

area handbook series

**Ghana**  
a country study



# Ghana

## a country study

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LaVerle Berry  
Research Completed  
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On the cover: Gold weight in the form of a portrait mask (Asante)

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## Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program sponsored by the Department of the Army. The last two pages of this book list the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer  
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## Preface

This study replaces *Ghana: A Country Study*, which was completed in 1971 during the second effort to establish republican government in Ghana under Kofi Abrefa Busia. Since then, Ghana has experienced four military governments and a third attempt at representative democracy before the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in January 1993. Since the early 1980s, the dominant developments in Ghana have been the adoption of an economic structural adjustment program backed by international lending agencies and a prolonged transition to a new form of elective government, both presided over by a military government headed by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. Rawlings continues to dominate political life, having been elected president in national elections in November 1992, one of the crucial steps in the latest attempt at representative government.

This edition of *Ghana: A Country Study* examines the record of the military government after 1981 and of the first two years of the Fourth Republic, 1992–94. Subsequent events are discussed in the Introduction.

This study is an attempt to treat in a concise and objective manner the dominant historical, social, economic, political, and national security aspects of contemporary Ghana. Sources of information used in preparing this volume include scholarly books, journals, and monographs; official reports of governments and international organizations; Ghanaian newspapers; the authors' previous research and observations; and numerous periodicals. Chapter bibliographies appear at the end of the book; brief comments on some of the more valuable sources recommended for further reading appear at the end of each chapter.

All measurements in this book are given in the metric system. A conversion table is provided to assist those readers who are unfamiliar with metric measurements (see table 1, Appendix). A Glossary is also included to explain terms with which the reader may not be familiar.

Place-names follow the system adopted by the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN). The authors have followed current and more accurate usage by using the term *Asante* rather than *Ashanti* in referring to one of the most

prominent of Ghana's peoples and indigenous states. The term *Ashanti*, which was generally employed during the pre-independence period, does, however, still appear in some geographic and commercial contexts. The reader should refer to the Glossary for further explanation.

The body of the text reflects information available as of November 1994. Certain other portions of the text, however, have been updated. The Introduction discusses significant events that have occurred since the completion of research, the Country Profile and Chronology include updated information as available, and the Bibliography lists recently published sources thought to be particularly helpful to the reader.

*Table A. Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
<b>EARLY HISTORY</b>	
ca. 10,000 B.C.	Earliest recorded probable human habitation within modern Ghana at site on Oti River.
ca. 4000 B.C.	Oldest date for pottery at Stone Age site near Accra.
ca. 100 B.C.	Early Iron Age at Tema.
<b>FORMATIVE CENTURIES</b>	
ca. A.D. 1200	Guan begin their migrations down Volta Basin from Gonja toward Gulf of Guinea.
ca. 1298	Akan kingdom of Bono (Brong) founded. Other states had arisen or were beginning to rise about this time.
1471–82	First Europeans arrive. Portuguese build Elmina Castle.
1500–1807	Era of slave raids and wars and of intense state formation in Gold Coast.
1697–1745	Rise and consolidation of Asante Empire.
<b>NINETEENTH CENTURY</b>	
1843–44	British government signs Bond of 1844 with Fante chiefs.
1873–74	Last Asante invasion of coast. British capture Kumasi.
1874	Britain establishes Gold Coast Colony.
1878	Cocoa introduced to Ghana.
1896	Anglo-Asante war leads to exile of <i>asantehene</i> and British protectorate over Asante.
<b>TWENTIETH CENTURY</b>	
1900	First Africans appointed to colony's Legislative Council.
1902	Northern Territories proclaimed a British protectorate.
1914–18	Gold Coast Regiment serves with distinction in East Africa.
1919	German Togo becomes a mandate under Gold Coast administration.
1925	Constitution of 1925 calls for six chiefs to be elected to Legislative Council.
1939–45	Gold Coast African forces serve in Ethiopia and Burma.

*Table A. Chronology of Important Events*

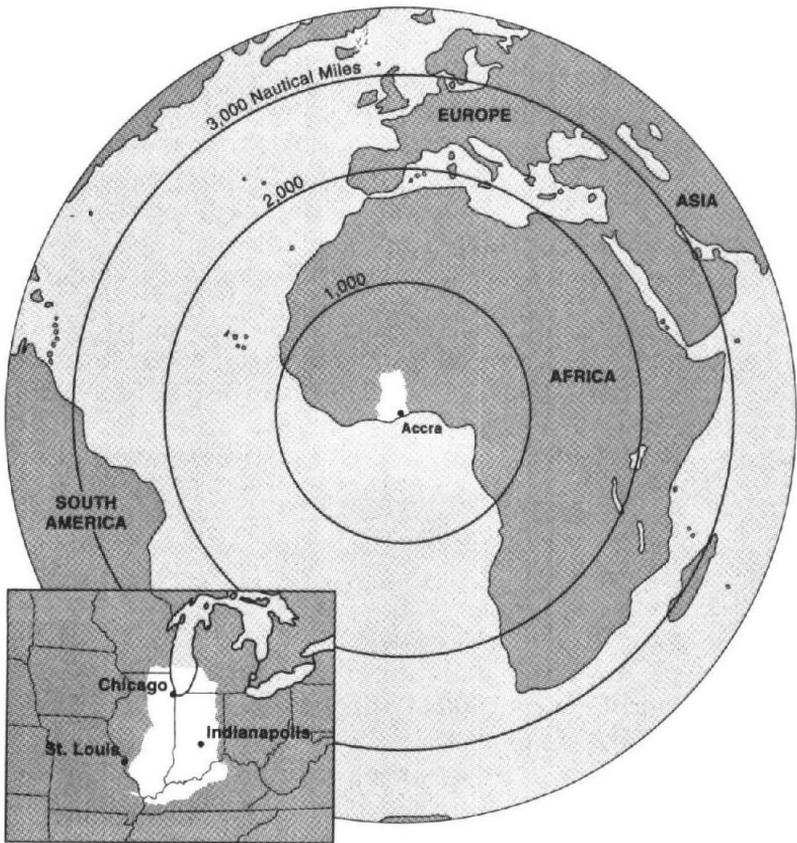
Period	Description
1947	United Gold Coast Convention founded.
1949	Kwame Nkrumah breaks with United Gold Coast Convention and forms Convention People's Party.
1951	New constitution leads to general elections. Convention People's Party wins two-thirds majority.
1954	New constitution grants broad powers to Nkrumah's government.
1956	Plébiscite in British Togoland calls for union with Gold Coast.  Convention People's Party wins 68 percent of seats in legislature and passes an independence motion, which British Parliament approves.
1957	British Colony of the Gold Coast becomes independent Ghana on March 6.
1958	Entrenched protection clauses of constitution repealed; regional assemblies abolished; Preventive Detention Act passed.
1960	Plébiscite creates a republic on July 1, with Nkrumah as president.
1964	Ghana declared a one-party state. Completion of Akosombo Dam.
1966	While Nkrumah is in China, army stages widely popular coup. National Liberation Council comes to power.
1969	Progress Party, led by Kofi Abrefa Busia, wins National Assembly elections.
1972	Lieutenant Colonel Ignatius Acheampong leads a military coup in January that brings National Redemption Council to power.
1978	Fellow military officers ease Acheampong from power.
1979	Junior officers stage Ghana's first violent coup, June 4. Armed Forces Revolutionary Council formed under Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. Hilla Limann elected president in July.
1981	Rawlings stages second coup, December 31. Provisional National Defence Council established with Rawlings as chairman.
1983	First phase of Economic Recovery Program introduced with World Bank and International Monetary Fund support.
1985	National Commission for Democracy, established to plan the democratization of Ghana's political system, officially inaugurated in January.
1988-89	Elections for new district assemblies begin in early December and continue through February 1989.
1990	Various organizations call for return to civilian government and multi-party politics, among them Movement for Freedom and Justice, founded in August.

*Table A. Chronology of Important Events*

Period	Description
1991	Provisional National Defence Council announces its acceptance, in May, of multipartyism in Ghana. June deadline set for creation of Consultative Assembly to discuss nation's new constitution.
1992	National referendum in April approves draft of new democratic constitution. Formation and registration of political parties become legal in May. Jerry John Rawlings elected president November 3 in national presidential election. Parliamentary elections of December 29 boycotted by major opposition parties, resulting in landslide victory for National Democratic Congress.
1993	Ghana's Fourth Republic inaugurated January 4 with the swearing in of Rawlings as president.
Late 1994– early 1995	Ghana hosts peace talks for warring factions of Liberian civil war.
1995	President Rawlings pays official visit to the United States, March 8–9, first such visit by a Ghanaian head of state in more than thirty years.



# Country Profile



## Country

**Formal Name:** Republic of Ghana.

**Short Form:** Ghana.

**Term for Citizens:** Ghanaian(s).

**Capital:** Accra.

**Date of Independence:** March 6, 1957.

**Note**—The Country Profile contains updated information as available.

## Geography

**Size:** 238,533 square kilometers, roughly the size of the states of Illinois and Indiana.

**Topography:** Generally low physical relief except in the east. Five distinct geographical regions: low plains inland from Atlantic coast; northern plateau stretching from western border to Volta River Basin averaging 450 meters in height; mountainous uplands along eastern border, bisected in south by Volta River Gorge; Volta River Basin in center; and dissected plateau up to 300 meters high in north.

**Climate:** Tropical climate governed by interaction of dry continental air mass from the northeast and moist southwest equatorial system. Annual mean temperature between 26°C and 29°C. Annual rainfall varies from more than 2,100 millimeters in southwest to 1,000 millimeters in north. Vegetation heaviest in south, thinning to savanna and dry plains in north.

## Society

**Population:** Estimated at 17.2 million in mid-1994, up from about 6.7 million in 1960; approximately half under age fifteen. Growth rate more than 3 percent per year since 1980. 1990 population density sixty-three persons per square kilometer; density highest in southwestern third of country, thinnest in center, higher in north. About 33 percent urban in 1992.

**Ethnolinguistic Groups:** Approximately 100 ethnolinguistic groups, all further subdivided into numerous cultural and linguistic units. Major ethnic groups are the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbane, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe. Languages belong either to Kwa or to Gur subfamily of Niger-Congo language family. Kwa speakers, found to south of Volta River, include the Akan, Ewe, and Ga-Adangbe. Gur speakers live north of Volta River and include the Grusi, Gurma, and Mole-Dagbane. English is official language used in government, large-scale business, national media, and school beyond primary level. Akan, Ewe, Ga, Nzema, Dagbane, and Hausa (a trade language from Nigeria) also used in radio and television broadcasting.

**Religion:** According to 1985 estimate, 62 percent Christian, 15

percent Muslim, 22 percent indigenous or nonbelievers. Christians composed of Protestants (25 percent, Methodists and Presbyterians especially numerous), Roman Catholics (15 percent), Protestant Pentecostals (8 percent), and Independent African Churches (about 14 percent). Muslims mostly Sunni. Christianity predominates in center and south, Islam in north.

**Health:** Large number of infectious diseases endemic to tropics, including cholera, typhoid, tuberculosis, anthrax, pertussis, yellow fever, hepatitis, trachoma, and malaria. Other diseases include schistosomiasis, guinea worm, dysentery, onchocerciasis, venereal diseases, and poliomyelitis. Malnutrition also widespread. Average life expectancy fifty-six years in 1993. Severe shortage of hospital beds and doctors. Since late 1980s, government has emphasized immunization and primary health care programs. Incidence of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) second highest in West Africa and rising.

**Education:** Education system consists of primary (six years), junior secondary (three years), and senior secondary (three years) after reforms of mid-1980s eliminated former middle schools; polytechnic institutions; and four universities. Universal education remains an unrealized goal, but most children have access to primary and junior secondary schools. Local vernacular is language of instruction on primary level, English thereafter. All students pay textbook fees. Enrollments for 1990–91: primary 1.8 million, junior secondary 609,000, senior secondary 200,000. In 1989–90 about 11,500 students attended polytechnic schools. Enrollment in universities at Legon, Kumasi, and Cape Coast totaled 9,251 in 1989–90; in 1993 a fourth university opened at Tamale. In early 1990s, the government instituted fees for boarding and lodging, provoking student demonstrations. Adult literacy rate reportedly about 40 percent in 1989.

## **Economy**

**General Character:** At independence, economy based on cocoa and gold; country relatively prosperous. After mid-1960s, economy stagnated, characterized by weak commodity demand, outmoded equipment, overvalued currency, smuggling, and foreign debt. Since 1983 Economic Recovery

Program (a structural adjustment program) has resulted in new investment and rising exports of cocoa, gold, and timber, but also in high foreign debt and little improvement in general standard of living.

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** In 1992 GDP was US\$6.1 billion; per capita income US\$380.

**Budget:** In 1993 about ₵667 billion, including ₵119 billion deficit (roughly US\$1.1 billion and US\$187 million, respectively, based on mid-1993 exchange rate).

**Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing:** In 1991 agriculture most important sector of economy, constituting just under half of GDP, down from 60 percent in 1983. Production of exports and food crops fell steadily after mid-1960s; major recovery began in 1980s. Cocoa most important cash crop; Ghana world's third largest cocoa producer as of 1992–93 crop year. Other cash crops—palm oil, cotton, tobacco, sugarcane, rubber, and kenaf (used in fiber bags)—much less important. Major food crops: yams, corn, cassava, and other root crops. Forests cover southern third of country. Commercial forestry major industry; deforestation serious problem. Livestock production negligible outside far north. Limited commercial fishing industry.

**Industry:** In 1960s largest manufacturing industries included aluminum, saw mills and timber processing, cocoa processing, breweries, cement, oil refining, textiles, and vehicle assembly. Factory output fell as low as 21 percent of capacity by 1982 but recovered to average of 40 percent in 1989. In early 1990s, many textile, pharmaceutical, leather, and electronics factories reportedly closed because of economic liberalization and foreign competition.

**Mining:** Major minerals are gold, bauxite, manganese, and diamonds. Mineral production fell precipitously during 1970s, recovered during 1980s. Minerals second highest export earner in early 1990s. Gold most important mineral, long associated with ancient and contemporary Ghana. Production in 1992 more than 1 million fine ounces and rising, surpassing cocoa as chief export earner. One of world's leading producers of manganese, but early 1990s production less than half mid-1970s output. Diamonds mostly industrial grade; 1992 production 694,000 carats and increasing. Large bauxite

reserves little exploited.

**Energy:** Commercial quantities of petroleum offshore, but output negligible in early 1990s. Hydroelectric generating capacity nearly 1.2 megawatts, mostly at Akosombo Dam on Volta River; 60 percent consumed by Volta Aluminum Company, remainder consumed domestically or sold to Togo and Benin. Significant expansion planned. Northern regions being connected to national power grid.

**Foreign Trade:** Major exports—cocoa, gold, timber, and industrial diamonds—mainly to Germany, Britain, United States, and Japan. Major imports—capital goods, oil, consumer goods, and intermediate goods—mostly from Britain, Nigeria, United States, and Germany. Ghana's trade balance, negative since 1980s, estimated at -US\$190 million for 1994.

**External Debt:** US\$4.6 billion in 1993.

**Currency and Exchange Rate:** Cedi (¢), divided into 100 pesewas. In April 1995, US\$1.00 = ¢1,105.

**Fiscal Year:** Calendar Year.

## Transportation and Telecommunications

**Roads:** Most regions accessible by road network of more than 32,000 kilometers; 12,000 classified as main roads. About 6,000 kilometers paved, remainder gravel or earth. Since 1985 major repairs under way on all main and some feeder roads.

**Railroads:** 953 kilometers of narrow gauge (1.067 meter) track; only thirty-two kilometers double-tracked. Serve only southern industrial/commercial centers, mainly connecting Accra, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Kumasi. Limited renovation under way as part of Economic Recovery Program.

**Civil Aviation:** Eleven airfields, including Kotoka International Airport at Accra and major domestic airports at Sekondi-Takoradi, Kumasi, and Tamale. Ghana Airways operates small fleet on domestic and international routes. In early 1990s, runways, lighting, and freight and terminal buildings upgraded at Kotoka.

**Ports and Waterways:** Two deep artificial harbors—Tema (2.7-million-ton capacity) and Takoradi (projected 1.6-million-ton capacity). More than 1,100-kilometer navigable network on Lake Volta, with additional ports planned; 168 kilometers of

Ankobra River, Tano River, and Volta River navigable. Small merchant marine of one refrigerated and five cargo ships.

**Telecommunications:** Relatively limited telecommunications system. About 45,000 telephones in 1993, concentrated in Accra. Two domestic radio-relay systems, one east-west serving coastal cities, one north-south connecting Accra with Burkina Faso. International telecommunications via link with International Telecommunications Satellite Corporation (Intelsat) Atlantic Ocean Satellite. Four AM and one FM radio stations; four television stations; two domestic shortwave transmitters broadcast in English and six local languages; one international transmitter broadcasts in English, French, and Hausa.

## Government and Politics

**Government:** A parliamentary democracy at independence in 1957, followed by alternating military and civilian governments. In January 1993, military government gave way to Fourth Republic after presidential and parliamentary elections in late 1992. The 1992 constitution divides powers among a president, parliament, cabinet, Council of State, and an independent judiciary. Government elected by universal suffrage.

**Administrative Divisions:** Ten administrative regions divided into 110 districts, each with its own District Assembly. Below districts are various types of councils, including fifty-eight town or area councils, 108 zonal councils, and 626 area councils. 16,000 unit committees on lowest level.

**Judicial System:** Legal system based on Ghanaian common law, customary (traditional) law, and the 1992 constitution. Court hierarchy consists of Supreme Court of Ghana (highest court), Court of Appeal, and High Court of Justice. Beneath these bodies are district, traditional, and local courts. Extrajudicial institutions include public tribunals, vigilante groups, and *asaf* companies. Since independence, courts relatively independent; this independence continues under Fourth Republic. Lower courts being redefined and reorganized under Fourth Republic.

**Politics:** Since mid-1992 political parties legal after ten-year hiatus. Under Fourth Republic, major parties are National Democratic Congress, led by Jerry John Rawlings, which won

presidential and parliamentary elections in 1992; New Patriotic Party, major opposition party; People's National Convention, led by former president Hilla Limann; and (new) People's Convention Party, successor to Kwame Nkrumah's original party of same name.

**Foreign Relations:** Since independence, fervently devoted to ideals of nonalignment and Pan-Africanism, both closely identified with first president, Kwame Nkrumah. Favors international and regional political and economic cooperation. Active member of United Nations and Organization of African Unity. In 1994 President Rawlings elected chairman of Economic Community of West African States.

## National Security

**Armed Forces:** In 1994 armed forces totaled about 6,850 active personnel, consisting of army, 5,000; air force, 1,000; and navy, 850. Missions are to protect against foreign aggression and to maintain internal security. Armed forces aided in these missions by various paramilitary forces.

**Major Military Units:** Army largest and best-equipped service and primary unit of defense. Air force and navy both smaller and subordinate to army. All three services hindered by equipment maintenance problems and low states of combat readiness.

**Military Equipment:** Army equipment mostly older and poorly maintained weapons, largely of British, Brazilian, Swiss, Swedish, Israeli, and Finnish manufacture. Air force equipped with combat, transport, and training aircraft. Navy possesses eight sizable ships, including two corvettes and four fast-attack craft. All three services experience budgetary and maintenance problems.

**Defense Budget:** Defense spending high in 1960s, declined in 1970s and 1980s. In 1992 defense budget about US\$105 million, less than 2 percent of budgetary expenditures.

**Foreign Military Relations:** During colonial and early independence periods, military training and equipment came from Britain. In 1960s and after, military relations diversified to include Soviet Union, China, German Democratic Republic (East Germany), and Libya. In 1990s Ghana revived military

ties with Britain, United States, and other Western countries. Ghana also providing military units for peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Rwanda and observers and police for several United Nations missions.

**Internal Security Forces:** Consist of more than 16,000 General Police, 5,000-member People's Militia, and National Civil Defence Force composed of all able-bodied citizens. Since independence, stature of police has varied according to role in suppression of dissent, extortion, and bribery. In 1990s police involved in various United Nations international peacekeeping operations.



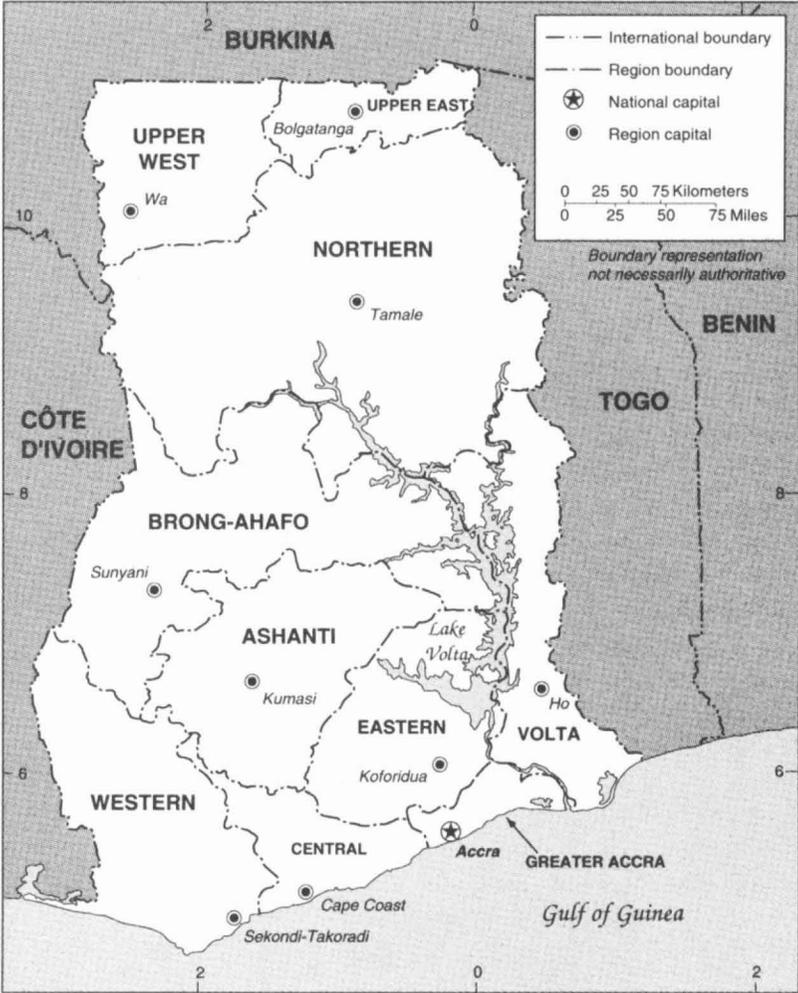


Figure 1. Administrative Divisions of Ghana, 1994

## Introduction

WHEN GHANA ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE from colonial domination in 1957, the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to do so, it enjoyed economic and political advantages unrivaled elsewhere in tropical Africa. The economy was solidly based on the production and export of cocoa, of which Ghana was the world's leading producer; minerals, particularly gold; and timber. It had a well-developed transportation network, relatively high per capita income, low national debt, and sizable foreign currency reserves. Its education system was relatively advanced, and its people were heirs to a tradition of parliamentary government. Ghana's future looked promising, and it seemed destined to be a leader in Africa.

Yet during the next twenty-five years, rather than growth and prosperity, Ghanaians experienced substantial declines in all of the above categories, and the country's image became severely tarnished. Beginning in the early 1980s and continuing into the mid-1990s, efforts were undertaken to rebuild the government and the economy and to restore the luster of Ghana's name. It is this attempt at reconstruction that constitutes the major focus of the present volume.

The region of modern Ghana has been inhabited for several thousand years, but little is known of Ghana's early inhabitants before the sixteenth century. By then, however, the major population groups were on the scene and in their present locales. More than 100 separate ethnic groups are found in Ghana today, a number of which are immigrant groups from neighboring countries.

One of the most important is the Akan, who live in the coastal savannah and forest zones of southern Ghana. The Akan were living in well-defined states by the early sixteenth century at the latest. By the end of that century, the states of Mamprusi, Dagomba, and Gonja had come into being among the Mole-Dagbane peoples of northern Ghana. These peoples and states were significantly influenced by Mande-speaking peoples from the north and the northeast. In the extreme north of present-day Ghana are a number of peoples who did not form states in pre-colonial times. These peoples, such as the Sisala, Kasena, and Talensi, are organized into clans and look to the heads of their clans for leadership. Like the Mole-

Dagbane, they have been heavily influenced by Islam, introduced into the region centuries ago by trans-Saharan traders or by migrants from the north.

The best-known of the indigenous states of Ghana is without doubt Asante, a term that applies to both people and state. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, this Akan-based society began to expand from the area around Kumasi, its capital, allying with or subduing neighboring Akan states such as Denkyira and Akwapim. Eventually, Asante incorporated non-Akan peoples and kingdoms, including Gonja, Dagomba, and Mamprusi, into an empire that encompassed much of modern Ghana and parts of neighboring Côte d'Ivoire. Along a network of roads radiating from Kumasi flowed communications, tribute, and, above all, gold, over which the Asante held a monopoly.

Gold is found in several regions of West Africa, including the headwaters of the Niger River and the forest zone of modern Ghana. The West African gold trade was well-established in antiquity, and it helped tie the peoples of Ghana into a trans-Saharan commercial network that stretched from the West African forest zone across the Sahara to ports on the Mediterranean. Aside from providing material benefits, trade seems to have been one of the major factors in state formation in Ghana.

Gold drew European traders to the Gulf of Guinea. The first to arrive in the late fifteenth century were the Portuguese, who set up an outpost on Ghana's coast. During the next century, the lure of gold gave way to the slave trade because of the demand for labor in the Americas. Trading in slaves as well as gold, the Dutch, the Danes, the English, and the Swedes eventually joined the Portuguese on what had come to be known as the "Gold Coast." By the early nineteenth century, the British were the most important European power on the Gold Coast. Thereafter, the British extended their control inland via treaties and warfare until by 1902 much of present-day Ghana was a British crown colony. Ghana's current borders were realized in 1956 when the Volta region voted to join Ghana.

British colonial government, while authoritarian and centralized, nonetheless permitted Ghanaians a role in governing the colony. This was true not only of central governing bodies such as the Legislative Council and later the Executive Council, but of local and regional administration as well. The British policy of indirect rule meant that chiefs or other local leaders

became agents of the colonial administration. This system of rule gave Ghanaians experience with modern, representative government to a degree unparalleled elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa.

During the colonial period, the Gold Coast began to develop economically. Roads, railroads, and a harbor at Takoradi were constructed. In 1878 a Ghanaian brought cacao pods into the country, introducing what eventually became the country's major cash crop. Large-scale commercial gold mining began, and Western-style education was introduced, culminating in the founding of the University College of the Gold Coast in 1948. The education system trained a class of Ghanaians that found employment in the colonial administration. In the twentieth century, this same class increasingly sought economic, political, and social improvements as well as self-government, and, eventually, independence for Ghanaians.

After World War II, the drive for independence began in earnest under the auspices of the United Gold Coast Convention and the Convention People's Party, the latter founded by Kwame Nkrumah in 1949. Britain granted independence on March 6, 1957, under a governor general as representative of the crown and Nkrumah as prime minister. In 1960 a new constitution created the Republic of Ghana, the same year that Nkrumah was elected president.

Nkrumah saw Ghana as the "Star of Black Africa." He believed that Ghana should lead the effort to free Africa from the shackles of Western colonialism and envisioned a union of independent African states that would command respect in the world. Nkrumah also helped found the Non-Aligned Movement, a grouping of world states that attempted to pursue policies independent of East and West. His ideas about African unity proved immensely appealing in the late 1950s and early 1960s; indeed, the Pan-Africanist dream still resonates across Africa in the 1990s.

Nkrumah's pursuit of Pan-Africanism proved expensive and ultimately futile, and it partially accounts for the economic problems that Ghana encountered during the early 1960s. More important, however, were Nkrumah's domestic policies. He believed in centralization, both political and economic. Constitutional safeguards against authoritarianism were abolished, political opposition was stifled, and, shortly after the 1960 elections, Nkrumah was declared president for life. By the

mid-1960s, Ghana had become a one-party state under a powerful president.

Nkrumah also believed in a rapid transformation of the Ghanaian economy along socialist lines. He channeled investment into new industrial enterprises and agricultural projects, nationalized foreign-owned enterprises, and wherever possible "Ghanaianized" the public and private sectors. State-sponsored enterprises such as the Akosombo Dam and the Volta Aluminum Company were undertaken, roads were built, and schools and health services were expanded. The former Northern Territories, the northernmost third of the country which had been neglected by the British, received special attention in an attempt to address the imbalance in infrastructure and social services between North and South.

Ghana, however, lacked sufficient resources to finance the public-sector projects that Nkrumah envisioned. When foreign currency reserves were exhausted, the government resorted to deficit financing and foreign borrowing to pay for essential imports. Trained manpower to allocate resources and to operate old and new state enterprises was equally in short supply, and internal financial controls necessary to implement development led almost naturally to corruption. Despite obvious gains from investment in roads, schools, health services, and import-substituting industries, by the mid-1960s Ghana was a nation ensnared in debt, rising inflation, and economic mismanagement, the result of Nkrumah's ill-conceived development policies. An overvalued currency discouraged exports, corruption was increasingly a fact of life, and the political system was intolerant of dissent and authoritarian in practice.

In 1966 Nkrumah was overthrown and a military government assumed power. But neither military nor civilian governments during the next fifteen years were able to deal successfully with the host of problems that Nkrumah had bequeathed. In particular, under the Supreme Military Council (1972–79), Ghana's economy and political institutions deteriorated at an alarming rate. The 1970s were a period of steadily falling agricultural production, manufacturing output, and per capita income. Declining cocoa production and exports were accompanied by a corresponding rise in smuggling of the crop to neighboring countries, especially Côte d'Ivoire, and largely accounted for chronic trade deficits. Personal enrichment and corruption became the norm of government.

Beyond these serious problems loomed much larger issues that needed to be addressed if Ghana were to resume its position at the forefront of Africa's leading nations. Among these were the fear of an overly centralized and authoritarian national executive, the burden of accumulated foreign debt, and the need to forge a nation from Ghana's diverse ethnic and regional interests. In particular, the challenge was to devise a system of government that would bridge the enormous gap that had developed between the political center and society at large. For most Ghanaians, the nation-state by the late 1970s had become a largely irrelevant construct that had ceased to provide economic benefits or opportunities for meaningful political participation. As a consequence, local, ethnic, and regional interests had become much more prominent than those of Ghana as a whole.

Such were the challenges that lay before the group of military officers who seized power at the end of 1981. During its first year, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) spoke vaguely about socialism and established people's and workers' defence committees and extra-judicial public tribunals as a way to involve Ghanaians in public administration. In 1983, however, the council, under its leader, Jerry John Rawlings, abandoned its socialist leanings and negotiated a structural adjustment program with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as the best and perhaps only method of rejuvenating the economy. Called the Economic Recovery Program, it was designed to stimulate economic growth and exports, to enhance private initiative and investment, and to reduce the role of the state in economic affairs.

On the one hand, Ghana's structural adjustment program was and continues to be one of a half dozen models for such programs backed by international lending agencies. It succeeded in reversing the downward trend in production and exports, especially in the cocoa, mining, and timber industries. During the 1980s, gross national product grew at annual rates of 5 percent or more a year, per capita income slowly began to rise, and inflation abated. Since 1990, economic growth has slowed, but trends in the economy remain positive.

On the other hand, Ghana has incurred new debts to finance its Economic Recovery Program, unemployment has risen, and new fees for basic services such as education and health care have added to the burdens of ordinary citizens. Indeed, for many Ghanaians, structural adjustment has not yet

significantly improved their lives. Additionally, per capita income, while continuing to rise, is unevenly distributed throughout the population, and private overseas investment has largely failed to materialize. In Ghana's case, structural adjustment is clearly a long-term process. Despite problems and shortcomings, the government of the present Fourth Republic, which succeeded the PNDC in 1993, remains committed to it.

Equally significant were steps to devise new political institutions that would allow a large number of Ghanaians to participate in governing the country. The creation of defence committees and public tribunals in the early 1980s was a step in this direction. In 1988 and early 1989, nonpartisan elections were held to fill seats in representative assemblies constituted in each of Ghana's ten administrative regions; similar bodies were eventually seated in cities, towns, and villages. Thereafter, the overriding question was what form the national government would take. After initial reluctance to commit themselves to a multiparty political system, Rawlings and the PNDC yielded in the face of domestic and international pressures. In April 1992, a new constitution that called for an elected parliament and chief executive won overwhelming approval in a national referendum. Political parties, banned since 1982, were the mechanism by which the system was to work.

Presidential elections were held in November 1992, followed in December by elections for the 200-member national parliament. After a heated campaign, Jerry Rawlings was elected president. His party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), won control of parliament. In January 1993, Rawlings and the new parliamentarians were sworn into office, thereby launching Ghana's fourth attempt at republican government since independence.

The new political order in Ghana, unfortunately, did not get off to a happy start. The four opposition parties that had candidates running in the presidential race charged that fraud and voting irregularities accounted for Rawlings's victory. When their demands for a revised voters register were rejected because of cost and time factors, they boycotted the parliamentary elections. This stance by the opposition resulted in what is in effect a one-party republic, which imparts a hollowness to Ghana's latest effort at democratic government. Although the opposition parties have accepted the status quo for the time being and have taken on the role of watchdog even though

they are not represented in parliament, they have continued to press for a new voters list before elections scheduled for 1996 and remain basically unreconciled to NDC rule. As a result, the first two years of the Fourth Republic were marked by a series of skirmishes and quarrels between the government and the opposition.

In its campaign against the NDC government, the opposition, resorting to the courts, won several cases against the government in 1993 and early 1994. Since 1993 a small but vigorous independent press has developed, which the opposition has used to publicize its views. Despite publication of what at times have been sensational or even libelous charges against members of the NDC, including Rawlings, the government has made no move to censor or suppress independent newspapers and magazines. Official spokesmen, however, have repeatedly denounced what they consider irresponsible reporting in the private press.

In late 1994 and early 1995, controversy over the media continued unabated. The most contentious issue involved the attempt to establish a private radio station as an alternative to the official Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. Known as "Radio Eye" and dedicated to providing a wider range of political opinion and information than the government network, it began broadcasting in November 1994. The government promptly shut it down and seized its equipment, charging that Radio Eye had not been licensed. The opposition parties protested that the government's action was an affront to democratic procedures and turned once more to the courts, challenging the government's licensing practices and the constitutionality of its actions.

By early 1995, the case was before the Supreme Court of Ghana. Meanwhile, in early February the government announced that properly authorized private radio stations would begin broadcasting in February. The large number of license applications received by the government—more than sixty—indicated the interest in private, independent radio broadcasting.

Prospects for abatement in the media battles between the government and its critics were nil, given the degree of antipathy between the two sides and preparations for national elections in 1996. Even so, both appeared to accept the basic rules of democratic procedure. In a statement marking the second anniversary of the Fourth Republic, the New Patriotic Party

called on Rawlings (and the NDC) to respect the 1992 constitution to ensure that this latest exercise in democracy would succeed. Most significantly, the statement added, "Let us recognise that the eras of violent and revolutionary change of government in Ghana are over."

Aside from freedom of the press and speech, other basic human rights also appeared to enjoy increased respect in mid-1995. There were persistent reports of police abuse, especially in areas distant from Accra, as well as of unwarranted detentions, beatings, and similar infringements of rights, but, in general, the number and severity of human rights violations continued to decline. The judiciary in particular showed clear evidence of preserving its independence, in keeping with Ghanaian tradition and the requirements of democratic governance.

Such a state of affairs was encouraging, given the role of the armed forces and the police in Ghana's postindependence history. Of the ten governments since 1957, six were composed of military officers who came to power via coups. The PNDC was one such regime, and even though it handed over power to a civilian, constitutional government in 1993, the question of the role of Ghana's military in the Fourth Republic was still an important one. Under the Economic Recovery Program, funding of the armed forces was reduced, and equipment and facilities were allowed to deteriorate. In recognition of this fact and of the continuing mission of the armed forces in matters of defense and international peacekeeping, Rawlings called for renewed attention to the needs of the armed forces in his speech marking the second anniversary of the Fourth Republic in January 1995.

On the economic scene, the government was determined to continue with structural adjustment. Tight fiscal controls in central and local government accounts, an essential element in structural adjustment, had been relaxed as the 1992 elections approached, leading to an increase in the government deficit, inflation, and interest rates. Indications were that this situation had not been brought under control in mid-1995.

Ghana faced other major problems with its Economic Recovery Program in the mid-1990s as well. These included the progressive fall in the value of the cedi, the national currency; a high rate of inflation (more than 30 percent in mid-1995); the lack of private-sector investment, especially in manufacturing; and rising levels of unemployment as a result of international

competition, domestic factory closings, and downsizing of parastatals and the government bureaucracy. Added to these problems were the difficulty of reconciling the rigors of free-market economic reforms with popular demands for improved public services and living standards, and a population growing by well over 3 percent a year.

Preliminary data for the whole of 1994 showed that the country had achieved a budget surplus, with another anticipated for 1995, and that gross domestic product adjusted for inflation amounted to 3.8 percent, short of the target of 5 percent but still commendable. Ghana's trade deficit, however, amounted to US\$200 million, with a similar figure projected for 1995. Total international debt for 1993, the most recent year for which revised figures were available, stood at US\$4.6 billion; its rate of increase, however, showed signs of slowing. In January 1995, the government granted a 52 percent increase in the minimum wage under pressure from the Trade Union Congress.

On the whole, Ghana's economy seemed to be headed in the right direction in the mid-1990s, even if sustained economic recovery was not yet a reality more than a decade after introduction of the Economic Recovery Program and even if the country continued to rely on cocoa, gold, and timber for most of its foreign currency earnings. Nonetheless, in spite of real problems, Ghana was still the model for structural adjustment in Africa in the eyes of Western lending institutions.

The fragility of the economic and political transition underway in Ghana was evident from events in the spring of 1995. On March 1, the government introduced a new value-added tax to replace the national sales tax. Set at 17.5 percent of the price of many commodities and services, the new tax immediately resulted in rising prices and contributed to an already high rate of inflation. It thereby added to the deprivation many Ghanaians had been experiencing for more than a decade under the Economic Recovery Program. For many, it was simply too much. Discontent among civil servants, teachers, and others led to street demonstrations and finally, on May 11, to the largest protest demonstration in Accra against government policies since Rawlings and the PNDC came to power. Five people were killed and seventeen injured in clashes between supporters and opponents of the government. Demonstrators not only criticized what they considered harsh economic policies, but some also called openly for Rawlings to step down.

The protests, organized by opposition parties, provided Rawlings's opponents with a rallying cry. For the first time since 1993, the Rawlings government appeared politically vulnerable. In the face of continued protests and increasing doubts about the viability of the value-added tax, the government in early June announced plans to replace it with a new national sales tax. In the meantime, one of the NDC's partners in the Progressive Alliance, the National Convention Party, withdrew from the alliance in late May. The party's leaders claimed that it had not been allowed to participate in affairs of government as had been promised when the alliance was formed to contest the 1992 elections. The National Convention Party, therefore, would no longer be bound by the agreement, and it would feel free to associate with the opposition if it chose to do so.

In early 1995, Rawlings, as chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), continued his efforts to find a solution to the civil war in Liberia. At a December meeting in Accra, the major combatants agreed to form a new governing council and to implement a cease-fire. As of April, however, the combatants had not been able to agree fully on the new council's membership despite another meeting in Accra in January, and even the cease-fire threatened to come unraveled as renewed fighting broke out in Liberia. So disappointed were Rawlings and other West African leaders that they threatened to withdraw their peacekeeping troops if the Liberians continued to obstruct the ECOWAS peace process.

In support of another peacekeeping mission, on March 1, 1995, Ghana dispatched a contingent of 224 officers and men as part of its long-term commitment to the United Nations peacekeeping forces in Lebanon. Other Ghanaians continued to serve as military observers, police, or soldiers in international peacekeeping missions in Western Sahara, the former Yugoslavia, Mozambique, and Rwanda. The warming in relations with neighboring Togo also continued. After the arrival of a new Ghanaian ambassador in Lomé in mid-November, Togolese authorities reopened their western border in December and were expected to name an ambassador to Accra during 1995.

As the home of Pan-Africanism, Ghana hosted the second Pan-African Historical and Theatre Festival (Panafest) from December 9 to 18, 1994. As with the first Panafest in Accra in 1992, the 1994 festival was designed to foster unity among Africans on the continent and abroad. Unfortunately, attendance

at Panafest 94 was lower than expected, one reason the festival was a disappointment to its sponsors.

Finally, in early March 1995, Rawlings paid an official visit to Washington, where he met with President Bill Clinton. The two presidents discussed a variety of topics, including regional stability in West Africa and trade and investment in Ghana. Clinton noted Ghana's prominence in international peacekeeping missions, especially in Liberia, and pledged continued United States support for Ghanaian efforts at regional conflict resolution. Rawlings's visit was the first to the United States by a Ghanaian head of state in at least thirty years.

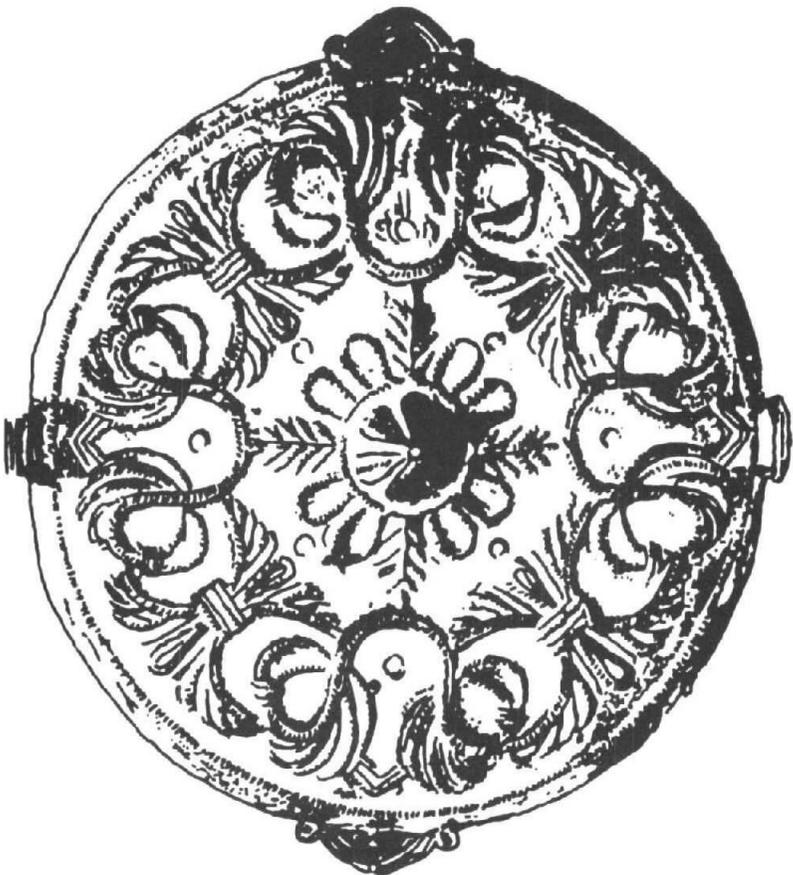
By mid-1995, Ghana had emerged at the forefront of change in sub-Saharan Africa. Its structural adjustment program was a model for other developing nations on the continent, and its pursuit of popular, representative government and democratic institutions made it a pacesetter in the political realm. Endowed with both human and natural resources and with a political leadership seemingly determined to reverse decades of economic and political decline, Ghana had the potential to become one of Africa's leading nations once again. Whether Ghana would resume its status as the "Star of Black Africa" envisioned by Kwame Nkrumah, however, remained to be seen.

August 1, 1995

LaVerle Berry



## Chapter 1. Historical Setting



*A pectoral of cast gold (Akan)*

ACCORDING TO TRADITION, most present-day Ghanaians are descended not from the area's earliest inhabitants but from various migrant groups, the first of which probably came down the Volta River Basin in the early thirteenth century. By the sixteenth century, most ethnic groups constituting the population of Ghana (formerly the British colony of the Gold Coast) had settled in their present locations. Prior to British control in the nineteenth century, political developments in the area largely revolved around the formation, expansion, and contraction of a number of states—a situation that often entailed much population movement. Some people, however, lived in so-called segmentary societies and did not form states, particularly in northern Ghana.

Early states in Ghana made every effort to participate in or, if possible, to control, trade with Europeans, who first arrived on the coast in the late fifteenth century. These efforts in turn influenced state formation and development. Much more important to the evolution of these states, however, were their responses to pre-European patterns of trade. This was particularly true of commercial relations between the Akan states of southern Ghana and trading centers in the western Sudan. Competition among the traditional societies ultimately facilitated British efforts to gain control of what Europeans called the "Gold Coast." Traditional authorities, who with their elders had hitherto exercised autonomous control over their territories, became agents of the British colonial government under the policy of indirect rule.

As was the case in many sub-Saharan African countries, the rise of a national consciousness in Ghana developed largely in the twentieth century in response to colonial policies. The call to freedom came from a few elites, but it was only after World War II that the concept of independence captured the imagination of large numbers of people and gained popular support. Differences existed between the two leading political parties, however, on such issues as the timetable for independence and the powers to be vested in the modern state.

Ghana's first independent administration was inaugurated on March 6, 1957, with Kwame Nkrumah as prime minister. On July 1, 1960, Ghana was declared a republic, with Kwame Nkrumah as its president. Earlier, parliament had passed the Preven-

tive Detention Act of 1958, which granted authority to the head of state to detain without trial those who were considered a threat to the nation. By means of such measures, Nkrumah and his party intimidated leading members of the opposition. Some opponents were co-opted; others were either exiled or jailed. As leader of Ghana at the time of the Cold War, Nkrumah forged alliances that increasingly placed him in the camp of the Eastern Bloc. Western governments understood Nkrumah's agenda to be socialist and worried about his influence on other African leaders. Some observers believed that Nkrumah's obsession with what he called the "total liberation of Africa" compelled him to create an authoritarian political system in Ghana. Critics of the regime accused Nkrumah of introducing patterns of oppression into Ghanaian politics and of tolerating widespread corruption among party leaders. The regime paid too much attention to urban problems at the expense of the more productive rural sector, they felt, and it embraced unrealistic economic and foreign assistance policies that led the nation to accrue huge foreign debts. The Nkrumah administration was overthrown by the military in February 1966. Many analysts maintain that the political instability and economic problems faced by the country since the mid-1960s are by-products of the Nkrumah era.

By 1981 Ghana had undergone seven major changes of government since the fall of Nkrumah. Each change was followed by alienation of the majority of the population and by military intervention, touted to end the rule that was responsible for the country's problems. Each time, the new government, civil or military, failed to stabilize the political and economic conditions of the country.

As its fourth decade of independence began in 1987, Ghana was under the administration of the Provisional National Defence Council, a military government led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings that had come to power in December 1981. Like the Nkrumah administration three decades earlier, the Provisional National Defence Council and Rawlings were criticized for their populism and desire for radical change. Despite the difficult early years of the Rawlings regime, Ghana's economy had begun to show signs of recovery by the late 1980s, and preparations were underway to return the country to some form of democratic government.

## The Precolonial Period

By the end of the sixteenth century, most ethnic groups constituting the modern Ghanaian population had settled in their present locations. Archaeological remains found in the coastal zone indicate that the area has been inhabited since the early Bronze Age (ca. 4000 B.C.), but these societies, based on fishing in the extensive lagoons and rivers, left few traces. Archaeological work also suggests that central Ghana north of the forest zone was inhabited as early as 3,000 to 4,000 years ago. Oral history and other sources suggest that the ancestors of some of Ghana's residents entered this area at least as early as the tenth century A.D. and that migration from the north and east continued thereafter.

These migrations resulted in part from the formation and disintegration of a series of large states in the western Sudan (the region north of modern Ghana drained by the Niger River). Prominent among these Sudanic states was the Soninke kingdom of Ghana. Strictly speaking, *ghana* was the title of the king, but the Arabs, who left records of the kingdom, applied the term to the king, the capital, and the state. The ninth-century Arab writer, Al Yaqubi, described ancient Ghana as one of the three most organized states in the region (the others being Gao and Kanem in the central Sudan). Its rulers were renowned for their wealth in gold, the opulence of their courts, and their warrior-hunting skills. They were also masters of the trade in gold, which drew North African merchants to the western Sudan. The military achievements of these and later western Sudanic rulers and their control over the region's gold mines constituted the nexus of their historical relations with merchants and rulers of North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Ghana succumbed to attacks by its neighbors in the eleventh century, but its name and reputation endured. In 1957 when the leaders of the former British colony of the Gold Coast sought an appropriate name for their newly independent state—the first black African nation to gain its independence from colonial rule—they named their new country after ancient Ghana. The choice was more than merely symbolic because modern Ghana, like its namesake, was equally famed for its wealth and trade in gold.

Although none of the states of the western Sudan controlled territories in the area that is modern Ghana, several small kingdoms that later developed in the north of the country were

ruled by nobles believed to have immigrated from that region. The trans-Saharan trade that contributed to the expansion of kingdoms in the western Sudan also led to the development of contacts with regions in northern modern Ghana and in the forest to the south. By the thirteenth century, for example, the town of Jenné in the empire of Mali had established commercial connections with the ethnic groups in the savanna-woodland areas of the northern two-thirds of the Volta Basin in modern Ghana. Jenné was also the headquarters of the Dyula, Muslim traders who dealt with the ancestors of the Akan-speaking peoples who occupy most of the southern half of the country.

The growth of trade stimulated the development of early Akan states located on the trade route to the goldfields in the forest zone of the south. The forest itself was thinly populated, but Akan-speaking peoples began to move into it toward the end of the fifteenth century with the arrival of crops from Southeast Asia and the New World that could be adapted to forest conditions. These new crops included sorghum, bananas, and cassava. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, European sources noted the existence of the gold-rich states of Akan and Twifu in the Ofin River Valley.

Also in the same period, some of the Mande, who had stimulated the development of states in what is now northern Nigeria (the Hausa states and those of the Lake Chad area), moved southwestward and imposed themselves on many of the indigenous peoples of the northern half of modern Ghana and of Burkina Faso (Burkina—formerly Upper Volta), founding the states of Dagomba and Mamprusi. The Mande also influenced the rise of the Gonja state.

It seems clear from oral traditions as well as from archaeological evidence that the Mole-Dagbani states of Mamprusi, Dagomba, and Gonja, as well as the Mossi states of Yatenga and Wagadugu, were among the earliest kingdoms to emerge in modern Ghana, being well established by the close of the sixteenth century. The Mossi and Gonja rulers came to speak the languages of the peoples they dominated. In general, however, members of the ruling class retained their traditions, and even today some of them can recite accounts of their northern origins.

Although most rulers were not Muslims, they either brought with them or welcomed Muslims as scribes and medicine men, and Muslims also played a significant role in the trade that

linked southern with northern Ghana. As a result of their presence, Islam substantially influenced the north. Muslim influence, spread by the activities of merchants and clerics, has been recorded even among the Asante (also seen as Ashanti—see Glossary) to the south. Although most Ghanaians retained their traditional beliefs, the Muslims brought with them certain skills, including writing, and introduced certain beliefs and practices that became part of the culture of the peoples among whom they settled (see Christianity and Islam in Ghana, ch. 2).

In the broad belt of rugged country between the northern boundaries of the Muslim-influenced states of Gonja, Mamprusi, and Dagomba and the southernmost outposts of the Mossi kingdoms lived a number of peoples who were not incorporated into these entities. Among these peoples were the Sisala, Kasena, Kusase, and Talensi, agriculturalists closely related to the Mossi. Rather than establishing centralized states themselves, they lived in so-called segmented societies, bound together by kinship ties and ruled by the heads of their clans. Trade between the Akan states to the south and the Mossi kingdoms to the north flowed through their homelands, subjecting them to Islamic influence and to the depredations of these more powerful neighbors.

Of the components that would later make up Ghana, the state of Asante was to have the most cohesive history and would exercise the greatest influence. The Asante are members of the Twi-speaking branch of the Akan people. The groups that came to constitute the core of the Asante confederacy moved north to settle in the vicinity of Lake Bosumtwi. Before the mid-seventeenth century, the Asante began an expansion under a series of militant leaders that led to the domination of surrounding peoples and to the formation of the most powerful of the states of the central forest zone.

Under Chief Oti Akenten (r. ca. 1630–60), a series of successful military operations against neighboring Akan states brought a larger surrounding territory into alliance with Asante. At the end of the seventeenth century, Osei Tutu (d. 1712 or 1717) became *asantehene* (king of Asante). Under Osei Tutu's rule, the confederacy of Asante states was transformed into an empire with its capital at Kumasi. Political and military consolidation ensued, resulting in firmly established centralized authority. Osei Tutu was strongly influenced by the high priest, Anokye, who, tradition asserts, caused a stool of gold to descend from the sky to seal the union of Asante states. Stools

already functioned as traditional symbols of chieftainship, but the Golden Stool of Asante represented the united spirit of all the allied states and established a dual allegiance that superimposed the confederacy over the individual component states. The Golden Stool remains a respected national symbol of the traditional past and figures extensively in Asante ritual.

Osei Tutu permitted newly conquered territories that joined the confederation to retain their own customs and chiefs, who were given seats on the Asante state council. Osei Tutu's gesture made the process relatively easy and nondisruptive because most of the earlier conquests had subjugated other Akan peoples. Within the Asante portions of the confederacy, each minor state continued to exercise internal self-rule, and its chief jealously guarded the state's prerogatives against encroachment by the central authority. A strong unity developed, however, as the various communities subordinated their individual interests to central authority in matters of national concern.

By the mid-eighteenth century, Asante was a highly organized state. The wars of expansion that brought the northern states of Mamprusi, Dagomba, and Gonja under Asante influence were won during the reign of Asantehene Opoku Ware I (d. 1750), successor to Osei Tutu. By the 1820s, successive rulers had extended Asante boundaries southward. Although the northern expansions linked Asante with trade networks across the desert and in Hausaland to the east, movements into the south brought the Asante into contact, sometimes antagonistic, with the coastal Fante, Ga-Adangbe, and Ewe peoples, as well as with the various European merchants whose fortresses dotted the Gold Coast (see fig. 2).

## **Arrival of the Europeans**

### **Early European Contact and the Slave Trade**

When the first Europeans arrived in the late fifteenth century, many inhabitants of the Gold Coast area were striving to consolidate their newly acquired territories and to settle into a secure and permanent environment. Several African immigrant groups had yet to establish firm ascendancy over earlier occupants of their territories, and considerable displacement and secondary migrations were in progress. Ivor Wilks, a leading historian of Ghana, has observed that Akan purchases of slaves from Portuguese traders operating from the Congo

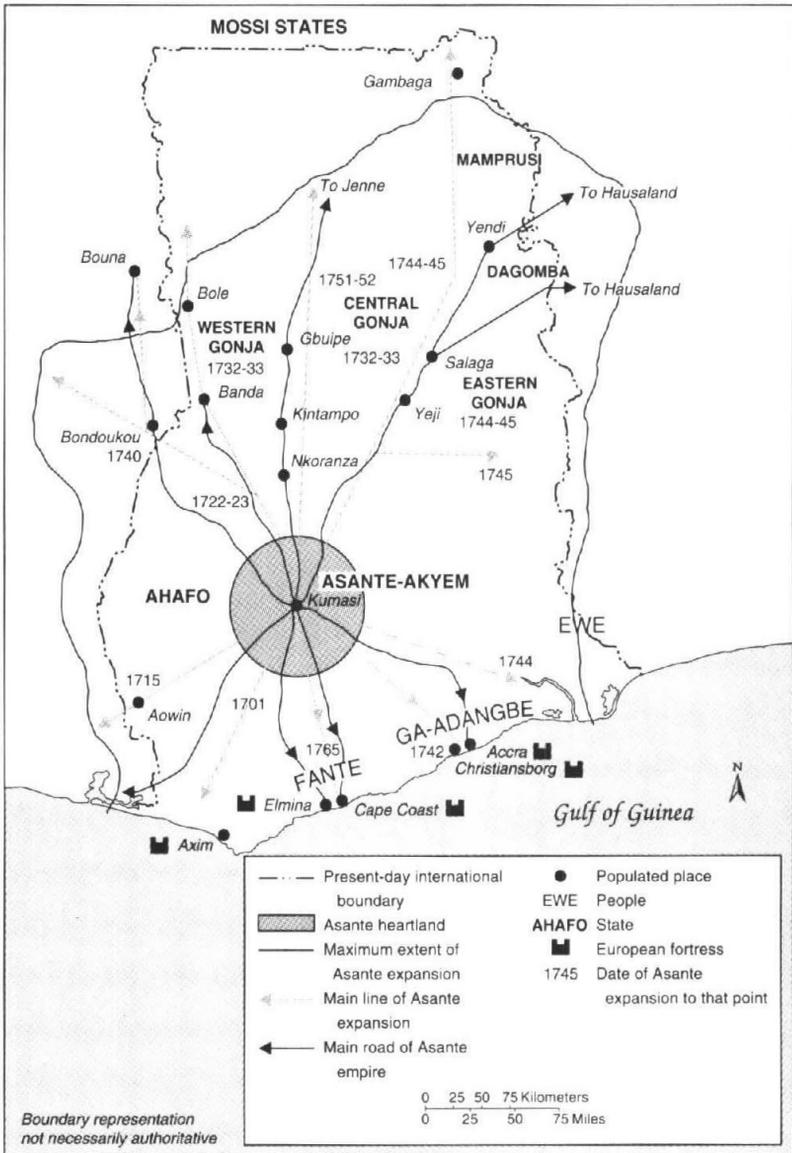
region augmented the labor needed for the state formation that was characteristic of this period. Unlike the Akan groups of the interior, the major coastal groups, such as the Fante, Ewe, and Ga, were for the most part settled in their homelands.

The Portuguese were the first to arrive. By 1471, under the patronage of Prince Henry the Navigator, they had reached the area that was to become known as the Gold Coast. Europeans knew the area as the source of gold that reached Muslim North Africa by way of trade routes across the Sahara. The initial Portuguese interest in trading for gold, ivory, and pepper increased so much that in 1482 the Portuguese built their first permanent trading post on the western coast of present-day Ghana. This fortress, Elmina Castle, constructed to protect Portuguese trade from European competitors and hostile Africans, still stands.

With the opening of European plantations in the New World during the 1500s, which suddenly expanded the demand for slaves in the Americas, slaves soon overshadowed gold as the principal export of the area. Indeed, the west coast of Africa became the principal source of slaves for the New World. The seemingly insatiable market and the substantial profits to be gained from the slave trade attracted adventurers from all over Europe. Much of the conflict that arose among European groups on the coast and among competing African kingdoms was the result of rivalry for control of this trade.

The Portuguese position on the Gold Coast remained secure for almost a century. During that time, Lisbon leased the right to establish trading posts to individuals or companies that sought to align themselves with the local chiefs and to exchange trade goods both for rights to conduct commerce and for slaves provided by the chiefs. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, adventurers—first Dutch, and later English, Danish, and Swedish—were granted licenses by their governments to trade overseas. On the Gold Coast, these European competitors built fortified trading stations and challenged the Portuguese. Sometimes they were also drawn into conflicts with local inhabitants as Europeans developed commercial alliances with local chiefs.

The principal early struggle was between the Dutch and the Portuguese. With the loss of Elmina in 1642 to the Dutch, the Portuguese left the Gold Coast permanently. The next 150 years saw kaleidoscopic change and uncertainty, marked by local conflicts and diplomatic maneuvers, during which various



Source: Based on information from Daryll Forde and P. M. Kaberry, eds., *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1967, 208; and Ivor G. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1975, 19.

Figure 2. Asante Expansion and Major European Fortresses in the Eighteenth Century

European powers struggled to establish or to maintain a position of dominance in the profitable trade of the Gold Coast littoral. Forts were built, abandoned, attacked, captured, sold,

and exchanged, and many sites were selected at one time or another for fortified positions by contending European nations.

Both the Dutch and the British formed companies to advance their African ventures and to protect their coastal establishments. The Dutch West India Company operated throughout most of the eighteenth century. The British African Company of Merchants, founded in 1750, was the successor to several earlier organizations of this type. These enterprises built and manned new installations as the companies pursued their trading activities and defended their respective jurisdictions with varying degrees of government backing. There were short-lived ventures by the Swedes and the Prussians. The Danes remained until 1850, when they withdrew from the Gold Coast. The British gained possession of all Dutch coastal forts by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, thus making them the dominant European power on the Gold Coast.

During the heyday of early European competition, slavery was an accepted social institution, and the slave trade overshadowed all other commercial activities on the West African coast. To be sure, slavery and slave trading were already firmly entrenched in many African societies before their contact with Europe. In most situations, men as well as women captured in local warfare became slaves. In general, however, slaves in African communities were often treated as junior members of the society with specific rights, and many were ultimately absorbed into their masters' families as full members. Given traditional methods of agricultural production in Africa, slavery there was quite different from that which existed in the commercial plantation environments of the New World.

Another aspect of the impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on Africa concerns the role of African chiefs, Muslim traders, and merchant princes in the trade. Although there is no doubt that local rulers in West Africa engaged in slaving and received certain advantages from it, some scholars have challenged the premise that traditional chiefs in the vicinity of the Gold Coast engaged in wars of expansion for the sole purpose of acquiring slaves for the export market. In the case of Asante, for example, rulers of that kingdom are known to have supplied slaves to both Muslim traders in the north and to Europeans on the coast. Even so, the Asante waged war for purposes other than simply to secure slaves. They also fought to pacify territories

that in theory were under Asante control, to exact tribute payments from subordinate kingdoms, and to secure access to trade routes—particularly those that connected the interior with the coast.

It is important to mention, however, that the supply of slaves to the Gold Coast was entirely in African hands. Although powerful traditional chiefs, such as the rulers of Asante, Fante, and Ahanta, were known to have engaged in the slave trade, individual African merchants such as John Kabes, John Konny, Thomas Ewusi, and a broker known only as Noi commanded large bands of armed men, many of them slaves, and engaged in various forms of commercial activities with the Europeans on the coast.

The volume of the slave trade in West Africa grew rapidly from its inception around 1500 to its peak in the eighteenth century. Philip Curtin, a leading authority on the African slave trade, estimates that roughly 6.3 million slaves were shipped from West Africa to North America and South America, about 4.5 million of that number between 1701 and 1810. Perhaps 5,000 a year were shipped from the Gold Coast alone. The demographic impact of the slave trade on West Africa was probably substantially greater than the number actually enslaved because a significant number of Africans perished during slaving raids or while in captivity awaiting transshipment. All nations with an interest in West Africa participated in the slave trade. Relations between the Europeans and the local populations were often strained, and distrust led to frequent clashes. Disease caused high losses among the Europeans engaged in the slave trade, but the profits realized from the trade continued to attract them.

The growth of anti-slavery sentiment among Europeans made slow progress against vested African and European interests that were reaping profits from the traffic. Although individual clergymen condemned the slave trade as early as the seventeenth century, major Christian denominations did little to further early efforts at abolition. The Quakers, however, publicly declared themselves against slavery as early as 1727. Later in the century, the Danes stopped trading in slaves; Sweden and the Netherlands soon followed.

The importation of slaves into the United States was outlawed in 1807. In the same year, Britain used its naval power and its diplomatic muscle to outlaw trade in slaves by its citizens and to begin a campaign to stop the international trade in

slaves. These efforts, however, were not successful until the 1860s because of the continued demand for plantation labor in the New World.

Because it took decades to end the trade in slaves, some historians doubt that the humanitarian impulse inspired the abolitionist movement. According to historian Walter Rodney, for example, Europe abolished the trans-Atlantic slave trade only because its profitability was undermined by the Industrial Revolution. Rodney argues that mass unemployment caused by the new industrial machinery, the need for new raw materials, and European competition for markets for finished goods are the real factors that brought an end to the trade in human cargo and the beginning of competition for colonial territories in Africa. Other scholars, however, disagree with Rodney, arguing that humanitarian concerns as well as social and economic factors were instrumental in ending the African slave trade.

### **Britain and the Gold Coast: The Early Years**

By the early nineteenth century, the British, through conquest or purchase, had become masters of most of the forts along the coast. Two major factors laid the foundations of British rule and the eventual establishment of a colony on the Gold Coast: British reaction to the Asante wars and the resulting instability and disruption of trade, and Britain's increasing preoccupation with the suppression and elimination of the slave trade.

During most of the nineteenth century, Asante, the most powerful state of the Akan interior, sought to expand its rule and to promote and protect its trade. The first Asante invasion of the coastal regions took place in 1807; the Asante moved south again in 1811 and in 1814. These invasions, though not decisive, disrupted trade in such products as gold, timber, and palm oil, and threatened the security of the European forts. Local British, Dutch, and Danish authorities were all forced to come to terms with Asante, and in 1817 the African Company of Merchants signed a treaty of friendship that recognized Asante claims to sovereignty over large areas of the coast and its peoples.

The coastal people, primarily some of the Fante and the inhabitants of the new town of Accra, who were chiefly Ga, came to rely on British protection against Asante incursions, but the ability of the merchant companies to provide this security was limited. The British Crown dissolved the company in

1821, giving authority over British forts on the Gold Coast to Governor Charles MacCarthy, governor of Sierra Leone. The British forts and Sierra Leone remained under common administration for the first half of the century. MacCarthy's mandate was to impose peace and to end the slave trade. He sought to do this by encouraging the coastal peoples to oppose Kumasi rule and by closing the great roads to the coast. Incidents and sporadic warfare continued, however. MacCarthy was killed, and most of his force was wiped out in a battle with Asante forces in 1824. An Asante invasion of the coast in 1826 was defeated, nonetheless, by British and local forces, including the Fante and the people of Accra.

When the British government allowed control of the Gold Coast settlements to revert to the British African Company of Merchants in the late 1820s, relations with Asante were still problematic. From the Asante point of view, the British had failed to control the activities of their local coastal allies. Had this been done, Asante might not have found it necessary to attempt to impose peace on the coastal peoples. MacCarthy's encouragement of coastal opposition to Asante and the subsequent 1824 British military attack further indicated to Asante authorities that the Europeans, especially the British, did not respect Asante.

In 1830 a London committee of merchants chose Captain George Maclean to become president of a local council of merchants. Although his formal jurisdiction was limited, Maclean's achievements were substantial; for example, a peace treaty was arranged with Asante in 1831. Maclean also supervised the coastal people by holding regular court in Cape Coast, where he punished those found guilty of disturbing the peace. Between 1830 and 1843, while Maclean was in charge of affairs on the Gold Coast, no confrontations occurred with Asante, and the volume of trade reportedly increased threefold. Maclean's exercise of limited judicial power on the coast was so effective that a parliamentary committee recommended that the British government permanently administer its settlements and negotiate treaties with the coastal chiefs that would define Britain's relations with them. The government did so in 1843, the same year crown government was reinstated. Commander H. Worsley Hill was appointed first governor of the Gold Coast. Under Maclean's administration, several coastal tribes had submitted voluntarily to British protection. Hill proceeded to define the conditions and responsibilities of his jurisdiction

over the protected areas. He negotiated a special treaty with a number of Fante and other local chiefs that became known as the Bond of 1844. This document obliged local leaders to submit serious crimes, such as murder and robbery, to British jurisdiction and laid the legal foundation for subsequent British colonization of the coastal area.

Additional coastal states as well as other states farther inland eventually signed the Bond, and British influence was accepted, strengthened, and expanded. Under the terms of the 1844 arrangement, the British gave the impression that they would protect the coastal areas; thus, an informal protectorate came into being. As responsibilities for defending local allies and managing the affairs of the coastal protectorate increased, the administration of the Gold Coast was separated from that of Sierra Leone in 1850.

At about the same time, growing acceptance of the advantages offered by the British presence led to the initiation of another important step. In April 1852, local chiefs and elders met at Cape Coast to consult with the governor on means of raising revenue. With the governor's approval, the council of chiefs constituted itself as a legislative assembly. In approving its resolutions, the governor indicated that the assembly of chiefs should become a permanent fixture of the protectorate's constitutional machinery, but the assembly was given no specific constitutional authority to pass laws or to levy taxes without the consent of the people.

In 1872 British influence over the Gold Coast increased further when Britain purchased Elmina Castle, the last of the Dutch forts along the coast. The Asante, who for years had considered the Dutch at Elmina as their allies, thereby lost their last trade outlet to the sea. To prevent this loss and to ensure that revenue received from that post continued, the Asante staged their last invasion of the coast in 1873. After early successes, they finally came up against well-trained British forces who compelled them to retreat beyond the Pra River. Later attempts to negotiate a settlement of the conflict with the British were rejected by the commander of their forces, Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley. To settle the Asante problem permanently, the British invaded Asante with a sizable military force. The attack, which was launched in January 1874 by 2,500 British soldiers and large numbers of African auxiliaries, resulted in the occupation and burning of Kumasi, the Asante capital.

The subsequent peace treaty required the Asante to renounce any claim to many southern territories. The Asante also had to keep the road to Kumasi open to trade. From this point on, Asante power steadily declined. The confederation slowly disintegrated as subject territories broke away and as protected regions defected to British rule. The warrior spirit of the nation was not entirely subdued, however, and enforcement of the treaty led to recurring difficulties and outbreaks of fighting. In 1896 the British dispatched another expedition that again occupied Kumasi and that forced Asante to become a protectorate of the British Crown. The position of *asantehene* was abolished, and the incumbent was exiled.

The core of the Asante federation accepted these terms grudgingly. In 1900 the Asante rebelled again but were defeated the next year, and in 1902 the British proclaimed Asante a colony under the jurisdiction of the governor of the Gold Coast. The annexation was made with misgivings and recriminations on both sides. With Asante subdued and annexed, British colonization of the region became a reality.

## **The Colonial Era: British Rule of the Gold Coast**

Military confrontations between Asante and the Fante contributed to the growth of British influence on the Gold Coast. It was concern about Asante activities on the coast that had compelled the Fante states to sign the Bond of 1844. In theory, the bond allowed the British quite limited judicial powers—the trying of murder and robbery cases only. Also, the British could not acquire further judicial rights without the consent of the kings, chiefs, and people of the protectorate. In practice, however, British efforts to usurp more and more judicial authority were so successful that in the 1850s they considered establishing European courts in place of traditional African ones.

As a result of the exercise of ever-expanding judicial powers on the coast and also to ensure that the coastal peoples remained firmly under control, the British, following their defeat of Asante in 1874, proclaimed the former coastal protectorate a crown colony. The Gold Coast Colony, established on July 24, 1874, comprised the coastal areas and extended inland as far as the ill-defined borders of Asante.

The coastal peoples did not greet this move with enthusiasm. They were not consulted about this annexation, which arbitrarily set aside the Bond of 1844 and treated its signatories like conquered territories. The British, however, made no claim to

any rights to the land, a circumstance that probably explains the absence of popular resistance. Shortly after declaring the coastal area a colony, the British moved the colonial capital from Cape Coast to the former Danish castle at Christiansborg in Accra.

The British sphere of influence was eventually extended to include Asante. Following the defeat of Asante in 1896, the British proclaimed a protectorate over the kingdom. Once the *asantehene* and his council had been exiled, the British appointed a resident commissioner to Asante, who was given both civil and criminal jurisdiction over the territories. Each Asante state was administered from Kumasi as a separate entity and was ultimately responsible to the governor of the Gold Coast. As noted above, Asante became a colony following its final defeat in 1901.

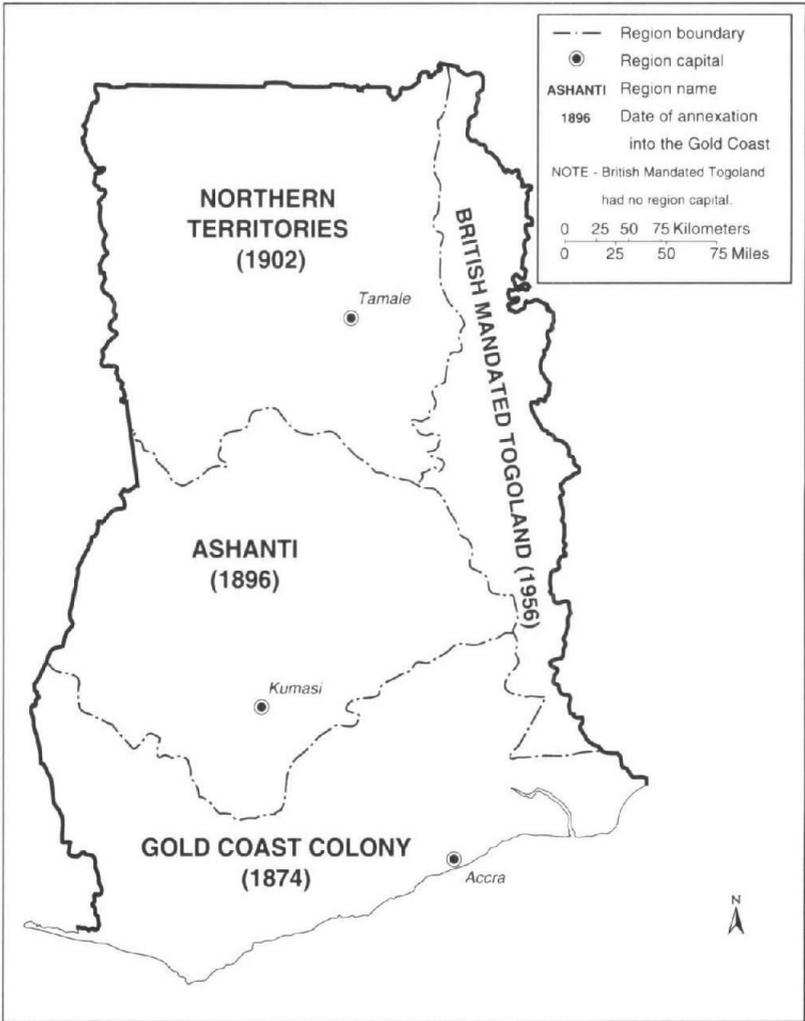
In the meantime, the British became interested in the broad areas north of Asante, known generally as the Northern Territories. This interest was prompted primarily by the need to forestall the French and the Germans, who had been making rapid advances in the surrounding areas. British officials had first penetrated the area in the 1880s, and after 1896 protection was extended to northern areas whose trade with the coast had been controlled by Asante. In 1898 and 1899, European colonial powers amicably demarcated the boundaries between the Northern Territories and the surrounding French and German colonies. The Northern Territories were proclaimed a British protectorate in 1902.

Like the Asante protectorate, the Northern Territories were placed under the authority of a resident commissioner who was responsible to the governor of the Gold Coast. The governor ruled both Asante and the Northern Territories by proclamations until 1946.

With the north under British control, the three territories of the Gold Coast—the Colony (the coastal regions), Asante, and the Northern Territories—became, for all practical purposes, a single political unit, or crown colony, known as "the dependency" or simply as the Gold Coast. The borders of present-day Ghana were realized in May 1956 when the people of the Volta region, known as British Mandated Togoland, voted in a plebiscite to become part of modern Ghana (see fig. 3).

## **Colonial Administration**

Beginning in 1850, the coastal regions increasingly came



Source: Based on information from William Ernest Ward, *A History of Ghana*, London, 1958, 24.

Figure 3. Administrative Divisions of the Gold Coast, mid-1950s

under control of the governor of the British fortresses, who was assisted by the Executive Council and the Legislative Council. The Executive Council was a small advisory body of European officials that recommended laws and voted taxes, subject to the governor's approval. The Legislative Council included the members of the Executive Council and unofficial members initially chosen from British commercial interests. After 1900 three chiefs and three other Africans were added to the Legis-

lative Council, these being chosen from the Europeanized communities of Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi. The inclusion of Africans from Asante and the Northern Territories did not take place until much later. Prior to 1925, all members of the Legislative Council were appointed by the governor. Official members always outnumbered unofficial members.

The gradual emergence of centralized colonial government brought about unified control over local services, although the actual administration of these services was still delegated to local authorities. Specific duties and responsibilities came to be clearly delineated, and the role of traditional states in local administration was also clarified.

The structure of local government had its roots in traditional patterns of government. Village councils of chiefs and elders were almost exclusively responsible for the immediate needs of individual localities, including traditional law and order and the general welfare. The councils, however, ruled by consent rather than by right. Chiefs were chosen by the ruling class of the society; a traditional leader continued to rule not only because he was the choice of what may be termed the nobility, but also because he was accepted by his people. The unseating or destooling of a chief by tribal elders was a fairly common practice if the chief failed to meet the desires or expectations of the community (see *Traditional Patterns of Social Relations*, ch. 2).

Traditional chiefs figured prominently in the system of indirect rule adopted by British authorities to administer their colonies in Africa. According to Frederick Lugard, architect of the policy, indirect rule was cost effective because it reduced the number of European officials in the field. By allowing local rulers to exercise direct administrative control over their people, opposition to European rule from the local population would be minimized. The chiefs, however, were to take instructions from their European supervisors. The plan, according to Lugard, had the further advantage of civilizing the natives because it exposed traditional rulers to the benefits of European political organization and values. This "civilizing" process notwithstanding, indirect rule had the ultimate advantage of guaranteeing the maintenance of law and order.

The application of indirect rule in the Gold Coast became essential, especially after Asante and the Northern Territories were brought under British rule. Before the effective colonization of these territories, the intention of the British was to use

both force and agreements to control chiefs in Asante and the north. Once indirect rule was implemented, the chiefs became responsible to the colonial authorities who supported them. In many respects, therefore, the power of each chief was greatly enhanced. Although Lugard pointed to the civilizing influence of indirect rule, critics of the policy argued that the element of popular participation was removed from the traditional political system. Despite the theoretical argument in favor of decentralization, indirect rule in practice caused chiefs to look to Accra (the capital) rather than to their people for all decisions.

Many chiefs and elders came to regard themselves as a ruling aristocracy. Their councils were generally led by government commissioners, who often rewarded the chiefs with honors, decorations, and knighthood. Indirect rule tended to preserve traditional forms and sources of power, however, and it failed to provide meaningful opportunities for the growing number of educated young men anxious to find a niche in their country's development. Other groups were dissatisfied because there was not sufficient cooperation between the councils and the central government and because some felt that the local authorities were too dominated by the British district commissioners.

In 1925 provincial councils of chiefs were established in all three territories of the colony, partly to give the chiefs a colony-wide function. This move was followed in 1927 by the promulgation of the Native Administration Ordinance, which replaced an 1883 arrangement that had placed chiefs in the Gold Coast Colony under British supervision. The purpose was to clarify and to regulate the powers and areas of jurisdiction of chiefs and councils. Councils were given specific responsibilities over disputed elections and the unseating of chiefs; the procedure for the election of chiefs was set forth; and judicial powers were defined and delegated. Councils were entrusted with the role of defining customary law in their areas (the government had to approve their decisions), and the provincial councils were empowered to become tribunals to decide matters of customary law when the dispute lay between chiefs in different hierarchies. Until 1939, when the Native Treasuries Ordinance was passed, however, there was no provision for local budgets. In 1935 the Native Authorities Ordinance combined the central colonial government and the local authorities into a single governing system. New native authorities, appointed by the governor, were given wide powers of local government under the

supervision of the central government's provincial commissioners, who assured that their policies would be those of the central government.

The provincial councils and moves to strengthen them were not popular. Even by British standards, the chiefs were not given enough power to be effective instruments of indirect rule. Some Ghanaians believed that the reforms, by increasing the power of the chiefs at the expense of local initiative, permitted the colonial government to avoid movement toward any form of popular participation in the colony's government.

## **Economic and Social Development**

The years of British administration of the Gold Coast during the twentieth century were an era of significant progress in social, economic, and educational development. Transportation, for example, was greatly improved. The Sekondi-Tarkwa railroad, begun in 1898, was extended until it connected most of the important commercial centers of the south, and by 1937, there were 9,700 kilometers of roads. Telecommunication and postal services were initiated as well.

New crops were also introduced and gained widespread acceptance. Cacao trees, introduced in 1878, brought the first cash crop to the farmers of the interior; cocoa became the mainstay of the nation's economy in the 1920s when disease wiped out Brazil's trees. The production of cocoa was largely in the hands of Africans. The Cocoa Marketing Board was created in 1947 to assist farmers and to stabilize the production and sale of their crop. By the end of that decade, the Gold Coast was supplying more than half of the world's cocoa.

The colony's earnings increased further from the export of timber and gold. Gold, which initially brought Europeans to the Gold Coast, remained in the hands of Africans until the 1890s. Traditional techniques of panning and shaft mining, however, yielded only limited output. The development of modern modes of extracting minerals made gold mining an exclusively foreign-run enterprise. For example, Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, which was organized in 1897, gained a concession of about 160 square kilometers in which to prospect commercially for gold. Although certain tribal authorities profited greatly from the granting of mining concessions, it was the European mining companies and the colonial government that accumulated much of the wealth. Revenue from export of the colony's natural resources financed internal improvements

in infrastructure and social services. The foundation of an educational system more advanced than any other in West Africa also resulted from mineral export revenue.

Many of the economic and social improvements in the Gold Coast in the early part of the twentieth century have been attributed to Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, governor from 1919 to 1927. Born in Toronto, Canada, Guggisberg joined the British army in 1889. During the first decade of the twentieth century, he worked as a surveyor in the British colonies of the Gold Coast and Nigeria, and later, during World War I, he served in France.

At the beginning of his governorship of the Gold Coast, Guggisberg presented a ten-year development program to the Legislative Council. He suggested first the improvement of transportation. Then, in order of priority, his prescribed improvements included water supply, drainage, hydroelectric projects, public buildings, town improvements, schools, hospitals, prisons, communication lines, and other services. Guggisberg also set a goal of filling half of the colony's technical positions with Africans as soon as they could be trained. His program has been described as the most ambitious ever proposed in West Africa up to that time. Another of the governor's programs led to the development of an artificial harbor at Takoradi, which then became Ghana's first port. Achimota College, which developed into one of the nation's finest secondary schools, was also a Guggisberg idea.

During the colonial years, the country's educational institutions improved markedly. From beginnings in missionary schools, the early part of the twentieth century saw significant advances in many fields, and, although the missions continued to participate, the government steadily increased its interest and support. In 1909 the government established a technical school and a teachers' training college at Accra; several other secondary schools were set up by the missions. The government steadily increased its financial backing for the growing number of both state and mission schools. In 1948 the country opened its first center of higher learning, the University College. It was through British-style education that a new Ghanaian elite gained the means and the desire to strive for independence.

The colony assisted Britain in both World War I and World War II. From 1914 to 1918, the Gold Coast Regiment served with distinction in battles against German forces in Cameroon



*Asantehene Otumfuo Nana Opoku Ware II sitting in state to receive  
homage from his subjects*

*Courtesy Embassy of Ghana, Washington*

*The paramount chief of Nakong, Kasena people, far northern Ghana*

*Courtesy life in general (Brook, Rose, and Cooper Le Van)*

and in the long East Africa campaign. In World War II, troops from the Gold Coast emerged with even greater prestige after outstanding service in such places as Ethiopia and Burma. In the ensuing years, however, postwar problems of inflation and instability severely hampered readjustment for returning veterans, who were in the forefront of growing discontent and unrest. Their war service and veterans' associations had broadened their horizons, making it difficult for them to return to the humble and circumscribed positions set aside for Africans by the colonial authorities.

## **The Growth of Nationalism and the End of Colonial Rule**

As the country developed economically, the focus of government power gradually shifted from the hands of the governor and his officials into those of Ghanaians. The changes resulted from the gradual development of a strong spirit of nationalism and were to result eventually in independence. The development of national consciousness accelerated quickly after World War II, when, in addition to ex-servicemen, a substantial group of urban African workers and traders emerged to lend mass support to the aspirations of a small educated minority. Once the movement had begun, events moved rapidly—not always fast enough to satisfy the nationalist leaders, but still at a pace that surprised not only the colonial government but also many of the more conservative Africans.

### **Early Manifestations of Nationalism**

As early as the latter part of the nineteenth century, a growing number of educated Africans found an arbitrary political system that placed almost all power in the hands of the governor through his appointment of council members increasingly unacceptable. In the 1890s, some members of the educated coastal elite organized themselves into the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society to protest a land bill that threatened traditional land tenure. This protest helped lay the foundation for political action that would ultimately lead to independence. In 1920 one of the African members of the Legislative Council, Joseph E. Casely-Hayford, convened the National Congress of British West Africa, which sent a delegation to London to urge the Colonial Office to consider the principle of elected representation. The group, which claimed to speak for all British

West African colonies, represented the first expression of political solidarity between intellectuals and nationalists of the area. Even though the delegation was not received in London (on the grounds that it represented only the interests of a small group of urbanized Africans), its actions aroused considerable support among the African elite at home.

Notwithstanding their call for elected representation as opposed to a system whereby the governor appointed council members, these nationalists insisted that they were loyal to the British Crown and that they merely sought an extension of British political and social practices to Africans. Notable leaders included Africanus Horton, Jr., J.M. Sarbah, and S.R.B. Attah-Ahoma. Such men gave the nationalist movement a distinctly elitist flavor that was to last until the late 1940s.

The constitution of 1925, promulgated by Guggisberg, created provincial councils of paramount chiefs for all but the northern provinces of the colony. These councils in turn elected six chiefs as unofficial members of the Legislative Council. Although the new constitution appeared to recognize African sentiments, Guggisberg was concerned primarily with protecting British interests. For example, he provided Africans with a limited voice in the central government; yet, by limiting nominations to chiefs, he drove a wedge between chiefs and their educated subjects. The intellectuals believed that the chiefs, in return for British support, had allowed the provincial councils to fall completely under control of the government. By the mid-1930s, however, a gradual rapprochement between chiefs and intellectuals had begun.

Agitation for more adequate representation continued. Newspapers owned and managed by Africans played a major part in provoking this discontent—six were being published in the 1930s. As a result of the call for broader representation, two more unofficial African members were added to the Executive Council in 1943. Changes in the Legislative Council, however, had to await a different political climate in London, which came about only with the postwar election of a British Labour Party government.

The new Gold Coast constitution of 1946 (also known as the Burns constitution after the governor of the time) was a bold document. For the first time, the concept of an official majority was abandoned. The Legislative Council was now composed of six ex-officio members, six nominated members, and eighteen elected members. The 1946 constitution also admitted repre-

representatives from Asante into the council for the first time. Even with a Labour Party government in power, however, the British continued to view the colonies as a source of raw materials that were needed to strengthen their crippled economy. Change that would place real power in African hands was not a priority among British leaders until after rioting and looting in Accra and other towns and cities in early 1948 over issues of pensions for ex-servicemen, the dominant role of foreigners in the economy, the shortage of housing, and other economic and political grievances.

With elected members in a decisive majority, Ghana had reached a level of political maturity unequalled anywhere in colonial Africa. The constitution did not, however, grant full self-government. Executive power remained in the hands of the governor, to whom the Legislative Council was responsible. Hence, the constitution, although greeted with enthusiasm as a significant milestone, soon encountered trouble. World War II had just ended, and many Gold Coast veterans who had served in British overseas expeditions returned to a country beset with shortages, inflation, unemployment, and black-market practices. These veterans, along with discontented urban elements, formed a nucleus of malcontents ripe for disruptive action. They were now joined by farmers, who resented drastic governmental measures that mandated the cutting down of diseased cacao trees in order to control an epidemic, and by many others who were unhappy that the end of the war had not been followed by economic improvements.

### **The Politics of the Independence Movements**

Although political organizations had existed in the British colony, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) was the first nationalist movement with the aim of self-government "in the shortest possible time." Founded in August 1947 by educated Africans such as J.B. Danquah, A.G. Grant, R.A. Awoonor-Williams, Edward Akufo Addo (all lawyers except for Grant, who was a wealthy businessman), and others, the leadership of the organization called for the replacement of chiefs on the Legislative Council with educated persons. For these political leaders, traditional governance, exercised largely via indirect rule, was identified with colonial interests and the past. They believed that it was their responsibility to lead their country into a new age. They also demanded that, given their education, the colonial administration should respect them and

accord them positions of responsibility. As one writer on the period reported, "The symbols of progress, science, freedom, youth, all became cues which the new leadership evoked and reinforced." In particular, the UGCC leadership criticized the government for its failure to solve the problems of unemployment, inflation, and the disturbances that had come to characterize the society at the end of the war.

Their opposition to the colonial administration notwithstanding, UGCC members were conservative in the sense that their leadership did not seek drastic or revolutionary change. This was probably a result of their training in the British way of doing things. The gentlemanly manner in which politics were then conducted was to change after Kwame Nkrumah created his Convention People's Party (CPP) in June 1949.

Nkrumah was born at Nkroful in the Nzema area and educated in Catholic schools at Half Assini and Achimota. He received further training in the United States at Lincoln University and at the University of Pennsylvania. Later, in London, Nkrumah became active in the West African Students' Union and the Pan-African Congress. He was one of the few Africans who participated in the Manchester Congress of 1945 of the Pan-Africanist movement. During his time in Britain, Nkrumah came to know such outspoken anti-colonialists and intellectuals as the West Indian George Padmore and the African-American W.E.B. Du Bois. In 1947, when the UGCC was created in the Gold Coast to oppose colonial rule, Nkrumah was invited from London to become the movement's general secretary.

Nkrumah's tenure with the UGCC was a stormy one. In March 1948, he was arrested and detained with other leaders of the UGCC for political activism. Later, after the other members of the UGCC were invited to make recommendations to the Coussey Committee, which was advising the governor on the path to independence, Nkrumah broke with the UGCC and founded the CPP. Unlike the UGCC, which called for self-government "in the shortest possible time," Nkrumah and the CPP asked for "self-government now." The party leadership, made up of Nkrumah, Kojo Botsio, Komla A. Gbedemah, and a group of mostly young political professionals known as the "Verandah Boys," identified itself more with ordinary working people than with the UGCC and its intelligentsia.

Nkrumah's style and the promises he made appealed directly to the majority of workers, farmers, and youths who heard him; he seemed to be the national leader on whom they could focus

their hopes. He also won the support of influential market women, who, through their domination of small-scale trade, served as effective channels of communication at the local level.

The majority of the politicized population, stirred in the postwar years by outspoken newspapers, was separated from both the tribal chiefs and the Anglophile elite nearly as much as from the British by economic, social, and educational factors. This majority consisted primarily of ex-servicemen, literate persons who had some primary schooling, journalists, and elementary school teachers, all of whom had developed a taste for populist conceptions of democracy. A growing number of uneducated but urbanized industrial workers also formed part of the support group. Nkrumah was able to appeal to them on their own terms. By June 1949, when the CPP was formed with the avowed purpose of seeking immediate self-governance, Nkrumah had a mass following.

The constitution of 1951 resulted from the report of the Coussey Committee, created because of disturbances in Accra and other cities in 1948. In addition to giving the Executive Council a large majority of African ministers, it created a Legislative Assembly, half the elected members of which were to come from the towns and rural districts and half from the traditional councils, including, for the first time, the Northern Territories. Although it was an enormous step forward, the new constitution still fell far short of the CPP's call for full self-government. Executive power remained in British hands, and the legislature was tailored to permit control by traditionalist interests.

With increasing popular backing, the CPP in early 1950 initiated a campaign of "positive action," intended to instigate widespread strikes and nonviolent resistance. When some violent disorders occurred, Nkrumah, along with his principal lieutenants, was promptly arrested and imprisoned for sedition. But this merely increased his prestige as leader and hero of the cause and gave him the status of martyr. In February 1951, the first elections were held for the Legislative Assembly under the new constitution. Nkrumah, still in jail, won a seat, and the CPP won an impressive victory with a two-thirds majority of the 104 seats.

The governor, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, released Nkrumah and invited him to form a government as "leader of government business," a position similar to that of prime minister.

Nkrumah accepted. A major milestone had been passed on the road to independence and self-government. Nonetheless, although the CPP agreed to work within the new constitutional order, the structure of government that existed in 1951 was certainly not what the CPP preferred. The ministries of defense, external affairs, finance, and justice were still controlled by British officials who were not responsible to the legislature. Also, by providing for a sizable representation of traditional tribal chiefs in the Legislative Assembly, the constitution accentuated the cleavage between the modern political leaders and the traditional authorities of the councils of chiefs.

The start of Nkrumah's first term as "leader of government business" was marked by cordiality and cooperation with the British governor. During the next few years, the government was gradually transformed into a full parliamentary system. The changes were opposed by the more traditionalist African elements, particularly in Asante and the Northern Territories. This opposition, however, proved ineffective in the face of continuing and growing popular support for a single overriding concept—*independence at an early date.*

In 1952 the position of prime minister was created and the Executive Council became the cabinet. The prime minister was made responsible to the Legislative Assembly, which duly elected Nkrumah prime minister. The constitution of 1954 ended the election of assembly members by the tribal councils. The Legislative Assembly increased in size, and all members were chosen by direct election from equal, single-member constituencies. Only defense and foreign policy remained in the hands of the governor; the elected assembly was given control of virtually all internal affairs of the colony.

The CPP pursued a policy of political centralization, which encountered serious opposition. Shortly after the 1954 election, a new party, the Asante-based National Liberation Movement (NLM), was formed. The NLM advocated a federal form of government, with increased powers for the various regions. NLM leaders criticized the CPP for perceived dictatorial tendencies. The new party worked in cooperation with another regionalist group, the Northern People's Party. When these two regional parties walked out of discussions on a new constitution, the CPP feared that London might consider such disunity an indication that the colony was not yet ready for the next phase of self-government.

The British constitutional adviser, however, backed the CPP position. The governor dissolved the Legislative Assembly in order to test popular support for the CPP demand for immediate independence. The crown agreed to grant independence if so requested by a two-thirds majority of the new legislature. New elections were held in July 1956. In keenly contested elections, the CPP won 57 percent of the votes cast, but the fragmentation of the opposition gave the CPP every seat in the south as well as enough seats in Asante, the Northern Territories, and the Trans-Volta Region to hold a two-thirds majority of the 104 seats.

Prior to the July 1956 general elections in the Gold Coast, a plebiscite was conducted under United Nations (UN) auspices to decide the future disposition of British Togoland and French Togoland. The British trusteeship, the western portion of the former German colony, had been linked to the Gold Coast since 1919 and was represented in its parliament. The dominant ethnic group, the Ewe, were divided between the Gold Coast proper and the two Togos. A clear majority of British Togoland inhabitants voted in favor of union with their western neighbors, and the area was absorbed into the Gold Coast. There was, however, vocal opposition to the incorporation from some of the Ewe in southern British Togoland.

## **Independent Ghana**

On August 3, 1956, the newly elected Legislative Assembly passed a motion authorizing the government to request independence within the British Commonwealth. The opposition did not attend the debate, and the vote was unanimous. The British government accepted this motion as clearly representing a reasonable majority. On March 6, 1957, the 113th anniversary of the Bond of 1844, the former British colony of the Gold Coast became the independent state of Ghana. The nation's Legislative Assembly became the National Assembly, and Nkrumah continued as prime minister. According to an independence constitution also drafted in 1957, Queen Elizabeth II was to be represented in the former colony by a governor general, and Sir Arden-Clarke was appointed to that position. This special relationship between the British Crown and Ghana would continue until 1960, when the position of governor general was abolished under terms of a new constitution that declared the nation a republic.



*Ghana's monument to independence, Black Star Square, Accra  
Courtesy James Sanders*

The independence constitution of 1957 provided protection against easy amendment of a number of its clauses. It also granted a voice to chiefs and their tribal councils by providing for the creation of regional assemblies. No bill amending the entrenched clauses of the constitution or affecting the powers of the regional bodies or the privileges of the chiefs could become law except by a two-thirds vote of the National Assembly and by simple majority approval in two-thirds of the regional assemblies. When local CPP supporters gained control of enough regional assemblies, however, the Nkrumah government promptly secured passage of an act removing the special entrenchment protection clause in the constitution, a step that left the National Assembly with the power to effect any constitutional change the CPP deemed necessary.

Among the CPP's earliest acts was the outright abolition of regional assemblies. Another was the dilution of the clauses designed to ensure a nonpolitical and competitive civil service. This action allowed Nkrumah to appoint his followers to positions throughout the upper ranks of public employment. Thereafter, unfettered by constitutional restrictions and with an obedient party majority in the assembly, Nkrumah began his administration of the first independent African country south of the Sahara.

### **Nkrumah, Ghana, and Africa**

Nkrumah has been described by author Peter Omari as a dictator who "made much of elections, when he was aware that they were not really free but rigged in his favor." According to Omari, the CPP administration of Ghana was one that manipulated the constitutional and electoral processes of democracy to justify Nkrumah's agenda. The extent to which the government would pursue that agenda constitutionally was demonstrated early in the administration's life when it succeeded in passing the Deportation Act of 1957, the same year that ethnic, religious, and regional parties were banned. The Deportation Act empowered the governor general and, therefore, subsequent heads of state, to expel persons whose presence in the country was deemed not in the interest of the public good. Although the act was to be applied only to non-Ghanaians, several people to whom it was later applied claimed to be citizens.

The Preventive Detention Act, passed in 1958, gave power to the prime minister to detain certain persons for up to five years without trial. Amended in 1959 and again in 1962, the act was

seen by opponents of the CPP government as a flagrant restriction of individual freedom and human rights. Once it had been granted these legal powers, the CPP administration managed to silence its opponents. J.B. Danquah, a leading member of the UGCC, was detained until he died in prison in 1965. Kofi Abrefa Busia, leader of the opposition United Party (UP), formed by the NLM and other parties in response to Nkrumah's outlawing of so-called separatist parties in 1957, went into exile in London to escape detention, while other UP members still in the country joined the ruling party.

On July 1, 1960, Ghana became a republic, and Nkrumah won the presidential election that year. Shortly thereafter, Nkrumah was proclaimed president for life, and the CPP became the sole party of the state. Using the powers granted him by the party and the constitution, Nkrumah by 1961 had detained an estimated 400 to 2,000 of his opponents. Nkrumah's critics pointed to the rigid hold of the CPP over the nation's political system and to numerous cases of human rights abuses. Others, however, defended Nkrumah's agenda and policies.

Nkrumah discussed his political views in his numerous writings, especially in *Africa Must Unite* (1963) and in *Neo-Colonialism* (1965). These writings show the impact of his stay in Britain in the mid-1940s. The Pan-Africanist movement, which had held one of its annual conferences, attended by Nkrumah, at Manchester in 1945, was influenced by socialist ideologies. The movement sought unity among people of African descent and also improvement in the lives of workers, who, it was alleged, had been exploited by capitalist enterprises in Africa. Western countries with colonial histories were identified as the exploiters. According to the socialists, "oppressed" people ought to identify with the socialist countries and organizations that best represented their interests; however, all the dominant world powers in the immediate post-1945 period, except the Soviet Union and the United States, had colonial ties with Africa. Nkrumah asserted that even the United States, which had never colonized any part of Africa, was in an advantageous position to exploit independent Africa unless preventive efforts were taken.

According to Nkrumah, his government, which represented the first black African nation to win independence, had an important role to play in the struggle against capitalist interests on the continent. As he put it, "The independence of Ghana

would be meaningless unless it was tied to the total liberation of Africa." It was important, then, he said, for Ghanaians to "seek first the political kingdom." Economic benefits associated with independence were to be enjoyed later, proponents of Nkrumah's position argued. But Nkrumah needed strategies to pursue his goals.

On the domestic front, Nkrumah believed that rapid modernization of industries and communications was necessary and that it could be achieved if the workforce were completely Africanized and educated. Even more important, however, Nkrumah believed that this domestic goal could be achieved faster if it were not hindered by reactionary politicians—elites in the opposition parties and traditional chiefs—who might compromise with Western imperialists. From such an ideological position, Nkrumah's supporters justified the Deportation Act of 1957; the Detention Acts of 1958, 1959, and 1962; parliamentary intimidation of CPP opponents; the appointment of Nkrumah as president for life; the recognition of his party as the sole political organization of the state; the creation of the Young Pioneer Movement for the ideological education of the nation's youth; and the party's control of the civil service. Government expenditures on road building projects, mass education of adults and children, and health services, as well as the construction of the Akosombo Dam, were all important if Ghana were to play its leading role in Africa's liberation from colonial and neo-colonial domination.

On the continental level, Nkrumah sought to unite Africa so it could defend its international economic interests and stand up against the political pressures from East and West that were a result of the Cold War. His dream for Africa was a continuation of the Pan-Africanist dream as expressed at the Manchester conference. The initial strategy was to encourage revolutionary political movements in Africa, beginning with a Ghana, Guinea, and Mali union, that would serve as the psychological and political impetus for the formation of a United States of Africa. Thus, when Nkrumah was criticized for paying little attention to Ghana or for wasting national resources in supporting external programs, he reversed the argument and accused his opponents of being short-sighted.

But the heavy financial burdens created by Nkrumah's development policies and Pan-Africanist adventures created new sources of opposition. With the presentation in July 1961 of the country's first austerity budget, Ghana's workers and farmers

became aware of and critical of the cost to them of Nkrumah's programs. Their reaction set the model for the protests over taxes and benefits that were to dominate Ghanaian political crises for the next thirty years.

CPP backbenchers and UP representatives in the National Assembly sharply criticized the government's demand for increased taxes and, particularly, for a forced savings program. Urban workers began a protest strike, the most serious of a number of public outcries against government measures during 1961. Nkrumah's public demands for an end to corruption in the government and the party further undermined popular faith in the national government. A drop in the price paid to cocoa farmers by the government marketing board aroused resentment among a segment of the population that had always been Nkrumah's major opponent.

### **The Growth of Opposition to Nkrumah**

Nkrumah's complete domination of political power had served to isolate lesser leaders, leaving each a real or imagined challenger to the ruler. After opposition parties were crushed, opponents came only from within the CPP hierarchy. Among its members was Tawia Adamafio, an Accra politician. Nkrumah had made him general secretary of the CPP for a brief time. Later, Adamafio was appointed minister of state for presidential affairs, the most important post in the president's staff at Flagstaff House, which gradually became the center for all decision making and much of the real administrative machinery for both the CPP and the government. The other leader with an apparently autonomous base was John Tettegah, leader of the Trade Union Congress. Neither, however, proved to have any power other than that granted to them by the president.

By 1961, however, the young and more radical members of the CPP leadership, led by Adamafio, had gained ascendancy over the original CPP leaders like Gbedemah. After a bomb attempt on Nkrumah's life in August 1962, Adamafio, Ako Adjei (then minister of foreign affairs), and Cofie Crabbe (all members of the CPP) were jailed under the Preventive Detention Act. The CPP newspapers charged them with complicity in the assassination attempt, offering as evidence only the fact that they had all chosen to ride in cars far behind the president's when the bomb was thrown.

For more than a year, the trial of the alleged plotters of the 1962 assassination attempt occupied center stage. The accused

were brought to trial before the three-judge court for state security, headed by the chief justice, Sir Arku Korsah. When the court acquitted the accused, Nkrumah used his constitutional prerogative to dismiss Korsah. Nkrumah then obtained a vote from the parliament that allowed retrial of Adamafo and his associates. A new court, with a jury chosen by Nkrumah, found all the accused guilty and sentenced them to death. These sentences, however, were commuted to twenty years' imprisonment.

In early 1964, in order to prevent future challenges from the judiciary, Nkrumah obtained a constitutional amendment allowing him to dismiss any judge. At the same time, Ghana officially became a single-party state, and an act of parliament ensured that there would be only one candidate for president. Other parties having already been outlawed, no non-CPP candidates came forward to challenge the party slate in the general elections announced for June 1965. Nkrumah had been re-elected president of the country for less than a year when members of the National Liberation Council (NLC) overthrew the CPP government in a military coup on February 24, 1966. At the time, Nkrumah was in China. He took up asylum in Guinea, where he remained until he died in 1972.

## **The Fall of the Nkrumah Regime and Its Aftermath**

Leaders of the 1966 military coup, including army officers Colonel E.K. Kotoka, Major A.A. Afrifa, Lieutenant General (retired) J.A. Ankra, and Police Inspector General J.W.K. Harley, justified their takeover by charging that the CPP administration was abusive and corrupt. They were equally disturbed by Nkrumah's aggressive involvement in African politics and by his belief that Ghanaian troops could be sent anywhere in Africa to fight so-called liberation wars, even though they never did so. Above all, they pointed to the absence of democratic practices in the nation—a situation they claimed had affected the morale of the armed forces. According to Kotoka, the military coup of 1966 was a nationalist one because it liberated the nation from Nkrumah's dictatorship—a declaration that was supported by Alex Quaison-Sackey, Nkrumah's former minister of foreign affairs.

Despite the vast political changes brought about by the overthrow of Nkrumah, many problems remained. For example, the underlying ethnic and regional divisions within society had to be addressed. The apparent spirit of national unity that

seemed to have developed during the Nkrumah years turned out to have resulted in part from his coercive powers as well as from his charisma. As a consequence, successive new leaders faced the problem of forging disparate personal, ethnic, and sectional interests into a real Ghanaian nation. The economic burdens, aggravated by what some described as past extravagance, would cripple each future government's ability to foster the rapid development needed to satisfy even minimal popular demands for a better life. The fear of a resurgence of an overly strong central authority would continue to dominate the constitutional agenda and to pervade the thinking of many educated, politically minded Ghanaians. Others, however, felt that a strong government was essential.

A considerable portion of the population had become convinced that effective, honest government was incompatible with competitive political parties. Many Ghanaians remained committed to nonpolitical leadership for the nation, even in the form of military rule. The problems of the Busia administration, the country's first elected government after Nkrumah's fall, illustrated the problems Ghana would continue to face.

### **The National Liberation Council and the Busia Years, 1966–71**

The leaders of the coup that overthrew Nkrumah immediately opened the country's borders and its prison gates to allow the return from exile or release from preventive detention of all opponents of Nkrumah. The National Liberation Council (NLC), composed of four army officers and four police officers, assumed executive power. It appointed a cabinet of civil servants and promised to restore democratic government as quickly as possible. The ban on the formation of political parties remained in force until late 1968, but activity by individual figures began much earlier with the appointment of a succession of committees composed of civil servants and politicians as the first step in the return to civilian and representative rule.

These moves culminated in the appointment of a representative assembly to draft a constitution for the Second Republic of Ghana. Political party activity was allowed to commence with the opening of the assembly. By election time in August 1969, the first competitive nationwide political contest since 1956, five parties had been organized.

The major contenders were the Progress Party (PP), headed by Kofi A. Busia, and the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL), led by Komla A. Gbedemah. Critics associated these two lead-

ing parties with the political divisions of the early Nkrumah years. The PP found much of its support among the old opponents of Nkrumah's CPP—the educated middle class and traditionalists of Ashanti Region and the North. This link was strengthened by the fact that Busia had headed the NLM and its successor, the UP, before fleeing the country to oppose Nkrumah from exile. Similarly, the NAL was seen as the successor of the CPP's right wing, which Gbedemah had headed until he was ousted by Nkrumah in 1961.

The elections demonstrated an interesting voting pattern. For example, the PP carried all the seats among the Asante and the Brong. All seats in the northern regions of the country were closely contested. In the Volta Region, the PP won some Ewe seats, while the NAL won all seats in the non-Ewe northern section. Overall, the PP gained 59 percent of the popular vote and 74 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. The PP's victories demonstrated some support among nearly all ethnic groups. An estimated 60 percent of the electorate voted.

Immediately after the elections, Gbedemah was barred from taking his seat in the National Assembly by a Supreme Court decision involving those CPP members who had been accused of financial crimes. Gbedemah retired permanently from active participation in politics. The NAL, left without a strong leader, controlled thirty seats; in October 1970, it absorbed the members of three other minor parties in the assembly to form the Justice Party (JP) under the leadership of Joseph Appiah. The JP's combined strength constituted what amounted to a southern bloc with a solid constituency among most of the Ewe and the peoples of the coastal cities.

Busia, the PP leader in both parliament and the nation, became prime minister when the National Assembly met in September. An interim three-member presidential commission, composed of Major Afrifa, Police Inspector General Harley of the NLC, and the chief of the defense staff, Major General A.K. Ocran, served in place of an elected president for the first year and a half of civilian rule. The commission dissolved itself in August 1970. Before stepping down, Afrifa criticized the constitution, particularly provisions that served more as a bar to the rise of a dictator than as a blueprint for an effective, decisive government. The electoral college chose as president Chief Justice Edward Akufo Addo, one of the leading nationalist politicians of the UGCC era and one of the judges dismissed by Nkrumah in 1964.

All attention, however, remained focused on Prime Minister Busia and his government. Much was expected of the Busia administration because its parliamentarians were considered intellectuals and, therefore, more perceptive in their evaluations of what needed to be done. Many Ghanaians hoped that their decisions would be in the general interest of the nation, as compared with those made by the Nkrumah administration, which were judged to satisfy narrow party interests and Nkrumah's personal agenda. The NLC had given assurances that there would be more democracy, more political maturity, and more freedom in Ghana because the politicians allowed to run in the 1969 elections were proponents of Western democracy. In fact, these were the same individuals who had suffered under the old regime and were, therefore, thought to understand the benefits of democracy.

Two early measures initiated by the Busia government were the expulsion of large numbers of noncitizens from the country and a companion measure to limit foreign involvement in small businesses. The moves were aimed at relieving the unemployment created by the country's precarious economic situation (see *Historical Background*, ch. 3). The policies were popular because they forced out of the retail sector of the economy those foreigners, especially Lebanese, Asians, and Nigerians, who were perceived as unfairly monopolizing trade to the disadvantage of Ghanaians. Many other Busia moves, however, were not popular. Busia's decision to introduce a loan program for university students, who had hitherto received free education, was challenged because it was interpreted as introducing a class system into the country's highest institutions of learning. Some observers even saw Busia's devaluation of the national currency and his encouragement of foreign investment in the industrial sector of the economy as conservative ideas that could undermine Ghana's sovereignty.

The opposition JP's basic policies did not differ significantly from those of the Busia administration. Still, the party attempted to stress the importance of the central government rather than that of limited private enterprise in economic development, and it continued to emphasize programs of primary interest to the urban work force. The ruling PP emphasized the need for development in rural areas, both to slow the movement of population to the cities and to redress regional imbalance in levels of development. The JP and a growing number of PP members favored suspension of payment on

some foreign debts of the Nkrumah era. This attitude grew more popular as debt payments became more difficult to meet. Both parties favored the creation of a West African economic community or an economic union with neighboring West African states.

Despite broad popular support garnered at its inception and strong foreign connections, the Busia government fell victim to an army coup within twenty-seven months. Neither ethnic nor class differences played a role in the overthrow of the PP government. The crucial causes were the country's continuing economic difficulties, both those stemming from the high foreign debts incurred by Nkrumah and those resulting from internal problems. The PP government had inherited US\$580 million in medium- and long-term debts, an amount equal to 25 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) of 1969. By 1971 the US\$580 million had been further inflated by US\$72 million in accrued interest payments and US\$296 million in short-term commercial credits. Within the country, an even larger internal debt fueled inflation.

Ghana's economy remained largely dependent upon the often difficult cultivation of and market for cocoa. Cocoa prices had always been volatile, but exports of this tropical crop normally provided about half of the country's foreign currency earnings. Beginning in the 1960s, however, a number of factors combined to limit severely this vital source of national income. These factors included foreign competition (particularly from neighboring Côte d'Ivoire), a lack of understanding of free-market forces (by the government in setting prices paid to farmers), accusations of bureaucratic incompetence in the Cocoa Marketing Board, and the smuggling of crops into Côte d'Ivoire. As a result, Ghana's income from cocoa exports continued to fall dramatically.

Austerity measures imposed by the Busia administration, although wise in the long run, alienated influential farmers, who until then had been PP supporters. These measures were part of Busia's economic structural adjustment efforts to put the country on a sounder financial base. The austerity programs had been recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary). The recovery measures also severely affected the middle class and the salaried work force, both of which faced wage freezes, tax increases, currency devaluations, and rising import prices. These measures precipitated protests from the Trade Union Congress. In response, the gov-



*Kwame Nkrumah, prime  
minister and president,  
1957–66  
Courtesy Embassy of Ghana,  
Washington*



*Colonel Ignatius Kutu  
Acheampong, head of state and  
chairman of the National  
Redemption Council and  
Supreme Military Council,  
1972–78  
Courtesy Embassy of Ghana,  
Washington*

ernment sent the army to occupy the trade union headquarters and to block strike actions—a situation that some perceived as negating the government's claim to be operating democratically.

The army troops and officers upon whom Busia relied for support were themselves affected, both in their personal lives and in the tightening of the defense budget, by these same austerity measures. As the leader of the anti-Busia coup declared on January 13, 1972, even those amenities enjoyed by the army during the Nkrumah regime were no longer available. Knowing that austerity had alienated the officers, the Busia government began to change the leadership of the army's combat elements. This, however, was the last straw. Lieutenant Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong, temporarily commanding the First

Brigade around Accra, led a bloodless coup that ended the Second Republic.

### **The National Redemption Council Years, 1972–79**

Despite its short existence, the Second Republic was significant in that the development problems the nation faced came clearly into focus. These included uneven distribution of investment funds and favoritism toward certain groups and regions. Furthermore, important questions about developmental priorities emerged. For example, was rural development more important than the needs of the urban population? Or, to what extent was the government to incur the cost of university education? And more important, was the public to be drawn into the debate about the nation's future? The impact of the fall of Ghana's Second Republic cast a shadow across the nation's political future because no clear answers to these problems emerged.

According to one writer, the overthrow of the PP government revealed that Ghana was no longer the pace-setter in Africa's search for workable political institutions. Both the radical left and the conservative right had failed. In opposing Nkrumah's one-party state, Busia allegedly argued that socialist rule in Ghana had led to unemployment and poverty for many while party officials grew richer at the expense of the masses. But in justifying the one-party state, Nkrumah pointed to the weaknesses of multiparty parliamentary democracy, a system that delayed decision-making processes and, therefore, the ability to take action to foster development. The fall of both the Nkrumah and the Busia regimes seemed to have confused many with regard to the political direction the nation needed to take. In other words, in the first few years after the Nkrumah administration, Ghanaians were unable to arrive at a consensus on the type of government suited to address their national problems.

It was this situation—the inability of the PP government to satisfy diverse interest groups—that ostensibly gave Acheampong an excuse for the January 13 takeover. Acheampong's National Redemption Council (NRC) claimed that it had to act to remove the ill effects of the currency devaluation of the previous government and thereby, at least in the short run, to improve living conditions for individual Ghanaians. Under the circumstances, the NRC was compelled to take immediate measures. Although committed to the reversal of the fiscal policies

of the PP government, the NRC, by comparison, adopted policies that appeared painless and, therefore, popular. But unlike the coup leaders of the NLC, members of the NRC did not outline any plan for the return of the nation to democratic rule. Some observers accused the NRC of acting simply to rectify their own grievances.

To justify their takeover, coup leaders leveled charges of corruption against Busia and his ministers. In its first years, the NRC drew support from a public pleased by the reversal of Busia's austerity measures. The Ghanaian currency was revalued upward, and two moves were announced to lessen the burden of existing foreign debts: the repudiation of US\$90 million of Nkrumah's debts to British companies, and the unilateral rescheduling of the rest of the country's debts for payment over fifty years. Later, the NRC nationalized all large foreign-owned companies. But these measures, while instantly popular in the streets, did nothing to solve the country's real problems. If anything, they aggravated the problem of capital flow.

Unlike the NLC of 1966, the NRC sought to create a truly military government; hence, in October 1975, the ruling council was reorganized into the Supreme Military Council (SMC), and its membership was restricted to a few senior military officers. The intent was to consolidate the military's hold over government administration and to address occasional disagreements, conflicts, and suspicions within the armed forces, which by now had emerged as the constituency of the military government. Little input from the civilian sector was allowed, and no offers were made to return any part of the government to civilian control during the SMC's first five years in power. SMC members believed that the country's problems were caused by a lack of organization, which could be remedied by applying military organization and thinking. This was the extent of the SMC philosophy. Officers were put in charge of all ministries and state enterprises; junior officers and sergeants were assigned leadership roles down to the local level in every government department and parastatal organization.

During the NRC's early years, these administrative changes led many Ghanaians to hope that the soldiers in command would improve the efficiency of the country's bloated bureaucracies. Acheampong's popularity continued into 1974 as the government successfully negotiated international loan agreements and rescheduled Ghana's debts. The government also provided price supports for basic food imports, while seeking

to encourage Ghanaians to become self-reliant in agriculture and in the production of raw materials. In the Operation Feed Yourself program, all Ghanaians were encouraged to undertake some form of food production, with the goal of eventual food self-sufficiency for the country. The program enjoyed some initial success, but support for it gradually waned.

Whatever limited success the NRC had in these efforts, however, was overridden by other basic economic factors. Industry and transportation suffered greatly as world oil prices rose during and after 1974, and the lack of foreign exchange and credit left the country without fuel. Basic food production continued to decline even as the population grew, largely because of poor price management and urbanization. When world cocoa prices rose again in the late 1970s, Ghana was unable to take advantage of the price rise because of the low productivity of its old orchards. Moreover, because of the low prices paid to cocoa farmers, some growers along the nation's borders smuggled their produce to Togo or Côte d'Ivoire. Disillusionment with the government grew, particularly among the educated. Accusations of personal corruption among the rulers also began to surface.

The reorganization of the NRC into the SMC in 1975 may have been part of a face-saving attempt. Shortly after that time, the government sought to stifle opposition by issuing a decree forbidding the propagation of rumors and by banning a number of independent newspapers and detaining their journalists. Also, armed soldiers broke up student demonstrations, and the government repeatedly closed the universities, which had become important centers of opposition to NRC policies.

Despite these efforts, the SMC by 1977 found itself constrained by mounting nonviolent opposition. To be sure, discussions about the nation's political future and its relationship to the SMC had begun in earnest. Although the various opposition groups (university students, lawyers, and other organized civilian groups) called for a return to civilian constitutional rule, Acheampong and the SMC favored a union government—a mixture of elected civilian and appointed military leaders—but one in which party politics would be abolished. University students and many intellectuals criticized the union government idea, but others, such as Justice Gustav Koranteng-Addow, who chaired the seventeen-member ad hoc committee appointed by the government to work out details of the plan, defended it as the solution to the nation's political problems.

Supporters of the union government idea viewed multiparty political contests as the perpetrators of social tension and community conflict among classes, regions, and ethnic groups. Unionists argued that their plan had the potential to depoliticize public life and to allow the nation to concentrate its energies on economic problems.

A national referendum was held in March 1978 to allow the people to accept or reject the union government concept. A rejection of the union government meant a continuation of military rule. Given this choice, it was surprising that so narrow a margin voted in favor of union government. Opponents of the idea organized demonstrations against the government, arguing that the referendum vote had not been free or fair. The Acheampong government reacted by banning several organizations and by jailing as many as 300 of its opponents.

The agenda for change in the union government referendum called for the drafting of a new constitution by an SMC-appointed commission, the selection of a constituent assembly by November 1978, and general elections in June 1979. The ad hoc committee had recommended a nonparty election, an elected executive president, and a cabinet whose members would be drawn from outside a single-house National Assembly. The military council would then step down, although its members could run for office as individuals.

In July 1978, in a sudden move, the other SMC officers forced Acheampong to resign, replacing him with Lieutenant General Frederick W.K. Akuffo. The SMC apparently acted in response to continuing pressure to find a solution to the country's economic dilemma. Inflation was estimated to be as high as 300 percent that year. There were shortages of basic commodities, and cocoa production fell to half its 1964 peak. The council was also motivated by Acheampong's failure to dampen rising political pressure for changes. Akuffo, the new SMC chairman, promised publicly to hand over political power to a new government to be elected by July 1, 1979.

Despite Akuffo's assurances, opposition to the SMC persisted. The call for the formation of political parties intensified. In an effort to gain support in the face of continuing strikes over economic and political issues, the Akuffo government at length announced that the formation of political parties would be allowed after January 1979. Akuffo also granted amnesty to former members of both Nkrumah's CPP and Busia's PP, as well as to all those convicted of subversion under Acheampong.

The decree lifting the ban on party politics went into effect on January 1, 1979, as planned. The commission that had been working on a new constitution presented an approved draft and adjourned in May. All appeared set for a new attempt at constitutional government in July, when a group of young army officers overthrew the SMC government in June 1979.

## **Ghana and the Rawlings Era**

On May 15, 1979, less than five weeks before constitutional elections were to be held, a group of junior officers led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings attempted a coup. Initially unsuccessful, the coup leaders were jailed and held for court-martial. On June 4, however, sympathetic military officers overthrew the Akuffo regime and released Rawlings and his cohorts from prison fourteen days before the scheduled election. Although the SMC's pledge to return political power to civilian hands addressed the concerns of those who wanted civilian government, the young officers who had staged the June 4 coup insisted that issues critical to the image of the army and important for the stability of national politics had been ignored. Naomi Chazan, a leading analyst of Ghanaian politics, aptly assessed the significance of the 1979 coup in the following statement:

Unlike the initial SMC II [the Akuffo period, 1978–1979] rehabilitation effort which focused on the power elite, this second attempt at reconstruction from a situation of disintegration was propelled by growing alienation. It strove, by reforming the guidelines of public behavior, to define anew the state power structure and to revise its inherent social obligations. . . .

In retrospect the most irreversible outcome of this phase was the systematic eradication of the SMC leadership. . . . [Their] executions signaled not only the termination of the already fallacious myth of the nonviolence of Ghanaian politics, but, more to the point, the deadly serious determination of the new government to wipe the political slate clean.

Rawlings and the young officers formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The armed forces were purged of senior officers accused of corrupting the image of the military. In carrying out its goal, however, the AFRC was caught



Limann's People's National Party (PNP) began the Third Republic with control of only seventy-one of the 140 legislative seats. The opposition Popular Front Party (PFP) won forty-two seats, while twenty-six elective positions were distributed among three lesser parties. The percentage of the electorate that voted had fallen to 40 percent. Unlike the country's previous elected leaders, Limann was a former diplomat and a non-charismatic figure with no personal following. As Limann himself observed, the ruling PNP included people of conflicting ideological orientations. They sometimes disagreed strongly among themselves on national policies. Many observers, therefore, wondered whether the new government was equal to the task confronting the state.

The most immediate threat to the Limann administration, however, was the AFRC, especially those officers who organized themselves into the "June 4 Movement" to monitor the civilian administration. In an effort to keep the AFRC from looking over its shoulder, the government ordered Rawlings and several other army and police officers associated with the AFRC into retirement; nevertheless, Rawlings and his associates remained a latent threat, particularly as the economy continued its decline. The first Limann budget, for fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1981, estimated the Ghanaian inflation rate at 70 percent for that year, with a budget deficit equal to 30 percent of the gross national product (GNP—see Glossary). The Trade Union Congress claimed that its workers were no longer earning enough to pay for food, much less anything else. A rash of strikes, many considered illegal by the government, resulted, each one lowering productivity and therefore national income. In September the government announced that all striking public workers would be dismissed. These factors rapidly eroded the limited support the Limann government enjoyed among civilians and soldiers. The government fell on December 31, 1981, in another Rawlings-led coup.

### **The Second Coming of Rawlings: The First Six Years, 1982–87**

The new government that took power on December 31, 1981, was the eighth in the fifteen years since the fall of Nkrumah. Calling itself the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), its membership included Rawlings as chairman, Brigadier Joseph Nunoo-Mensah (whom Limann had dismissed as army commander), two other officers, and three civilians. Despite its military connections, the PNDC made clear that it

was unlike other soldier-led governments. This was immediately proved by the appointment of fifteen civilians to cabinet positions.

In a radio broadcast on January 5, 1982, Rawlings presented a detailed statement explaining the factors that had necessitated termination of the Third Republic. The PNDC chairman assured the people that he had no intention of imposing himself on Ghanaians. Rather, he "wanted a chance for the people, farmers, workers, soldiers, the rich and the poor, to be part of the decision-making process." He described the two years since the AFRC had handed over power to a civilian government as a period of regression during which political parties attempted to divide the people in order to rule them. The ultimate purpose for the return of Rawlings was, therefore, to "restore human dignity to Ghanaians." In the chairman's words, the dedication of the PNDC to achieving its goals was different from any the country had ever known. It was for that reason that the takeover was not a military coup, but rather a "holy war" that would involve the people in the transformation of the socioeconomic structure of the society. The PNDC also served notice to friends and foes alike that any interference in the PNDC agenda would be "fiercely resisted."

Opposition to the PNDC administration developed nonetheless in different sectors of the political spectrum. The most obvious groups opposing the government were former PNP and PFP members. They argued that the Third Republic had not been given time to prove itself and that the PNDC administration was unconstitutional. Further opposition came from the Ghana Bar Association (GBA), which criticized the government's use of public tribunals in the administration of justice. Members of the Trade Union Congress were also angered when the PNDC ordered them to withdraw demands for increased wages. The National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) went even further, calling on the government to hand over power to the attorney general, who would supervise new elections.

By the end of June 1982, an attempted coup had been discovered, and those implicated had been executed. Many who disagreed with the PNDC administration were driven into exile, where they began organizing their opposition. They accused the government of human rights abuses and political intimidation, which forced the country, especially the press, into a "culture of silence."

Meanwhile, the PNDC was subjected to the influence of contrasting political philosophies and goals. Although the revolutionary leaders agreed on the need for radical change, they differed on the means of achieving it. For example, John Ndebugre, secretary for agriculture in the PNDC government, who was later appointed northern regional secretary (governor), belonged to the radical Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards, an extreme left-wing organization that advocated a Marxist-Leninist course for the PNDC. He was detained and jailed for most of the latter part of the 1980s. Other members of the PNDC, including Kojo Tsikata, P.V. Obeng, and Kwesi Botchwey, were believed to be united only by their determination either to uplift the country from its desperate conditions or to protect themselves from vocal opposition.

In keeping with Rawlings's commitment to populism as a political principle, the PNDC began to form governing coalitions and institutions that would incorporate the populace at large into the machinery of the national government. Workers' Defence Committees (WDCs) People's Defence Committees (PDCs), Citizens' Vetting Committees (CVCs), Regional Defence Committees (RDCs), and National Defence Committees (NDCs) were all created to ensure that those at the bottom of society were given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. These committees were to be involved in community projects and community decisions, and individual members were expected to expose corruption and "anti-social activities." Public tribunals, which were established outside the normal legal system, were also created to try those accused of antigovernment acts. And a four-week workshop aimed at making these cadres morally and intellectually prepared for their part in the revolution was completed at the University of Ghana, Legon, in July and August 1983.

Various opposition groups criticized the PDCs and WDCs, however. The aggressiveness of certain WDCs, it was argued, interfered with management's ability to make the bold decisions needed for the recovery of the national economy. In response to such criticisms, the PNDC announced on December 1, 1984, the dissolution of all PDCs, WDCs, and NDCs, and their replacement with Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs). With regard to public boards and statutory corporations, excluding banks and financial institutions, Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs) that acted as advisory bodies to managing directors were created.

The public tribunals, however, despite their characterization as undemocratic by the GBA, were maintained. Although the tribunals had been established in 1982, the law providing for the creation of a National Public Tribunal to hear and determine appeals from, and decisions of, regional public tribunals was not passed until August 1984. Section 3 and Section 10 of the PNDC Establishment Proclamation limited public tribunals to cases of a political and an economic nature. The limitations placed on public tribunals by the government in 1984 may have been an attempt by the administration to redress certain weaknesses. The tribunals, however, were not abolished; rather, they were defended as "fundamental to a good legal system" that needed to be maintained in response to "growing legal consciousness on the part of the people."

At the time when the foundations of these sociopolitical institutions were being laid, the PNDC was also engaged in a debate about how to finance the reconstruction of the national economy. The country had indeed suffered from what some described as the excessive and unwise, if not foolish, expenditures of the Nkrumah regime. The degree of decline under the NRC and the SMC had also been devastating. By December 1981, when the PNDC came to power, the inflation rate topped 200 percent, while real GDP had declined by 3 percent per annum for seven years. Not only cocoa production but even diamonds and timber exports had dropped dramatically. Gold production had also fallen to half its preindependence level.

Ghana's sorry economic condition, according to the PNDC, had resulted in part from the absence of good political leadership. In fact, as early as the AFRC administration in 1979, Rawlings and his associates had accused three former military leaders (generals Afrifa, Acheampong, and Akuffo) of corruption and greed and of thereby contributing to the national crisis and had executed them on the basis of this accusation. In other words, the AFRC in 1979 attributed the national crisis to internal, primarily political, causes. The overthrow of the Limann administration by the PNDC in 1981 was an attempt to prevent another inept administration from aggravating an already bad economic situation. By implication, the way to resolve some of the problems was to stabilize the political situation and to improve the economic conditions of the nation radically.

At the end of its first year in power, the PNDC announced a four-year program of economic austerity and sacrifice that was

to be the first phase of an Economic Recovery Program (ERP). If the economy were to improve significantly, there was need for a large injection of capital—a resource that could only be obtained from international financial institutions of the West. There were those on the PNDC's ideological left, however, who rejected consultation with such agencies because these institutions were blamed in part for the nation's predicament. Precisely because some members of the government also held such views, the PNDC secretary for finance and economic planning, Kwesi Botchwey, felt the need to justify World Bank (see Glossary) assistance to Ghana in 1983:

It would be naive and unrealistic for certain sections of the Ghanaian society to think that the request for economic assistance from the World Bank and its affiliates means a sell-out of the aims and objectives of the Ghanaian revolution to the international community. . . . It does not make sense for the country to become a member of the bank and the IMF and continue to pay its dues only to decline to utilize the resources of these two institutions.

The PNDC recognized that it could not depend on friendly nations such as Libya to address the economic problems of Ghana. The magnitude of the crisis—made worse by widespread bush fires that devastated crop production in 1983–84 and by the return of more than one million Ghanaians who had been expelled from Nigeria in 1983, which had intensified the unemployment situation—called for monetary assistance from institutions with more resources.

Phase One of the ERP began in 1983. Its goal was economic stability. In broad terms, the government wanted to reduce inflation and to create confidence in the nation's ability to recover. By 1987 progress was clearly evident. The rate of inflation had dropped to 20 percent, and between 1983 and 1987, Ghana's economy reportedly grew at 6 percent per year. Official assistance from donor countries to Ghana's recovery program averaged US\$430 million in 1987, more than double that of the preceding years. The PNDC administration also made a remarkable payment of more than US\$500 million in loan arrears dating to before 1966. In recognition of these achievements, international agencies had pledged more than US\$575 million to the country's future programs by May 1987. With these accomplishments in place, the PNDC inaugurated Phase Two of the ERP, which envisioned privatization of state-owned

assets, currency devaluation, and increased savings and investment, and which was to continue until 1990.

Notwithstanding the successes of Phase One of the ERP, many problems remained, and both friends and foes of the PNDC were quick to point them out. One commentator noted the high rate of Ghanaian unemployment as a result of the belt-tightening policies of the PNDC. In the absence of employment or redeployment policies to redress such problems, he wrote, the effects of the austerity programs might create circumstances that could derail the PNDC recovery agenda.

Unemployment was only one aspect of the political problems facing the PNDC government; another was the size and breadth of the PNDC's political base. The PNDC initially espoused a populist program that appealed to a wide variety of rural and urban constituents. Even so, the PNDC was the object of significant criticism from various groups that in one way or another called for a return to constitutional government. Much of this criticism came from student organizations, the GBA, and opposition groups in self-imposed exile, who questioned the legitimacy of the military government and its declared intention of returning the country to constitutional rule. So vocal was the outcry against the PNDC that it appeared on the surface as if the PNDC enjoyed little support among those groups who had historically molded and influenced Ghanaian public opinion. At a time when difficult policies were being implemented, the PNDC could ill afford the continued alienation and opposition of such prominent critics.

By the mid-1980s, therefore, it had become essential that the PNDC demonstrate that it was actively considering steps toward constitutionalism and civilian rule. This was true notwithstanding the recognition of Rawlings as an honest leader and the perception that the situation he was trying to redress was not of his creation. To move in the desired direction, the PNDC needed to weaken the influence and credibility of all antagonistic groups while it created the necessary political structures that would bring more and more Ghanaians into the process of national reconstruction. The PNDC's solution to its dilemma was the proposal for district assemblies.

### **The District Assemblies**

Although the National Commission for Democracy (NCD) had existed as an agency of the PNDC since 1982, it was not until September 1984 that Justice Daniel F. Annan, himself a

member of the ruling council, was appointed chairman. The official inauguration of the NCD in January 1985 signaled PNDC determination to move the nation in a new political direction. According to its mandate, the NCD was to devise a viable democratic system, utilizing public discussions. Annan explained the necessity for the commission's work by arguing that the political party system of the past had lost track of the country's socio-economic development processes. There was the need, therefore, to search for a new political order that would be functionally democratic. Constitutional rules of the past, Annan continued, were not acceptable to the new revolutionary spirit, which saw the old political order as using the ballot box "merely to ensure that politicians got elected into power, after which communication between the electorate and their elected representative completely broke down."

After two years of deliberations and public hearings, the NCD recommended the formation of district assemblies as local governing institutions that would offer opportunities to the ordinary person to become involved in the political process. The PNDC scheduled elections of the proposed assemblies for the last quarter of 1988.

If, as Rawlings said, the PNDC revolution was a "holy war," then the proposed assemblies were part of a PNDC policy intended to annihilate enemy forces or, at least, to reduce them to impotence. The strategy was to deny the opposition a legitimate political forum within which it could articulate its objections to the government. It was for this reason, as much as it was for those stated by Annan, that a five-member District Assembly Committee was created in each of the nation's 110 administrative districts and was charged by the NCD with ensuring that all candidates followed electoral rules. The district committees were to disqualify automatically any candidate who had a record of criminal activity, insanity, or imprisonment involving fraud or electoral offenses in the past, especially after 1979. Also barred from elections were all professionals accused of fraud, dishonesty, and malpractice. The ban on political parties, instituted at the time of the Rawlings coup, was to continue.

By barring candidates associated with corruption and mismanagement of national resources from running for district assembly positions, the PNDC hoped to establish new values to govern political behavior in Ghana. To do so effectively, the government also made it illegal for candidates to mount cam-



*Makola Market, the largest market in Accra  
Courtesy life in general (Brook, Rose, and Cooper Le Van)*

paign platforms other than the one defined by the NCD. Every person qualified to vote in the district could propose candidates or be nominated as a candidate. Candidates could not be nominated by organizations and associations but had to run for district office on the basis of personal qualifications and service to their communities.

Once in session, an assembly was to become the highest political authority in each district. Assembly members were to be responsible for deliberation, evaluation, coordination, and implementation of programs accepted as appropriate for the district's economic development; however, district assemblies were to be subject to the general guidance and direction of the central government. To ensure that district developments were in line with national policies, one-third of assembly members were to be traditional authorities (chiefs) or their representatives; these members were to be approved by the PNDC in consultation with the traditional authorities and other "productive economic groups in the district." In other words, a degree of autonomy may have been granted to the assemblies in the determination of programs most suited to the districts, but the PNDC left itself with the ultimate responsibility of making sure

that such programs were in line with the national economic recovery program.

District assemblies as outlined in PNDC documents were widely discussed by friends and foes of the government. Some hailed the proposal as compatible with the goal of granting the people opportunities to manage their own affairs, but others (especially those of the political right) accused the government of masking its intention to remain in power. If the government's desire for democracy were genuine, a timetable for national elections should have been its priority rather than the preoccupation with local government, they argued. Some questioned the wisdom of incorporating traditional chiefs and the degree to which these traditional leaders would be committed to the district assembly idea, while others attacked the election guidelines as undemocratic and, therefore, as contributing to a culture of silence in Ghana. To such critics, the district assemblies were nothing but a move by the PNDC to consolidate its position.

Rawlings, however, responded to such criticism by restating the PNDC strategy and the rationale behind it:

Steps towards more formal political participation are being taken through the district-level elections that we will be holding throughout the country as part of our decentralisation policy. As I said in my nationwide broadcast on December 31, if we are to see a sturdy tree of democracy grow, we need to learn from the past and nurture very carefully and deliberately political institutions that will become the pillars upon which the people's power will be erected. A new sense of responsibility must be created in each workplace, each village, each district; we already see elements of this in the work of the CDRs, the 31st December Women's Movement, the June 4 Movement, Town and Village Development Committees, and other organizations through which the voice of the people is being heard.

As for the categorization of certain PNDC policies as "leftist" and "rightist," Rawlings dismissed such allegations as "remarkably simplistic. . . . What is certain is that we are moving *forward!*" For the PNDC, therefore, the district elections constituted an obvious first step in a political process that was to culminate at the national level.

Rawlings's explanation notwithstanding, various opposition groups continued to describe the PNDC-proposed district assemblies as a mere public relations ploy designed to give political legitimacy to a government that had come to power by unconstitutional means. Longtime observers of the Ghanaian political scene, however, identified two major issues at stake in the conflict between the government and its critics: the means by which political stability was to be achieved, and the problem of attaining sustained economic growth. Both had preoccupied the country since the era of Nkrumah. The economic recovery programs implemented by the PNDC in 1983 and the proposal for district assemblies in 1987 were major elements in the government's strategy to address these fundamental and persistent problems. Both were very much part of the national debate in Ghana in the late 1980s.

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Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, was not a distinct entity until late in the nineteenth century. Its history before the arrival of the Europeans and even after the consolidation of British colonial rule must be studied as a part of the history of the portion of West Africa extending from Sierra Leone to Nigeria and northward into the Sahara. This is the region from which came the people and the social and political organizations that most influenced Ghanaians. *Peoples and Empires of West Africa, 1000–1800* by G.T. Stride and Caroline Ifeka gives a rich view of this period, with adequate attention to the future Ghana. So does the classic treatment by J.D. Fage in his *A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey*. Robert Lystad's *The Ashanti* and Ivor Wilks's *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* both provide a comprehensive look at the history of the most influential of the purely Ghanaian kingdoms, without which an understanding of later Ghanaian history would be impossible. For the years of European commercial activities on the Guinea Coast, see Arnold Walter Lawrence's *Trade, Castles, and Forts of West Africa* and also his *Fortified Trade-posts: The English in West Africa, 1645–1822*. Other supplementary readings on the period can be found in works by Kwame Arhin, A. Adu Boahen, Nehemia Levtzion, Michael Crowder, and John K. Fynn.

Military readers may enjoy Paul Mmegha Mbaeyi's *British Military and Naval Forces in West African History, 1807–1874*, which provides an interesting view of the introductory years of colonial rule. The third part of William M. Hailey's *Native Administration in the British African Territories* provides exhaustive detail on the colonial period, while R.E. Wraith's *Guggisberg* is a fine description of an era when colonial policy could even have been defined as progressive. For information on the ending of British rule and the birth of nationalism, David E. Apter's *The Gold Coast in Transition* (revised and reprinted as *Ghana in Transition*) still provides an outstanding assessment. There are many books, polemic and scholarly, on the Nkrumah years. Peter T. Omari's *Kwame Nkrumah: Anatomy of an African Dictatorship* is most often cited. See also Bob Beck Fitch and Mary Oppenheimer's *Ghana: End of an Illusion*. Among the most valuable sources on what Ghana faced in the post-Nkrumah era are those by Deborah Pellow, Naomi Chazan, Maxwell Owusu, and Kwame Ninsin. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)