Case Studies: British West Africa

“From Gold Coast to Ghana”
Case Studies: why ‘these’?

- as can be seen from ‘Case Studies of Interest’ in “Resources”, in the past we have looked at different colony-to-nation situations

- so: why these?
Case Studies

Want to look at each major colonial power:

- this is how we see interaction of domestic (European) and local (African) situations and different ‘dynamics’ they set in play during process of decolonization/independence

- this is also how we understand longer-term legacies of that process in terms of how they shape newly-independent nation
Case Studies

Want to see how various issues we identified as central in ‘shaping decolonization process’ (at both European and African level) then influence new nation: e.g.

- generational differences in nationalist movements
- local racial discrimination
- second-wave colonization
- economic/geographical differences
- ethnic consciousness (becoming political)
Case Studies

- Pan-Africanism
- Cold War competition (US, Soviet Union)
- ideological competition (especially influence Communism/Socialism)

Case Studies chosen here – Ghana, Mali, Congo, Rhodesia, Mozambique, South Africa – each reflect a combination of these issues; collectively they shed important light upon late 20th – early 21st century Africa
African Independence

Gold Coast to Ghana 1957
Gold Coast to Ghana:

- significant for impact on acceleration of British decolonization (and ‘process’: political parties, constitutions, elections)

- process also revelatory of generational and geographic tensions/conflict

- Nkrumah: not only ‘symbolic’ of African Independence – real leader of Pan-Africanist movement; Ghana ‘beacon of hope’ for African nationalist leaders
Gold Coast to Ghana

Video:

Basil Davidson
“Africa: Rise to Nationalism – the Gold Coast”
Gold Coast to Ghana

Model British Colony becomes first Independent Nation:

- story of Gold Coast already introduced in several lectures

- relatively well-off colony, based largely on commercialized cocoa

- small educated elite with ties to US and Britain
Gold Coast to Ghana

- formed earliest of political parties (United Gold Coast Convention): moderate

- post-war: radicalized by youth CYO

- founder: American-educated, Pan-Africanist influenced Kwame Nkrumah

- following boycotts, servicemen’s March [in which police opened fire] 1948, Nkrumah and followers left UGCC/CYO
Gold Coast to Ghana

- founded Convention People’s Party: Independence Now!!
Gold Coast to Ghana

CPP under Nkrumah:

- rooted in earlier CYO (youth group)

- also more aware of newly emergent social groups: workers/unions, women, rural communities (farmers, merchants)

- willing to address their needs
Gold Coast to Ghana

CPP under Nkrumah:

- awareness of ‘modern’ politics

- role of charisma (traded on Nkrumah’s), organizing, advertising, slogans…

- became known as ”Verandah Boys”: moved out of cities, into rural areas, stayed with/spoke with people (slept on their ‘porches’…. hence name)
Gold Coast to Ghana

CPP under Nkrumah:

- developed links to wider decolonizing world (eg. India)

- built up Pan-Africanist influence

- British issued new constitution 1951: provided for local elections, ‘assembly’ to work with British Governor General who oversaw ‘self-governance’ of colony [see Lecture Feb. 11]
Gold Coast to Ghana

CPP under Nkrumah:
- elections: CPP won 2/3 seats
- Nkrumah in jail but released and invited to form government
- posed dilemma: ‘power’ associated with Assembly purely local yet… presented first step towards ‘Independence’
- was ‘soon’ good enough?
“In accepting the British government’s offer of 1951 to make him leader of a … government pledged to an eventual African independence … Nkrumah told his voters:

‘there is a great risk in accepting office under this new constitution which still makes us half-slaves and half-free.’ There would be a great need for ‘vigilance and moral courage’ to withstand the consequent temptations of ‘temporary personal advantage.’ This was because ‘bribery and corruption, both moral and factual have eaten into the whole fabric of our society and these must be stamped out if we are to achieve any progress’. “

[from Davidson, The Black Man’s Burden, pp.162-3]
FOREIGN NEWS
Ex-Prisoner Takes Office As Prime Minister

A native politician, who was released from prison a year ago to lead the Gold Coast's first elected government, was sworn in as the first prime minister in British West Africa. At Accra, seat of the government, Kwame Nkrumah, 42, accepted the appointment from British Governor Charles Arden Clarke, who told an overflow assembly that Queen Elizabeth II approved the change for more self-government. Nkrumah, leader of the Convention People's party, was swept into power on a platform of "self-government now." He had been serving a two-year prison term for attempting to incite a general strike, but was ordered freed by Clarke "as an act of grace." Nkrumah is a Lincoln U. (Pa.) graduate.
“They called us all verandah boys
They thought we were just a bunch of toys
But we won the vote at the midnight hour
Came out of jail and took over power”

(George Browne, “Freedom for Ghana”, 1952)
Gold Coast to Ghana

1952:
- position ‘Prime Minister’ elected by assembly, created

1954:
- elected assembly: full control of internal affairs but governor retained control military and foreign affairs

- Assembly itself to be elected directly, rather than (as earlier) through Tribal councils: closer to ‘real democracy’
Gold Coast to Ghana

But struggle for independence not only about struggle against British:

- also struggle to agree on what ‘nationalism’ meant

- who was to benefit?

- legacies of colonial administration and economic development played key roles in ‘internal’ struggles
The struggle for Independence was as much an internal, civil battle as it was an externally directed one: Gold Coast proved ‘model’ in this respect as well.

Battle against:
- conflicting views of authority --‘traditional’ versus ‘modern’
- conflicting needs of different regions, ethnic groups in those regions
Gold Coast to Ghana

Battle against practices, behaviour generated by colonialism but destructive to independence:

- putting forward one’s tribe and/or family in administration; rewarding them when possible – expecting that an ‘educated’ son (or even daughter) would ‘deliver’ for the tribe in exchange for its support in financing education
Gold Coast to Ghana

- shifting burden of taxation, work onto marginal social groups like former slaves and political/economic dependents

- treating whole regions as ‘labour reserves’, whole ethnic groups as ‘workers’, fostering long-term practices of migration
After 1954, CPP followed policy of increasing centralization which generated resistance

National Liberation Movement formed:
- based in Asante/Ashante (central region of cocoa production)
- wanted federalist structure
- more autonomy for different regions
Gold Coast to Ghana

Ashanti

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After 1954: CPP followed policy of increasing centralization which generated resistance

Northern Peoples Party:

- based in north
- largely Muslim, poor: had served as colonial ‘labour reserve’ for commercial agriculture (cocoa) and gold mining (in south)

Parties worked together to undermine CPP
Gold Coast to Ghana

Northern Region
1956: New elections held

- testing CPP’s demand for ‘Independence Now’

- CPP won only 57% vote: but…
  - all of the south
  - enough votes in Asante, North, Trans-Volta (East) to hold 2/3 majority
Gold Coast to Ghana

British promised to grant independence if passed by 2/3 new assembly: achieved

- March 6, 1957 Gold Coast became ‘Ghana’ [named after famous medieval empire geographically located in Mali-Senegal region]

- first sub-Saharan colony to gain independence

- Kwame Nkrumah first President of new nation
Gold Coast to Ghana:

Kwame Nkrumah
Prime-Minister (left) of Gold Coast, 1956
President (right) of Ghana, 1957

[B Davidson, Africa, History of a Continent, (1966), 298]

Gold Coast to Ghana: Independence in the Market Place

Celebrating Independence: market women played a critical role in the CPP’s victory.

Note the cloth worn by the woman, right foreground.

Opening of Parliament

Combined ‘old’ and ‘new’: two medicine men pour sacred oil -- ‘libations’ – and call on the gods to bless the work of the new Parliament.  

(President Nkrumah on the right)
Independence Day Speech:
- famous for statement that independence for Gold Coast was ‘meaningless’ until all the continent of Africa was free
- echoing principles of Pan-Africanism: Nkrumah tied goals of decolonization to idea of African Unity
- Ghana ‘beacon’ of freedom for all-Africa
'All African People’s Congress':
Dec. 5-13, 1958

- year after independence, Nkrumah organized Pan-Africanist conference in Accra with theme "Hands Off Africa – Africa Must be Free"

- 300 delegates political parties, trade unions from 28 African countries (almost all still colonized)
All African People’s Congress

Nkrumah at ‘All African People’s Congress’, 1958
- many future leaders, prominent Black activists present: Tom Mboya (Kenya) opened conference

- appealed to US and Soviet Union to leave Africa out of their Cold War

- W.E.B. DuBois (America): cautioned African countries that some individual ‘cultural tradition’ would have to be sacrificed to achieve the United States of Africa
All African People’s Congress

- other ‘independence leaders’ present:
  Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia)
  Roberto Holden (Angola)
  Hastings Banda (Malawi)
  Patrice Lumumba (Congo)

- ideas, encouragement from Congress taken home: said to have played role in hastening local-level demands for decolonization (e.g. Congo)
- Nkrumah delivered closing remarks: emphasized that Africa’s economic future and reconstruction should be based on socialism

- Mboya broached the possibility of violence to achieve goals in settler colonies
All African People’s Congress

Two Important Resolutions Passed:

- on Imperialism and Colonialism:

“the All-African People's Conference in Accra declares its full support to all fighters for freedom in Africa, to all those who resort to peaceful means of non-violence and civil disobedience, as well as to all those who are compelled to retaliate against violence to attain national independence and freedom for the people. …”
All African People’s Congress

Two Important Resolutions Passed:

- on Racism and Discrimination:

“The All-African People’s Conference declares that the struggle for the freedom of Africa is the task of the Africans themselves, and calls upon the workers, the peasants, and other sections of the toiling masses, together with the intellectuals to unite their forces in common action for a final attack on discrimination and racialism. …”

[see full text of both resolutions in ‘All African People’s Congress, 1958’ in Resources]
- Two years later, 1960: another 18 colonies had joined Ghana as independent nations

- May 1963: Organization of African Unity established in Addis Abba

- 1958 Congress had assured Ghana, Nkrumah ideological and political leadership of Pan-Africanism but… also sowed seeds future conflict within OAU