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Jeffrey S. Ahlman. *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017. xvi + 305 pp. $32.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8214-2293-9.

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In this sterling work, historian Jeffrey Ahlman, assistant professor at Smith College, demonstrates that there are different angles and vantage points from which to study the postindependence history of Ghana. By extension, this work provides a framework for the study of other African countries during their immediate postcolonial histories. In this book, Ahlman puts forward a rather ambitious multilayered argument. He argues that the emergence of Nkrumahist ideology and the transformations that occurred were points of "negotiation" between the people and the state. Further, the hopes of the people were often frustrated by the postcolonial state. Using archival records, newspaper accounts, and oral testimony, Ahlman supports his argument well, thereby producing a much-needed work on this important period in both Ghana's history and the history of sub-Saharan Africa.

Challenging scholarship that has taken a more pessimistic and cynical view of African postcolonial history, Ahlman offers an approach that is more empathetic. He captures the historical moment by stressing the "ambiguities and contradictions surrounding the continent's transition to self-rule" (p. 5). The importance of this work is that Ahlman deconstructs the place Ghana has had in postcolonial historiography; owing to its preeminent status as the first sub-Saharan African colony to receive independence (in 1957), the hopes of the entire continent rode on its success. It became a model for future colonies that would gain independence in the 1960s. Yet for historians, Ghana's failure to achieve abiding political stability beyond its first decade of independence became a negative example for the continent.

In chapter 1 Ahlman positions Kwame Nkrumah himself. He makes it clear that this is not a biographical treatment of Nkrumah, but rather an analysis of the political and intellectual currents that shaped his anticolonial thought. Beginning with the founding of the Convention People's Party (CPP) and its adoption of Nkrumah's ideology, Ahlman demonstrates that the party harnessed the pre-independence aspirations of the masses, which it articulated in its own press and at rallies and meetings. During this early phase of the CPP, it succeeded in controlling the narrative that defined its opposition from the Ashanti region fueled by the National Liberation Movement (NLM). The CPP convinced the masses in the Gold Coast that it represented the people against an antiquated view of Asante "exceptionalism" that had the potential to fracture the emerging new Ghana. Ahlman's main point here is that from its beginnings the CPP had to struggle against opposition to craft a narrative of itself that was inclusive of the best interests of the people.

Yet as the CPP fought against opposing parties, it also asserted its message to define the ideals and commitments of the new nation.

Chapter 2 focuses on Nkrumah's work in the nationalist struggle in Ghana from his return to the Gold Coast in 1947 to independence in 1957. Ahlman emphasizes that Nkrumah and the CPP attempted to forge a vision of modernization in the newly independent Ghana. He stresses how Nkrumah, or Nkrumahism, was interested not only in Pan-Africanism, the liberation of other African colonies, but also in the nuts-and-bolts issues of bringing Ghana itself into modernity. Yet, according to Ahlman, competing interests emerged as local and national concerns often contradicted each other.

The rest of the book focuses on Nkrumahism's designs for shaping the new nation and the negotiations that occurred with the people. Chapter 3 centers on how Nkrumahism determined to engender a new ethos of citizenship as Ghana emerged from the shackles of colonialism to independence. Ahlman focuses on the challenges Ghana faced as Nkrumahism had to balance its Pan-Africanist vision with the development of a new, independent citizenry. The main focus is how the CPP attempted to serve the youth, who were in an economically precarious situation. The creation of the Builders Brigade in 1957 was both an attempt to place the young men and women of Ghana in a better economic position to aid in the country's modernization but also as a means to enforce social control, as this population had been labeled lazy and indolent. Yet, Ahlman simultaneously presents evidence from participants in the Brigade that the program also served as a form of "social renewal." The party held the same view of schoolchildren, and they, too, were targets of national programming. A top-down effort to create a youth movement in Ghana to instill patriotism came to fruition in 1961 with the formation of the Ghana Young Pioneers. Ahlman notes that Nkrumah and members of the party drew inspiration from the Soviet Union and Israel in creating the organization and format of this group. It was to drill CPP ideology into the children through songs, performances, and a curriculum. Ahlman presents testimony from members of the Young Pioneers who stated that this program developed their character in terms of self-reliance and patriotism. Through the Brigade, the Nkrumahist state sought to challenge prevailing gender roles, as some women who participated did what was then considered manly work, such as driving tractors. What Nkrumah and the CPP intended was to draw the new nation away from the old social and economic hierarchies, envisioning the future in the hands of this new nation's new generation. As Ahlman demonstrates through oral testimony, the most controversial of these programs was the uniform. Both groups donned military-style uniforms that enabled them to connect to the CPP more strongly than the older generation. This caused open challenges to the position of the elders. The efforts of the party, then, caused social disruption rather than social unity, especially between the youth and their elders.

In chapter 4, Ahlman shifts attention to the place of labor within this new socialist economy as it became a focal point in creating a new society in Ghana under Nkrumahism. Here Ahlman argues that although the people themselves embraced work in its new conception under Nkrumahism and the CPP, their leaders placed undue moral demands on workers that resulted in their alienation. Ahlman further contends that the CPP's co-option of the labor movement during the pre-independence period was detrimental to both. The evidence for this assertion is the strike of September 1961. Even prior to this strike, the CPP attempted to redefine the purpose of work, shifting its aim from individual satisfaction and stability to a more collective one. More significantly, work was key to the process of colonial liberation as a tool for nation-building. Judging from this portion of the narrative, this shift, which was in line with Nkrumahism, was also anticolonial. The CPP at-

tempted to disengage labor from its colonial mode to a new, independent yet socialist mode. No longer would labor only serve the metropole; it would also cater to the amorphous "people." Utilizing Nkrumahist ideology that centered on the role of work in the new nation, the government instituted a wage freeze in response to an economic crisis that occurred in 1961. The resulting strike indicated that the popular front would only go so far in upholding Nkrumahism: the wage freeze and other austerity measures were more than it was willing to accept.

Ahlman returns to the theme of gender in chapter 5, which focuses on employees in the Bureau of African Affairs in the years after the 1961 strike (1961-64), to compare the experiences of people who worked within the shifting nature of Nkrumahism. Alhman also addresses how Ghanaians perceived international contexts of African liberation and anticolonialism. Ahlman reveals that Nkrumahism and the CPP attempted to thwart a "feminization of the revolution." The Bureau of African Affairs (BAA) was the major conduit of Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist ideals, and it employed a large group of men and women. Yet it was women who "served as its administrative lifeblood" (p. 162). Ahlman comments that employment in the BAA allowed women a source of steady income and flexibility to manage their family commitments. He connects the growth of women's employment in Ghana during this period with trends in the West. Women working in this sector of the government embodied the virtues of Nkrumahism in the same vein as did men. In fact, the CPP announced that the Nkrumahist revolution was also a gender revolution challenging the old forms of patriarchy. It was no surprise that women openly supported these Nkrumahist ideals, but in the upper management of the BAA men were in charge. Ahlman juxtaposes this public pronouncement of a gender revolution with how Nkrumahism itself was cast in masculine terms, therefore leaving little space for gender inclusivism. Ahlman uncovers signs of outward antagonism and mockery of women in the BAA over the issues of sick leave and maternity leave. Though there were general policies for employees to take advantage of sick and maternity leave, the men in charge scoffed at their women colleagues for utilizing what was rightfully theirs. These disdainful attitudes of men toward women appear in the records of the BAA. Though outwardly Nkrumahism espoused a gender revolution, the BAA operated against such and circumscribed the behavior of women, conforming to sexist attitudes.

The one-party state is the theme of chapter 6. Ghana became a one-party state in 1962, Ahlman stressed the varying strategies individual Ghanaians employed to preserve their position within the new realities of the state. As members of the opposition parties and then individual citizens publicly denounced one-party democracy, they demonstrated how active their political engagement was despite the repressiveness of the CPP. At this point in postcolonial history, Ghanaians rejected the CPP's contention that multiparty democracy had failed, and had "slowed down" the progress of the revolution. Drawing from parliamentary records concerning the 1958 Preventative Detention Act that "gave the government the bureaucratic and judicial flexibility through which to deal with threats to the nation" (p. 179), Ahlman shows how members of opposition parties interpreted this piece of legislation as whittling away individual rights and paving the way toward dictatorship. This was a constant theme throughout 1962. Post-1962 the party acted more tyrannically, detaining those who opposed it from within and without. What Ahlman demonstrates is that the one-party state, and constant opposition to it, led inevitably to the coup of 1966.

In this work, Ahlman presents evidence that reveals the generally authoritarian and at times repressive nature of the CPP. One facet of the book that is helpful is Ahlman's tracing of Nkrumahism's development over two decades.

Some of the older works date Nkrumahism as beginning at independence, but Ahlman rightly dates it as beginning in 1951 with the emergence of self-government and the ascendancy of the CPP as the ruling party. For example, Henry Bretton's *The Rise and Fall of Kwame Nkrumah* (1966) embarks from 1957, and Trevor Jones, in his *Ghana's First Republic 1960-1966* (1977), offers a very superficial context to the republican period. Yet the seeds of Nkrumahism are found in Nkrumah's *Toward Colonial Freedom* (1947). Ahlman correctly labels Nkrumahism as anticolonialist in its basic form, and that was truly its goal in its nascence. Though some of the earlier works on Nkrumah and the demise of his rule are overly critical, and argue that Nkrumah's ideology and the socialism of the CPP were at odds with what the people wanted, Ahlman's work is critical yet measured. He provides oral testimony to give voice to the people, and this demonstrates the nuance between state aspirations and the aspirations of the citizens. At times, both shared aspirations, and there was more negotiation over the course of the new nation than admitted in the older historiography. Ahlman's work presents a critical work that bridges the gap between the overly harsh studies of the late 1960s and 1970s and the more recent sentiments of Ghanaians who believe that Nkrumahism managed to bring some benefits to Ghana. Ahlman successfully narrates a complicated story of Ghana and the CPP from 1951 to 1966.