkrumah's head on Ghana's new national coins. In fact, the honor of being minted on the national coins and paper money was not afforded to any other Ghanaian citizen, including the other members of Ghana's "Big Six" who also fought for independence, at least not while Nkrumah remained in office. The outgoing British colonial officials, and members of the political opposition to Nkrumah's party, most notably Ga and Asante chiefs, rejected Nkrumah's assertions that his actions were compelled by the need to make Ghanaians aware of their new-found national independence, which Nkrumah argued was only achievable through minting the national currency with his image, coupled with other nationalist iconography.<sup>7</sup>

Nkrumah's nation-building projects were also portrayed on the new Ghanaian postage stamps, which are "probably the most common pictorial device in Africa."<sup>8</sup> The European colonial powers had utilized the iconography of postage stamps to portray native Africans and their environment as the racialized and exotic other, to "brand" their colonies and to legitimize their rule over Africans. As Posnansky argues, "...the earliest [colonial] stamps of Africa depicted European symbols of authority: the ruler's head, the Kaiser's yacht, or the allegorical symbols of freedoms and values that imperial powers failed to provide for their African

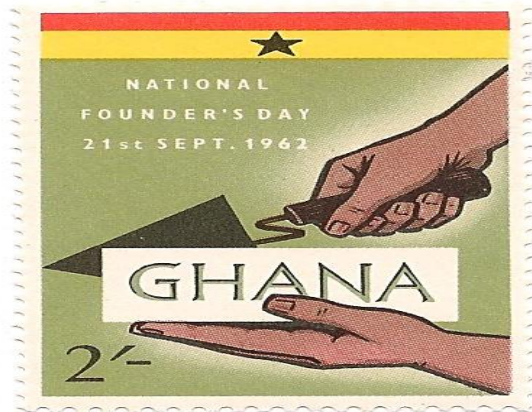
subjects.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, as Mwangi has shown for colonial East Africa, and Cusack in the case of the Portuguese Empire, European powers utilized the iconography and language on colonial currencies and postage stamps to represent their notions of Africa as exotic, childlike, wild, and ready to be tamed by the monarch whose head overlooked the African terrain over which s/he presided.<sup>10</sup>

After independence, African statesmen would, for the most part, emulate the former European colonial rulers by utilizing postage stamps to proclaim and legitimize their own authority and to build national identity. However, while the stamps of the former European powers focused on portraying Africans as the colonized other on the territorial periphery of empire, African nationalists used stamps to normatively depict their societies as the focal point of a new, postcolonial world with an optimistic future. The usefulness of postage stamps (and national money) as a means of spreading the political messages of the state was not lost on Nkrumah. Upon establishing the Ghana Postal Service at independence, the Nkrumah government abandoned the British Crown Agents, which had supplied Gold Coast stamps during colonial times, and turned to a 1957 American start-up company, the Ghana Philatelic Agency (GPA), to market its new national stamps.<sup>11</sup> As the GPA’s business expanded beyond Ghana, its name changed to the Inter-Governmental Philatelic Corporation (IGPC).<sup>12</sup> Although the London-based security printers Harrison and Sons, Ltd. continued to print Ghanaian postage stamps, Ghana also broke ranks with British Commonwealth protocol by having some stamps printed by the E.A. Wright Bank Note Company, located in Philadelphia, not far from Lincoln University, what where Nkrumah had attended. It was the IGPC, moreover, that had the exclusive worldwide rights to distribute Ghanaian stamps, to the astonishment of more experienced philatelic companies and businessmen such as Jacques Minkus who felt entitled to get the contract to market Ghana’s postage stamps.<sup>13</sup> However, the IGPC was not just a marketer of Ghanaian stamps, but also a kind of public relations firm that was tasked with projecting a good image of Ghana to American government officials and the general public, as we shall see later.

The issuance of Ghanaian stamps came under the direct mandate of the Cabinet, over which he presided. The Cabinet appointed a Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC), itself presided over by the Minister of Communications (seconded by the Director of Posts and Telecommunications), which made recommendations regarding the themes, designs, denominations, and other aspects of the production of permanent and commemorative postage stamps. The SAC drew from a local and worldwide panel of commissioned artists who submitted specific designs as requested. The agency then made recommendations to the Cabinet, which had the final word on which designs to circulate and which to reject.<sup>14</sup> To commemorate the first anniversary of Ghana’s independence, the SAC ordered the printing of the new nation’s very first postage stamp—called the Nkrumah or Independence Commemorative Stamp (figure 1.1). This stamp series carried an image of the map of Africa with the location and name of Ghana highlighted. It also had an image of a soaring palm-nut vulture (*Gypohierax Angolensis*), otherwise known as the vulturine fish eagle, African eagle or “Aggrey’s eagle.”<sup>15</sup> On the stamp, the image of the bird faced the portrait of Prime Minister Nkrumah. As the Ghana Philatelic Agency states, “The four values of the Nkrumah set all have the portrait of Dr. Nkrumah on them. This pictorial expression of Dr. Nkrumahs [sic] power

(having replaced the picture of the Queen) was a simple and effective way of overcoming the language barriers, and thus the stamps brought the news to the whole nation, regardless of language differences."<sup>16</sup> However, this was to the distaste of the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), which expected the stamps and money of the new state, which had gained independence as a Dominion in the British Commonwealth (until it became a Republic in 1960), to bear Queen Elizabeth's image.<sup>17</sup> The CRO complained that Nkrumah "has already created one undesirable precedent in the shape of an Independence stamp bearing not the Queen's but the Prime Minister's effigy..."<sup>18</sup>

**Figures 1.1–1.9 Postage Stamps Illustrating Nkrumah's Nationalism and Nation-Building Projects**



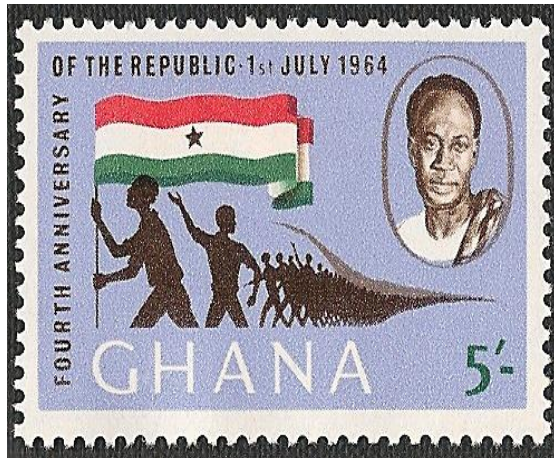
1.1 Ghana Independence Commemoration March 1957

1.2 National Founder's Day 21st Sept. 1962

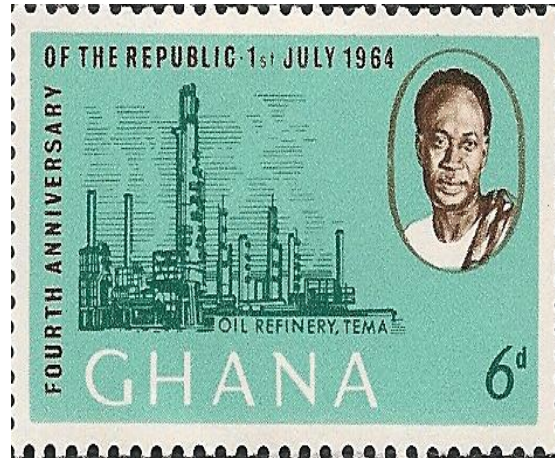


1.3 Nkrumah State Parliament House

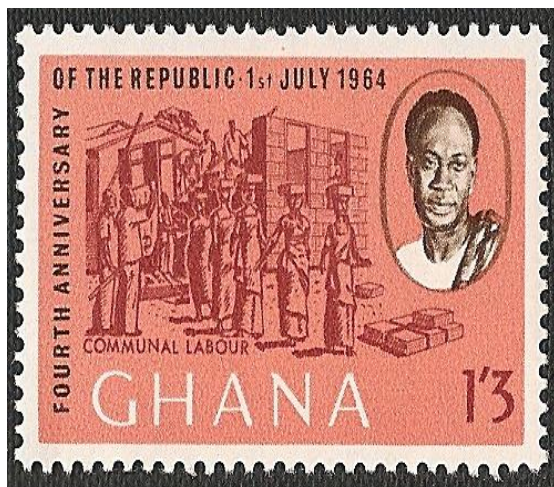
1.4 Inauguration of Ghana Airways July 1958



1.5 Fourth Anniversary of the Republic 1st July 1964



1.6 Oil Refinery, Tema



1.7 Communal Labour



1.8 Harvesting Corn in a State Farm



1.9 Volta River Project

The CRO's protest was also in all likelihood a disapproval of Nkrumah's increasing business links with non-British merchants such as Manfred Lehmann. Like the GPA, however, Nkrumah argued that there was a deliberate political reason for replacing the Queen's image on postage stamps (and currency) with his likeness. In an article in a London newspaper answering critics' disapproval of his actions, Nkrumah wrote:

My Cabinet have decided, with my agreement, to put my head on the coinage, because many of my people cannot read or write. They've got to be shown that they are now really independent. And they can only be shown by signs. When they buy stamps they will see my picture—an African like themselves—and they will say "Aiee...look here is our leader on the stamps, we are truly a free people."<sup>19</sup>

This issue would haunt Nkrumah throughout his presidency, and beyond. In addition to the aforementioned stamp, the Cabinet issued other stamps to symbolically consolidate Nkrumah's power and promote his personality cult. This included an annual series commemorating his birthday on 21 September, which was dubbed "National Founder's Day" (figure 1.2). The particular stamp in figure 1.2 had a symbolically direct reference to the idea of nation building. Its iconography shows an African's hands holding a brick inscribed with the name "Ghana," and clutching a trowel, sending the message that it was up to Ghanaians to build their new state—one brick at a time.

There were three additional, interconnected strands of symbolic nationalism and nation building portrayed on Nkrumah-era postage stamps, namely, political, socio-cultural, and economic nationalism. Stamps espousing political nationalism included the marking of major political milestones and ideological themes, such as the "First Anniversary of Independence 6 March 1958" series. In addition to portraying the national flag, the four stamps in this series depicted themes of modernization such as the state-owned "Ambassador Hotel," and political themes including the "State Opening of Parliament 1957" (which was attended by the Duchess of Kent who represented Queen Elizabeth), the "National Monument," and the "Coat of Arms," and a stamp titled "Nkrumah Statue Parliament House" (figure 1.3) depicting the Prime Minister's statue facing the luminous rising sun. In the latter stamp, the statue's raised right hand symbolized Nkrumah's commanding of the birth of a new nation-state (like the rising sun), Ghana being imagined as the loadstar of African liberation. "Republic Day," which was first celebrated on 1 July 1960 when Ghana became a republic, was also an important political achievement that was commemorated on postage stamps. The Standing Development Committee of the SAC went so far as to state that "great prominence is now given to the Republic celebrations than to Independence celebrations."<sup>20</sup>

These stamps also featured socio-cultural themes, included sporting events such as African soccer tournaments and the Olympics, which demonstrated the prowess of the Ghanaian athlete through images of victorious and competitive athletes. Healthcare advances and quality of life issues such as the "World United Against Malaria" (December 1962), "Freedom From Hunger Campaign" (March 1963), and "Red Cross Centenary 1863 – 1963" were also featured on stamps.



Finally, the illustration of economic themes on stamps, particularly those promoting modernization and industrialization, were also an important aspect of Nkrumah's nation-building projects. According to Child, "Postal themes stressing industrialization and modernization can also carry a message of the economic pride a country has in its status as an emerging developed country."<sup>21</sup> Such stamps included the sixtieth anniversary of Ghana Railway (1903-1963), showing an image of an old and a modern locomotive. The "Inauguration of Ghana Airways July 1958" series had four designs, which symbolized the new nation's entry into the modern world of aeronautics: (1) The Ghana Eagle symbolically encircling the world; (2) a Britannia aircraft; (3) a Boeing Stratocruiser aircraft and an albatross in flight (figure 1.4); and (4) the West African Vulturine Fish Eagle and a jet aircraft in flight.<sup>22</sup> Mining of commodities such as gold and diamonds were also promoted, as was agricultural production, including growing and harvesting of cocoa, logging, fishing, and commercial flora and fauna.

By 1964, Ghana had become a one-party state under the Convention People's Party (CPP). Postage stamps issued during and after that year reflected this political change, such as the "Fourth Anniversary of the Republic 1st July 1964" series. These stamps featured several graphical themes articulating more socialist ideals and promoting state-led economic development projects and industries. Figure 1.5, for example, is reminiscent of some East Bloc postage stamps, which typically have an image of the party leader and president overlooking the masses who are being shown the way forward by a (CPP) flag-bearer. The other stamps in this series, all bearing Nkrumah's image, included "Oil Refinery Tema," "Communal Labour," and "Harvesting Corn in a State Farm" (figures 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8). The importance of the Volta River Hydroelectric Project (figure 1.9) to both Nkrumah's nation-building efforts and the Cold War is discussed more fully below. Finally, the "Ghana New Currency 19th July 1965" series advertised the changeover from the British sterling to the American-style decimal currency system, while representing a further distancing of Ghana from the remnants of the colonial state.

### **Pan-Africanism**

In addition to his nationalist projects, Nkrumah was also a staunch anti-colonialist and Pan-Africanist who tried but failed to establish and potentially lead a United States of Africa. The visual record, especially postage stamps with Pan-Africanist themes, illustrates his efforts at promoting a common African socio-political, economic and cultural entity. In April 1958, Nkrumah convened the Conference of Independent African States in Accra (otherwise known as the Accra Conference), which eight participating states attended by—Ghana, Liberia, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt (representing the United Arab Republic or UAR), the Sudan, and Ethiopia, as well as members of various liberation movements on the continent. These independent nations discussed their common problems and challenges, including issues of national sovereignty, national identity, the need for knowledge and information sharing, working within the framework of the United Nations to advocate for decolonization, and other Pan-Africanist goals.

A commemorative series of stamps was issued for the event, one of which had a map of Africa showing the locations of the eight participating countries and a scroll wrapped around

the continent, bearing the legend “Conference of Independent African States” (figure 2.1). The two other stamps in this series featured an image of a burning Torch of Freedom set in front of the continent. The stamps noticeably excluded the Union of South Africa and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (or Central African Federation). This is not surprising since Nkrumah and his allies opposed these countries over their racist and undemocratic policies against black Africans and other disenfranchised groups, their suppression of regional African liberation movements, and their opposition to Ghana’s entry into the Commonwealth.

Following on the heels of the Accra Conference, Ghana and Guinea formed an alliance in November 1958, and, with the addition of Mali in April 1961, a three-nation union was born. The Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union, also known as the Union of African States, would be short-lived, lasting only to 1962. The Accra Conference also established 15 April as “Africa Freedom Day” (later known as African Liberation Day) to mark the progress of the various liberation movements and as a day to express anti-colonialist and Pan-Africanist sentiments and actions. Africa Freedom Day was commemorated each year on Ghanaian postage stamps, “in view of the part being played by Ghana in Africa’s fight for freedom.”<sup>23</sup> The 15 April 1961 Africa Freedom Day stamp illustrated in figure 2.2 depicted the flags of nine independent African territories encircling the African continent.

In January 1961, another Pan-Africanist gathering, the Casablanca Conference, convened in the Moroccan capital as an emergency meeting to address the Congo Crisis. Attending were the countries that would become known as the Casablanca Group—Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, the UAR, and the Algerian Provisional Government (the FLN).<sup>24</sup> The Nkrumah government authorized commemorative postage stamps to mark the anniversary of this conference and to promote peace in Africa, as the symbolism of figure 2.3 shows with the olive-branch-carrying white dove. Most of the Casablanca Group countries were Lumumbist, non-aligned, and socialist. They also had a vested interest in the Congo Crisis, having contingents in the United Nations peacekeeping force that Patrice Lumumba had requested to mediate the conflict. Upon Lumumba’s assassination, Nkrumah showed his support for the memory of his comrade in the struggle by authorizing the issuance of the “1st Anniversary of the Death of Patrice Lumumba Premier of the Congo” stamp series issued on 12 February 1962 (figure 2.4). The recommendation to issue this commemorative stamp was made by the government of Morocco and the delegates to the African Economic Meeting, held in Conakry in May 1961.<sup>25</sup> As figure 2.5 shows, Nkrumah and other Third World leaders celebrated the United Nations as a platform for African and world liberty, peace, prosperity, and human rights, although the international organization was perceived as being complicit in the death of Lumumba.

Two years later, the Casablanca Conference was followed by another gathering in the Ethiopian capital. One outcome was the African Unity Charter, adopted on 25 May 1963, which was commemorated by postal issues such as the “First Anniversary of the Signing of the African Unity Charter” stamp series (figure 2.6). One stamp in this series carried the French phrase “Unite Africaine,” symbolizing Nkrumah’s interest in uniting Africa across linguistic lines. The African Unity Charter established the Organization of African Unity or OAU, also commemorated on numerous postage stamp issues such as in figure 2.7.

Nkrumah also promoted African arts, culture and the sciences as a means of encouraging Pan-African unity and progress. In Ghana, he appropriated the glorious Asante past (as a vast

expanding trading and warrior kingdom in Western Africa) through museum exhibits and monetary and postal iconography. He also identified with other great African civilizations as a means of anchoring the regime to a great continental heritage and rich traditions and cultures. An example of this is the 1963 UNESCO “Save the Monuments of Nubia” stamp series, with images of Rameses II at Abu Simbel (figure 2.8), Queen Nefertari, and the Sphinx at Seba. Ghana and other African countries issued these stamps to bring awareness to the destruction of these monuments caused by construction of the Aswan Dam in Egypt. The Ghanaian stamps in this series featured the name of the country as well as the flag, adjacent to the Nubian monuments, perhaps to equate the glories of Ancient Nubian with (Ancient) Ghana. Ironically, the Aswan Dam, which threatened the Nubia monuments, was built by Egyptian premier Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was both Nkrumah’s political ally and rival on issues including the Pan-African and Non-Aligned Movements. It was therefore ironic that the government of

**Figures 2.1–2.12 Ghanaian Postage Stamps Illustrating Kwame Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanist Politics**



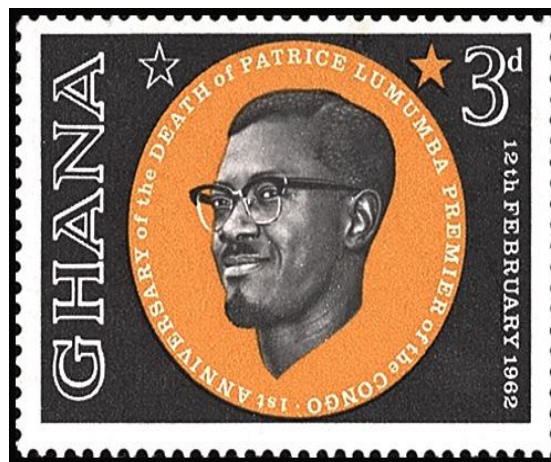
2.1 Conference of Independent African States  
Accra 1958



2.2 Africa Freedom Day



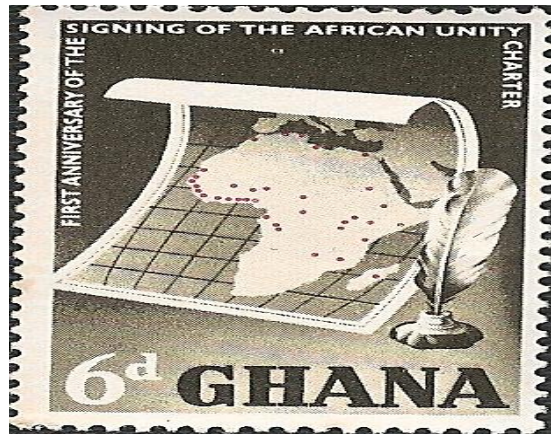
2.3 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Casablanca Conference  
Jan 4, 1962



2.4 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Death of Patrice Lumumba  
premier of the Congo February 1962



2.5 United Nations Human Rights Day December 1960



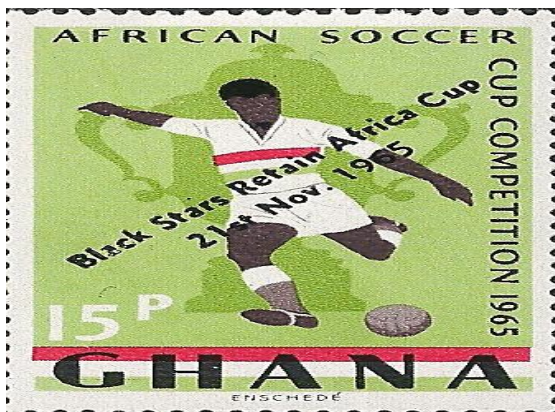
2.6 First Anniversary of the Signing of the African Unity Charter '64 10<sup>th</sup>



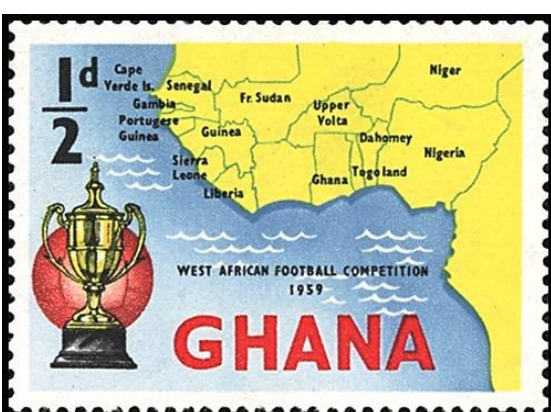
2.7 OAU Summit Conference Accra 1965



2.8 Save the Monuments of Nubia 1963



2.9 African Soccer Cup Competition 1965



2.10 West African Football Competition 1959



2.11 G. Washington Carver 1964



2.12 Inauguration of the Black Star Line 1957

Ghana issued stamps advocating the protection of these threatened sites, which were endangered not by “neo-colonialists,” but by a fellow leader of an African country.

Other stamps with Pan-Africanist themes commemorated continental sporting events such as the victory of the national soccer team (the Black Stars) in the “African Soccer Cup Competition 1965” (figure 2.9). Regional integration through sports was promoted with issues such as the “West African Football Competition October 1959” series (figure 2.10), played for the Kwame Nkrumah Gold Cup. Countries that participated in this competition represented Lusophone (Cape Verde and Portuguese Guinea), Francophone (Senegal, Guinea, French Sudan, Upper Volta, Dahomey, Niger, and Togoland), and Anglophone nations (Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, and Nigeria).

The courting of African-Americans, Caribbeans, and other blacks in the Diaspora was also an important aspect of Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanist dreams. To this end, he had invited many prominent and highly educated blacks to join his government to serve in formal and informal capacities, including Arthur Lewis, Ras Makonnen, George Padmore, and W.E.B. Du Bois, among others. Nkrumah also celebrated the achievements of blacks in the Diaspora as an inspiration to Ghanaians and all Africans. Thus, Ghana issued a UNESCO Week (1964) stamp series featuring two scientists, one with Albert Einstein and another featuring the African American scientist George Washington Carver with an image of a peanut (groundnut) plant from which he developed numerous products (figure 2.11).

In 1958, a series of stamps was issued commemorating the inauguration of the Black Star Shipping Line, a joint venture between the governments of Ghana and Israel.<sup>26</sup> The stamps depicted the history of navigation, showing a Viking ship and a medieval galleon, in addition to a modern cargo vessel (figure 2.12). Nkrumah borrowed the name of Ghana’s national shipping company from the Jamaican-born Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey, who had incorporated the short-lived Black Star Line in Delaware in 1919. In line with his Back-to-Africa agenda, Garvey had founded the company to facilitate the transportation of goods and peoples of African descent between the Americas, Africa, and other worldwide markets and destinations.<sup>27</sup> Like Garvey, Nkrumah most likely intended to use the Black Star Line to facilitate the movement of

African peoples and commodities across the continent and throughout the worldwide Diaspora and beyond.

### **Internationalism: The Cold War and the Non-Aligned Movement**

The third major hallmark of the Nkrumah era was his focus on internationalism as it related to international events, inter-governmental organizations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Cold War. Stamps commemorating United Nations Day (figure 3.1), the United Nations Trusteeship Council (figure 3.2), and United Nations Human Rights Day, as well as Ghana's participation in global sporting events such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games (figure 3.3) also served to legitimize Ghana's status as an emerging but influential part of the Third World bloc. The UN was of particular importance to Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist internationalism; the symbolism of figure 3.1 implies that the black and white worlds, or the Third World and the West, could achieve equality and live in friendship through the mediation of the United Nations. As Nkrumah stated in the National Assembly on 4 September 1958:

Ghana regards the faithful adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter as an integral part of her foreign policy and we shall continue to co-operate fully in the activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. It is a matter of crucial importance to us and to our sister African nations that the United Nations Organization should become an effective instrument for the preservation of world peace.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, Ghana and other countries in the Non-Aligned Movement issued a "Conference of Non-Aligned Countries" series of stamps to commemorate the event held in Belgrade in September 1961, advocating for world peace and non-nuclear proliferation. The symbolism of the Belgrade Conference stamps included a world map over which hovered an unbroken chain and an olive branch, an olive branch at a podium (figure 3.4), as well as a white dove carrying an olive branch (figure 3.5). In June 1962, the "World Without the Bomb" conference was held in Ghana. Stamps commemorating this "Accra Assembly" had similar symbols promoting non-alignment and world peace, including a stamp designed by the Israeli artist Maxim Shamir, which featured a graphic of an exploded atomic bomb in the shape of a skull (figures 3.6). The issuance of these stamps was in protest of the development of nuclear power in Africa, especially as a weapon of war for the colonial powers.

In 1959, along with an alliance of Western pacifists, Ghana embarked on a campaign to stop France from detonating its first nuclear bomb in the Sahara region of Algeria (its then North African colony) the following year. When this alliance failed to stop France from nuclear testing beginning in February 1960, Nkrumah recalled his ambassador to France. As France detonated its third atomic bomb in the Sahara in 1960, Egypt, Morocco, and Nigeria joined Ghana in expressing African outrage over these actions. In 1962, in further support of the non-nuclear proliferation movement, Nkrumah financed and hosted "the World Without the Bomb" disarmament assembly in Accra.<sup>29</sup> Ghana issued a similarly themed postage stamp to commemorate the event. Nationalists, Pan-Africanists, and their non-aligned allies in the West saw these tests on African soil as an affront to African sovereignty and neutrality. Notwithstanding the failure to stop French testing in Africa, Nkrumah promised to "support

wholeheartedly the efforts of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations to make Africa a Nuclear Free Zone."<sup>30</sup> However, the Ghanaian premier and his supporters were utterly unable to stop the forward march of the nuclear age in Africa or elsewhere.

Symbols of nationhood, particularly postage stamps, can also be used as historical evidence to ascertain Cold War alliances, especially during the wave of decolonization in Africa.

According to Posnansky:

Unlike the colonial [postage stamp] issues, all the African countries began to proclaim their heroes from their own and the rest of Africa's past and from the struggle against colonialism...They also demonstrated their political allegiances, with Marx and Lenin on Guinean stamps and Kennedy and American figures on those from anglophone [sic] and Americanophile countries. The stamps of North Africa proclaimed pan-Arab unity and solidarity with the Palestinian cause.<sup>31</sup>

Many of Ghana's stamp and currency designs and themes followed along the lines of Soviet and other socialist models of using graphic elements to promote the state ideology and the centrality of its party and national leader. However, the Cabinet's Stamp Advisory Committee exclusively depicted British and American leaders and not Soviet ones on Ghana's postage stamps, promoting the nation's international relations with the West. For example, Ghana's Commonwealth ties and foreign policy were emphasized by stamps that commemorated the royal visits of Prince Philip in November 1959, as well as Queen Elizabeth in November 1961 (figure 3.7).

Initially, Americans found much promise in the Nkrumah administration. To underscore the importance that the United States placed on an emergent, independent Africa in the context of the Cold War, President Eisenhower dispatched Vice President and Mrs. Richard Nixon to attend the Ghana Independence Day celebrations on 6 March 1957. "This ushered in the very warm and friendly relations existing between the two countries."<sup>32</sup> Eisenhower then invited Nkrumah to the White House in July 1958, which was hailed as "the most important milestone in American-Ghanaian relations."<sup>33</sup> After meeting with President Eisenhower, Nkrumah accepted an invitation by Prime Minister Diefenbaker to visit Canada. As figure 3.8 shows, this important state visit between Nkrumah and the heads of the two North American giants was commemorated on the Nkrumah stamps, which were overprinted with the legend "PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT, U.S.A. AND CANADA." Nkrumah also visited the Kennedy White House on 8 March 1961, making him the first foreign head of state to visit the United States after JFK became president.<sup>34</sup> This underscores the importance that the Kennedy Administration attached to wooing African leaders into the capitalist camp.

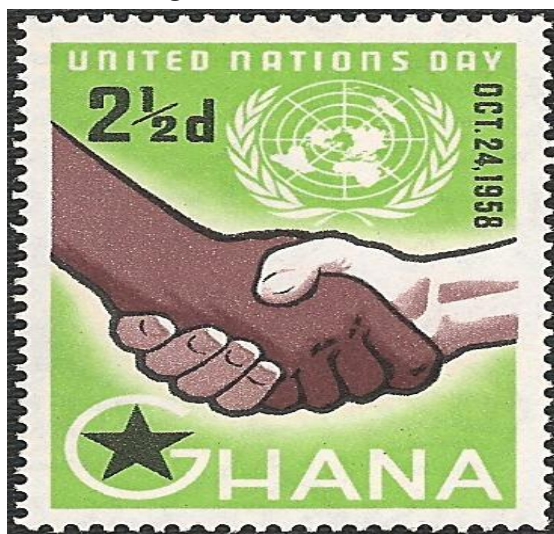
Of course, Nkrumah's visit to Washington was as much about economics as it was politics. His government badly needed enormous sums of money to finance the Volta River hydroelectric project. Despite the seemingly amicable diplomatic dealings between Ghana and the United States, Robert Kennedy (RFK) was extremely apprehensive about supporting the Nkrumah regime. The President's brother was concerned with Nkrumah's increasing hold on power and his suppression of his political adversaries. RFK unsuccessfully urged JFK not to fund the Volta Project.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, President Kennedy's quest to keep newly-independent

African countries in the Western camp, and thus out of Soviet hands, outweighed these other concerns.

Ghana also issued stamps commemorating various American presidents such as Abraham Lincoln (figures 3.9 and 3.10), John F. Kennedy (figure 3.11) after his assassination, and human rights activists such as Eleanor Roosevelt (figure 3.12). Nkrumah had attended Lincoln University and obviously admired the man after whom the university was named. Furthermore, the two had several things in common; both were born to poor parents in rural settings, and were elected to office at critical times in their countries' history. The theme for the 150th birthday anniversary of Lincoln stamp in figure 3.9, which shows a boyish-looking Nkrumah standing in admiration at the feet of Lincoln's iconic memorial, was suggested by the government of Ghana, designed by British stamp designer Michael Goaman, and was taken at the Lincoln Monument during Nkrumah's 1958 visit to Washington.<sup>36</sup> According to David Scott, author and expert on European stamp designs:

Michael [Goaman] was also an astute observer of political change and its impact on the cultural environment. His many designs for the newly independent countries of Africa, produced in the late 1950s and early 60s, attest to this skill. In an outstanding design of 1959, based on a photograph reproduced in *Life* magazine the previous year, the head and shoulders of the newly elected Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah, are silhouetted against a statue of Abraham Lincoln. A special Goaman touch is the way the name "Ghana" is imposed on the African president's torso, communicating in purely graphic terms the stamp's implicit message that the great American democratic tradition of Lincoln is carried forward in Africa by a native president.<sup>37</sup>

### Figures 3.1–3.12 Nkrumah-Era and Ghanaian Postage Stamps Relating to the Cold War and the Non-Aligned Movement



3.1 United Nations Day 1958

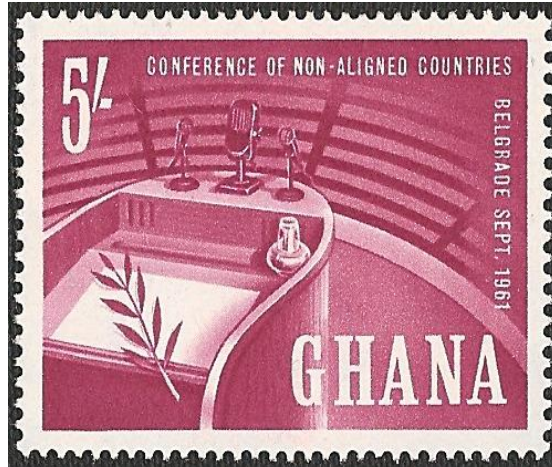


3.2 United Nations Trusteeship Council 1959





3.3 Olympic Games 1960

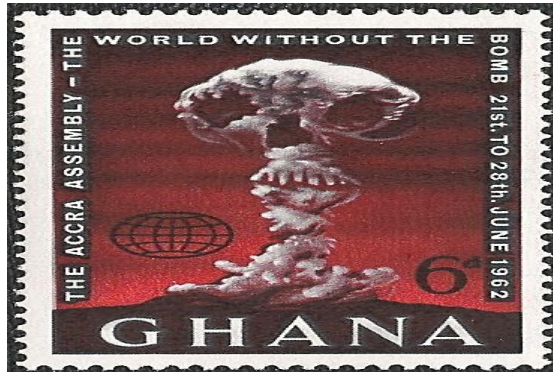


3.4 Conference of Non-Aligned Countries Belgrade

Sept. 1961



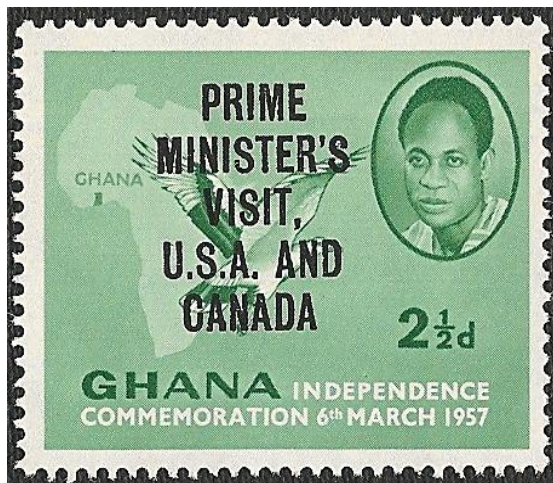
3.5 Conference of Non-Aligned Countries Belgrade



3.6 World Without the Bomb 1962 Sept. 1961



3.7 Visit of Queen Elizabeth November 1961



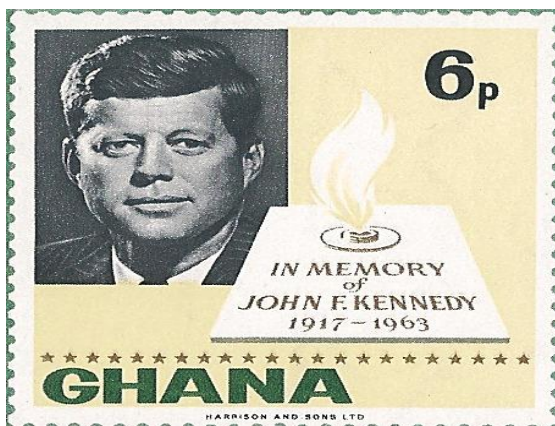
3.8 Prime Minister's Visit to U.S.A. and Canada  
Overprint '58



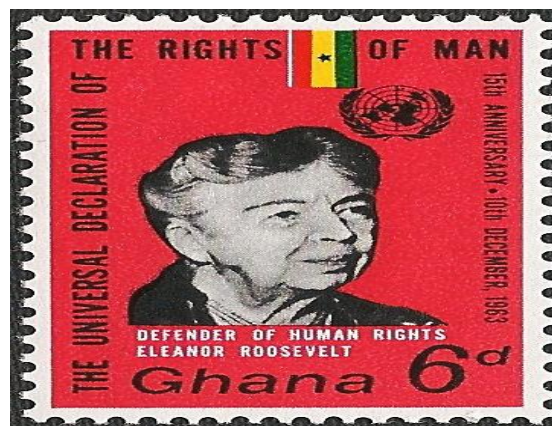
3.9 Abraham Lincoln 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary '59



3.10 Abraham Lincoln Memorial '65



3.11 In Memory of John F. Kennedy 1917-1963



3.12 The Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary December 1963

Ghana on 17 May 1965 issued a series of postage stamps commemorating the death centenary of Abraham Lincoln. One such stamp (figure 3.10) featured the words of Abraham Lincoln, “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as god gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in.” These two stamps (figures 3.9 and 3.10) suggest that Nkrumah saw himself as the modern day successor of Lincoln in the African context, “to finish the work” of national liberation that Lincoln pioneered. For just as how Lincoln is credited with freeing the slaves on the American sub-continent, Nkrumah saw himself as the man tasked with freeing the African continent from (neo)colonialism and economic bondage, although other African leaders from rival political blocs saw this self-appointment as problematic.

In addition to marketing Ghanaian philatelic products overseas, the Ghana Philatelic Agency also utilized the nation’s postage stamps as a public relations tool to promote Ghana’s (and Nkrumah’s) good name in the United States. The GPA promoted the notion that Nkrumah was Ghana’s, and by extension, Africa’s political savior. In their first newsletter, which was circulated among philatelists in the United States and other countries, the GPA wrote:

This nations (sic) independence was gained chiefly thru the tireless efforts of its Prime Minister, the brilliant, American educated Hon. Dr. K. Nkrumah...He has won the overwhelming admiration of all people for his exceptional

achievements...Ghana today is a real democratic republic, united under the leadership of Dr. Nkrumah.<sup>38</sup>

The GPA also tried to make Ghanaian nationalism and Pan-Africanism popular in official American government circles, both at the state and federal levels. For instance, a set of the Ghana Independence Day commemorative stamps was given to New York Governor William Averell Harriman, who signed the Ghana Independence Day Declaration. "March 6th, 1958 was declared GHANA INDEPENDENCE DAY for the State of New York by the Governor in honor of the new countries' [sic] achievements within one year of its independence."<sup>39</sup> The Agency also promoted Pan-Africanism at the highest levels of the American government. This was the case, for example, with the 1958 issue of the Conference of Independent African States postage stamps (figure 2.1). "When the African Conference stamps were issued this year, Vice Pres. Nixon was happy to express his interest in Ghana's affairs by accepting a presentation of specially mounted stamps, presented by Mrs. Manfred R. Lehmann of the Ghana Philatelic Agency."<sup>40</sup> The GPA went further in advocating, through its literature and direct contacts within the Eisenhower administration, local and state officials, and the influential and well-off American philatelists, that the United States should embrace Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist programs, which they felt could benefit Washington in the long run:

Now we have a chance to back an African nation which is really friendly to us, and has all the earmarks of a staunch bulwark of democracy, and help it into the driver's seat as far as the leadership of African affairs is concerned. By supporting the African Conference, we help shift the attention of the world to Ghana as the mouthpiece of Africa. And our interest will encourage friendship and loyalty between the United States and Ghana and its African neighbors.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, the GPA cited the military bases that the United States already maintained in some of the countries participating in the Accra Conference, including Morocco, Libya, and Ethiopia, Washington's historical ties with Liberia, and its political support for Tunisia and Sudan as further reasons to support Pan-Africanism.<sup>42</sup>

Nkrumah thought that one of the critical aspects of independence was the attainment of a vibrant economic system that would generate wealth for the wellbeing of the nation, without relying too heavily on outside aid. In the chapter titled "Building a New Nation" in *I Speak of Freedom*, Nkrumah declared that "with the achievement of Independence...I began to concentrate on the long-term objectives; economic freedom for Ghana, and African emancipation and Unity."<sup>43</sup> Nkrumah pursued a socialist policy that was characterized by government control of the means of generating money, through rapid industrialization, the indigenization of industry, and small-scale businesses. As Nkrumah stated in *Africa Must Unite*:

In the industrial sphere, our aim has been to encourage the establishment of plants where we have a natural advantage in local resources and labour or where we can produce essential commodities required for development or for domestic consumption. During 1961, over 60 new factories were opened. Among them was [sic] a distillery, a coconut oil factory, a brewery, a milk-processing plant, and a lorry and bicycle assembly plant.<sup>44</sup>

He sought to balance his domestic monetary policies, however, under the banner of nationalism with the need for direct foreign investments. Despite being a staunch nationalist and Pan-Africanist, Nkrumah pretended not to be indifferent to the fact that, in order to build the nation, Ghana needed outside financial assistance, often from many of the same companies that were a part of the British colonial establishment. He outlined that Ghana's foreign policy "...was based on economic and cultural co-operation with all countries..."<sup>45</sup> He concluded:

In regard to investment from abroad, it would be ungenerous if we did not acknowledge the great value to Ghana of the investments already made here by foreign companies and individuals. It is the intention of my Government, and the wish of the country, to do all we can to encourage such investments, to protect the interests of those who have already invested, and to attract new investors.<sup>46</sup>

The embrace of modernity and the promotion and exhibition of science and technology for economic development were also key ingredients in Nkrumah's nation-building plans. To this end, the CPP government received aid for his modernization and industrial development schemes from both the East and West blocs. The British supplied the aircraft for the new Ghana Airways after independence. In the 1960s, Nkrumah embarked on an ambitious plan to rapidly industrialize Ghana, even going ahead with Soviet-backed plans to build a nuclear reactor as part of Ghana's energy mix, which never actually materialized.<sup>47</sup>

The centerpiece of Ghana's industrialization projects was the ambitious and symbolic Akosombo/Volta River hydroelectric plant, which was originally commissioned and financed by the British and completed by American engineers and financiers.<sup>48</sup> Nkrumah wanted to use the Volta River dam to launch the African industrial revolution within one generation, for he and his senior advisors believed that they needed to have "power" to develop Ghana's infrastructure. Through its postal promotions, the GPA also did its part to tout Ghana as a great candidate to receive American economic assistance through the American financing of the Volta River Dam:

The stage is set for real progress in our position in Africa. This government may soon also extend financial help towards the improvement of economic and social conditions there. Such help is not only idealistic but can pay back handsome dividends – take the case of the huge Volta River Project in Ghana, which, if we help realize it, will give the Free World an almost unlimited source of aluminum and its by-products.<sup>49</sup>

The Volta Project, like much of Nkrumah's other nation-building projects, followed a combination of the Soviet and Chinese models of state-led industrialization, and modernization through a vanguard party (the CPP), five-year plans, rapid industrialization and labor-intensive agriculture. An example of this ideological triangle is the image of the Volta River Project designed in the letters of "GHANA." The CPP/State party flag is quite visible on the side of the graphic (figure 1.9), and is an example of the importance that the Nkrumah administration gave to state-led industrialization.<sup>50</sup> Initially undertaken with British financial support, the project was shelved by the British in the wake of the 1956 loss of the Suez Canal and Whitehall's dwindling coffers for financing such huge international development projects. The Eisenhower

Administration began backing the project in 1958, getting Kaiser Aluminum to agree to financing the dam and bauxite smelter. The Kennedy Administration lent further millions of dollars to the Volta River scheme.<sup>51</sup> At the opening ceremony of the completed Volta River Hydroelectric Dam on 22 January 1966, Nkrumah expressed his gratitude to both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy as leaders who took the opportunity to make a purposeful and meaningful contribution to a developing country.<sup>52</sup>

Notwithstanding, Nkrumah's left-leaning tendencies, flirtations with communism, and his commitment to world peace during the Cold War inspired a U.S.-backed coup that removed him from power on 24 February 1966. As June Milne, Nkrumah's former research/editorial assistant and literary executrix writes, it was with Washington's (mixed) blessings that Nkrumah went to Hanoi to pursue his peace plan, only three weeks before the coup was staged. She further asserts that the Americans had pre-planned the coup with local collaborators, but only if they could get Nkrumah to leave the country.<sup>53</sup> John Stockwell agrees with Milne in attributing CIA complicity in Nkrumah's removal from power.<sup>54</sup> Nkrumah's links with the left, however, did not end with his ouster from power but on the contrary grew stronger. After the coup, four left-leaning leaders in Africa (Gamal Abdel Nasser, Modibo Keita, Sékou Touré, and Julius Nyerere) each offered to host Nkrumah. He accepted the invitation of staunch socialist and Pan-Africanist Sékou Touré of neighboring Guinea-Conakry and was made co-president until his death in 1972. The pivotal issue that severed whatever ties that had existed between Nkrumah and the United States can arguably be attributed to his publication of *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* in 1965. In it, he accused the United States of collaborating with the former European colonial powers to exploit Africa economically, contributing to the continent's underdevelopment. An outraged US government officially protested Nkrumah's accusations and cut off funding to his regime. Moreover, the American press duly vilified Nkrumah.<sup>55</sup>

### **The Renaissance of Nkrumah in Ghana Since the Coup**

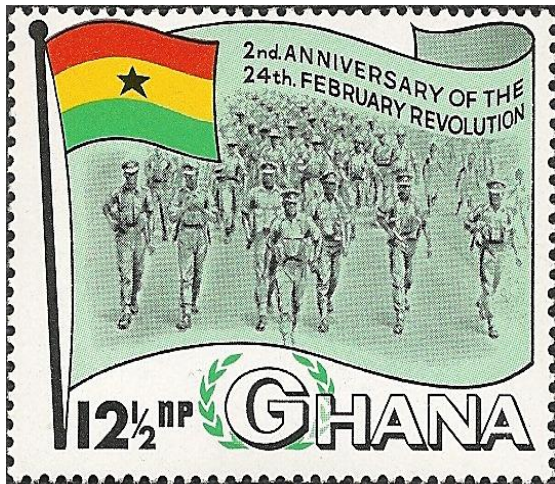
Since his death in exile in 1972, Nkrumah's historical legacy has gone through a process of reconstruction, re-evaluation, and re-interpretation, both within and outside of Ghana. Post-Nkrumah postage stamps, currencies and monuments also show how Nkrumah's legacy has been judged in Ghana. For example, the military coup leaders used stamps as propaganda to discredit Nkrumah's legacy and advance their own. The NLC not only removed Nkrumah from power, but also his image from the national stamps and currency. Figures 4.1–4.3, for example, are stamps issued by the NLC to celebrate their "24th February Revolution," to cast their coup in a populist light, and to imply that they had broken the chains of Nkrumah's tyranny and restored the nation to its glory (notice that the original colors of the Ghanaian flag, which Nkrumah had changed, were restored). In addition, Nkrumah's statues built by his regime in the major cities of Ghana were occasionally bombed and finally pulled down by the NLC during the coup. The Acheampong regime (1972-1978) was friendlier toward Nkrumah's memory than other post-1966 coup leaders, and made many symbolic gestures to redeem Nkrumah's legacy. For example, Acheampong allowed for Nkrumah's body to be brought back from Guinea-Conakry and reinterred in Ghana. In 1975, the Nkrumah statue at Parliament House that was demolished during the coup was recovered from a police barracks and placed

at the National Museum. On 3 March 1977, the National Museum unveiled the statue to the Ghanaian public.<sup>56</sup>

Other post-coup governments also sought to symbolically capitalize on the increasing nostalgia with which Ghanaians and other Africans viewed Nkrumah and the other cohorts of first-generation African independence leaders since the dust had settled on that period of the continent's history. For example, in 1980, the Hilla Limann administration (1979-1981) released the "Past Great Sons of Ghana" series of stamps featuring Nkrumah (figure 4.4).<sup>57</sup> In 1988, the Rawlings regime (1979 and 1981-2001) released stamps commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the OAU, with one stamp acknowledging co-founders Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia and Kwame Nkrumah as a "Proponent of African Unity & Liberation" (figure 4.5). In 1991, the Rawlings government also released a commemorative stamp series, dubbed the "Tenth Non-Aligned Ministerial Conference Accra," which depicted the five iconic leaders of Non Aligned Movement (Nasser, Nehru, Sukarno, and Tito), including Nkrumah (figure 4.6). A commemorative stamp was issued by Ghana for the birth centenary of Nehru in 1990, with a photograph showing the latter welcoming Nkrumah on a state visit (figure 4.7). For the fortieth anniversary of Ghana's independence in 1997, a commemorative postage stamp was issued showing the iconic photograph of Nkrumah and his deputies declaring independence at the Old Polo Grounds (figure 4.8).

In the 1990s, the Rawlings regime also removed Nkrumah's body from where it had been buried in his birthplace of Nkroful and re-interred it at the purpose-built mausoleum in Accra, called the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park. The statue of Nkrumah at the mausoleum, entitled "The Tree Cut Short," was designed with Nkrumah assuming his signature "forward ever, backward never" pose. It is also surrounded by *abeng*-blowers kneeling in a pool of water (which symbolizes rejuvenation and purification), hailing Nkrumah as a political chief.<sup>58</sup> Nkrumah's symbolic resurrection and reinstatement as the "Founder of the Nation" at his mausoleum has become a major tourist attraction for visitors to Ghana, especially those from the African Diaspora who largely have a positive view of Nkrumah as a leader who, in addition to trying to unite the continent, also sought to unite peoples of African ancestry worldwide. The most recent Ghanaian postage stamp to memorialize Kwame Nkrumah was issued in March and July 2010, when Ghana Post and the Volta River Authority (VRA) launched a commemorative stamp series for the centenary celebration of the birth of Nkrumah (figures 4.9–4.11). These stamps were released to remind Ghanaians, especially the youth, of the visionary that was Nkrumah and to demonstrate that many of the projects and ideas that he started still benefit Ghana and Africa today.<sup>59</sup> Figure 4.11, for example, is the center label for the commemorative Nkrumah Birth Centenary stamp sheet features the legend, "Dr. Kwame Nkrumah-The Prime Mover of Power Generation in Ghana," referring to the former President's literal and figurative harnessing of power in the country. Furthermore, as it wound down its vast Eurasian empire, the Soviet Union also honored Kwame Nkrumah with a commemorative postage stamp in 1989, with the legend "Activist in the African national liberation movement" (figure 4.12).<sup>60</sup>

Figures 4.1–4.12 Post-Coup Stamps Featuring or Related to Kwame Nkrumah



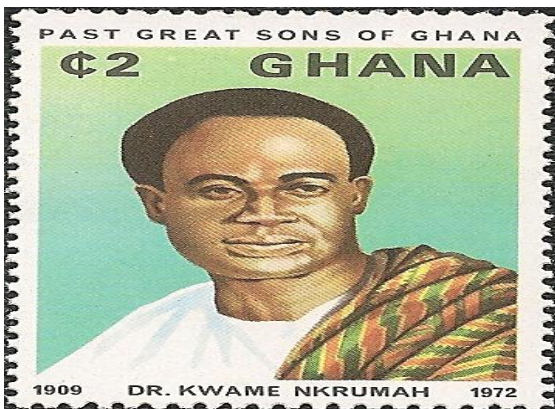
4.1 2nd Anniversary of the 24<sup>th</sup> February Revolution



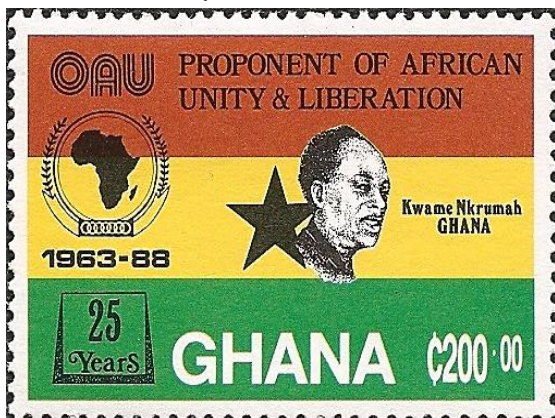
4.2 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the 24<sup>th</sup> February Revolution



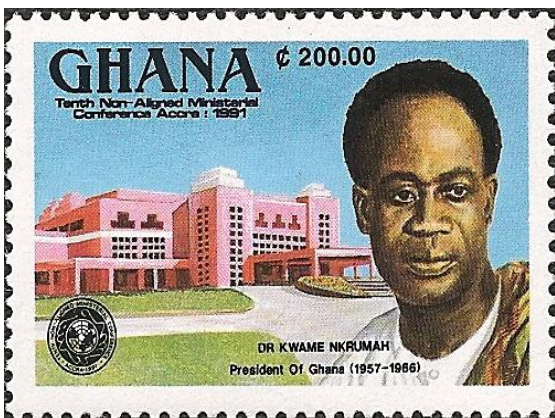
4.3 Ghana's Revolution of 24<sup>th</sup> February 1966  
1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary 1967



4.4 Past Great Sons of Ghana 1980



4.5 Proponent of African Unity & Liberation 1988



4.6 Tenth Non-Aligned Ministerial Conference  
Accra '91



4.7 Birth Centenary of Nehru, Nehru Welcomes Nkrumah 1990



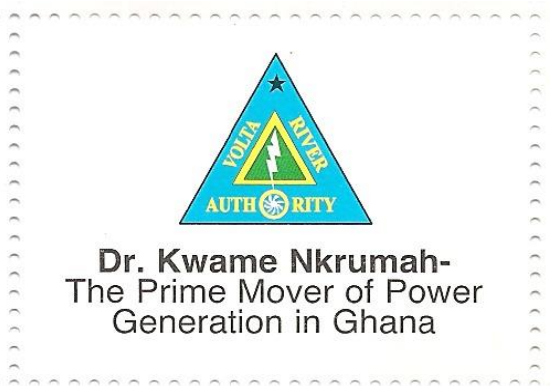
4.8 40<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Ghana 1957-1997



4.9 Nkrumah Birth Centenary Stamp



4.10 Nkrumah Birth Centenary Stamp



4.11 Center Label for the Nkrumah Birth Centenary Sheet



4.12 Nkrumah commemorative postage stamp issued Stamp by the USSR in 1989

The iconography of Ghanaian money also reflects how Kwame Nkrumah has been remembered since the coup. As previously mentioned, Nkrumah's image was minted on all cedi banknotes during his presidency, such as in figure 5.1. The year after staging the coup, the NLC removed Nkrumah's image from the cedi currency and changed the name to the New



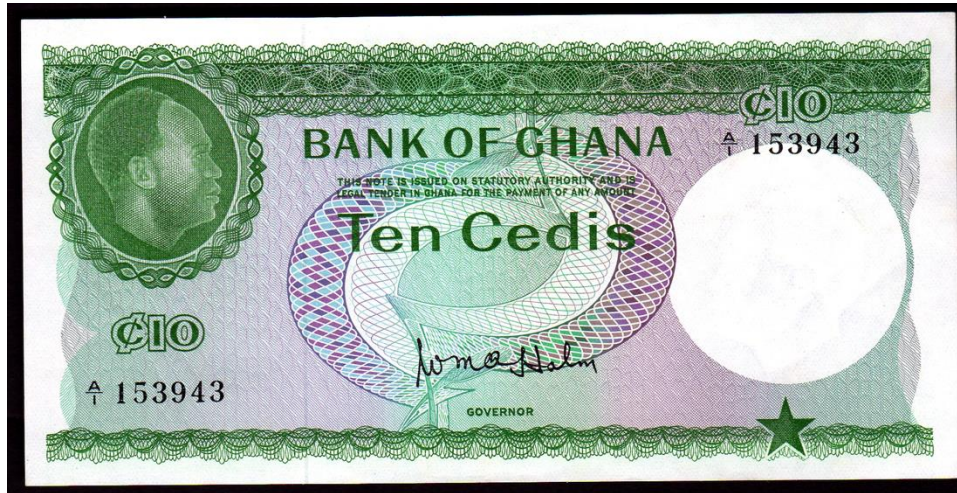
Cedi to signal the new political order. Furthermore, Nkrumah's image disappeared from the national currency for a period of thirty-five years. During this period, the iconography of the national currency has been characterized by "neutral" images such as national projects (the Akosombo Dam, cocoa farming, timber extraction, etc.), and cultural images portraying the daily lives of ordinary Ghanaians. A variety of factors explain the iconographic absence of the Osagyefo from the Cedi during this period, including the succession of military coups and counter-coups between the 1960s and 1970s, the hostility of several of the post-Nkrumah regimes toward him, and the economic instability and uncertainties of Ghana up to the millennium.<sup>61</sup>

In 2002, the Kufuor administration issued a new set of banknotes, and Nkrumah reappeared on the front of what was then Ghana's second highest currency denomination, the GH¢10,000 cedi note, the theme of which was "Nationhood" (figure 5.2). However, this time he did not appear as the sole Founding Father of the nation; five other members of "The Big Six" who led Ghana to independence from Great Britain flanked his image.<sup>62</sup> The Kufuor government had constructed this composite picture of the Big Six, which was taken from individual photographs of each of the men in single file.<sup>63</sup> This image became a standard vignette on paper money and other symbols of nationhood. It was used to rewrite the historical narrative of Ghana to make it less-Nkrumah centric, while still honoring Nkrumah as the central figure in the independence movement at the same time.

In July 2007 the Ghanaian currency was "re-denominated" and a new series of notes, the New Ghana Cedi, issued.<sup>64</sup> The iconography of the New Ghana Cedi "combines artistry with wide-ranging tributes to the founders and features of Ghana's modern nationhood."<sup>65</sup> On all the notes, except for the two Cedi bill, the obverse side features the standard vignette of The Big Six and the Independence Arch (figure 5.3), while the reverse sides of the banknotes "depict symbolic landmarks of Ghana's progress."<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of Kwame Nkrumah's icon on the 2002 and 2007 issues of Ghanaian banknotes may indicate that history and time have reconciled the perceptions about Nkrumah's legacy in Ghana as it relates to nation-building, Pan-Africanism, and internationalism. It may also have represented an attempt by the former Kufuor government at national reconciliation to heal the political wounds of history as the nation approached the fifty-year mark; Kufuor was Member of Parliament and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kofi A. Busia's Progress Party government (which lasted from 1969-1972), which was put in power by the NLC military regime that ousted Nkrumah, and later Spokesman on Foreign Affairs and Deputy Opposition Leader of the Popular Front Party (PFP) Parliamentary Group during the short-lived administration of Dr. Hilla Limann (1979-1981). He was also leader of the NDC, which is an ideological offshoot of the United Gold Coast Convention, started in the late 1940s by Dr. J.B. Danquah, Nkrumah's chief political archrival.<sup>67</sup> This revisionist rewriting or re-minting of history, rather, as reflected in the iconography of the new currencies, takes into consideration the other history-makers and contributors to the independence cause and subsequent nation-building processes.

The latest banknote to be added to the New Ghana Cedi series is a GH¢2 note, which was put into circulation by the Bank of Ghana in May 2010 "to celebrate the year-long anniversary of Ghana's visionary leader."<sup>68</sup> Inscribed with the words "6th March 2010" and "Centenary of the Birth of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah," the bill features an imposing portrait of Nkrumah dressed in

Figures 5.1 – 5.4 Ghanaian Cedi Banknotes Featuring Nkrumah’s Image, 1965–Present



5.1 GHC 10 Cedis Banknote, 1965 Issue



5.2 New GHC 10,000 Cedis Banknote 2002 Issue



5.3 Redenominated GHC 1 Cedi Banknote 2007 Issue



5.4 Redenominated GHC 2 Cedis Banknote 2010 Issue

traditional garb, in addition to an image of his mausoleum statue (figure 5.4). The then new Governor of the Bank of Ghana K.B. Amisshah-Arthur (2009 - 2012), asserted that henceforth Ghana's currency will be used to honor the nation's national heroes who made a positive impact on the lives of Ghanaians.<sup>69</sup> The commemorative banknote demonstrates not only that Nkrumah is still relevant to contemporary Ghanaian society but also that his very name and image continues to be a lightning rod for both admirers and critics of his legacy.

One columnist, Thomas Dickens, who was unhappy about what he perceived to be the trivial nature of the John Atta Mills administration's (2009-2012) release of the Nkrumah banknote, wrote:

At best the new cedi note to become legal tender to commemorate the centenary anniversary of the late Dr Kwame Nkrumah can be magnanimously described as the loss of focus of the current Administration and a perfect example of political bigotry. This statement is not meant to take anything away from Dr Nkrumah's contribution to the political history of Ghana...but printing a new two-cedi note in honour of a former president is the least of Ghana's problems at this moment...overlooking them and giving Ghanaians another cedi note is tantamount to belittling the promises-laden manifesto upon which the NDC rode to power.<sup>70</sup>

Dickens further accused President Mills of wanting to show that he was aligned with the political ideologies of Nkrumah, and further argued that "Dr Nkrumah is already on the Ghanaian bank notes with the other members of the 'Big Six... Instead, the government's efforts should be channelled into solving the never-ending economic hardship, poverty, bad roads, lack of social services/amenities and creating jobs with the aim of making the 'A Better Ghana' schema a reality." He ended his column by stating, "I would like to remind Professor Mills and his henchmen that Ghana has had a lot of great sons and daughters who, though not politicians, have done so much for Ghana and deserve to be honoured." He suggested that such a great son of Ghana who should be the central vignette on the new currency, instead of Nkrumah, is Tetteh Quarshie, who is credited with bringing the first cocoa seeds to Ghana from Fernando Po

in 1879.<sup>71</sup> Dickens must not have carefully examined the New Cedi banknotes, for if he had, he would have noticed that they are embedded with historical designs and security features, including a watermark of Tetteh Quashie and a cocoa pod.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, it appears that the commemorative wording relating to the Nkrumah centennial will be removed from future issues of the GH¢2 banknote.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite his rhetoric about Ghana's international neutrality and brotherliness, Kwame Nkrumah faced several dilemmas and contentions in building the new Ghanaian nation-state in the post-colonial era, at the high of the Cold War, which compounded his pronouncements about nonalignment. Although Nkrumah was a socialist, he adored both "the empire of liberty" (the United States) and was also enamored with its archrival, "the empire of justice" (the Soviet Union), as Westad has dubbed the two Cold War superpowers.<sup>74</sup> Juxtaposed to the competing demands of gaining ideological inspiration and economic assistance from both East and West, being an integral part of the Non-Aligned Movement, advancing the cause for African unity/Pan-Africanism, and at the same time building a new nation-state, proved to be a difficult balancing act, even for Kwame Nkrumah.

While Nkrumah rhetorically insisted that his government "looked" neither left nor right, or East or West, he in practice "looked" in every direction. His political ideals and economic and social policies, while leaning more toward African socialism, cannot be defined as simply leftist. This is evident from the examination of the symbols of nationhood that Nkrumah developed to promote his ideology and programs. For example, as Wilburn argues, "Nkrumah's philately was far more capitalistic than socialistic in origin and semiotics."<sup>75</sup> In actuality, Nkrumah was influenced heavily by Western capitalism, Eastern socialism, and Pan-Africanism emanating from intellectuals in the Soviet Union, United States, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Africa. His government received ideological inspiration, money, and technical assistance from the Soviets, Americans, British, and Israelis and their allies alike, although his relationship with all of these parties underwent the ebbs and flows that came with the changing domestic and global political, economic and social developments impacting these states.

Thus, while Nkrumah professed to be nonaligned, as did many other leaders of newly independent African and other "Third World" nation-states, and while he has been described variously as a Leninist Czar, an African Socialist, and a self-branded Marxist-Leninist and a non-denominational Christian, he was in essence a political pragmatist. And he was such, not because he was necessarily a political opportunist, but rather, as an African who had lived in the West for over a decade, travelled to and had extensive dealings with the East as a politician, he was essentially a product of all three worlds.

Through philatelic and numismatic mediums, as well as other symbols of nationhood, Nkrumah advertised the birth of the new Ghanaian nation-state as the forerunner to the decolonization of the continent at large; promoted himself as both the father of the Ghanaian nation and the hoped-for United States of Africa; publicized his most prestigious nationalist economic programs such as the Volta River Hydroelectric Dam, Ghana Airways, the Tema oil refinery, cocoa farming, fishing, logging, and communal labor on state farms. Postal iconography commemorated Pan-African historical, political, and socio-cultural developments.

These included the creation and commemoration of Pan-African organizations, conferences, treaties, and commercial endeavors such as the Conference of Independent African States, OAU conferences, the signing of the African Unity Charter, the Casablanca conferences, and the Black Star Line Shipping Company. Other stamps with a Pan-African theme included Africa Freedom Day, the Save the Monuments of Nubia campaign, African football (soccer) competitions, the anniversary of the death of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, and the African American inventor George Washington Carver.

International issues, developments, organizations, personalities, and cultural events addressed on Nkrumah-era postage stamps included Nkrumah's visits to the United States and Canada, United Nations Day, United Nations Human Rights Day, the United Nations Trusteeship Council, the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Belgrade, and global nuclear non-proliferation. Stamps were also issued to commemorate various anniversaries related to American presidents (and first ladies) and British royalty, including J.F.K., Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt (on a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man stamp), and Queen Elizabeth. Also commemorated were the Olympic Games because of their cultural, political, and economic importance. After Nkrumah was ousted from power, Ghanaian military regimes formed as a result of coups and counter-coups, interspersed by brief periods of non-military leadership from mid-1960s to the late 1980s continued to use currency and postage stamps as mediums for broadcasting political messages to the nation. These included stamps commemorating the military coup staged by the National Liberation Council and the National Redemption Council/Supreme Military Council, as well as the short-lived restoration of democratic rule under the Progress Party.

Evidently, the nationalistic, Pan-African, and international political messages depicted on Ghanaian postage stamps and currency and in museum exhibits and other symbols of nationhood significantly declined over the ensuing decades after Nkrumah's death, but more noticeably from the 1990s onwards. Since then, the iconography of postage stamps in particular, issued by successive Ghanaian governments have featured designs which appeal more to philatelists in North American and Europe who regularly purchase and collect African postage stamps. As Wilburn laments, "Semiotics of revolutionary fervor and Afrocentric imagery initiated in the Nkrumah era are now less frequently issued and have been largely replaced by Western images of popular culture. Where is Nkrumah's philosophy of Consciencism today?"<sup>76</sup>

While this revolutionary zeal has indeed disappeared from the visual tools of political propaganda that the Ghanaian nation-state has at its disposal, Nkrumah's place in the political and socio-cultural history of post-independence Africa is still very present. Since his death, Nkrumah's image has been printed on Soviet postage stamps and on Guinean (Conakry) postage stamps and currency, and immortalized in monuments in Mali and Ethiopia; his golden statue stands today in front of the modern African Union building in Addis Ababa as a testament to the important role that he played in African and global history and politics. Though the narrative of Ghanaian nationhood is now broadened to include other members of "the Big Six" who led Ghana to independence, contemporary Ghanaian statues, currency, and postage stamps bearing Nkrumah's image are still issued. These mediums illustrate his domestic economic development initiatives such as the Volta River project (which still supply electricity to Ghana and some of its neighbors), support for the African liberation movements

and African unity, and depict his relationship with other international leaders in the Non-Aligned or Third World Movements such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Chairman Mao, confirming his uncontested status as the continent's premier Pan-Africanist, international statesman, and father of the Ghanaian nation-state.

## Notes

- 1 See Allman 2008, p. 83.
- 2 Over the last few decades, for example, several biographies and other works have been written about Nkrumah, including those by Nkrumah's "Literary Executrix" June Milne 2006, and scholars such as Davidson 1973, Birmingham 1998, Arhin 1993, Assensoh 1978 and 1989, and Biney 2011.
- 3 See Fuller 2008, 2010 and 2014.
- 4 See, for example, Billig 1995, Burke 2001, Cerulo 1993, Child 2005, Cusack 2005b, Gilbert and Helleiner 1999, Helleiner 1998, Kevane, 2008, Posnansky 2004, Posnansky, et al. 2004, Scott 1995, Smith 2001, and Unwin and Hewitt 2001.
- 5 Adedze's articles (2004 and 2008) include references to these records as well as interviews with Ghanaian stamp designers and philatelic administrators. On the other hand, Wilburn (2012, p. 41, note 13) laments that "Unfortunately, pre-1970 contracts and records of [the Inter-Governmental Philatelic Corporation] IGPC (GPA) [which will be discussed later in this article] have been lost or destroyed," although such documents exist in the GPC Archives. The records of the GPC span the mid-1950s to the end of the 1960s, with a smattering of other documents generated in subsequent decades. The majority of the documents relate to the activities of the Postage Stamps Committee. The archives contain hundreds of pages of records such as those of private companies that issued stamps for Ghana, including Harrison and Sons, Ltd., De La Rue Plc, and the IGPC. The archival holdings also include cabinet memos, artists' sketches of stamps and notes about stamp designs, newspaper articles, and letters from local and international stakeholders (including UNESCO) about the production of stamps. The custodian of these documents (as of the publication of this article) is Mr. Peter Tagoe, formerly of the Philatelic Section of the headquarters of the Ghana Post Office in Accra. Other important archival holdings exist but have been more elusive to find or access. For example, the records of British stamp designer Michael Goaman reside at the Goaman Archives in Edinburgh in the United Kingdom with a private collector. Goaman joined the Ghana stamp designers' panel in June 1958 and supplied stamp designs for the country up to the early 1960s. The Ghana Post Archives also contain some records relating to the commercial and philatelic activities of Dr. Manfred Lehmann, the American businessman and founder of the IGPC in Ghana. Accessing and analyzing these significant archival holdings would provide an opportunity for other researchers to incorporate them in their publications, which would provide us with a more nuanced view of the significance of postage stamps to nationalism in Ghana and other African countries.
- 6 See, for example, Fuller 2010, and Fuller 2014.

- 7 See Fuller 2008 and 2014 (chapter 4) for a more extensive discussion of the contentions of coinage in Nkrumah's Ghana.
- 8 Posnansky, Adedze and Levin 2004, p. 52.
- 9 Posnansky 2004, p. 53.
- 10 Mwangi 2003; Cusack 2005b.
- 11 The IGPC was founded by Dr. Manfred Lehmann, the president of the international firm Lehmann Trading Corporation, who had a variety of enterprises in newly independent African and Caribbean nation-states. He also had tremendous political and business connections in the United States, Israel, and other powerful countries, and had formed early business ties with Ghana, having established, in 1953, the Ghana American Corporation and personally knew key ministers in Nkrumah's government. He attended Nkrumah's inauguration as Prime Minister in March 1957 and was subsequently invited with his wife for social visits to the Presidential Palace and the Parliament. However, the relationship between Nkrumah and Lehmann soured from the late 1950s to the early 1960s over the former's support of the Palestinian side in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and disagreements between Ghana and Israel over the Congo Crisis. See "Biography" and "Foreign Encounters" on [www.manfredlehmann.com/index.html](http://www.manfredlehmann.com/index.html) (accessed August 24, 2014); Wilburn 2012, pp. 24-26; Adedze 2008, pp. 7-14; Levey 2003.
- 12 The IGPC went on to issue national stamps for other African states as they became independent and established national postal authorities. It also mopped up many of the new nation-states that emerged out of the collapsed communist Soviet Union in the 1990s, assisting them to set up postal programs and issue stamps. Today, the company issues stamps for over thirty African countries and is now the world's largest philatelic company. See <http://www.igpc.net/about.html> (accessed 13 May 2007).
- 13 Adedze 2008, pp. 8-10.
- 14 Ghana Philatelic Agency no. 2, 1958, p. 2.
- 15 Although it is most commonly referred to as a vulture, there is some disagreement among ornithologists as to whether the bird is a vulture, an eagle or a combination of the two. The bird is also called "Aggrey's Eagle" in honor of a proverb recited and popularised by Dr. James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey - one of the Gold Coast's most acclaimed educators of the early twentieth century. The eagle was a recognized traditional icon that carried symbolic and proverbial meaning to Aggrey, who, in the spirit of African independence, had written, "My people of Africa, we were created in the image of God, but men have made us think that we are chickens, and we still think we are, but we are eagles. Stretch forth your wings and fly! Don't be content with the food of chickens. See <http://www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/ads/21.html> (accessed November 30, 2007).
- 16 Ghana Philatelic Agency no. 2, 1958, p. 7. Although the GPA referred to the Prime Minister as "Dr. Nkrumah," he never finished his degree at the London School of Economics (LSE), notwithstanding the LSE Press and Information Office's statement that Kwame Nkrumah received a PhD from the institution in 1946. It is more likely that the LSE awarded Nkrumah an honorary doctorate after he became Prime Minister of Ghana in 1957. See

- <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/pressAndInformationOffice/aboutLSE/worldLeaders.htm> (accessed December 5, 2007).
- 17 Fuller 2008, p. 530.
  - 18 British National Archives (henceforth NA): DO 35/6194, correspondence from J. Chadwick to Mr. Whitehead, 27/02/57.
  - 19 Nkrumah 1957, p. 12.
  - 20 Ghana Post Archives (henceforth GPA) SDC Memorandum #2365, p. 2.
  - 21 Child 2005, p. 123.
  - 22 British Library Philatelic Collections (henceforth BLPC) July 1958.
  - 23 Ghana Post Archive S4/51 First Anniversary of the Death of Premier Patrice Lumumba, SDC Memorandum #2365: p. 2.
  - 24 The main rival to the Casablanca bloc was the Monrovia Group, which constituted other African countries that were more aligned with the West and took a stance in opposition to Nkrumah's on African politics and the question of African unity. Formed in May 1961 in the Liberian capital, the original membership of the Monrovia group included countries such as Liberia, Nigeria, Togo, and Guinea-Conakry. The group was led by the charismatic Nigerian Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Liberian President William Tubman. Zealously cherishing their newfound nationhood, these countries were more conservative and gradualist in their approach to solving the problems that came with African independence. While they agreed in principle with the need for African unity, they favored the creation of regional economic, socio-cultural and political alliances than an all-encompassing United States of Africa. They also courted Direct Foreign Investment from the United States and the former European colonial powers into their economies. See Akinsanya 1976, pp. 511-29; Gocking 2005, pp. 127-30.
  - 25 GPA S4/51 First Anniversary of the Death of Premier Patrice Lumumba 12th February 1962. Standing Development Committee Memorandum #2365 by the Ministry of Construction and Communications, "Commemorative Issues of Ghana Postage Stamps: 1962," n.d. (but probably mid-late 1961): p. 2.
  - 26 GPA no. 2, 1958, p. 8.
  - 27 See Bandele 2008, and Martin 1976.
  - 28 As quoted in the British Library Archives, SB11, Prog. 3639/2, "Special Issue of Ghana Stamps Commemorating United Nations Day," 24 October 1958: p. 2.
  - 29 Allman 2008; Wittner 1997, pp. 265-71; Wittner 2007.
  - 30 Agyei 2007.
  - 31 Posnansky 2004, p. 54.
  - 32 GPA no. 2, 1958, p. 6.
  - 33 Ibid., p. 6.
  - 34 <http://perso.orange.fr/les.insatisfaits/the.osagyefo.html> (accessed 24 June 2007).
  - 35 Schlesinger, Jr. 2002, pp. 560-61.
  - 36 British Library Archives, "Special Issue of Ghana Postage Stamps Commemorating the 150th Birthday Anniversary of Abraham Lincoln," 1959.



- 37 David Scott, "Michael Goaman: A Graphic Designer Who Created Classic Postage Stamps With His Wife for 30 Years," Obituary, *The Guardian*, 15 June 2009, [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jun/16/obituary-michael-goaman](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jun/16/obituary-michael-goaman).
- 38 GPA no. 3, 1958, p. 2.
- 39 Ibid., p. 7.
- 40 GPA no. 2, 1958, p. 6.
- 41 GPA no. 3, 1958, p. 5.
- 42 Ibid., 1958, p. 5.
- 43 Nkrumah, 1973b, p. 111.
- 44 Nkrumah 1970, pp. 110-11.
- 45 Nkrumah 1973, p. 116.
- 46 Ibid., pp. 111-12.
- 47 See Fuller 2010, chap. 3.
- 48 The literature on the Volta River Project is extensive. See, for example, Barnes 1966, Hart 1980, Moxon 1969, and Tsikata 2004, 2005, and 2006. Documentary footage and analyses of the politics and economics of the Volta Dam has also been presented in television programs produced by Ali Mazrui and Adam Curtis. Mazrui, who referred to Nkrumah as a "Leninist Czar" in a 1966 article bearing that title, included video footage of the opening of the Volta River Dam in "Tools of Exploitation," Program 4 of his 1986 *Africa: A Triple Heritage* TV series (otherwise called *The Africans*). See also Adam Curtis's vivid 2009 "Black Power" episode from the Pandora's Box documentary series.
- 49 GPA no. 3, 1958, pp. 5-6.
- 50 As the Nkrumah state became more authoritarian, he increasingly branded the nation in his and his party's image. For example, the red, gold, and green colors of the national flag were changed to the CPP banner colors of red, white, and green in 1964, when Ghana became a single-party state. See Fuller 2008.
- 51 For more on the politics, diplomacy, and economics of the project, see Barnes 1966, Gocking 2005, pp. 118-20, Hart 1980, Killick 1967, p. 393, Moxon 1969, and Tsikata 2004, 2005, and 2006.
- 52 Moxon 1969, pp. 232-33.
- 53 Milne 2006b, p. 8.
- 54 See Stockwell 1978, pp. 160, 201.
- 55 See "A Waste" 1965; Associated Press, 23 November 1965a; Associated Press, 23 November 1965b; Finney 1965; Garrison 1965; Gwertzman 1965; Louchheim 1965; and Sterne 1965.
- 56 Fuller 2008, p. 538.
- 57 The other Ghanaians honored in this series include Dr. J.B. Danquah, John Mensah Sarbah, Dr. J.E.K. Aggrey, and G.E. (Paa) Grant.
- 58 *Abeng* is an animal horn used as a musical instrument.
- 59 Ghana News Agency 2010.
- 60 Translation provided by Odd Arne Westad, 20 April 2011. Other Third World leaders have been commemorated on Soviet stamps in the past. This includes Patrice Lumumba in 1961,

- Nelson Mandela in 1988, and Jawaharlal Nehru in 1989.
- 61 Fuller 2008.
  - 62 Bank of Ghana. 2002. "Issue of 10000 & 20000 Cedis Banknotes." Accra: p. 2.
  - 63 Ayensu 2007, p. 224.
  - 64 Acquah 2007, Ayensu 2007, pp. 224-25, and Kufuor 2007.
  - 65 Ayensu 2007, p. 224.
  - 66 Ibid., p. 225.
  - 67 See Biney 2011, p. 188.
  - 68 Mac-Jordan 2010.
  - 69 Banknote News 2010. Amissah-Arthur became vice president of Ghana in August of 2012.
  - 70 Dickens 2010.
  - 71 Ibid.
  - 72 Acquah 2007, pp. 3-6; Ayensu 2007, pp. 224-27.
  - 73 Banknote News 2010.
  - 74 Westad 2005. These two ideals were unified and forever etched into the granite structure of the Independence Monument in Accra with the words, "Freedom and Justice."
  - 75 Wilburn 2012, p. 36.
  - 76 Ibid., p. 39.

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