

STATES OF 'BACKWARDNESS', VISIONS OF 'MODERNITY':  
WEST AFRICAN MIDDLE CLASSES IN DISCOURSES OF DEVELOPMENT

A Thesis

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Olajumoke Thokozile Warritay

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## ABSTRACT

African development has long been described as behind or below that of ‘advanced’, ‘First World’, industrialized nations. Consequently, discourses of African progress from colonialism to the present have focused on transforming African societies from ‘backwardness’ and ubiquitous poverty to more prosperous, ‘modern’ conditions. African societies are generally understood as dichotomously configured between elites and impoverished masses. As a result, contemporary African development is aimed primarily at policing wanton elites and providing for the precarious poor. While both these objectives are worthwhile, they create a limited representation of African societies; one focused exclusively on extremes. The existence and experiences of African middle classes are largely ignored. Recently, however, reports have signaled the emergence of an African ‘middle class’ and forecasted its positive impact on development.

This thesis investigates a particular subset of West African middle classes in development discourses at the end of empire. I argue for the longstanding existence of modern African middle classes in West Africa and describe how popular notions of African development and modernity have limited our ability to see African middle classes. I examine Western-educated segments of the middle classes at the end of colonialism, and identify them as significant middling groups because of their position between supposedly ‘backwards’ African traditionalism and Western modernity as well as their position astride capital and labor. Because of their middling character, Western-educated middle classes in West Africa emerged as both subjects and objects of development in the transition from colonial to nation-states. I emphasize how notions of progress created by and about Western-educated West Africans focused on the imperatives of modernization and state-led development.

The thesis focuses on definitions of African middle classes, notions of African modernity, and visions of national development at the end of empire. I examine social theories about middle classes in general and African class structures in particular before discussing visions of development as expressed by influential Western-educated Africans (namely Edward Blyden, Africanus Horton, Kwame Nkrumah and Félix Houphouët-Boigny). I point to nationalism as a unifying class project for Western-educated Africans at the end of colonialism, and underscore how Western-educated Africans envisioned the advent of African nations as the continent's entry into the modern world. National development then appeared as a strategy for 'backwards' nations to 'catch-up', and Western-expertise was offered as an expedient way to boost growth and modernize new nations. Examples from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are provided throughout the thesis to illustrate general claims and to highlight variation within West Africa. At the end of colonialism, ideas about development in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire were almost antithetical. These two countries demonstrate how differences in ideology, imperial relations, and state-led development strategies necessarily affected the size and strength of Western-educated middle classes at the end of empire.

In all, this thesis highlights the power of development discourses in constructing certain images of 'African society' which, in turn, propel particular development projects. How we imagine and represent African societies has important effects. This thesis pushes the way we understand Africa's past as well as contemporary class constructions. I attempt to insert the middle classes into representations of African societies with the belief that including the middle classes will produce more accurate and realistic ideas about African development.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born to Sierra Leonean parents, Ms. Warritay attended British and American international schools in Nairobi and Lagos before attending Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She is a part of growing populations of ‘third-culture kids’ and ‘Afropolitans’ (Tuakli-Wosornu 2008) whose lives are not bound by any one nation or identity. This experience informs her thinking. Broadly, Ms. Warritay is interested in issues of global inequality and African development which she is currently investigating through analysis of West African class structures.

To Aunty May,  
For love and strength and wisdom we thank you

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## INTRODUCTION

Ideas about African social, economic, and political ‘development’ required new attention in the middle of the twentieth century as colonies transitioned into nation-states and colonial subjects became rights-bearing citizens. Former colonies were, all of a sudden, ‘poor’ ‘backward’ countries, and ‘development’ was introduced as a means of improving living standards and national standings. As empire faded, colonial categories changed and conceptual space opened to include Africans in the ‘modern’ world.<sup>1</sup> This thesis examines ideas of progress at the end of empire in order to challenge contemporary categories of African development. Specifically, I call into question the idea that African nations are divided dichotomously between ‘elites’ and poor masses. From analysis of the transition from empire to nation, I argue for the longstanding existence of ‘the middle class’ in West Africa, and suggest its importance to national development.

‘Development’ is a contested idea associated with ideas of progress; the problems it identifies and solutions proposed reflect desired changes for the present as well as visions of alternative futures. Contemporary discourses of ‘African development’ generally express plans to move the continent away from poverty, nepotism and the caprices of war towards more economically prosperous and politically stable ‘modern’ societies. Most African development discourses, and the projects they inspire, rest on one of two general conceptions of ‘African society’.<sup>2</sup> In the first, African societies are characterized by extreme deprivation and excessive

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<sup>1</sup> As colonial African subjects, once perceived as incapable of self-determination, became emancipated national subjects there was a necessary re-thinking of the capacities of Africans; a process that required rejecting old narratives and categories, and expanding the boundaries of the possible.

<sup>2</sup> ‘African society’ is, of course, a generalization with no substantive meaning. This reference to ‘African society’ is made as an allusion to the ways “sub-Saharan Africa” is collapsed into a development problematic in research as well as practical development work. Despite vast continental differences, there remains an impulse to understand the problems of ‘Africa’ collectively.

privilege. Africa is the continent of unparalleled poverty and extraordinary plunder – the unfortunate battle death and disease while authorities profiteer and bully for bribes. Development, it is suggested, must focus on assisting the infirm, impoverished, and powerless masses on the one hand, and policing corrupt, pillaging, and tyrannical elites on the other. African development is, consequently, framed as a conglomeration of national projects aimed at meeting basic needs, raising measures of economic productivity, and facilitating good governance. The characterization (and reality) of ‘Africa’ as a place of unrivaled deprivation and undependable elites provides the principle justification for the existence of development agencies, programs, and policies on the continent. The development ‘industry’ – comprised of international institutions, NGOs, and state organs – uses this discourse of extremes to unconsciously construct a two-class model of ‘African society’. In accordance with this dichotomous depiction, national development projects focus on the exigencies of the poor and extravagances of Africa’s rich.

Another less popular but equally evocative image of ‘African society’ in development discourse focuses on populations of potential. Pointing to the continent’s abundant natural resources and fast-growing industries, this discourse suggests that savvy entrepreneurs, skilled professionals, and technical experts can propel the continent towards greater ‘development’. The discourse maintains that untapped wells of oil, dense forests, and other natural repositories can boost national prosperity if harnessed with the right technology and technical know-how. Furthermore, development potential is identified in industries such as telecommunications, information technology<sup>3</sup>, finance, entertainment<sup>4</sup> and fashion. The 2009 Information

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<sup>3</sup> The idea of technological ‘leap frogging’ is especially popular as a form of ‘development’ in African industries such as information technology, telecommunications, and banking.

<sup>4</sup> West African entertainment has expanded exponentially in recent years. Examples of growth in film and television include: 1.) ‘Nollywood’, the Nigerian film industry which produces in excess of

Economy Report, for example, refers to Africa as undergoing a “mobile phone revolution” and reports that since 2003 mobile phone subscriptions in sub-Saharan Africa have grown faster than any other region of the world.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, Africa is advertised as “open for business”, and described by venture capitalists as the “world’s fastest-growing continent”.<sup>6</sup> The IMF has supported this notion by projecting that the African continent will grow faster than any other continent in the next decade.<sup>7</sup>

In this discourse of industry growth and economic opportunities, ‘development’ is focused on expanding the availability of capital, technology, and specialized knowledge to people who can unlock the continent’s potential. More recently, in addition to the significance of innovation and productivity from entrepreneurs in this process, more attention has been paid to the importance of Africa’s growing ‘middle class’ as a base for the consumption of commodities and services.<sup>8</sup> This discourse of development presents the proliferation of small businesses, the growing strength of African stock markets, and expansion of commercial markets as markers of success and proof positive of the continent’s hidden potential.

The two narratives of ‘African development’ outlined above are necessarily simplistic caricatures of a complex continent but the images they conjure are important. In the first discourse, African development is characterized as a problem of

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US\$200 million a year; and 2.) DStv Multichoice, a cable TV network based in South Africa but broadcasted in 47 African countries with well over 48.5 million viewers.

<sup>5</sup> The report was published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2009. Mobile phone subscription in Africa, it reported, had a growth rate of 550% between 2003 and 2008.

<sup>6</sup> *African Capital Markets News*, < <http://www.afrigrow.com/?p=92> > (22 September 2009).

<sup>7</sup> *Africa Recovery*, 12:2 November 1998, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Bernstein and Johnston (2005) begin their article in the *Business Day* newspaper, “The onset of higher economic growth and soaring levels of confidence in the South African economy has prompted burgeoning awareness of the emerging African middle class. The entry of growing numbers of Africans into higher income brackets is good news...and leads to all manners of hopes and expectations...” While this comment is directed specifically at South Africa, a very particular development ‘success’ story, this quote captures an increasingly popular sentiment about other African countries.

extremes with no recognition of middle classes. The second development discourse focuses on the social significance of entrepreneurs and consumers without placing these groups in relation to others in their societies. These two discourses are seldom combined and, generally, the dominant discourse of poor masses and wanton elites shapes understandings of African development problems. Following the dominant construction, African middle classes are either assumed not to exist or to be in small, incipient sizes. Beyond simply noting how powerful these representations are in defining development programs and strategies, we can also consider what they tell us about the significance of the ‘middle class’ to African development. Paradoxically, the ‘middle class’ is absent in dominant notions of African development, but the growing ‘middle class’ is seen as central to (and a signal of) the growth of industry. This paradox begs the question: Who are the middle classes in African nations, and what are their relationships to African development?

Middle classes in African nations are surprisingly understudied; their composition and characteristics are seldom specified, and their sizes in different national contexts are largely unknown. Increasingly, however, publications in magazines, newspapers, and blogs have hailed the emergence of Africa’s “new middle class”, and pointed to its expansion as a sign of hope on an otherwise bedraggled and dysfunctional continent.<sup>9</sup> These articles describe the African ‘middle class’ as people whose incomes and consumption habits afford them lifestyles in step with presumed ‘middle class’ norms. For example, a Washington Post journalist writes, the middle class:

includes working Africans who make as little as \$200 a month, a paltry sum by Western standards, yet hardly the \$1 or so a day in earnings that describe life for about half the continent's population. Perhaps a third of all Africans, or 300

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<sup>9</sup> African blogs are ubiquitous and the emergent middle class is a popular topic especially on “Timbuktu Chronicles” written by entrepreneur Emeka Okafor.

million people, fall into a middle category -- people struggling to put their kids through school and pay rent, but able to buy a cellphone or DVD once in a while.<sup>10</sup>

While the sources and methods used to acquire these estimates are not disclosed, the author nonetheless describes a widely observable reality in countries across the African continent. Shopping complexes, fitness centers, cable television, gated communities, and home mortgages – trimmings commonly associated with the ‘middle class’ in Western nations – are noticeably present in African countries. Recent World Bank and development reports are also acknowledging an apparent growth of the ‘middle class’ in developing nations.<sup>11</sup> They identify middle classes in developing countries as populations living between the mean incomes of Brazil and Italy<sup>12</sup> or, in the least developed countries, those living on between \$2 and \$10 a day.<sup>13</sup>

If new middle classes are indeed emerging in African countries how do we identify them and how do we explain their sudden rise? What does their presence portend for national development? These questions have not been adequately addressed in academic or development literature, despite the significant impact they might have in shaping development projects. At present, discussions of Africa’s ‘middle class’ rely on colloquial understandings of the term, and employ arbitrary income levels to identify middle class membership. It is difficult to believe, however, that we can describe middle classes on the basis of income without attention to social

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<sup>10</sup> Stephanie McCrummen, “In Africa, a New Middle-Income Consumerism,” *The Washington Post*, 1 September 2008.

<sup>11</sup> The World Bank has piqued interest in rising middle classes in developing nations, insinuating that the strength of the middle class will translate to increased political stability, improved national GDP as well as boosts to infrastructure and social services. Milanovic and Yitzhaki “Decomposing World Income Distribution: Does the World Have a Middle Class?” *Review of Income and Wealth* (2002): 155-178.

<sup>12</sup> Milanovic and Yitzhaki 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Banerjee and Duflo, “What is Middle Class about the Middle Classes Around the World” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (2008):3-28.

relations. We cannot treat the ‘middle class’ as an isolated segment of a national population separated from other classes and disconnected from historical class formation. Classes do not exist a priori but, rather, are made and re-made within social context.

Furthermore, informal use of the term ‘middle class’ relies on idealized notions of Western middle classes and loosely connected symbols of ‘modern’ living. There is no reason to assume, however, that African middle classes mirror Western models since the histories and geopolitical positioning of African nations is unlike Western nations. Furthermore, the fact that African middle classes are so poorly defined should make us cautious in making claims about their influences on growth and national development. The existence of African middle classes cannot be taken for granted – they must be identified on their own terms and researched in context. This thesis is an attempt to engage in more focused sociological investigation of this altogether ignored or too-readily presumed category. I provide a working definition of African middle classes and use the transition from empire to the nation-state to discuss their historical relations to national development.

Despite the paucity of research on African middle classes, there appears to be a certain investment in them; a hope that their presence, even in diminutive form, will unlock new economic potential or provide political stability. These notions hail in part from studies in Western literature that identify the ‘middle class’ as a source of economic development. As far back as the 1800s the middle class was identified as the “driving force of nations.”<sup>14</sup> More recently, Western societies displaying high inequality with small middle classes have been linked to low levels of growth and

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<sup>14</sup> Joaquim Nabuco, *O Abolicionismo* (Brasilia: Senado Federal, 1863, reprinted 2003)

limited capital accumulation.<sup>15</sup> Beyond their economic influence middle classes are also identified as significant political actors with the power to change political configurations, buttress intransigent political orders, or serve as democratizing forces in ‘mature’ nations.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, development theories have associated the leadership of urbanized middle classes with successful modernization and democratization.<sup>17</sup> The ‘middle class’ appears, therefore, as a popular but elusive force associated with Western progress – its presence is believed to remake or strengthen the social fabric. However, research in African contexts is yet to validate the benefits of the ‘middle class’ to economic development or political stability.

This thesis suggests that we investigate African middle classes more closely before drawing conclusions on their contribution to national development. I focus here on a subset of West African middle classes at the end of colonialism, and argue that the African middle classes receiving attention today are not new social forces but, rather, part of class structures with much longer histories. I look at Western-educated Africans specifically and identify them as an especially significant segment of the middle classes. While Western-educated Africans do not represent the ‘middle class’, they shaped the contours of development discourse and practice in the transition from empire to nation.

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<sup>15</sup> David Landes, The Wealth and Poverty of Nations (New York: Norton, 1998); Irma Adelman and Cynthia Taft Morris, Society, politics, and economic development: a quantitative approach (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967); Oded Galor and Joseph Zeira, “Income distribution and macroeconomics” *Review of Economic Studies* (1993):35-52.

<sup>16</sup> Scott Lash and John Urry, The End of Organized Capitalism (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); M. Savage et al, Property, bureaucracy and culture. Middle class formation in contemporary Britain (London: Routledge, 1995)

<sup>17</sup> Leela Fernandes, India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); S.M. Lipset, “The Changing Class Structure and Contemporary European Politics” *Daedalus* (1964):271-303.

## Development and Modern Middle Classes

The end of colonialism and emergence of African nation-states marked fundamental shifts in the political relevance, economic advantages, and social functions of Western-educated Africans. In this transitional moment, Western-educated Africans stood poised to assume positions of authority and exploit new opportunities. As seemingly more 'modern' than others, Africans with Western schooling were presumed to be necessary in moving Africa into modernity and were, consequently, inserted into development discourses and imaginaries.

The dominant development ideas at the end of colonialism were characterized by evolutionary mindsets, teleological projections, and optimistic outlooks about the potential to transform Africa from traditionalism and backwardness to the likeness of Western modernity. This was a period of grand narratives that (over)confidently pronounced the mechanisms and stages of social progress. From the 1940s until approximately the 1970s, dominant development discourses supported state intervention as the primary means of implementing development projects. In the process of decolonization and nation-building, therefore, the nation-state emerged as the primary unit of development and Western-educated Africans appeared as the mainstay of modernity.

Notions of development proposed to completely transform African from 'backwardness'. At their core they placed economic growth as the ultimate measure of modern development. In both capitalist and socialist discourses of development in this transitional period, African nations were perceived as temporally behind industrialized nations, and conceived strategies for Africa's economic 'catch-up'. Politically, the emergence of nation-states fanned hopes that Africans would finally receive the same treatment as other human beings and enjoy rights of citizenship accorded members of the comity of nations; namely, political participation and access

to modern institutions (such as hospitals, schools, courts etc.). With economic, political, and social changes in mind, African modernity was imagined as a *package* of institutions and processes linked to economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, infrastructural development, bureaucratization and secularization. These development ideas emanated from Africans with nationalist hopes as well as Western scholars in the disciplines of anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology with new interest in development studies. These groups demonstrated tremendous power in the production and dissemination of development knowledge at the end of colonialism. Despite their disparate entry points into questions of development, African nationalists and Western experts both identified the state as the primary engine for ‘modern’ development.

In the following chapters I examine these ideas of development in order to construct historically grounded conceptions of African middle classes and to comment on their contributions to national development. I identify Western-educated African professionals as a significant subset of the middle classes and attempt to understand them relationally in the transition from empire to nation. Western-educated African middle classes, I argue, stood: in relation to other classes (i.e. between labor, capital, traditional authority figures etc.); in between ideas (such as ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’); and astride development projects of both the colonial and nation-state. I suggest that because of their middling positions in colonies, Western-educated Africans experienced occupational privileges and elevated status as well as the frustrations and existential anxieties provoked by political subjugation, racial denigration and economic subordination. However, with the emergence of African nation-states, colonial discourses were dismantled and new narratives of socio-political and economic development constructed. Western-educated Africans feature in this transition as both the subjects and objects of development.

Although the thesis aims to challenge general ideas about ‘Africa’, I focus on coastal, tropical West Africa (the region extending from present-day Senegal through to Nigeria), and pay special attention to examples from Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. As former British and French colonies, respectively, and as nations that pursued socialist and capitalist arrangements after independence, Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire point to important contrasts and continuities in the ways ‘development’ was conceived in West Africa and how social contexts differed. I do not attempt an in-depth case study of either nation, but focus instead on developing a *conceptual* understanding of development and Western-educated middle classes in West Africa more generally.

I have chosen West Africa as the focus of this project because of its importance in the development of African nationalist ideas and its historical connections to Diaspora communities across the Atlantic and in Europe. A triangle of transatlantic influences exchanged ideas between Africa, Europe, and the so-called ‘New World’ and produced especially powerful discourses of progress in terms of racial liberation, pan-Africanism, and nationalism.<sup>18</sup> Western schooling in coastal West Africa also took hold at an earlier time than in other parts of the African continent. Consequently, West Africa contained pockets of bilingual intelligentsia, clerks, lawyers, doctors and the like who often helped administer colonial states as well as forming ideas about African ‘development’. Lastly, focus on West Africa allows comparison of the differences between French and British colonialism. As the two leading imperialists in Africa, the legacies of France and Britain still manifest today and affect visions and execution of ‘African development’.

In examining development discourse I explore myriad categories from classes and colonies to empires, nations, and “races”. I acknowledge the nation-state as the

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<sup>18</sup> Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

preeminent unit of analysis in development discourse, but also factor non-national units such as racial movements, regional federations and global institutions into discourse analysis. I follow Stuart Hall's definition of discourse as a particular form of representing things and the relations between that which is represented. "A discourse", Hall writes, "is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic."<sup>19</sup> "Discursive practice" is the process through which discourse is formed and meaning produced through a collection of interrelated categories and statements.<sup>20</sup> Discourses not only provide language and frameworks for representation, but also limit or exclude certain categories and topics from discussion.

Discourses, therefore, produce knowledge and circumscribe the realm of the possible as an expression of power. The ability to delineate what is 'known' and impose this knowledge as 'truth' is a reflection of discursive power. Michel Foucault's assertion that "power produces knowledge" is especially evident in discourses at the end of empire as the voices and visions of Western-educated Africans and Western experts dominated conceptions of development.<sup>21</sup> According to Foucault, "when power operates so as to enforce the 'truth' of any set of statements, then such a discursive formation produces a 'regime of truth'."<sup>22</sup> Development 'truth' at the end of empire rested on the assumption that state-led industrialization and modernization were *the* means of development – a belief referred to in this thesis as 'developmentalism'. From the 1940s until the 1970s, a developmentalist regime held

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<sup>19</sup> Stuart Hall, *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power*, ed. Hall et al (Malden: Blackwell Publishing 1996), 185-227.

<sup>20</sup> Discourse, therefore, emanates from various sources, and is not dependent on any given institution or actor to validate it or give it a particular coherency or 'integrity'. Discourses are diffuse and derive their strength from the multifarious ways discourses reproduce themselves through diffuse capillary-like systems. Discourses are open systems with as much consensus as there is contradiction (Hall 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980): 27

<sup>22</sup> Hall 1996: 205

sway; encouraging a variety of theories about state-managed development and initiating a host of state-led development projects. Today state intervention and modernization are no longer development ‘truths’, but their lingering effects are felt in various ways.<sup>23</sup> Contemporary and historical development discourses matter because they frame and inform development interventions and, as such, produce real social effects.

The crisis and end of empire is an especially instructive moment to examine development discourses. Transition periods bring declining discourses up against new ones and can make tacit or taken for granted assumptions more explicit; highlighting discursive contradictions and continuities.<sup>24</sup> This thesis juxtaposes colonial narratives of progress with African national discourses of development in an effort to elucidate underlying assumptions and point to disparate development projections. The centrality of Western referents to both pre and post-colonial visions of African progress is a sign of the power wielded by the ‘West’ over ‘Africa’ as well as by Western-educated Africans over other Africans in this transitional period.

The thesis weaves between discourse analysis and historical narrative in order to form conceptual understandings of both development and middle classes. Historical details give context for development discourses while also providing details to support conceptual claims. Condensing the oftentimes contradictory and complex realities of social life into sociological categories (like class) and theoretical processes (like development) is necessarily distorting, but the particularities of history help minimize the tendency towards idealism and the violence of abstraction. V.Y. Mudimbe claims “There is no description of Africa that does not involve destructive

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<sup>23</sup> The notion, for example, of African ‘backwardness’ is still prevalent, and despite acknowledgment of the impracticality of African ‘catch-up’ with Western nations this idea is still widely promoted.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph Rosnow, Paradigms in transition (New York: Oxford University Press 1981)

and mendacious functions.”<sup>25</sup> When the multiplicity of ethnicities, religions, gender relations, classes and cultural practices on the continent are considered it is clear that any attempt to discuss ‘Africa’ or ‘African society’ is based on essentialized and abstract notions. However, development discourses, especially in the transition from empire to nation, were often constructed in continental and pan-African terms and development strategies for a generalized ‘Africa’ were (and still are) commonly invoked. So, despite acknowledgment of vast differences across the continent and sensitivity to the need for historical specificity, I attempt to develop somewhat generalized conceptions of West African middle classes and their relation to national development.

This work is not an attempt to empirically prove the existence of African middle classes or specify their quantitative dimensions (although a case for their historical and contemporary presence is made in myriad ways). Nor is the intention here to glorify the middle class as a critical variable which, when inserted into the right development formula, will yield long-anticipated results. I aim instead to expound on one stratum of African middle classes in the middle of the twentieth century, to indicate what roles they played in specific development discourses, and explore the impact they were presumed to portend for social, political, and economic advancement. I do not attempt to provide tidy resolutions about African middle classes and their impact on development. I do, however, move away from presentist, colloquial conceptions of the ‘middle class’, while also delineating transformations in development discourses at the end of empire. I aim to highlight overlaps, contradictions, and continuities in conceptions of African middle classes, African development, and African modernity.

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<sup>25</sup> ” V.Y. Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1988)

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one establishes a definition of African middle classes in the transition from empire to nation. The chapter describes how the expansion of colonial states and economies increased differentiation in the division of labor in African societies, and produced new middle classes comprised, in part, by Western-educated administrators, bureaucrats, and salaried professionals. The chapter outlines sociological understandings of middle classes as conceived by Karl Marx and Max Weber. I proceed, however, to develop a definition of middle classes that considers particular West African social categories as well as notions of modernity and development. I argue that a self-conscious class of Western-educated Africans emerged in the transition from empire to nation, and congealed their identity around visions of national development. Western-educated African middle classes envisioned development through the nation-state as a way to liberate Africans from colonial conquest and, simultaneously, elevate their local and global status. Chapter one argues for a relational understanding of African middle classes, and for the identification of its Western-educated members in this period through their engagement with nationalist and developmentalist projects.

The chapter indicates that Western-educated middle classes were central to development ideas about: 1.) *vertical integration* of Africa into the modern world and 2.) *horizontal expansion* of ‘Western modernity’ to all Africans in nation-states. *Vertical integration* refers to the presumed attainment of African liberty, equality, and restored dignity through the nation-state. National status, it was suggested, would bring Africa into the modern world and raise Africans to the same level of humanity as other members of the comity of nations. *Horizontal expansion* of ‘Western modernity’ alludes to projections of development that forecasted the replacement of African ‘backwardness’ with institutions and practices of the ‘West’ (and in socialist cases the ‘East’). The privileges of modernity, this argument suggested, could be

extended to more segments of society if African nation-states sponsored development projects and implemented modernizing measures. Chapter one, therefore, defines the middle classes and lays the foundation for later discussions about modernity and developmentalism.

Chapter two examines *vertical integration* more closely by investigating anti-colonial and nationalist development discourses. I describe how shared experiences of colonial oppression promoted solidarity between Africans with Western education, and facilitated the construction of a racialized ‘African’ identity. From their position between labor and capital and astride Western and African worlds, African middle classes enjoyed opportunities for occupational security, capital accumulation and elevated social power and prestige, while also experiencing racial subjugation and the unbearable weight of the color bar. West African discourses of development pointed to the nation-state as a means of expanding personal opportunities and elevating the general status of the black “race”. I explore how these liberatory discourses often built on conceptions of an idealized African past while advocating for a modern African future. African societies, Western-educated Africans argued, had to be regenerated and restored to recover African values and dignity robbed by imperial domination. Promotion of African identity and nationalism became ways to confirm African humanity and assert African modernity.

In this chapter I highlight ideas of progress expressed by significant personalities such as Edward Bylden, Africanus Horton, Kwame Nkrumah and Félix Houphouët-Boigny. I also examine Pan-African and negritude movements as significant influences in the formation of discourses of ‘development’ and sustained attempts to vertically boost Africa’s status in the ‘modern’ world. These movements allowed Africans with Western exposure to use their knowledge of imperialism and the ‘black’ experience to express particular visions of national development. I argue

that opportunities for Western-educated Africans to sharpen their conceptions of ‘development’ increased with the organization of transatlantic conferences, the expansion of print capitalism, and the growing strength of Diaspora communities in North America and Europe. However, because Western-educated Africans aimed to (re)establish African humanity while simultaneously pursuing venerated Western ideals their lives and development ideas betrayed a host of contradictions. As Kwaku Larbi Korang writes:

Imagining African modernity in the nation-form, [African] writer-intellectuals disclose a paradox at the level of concept. They are to be seen simultaneously affirming – saying an intimate “yes” to – an alien dominant even as they mobilize its categories to say “no” in revolt against it...[T]hese nationalist intellectuals represent *in themselves* the place where “Africa” and “modernity,” native and alien, intersects as an ontological predicament” (Korang, 2003: 13)

This second chapter, therefore, explores discourses of development proffered by Western-educated Africans, and argues that their narratives of progress reflected their existential dilemmas as Western-influenced Africans as well as their collective ambitions to inaugurate African modernity.

Chapter three turns our attention to hopes for the *horizontal expansion* of ‘modernity’ expressed in developmentalist discourses and projects. The chapter examines developmentalist regimes and modernization paradigms, and highlights how the former hailed African states as the engines of development and the latter instructed Africans to relinquish ‘backwardness’ and embrace the virtues of ‘Western modernity’. African societies in this developmentalist period were assumed to progress in linear fashion towards the standards of living and lifestyles of Western nations. Development theories placed hopes on Western-educated African engineers, doctors, teachers, administrators and the like to economically build and modernize emerging African nations. Also, with national independence, Western-educated

Africans became occupants of the state and expressed their own conceptions of 'development'. Chapter three, therefore, examines Western-educated African middle classes as both the objects and subjects of state-led 'development'. I also examine the importance of Cold War rivalries in shaping development projects, and stress the developmentalist dimensions of both socialist and capitalist discourses. Regardless of their ideological leanings, development initiatives in this period were explicitly state-led; examples from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are given once again to illustrate this fact.

Chapter three, therefore, highlights the strength of developmentalism and modernization in shaping visions of post-colonial Africa and discourses of development. In both Marxist and capitalist projections of African development, traditional backwardness was to be shed and replaced by modern industrialization. Western knowledge was considered premium and Western experts or Western-educated Africans were presumed to hold the key to unlocking secrets of modern development. The expansion of Western-educated African middle classes was expected to signify successful renouncement of traditionalism and the onset of modern practices. The more thoroughly Africans imbibed Western culture and mannerisms, the more quickly they were projected to transition into modernity and become 'developed'.

Altogether, the thesis highlights the power of development discourses in determining notions about African societies. How we imagine and represent Africa is of critical importance. Elaborating African middle classes is not a solution in and of itself but rather a missing part of the development puzzle. By making the middle classes more visible we can begin to ask more comprehensive development questions.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Middle Classes, Modernity, and Development**

The end of European imperialism in Africa marked a fundamental shift in discourses of modernity. With the demise of empire and rise of African nations, colonial narratives of ‘primitive natives’ incapable of self-rule were no longer tenable. These discourses gave way to development narratives asserting that Africans were not confined to backwardness, but could in fact develop into more ‘advanced’, ‘modern’ societies. The advent of nations in Africa elevated ‘natives’ to the same world category as their erstwhile ‘colonizers’, and intimated African access to modern rights and privileges. For Western-educated Africans especially, entry into the comity of nations implied significant changes in their identity and status within the modern world.<sup>26</sup> Western-educated Africans stood between ‘African backwardness’ and ‘Western modernity’ and, as such, emerged as important middling groups between colonialism’s constraints and Africa’s potential for national growth. Western-educated Africans in certain occupations (such as doctors, teachers, engineers and the like) were also positioned between owners of capital and highly exploited laborers. Their middling character, therefore, was not only between traditionalism and modernity but also as middle classes between labor and capital. This chapter investigates these two middling dimensions of Western-educated Africans in the transition from empire to nation in order to argue the longstanding existence of ‘modern’ West African middle classes.

Middle classes in West Africa are necessarily plural; they represent the multifarious and fragmented groups between owners of property and the propertyless.

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<sup>26</sup> I use the term ‘Western-educated’ Africans here refer to Africans schooled in Western educational systems (either in West Africa or abroad).

African middle classes include salaried professionals as well as employees in commerce, industry, and service jobs; self-employed and direct producers such as farmers, artisans, and crafts makers; and also small-scale capitalists such as shopkeepers, operators, family firms, and small agricultural and industrial owners of production.<sup>27</sup> The central argument in this chapter is that at the end of colonialism, Western-educated Africans represented a subset of the middle classes that stood between Western ideals of modernity and African hopes for national development. Their class identity formed as a function of their middling social, economic, and political standings which, in turn, propelled them towards particular nationalist projects. The chapter identifies Western-educated African middle classes in the transition from empire to nation by their relation to traditionalism and modernity, labor and capital, local status groups, and their proclivity towards various nationalist projects.

I open with a discussion of modernity followed by elaboration of classes in ‘modern’ capitalist societies. I build on insights from Karl Marx, Max Weber and others about middle classes in capitalist societies, and suggest ways to conceptualize or identify West African middle classes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of class relations in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire in order to illustrate the plurality of middle class configurations.

### Colonial Narratives of Modernity and the Rise of the Nation-State

Colonial discourses upheld the West as the epicenter of the ‘modern’ world. As the supposed source of industrial capitalism, constitutional government, and representative democracy Western societies were depicted as beacons of progress

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<sup>27</sup> Diane Davis, Discipline and Development (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

demonstrating the way forward for less developed societies. Imperial narratives promoted European institutions and practices as markers of ‘civilization’, and presented political, economic, and social structures of the West as seemingly unified components of ‘modern’ nations.<sup>28</sup> Western societies, it was suggested, not only exhibited elaborate market relations and high degrees of monetization they also, allegedly, were comprised of rational decision-making citizens, with secular belief systems that freed them from the strictures of religion and restrictive kinship bonds. Europe was characterized by “individualism, the centrality of Reason, autonomy of action, liberal democracy, the Rule of Law, the open future, and an obsession with novelty.”<sup>29</sup> The trappings of ‘modern’ Western life were, it was suggested, also evident in the existence of small nuclear families with access to rapid communications, advanced forms of transportation, and innovative technologies. In both private and public spheres, Western social structures and lifestyles were portrayed as signs and standards of ‘modernity’.

Africa on the other hand was portrayed as modernity’s Other. ‘Traditional’ African societies, imperial discourses suggested, were stuck in static, closed systems with ascribed social roles and extensive kinship patronage. Africans were, supposedly, governed by animalistic urges, belief in superstition, and ritual practices. Unaccustomed, for the most part, to urban life, Africans displayed all the uncouth behaviors of ‘uncivilized’ people – bearing exposed chests, engaging in polygamy, and living in rudimentary housing structures. Discourses of modernity in the colonial period were characterized, therefore, by a series of antinomies supposedly

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<sup>28</sup> James Ferguson *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, (Durham: Duke University Press 2006), 177. Modernity, Ferguson explains, was presented in imperial discourses as a ‘package’ of institutions, despite the fact that disparate components of Western nations emerged separately and contingently.

<sup>29</sup> Olufemi Taiwo, “Prophets Without Honor: African Apostles of Modernity in the Nineteenth Century” *West Africa Review*, (2001):1-3

distinguishing Western and African societies. In simplified form, the binaries of colonial narratives differentiated between ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ societies, ‘advanced’-‘primitive’, ‘urban’-‘rural’, ‘scientific’-‘superstitious’, ‘secular’-‘animist’, and ‘calculating’ versus ‘supposing’. These supposed dichotomies undergirded European imperial ideology, and provided legitimizing categories for colonial missions and projects.<sup>30</sup> While we must recognize imperial heterogeneity, it is clear that colonial discourses bifurcated the world into opposed antinomies and placed Africa outside the realm of the modern world.

Furthermore, colonial ideas about African modernity (or assumed lack thereof) adopted a continental, more specifically, sub-continental dimension. Africa, understood as the ‘dark continent’, was assigned a racial identity through its encounter with Europe, and people of African descent subsequently, to varying degrees, internalized a Black identity. ‘Sub-Saharan’ or ‘Black’ Africa was ‘invented’ by homogenizing disparate peoples on the basis of a constructed racial identity.<sup>31</sup> Coastal West Africa specifically and ‘Africa’ in general, were subsumed in racialized, reductionist discourses of modernity that organized Africans into the subordinately ranked category of ‘Blacks’. However, when the ethnic plurality of African societies is considered, there is little reason to discuss the sub-continent as a unified whole aside from its legacy of imperial incursion and colonial subjugation. Inscribed into racial and imperial hierarchies, Africa’s colonially-given identity as a Black continent played a central role in shaping conceptions about African modernity. ‘Africa’ equaled ‘Black’ and the extent to which ‘modernity’ applied was questioned in accordance with imperial beliefs about racial capacities and social hierarchies.<sup>32</sup> Colonial

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<sup>30</sup> Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world (Berkeley: University of Berkeley 1997)

<sup>31</sup> Mudimbe 1988

<sup>32</sup> James Ferguson’s treatment of moral, racial and social hierarchies is instructive (Ferguson 2006).

narratives of African modernity were formed, therefore, from contrived notions about the collective ‘backwardness’ of Black people, more so than from specific analysis of the everyday practices and idiosyncrasies of, say, Mende, Hausa, or Akan people.

To be sure, accounts by European anthropologists were decisive in generating ideas about ‘primitive’ African societies, and their ‘expert’ opinions were bolstered by popular European literature, imperial propaganda, and ‘scientific’ theories on racial and social hierarchies. The categories and classifications devised by anthropologists and colonial officers still have profound, ongoing effects on local and global perceptions of African peoples. Despite the diversity of African societies, processes of racial essentializing and the construction of Africans into ‘uncivilized’ ‘tribes’ decided their position in a colonially-prescribed modern world. Africa, a continent of varied ethnic and religious groups with complex political and economic structures that changed continuously through exchange and encounter with people from other parts of the world, was constructed as a perennially ‘primitive’ place distinct from the ‘modern’ West. As James Ferguson writes, modernity is a “powerful discourse of identity” which, in the colonial period, constructed Africans as hopelessly backward, constrained by their racial deficiencies and traditional ascriptions.<sup>33</sup> Understood in colonial discourse as racially inferior and socially regressive, the global status of Africans was beyond and beneath that of ‘modern’ societies.

### Modernity Re-defined

In the period around World War II, colonialism’s contradictions became abundantly clear, and notions of modernity were necessarily reconfigured. Africans, employed to fight on behalf of their respective colonial powers, observed mass carnage and misery

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<sup>33</sup> Ferguson 2006:177

in Europe which challenged imperial myths of ‘civilization’ and diminished the ‘White man’s’ mystique. Also, at the same time that Allied forces denounced Nazi and Japanese imperial aggression, rebuffed anti-Semitism, and declared the evils of occupation, France and Britain maintained vast colonies in Africa and Asia, insisted on enforcing the color bar, and subjected others to their external rule. These inconsistencies met more outrage and resistance in the period around World War II. In the United States, Europe and across the African continent vociferous demands were made for self-determination and racial equality. Opposition to discrimination of ‘Negro’ people around the world posed a particularly strong challenge to racial hierarchies, and exacerbated the growing crisis of empire.

In this context of contested and declining empire the notion of African nations was pushed to the fore. The idea of African nation-states implied self-rule, the conferral of citizenship rights, and recognition of African equality by other nations. In the mid-twentieth century imaginary, Africa nations stood as the promise of advancement – the universal stamp of political legitimacy and insurer of rights and privileges.<sup>34</sup> As members of the comity of nations, Africans moved category from colonial *subjects* to national *citizens*, adopting new local and global identities in the process. Modernity, it seemed, was no longer the possession of a ‘superior race’ but, rather, a characteristic of advanced societies in the race of nations. Nations existed, as it were, in a geopolitical hierarchy in which countries with economic and military might gained superordinate position. Presumably, with the formation of nation-states, Africans had the dual opportunities to be recognized on a global level as well as to move their new nations up the rungs of the global hierarchy of nation-states. The nation appeared as the gateway to African modernity. ‘Development’, it was suggested, would fast track the establishment of modern institutions (such as hospitals,

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<sup>34</sup> Ferguson 2006

factories, universities etc.) as well as infrastructure and amenities (like paved roads, bridges, electricity and running water), thus propelling African nations squarely into the modern world.

This narrative of ‘modernity’, however, is grossly problematic. Firstly, the notion that Western nations ‘developed’ in a unilinear, systematically planned fashion elides the plethora of contestation involved in the establishment of modern republics and parliamentary democracy in Europe and North America. There was no inevitable march of history or magical formula by which Western nations produced institutions and mentalities associated with modernity. Instead, nation-states were formulated contingently and gradually through unpredictable civil wars and social revolutions. The long history of liberalism and capitalist expansion in Europe and the United States would be impossible to reproduce, and could never emerge as a ‘package’.<sup>35</sup> The version of ‘Western modernity’ extolled in the transition from empire to nation and suggested as the universal telos of all nations was, in fact, the product of particular histories that included massive plundering, social dislocations, and political upheaval that we could not (nor would we want to) replicate in the geopolitical arrangement of nations.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, the accumulation of capital in the West was directly related to surplus generated from the trans-Atlantic slave trade, imperial extraction of natural minerals and resources, and the exploitation of labor in colonies.<sup>37</sup> The ‘modern

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<sup>35</sup> Barrington Moore (1966) and Karl Polanyi (2001) demonstrate the contingency and contestation of democratic and capitalist historical development. Liberalism cannot be assumed as a universal given. I also am acknowledging here the contributions of slavery and colonialism to the growth of Western metropolises.

<sup>36</sup> Borrowing from Enrique Dussel, Lewis Gordon refers to the horrors of conquest since 1492 (i.e. genocide, slavery, exploitation etc) as “modernity’s underside” (Lewis Gordon *Existential Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge 2000): 1). This phrase explains why there should be no desire to replicate the actions taken for the capital accumulation that led to ‘Western modernity’.

<sup>37</sup> Underdevelopment and dependency theories clearly make the connection between the economic growth of Europe and the restricted or disfigured growth of African countries. These theories are addressed in more detail in chapter three of this thesis.

world', consequently, was built with and by Africans, not before or without them. Modernity was never an exclusive feature of advanced Western civilizations but, rather, the "shared historical present" of all people within the reaches of an expanding capitalist world system.<sup>38</sup> As Geschiere *et al* suggest, 'African modernity' cannot be divorced from developments elsewhere, nor can it be described as a delayed attempt to converge with a Western future.<sup>39</sup> African modernity is not the unilinear adoption of Western institutions and practices but, rather, the acquisition, cooption, and transformation of elements from both Western and African traditions. This leads to the belief that, "Europe was made by its imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe."<sup>40</sup> African modernity is, and has been, coeval with Western modernity. Neither one is clearly definable but both must be understood as developing in conjunction with each other through material, cultural, and ideological exchange. As more scholars encourage us to conceive it, African modernity is a product of *bricolage* – a patchwork of traditions, cultures, and epistemes.<sup>41</sup>

### Middle Classes in the Modern World

Discourses of 'modernity' were instrumental in constructing notions of African progress at the close of colonialism; they (problematically) prompted Africans to pursue models of 'development' exhibited in Western nations. Importantly, however, the prosperity associated with 'modernity' in Western societies was, in large part, a

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<sup>38</sup> Ferguson (2006): 168

<sup>39</sup> Peter Geschiere et al, Readings in Modernity in Africa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008)

<sup>40</sup> Cooper and Stoler (1997):1

<sup>41</sup> Pierre-Joseph Laurent "The Process of Bricolage Between Mythic Societies and Global Modernity" (2005); Geschiere et al (2008); Brian Larkin "Degraded Images, Distorted Sounds: Nigerian Video and the Infrastructure of Piracy" (2008); Jojada Verrips and Birgit Meyer, "Kwaku's Car: The Struggles and Stories of a Ghanaian Long-Distance Taxi Driver" (2008); Frederick Cooper "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backwards Africans, and the Development Concept"(1997)

product of decades of capitalist accumulation. Capitalism is a socially transforming system that separates societies on the basis of property ownership. The two great classes it creates are owners of capital and those who own nothing but their labor. Capitalism cannot merely be understood, however, by its constitutive parts but must instead be understood by relations between them. Thus it is the relation of capital to labor that establishes a capitalist system. Capitalism must be analyzed as an “organic whole” – a system of social relations with structures and dynamics of its own.<sup>42</sup>

However, productive relations exist beyond those of capital and wage-working labor – these include, importantly, a variety of middle classes. The rest of this chapter examines the ‘middle class’ in Western social theory and provides a conceptual framework for how we might understand West African middle classes. I affirm the existence of capitalist development in West Africa, and investigate the use of ‘class’ in African contexts. By analyzing debates at the end of empire I point to the salience of class as well as the utility of acknowledging middle classes. I identify Western-educated Africans as dominant segments of the middle classes in the transition from empire to nation, and indicate ways to identify West African middle classes more generally. In making West African middle classes more visible we begin to see ‘African modernity’ as more than just creation of the nation, but also as the introduction of occupations, lifestyles, and consumption patterns characteristic of modern middle classes.

### Capitalist Expansion in Africa

From the sixteenth century on African societies have been entangled in webs of capitalist development, and engaged in exchange of ‘goods’ such as slaves, palm oil,

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Antonio, Marx and Modernity: key readings and commentary (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2003). While Antonio urges for the explication of capitalism as an “organic whole” this is a challenge of immense proportions; it requires the construction of a theory of capitalism akin to Marx’s *Das Kapital*. Needless to say, this kind of scholarship is not easy to come by.

cowrishes, natural dyes (such as indigo), textiles, gold, diamonds and ivory. Even though Africa was not a particularly large zone of European investment in comparison to Asia and the Americas, the centrality of trade to imperial projects in Africa can scarce be denied. Trading companies, like the French West Africa Company (CFAO), played a significant role in expanding imperial holdings and conferred the dual advantage of imperial and capitalist expansion.<sup>43</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, African markets became a new, albeit limited, frontier for European capitalists, and helped alleviate European balance of trade problems as well as the over-production crisis caused by shrinking European markets.<sup>44</sup> Natural resources were increasingly extracted from Africa, sold in European markets and exported back to Africa in the form of cheap commodities.<sup>45</sup> In addition, cheap labor and limited competition made overseas investment attractive and profits large for European stockholders.

As European interests settled more on the continent, plantation economies grew and contributed to the production of groundnuts, cocoa, tea, coffee and the like. Colonialism exacted African labor to produce surplus, instituting, among other things, taxation policies designed to increase cultivation and magnify metropole profit.<sup>46</sup> The colonial era implanted a capitalist ethos in African societies by displacing populations from their lands and turning populations towards wage labor.<sup>47</sup> In addition, farmers were oriented to capitalist production through the pressures of taxes, and goods transporters, shopkeepers, and distributors of various kinds engaged in capitalist

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Aldrich, Greater France: a history of French overseas expansion (New York: Palgrave, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> John Hobson "Imperialism, A Study" (2006). According to John Hobson, and later followers of his theory such as Lenin and Trotsky, the "shrinking" of European markets was a significant factor in imperial ambitions and conquest.

<sup>45</sup> James Olson and Robert Shadle, Historical Dictionary of the British Empire (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996)

<sup>46</sup> Michael Crowder, "Whose Dream was it Anyway? Twenty-five Years of African Independence" (New York: Garland Publishers, 1993)

<sup>47</sup> The extent of capitalism's reach in African territories before and during colonialism is debatable. What I am flagging here is the introduction and expansion of market mentalities related to commodity exchange.

exchange. The expansion of capitalism was not, of course, a solely economic or market-based transformation; it entailed radical revisions to social relations at all levels of society, and changing centers of wealth coincided, necessarily, with revisions in political arrangements.

### Emerging Classes in African Contexts

Class stratification is widely acknowledged as a feature of capitalist societies as small populations accumulate capital and inequalities between the haves and have-nots increase dramatically over time. A seldom glorified but central component of capitalist expansion is its conversion of propertyless people into wage laborers, and their subsequent dependence on capitalists for their livelihood. Of course, varying theories of capitalist development exist, but many recognize that the system is premised on the multiplication of surplus in the hands of capitalists and the growing reliance of wage-workers on those with capital.<sup>48</sup> Whereas class is an immensely useful heuristic in analyzing the distribution of property and power in Western societies, its applicability to African contexts is more contested. Analyses of African social divisions typically focus on ethnicity or “tribe” and tensions between various ethnic groups like the Yoruba, Igbo, Krio, Mende, Fante and Asante.<sup>49</sup> Religious distinctions are also frequently examined as the “triple heritage” of Christianity, Islam, and African religious traditions are noted as significant factors in social and political life.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, gender and age differences receive attention as the differentiated

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<sup>48</sup> Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” (1852) in Antonio 2003; Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation (Boston: Beacon, 2001)

<sup>49</sup> Scholars have noted, however, that many constructions of African ‘tribes’ and ‘tribal’ rivalries emerged from colonial policies of ‘divide and conquer’.

<sup>50</sup> Ali Mazrui, The Africans (New York: Little Brown and co., 1987)

experiences of men, women, youth and elderly people are recognized as important social divisions.

It is also undeniable, however, that in African colonies and the nation-states that followed them, select African and European populations benefited handsomely from market economies, while others clearly became subordinate to capital and suffered as dispensable wage-workers. Groups of laborers, managers, and owners received differentiated amounts of capital and, consequently, enjoyed varying lifestyles and life chances. Beginning with labor protests in the late 1920s the language of class gained currency in African contexts through the idea of an emergent but restive modern “working class”. Colonial offices attempted to manage African labor unrest by employing strategies used to placate European industrial laborers; through negotiations with labor unions and provision of labor protections colonial officers hoped to quell African laborers. Class rhetoric also surfaced in anti-colonial ideology which suggested that imperial powers were a “ruling class” over exploited black people. African nationalists employed the language of class to justify revolutionary action. As empires waned, therefore, the rhetoric of class conflict and revolutionary classes became increasingly more prevalent.

Most significantly, however, the end of empire coincided with a shift in the balance of power that saw the rise of the United States and Soviet Union as antagonistic global superpowers. Ideological positions expressed through the Cold War played a central role in configuring post-colonial Africa. Factions identifying with anti-West, anti-imperial, and or anti-racist agendas evoked Marxist-inspired beliefs to oppose colonialism on one hand and capitalist expansion on the other. In West Africa, the logic of capitalism so forcefully promoted by colonialism was cast as the great divider of African communities and oppressor of ‘Negro’ people at large. Various West African leaders and activists claimed that colonialism had created

classes in African societies which had previously been “classless”.<sup>51</sup> They argued that European intervention on the continent had disrupted “traditional” African principles of communalism and egalitarianism, and left in their stead uneven class-stratified societies. As African nations emerged, they believed, efforts had to be made to reinstate more equal societies. At the end of empire, therefore, West African liberatory movements incorporated class categories and theories (often Marxist-inspired) into visions of postcolonial Africa. The acknowledgment of class-based exploitation and critiques of capitalism made in this period were undoubtedly fuelled by the Cold War, but also derived more generally from revolutionary movements grounded in Marxian analysis.

However, the applicability of class in West African contexts is still widely challenged and the next sections elaborate why. Of the varied and oftentimes contradictory perspectives on class in Africa, three bear elucidation here: 1.) The rejection of class as a heuristic for African social analysis; 2.) Use or adoption of Marxist conceptions of class structure and class conflict; and 3.) Focus on political and ruling ‘elites’ instead of dominant classes. A brief examination of each perspective follows.

### The Salience of Class in West Africa

The suggestion that classes exist in West Africa is reviled by some who see social hierarchies as simply a vestige of colonialism, and dismissed altogether by others who maintain the idea of African classlessness. Those who reject the relevance of class often cite African value systems and social relations that are antithetical to capitalist development and class formation. The thrust of these arguments is often that

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<sup>51</sup> S.N. Sangmpam, “Sociology of “Primitive Societies”, Evolutionism, and Africa” *Sociological Forum* (1995):609-632.

capitalism has not taken hold in Africa or has not formed the classes typically associated with capitalist development. Scholars who hold this position contend that prior to colonialism African societies were largely “pre-capitalist” and operated on simple moral economies. Within moral economies, communitarianism prevails and no-one starves or wallows for work as customs of cooperation and reciprocity ensure basic subsistence for all. The ethos of moral economies, or “economies of affection”, prompt distribution of resources according to need, not accumulation, and result in largely “classless” or egalitarian societies.<sup>52</sup> Tremendous variation of this argument exists but the major conclusions drawn include: the all-out rejection of the existence of classes in African societies; elevation of kinship or lineage relations of production over capitalist ones<sup>53</sup>; and the recognition of hybrid or “pseudo-capitalist” social relations that reflect a mix of traditional African models of subsistence and imperially enforced material production.<sup>54</sup> Despite variation in arguments about the salience of class, there is common suspicion about the strength of capitalist classes in Africa and skepticism about the capacity for large scale capital accumulation in societies with supposedly communalist or kinship-based ethos.<sup>55</sup>

Further supporting the dismissal of class analysis in Africa is the fact that class affiliations are seldom articulated. West Africans would sooner self-identify as members of particular ethnic groups, religious institutions, political parties and national polities before making claims about supposed class identities. The natural question that follows this observation is whether class identities can be assigned if they are not professed. Can claims about African “bourgeoisie” be credible if

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<sup>52</sup> Goran Hyden, No Shortcuts to Progress (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983)

<sup>53</sup> Sangmpam (1995)

<sup>54</sup> S.N. Sangmpam, Pseudocapitalism and the Overpoliticized State (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1994)

<sup>55</sup> Bongo Adi “The Moral Economy and Prospects of Accumulation in Sub-Saharan Africa” *West Africa Review* (2005); Ian Scott “Middle Class Politics in Zambia”, *African Affairs* (1978):321-334; Sangmpam (1995)

Africans do not self-identify as such? The argument can be made that ‘tribes’ or ethnicities, religion and gender are strongly held identities that transcend property differences and, consequently, nullify or at least challenge the appositeness of class.

I hold that class is a relevant and useful social analytic concept in Africa. Although weak in some places and stronger in others, capitalism was firmly entrenched in Africa by the time independence was achieved. Capitalist social relations were evident in the colonial production chains that linked African commodities to global markets, the expansion of wage-work and exploitation of labor, and the accumulation of capital in both urban and rural settings by Africans and non-Africans alike. In African colonies, institutions and mechanisms of Western capitalist development became more established in the form of commercial, financial and, eventually, industrial economic activity. These changes entailed the introduction of money exchange<sup>56</sup>; the establishment of banks (as early as 1853 in West Africa)<sup>57</sup>; normalization of wage-work and money income; construction of port cities and customs legislature; increase in commodity flows; and an ever-expanding and complex division of labor. Capitalist developments produced new social configurations as some groups amassed wealth and privilege while others were dispossessed of their means of production and became more dependent on wage labor. Compared to periods prior to colonization, West African societies by the end of World War II contained new forms of social organization and economic stratification. Novel forms of wealth were on display alongside new types of work and remuneration. Landed owners, local businesses, foreign interests, manual laborers, salaried clerks, and a host of other ‘workers’ all comprised the unequal capitalist economies of

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<sup>56</sup> Various mediums of exchange were used in West African trade prior to the introduction of coins and eventually paper money. Cowrie shells and bronze ingots were particularly popular forms of currency.

<sup>57</sup> The Banque d’Afrique Occidentale was created by the French in present-day Senegal in 1853. It was originally called Banque du Sénégal, but changed its name in 1901 when it expanded and began administering a common currency for French West Africa.

colonial West Africa. Examples of changing classes and social relations provoked by capitalist expansion are provided later in the chapter. Regardless of the existence and continuation of moral economies, the fact remains that capital accumulation, private ownership, and money economies are, and have been, significant components of West African societies.

Constructions of “classless” African societies romanticize the past or tell impartial accounts of the present. Disparities in wealth and privilege are evident all over West Africa and extend back to pre-colonial stratification within and between villages, kingdoms and empires. Class does not apply solely to the conditions of production found in capitalist societies but can, rather, be used as a universal concept to signal production, property, or prestige-based social stratification. Inequalities in wealth and status reflect class distinctions and influence social relations even in the presence of strong cultural and ethnic divisions. This is not to say that class is the predominant organizer in all societies. It is merely one of a variety of distinctions used to arrange social orders. Class, ethnicity, religion, gender and race are not mutually exclusive but, rather, important intersecting, and sometimes overlapping, social constructions. Colonialism constructed new social relations and identities including new class configurations introduced through colonial extraction and capitalist production.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, moral economies operate in conjunction with expanding capitalist economies, not entirely outside of them. At the end of empire African colonies were engaged in commodity production of cash crops and industrial commodities. This fact does not change when we consider that large populations (probably the majority) of Africans were not fully involved in these production chains. Social reciprocity and

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<sup>58</sup> Bruce Berman, “Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State” *African Affairs* (1998) 305-341

communitarian affection in African communities neither arrested nor attenuated capital accumulation or capitalist inequalities.

### Marxist Influences on African Class Structure

In the 1920s African colonies began to be described in European-style class terms. Discussion of the fact (or fiction) of European-style African classes was spurred in large part by labor unrest and the spread of Marxist-inspired revolutionary ideology. Towards the end of empire, Marxist concepts and class categories were adopted by anti-colonial projects, political parties, and national liberation movements that used ideas about exploitation of ‘working classes’, domination by ‘international bourgeoisie’ and revolution by the ‘masses’ to explain the colonial predicament and call Africans to action. Topics such as forced labor, land rights, hut taxes, and the violent repression of trade unions increasingly assumed class dimensions and were discussed in class terms. Marxist readings of African colonial problems prompted attempts to identify or construct revolutionary consciousness amongst African farmers and laborers. African ‘working classes’ were presumed to exist (when they often did not) and assumed to be harbingers of social revolution. Attempts to map Marxist class categories on to African contexts led to inconsistent and bizarre constructions like the following:

In Africa, the peasant masses constitute the largest part of the working class and potentially the fundamental element of a socialist revolution. But these masses are dispersed, unorganised and generally speaking non-revolutionary.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Jean Copans, “The marxist conception of class” *Review of African Political Economy* (1985):29

Statements to this effect demonstrate desperate desires amongst anti-colonial groups and scholars to find revolutionary classes within African societies, and to identify revolutionary forces as ‘working class’.

In the period around African independence, the USSR played a decisive role in introducing Marxist notions to African contexts. Following its inception in 1919, the Third Communist International (also known as the Comintern or Third International) pursued an aggressive agenda of “world revolution”. The Comintern was committed to applying “all available means, including armed force, [to] the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the State.”<sup>60</sup> With this objective in mind the Comintern supported Communist organizations, unions, and revolutionary thinkers around the world, influencing notable Pan-Africanists such as W.E.B. DuBois and George Padmore.<sup>61</sup> Though it met colonial resistance, the Comintern eventually infiltrated African colonies and influenced African nationalists with revolutionary ideas. It successfully supported nascent trade unions and militant anti-colonial movements.<sup>62</sup> However, the USSR’s actions were far from altruistic. The Soviet Union spread socialist ideology to promote its strategic and diplomatic interests, and neglected rigorous theoretical analysis of African class structures and social issues. As Jean Copans writes, the “Bolsheviks had little to say about African contexts and presumed the *avant garde* nature of the working class even in the face of its absence.”<sup>63</sup> Thus Marxist-Leninist rhetoric was adopted in African contexts in somewhat grafted form, structured in the likeness of European class struggle to fit Soviet ideological and diplomatic needs. The USSR played, therefore, an influential

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<sup>60</sup> Comintern <<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/RUScomintern.htm>>

<sup>61</sup> Holger Weiss and Risto Marjomaa “Comintern and African Nationalism, 1921-1935” <<http://web.abo.fi/fak/hf/hist/delprojekt1.pdf>> (2004)

<sup>62</sup> John Hargreaves, “The Comintern and Anti-Colonialism” *African Affairs* (1993): 255-261

<sup>63</sup> Copans (1985):28

role in shaping the discourse of African class structures and directing visions of national development.<sup>64</sup> Descriptions of African societies, inspired in large part by Karl Marx, prompted the addition of class analysis to the imagining of African nations.

This is not to say, however, that the USSR entirely dominated class analysis in the transition from empire to nation. African nationalists, union leaders, and intellectuals presented varying notions about African class struggle and African Socialism. In general, however, these class theories were anti-imperial in nature, and modified Marxist categories about production to fit racial divisions in colonial stratification. Anti-imperial ideology generally constructed European colonizers as bourgeois ruling classes, and portrayed Africans as collectively oppressed masses. Class struggle, therefore, was between European imperialists and colonized Africans, and African Socialism the remedy for reversing European instillation of private ownership and individualism over communitarian African orientations. To make this argument, African nationalists minimized or ignored differences between Africans, emphasizing instead the common objectives of a unified African revolutionary front.<sup>65</sup> Class struggle, anti-imperial movements suggested, applied solely to tension between Europeans and Africans, and was not an endemic feature of African societies. These constructions of class were necessarily ambiguous and befuddled; they mapped race onto class and denied class distinctions between black Africans. A partial exception was made in references to the so-called “labor aristocracy” that stood as a co-opted

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<sup>64</sup> Chapter three of this thesis provides more analysis of the ways Soviet influence directed national development. Perhaps the most devastating aspect of the Cold War for Africa is that the debates in the West and East were played out violently in African contexts through assassinations, coup d’etats, and long lasting civil wars.

<sup>65</sup> The journal *Afrique Noire* published the following statement in 1951: “Class struggle, the very basis of communism, has no raison d’etre in a country whose society is not a divided one” (Copans 1985: 28). This statement, alongside hundreds like it reinforced the idea that African societies, while caught in class struggle with imperialists, were not engaged in internal forms of stratification or class antagonism.

stratum of the working class that furthered the interests of local and foreign ruling classes.<sup>66</sup> In general, however, careful class analysis was not extended to African social relations; instead, West Africans imposed Marxist class terms on racialized anti-imperial agendas and proliferated baffling class constructs.

The theoretical confusion of anti-imperial class analysis is illustrated in Sekou Touré's writings.<sup>67</sup> He writes in 1959:

We [have] adopted Marxism insofar as it applies to Africa...Marxism can be applied in all its doctrinal aspects by the international working class when it concerns itself with class struggle, but this latter element has been removed to allow all African social categories to engage themselves in the general anti-colonial struggle.<sup>68</sup>

Touré suggests that Marxism applies to African contexts but goes on, however, to reject the relevance of class struggle on the continent. His focus is anti-imperial struggle, not analysis of African class stratification. Used in this way, Marxism provides revolutionary terminology and concepts but is not applied rigorously to inequalities in African colonies and emerging nations. As a result, theoretical difficulties abound in the writings of African liberation leaders at the end of empire.<sup>69</sup> I cannot perform a thorough treatment of this literature here, but the above discussion emphasizes that Marxism was hugely influential in introducing class categories to analysis of African colonial struggles and in constructing visions of post-independence development.

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<sup>66</sup> Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly "Silver, Labor Movements and Capital Migration" in Labor in the Capitalist World-Economy (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1984); Frederick Cooper, Decolonization and African Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

<sup>67</sup> Sekou Touré was an influential anti-imperialist who became the first president of Guinea.

<sup>68</sup> Copans (1985):28

<sup>69</sup> Amílcar Cabral's thinking stands apart as an exception as he attempted more than others to frame indigenous ethnic differences in their own class terms without depending on Marxist-given categories and theories (Copans 1985).

## Political and National Elites

Finally, questions about the salience of class in African contexts arise in discussion about the formation and function of ‘elites’ in emerging African nations. Typical narratives of African independence suggest that African leaders who assumed the reins of power from Europeans came from and developed into political ‘elites’. As West African nations gained independence, those who spoke, read, and wrote European languages filled administrative positions in national bureaucratic structures. The suggestion made in political science literature is that leaders of nationalist movements came from elite groups and replaced colonial officers as national elites. The transfer of power from colonial to African leaders, therefore, resulted in the formation of a “managerial bourgeoisie” composed primarily of Western-educated African elites.<sup>70</sup> Much debate has ensued about whether national leaders and government bureaucrats comprise a class of their own, and no facile conclusions reconcile differing opinions on this issue.<sup>71</sup> One point of agreement, however, is that following independence Africans associated with the nation-state acquired tremendous political and economic privileges. As they gained more control of new offices and institutions, African state officials and government bureaucrats increasingly mismanaged and abused their powers, pilfering from national coffers and enjoying excessive luxuries.<sup>72</sup> National independence created, therefore, a new African aristocracy or national elite enriched primarily through the state.

One of the explanations for the emergence of ‘national elites’ is that capitalist classes in Africa were weak or nonexistent which compelled state bureaucracies to

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<sup>70</sup> Richard Sklar, Corporate Power in an African State (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975):199

<sup>71</sup> Colin Leys, The Rise and Fall of Development Theory (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)

<sup>72</sup> Notorious examples of pilfering governments in West Africa include Sierra Leone’s Siaka Stevens and Nigeria’s Ibrahim Babaginda.

expand and provide infrastructure and general services that entrepreneurial classes would otherwise provide.<sup>73</sup> However, as government bureaucracies swelled they bloated. State bureaucrats engaged in corrupt and clientelist behavior intended to enrich themselves and their cronies. By manipulating political and economic advantage they accumulated capital through the state, and developed into dominant national classes. As Dale Johnson summarizes, “states assumed entrepreneurial functions, giving birth to technocratic, managerial, and technical groupings that [did] not owe their existence to private property” but, rather, to the patronage systems of excessively large bureaucratic state structures.<sup>74</sup>

The concern in much of the literature on national ‘elites’ is about comportment of the African state, and ways in which African leaders deploy political power for personal aggrandizement. Essential to this argument is that African states have encouraged the formation of elites with corrupt, if not parasitic, tendencies. African political parties and state institutions have become ladders for promotion, economic advancement, and social power for the lucky few in position to exploit nepotistic and clientelist relationships. Within this focus on national elites and corrupt bureaucracies, heavy emphasis is placed on the state as an agent of class formation and progenitor of ‘politics of the belly’.<sup>75</sup> Social inequality is created, therefore, by the state which was taken over initially by Western-educated Africans but hijacked in earnest by pervasive greed. Systems of patronage in African nations operate as corrupt versions of moral economies with each person taking a cut from national coffers for themselves and their people.<sup>76</sup> African national elites are, consequently, associated with corruption and selfish embezzlement more than constructive entrepreneurial activity or nation

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<sup>73</sup> Dale Johnson, Middle classes in dependent countries (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1984):15

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Jean-Francois Bayart, The State in Africa (London: Longman, 1993)

<sup>76</sup> Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, Africa Works (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1999)

building. Thus, in this literature, analysis of social inequalities has turned to investigation of authoritarian regimes, one-party democracies, corruption, 'tribal' patronage, and the problem of 'Big Men' in African states.<sup>77</sup> Though valid, these preoccupations discourage more careful consideration of the distribution of power and social stratification in African contexts.

The use of 'elites' as analytical concept is restrictive, and tends to focus analysis only on groups with the highest authority, privilege, prestige and status. However, talking about 'elites' provides little information about non-elites. Non-elites, we must assume, lack power and prestige and, as such, are defined more by what they are not rather than who or what they are. Furthermore, discussion of 'elites' fails to capture social relations between elites and non-elites. In short, we gain little analytic purchase by referring to African 'elites'. While some Africans undoubtedly became part of exclusive political and economic groups at independence, others occupied less powerful positions within West African societies, and were simply engaged in increasingly diverse divisions of labor. Instead of simplistically using 'elites' to refer to dominant groups, we can disaggregate the term and think more expansively about social positions and roles played by Western-educated Africans and others at the end of empire. This type of analysis, I believe, is made possible with the language of class which allows for more carefully description of social relations, and property and status based stratification.

In the preceding sections I covered three of the most popular ways class emerges in discussions of West Africa in the transition from empire to nation: some insist that African societies are fundamentally classless, others adamantly apply Marxist class concepts, and various others shift focus to manipulative and exploitative

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<sup>77</sup> Berman (1998), Bayart (1993)

‘elites’. None of these approaches provide analytic room to theorize Western-educated Africans as a middle class. Social categories such as ‘native’, ‘civilized’, ‘working class’, ‘peasant’, ‘bourgeoisie’, and ‘ruling class’ poorly describe Western-educated Africans at the end of empire. Before independence they were neither labor nor the ruling classes; they occupied a more amorphous middle category. Western-educated Africans functioned as clerks, teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and administrators. Though few in number, they were an important professional core and represented a new bureaucratic order. After independence some assumed or continued positions in the state apparatus but, as indicated above, labeling them elites indicates very little about social relations. Some Western-educated Africans were undoubtedly part of incredibly privileged political groups, but others qualified more as members of modern middle classes – propertyless workers who expressed their status through lifestyle and consumption habits.

### ‘Modern’ Middle Classes

Middle classes are often recognized in ‘modern’ societies but poorly defined. Their character as a class is much contested, as is their role in national development. In ‘modern’ societies, which as discussed previously typically refers to ‘Western capitalist’ societies, middle classes are generally understood as the intermediate groups between labor and capital. They are the propertyless workers, salaried professionals, and self-employed who enjoy some degree of occupational stability and status but do not necessarily control their production or wield tremendous social power.<sup>78</sup> Middle classes in the twentieth century or ‘new’ middle classes, as they are sometimes called, appear with the increased division of labor and expansion of

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<sup>78</sup> Nicolas Abercrombie and John Urry, Capital, labour and the Middle Classes (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983)

bureaucratic structures typical of growing market economies. They represent an ever-increasing and heterogenous segment of capitalist societies that expands with growth in scale of industrial, commercial and state bureaucracies.<sup>79</sup> The notion of middle classes blurs class categories, and the boundaries between working classes, salaried classes, bureaucrats, and owners become harder to define. One clear trend, however, is that occupations in ‘modern’ societies become more differentiated and work is increasingly more organized towards the keeping of accounts and conformation to legal standards. Procedures, protocol, and regulations develop to direct work, institutions, and social relations towards greater rationality and efficiency.<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, modern states produce a host of institutional structures intended to improve social order through bureaucratic oversight and legal administration. Nation-states also create public and governmental institutions that require administration by a variety of functionaries, technocrats and officials organized hierarchically within bureaucratic structures.<sup>81</sup> As a consequence, managers, administrators, and professionals emerge as ‘middle class’ occupations in ‘modern’ societies. Whether located in large institutions, employed as white-collar professionals or self-employed, middle classes enjoy a certain degree of job security, benefits, and status not typically accorded to manual laborers and ‘working classes’. As typically educated members of society located between rich and poor classes, middle classes are also assumed to contribute to the strength of civil society and other democratic structures. They serve, scholars suggest, as a balancing force, ensuring that democracy is not controlled by either ‘ignorant’ masses or manipulative elites.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Arthur Viditch “The New Middle Classe” in *Classes* (New York: New York University Press 1994) 261-280

<sup>80</sup> Stephen Kahlberg, *Max Weber* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005)

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Fernandes (2006); Val Burris, “Class formation in advanced capitalist societies” *Social Praxis* (1980): 147-179

Therefore, development of ‘the middle class’, alongside the rise of the nation-state, is pointed to as a harbinger of deliberative democracy and Western modernity at large.<sup>83</sup>

Middle classes in non-Western societies have historically been understood against these Western ideals, and hopes are placed on middle classes to serve as leaders in modernization and democratization in ‘developing’ countries. However, comparisons between Western ideal types and non-Western societies have “tended to transform the middle class in non-Western countries into an overladen (though understudied) sociological category.”<sup>84</sup> In the following section, I construct a definition of West African middle classes based on Western conceptions of middle class formation and Western social theory. However, rather than super-imposing Western categories onto African contexts or simply comparing them to Western models, I attempt to account for socio-cultural, political and economic factors particular to West Africa. My definition acknowledges Western influences while signaling the importance of West African-specific sociological theorizing. I start, however, with a brief summary of analysis of middle classes in Western social theory.

### Middle Classes in Western Societies: Marx, Weber, and the Boundary Problem

The middle class is necessarily an ill-defined entity. This does not reflect a lack of theoretical penetration but rather the character of reality...[We must] consciously strive to capture this essential ambiguity of [the middle classes] rather than dispose of it.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ronald M. Glassman, *The Middle Class and Democracy in Socio-Historical Perspective* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995); A.F. Pollard “Review [Untitled]” *The English Historical Review* (1906):163-164; Fernandes (2006) English historian A.F. Pollard declared the advent of the middle classes and the rise of the nation-state as the two indispensable “factors” in the triumph of modernity over the Middle Ages (Pollard 1906).

<sup>84</sup> Fernandes (2006): xxvii

<sup>85</sup> Loic Waquant, “Making Class” in *Bringing Class Back* (Boulder: Westview Press 1991):57

The ‘middle class’ is a nebulous and contested social category. As Loïc Wacquant intimates above, it is “ill-defined” because of its tremendous complexity and not, necessarily, as a result of analytic feebleness. Despite ambiguity in its meaning, the ‘middle class’ is an oft cited social category believed to possess significant political and economic meaning. In popular literature, the ‘middle class’ is deployed without conceptual or empirical specification, but its use conjures strong enough sentiments to justify changes in government policies and development strategies. The more the ‘middle class’ is divorced from historical specificity, the more it depends on abstract imagery. In this sense, the ‘middle class’ is more a myth than reality; it is a reified concept based on sentimental idealized images of socio-historical types formed in the recent past primarily from social images in the United States. The model of the U.S. ‘middle class’ is furthered in the popular imagination by the imagery of white picket fences protecting nuclear families, cars and hi-tech appliances that symbolize the ‘typical’ modern life. In common parlance the ‘middle class’ refers to educated salaried professionals whose lifestyles and proclivities reflect modern Western normality. The ‘middle class’ in the West is conceived as an individualistic, meritocratic, and progressive stratum of society. Its associated ideology is that hard work and respect for education yields economic rewards and opportunities for social mobility, and that the benefits enjoy by the ‘middle class’ are available to every determined citizen in a democratic and economically advanced nation-state. Threats to the ‘middle class’ are seen, therefore, as threats to the health and well-being of the modern nation, and the expansion of the ‘middle class’ is framed in a congratulatory narrative of economic and material progress. In this way, the ‘middle class’ is woven in as a principal thread in the broader narrative of modernization and liberal-democratic capitalist development.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002)

## Marx and the Two-Class Bias

We must not, however, speak of the ‘middle class’ but rather middle classes. Middle classes have been theorized by a plethora of Western social theorists from Aristotle to more contemporary scholars but, arguably, the most influential analysis has come from Karl Marx and Max Weber. Marx postulated a dual class structure in capitalist societies. He argues in *Capital* that capitalists generate surplus value through the exploitation of labor and strategic deployment of technological innovation. In a capitalist mode of production, propertyless workers are forced to sell their labor for their subsistence, and are made increasingly more dependent on capital. As a byproduct of this structural relation of production, exploited wage workers form as one class and proprietors and capitalists as another. Marx describes these classes as proletariat and bourgeoisie respectively and contends that they develop into “two great hostile camps” based on the structural imbalance inherent to capitalist relations of production.<sup>87</sup> Formation of these dichotomous classes in capitalist development is a highly uneven and relational process, with neither bourgeoisie nor proletariat able to form without the other.<sup>88</sup> As capital is concentrated in capitalist groups and wage workers are systematically exploited, the classes are increasingly more polarized. Individuals within a given class share the same position in their society’s system of property relations and experience similar material constraints. Amongst the proletariat collective awareness of exploitation breeds class consciousness, while the bourgeoisie seeks to maintain dominance through state structures and ruling ideology.<sup>89</sup> Class establishes the socio-material conditioning of individual lives and shapes beliefs according to class relations to the means of production. The tendency of capitalist

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<sup>87</sup> Engels “The 1888 English Edition” (1888) <  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/preface.htm#preface-1888>>

<sup>88</sup> Antonio (2003); Johnson (1984)

<sup>89</sup> Antonio (2003)

development, therefore, is to generate structurally unequal social relations at the level of production which leads to the formation of antagonistic classes with opposed interests and conflicting political objectives. Marx claims that “separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class.”<sup>90</sup>

While Marx insisted on dichotomous internecine class structures formed through historically determined systems of social production, he also noted the existence of intermediate classes. Recognizing that small producers, self-employed groups, artisans and commercial wageworkers occupy different positions to capitalist production than the proletariat and bourgeoisie, Marx theorized formation of these intermediate classes and their alliances with either workers or large capitalists.<sup>91</sup> Marx identified these middle classes as “petite bourgeoisie” and described them as groups between labor on the one side and capitalists and landed proprietors on the other.<sup>92</sup> Petite bourgeoisie exist in several forms, which include simple commodity producers (such as commercial traders, artisans, and small farmers) who produce commodities directly and also own their means of production. Other petite bourgeoisie (managers, supervisors, bureaucrats, and salaried professionals etc.) employ labor power, but tend to work alongside their employees and have no control of the means of production. Still others exist as propertyless workers (such as clerks, administrators, and technicians) and small-scale capitalists (like shopkeepers) that are vulnerable to exploitation and devastation by big capital. According to Marx, the inability of these

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<sup>90</sup> Antonio (2003): 63

<sup>91</sup> ‘Commercial workers’ refer here to the groups that develop alongside the extension of industrial capital. In *Capital* (1888) Marx notes that expansion of commodity capital and money economies creates greater need for efficient administration in the form of standard and calculated prices, book-keeping, and account management. He contends ‘commercial workers’ develop to address these needs. However, Urry (1973) points out that even if the development of commodity capitalism necessitated these bureaucratic changes, Marx does not explain why this function is performed by ‘new’ middle classes, as opposed to existing bourgeois or proletariat groups. John Urry, *Towards a Structural Theory of the Middle Class, Acta Sociologica* (1973): 175-187.

<sup>92</sup> Martin Nicolaus, “Proletariat and Middle Class in Marx”, *Studies on the left* (1967):44-45.

middle classes to compete with or oppose large-scale capitalists leads to their eventual disbandment and subsequent absorption into the working classes. As Marx and Engels describe in *Capital*, the “diminutive capital [of petite bourgeoisie] does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with large capitalists, partly because their specialised skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production.”<sup>93</sup>

Marx also suggests that intermediate strata, such as religious clergy, intellectuals and politicians, ally themselves with ruling classes and assist the domination of exploited groups through moralizing, naturalizing, and legalizing ideology.<sup>94</sup> In this logic, ideational and cultural production in capitalist societies is undertaken by intermediate classes for the benefit of capitalists and landed classes. What’s more, propertied petite bourgeoisie rely on surplus generated by direct producers and “rest as a burden on the laboring foundation, [increasing] the social security and power of the upper [classes].”<sup>95</sup> Marx thus envisioned the reestablishment of a dichotomous class system with intermediary groups cast into either bourgeois or proletariat ranks, absorbed eventually into the fold of one of two polar classes. With ever-increasing polarization in the social organization of labor, Marx foresaw the declining significance of middle classes and their eventual demise.

History has borne out Marx’s prediction to some degree. Self-employed workers and small-scale producers have suffered at the hands of large-scale modern producers and evidence of their decline in ‘industrial societies’ has been amassed.<sup>96</sup> However, Marx failed to account for the emergence of a ‘new’ middle classes of

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<sup>93</sup> Rick Ogmundson, Collected Works Vol. 6 1845-1848 (New York: International Publishers, 1976): 491-2

<sup>94</sup> Antonio (2003)

<sup>95</sup> Nicolaus (1967): 47)

<sup>96</sup> Burris (1980)

professional, technical and administrative labor forms.<sup>97</sup> Marx misjudged the persistence of clerks, technicians, managers and professionals in capitalist societies, a blunder that has been dubbed the ‘embarrassment of the middle classes’.<sup>98</sup> Marxists have since attempted to account for the persistence of middle classes in capitalist societies, and their relation to labor and capital. One position holds that clerks, technicians, managers, and professional workers are so dependent on the authority of ruling classes they simply serve as an extension of it, and function as a pliable appendage of capitalist interests.<sup>99</sup> A second perspective focuses on similarities middle classes share with working classes based on both groups’ lack of ownership over their means of production. Middle classes, therefore, share interests with working classes that supersede any of the similarities they have with ruling classes.<sup>100</sup> Yet another position contends that middle classes bifurcate along two lines: bureaucrats that ally with ruling classes, and white collar workers who labor alongside proletarian classes.<sup>101</sup> Others argue for middle classes as ambivalent groups that simultaneously experience proletarian market situations as well as bourgeois work conditions, producing equivocal interests and mixed allegiances.<sup>102</sup> For Renner (1953) and Goldethorpe (1982) middle classes are defined by a “service contract” that provides them with salaries and clearly differentiates them from wage workers.<sup>103</sup> Receipt of stable remuneration, security of tenure and relatively good conditions of

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<sup>97</sup> Johnson (1984)

<sup>98</sup> Throughout Marx’s works he refers to the middle classes as ‘transitional’ and also postulates dissolution of the peasantry. However, both peasants and middle classes have persisted in capitalist societies which for Marxists has led to the ‘embarrassment of the middle classes’ paralleled by the ‘embarrassment of the peasantry’ (Wright 1985)

<sup>99</sup> R. Bendix, Work and Authority in Industry (New York: Harper, 1963)

<sup>100</sup> C. Wright Mills, White Collar (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953)

<sup>101</sup> R. Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in An Industrial Society (London: Routledge, 1959)

<sup>102</sup> D. Lockwood, The Blackcoated Worker (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958)

<sup>103</sup> Karl Renner, Transformations of Modern Society in Europe (Vienna: Auflage, 1953); John Goldethorpe, Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain (London: Oxford University Press, 1982)

service transform the “service class” into a conservative dominant group, distinct from bourgeois groups but indebted to their favor.<sup>104</sup>

The above positions represent attempts by various Western theorists, starting in the 1950s, to dialogue with Marx and grapple with the persistence of middle classes. However, deliberation by Marxists on middle classes in capitalist societies peaked in the 1970s with the so-called ‘boundary debates’.<sup>105</sup> These debates highlighted the contradictory and ambiguous social position of middle classes and challenged simplistic taxonomic division of classes into either bourgeoisie or proletariat. Recognizing the blurred nature of boundaries between the two classes scholars suggested that either: middle classes occupied their own distinct place in social orders and were irreducible to one of the two polarized classes<sup>106</sup>; or middle classes maintained multiple and ‘contradictory class locations’.<sup>107</sup> Marx himself noted that “middle and intermediate strata...obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere” but he, nonetheless, insisted on a clearly delineated two class structure.<sup>108</sup> Despite attempts to amend Marx’s oversight of the new middle classes and recognize their complexity, Marxists generally maintain the primacy of a two class structure and endeavor to elaborate alliances and overlapping interests of middle classes with either proletarian or bourgeois forces. While Marxists now acknowledge middle classes as enduring features of capitalist societies, analysis of middle classes is always second order priority for Marxists, overshadowed by the need to explain the social relations of

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<sup>104</sup> Tim Butler and Mike Savage, *Social Change and the Middle Classes* (London: Routledge, 1995)

<sup>105</sup> Scholars of note in these debates include Nicos Poulantzas (1975) and Carchedi (1977). Poulantzas structural definition of the “*petty bourgeoisie*” proved especially provocative and generated much debate (Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1977).

<sup>106</sup> Howard Aldrich and Jane Weiss, “Differentiation within the United States Capitalist Class” *American Sociological Review* (1981):279-290

<sup>107</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1976). Wright’s proposition that middle classes might engage as exploitative capitalists while also experiencing exploitation as producers is interesting and worthy of consideration. However, his reluctance to define middle classes based on attributes characteristic of either bourgeois or proletarian groups further illustrates Marxist reluctance to analyze middle classes on their own terms.

<sup>108</sup> Antonio (2003): 21

production between capitalists and working classes. A discrete two class structure remains the immovable foundation of Marxist class analysis.

### Weber and Class Complexity

Weber's analysis of the middle classes shares significant similarities with Marx's explication. Like Marx, Weber locates social class differentiation in possession and non-possession of property.<sup>109</sup> However, while Marx points to production as the underlying structuring process of class in capitalist societies, Weber suggests market capacity as the basis of social stratification. According to Weber, economic disparities develop based on the ways social rewards are acquired and distributed, namely through processes related to prestige, status, occupation, and life chances.<sup>110</sup> Weberian class relationships are structured, therefore, through market exchange more so than relations of production. Social class differences are visible through disparate consumption patterns, and variations in lifestyle, including access to leisure, location of residence, and commodity-based expressions of social position. Beyond possession of property and differences in relations of production, therefore, Weber focuses on the formation of classes, use of status, and party affiliation as interacting forces in the determination of social power and stratification in capitalist society.<sup>111</sup> For Weber, class does not determine status nor does status determine class, but their association provides hope and incentive for social mobility. He also emphasizes bureaucracy as the organizational form of modern capitalist societies and stresses its production of hierarchical authority structures as well as the need for 'staff' of modern commerce and bureaucratic institutions. Division of labor within modern

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<sup>109</sup> Urry (1973)

<sup>110</sup> Abercrombie and Urry (1983)

<sup>111</sup> Kahlberg (2005)

enterprise and authority relationships produce new forms of prestige and new occupations within capitalist societies. As a result, Weber argues for three types of classes (property classes, commercial classes, and social classes) and presents a three class social structure to account for the most privileged, middle, and negatively privileged groups.<sup>112</sup> Each type of class distinction is structured by occupation as well as different dimensions of wealth, prestige and power within a given society.

The middle classes in Weberian analysis comprise the middle propertied (small land owners), middle commercial classes (self-employed, retailers, farmers, artisans etc.), and middle social groups (petite bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and salaried professionals). Status for bureaucratic and professional middle classes derives from occupational prestige, which is linked to formal education and technical expertise, and expressed through lifestyle, display of material goods, and interaction in social circles of high esteem. Middle classes are highly differentiated groups “showing far greater disparities of conditions within [then] than the working class.”<sup>113</sup> Middle classes, for Weber, are fragmented groups that display little unitary cohesion and become more diffuse with the development of capitalism and its associated division of labor. As with Marxist analysis of middle classes, the ‘boundary problem’ surfaces again as no clear criteria circumscribes the most privileged, middle, and negatively privileged social strata in Weberian analysis. Weber embraces this complexity and suggests that social stratification operates on multiple graded hierarchies rather than discrete class distinctions. Middle classes especially are fragmented with fluid associations and

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<sup>112</sup> Weber differentiates each of these types of classes into positively privileged, middle, and negatively privileged groups. Those who are positively privileged in terms of property represent the segments of the population who own land, capital and commercial goods. Negatively privileged property groups are those with limited or no property, with middle groups in between. Commercial classes range from positively privileged merchants, bankers and sometimes professionals, to mid-scale farmers and craftsmen, and negatively privileged low-skill laborers. The ‘social classes’ refer to specific descriptive categories of social stratification which Weber discusses as working class, petite bourgeoisie, propertyless intelligentsia, and privileged classes. These social classes represent the three or four major class groups in capitalist society.

<sup>113</sup> Abercrombie and Urry (1983): 27

boundaries and, in addition to property differences, the interplay of wealth, status and authority structures social location.

Various scholars have elaborated and modified Weber's conception of the middle classes, leading to a plethora of theoretical propositions. There is considerable debate and variation, for example, in Weberian theories about the relative importance of property, occupation and authority in formation of middle classes and class stratification more generally. C. Wright Mills argues that occupation not property is the basis of social differentiation. In his seminal piece, White Collar, Mills describes the work of professionals, bureaucrats, and functionaries as a particular experience distinct from wage-working laborers and large-scale capitalists. Middle classes are characterized by their occupational indebtedness to institutions and bureaucratic structures, and the relative security they enjoy by virtue of their occupation. Despite the benefits and stability white collar workers experience, Mills contends the middle class worker is "always somebody's man, the corporation's, the government's, the army's; and he is seen as the man who does not rise."<sup>114</sup> He further asserts that the middle classes are characterized by heterogeneity and fragmentation, and the complex forms of stratification fail to map into neat conceptual categories.<sup>115</sup>

Ralf Dahrendorf, another influential theorist of the middle classes, contends that authority more than property is the basis for class divisions. In somewhat Marxist fashion, Dahrendorf (1959) divides modern societies into two main classes – those who possess authority and those without authority. However, his analysis adopts unquestionably Weberian dimensions in his suggestion that authority is primarily exercised through occupational association, and hierarchical positions in institutions, industries, and groups of high social esteem. The middle classes according to

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<sup>114</sup> Mills (1953)

<sup>115</sup> Abercrombie and Urry (1983)

Dahrendorf comprise aids of modern organizations and “staff of enterprise”, civil servants, administrators, and professionals who assume an indispensable place in modern bureaucracies and capitalist firms.<sup>116</sup> They are a “service class” that, when functioning within bureaucracies, are relatively insulated from the austerity of capitalist authority and, consequently behave in the interests of ruling classes. Dahrendorf is clear, however, that middle classes “always *belong* to the ruling class but as such never *are* the ruling class’ (Dahrendorf 1959: 301, original emphasis). This sentiment is furthered by the suggestion that middle classes are “everywhere an important repository of ideas and sentiments supportive of capitalism and the institutions of liberal democracy.”<sup>117</sup>

Another perspective of note is that of Anthony Giddens. Giddens suggests class stratification derives from market capacities of which he notes three important ones: “Ownership of property in the means of production; possession of educational or technical qualifications; and possession of manual labour-power.”<sup>118</sup> These varying market capacities produce three classes in capitalist society – capitalists, white-collar workers or middle classes, and working classes.<sup>119</sup> Education and technical training are the distinguishing features of the middle classes, and the basis for their rewards of higher remuneration, fringe benefits, and greater job security.<sup>120</sup> This analysis constructs the middle classes as socially distinct and permanent sectors of capitalist societies that, despite tremendous variation, can be characterized on their own terms without being understood as partially proletariat or bourgeoisie. Identification of middle classes as educated, technically trained, skilled workers and salaried

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<sup>116</sup> Dahrendorf (1959): 255

<sup>117</sup> F. Bechhofer and B. Elliot “Petit bourgeoisie in Late Capitalism” *Annual Review of Sociology* (1985): 181

<sup>118</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (London: Hutchinson, 1973):107

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

<sup>120</sup> Urry (1973)

professionals does not, however, erase the boundary problem – even with this framing questions remain about where the middle classes begin and end.

The last Weberian insight of note here is that by focusing on status and authority Weberian class analysis opens discussion of various sources of prestige and power outside economic and property-related relations. Factors such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, and religion can be considered as critical sources of stratification and social ordering. These social affiliations, in combination with class, intersect, overlap, and compete in the structuring of capitalist societies and the distribution of social power. This produces a very pluralist conception of social differentiation in which status organizes individuals who share a common lifestyle into hierarchical social positions. Parkin (1979) observes that insights from this expansive consideration of status variables are missed by Marxists because of their unfailing commitment to production as the source of stratification.<sup>121</sup> Parkin writes:

The Marxist preoccupation with the realm of production, increasingly held up as its mark of theoretical rigour, obscures from view any recognition of the possibility that some line of cleavage other than that between capital and labour could constitute the primary source of political and social antagonism. To accept that social inequalities and injustices stemming from racial, religious, linguistic, and sexual divisions could have a reality *sui generis*, not reducible to causes buried deep in the capitalist mode of production, would look suspiciously like a Weberian approach with all its peculiar fascination for distributive patterns and outcomes.<sup>122</sup>

Weberian analysis of middle classes, therefore, provides a complex model for understanding their location within stratified societies. No clear boundaries mark the contours of middle classes, but they are nonetheless identified as distinct, expansive,

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<sup>121</sup> Frank Parkin [Marxism and Class Theory](#) (New York: [Columbia University Press](#), 1979)

<sup>122</sup> Parkin, (1979) in Abercrombie and Urry (1983): 10-11

occupationally-identified groups located between positively and negatively privileged groups. My definition of middle classes draws inspiration from this Weberian appreciation of complexity and identifies the pursuit of modern status as a defining class characteristic of Western-educated segments of West African middle classes in the transition from empire to nation.

### West African Middle Classes

Middle classes, I conclude, are always multifarious, fragmented groups between owners of property and the propertyless. They include salaried professionals; employees in commerce, industry, and service jobs; self-employed and direct producers such as farmers, artisans, and crafts makers; and small-scale capitalists such as shopkeepers, operators, family firms, and small agricultural and industrial owners of production.<sup>123</sup> A dominant fragment of West African middle classes is comprised of Western-educated and technically trained bureaucrats, functionaries and salaried professionals. The higher strata of these groups are managers of enterprise, officers of bureaucracy, and principal agents of ‘development’; they are technical experts, supervisors, inspectors, foremen (and women), accountants, lawyers, engineers, doctors, teachers, and intellectuals. In addition to receiving financial remuneration, benefits, and job security these occupational groups also exercise some degree of social power and authority. Certificates, diplomas, and promotions mark their occupational prestige and differentiate them from the non-credentialed. The lower strata of bureaucrats and salaried workers include administrators and service workers, technicians, assistants, clerks, secretaries, nurses, and operators of ‘modern’ industries and institutions.

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<sup>123</sup> Davis (2004)

In West Africa, Western educated professionals, managers and administrators developed in large part with the need to order colonial production and the colonial state. Status for Western-educated middle classes in West Africa at the end of empire derived from their location within hierarchies of ownership and production, as well as from their association with ‘modern’ work. However, they collectively experienced the weight of the color bar as well as the sting of discourses that denied African capacity for self rule.<sup>124</sup> Standing astride two worlds Western-educated segments of the middle classes formulated visions of progress in reference to the West while working towards greater social mobility, political authority, and human equality for Africans like themselves. Struggling to overcome contradictions of colonial structures, Western-educated Africans congealed as a ‘class’ through nationalist projects. E.P. Thompson’s (1963) notion of class identity is helpful here.<sup>125</sup>

Thompson states:

Class [is] not a condition or a “thing” but a relationship, defined both by horizontal solidarities (for example, with other workers) and vertical antagonism (against a bourgeoisie); class belonging [comes] fundamentally from one’s place in production, if not by a strictly Marxist notation of labor power and surplus value then certainly by one’s relationship to work; class [is] experiential, shaped by consciousness of shared histories and recognizable through the accretions of a common culture.<sup>126</sup>

Western-educated Africans solidified as a ‘class’ through vertical projects of assimilation into the ‘modern’ world as well as horizontal affiliations that bolstered their identity as ‘Africans’. Like Thompson I suggest that Western-educated

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<sup>124</sup> In the 1950s, for example, indignation grew amongst newly appointed administrative officers in Uganda who were prohibited from accessing ‘confidential’ files that their white counterparts could access without restriction. These kinds of racialized restrictions stifled professional opportunities while also humiliating Africans. This particular incident conjured a bout of well-documented outrage and bitterness (Crowder 1993)

<sup>125</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Vintage, 1963)

<sup>126</sup> Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, *The Future of Class in History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007):25

fragments of West African middle classes forged horizontal affiliations, vertical oppositions, and cultural commonalities based on shared experiences and status aspirations.

In the colonial era, Western-educated middle classes, what Benedict Anderson calls the *bilingual literati*, served as linguistic and geographic intermediaries between colonizers and colonized and, as such, learned and translated Western knowledge systems while also performing bureaucratic duties of empire.<sup>127</sup> Despite lip-service to their status as ‘civilized’ or ‘evolved’ groups of Africans, African bureaucrats and salaried professionals received periodic reminders of the limitations of their social mobility within colonial structures through affronts to their personhood. These groups repeatedly discovered that they were “not quite/not white” and were bound to be permanently relegated to second class citizenship in an imperial world order.<sup>128</sup> Opposing the constraints of colonialism and elevating the status of Africans through the nation-state emerged as a unifying objective for various Western-educated Africans at the end of empire. The nation, from their hybrid stance, promised equal treatment and status for all citizens as well as membership in the comity of nations, which intimated African entry into the modern world. Their ‘class consciousness’ formed as a consequence of vertical antagonism to European rule, and collective (though not uniform) belief in African political and economic capacity. African development held the hope that Africans would someday share horizontal economic membership with the people of more ‘advanced’ nations. United by shared disdain of colonial repression and hopes of a Western-inspired national imaginary, fragmented groups of Western-educated Africans turned their frustration with colonial

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<sup>127</sup> Anderson (2007) discusses the bilingual literati as the frontline of encounter, the groups that serve as geographic and linguistic intermediaries between Western imperialists and indigenous peoples.

<sup>128</sup> Homi Bhaba *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

contradictions into self-conscious nationalist projects and movements for national development.

Upon independence, Western-educated Africans in many cases populated new political positions ranging from president to high court justices. High political ranks were filled by those with the educational capacity to maintain or reform institutions colonial administrations had put in place. These positions provided opportunities for political and economic aggrandizement, and produced new upper strata in West African societies. However, not all Western-educated Africans gained access to the state, and those who did not were compelled to build personal wealth independently. So while upper strata filled up with new politically-supported Western-educated Africans, others in the middle classes struggled for greater financial stability (obtained by selling their services) and social status (augmented by acquiring credentials and titles).

Where, however, is the boundary between upper and middle class West Africans? West African class boundaries, I would contend, are necessarily fluid. Indeed, fluidity is a central feature of middle classes in general as their apparent openness to 'everyone' marks political equality and progressive social ordering expected of the liberal nation-state. Formal education and technical training in Western institutions are marketed as the most assured means of social mobility and secure methods of acquiring financial stability, positions of authority, and political power. Though permeable, the boundaries of the middle classes are produced through symbolic and material expressions of prestige.<sup>129</sup> These expressions manifest in social titles, cultural tastes, lifestyle choices, living standards, leisure activities and the like. For Western-educated segments of African middle classes symbolic and material expressions of prestige display decidedly Western flare. The patterns of consumption,

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<sup>129</sup> Fernandes (2006)

possession of certain commodities, acquisition of particular vernacular, cultural choices and social activities betray Western inspiration and local adaptation. Everyday practices at home, work and on the streets present opportunities for conspicuous or veiled messaging of status-inscribed meaning.<sup>130</sup> Middle class membership, therefore, extends beyond occupational or economic positioning and the requisite training, and includes a host of behaviors and proclivities that construct a particular social identity.<sup>131</sup> In the transition from empire to nation, in addition to sharing occupational experiences and existential angst, Western-educated middle classes also assumed political sensibilities that assist in recognizing their social identity and simplify some of the theoretical challenges associated with determining middle classes sociologically.

Also of note, however, is that status derived from Western education and training interacted, complemented and competed with a variety of West-African status-giving constructs. Social differentiation in West African was also shaped, therefore, by ethno-cultural political regimes (i.e. the logic and political ordering of various West African kingdoms, city-states, lineage relations, and ethno-cultural hierarchies), gender dynamics and distinctions, age differentials in deference, religious divides and hierarchies of holy orders and, of course, indigenous property relations and occupational structures. Middle classes at the end of empire have to be understood in conjunction with these other forms of stratification and interlacing status-giving factors. Western-educated Africans in particular may have dressed in suits, spoken European languages with refined accents, lived in homes with 'modern' appliances, purchased radios, and engaged with liberatory ideology in the form of newspapers, bulletins and literature. But these populations may also have paid

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid

<sup>131</sup> Owensby (2002)

dowries, cooked on wood stoves, and lived in thatched homes. Their titles of status from Western education such as Dr. and Professor must be considered alongside and against local appellations of status such as chief, *baálě*, and *obirempon*. Also important in West African contexts is the place of religion, and authority from both Western religions and African religious and spiritual practices must be acknowledged. This would necessitate consideration of the social roles, status, and power of imams, priests, deacons and pastors as well as *marabouts*, *babalawos* etc.<sup>132</sup> In addition to social hierarchies introduced through education and religion, military might, ethnic affiliation, gender, and age also significantly structure social stratification in West Africa. Envisioning West African middle classes, therefore, requires acknowledging the varied occupations held in a given society, recognizing different forms of social authority, and accepting the plethora of lifestyle choices and habits engaged in by these populations.

Figure 1 presents a scheme of complex occupational stratification with an attempt to account for interaction with political, religious, and military distinctions found in several West African nations. The diagram highlights that status does not lie exclusively in the realm of education, nor can Western-educated Africans be collapsed into a category of national political ‘elites’. The scheme provided is by no means comprehensive but rather attempts to fill out and order occupations and status relations within West Africa. I have constructed three broad class categories: luxury/ruling classes, middle classes, and working/vulnerable classes. They attempt to capture variation in not only economic terms but also social stability and political power. While West African middle classes can be identified from their position in production

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<sup>132</sup>*Baálě* and *obirempon* refer to ‘big men’ in Yoruba and Ashanti political orders, they are next in line of authority after obas and ashantehene respectively. *Marabouts* are Islamic religious teachers in West Africa. *Babalawos* are Yoruba priests of Ifa, and widely stereotyped as ‘witchdoctors’ and dealers in the occult. Traditionally, however, they are the divine interpreters, priests and priestesses of the deity Orisa.

(as a Marx might suggest), it is also imperative to recognize the range of factors that affect their status and identity outside of productive relations. Drawing from ‘traditionally’ African, religious, military, and ethnic affiliations, West African middle classes reflect a combination of characteristics owing to production as well as consumption, lifestyle, and social prestige.

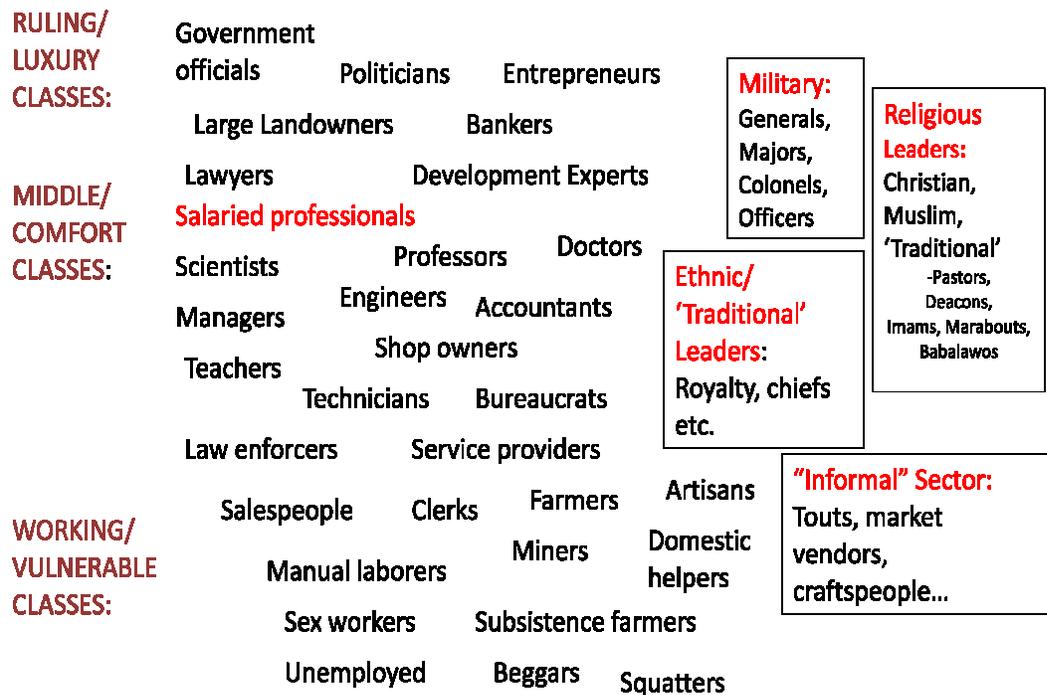


Figure 1.1: Scheme of West African Occupational Differentiation

Class and Context in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire

Though Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire are neighboring countries they do not share the same social complexity. A brief review of both countries helps to highlight that while the discussions above provoke us to construct more nuanced conceptual understandings of ‘African society’, each national context is replete with idiosyncratic features that complicate theories of class stratification. I discuss the ethnic and religious characters

of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire as well as their social composition in the transition period from empire to nation.

The Republic of Ghana spans approximately 92,098 square miles and is flanked by Togo in the East, Burkina Faso in the North, Côte d'Ivoire to the West and the Atlantic Ocean in the South. Ghana is ethnically diverse with approximately 47 local languages spoken. Approximately 50% of the population identifies as Akan, but within this umbrella group different ethnicities such as Ashanti, Akuapem, Akyem, Fante, Baoule, Nzema, Bono and others are found. The other 50% of the population are ethnically heterogeneous with no dominant group represented – they include Ga, Ewe, Guan, Gurma, and Mole-Dagbani groups. Ghana is estimated to have more than 100 different ethnic groupings.<sup>133</sup> Within its territory, Ghana also includes traditional states, kingdoms, and remnants of ancient empires – such as the Bono (now known as the Brong-Ahafo) and the Ashanti – that operate at times as subsocieties within the nation (Foster and Zolberg 1971). Ghana is predominantly Christian (approximately 60%) with Muslim populations (30%) concentrated in northern regions, and less than 10% of the population practicing indigenous religions.

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, with square mileage of approximately 124,502, is a slightly larger land mass than Ghana. Its southern coast is on the Atlantic Ocean, and it shares borders with Liberia and Guinea in the West, Mali and Burkina Faso to the North, and Ghana in the East. In Côte d'Ivoire approximately 65 local languages are spoken, and while Akan groups are also present their numbers are smaller and no predominant ethnicity exists. This is perhaps because no ancient states of significant size survived in the territory that became Côte d'Ivoire even though the Malinké, Koulango, Abron, Agni and Baoulé kingdoms were highly influential before the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Kwame Boafo-Arthur, *Ghana* (London:Zed Books, 2007)

century.<sup>134</sup> Common ethnic groups in present-day Côte d'Ivoire include Baoulé, Kru, Mandé and Sénoufo peoples. An estimated 40% of the population identifies as Muslim, 30% Christian, 10% practice indigenous religions and 15% claim no-religion.

At the end of colonialism and emergence of these two territories as independent nations, their respective social arrangements were quite disparate. Ghana was more urbanized with several thriving cities, whereas urban life in Côte d'Ivoire was centered largely in Abidjan. By the 1960s, approximately 40% of the population in Ghana resided in towns with more than 5,000 inhabitants as compared to less than 20% in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>135</sup> In both nations, however, commercial and urban activity was concentrated in the southern half of the country, with northern regions sending migrant labor and capital from cash crops to further boost southern development. This uneven development is still evident in contemporary Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

Importantly, education systems in Ghana were more extensive than in Côte d'Ivoire. These educational differences will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters. What is important to note here is that Ghana had larger, more differentiated populations of Western-educated workers. Elite schools such as Achimota School and William Ponty School, in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire respectively, trained students who would become political authorities and members of the highest ranks of Western-educated Africans. These Africans became occupants of the state and implemented development strategies that would, in turn, rearrange social configurations. As chapter three of this thesis explains, development in Ghana focused industrializing with local expertise while in Côte d'Ivoire emphasis was placed on developing agricultural sectors.

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<sup>134</sup> Richard Stryker, "Political and Administrative Linkage in the Ivory Coast" in Ghana and the Ivory Coast: Perspectives on Modernization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971):73-102.

<sup>135</sup> Remi Clignet and Philip Foster, "Convergence and Divergence in Educational Development in Ghana and the Ivory Coast" in Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971):265-292

Various occupational groups and classes existed in Ghana in the middle of the twentieth century. They included a rather small professional bourgeoisie – made up of the leading politicians, businessmen, professionals (doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, architects etc.), and bureaucrats. Western-educated members of this upper stratum of society also often had ties to local authority systems in the form of chieftaincies or royal lineages. Beyond the small merchant-professional-bourgeoisie, there were a considerably larger number of middle classes<sup>136</sup> including less wealthy professionals, small business owners, clerks, teachers, journalists, printers, photographers, traders, brokers, small contractors, pharmacists, nurses, small shop owners, tailors, shoemakers, artisans, and a “small but significant number of the 500,000 or so cocoa farmers [that] had incomes and values which placed them in the middle class.”<sup>137</sup> Workers with less property, fewer labor protections and less social authority included a growing number of skilled and semi-skilled wage laborers (employed in factories, ports, infrastructure projects, construction and the like), unskilled laborers, peasant farmers and small agriculturalists, workers in small fishing and pastoral communities, and many non-Ghanaian migrants who struggled to integrate into political and economic life.<sup>138</sup> While various occupations were represented in politics in this period, the political domain was dominated by lawyers and concentrated in urban areas in the southern half of the territory (namely in Kumasi and Accra). Starting in the 1920s labor various occupational groups in the Gold Coast

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<sup>136</sup> Middle classes can be ordered into upper and lower middle classes, but no attempt to do that is made here.

<sup>137</sup> Philip Foster and Aristide Zolberg, *Ghana and the Ivory Coast* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971):36; T.E. Anin, *Essays on the Political Economy of Ghana* (London: Selwyn Publishers Limited, 1991)

<sup>138</sup> Foster and Zolberg (1971)

began organizing into trade unions. The largest and most organized trade unions by the 1950s included teachers, civil servants, and cocoa farmers.<sup>139</sup>

At the close of colonialism In Côte d'Ivoire the upper echelons of society were comprised of planters (large farm or plantation owners), businessmen, and a large population of French settlers who managed colonial administration and engaged in entrepreneurial activity. French settlers were known as *colons* and, while they all received privileges denied to Africans, colonial officials and large traders wielded the most social authority. Ivorian public officials and civil servants were small in number but possessed disproportionate amounts of power. As a result, between "1945-1959, the public health official, teacher, civil servant, and clerk were the top positions open to Ivorians, who then became elected officials."<sup>140</sup> The French took pains to restrict formal education to a small 'elite' and so (in comparison to Ghana) numbers of trained doctors, nurses, pharmacists, engineers, technicians, lawyers, and teachers remained low. More prevalent in the middle classes were independent farmers, shop owners, traders, truckers, tailors, shoemakers, and artisans.<sup>141</sup> The most economically vulnerable and disempowered workers were the expansive groups of wage laborers employed primarily in agriculture. The political realm was dominated by planters, doctors and pharmacists prior to independence, and while planters retained political influence after independence, groups of scientists, technicians, lawyers and students of humanities gained power through the state.<sup>142</sup> Agricultural unions represented the

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<sup>139</sup> Jon Kraus "Political Change, Conflict, and Development in Ghana" in Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971):33-72

<sup>140</sup> Tessilimi Bakary, "Elite Transformation and Political Succession" in The Political Economy of Ivory Coast (New York: Praeger, 1984):46

<sup>141</sup> Aristide Zolberg, "Political Development in the Ivory Coast Since Independence" in Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971):9-32

<sup>142</sup> Bakary (1984):39

interests of planters, farmers, and laborers, but few other unions were significantly organized.

Without even exploring the social formation of these groups or their relations to one other we see in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire vastly different class configurations and social stratification. In both cases, however, middle classes can be identified – some of whom have Western-education as a background. Standing between colonialists and the 'masses', and between capital and labor, these 'modern' Western-educated middle classes experienced angst about their social constraints and impulses for African development. The next chapter goes on to explore some of these notions.

### Conclusion

African class categories at the end of empire were muddled by imperial misreadings of African societies, and clarity on class was further obscured by African liberatory agendas that relied on Marxist class categories or recalled romantic ideals of African classlessness. In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire a variety of occupational groupings could be identified and, in reflection on their social power, placed into appropriate classes (which I have simplistically divided here as upper/luxury classes, middle classes, and lower/vulnerable classes). While relations between classes ultimately determine their character, the point here has been to argue for the existence of *modern middle classes* and to indentify Western-educated populations as an important segment amongst them.

Like more recent scholarship, I view modernity as a shared present, and not as the temporal or material possession of a supposedly 'advanced' West. It is often assumed to initiate or mark a break from 'traditional' lifestyles and to usher in advances from Europe. As such, modernity is associated with the nation-state, rights of citizenship, economic growth, and a wide range of technologies for communication,

transportation, production and consumption. However, the modern world is not created in one locality or culture and transplanted onto others but, rather, is co-experienced and co-produced.<sup>143</sup> Modernity was not transferred from the metropole to colonies, but was produced through the experience and production of social life in both places. Both African and Western societies benefited from exchange of labor, capital, culture, and knowledge systems which resulted in the mutual, though uneven, development of Africa and the West in the modern period.<sup>144</sup> Modernity, therefore, is the contemporaneous experience and production of social life amongst highly differentiated yet intimately connected people.

Narratives of modernity in the transition from empire to nation largely failed to capture the complexity or motley composition of African societies. Categories such as ‘primitive’, ‘traditional’, or ‘native’ conveyed the notion of Africans outside the fold of modernity. Meanwhile, descriptions of ‘civilized’, ‘evolved’ or ‘elite’ Africans projected the idea that only small populations of Africans had converted to capitalist-based Western lifestyles and, in so doing, encountered modernity. Contrary to suggestions that capitalist modernity had to be introduced to the continent, Africans employed in colonial bureaucracies or in ‘traditional’ positions of power were engaged in amassing capital at the same time as ‘native’ populations were forced off land and into wage-labor. Dispossession and accumulation were two sides of the same coin of capitalist expansion and as lifestyle choices expanded so did economic, social and

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<sup>143</sup> This argument suggests thinking about world processes as a “unified field of analysis” (Mongia 1997) such that modernity was not something the West extended to Africa but that exchange of natural resources (including minerals, slaves, commodities etc.) ideas and cultural practices always included contributions from regions all over the world (Radhika Mongia, “Historicizing State Sovereignty: Inequality and the Form of Equivalence” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (2007): 384-411). ‘The West’ would not have developed in the ways it did without ‘the Rest’; suggesting co-production of modernity more than mere transference.

<sup>144</sup> I use the notion of a ‘modern period’ loosely here and use it to mean the period from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century in which Western hegemonic principles of parliamentary democracy and liberal capitalism expanded globally. ‘Modernity’ has resulted from exchange through these global encounters.

political inequalities within colonies and across regions. While some populations enjoyed luxuries others became more marginalized and vulnerable. However, instead of only seeing this dichotomy, I have urged the recognition of middle classes in this process of growing capitalist exchange, commodity consumption, and the addition of novel ways of living to local traditions. African colonies and the nations that followed them were not governed exclusively by a capitalist logic and clearly divided into classes of capitalists and wage-workers. On the contrary, they included variegated value systems, social relations and forms of stratification that reflect Africans attempts to imitate, co-opt and augment practices typically associated with the West. Capitalist classes, including middle classes, have emerged as part of this development, and West African societies display a mix of 'traditional', 'modern', class, ethnic, colonial, and gendered social arrangements.

## CHAPTER 2

### **African Visions of Progress: Black People in the Modern World**

This chapter focuses on Western-educated Africans as anti-imperial agents and examines their notions of progress at the end of empire as desires for ‘modernity’. During this period, Western-educated Africans were located between supposedly ‘backwards’ African traditions and ‘modern’ Western customs and lifestyles. Their experiences of imperial denigration, however, produced collective consciousness of colonial inconsistencies as well as feelings of alienation. I argue that Western-educated Africans consciously constructed racial identities and nationalist visions to respond to existential angst provoked by straddling ‘Africa’ and ‘the West’. To the Western-educated Africans examined in this chapter, the nation appeared as a vehicle for pan-African ‘regeneration’ and upliftment of the ‘Negro race’ to the same economic and political status as other members of the modern world. Paradoxically, Western-educated Africans aimed to reinstate the humanity of black peoples by using Western ideals of the ‘nation’. African nations were imagined as symbols of the equality of black Africans with their former oppressors, and signs of African membership in the ‘modern world’. Despite shared desires to move Africans into ‘modernity’, Western-educated Africans held a plethora of disparate notions of progress. Conservative camps envisioned ‘development’ under imperial guidance (protected by the economic and military purview of Western patrons), while more radical groups proposed complete independence from imperial powers and reclamation of a repressed ‘African’ ontology.

The chapter is divided into two parts. Part one looks at existential predicaments of Western-educated Africans, and their attempts to address colonial contradictions

through the formation of ‘African’ identity and African nations. I emphasize the writings of Edward Blyden, Africanus Horton as important figures in discourses of progress in the colonial period. Though not necessarily ‘representative’ of middle classes, each of these men provides insight into the limitations and aspirations of Western-educated Africans. I also discuss the Négritude and Pan-African movements as significant forces in the formation of racial solidarity and nationalist ambitions. This part of the chapter stresses the importance of bilingual literati in conceptualizing African development in terms of black liberation and African nationalism.

The second part of the chapter turns to Kwame Nkrumah and Félix Houphouët-Boigny as important Western-educated, but rival, leaders in the transition from colonial to nation-states. As the first presidents of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire respectively, Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny provide exemplary contrasts of radical and conservative development ideologies. Their perspectives reveal opposing beliefs about ‘African’: identity and solidarity; orientation to former colonial powers; and affiliation with emerging Cold War superpowers. While I recognize the unique subjectivity of Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny as charismatic, erudite, and exceptional leaders, I use them as proxy perspectives for other Western-educated Africans in the initial years of independence.

Taken collectively, the two sections in this chapter provide a partial genealogy of discourses of progress as articulated by Western-educated Africans in West Africa from approximately 1860 to 1960. I argue that despite divergent beliefs in both Anglophone and Francophone examples, Western-educated Africans aspired to achieve ‘African modernity’ and congealed as a ‘class’ in their struggles towards anti-colonial ends.

## Part 1:

### The (Un)Making of African Identity: Western Educated Africans and the 'Modern' Predicament

“Africa is to rise once more, she will take her place with the most Christian, civilized and intelligent nations of the Earth.”<sup>145</sup>

From the middle of the nineteenth century onward, the demands of commerce, Christian proselytizing, and colonial expansion produced growing numbers of European-influenced West Africans. Serving as cultural and linguistic translators, Africans mastered European languages, converted to Christianity, and assisted in brokering political and economic deals.<sup>146</sup> As trade and imperial interests expanded, Europeans divided Africans into one of two simple categories: “native” or “civilized”. ‘Natives’ were the embodiment of backwardness, the very antithesis of ‘modern civilization’. They were, allegedly, inferior and illiterate masses engaged in animistic and savage behavior. ‘Civilized’ Africans, on the other hand, purportedly demonstrated appreciation for Western culture, professed the truth of Christian divinity, and comported themselves with decorum befitting believers. In the minds of missionaries, ‘civilized’ Africans stood as beacons of Christian light in an otherwise dark and bedraggled continent.<sup>147</sup> As European commercial and missionary enclaves expanded into colonies in West Africa, ‘black Europeans’ assumed greater importance

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<sup>145</sup> The quote is by James Johnson (1867) who was a Sierra Leonean cleric of Nigerian origin who subscribed to ideas about a glorious African past and Christianity as a vehicle for Africa’s restoration (Olisanwuche Esedebe, Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991, (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1994): 22-23.

<sup>146</sup> ‘Middling’ Africans acted as important intermediaries between Europeans from the sea and Africans from the continental interior. Their linguistic and socio-geographic position “poised [them] between the African hinterland and the tiny but powerful class of white administrators, missionaries and traders.” (Kwaku Larbi Korang, Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003):295

<sup>147</sup> A strong association was made between Christianity, Western civilization, and education to the point where clear lines between them were hard to draw. To be civilized was equated with being Christian, and the more lettered Africans were encouraged to hold Western ideals as well Christian zeal.

as administrative and political intermediaries.<sup>148</sup> In addition to mission schools and churches, institutions of higher learning were also established to cultivate small but highly influential groups of Western educated ‘native intellectuals’.<sup>149</sup>

Included in the ranks of Western influenced groups in West Africa were repatriating people of African descent returning from the so-called ‘New World’. In the late 1800s, technological advancements, namely in the form of the steamship, increased mobility across the Atlantic Ocean and, propelled by a spate of repatriation movements in the Americas, led to increased return of freed slaves to West Africa.<sup>150</sup> For some returnees, ethnic and cultural heritage was lost in the Middle Passage; they had no cultural connections or affiliations with the African ethnic groups and regions to which they returned and they existed, as it were, as their own ethnicity *sui generis*.<sup>151</sup> Whether socialized in the Western hemisphere or mission or college educated in West Africa, groups of Western-influenced Africans proliferated in the nineteenth century. Notions of ‘progress’ articulated by these populations exposed their hybrid heritage – they simultaneously attempted to elevate the condition of ‘Negro’ people while venerating Western traditions. In fact, mission educated and repatriated Africans often acted as appendages of civilizing missions, extending

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<sup>148</sup> Secular schools were established in regions where Islam was the dominant religion. Also, Settlements along the coast of West Africa were made more permanent once schools (like Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone) and colonial institutions were established. The term ‘black Englishman’ was especially popular in describing Africans whose contact with European civilization led to life altering behaviors (Philip Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects* (Charlotte: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

<sup>149</sup> Of particular note here are Fourah Bay College (established in 1827) and Liberia College (established in 1863).

<sup>150</sup> Immanuel Geiss writes in *The Pan-African Movement*, “The steamship line increased the horizontal mobility of the modern elite on the West African coast...[and] facilitated the tendency of the West African elites to coalesce into a homogenous urban class along the coast from Gambia as far as Cameroon.” Korang (2003): 290.

<sup>151</sup> Returnees often developed into élite or middle caste like the Saros of Nigeria, Americo-Liberians and Krios of Sierra Leone. They oftentimes maintained distinct family ties from indigenous African communities, spoke different languages from those around them, engaged in occupations unfamiliar to local Africans, and maintained association with groups in Europe or the Americas. Before these groups engaged in more extensive social and reproductive relations with local groups, they maintained exclusive ethnic differences from the other Africans who surrounded them.

imperial hegemony through personal efforts to convert and re-educate indigenous African populations. For the first generations of Western-educated Africans in the nineteenth century, progress generally entailed adoption of Christianity, ‘regeneration’ of black people, and emulation of Western civilizations.<sup>152</sup> James Johnson, West African Bishop and nationalist (1836-1917), demonstrates in the epigraph above how members of the first generations of Western-educated Africans tied ‘Africa’s’ progress to Christian conversion and joining “civilized and intelligent nations of the Earth.”<sup>153</sup>

### Edward Blyden and Africanus Horton: Alienation versus Assimilation

Two incredibly influential voices in the early generations of Western-educated Africans were Edward Blyden and Africanus Horton. Edward Blyden was one of the first African intellectuals to address the condition of Western-educated Africans and black people more generally. Blyden perceived an erosion of African social, cultural and moral philosophy as a consequence of Western hegemony. As a repatriated African, his concern extended to the “Negro race” at large, and he identified religious missions and Eurocentric education as the chief agents of Western domination. For Blyden, Western-educated Africans were caught in a moral and existential dilemma as their efforts to be ‘civilized’ according to European standards required abandonment of the things that made them culturally distinct. Blyden called this the “African problem,” and suggested that encounter with the Western world and its subsequent onslaught of cultural antagonism, threatened to destroy the very essence of Africans or, as he termed it, the “African personality.” For Blyden the “educated Negro” was

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<sup>152</sup> Critical to these discourses were the first generation of Western-educated African doctors, lawyers, missionaries, and teachers. Particularly influential figures include J. Ajayi Crowther, Africanus Horton, Edward Blyden and James Johnson. Robert William July, The Origins of Modern African Thought (Asmara: Africa World Press Inc., 2004) comprehensively records the origin and elaboration of these early thinkers.

<sup>153</sup> Esedebe (1994):23

at risk of “alienation”, which he described as the temporary or permanent erasure of cultural connections produced by the impossible pursuit of European identity.

Alienated Africans, he suggested, were neither their true selves nor the aspired Other.<sup>154</sup>

However, while Edward Blyden lamented the ubiquity and oppressiveness of Western civilization, Africanus Horton bemoaned its limited diffusion. In Horton’s estimation, there was no need to preserve a dissipating African essence; in fact, Africa had not been changed enough. Horton saw tremendous benefit in Western civilization and determined that its further extension was Africa’s greatest hope. He believed, “It is impossible for a nation to civilize itself; civilization must come from abroad.”<sup>155</sup>

The way he saw it, civilization was not a European invention or trademark, all societies improved through contact with more advanced groups. Horton argued ancient Egypt had subdued its neighbors as part of civilizational exchange and improvement before it succumbed to the might of Roman civilization. Horton envisioned the spread of European civilization in Africa as the antidote to ‘backwardness’, which he saw as a cultural, not inherent, shortcoming. African power and progress depended on the extension of European civilization in the form of the nation state which, Horton supposed, would be championed by a vanguard class of Western-educated Africans. Equipped with instruments of European civilization, ‘enlightened’ Africans would relieve their brethren of their nescience by extending Western education, medical procedures and forms of economic improvement.

Ironically, Horton anticipated that “civilizational assimilation” would restore African “hope, that in the process of time, [Africans’] turn [would] come, when they [would]

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<sup>154</sup> As Korang duly notes, Blyden’s insights predate Franz Fanon’s analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Blyden’s clairvoyance about the racially provoked desires and contradictions are the substance of Fanon’s book written almost a half-century after Blyden’s observations.

<sup>155</sup> James Africanus Beale Horton and George Shepperson, West African Countries and Peoples (Edinburgh: University Press, 1969)

occupy a prominent position in the world's history, and...command a voice in the council of nations."<sup>156</sup>

### Colonial Constraints and Opportunities for Western-Educated Men

The formal expansion of European colonies in the 1870s also began a period of official racism. As colonies took full form in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Western-educated Africans found themselves more deeply inscribed in a racial hierarchy. According to colonial logic, Africans could no longer prove their humanity through religious conversion or Western acculturation. They were, instead, inherently consigned to inferiority by their racial affliction. As Rina Okonkwo puts it, "The term black Englishman, which denoted the concept that given equal education and opportunity the African could achieve equality with the European, soured to an epithet at the end of the nineteenth century."<sup>157</sup> The establishment of African colonies, therefore, was premised on racial difference, and introduced separatist and regionalist policies to amplify and contrive divisions between Europeans and Africans, as well as between African "tribes".<sup>158</sup> 'Civilized' Africans aspiring to stand on equal plane as Europeans, found themselves crushed by the weight of an immovable color bar. Their attempts to challenge colonial authority and assert their equality with Europeans was met with annoyance from Europeans and suspicion by other groups of Africans. The burgeoning colonial authority in the Gold Coast, for example, described Western-

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid

<sup>157</sup> Rina Okonkwo, Heroes of West African Nationalism (Enugu: Delta Publishers, 1985):1

<sup>158</sup> Scholars have long investigated the construction of "tribes" in West African, elucidating why the term "tribe" carries so much historical and contemporary baggage. Thomas Spear's "Neo-traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa" (2003) provides an interesting account of the 'creation of tribalism' and 'invention of tradition' in Africa. From this and other accounts we see how colonialism functioned on separatist foundations, using race and ethnicity to construct hierarchies of privilege and power, and creating 'tradition' and tensions in Africa.

educated Africans in the area as “a thorn in the side of the [imperial] Government”, a hindrance to imperial sprawl.<sup>159</sup>

At the same time, however, establishing colonial authority and administrative control required more skilled manpower than European settler communities could possibly provide. Western-educated Africans suddenly became assets to colonial governments. They could not be dismissed as “untrustworthy and disruptive agitators” but had to be seen as a locally based labor force capable of overseeing colonial functions.<sup>160</sup> They assumed more high status jobs relative to other Africans, whose value within the “racial capitalism of colonial imperialism” was largely reduced to an “inferior laboring class.”<sup>161</sup> Western education through missions and colonial government schools became, therefore, a primary means of upward social mobility within colonial structures, albeit with racially defined restrictions and ceilings. Demand for educated Africans in colonial bureaucracies allowed those with European language fluency and the appropriate educational background to attain new levels of prosperity and engage in previously unknown cultures of consumption. These Africans became clerks, colonial officers, lawyers, functionaries, clergy, doctors, teachers and the like, and adjusted their living arrangements and social engagements in accordance with their social status and professional opportunities. Social mobility and economic advancement depended more heavily on the colonial educational system, especially in British colonies. In French West Africa, there were smaller numbers of professional men and diminutive, but influential, groups of westernized elites.<sup>162</sup> Education in West African colonies became the primary vehicle for professional advancement and created more lucrative, prestigious salaried positions to a growing

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<sup>159</sup> Korang (2003):44

<sup>160</sup> Korang (2003): 43

<sup>161</sup> Korang (2003):61

<sup>162</sup> Wallerstein (1965)

“administrative bourgeoisie.”<sup>163</sup> To indicate and consolidate their status, more affluent Africans purchased membership in exclusive social clubs, and expressed Westernized cultural preferences such as affinity for Western music, designer clothes and European technologies.

Despite general economic advancement and cultural solidarity enjoyed by Africans with Western education, tremendous variation existed as a function of French and British education policies in West African colonies. While reserving the right to supervise and direct instruction, early British educational policies in African colonies generally encouraged pedagogical adjustment to local conditions, allowed vernacular instruction in primary schools, and outlined plans for mass education.<sup>164</sup> In contrast, imperial France practiced the policy of ‘Assimilation’, which strove to directly inculcate Africans with knowledge and pride in French traditions. Initial education policies in French colonial territories demanded instruction in French at all ages, offered employment to all students who completed primary education, and promised all students selected for secondary school educational standards equivalent to those in France.<sup>165</sup> Ostensibly, African subjects in French colonies were considered citizens provided they adopted French culture and customs. Africans emerging from British and French educational systems discarded indigenous attributes differentially, but all exhibited, to varying degrees, local expressions of metropolitan European culture.

By World War I, small but significant numbers of Africans had passed through mission and colonial schools and entered tertiary education in West Africa, Europe, and the United States. Though still a minority of the total population, they occupied

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<sup>163</sup> Wallerstein (1965):3

<sup>164</sup> It is widely noted that the British employed the policy of ‘Indirect Rule’ to administer their colonies. Generally, this approach advocated appointment of local authorities as proxy rulers and the opposition of ‘tribes’ against each other to maintain a balance of power in favor of Britain.

<sup>165</sup> Cowan (1965) describes in detail the changes and implications of colonial education policies. His careful analysis also illustrates how these policies evolved according to local African and metropolitan needs.

key positions in colonial institutions, mastered various Western occupational duties, and gained exposure to Western living standards and lifestyles. Employed as administrators, technicians, functionaries, and professionals, they learned the workings of colonial economies and political institutions, acquired Western consumption patterns, and adopted European etiquette. Their occupational positions afforded advantages in remuneration and job security, as well as privileges in the political realm whenever literacy was made a requirement for suffrage.<sup>166</sup> However, by straddling local and Western ways, Western-educated Africans were open to scrutiny from all sides; framed as traitors or renegades by their own people, they also faced rejection from Europeans as hapless racially inferior replicas. Moreover, Western-educated Africans were denied the freedoms and respect given white settlers and European officers. Western-educated Africans experienced racial degradation, social exclusion and professional embarrassment at the hands of racists and racially inscribed institutions in Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Flanked between European knowledge systems, African traditions and customs, unlettered masses, and colonial ‘masters’, Western-educated Africans were construed as culturally distinct but not racially deserving. They were go-betweens, buffers, and intermediaries, middling agents of all kinds whose position astride multiple worlds led to contradictory experiences of social power in some instances, and disregard and disrespect in others. Accordingly, Western-educated Africans faced existential confusion. Inculcated with European customs but denied European rights and privileges, they became conscious of their ‘place’ within colonial structures. Nevertheless, they applied Western epistemologies to African contexts, and formed conceptions of governance, production, consumption, and religion aimed to elevate

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<sup>166</sup> Western-educated Africans were in cases the only indigenous African populations to participate in colonial electoral practices as the unlettered were considered unfit to contribute to governance (Korang 2003).

Africans to ideals of Western ‘modernity’. The ideas Western-educated Africans held were distinctly Western oriented but, as a consequence of their experiences of racial oppression, were centrally concerned with the African, or Black, condition. They stood, therefore, in contradistinction to European colonizers and ‘traditional’ African authorities. They represented a diffuse group of privileged workers united through shared experiences of racial oppression, fluency in European languages, knowledge of Western institutions, and conscious of the paradoxes of cultural enrichment and social alienation produced by their social condition.

#### United Against Imperialism: Pan-Africa and the Black African State

Western-educated Africans recognized with disdain and existential alarm that their identity as African colonial subjects placed them in a secondary position to Europeans and at a distance from other Africans. With their Western exposure and education they straddled two worlds; familiar with both but at home in neither one. Resentful of personal and political restrictions imposed by racial hierarchies and colonial strictures, Western-educated Africans expressed their frustrations in print and speech. In conversation with bilingual literati and political organizers in Europe and the Americas, Western-educated elites and middle classes discussed ways to improve the lot of racially subjugated and economically exploited people of African descent. Pan-African conferences emerged as key venues for the development and dissemination of ideas about African progress and empowerment. As Hakim Adi explains, “The main cultural and political orientation taken was to fashion Pan-Africanism, as both a movement and an idea, corresponding to the needs and requirements of all those

whose exile from the African continent was a consequence of the impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, modern colonialism and imperialism.”<sup>167</sup>

The first Pan-African conference was convened in London in the year 1900 by Trinidadian lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams. Subsequent conferences in the 1920s, organized by the African American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, were held in Paris, Brussels, Lisbon and New York City. Representatives from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and the Americas debated pan-Africanism as a political ideology intended to promote unification and self determination of African peoples. Nationalism and capitalism were heavily treated at these conferences in response to ideas from Marcus Garvey’s Black Nationalist movement as well as the agitation and contributions of international labor movements.<sup>168</sup> By the Pan-African Congress of 1945 held in Manchester, these ideas had crystallized and were expressed unequivocally. Delegates declared:

We demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this ‘One World’ for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation... We are unwilling to starve any longer while doing the world’s drudgery in order to support by our poverty and ignorance a false aristocracy and a discredited imperialism. We condemn the monopoly of capital and the rule of private wealth and industry private profit alone. We want economic democracy as the only real democracy.<sup>169</sup>

While disparate philosophies animated the conferences and cannot be elucidated in full here, it is clear that the priorities of literate people of African descent shifted from

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<sup>167</sup> Hakim Adi, “The African Diaspora, 'Development' & Modern African Political Theory” *Review of African Political Economy* (2002):241

<sup>168</sup> John Langley, Pan-Africanism in Paris, 1924-1936” *Journal of Modern African Studies* (1969): 69-94. The influences of Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association and his various Pan-African ideologies are well documented (see for example Martin 1983). In addition to ideational contributions, international labor movements also contributed significantly by sending delegates to attend Pan-African conferences, covering travel costs and living expenses in order to ensure representation of labor interests.

<sup>169</sup> H. Adi and M. Sherwood The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited, (London: Beacon, 1995): 55

concern with Christianity and ‘civilization’ to more focused interest in the establishment of fraternal solidarity between black peoples and advancement of the black condition through the nation. Pan-Africanism served as a pillar of Black nationalism in this period and essential discourse for combating racism and colonial domination.<sup>170</sup> Despite substantive variation, the conferences generally reinforced four central resolutions expressed at the 1921 Pan-African conference. These resolutions: 1.) admonished colonial systems for separating “colored” and “white” races; 2.) criticized imperial powers for their activities 3.) insisted on the continued sovereignty of Abyssinia, Haiti, and Liberia; and 4.) issued a challenge to the world. The challenge was to proclaim:

either the complete assimilation of Africa with two or three of the great world states, with political, civil and social power and privileges absolutely equal for its black and white *citizens*, or the rise of *a great black African State* founded in Peace and Goodwill, based on popular education, natural art and industry and freedom of trade; autonomous and sovereign in its internal policy, but from its beginning a part of a great society of peoples in which it takes its place with others as co-rulers of the world (*my emphasis*).<sup>171</sup>

Their visions aimed not to reproduce African societies as they were in some idyllic past, but to create a *modern* future for Africans based on their adaptation of ideals of state citizenship. The objective of African liberation was, ultimately, to “hasten its introduction into the modern world.”<sup>172</sup> For Western-influenced Africans the nation-state appeared as the best way to propel Africans into modernity. Their consciousness of imperial contradictions, bilingual fluency, international connections and self-ordained positioning as vanguards of African liberation, gave Western-educated Africans the power to envision and articulate a postcolonial world in which

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<sup>170</sup> Micah Tsomondo “Pan-Africanism to Socialism” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* (1975):39-46

<sup>171</sup> Esedebe (1994): 71

<sup>172</sup> Jacques Howlett, “Presence Africaine 1947-1958” *The Journal of Negro History* (1958):140

Africans belonged to nations. Nationalism became a political project for classes of literate Africans. Their frustrations with colonialism and faith in the nation encouraged formation and delivery of national ideology in local, regional and international audiences.

### Nationalism and the nation: Postcolonial hopes and visions

Nationalism is here understood as the idea, belief or principle of the rights of a group of people to constitute a nation through territorial sovereignty or the preservation of a cultural identity.<sup>173</sup> Nationalism is associated with the pursuit of self determination and, as such, emanates from a variety of groups within a given territory.

Nationalisms, therefore, express a “polyphony of voices, overlapping and criss-crossing; contradictory and ambiguous; opposing, affirming, and negotiating their views of the nation.”<sup>174</sup> A variety of nationalisms compete in rhetoric and action to represent the identity of a given nation.<sup>175</sup> The nation, as Benedict Anderson writes, is an “imagined political community” in which individuals, regardless of inequalities between them, are united in “deep horizontal comradeship” that extends across “limited but sovereign” borders.<sup>176</sup> Nations are ‘imagined’ because they rest on constructions in peoples’ minds of fraternal bonds deriving from shared histories and

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<sup>173</sup> Ernst Haas, “What is Nationalism and Why Should We Study It” *International Organization* (1986): 707-744; Lowell Barrington, ““Nation” and “Nationalism”” *PS: Political Science and Politics* (1997): 712-716

<sup>174</sup> Prasenjit Duara, “Historicizing National Identity, or Who Imagines What and When” in Becoming National (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996):161

<sup>175</sup> James S. Coleman, “Nationalism in Tropical Africa” *American Political Science Review* (1954): 404-426 piece on ‘Traditionalist movements’, ‘Syncretistic movements’ and ‘Modernist movements’ provides a simple but insightful scheme for understanding various nativistic, religious, kinship or ‘tribal’, and economic, Westernized or pan-African perspectives on nationalism. The primary takeaway is that educated Africans comprised but one piece of the nationalist puzzle.

<sup>176</sup> Benedict Anderson. Imagined Communities (London: Verso, 2006):7

cultural practices. Millions of people with differentiated life experiences conjure fraternal sentiments and unite through a national imaginary.

The nation, as Anderson describes it, is a feature of the modern world made possible in large part through the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, and spread through “print-capitalism”. Nation-states are territorially bounded political entities divorced from monarchical structures and, as such, stand as distinctly different political and economic arrangements from previous eras. In the modern world, according to Anderson, the nation stands as the most universally legitimate political unit, and the expectation is that “everyone can, should, [and] will ‘have’ a nationality.”<sup>177</sup> While the centrality of the nation needs to be questioned, as do Anderson’s Euro-centric bias and universalizing tendencies, some of his points are well taken.<sup>178</sup> Despite local particularities and the impossibility of equivalence, the allure of the nation lies in its ostensibly universal offerings. It portends political sovereignty, equal citizenship rights, international recognition of belonging, and the prospect of economic development. Connections between members of a nation are imagined through myth and shared values, and portrayed through fraternal bonds – members of a nation are *brothers* who would shed blood for each others’ protection. Nationalisms generally assume this gendered dimension and “typically [spring] from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope.”<sup>179</sup>

African nations had to be imagined. They were fashioned after Western models and intended to unite people horizontally across bounded or cultural territories. As empire waned, a variety of African nationalisms were expressed by dispossessed peasants, market women, traditional authorities, and lettered men. It is this last group, however, whose voices carried loudest in the cacophony of nationalist discourses. In

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid

<sup>178</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

<sup>179</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989)

their attempts to imagine African nations, Western-educated Africans subsumed regional, ethnic, religious, gender, and linguistic differences into racial or territorial national identities. Drawing on pan-African values and discontent with colonial occupation, Western-educated Africans advocated for Black independence and national rights of citizenship. As Toyin Falola writes, “The most significant intellectual project... has been to reshape Africa according to the image constructed by its educated elite.”<sup>180</sup> As a function of their position astride Africa and the West, Western-educated Africans dominated discourses of modernity at the end of empire and presented their imagination of African nations as authentic and representative of the interests of African people at large. Equally as significant for our present discussion, however, was the expansion of politically engaged literate Africans who participated in the production, distribution and consumption of African newspapers, cultural critiques, and literary contributions.

### Print Media and African ‘Authenticity’

As numbers of literate Africans grew in West Africa and elsewhere, African-oriented newspapers and pamphlets also became more widely available. The *Lagos Weekly Record* (founded in 1890) and *Lagos Standard* (founded in 1895), for example, enjoyed large indigenous readership and garnered regional attention due to their critical evaluation of colonial governments.<sup>181</sup> Michael Crowder writes, “The most powerful political weapon possessed by the élite was the Press. Through this they were able to bring their grievances to the attention not only of local people, but of

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<sup>180</sup> Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001)

<sup>181</sup> A plethora of periodicals emerged around the turn of the century including the *African Standard*, *Mombasa Times & Uganda Argus* established in 1902 (to deliver a pro-colonialism perspective in East Africa), *Central African Times*, 1897 (Nyasaland), *Beira Post*, circa 1910 (Mozambique), *Cape Times*, 1876 (South Africa), *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 1884 (Sierra Leone).

members of the élite up and down the coast.”<sup>182</sup> He notes, however, that significant differences existed within French and British-controlled West Africa. France’s education policies kept literacy levels low in the majority of their territories which, when combined with strict censorship by the government, limited the growth of African Press. In British-administered West Africa, the Press had a “long and distinguished history of criticism of Government” and, as early as 1900, over 50 newspapers had been published between the two colonies of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast.<sup>183</sup>

In 1920, the Lagos Weekly Record launched a satellite in London called the *African Sentinel*, adding to a growing international Black Press and illustrating the perceived importance of African representation in Europe. ‘Negro’ political organizations sprouted in Paris and London, and engaged with pan-Africanism and rising Négritude movement. By the 1930s and ‘40s, African print capitalism was fully developed and widely circulated newspapers, bulletins, and manuscripts facilitated collective nationalist imagining.<sup>184</sup> The performative action of reading African-centered print in European languages created communities of people across disparate territories who shared concerns about other ‘Africans’ and espoused nationalist beliefs as solutions to their collective subordination. As Anderson writes, “the newspaper...created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers.”<sup>185</sup> African-controlled journals like the *West African Pilot* (established 1937) and *Présence Africaine* (established 1947) emerged as instrumental sources of

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<sup>182</sup> Michael Crowder, “Whose Dream Was It Anyway” in *Colonialism and Nationalism in Africa* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1968): 339-356

<sup>183</sup> Ibid

<sup>184</sup> Benedict Anderson’s notion of print-capitalism is useful in explaining connections between nationalism and Western-educated Africans. A bilingual class subsumed others within their vision of African freedom expressed through print media. Their possession of literacy and tools of communication assisted in the gradual hegemonism of middle class notions of nationalism.

<sup>185</sup> Anderson (2006):62

political and cultural intellection; disseminating news items and nationalist ideas to ever-widening audiences of literate Africans and people of African descent.

In addition, numerous student groups and activist organizations founded by Africans in the Diaspora were also contributed significantly to emancipatory discourses in Diaspora communities. In London especially, the 1930s and 1940s heralded the exchange of ideas and experiences through organizations such as the West African Students' Union (WASU) and personalities like Isaac Wallace Johnson, Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, and C.L.R. James. While based in London these organizations and personas channeled energy towards the formation of pan-African programs, furthering anti-imperial campaigns, and defining African identity. Of his experience in London, Paul Robeson wrote:

London was the centre of the British empire and it was there that I 'discovered' Africa. That discovery, which has influenced my life ever since, made it clear that I would not live out my life as an adopted Englishman, and I came to consider that I was an African.<sup>186</sup>

In the transition from empire to nation, therefore, fluency in European languages, access to print media, and participation in anti-colonial organizations afforded Western-educated Africans the opportunity to forge their identity as 'Africans', and the privilege of speaking and writing on behalf of the African continent. Disturbed by the restrictions of racial ceilings and outraged by maltreatment and exploitation of Black people, they dialogued with people of African descent in Europe, the Caribbean and the Americas to construct various (oftentimes conflicting) narratives about what they saw as the African, or Black, predicament. These discussions largely excluded illiterate and non-Western-educated populations and constructed imperialists as the enemy. As such, the views presented belonged to particular segments of African

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<sup>186</sup> Adi (2002): 242

populations. As self-appointed representatives of African people, the visions and voices of Western-educated Africans occupied privileged positions in debates about African identity, racial solidarity, self-determination, and nationalism. Despite their peculiar positions as formally educated minorities, they projected their perspectives as universally representative. It is clear, however, that their ideas represented their dual Western and African heritage, as well as their international exposure through travel and Diasporic dialogue. Their ability to present their ideas as representative reflects their *privileged positions* within colonial edifices as well as their increasing *power* over ‘traditional’ African authorities.

### Négritude and Black/African Identity

The 1930s witnessed the development and expansion of the literary and ideological movement known as Négritude. The movement convened African writers, artists, scholars, and political activists in order to found solidarity in a black identity, and support political and cultural struggles of pan-Africanism. The Négritude movement drew from the Harlem Renaissance for inspiration and focused attention on reclaiming blackness as a source of pride for African peoples. It espoused the notion that black solidarity was the best weapon against French colonial racism. Notable figures such as Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sedar Senghor, Léon Damas, and Jean Paul Sartre contributed to rearticulating an ‘authentic’ African identity, and developing various forms of cultural nationalism.<sup>187</sup> Other pan-African advocates featured in the periodical included Richard Wright, Horace Cayton, C.L. R. James, Gwendolyn

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<sup>187</sup> Also of note here are the likes of Gilbert Gratiant, Paulette Nardal, and Leonar Sainville. These and other founders of the Négritude movement interacted with ideas from the Harlem Renaissance espoused by Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. Abundant accounts of the negritude movement exist and provide insight into actions and tensions within the movement. Of note here are T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting’s Negritude women and Sylvia Washington Ba’s The concept of negritude in the poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor.

Brooks, E.F. Frazier and S. W. Allen, all of whom wrestled with the place of the Negro in a world dominated by imperialism, white power, and Euro-centricity.<sup>188</sup> Contributors to Negritude discourses confronted the historical, social and cultural assault laid on people of African descent by western domination, and attempted to restore social and psychological balance to a traumatized people. The Negritude movement, therefore, was not simply a philosophical idea about a Negro essence or a movement advocating African unity, it was also a conscious attempt to restore social, cultural and psychological balance to long traumatized people.<sup>189</sup> With ideologies of anti-colonialism, pan-African solidarity, and notions about African empowerment emanating from the Diaspora – oftentimes from London, Paris and cities in the United States – networks in the Diaspora proved just as important as continental partnerships in constructing nationalist discourses and conceptions of African modernity at the end of empire.<sup>190</sup>

A clear example of the representative authority assumed by West African literati is found in the opening lines of a 1958 journal article about the Negritude-promoting magazine *Présence Africain*. The article in *Revue Culturelle du Monde Noir* starts, “*Présence Africaine* is the only magazine currently published in France by Africans which authentically expresses the traditions and aspirations of the Negro World. Its readers are by no means limited to France.”<sup>191</sup> This introduction captures the ability of African intellectuals, critics, activists and other politically engaged folks to forward their ideas as “authentically” African, proudly Negro, and worthy of international attention. Alioune Diop, a Senegalese intellectual and political organizer, founded *Présence Africaine* with the intention of convening “all

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<sup>188</sup> Howlett (1958)

<sup>189</sup> Abiola Irele, “Negritude or Black Cultural Nationalism” *Journal of Modern African Studies* (1964):321-348

<sup>190</sup> Adi (2002)

<sup>191</sup> Howlett (1958):140

contributors of good will (White, Yellow or Black), who might be able to help to define African originality and to hasten its introduction into the modern world.”<sup>192</sup>

Published as a monthly magazine, *Présence Africaine* became the preeminent voice of the Négritude movement.

### From Colonial to Nation-State: Moving Into the ‘Modern’ World

The efforts to unite and elevate Black people outlined above can be viewed as the dual processes of *fraternizing* and *worlding* Africa.<sup>193</sup> *Fraternalizing* describes the association and union of disparate people of African ancestry. For Western-educated Africans in the first half of the twentieth century, this process was accomplished in large part through attendance at international meetings and conferences, pursuit of higher education in Europe and the United States, and the reading and writing of Afro-centric print media. Contact with Africans on the continent and in various Diasporas exposed the extent and similarities of racial denigration, and developed anti-imperial sentiments across colonial boundaries and ocean frontiers. *Fraternalizing* constituted a major role in the construction of black solidarity and generated feelings of shared purpose amongst people of African descent; it openly remonstrated racial oppression, and expanded consciousness and pride in ‘African’ identity. Through the building of horizontal linkages, black people increasingly identified as ‘African’ and became more sympathetic to anti-colonial struggles in regions far from their local struggles. This process of *fraternizing* built a cultural and political community on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid

<sup>193</sup> Worlding is a term used by Gayatri Spivak expanding on Martin Heidegger’s discussion of global power relations. Fraternalizing, is a term I have chosen to capture the building of racial brotherhood between people of African descent around the world.

*Worlding*, on the other hand, entailed rejection of the inferior status given Africans by slavery and imperial conquest, and insistence on the equality of Africans with other humans in the modern world. Nationalism was central to *worlding* projects as the nation portended modern rights, protections and global recognition for subjugated Africans. Referring to the role of nationalism in the *worlding* process one scholar explains, “Insofar...as Africa [was] seen as occupying a place “below” “the world,” worlding [was] inscribed in a nationalist imaginary as an agenda for Africa’s vertical integration within the human family”.<sup>194</sup> Both *fraternizing* and *worlding* were especially undertaken by Western-educated Africans as their fluency in European languages and literacy allowed access to print media and dissemination of their ideas in widely utilized European languages.

As literary Africans developed a sense of their own African identity, identified African ‘authenticity’, formulated political ideology, and tackled issues of imperialism as they saw it, they inserted themselves into postcolonial visions as indispensable harbingers of progress. In the 1940s and 1950s, a cadre of charismatic Western-educated men emerged from literate ranks across the African continent and the Diaspora, and expressed nationalist visions of African liberation and self-determination. This emergent class of highly educated political leaders in West Africa included the likes of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Herbert Macaulay, and Obafemi Awolowo (Nigeria), Milton Margai (Sierra Leone), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Amilcar Cabral (Guinea Bissau), Léopold Senghor (Senegal), Dawda Kairaba Jawara (the Gambia) and others.<sup>195</sup> All of these figures studied in Europe and/or the United States and acquired professional degrees before returning to their home colonies and engaging

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<sup>194</sup> Korang (2003): 34

<sup>195</sup> To be sure, some of the leaders who assumed power of new African states or successfully spearheaded anti-colonial movements were not highly educated. Notably among this group were Guinea’s Ahmed Sekou Toure and Burkina Faso’s Maurice Yameogo, both of whom did not complete secondary school.

politically. They represented a new type of African political leadership that commanded attention from Western authorities by using imperial languages to press for African claims.<sup>196</sup> Despite variation in their tactics and objectives, these lettered men largely envisioned the nation as Africa's ticket of admission to the modern world.

In addition to constructing various nationalist beliefs to overthrow imperialism, they also formulated nation-state ideology after assuming the reins of power. As many of the first governors, prime ministers, and presidents of their respective territories, these Western-educated political leaders developed visions of their nation-states and considered how to relate with others in the world system. Assembling the nation-state necessitated internal political organization through constitutional ordering, institutional arrangements, economic planning, foreign policy positioning, and formation of international alliances. Not surprisingly, ideas and institutions from Europe and North America influenced African leaders' projections of the nation-state. After independence, nation-state ideology, the set of connected ideas that define the national character, developed in Africa in the context of the Cold War and global concern with capitalist and socialist development. The second part of this chapter outlines two particular visions of how to incorporate African nations into the comity of nations.

### Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny – Antagonistic Visions of Progress

Kwame Nkrumah and Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first presidents of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire respectively, were highly influential personalities in the transition from empire to nation in West Africa. Their distinct perspectives on how African nations should proceed into the modern world reflected personal experiences and political orientations as well as engagement with various discourses of progress. Although both

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<sup>196</sup> Thomas Hodgkins, African Political Parties (Harmondsworth: Penguin African Series, 1961)

Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny were quite squarely political ‘élites’, their perspectives reveal the contested and contradictory meanings associated with liberation and the nation-state amongst Western-educated Africans. As dramatically different nationalist pioneers, Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny illustrate a variety of ideas of progress and ‘African modernity’. Their ideas fall into three main opposed categories: 1.) Pan-African versus national sovereignty; 2.) socialist versus capitalist development; and 3.) anti-colonial versus neo-colonial orientation. Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny demonstrate that the entry of African nations into the ‘modern world’ was a moment of grand imagining forged against the backdrop of pan-Africanist debates, Cold War considerations, and continued imperial influence. These two leaders, arguably more than any others in West Africa at the time, helped to shape ideas about Africa’s postcolonial future. The next sections, therefore, describe Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny’s ideational and discursive contributions to visions and discourses of African progress at the end of empire.

### Kwame Nkrumah: Radical ‘Father’ of Pan-Africanism

Fela Kuti, the Nigerian music legend, opens one of his popular songs with, “The father of pan-Africanism, Doctor Kwame Nkrumah, says the secret of life is to have no fear.”<sup>197</sup> This erroneous but popular sentiment, that Kwame Nkrumah founded pan-Africanism, reflects Nkrumah’s passion and profound impact on pan-African ideology. Nkrumah is known for his ideas about the ‘African personality’, African socialism, and neo-colonialism, but it is perhaps his pan-African legacy that left the strongest stamp of all.

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<sup>197</sup> “Fear not for man”, Fela Kuti (1977).

Nkrumah was one of the radical visionaries of the nationalist era. As a ‘radical’ he advocated fundamental structural changes to colonial social relations; proposing continental self-determination and altered relations of production. He was decidedly Pan-African, socialist, and anti-colonial in his orientation. Nkrumah not only desired profound changes on the continent, he demanded them urgently, expressing strong support for immediate social transformation rather than gradual reform. Our present discussion cannot delve into details of the politics around Nkrumah’s rise to power, actions in government, or untimely ousting. I focus instead on the ideas underlying his politics and theories animating his ideological positions.

Kwame Nkrumah was born in the British administered Gold Coast colony in 1909. He was educated at the famed Achimota School in Accra and later attended a Roman Catholic Seminary. He left the Gold Coast in his mid-twenties to further his studies in the United States, where he earned a Bachelor of Sacred Theology from Lincoln University and Masters Certificates in education and philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania. While in the United States, Nkrumah was introduced to the ideas of Marcus Garvey and exposed to the denigration characteristic of the Black experience in the Americas. Nkrumah credited Marcus Garvey for “awakening” the Negro race and providing specific objectives for racial advancement. Garvey’s slogans about the ‘Redemption of Africa’, ‘Peoples of Africa, Unite!’, ‘Hands Off Africa’ and ‘Africa for Africans’ girded Nkrumah’s political ideology and served as the foundational principles for his pan-African and anti-imperialist philosophies.<sup>198</sup> Also during his time in the United States, Nkrumah learned principles of Marxism,

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<sup>198</sup> R.L. Okonkwo “The Garvey Movement in British West Africa”, *The Journal of African History* (1980):116

namely of the Trotskyite and Maoist varieties, that he later interwove into his Pan-African ideologies.<sup>199</sup>

Nkrumah declared himself to be “unalterably opposed to imperialism in any form” and believed black solidarity was necessary to resist imperial domination.<sup>200</sup> While his pan-African ideas germinated in the United States they came into full bloom during his time in England. During his time in England, Nkrumah collaborated with George Padmore and W.E.B. DuBois to organize the Fifth Pan-African Congress.<sup>201</sup> At the forefront of this conference, Nkrumah and his ideological associates identified African nationalism as the most important ideological imperative and adopted Marxist socialism as its underlying philosophy. Nkrumah asserted that the “three political components of [African] liberation... [were] 1) Nationalism, 2) Pan-Africanism, 3) Socialism.”<sup>202</sup> For Nkrumah, there appeared to be no contradictions between claims for territorial sovereignty, race-based ideology, and class-centered philosophies.<sup>203</sup> Indeed he saw each of these dimensions as indispensable. Nationalism and pan-Africanism channeled Black solidarity towards political liberation, while socialism augured economic liberation in the form of industrial development and progressive distribution.

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<sup>199</sup> Nkrumah’s correspondence with Trinidadian Marxist C.L.R. James is considered an especially powerful influence in his political imagining.

<sup>200</sup> Jon Wornoff, *West African Wager* (N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1972): 27

<sup>201</sup> This conference was held in Manchester in 1945 and attracted delegates from around the globe. Also during his time in London Nkrumah founded the West African National Secretariat (WANS) to further the agenda of decolonization in Africa. He also was elected into the office of Vice-President of the West African Students’ Union (WASU). His participation in both indicate the energy of anti-imperialism in London, and Nkrumah’s intimate involvement in envisioning postcolonial Africa.

<sup>202</sup> Tsomondo (1975): 41

<sup>203</sup> There are clear reasons why these three ideologies are not necessarily compatible and why conflation of them can be viewed as problematic. Perhaps the most significant problem is the assumption that race solidarity can be arranged over class. Pan-African solidarity, although intended for all, necessarily impacts African differentially depending on their class position. factors, and the overlooking of the possibly those espousing race ideology do not in fact represent the interests of a particular class. Micah Tsomondo (1975) accuses Nkrumah of subverting pan-Africanism’s agenda by conflating it with socialism. The merging of these ideologies fractured black solidarity by introducing contentious economic dimensions to a longstanding race-based philosophy.

## African Redemption and Redirection

By the time Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast in 1947 he had acquired distinctly revolutionary vocabulary and fully developed political philosophies. He advocated “self-government now” and called for the complete independence of African territories from political and economic domination by imperial powers. When the Gold Coast achieved independence in 1957 Nkrumah was hailed president and *Osagyefo*, “redeemer”, of the new nation he called Ghana. Nkrumah borrowed the name ‘Ghana’ from an ancient empire talked about in pan-African circles. The Ghana Empire had flourished a thousand years prior to Nkrumah’s time and was located in a region reaching across present-day Mali and Mauritania. By calling the Gold Coast ‘Ghana’ Nkrumah reclaimed Africa’s glorious past and refashioned it into a new political and cultural national identity. However, Ghana’s independence, Nkrumah asserted, was meaningless without the liberation of all Africans from the tyranny of colonialism. Nkrumah’s nationalism was characterized by its continental concern and an avowed commitment to decolonization of the entire continent. Once in power he championed national independence movements across the continent and furthered his pan-African ideas by urging continental federation. He spearheaded the All-African Peoples’ Conference in 1958 where declared his intentions to support revolutions and political movements for emancipation in Arab and Black Africa. Success, he contended, hinged on prioritizing continental unity over all other affiliations. Nkrumah expressed this sentiment saying, “The overriding importance of African unity demands the sacrifice of all personal, tribal and regional objectives and considerations...If we cannot make an effort in this direction, we might as well begin to throw up our hands

in despair.”<sup>204</sup> Even within Ghana he discouraged regional affiliations and stressed the importance of building national and continental identity.

In addition to decolonization and “continent-building”, Nkrumah also argued for the importance of the African Personality, African socialism and neocolonialism. The African Personality was an emotional and ethical ontology that Nkrumah associated with pre-colonial African societies. He believed African societies prior to colonialism practiced forms of egalitarianism, humanism, and communalism that imperialism had destroyed or disrupted. An objective of postcolonial African nations, he insisted, would be the recovery of this lost or distorted identity through African socialism. Nkrumah’s visions of African emancipation recalled the notion of *Sankofa*, the reclamation of African ancestry for strength and vision into the future. African socialism, he suggested, would restore ‘African society’ by expelling remnants of European capitalism, and reintroducing African cultural norms while propelling Africa in industrial production and modern living standards. African socialism was loosely Marxist in that it critiqued capitalism and called for reordering of social relations, however, it relied on Nkrumah’s notion of humanism in “traditional African society”. He contended revolution was necessary to overturn bourgeois capitalism and institute a classless society championed by a vanguard proletarian class. African industrialization was necessary to expand proletariat class-conscious and prepare for the eventual eradication of class differences. African socialism was premised on three central tenets: 1.) control of the state by a nationalist self-conscious class; 2.) rapid industrialization and expansion of the proletariat, and 3.) pan-Africanist solidarity to combat neocolonial dependencies.<sup>205</sup> He envisioned state-managed projects as the

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<sup>204</sup> Opoku Agyeman, “The Osagyefu, the Mwalimu and Pan-Africanism” *Journal of Modern African Studies* (1975): 661

<sup>205</sup> Steven Metz, “In Lieu of Orthodoxy” *Journal of Modern African Studies* (1982): 377-392

driving force of industrialization and placed national planning as one of the primary state responsibilities.

Nkrumah believed the transition to socialism would reconstruct African society “in such a manner that the humanism of traditional African life reasserts itself in a modern technical community.”<sup>206</sup> However, recovery of African communalist principles was equally important as the introduction modern circumstances to emerging nations. Nkrumah’s vision of modernity included development of industrial and nuclear technologies in order to elevate Africa’s status in the world. He argued, for example:

We must ourselves take part in the pursuit of scientific and technological research as a means of providing the basis of our socialist society. Socialism without science is void... We have therefore been compelled to enter the field of atomic energy because this already promises to yield the greatest economic source of power since the beginning of man.<sup>207</sup>

Nkrumah also coined and popularized the notion of ‘neocolonialism’ and was an important exponent of the idea of ‘under-development’. The seeming sovereignty of nation-states, he argued, deceptively gave the impression of autonomy when in actuality former colonies remained subservient to the capital and political machinations of more power nations. Nkrumah accused power-hungry ‘neo-colonialists’ in Europe and African territories of conspiring to maintain their economic and political advantage by urging incremental step by step decolonization.<sup>208</sup> He also identified neocolonialism as the primary impediment to national development and pinpointed continental unity as the only appropriate tool to combat and bring down

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<sup>206</sup> Metz (1982): 388

<sup>207</sup> Agyeman (1975)

<sup>208</sup> Ibid

neo-colonial structures.<sup>209</sup> Nkrumah advocated African autonomy from the strictures of (neo)colonialism as well from the intrigues and affiliations of Cold War politics. He promoted African non-alliance in the Cold War, famously declaring, “We face neither East nor West, we face forward.” Ideologically, Nkrumah stood for immediate African self determination and envisioned the nation as the medium of modernity. African progress would come through continental pan-Africanism, African socialism and development through the nation-state.

#### Houphouët-Boigny: Conservative and Capitalist

Félix Houphouët-Boigny assumed contrary positions to Kwame Nkrumah on almost every issue. Initially opposed to African independence, Houphouët-Boigny later supported African nationalism, but advocated continued collaboration with European powers. Whereas Nkrumah stressed pan-Africanism as a countervailing force to neo-colonialism, Houphouët-Boigny encouraged newly independent nations to embrace the benefits of ‘fraternité’ with more ‘advanced’ regions in order to enjoy cultural and economic progress. Houphouët-Boigny was expressly capitalist in his economic orientation; he not only promoted economic liberalism in Côte d’Ivoire but denounced socialist and communist movements in Africa and around the world. As he aspired to expand capitalist development, he also promoted regional federations and national development programs over efforts to create economic or political continental solidarity. In all, Houphouët-Boigny imagined a politically and socially conservative postcolonial future for African nations propelled by capitalist development under the auspices of Western powers.

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<sup>209</sup> Bill Freund, The Making of Contemporary Africa (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998); Metz (1982)

Dia Houphouët was born in Yamoussoukro in the colony of Côte d'Ivoire in 1905. He hailed from a family of chiefs and royal lineage on his mother's side, and inherited leadership obligations to the Baoulé people. At the age of ten he converted to Christianity and changed his first name to Félix; he added Boigny (meaning "irresistible force") to his last name when he launched his political career in the 1940s. Houphouët-Boigny matriculated at the *École primaire supérieure* and later moved to Senegal to attend the *École William Ponty* and *École de médecine de l'AOF* (French West Africa School of Medicine). He trained to become a teacher and doctor, and despite excelling in his studies never completed his medical studies. Houphouët-Boigny worked as a medical assistant before returning to his village in 1939 to assume the position of *chef de canton*. He also began administering his family's cocoa plantation which he expanded and developed into a highly profitable agricultural venture. Despite being one of the wealthiest plantation owners in the region, Houphouët-Boigny took great interest in the lot of farmers and championed the growth of planter unions, namely the *Syndicat Agricole Africain* (founded in 1944). The farmers union took issue with unfair advantages given French plantation owners and worked to restore more equity. It was from this base in union organizing that Houphouët-Boigny launched into politics and acquired local and international recognition as an erudite and impassioned political figure. Following successful rallying through his political organization, *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA)*, Houphouët-Boigny was elected into the French Parliament in 1956 as the first 'West African Negro' in the French cabinet. Perhaps his most important contribution in this position was to help pass the *loi cadre* which transferred some French powers over to local representatives in overseas territories.<sup>210</sup> Importantly, the law provided

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<sup>210</sup> The 1956 *Loi cadre* (Overseas Reform Act) was a turning point in French administration of colonial territories as voting inequalities were partially removed and the foundations for the French community were established.

universal suffrage for African subjects in French colonies. In 1957, following the Bamako Conference, Houphouët-Boigny was elected Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire and in 1958 he obtained a place for the colony in the French Community – a political entity granting partial autonomy to colonies while France maintained control of defense, foreign affairs and currency.<sup>211</sup>

### Côte d'Ivoire and Collaboration

Houphouët-Boigny was acutely aware of economic dependence of the colonies on France and opposed motions to alter this relationship through national independence or movements for radical self-determination. He became, therefore, the “international salesman for the French Community”, promoting the virtues of gradual, guided transfer of economic and political responsibility from France to West African territories.<sup>212</sup> In an address to the United Nations in 1957, Houphouët-Boigny declared “We [Africans] cannot accept isolation. As political leaders of black Africa and whatever our political affiliations, we wish to cooperate fraternally...on a basis of absolute equality of rights and duties.”<sup>213</sup> Ivorian development, he believed, would result only as a function of continued partnership with France on economic, military, and cultural fronts. He anticipated Africans would confront tremendous difficulty after independence because of general “technological backwardness.”<sup>214</sup> He envisioned French contributions augmenting Côte d'Ivoire's budget, military strength, health programs, engineering projects and, above all, education programs.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Gabriel Lisette, Le Combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (Paris: Encyclopædia Universalis, 1983); Marie Miran, Islam, histoire et modernité en Côte d'Ivoire (Paris: Karthala, 2006); Thomas Patrick Melady, Profiles of African Leaders (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961)

<sup>212</sup> Melady (1961): 122

<sup>213</sup> Melady (1961): 115

<sup>214</sup> J.H.A. Watson “French-Speaking Africa since Independence” *African Affairs* ( 1963): 211-222

<sup>215</sup> Ibid

Consequently, when France granted Côte d’Ivoire independence in 1960, Houphouët-Boigny invoked the notion of ‘fraternité’ and proclaimed continued association with France and other nations of Europe to “hasten the economic progress and social evolution” of the Ivorian people.<sup>216</sup> Keeping the colonial name ‘Cote d’Ivoire’, Houphouët-Boigny was elected president and placed the new nation on the capitalist track of development laid by French colonialism. Independence, he insisted, would not disrupt French influence in West Africa and every effort would be made to develop French West Africa in the modern likeness of Europe nations. Paradoxically promoting “controlled” liberalism, Houphouët-Boigny set Côte d’Ivoire on a course to become the “Switzerland of West Africa” through foreign investment, technical assistance and state-planned enhancement of local capitalist sectors.<sup>217</sup> Houphouët-Boigny even endorsed retention of the French flag for one full year after independence with the assumption that foreign investors who would more readily trust the *tricolore* than some newly fashioned African flag.<sup>218</sup>

His firm alliance with the Western world prompted Houphouët-Boigny supporters in Europe and the United States to assign him the magnanimous moniker “Sage of Africa”, while his admirers in Côte d’Ivoire referred to him affectionately as ‘Pap’ or ‘le vieux’. He built close ties with France, and fostered an alliance known as *Françafrique*. His loyalty to Western powers prompted derision from socialist and communist camps, namely in the form of invectives and threats. Houphouët-Boigny in turn spurned trade and diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and China, and censured African countries that hid behind the pretext of ‘non-alliance’ or neutrality. All efforts, he insisted, should be made to arrest the spread of international

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<sup>216</sup> Melady (1961): 115

<sup>217</sup> Colin Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996): 122; Melady (1961)

<sup>218</sup> John Rapley, *Ivoirien Capitalism* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993): 68

communism and contain its detrimental effects. In accordance with his anti-communist sentiments, Houphouët-Boigny sabotaged revolutionary campaigns across the African continent, and supported conditions for capitalist accumulation instead.<sup>219</sup>

The Conseil de l'Entente was founded in 1959 by Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Dahomey (present-day Benin), Upper Volta (present-day Burkina Faso), and (eventually) Togo, and worked towards promoting regional cooperation between former French colonies. Houphouët-Boigny was instrumental to the founding of the council and popularization of the notion that regional, not continental, solidarity was necessary for economic development.<sup>220</sup> Since he viewed autonomous national development as economic self-destruction, Houphouët-Boigny advocated regional fund raising, loan granting, trade and investment. His visions of African modernity were, therefore, virtually antithetical to Nkrumah's. While these two leaders' conceptions present extremes of a range of nationalist and development ideologies composed by Western-educated Africans, they do not cover the entire gamut. A complex of contradictory variously motivated theories of African progress were presented by the cadre of Western-educated Africans that assumed political power as well as other Western-educated Africans who assumed official, professional, and service-related occupations in the transition from empire to nation. In general, however, ideas of progress imagined by Western-educated Africans sought to elevate Africans from denigration and extract them from backwardness through the nation-state, economic development, technological advancement, and state-led modernization projects.

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<sup>219</sup> Most notably he was implicated in the coup that overthrew Kwame Nkrumah in 1966 as well as actions taken to oust Mathieu Kérékou in 1977 and implicated removal of Thomas Sankara from Burkina Faso.

<sup>220</sup> Watson (1963)

## Conclusion

Frederick Cooper writes, the “national order of things should neither be taken as natural nor dismissed as an artificial imposition on Africa.”<sup>221</sup> The truth of this statement is particularly evident in the notions of progress proffered by Western-educated Africans from 1860s to the 1960s. Meanings of nationalism and visions of modernity were far from given, rather they reflected a host of contradictory, contingent, and constructed racial, political, cultural and economic aspirations. Both the radical and conservative conceptions of nationalism and independence highlighted above illustrate the centrality of modernity in the minds of Western-educated Africans at the end of empire. To varying degrees, they promoted an ‘African identity’, liberation of Africans through the nation, anti-colonial orientation and continued collaboration with European powers. Despite variation, discourses of progress sought to improve the treatment and status of ‘backwards’ Africans and propel Africans into the modern world. The tremendous optimism shared about Africa’s potential in the modern world of nations was fueled by developmentalist notions that state-led development projects could rapidly industrialize and modernize societies. The next chapter reviews conceptions of development in this transition period and the rise of developmentalist regimes.

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<sup>221</sup> Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and Connection”, *American Historical Review* (1994): 1542

## CHAPTER 3

### **Re-making the World System: Reconstruction and post-war 'Development'**

World War II summoned the most concentrated death and destruction the world has ever seen. The horrors of concentration camps, protracted battles, two atomic bombs, and war-related diseases and starvation left over 60 million dead, and scores of casualties from every continent. Aftershocks of the disaster in Europe rippled out to the colonies and, at the war's end, inter-national rescue forces appeared in the form of humanitarian and financial institutions.<sup>222</sup> Efforts to rebuild Europe, quell agitation in the colonies, and build newly independent nations spurred a host of 'development projects' around the world. The period between the 1940s and 1970s, therefore, was characterized by discourses of development that framed national recovery and social progress as a state-managed process of economic growth and social reconstruction. At the same time, however, there was a significant shift in global power from its base in Western Europe to new centers in the 'East' and 'West'. The rise of the United States and Soviet Union as global superpowers produced new discourses of progress and directed nation-states towards particular development projects. In both the ideological and academic discourses of development in this era, modernization and industrialization took center stage.

At the close of World War II, imperial powers used the notion of development in futile attempts to maintain control of their territories in West Africa. As independent African states emerged, however, development persisted as a state-led endeavor believed to drive modernization and industrialization. In both socialist and capitalist projections of African development, the state was expected to engineer and

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<sup>222</sup> The Marshall Plan and Bretton Woods institutions are perhaps best known, but other efforts were deployed with great success in Japan and elsewhere.

expedite African evolution out of traditional backwardness and toward more modern societies. The more thoroughly Africans embraced modern mannerisms and adopted industrial cultures, the more quickly they were expected to experience ‘development’. Africans in state offices, therefore, constructed projects for rapid industrialization while development experts stressed the importance of expanding Western education (and its associated lifestyles) to more numbers of Africans. In the 1960s and 1970s, therefore, state-led development projects set about transforming family affairs, agriculture, and industrial production.

This chapter elucidates how the meaning of development shifted in the transition from empire to nation. I emphasize modernization and industrialization as paradigmatic notions of progress in the period following World War II up until the 1980s. By tracing the history and logic behind these discourses of development the chapter underscores the strength of these theories in constructing enduring ideas about the composition of African societies as well as formulas for how to ‘fix’ them. The first part of the chapter examines development as: a colonial strategy, an influential academic discourse, and an internationally approved knowledge regime. I then discuss the emergence of modernization theory and predominance of modernization paradigms. The chapter concludes with discussion of Western education and modernization strategies in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire from approximately 1940 to 1980. Despite differences put in place by their respective colonial regimes as well as disparate allegiances during the Cold War, post-independence administrations in both Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire attempted to modernize and industrialize their nations with the state as the central engine of development. I highlight some of the development projects undertaken to introduce modern institutions and lifestyles to Ghanaian and Ivorian families, societies, and nations. While development strategies have changed significantly since the period immediately following World War II and African

independence, this era laid important foundations for contemporary conceptions of African development and modernity.

### World War II and the rise of Developmentalism

The influence of World War II in restructuring global power cannot be overstated. Devastation across Europe permitted the United States to assume a lead role in establishing a new world order. As the United Nations, established for the maintenance of peace, and the Marshall Plan (originally called the European Recovery Plan) were put into action, international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund also entered the world scene and worked to reconstruct shattered economies and build international consensus.<sup>223</sup> These institutional changes inspired new discourses about human rights, political self-determination, regulation of economies, and nation building. Accompanying and underpinning these changes was the belief that state and public sector intervention was necessary to stimulate and stabilize national economies. The acclaimed British economist, John Maynard Keynes, supported government involvement in the construction of monetary and fiscal policy, and operation of central banks. Keynesianism gained favor during reconstruction and practically became post-war orthodoxy. Consequently, from the mid-1940s until approximately 1980, the logic of *laissez-faire* capitalism took a back seat to a new international commitment to state-managed recovery and ‘development’.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> We can add to this list of World War II-inspired organizations the influential Organization for European Economic Co-operation (now the OECD)

<sup>224</sup> Fouad Makki, “The empire of capital and the remaking of centre-periphery relations” *Third World Quarterly* (2004): 149-168. Makki comprehensively describes the close of *laissez faire* capitalism and beginning of developmentalist regimes.

‘Development’ is a catchall phrase for progress that typically refers to social improvement and economic growth. As Gilbert Rist notes, development is incredibly seductive in its elusive promise of ‘better’ lives for all, and its mobilizing moral undertones.<sup>225</sup> ‘Development’ assumes a normative high ground, and unapologetically pronounces what progress looks like and how things ‘should’ be. Couched in these terms it becomes almost anathema to oppose ‘development’. In general, development discourses describe social problems and outline strategies to combat them; addressing cultural, political and economic deficiencies or dysfunctions as mutable phenomena. However development discourses also demonstrate dynamics of power in the choices of which social issues, concepts, theories, and practices are changed or reproduced.<sup>226</sup> Development discourses establish knowledge and set policies in motion – they are at once theoretical and practical. While development discourses are diffuse and contested dominant forms emerge as expressions of power; they suppress or subsume competing constructions and impose themselves as prevailing narratives of progress.

The predominant development narrative in the period between 1940 and 1970 can be described as ‘developmentalist’. This characterization comes not only from the host of institutions established at this time with the specific mandate to ‘develop’, but also from a general commitment to planned development orchestrated by the nation-state. After the war, the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions set about providing and regulating global capital, and assisting national growth. Economic growth through industrialization and social transformation in the form of modernization were the two dominant components of development theories in this period and the backbone of developmentalist regimes. Accompanying this attention to

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<sup>225</sup> Gilbert Rist, The History of Development (New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2002):22

<sup>226</sup> Young-Gil Chae, “Development Discourse” in The international encyclopedia of revolution and protest (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Arturo Escobar, Encountering Development, the making and unmaking of the Third World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

industrialization and modernization were new mathematical aggregates and averages designed to provide indicators of progress and rankings of the economic standing of nations. The American economist Simon Kuznets created a measure he called the 'gross national product' (GNP), which served as a foundation for a growing list of indices and methods of accounting for national inputs and outputs. With novel metrics in place and post-war focus on state-managed national growth, developmentalism assumed an econometric and technical dimension in the mid-twentieth century that fixed the nation-state as its primary unit of analysis, and the state as the primary agent of development.

### Colonial Development at the End of Empire

Developmentalism as described above was originally designed for devastated nations in Europe; with national autonomy and economic recovery portrayed as global priorities. However, the rise of nation-states as the unit of political and economic legitimacy coincided with the decline of France and Britain as global superpowers. In addition to tremendous material damage suffered by both France and Britain during the war, the logic of empire was also much impaired. On one end pressure mounted from the United States which, in a bid to further establish its global hegemony, used the notion of sovereignty to challenge its geo-political rivals and call for Britain and France to justify or relinquish their overseas territories. On the other end, labor unrest, riots and nationalist movements emerged within colonies; destabilizing or undermining imperial control.

African colonies were no exception. Starting in the 1920s African workers demanded better wages and labor protections, engaged in strikes and riots, and

organized actions to resist labor inequalities.<sup>227</sup> A common appeal from African labor movements at this time was for African workers to receive remuneration and treatment equal to European workers (Cooper 1996). If, African workers argued, they were subjected to European-style labor practices, they should receive European-style payment and benefits. Labor was the linchpin of colonial extraction, and disruptions in the supply and control of African labor threatened to completely destabilize imperial order. Adding to colonial powers' woes were the disparate and growing numbers of anti-colonial movements gaining momentum in the form of guerrilla movements, political parties, mass protests and the like. Calls for African 'self-determination' grew louder as anti-colonial movements expanded in West Africa and across British and French empires. Assaults on empire from within and without provoked France and Britain to introduce the notion of colonial development as a desperate last-ditch effort to justify holding on to their slipping colonies.<sup>228</sup>

In British colonial offices, the case was made that Britain had a moral duty to supervise economic and social development in the colonies. In respect to Africa in particular, British officials insisted on the political unpreparedness of Africans for self-government and the economic and social responsibilities of imperial trusteeship.<sup>229</sup> Starting in the 1940s, British colonial policies emphasized the importance of "improved labor standards, economic advancement and social

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<sup>227</sup> Significant strikes and riots took place from 1935-1948 in places such as Mombasa, the Gold Coast and Northern Rhodesia. Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backwards Africans, and the Development Concept" in International Development and the Social Sciences (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997):64-92.

<sup>228</sup> Cooper provides comprehensive coverage of the introduction of development as an imperial tactic for continuation. His careful analysis demonstrates important similarities and differences between French and British approaches to colonial development. Frederick Cooper, Decolonization and African Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

<sup>229</sup> Cooper's discussion of British justifications for continued colonial domination reveal that the United States placed enormous pressure on the Allies to adhere to the universal principle of self-determination. The policy of colonial development was, therefore, a policy designed to re-orient Britain's colonial territories just as much as it was intended to stave off U.S. criticism and scrutiny.

security...to [produce] rising standards of life” in African colonies.<sup>230</sup> The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 was among Britain’s first efforts to preserve empire under the guise of imperial benevolence. The Act claimed to improve the lives of a critical “mass of the colonial populations” by funding large-scale health and education programs, and increasing basic wages.<sup>231</sup> In addition to legitimizing continued imperial control, colonial ‘development’ programs also permitted surveillance of Africans. In order to be eligible for and receive social services, Africans were required to conform to British definitions of ‘work’ and ‘family’.<sup>232</sup> Britain’s rhetorical position, however, was that development improved the lot of all colonial subjects by introducing labor protections, increasing social services in urban centers and expanding general education. Despite British policies encouraging improved African well-being, in practice, colonial officers made concerted efforts to restrict the economic and political power of educated, skilled, and wealthy Africans through systematic enforcement of the color bar.<sup>233</sup>

For the French, colonial development was never intended to transform African society wholesale but, rather, to educate, assimilate and prepare an élite subsection of Africans for the eventual takeover of political and administrative duties. A small group of ‘*évolués*’ were granted rights of citizenship while the majority of Africans were labeled ‘subjects’ and governed under a vaguely defined principle of ‘association’. The policy of association emphasized flexible administration of the

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<sup>230</sup> Cooper (1996): 112

<sup>231</sup> Cooper (1996): 115

<sup>232</sup> British colonial welfare programs required laborers to record the size and location of their families in order to receive family wages and certain labor benefits. This was achieved under the guises of creating ‘industrial man’ in Africa – an imperial attempt to mold African labor problems in the image of European workers in order to maintain stability in ways more familiar to European official. Cooper (1996) provides an instructive account of colonial definitions of workers, and surveillance and control of restive labor.

<sup>233</sup> The ‘color bar’ is recognized as a professional and social restriction on African advancement and mobility.

colonies and facilitated “evolution of native groups along their own lines.”<sup>234</sup> Subjects had no political rights, however, and were coerced into labor in mines, on plantations and in the French military. Even as riots and protests broke out in the 1930s, the French continued policies of forced labor. Frederick Cooper highlights colonial commitment to forced labor in French territories stating that even “at the height of World War II, Vichy leaders recognized their inability to control the growing “African proletariat” [but] set about using more forced labor despite threats of social and political upheaval.”<sup>235</sup> Vichy France added the notion of “prudent industrialization” to their colonial policies which entailed strategic social and economic improvements in the colonies in order to pacify restive laborers while preventing African empowerment.<sup>236</sup> By introducing ‘development’ through improved infrastructure and social services the French hoped to allay restive laborers, increase African productivity, and appear to be extending the privileges of French citizenship to more people in wider territories. Development in French West Africa attempted to revise and perpetuate the notion of an indissoluble French union.

Despite their variations, French and British colonial officers shared several common approaches to development in the final days of empire. The first was that they framed development as a technocratic, knowledge-based process assumed to advance in evolutionary stages. British and French technocrats believed that their knowledge of European social history could be transposed onto African contexts and used to expedite the movement of African societies along a linear path of development. Even as France and Britain realized that continued imperial control of Africa was untenable, they “both held to the belief that their historical experience and

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<sup>234</sup> Raymond Betts, Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005): 106

<sup>235</sup> Cooper (1996): 111

<sup>236</sup> Cooper (1997)

the models they had tried to implant in Africa constituted the standard by which their successors could be judged.”<sup>237</sup> Additionally, colonial supervisors aimed to transform Africans from traditionalism and insolvency into modern, prosperous societies – a painstaking process that they hoped European imperial powers would oversee for multiple generations.<sup>238</sup> Colonial officers argued that the extent of African ‘primitiveness’ and ‘aboriginal poverty’ was so great that colonial oversight was needed to govern and develop ‘African society’.

Colonial officers made the case that it was their social responsibility to “prepare Africans for their future in a differentiated, hierarchical structure of labor”, and to this end they would strive to “foster liveable wages, security, and *cultural adaptation*” (*my emphasis*).<sup>239</sup> Consequently, while labor issues prompted the introduction of development policies, development assumed ever-more inclusive meanings for the colonial state. For example, a 1948 colonial office paper stated:

The African plantation owner, mining prospector, shopkeeper, factory manager, skilled mechanic, etc., should be encouraged, for they are at present deplorably rare. The development of this class would go far to give the African the feeling that he owned his country and exploited its resources, instead of seeing these constantly in the hands of the white man. - Colonial Office Paper, 1948.<sup>240</sup>

This quote highlights the shift in colonial development interest from its focus on labor to complete transformation of African social relations and cultural practices. Before British (and to a lesser degree French) powers surrendered their colonies they intended to “encourage” the growth of African agricultural owners, managers of industry, small business owners, and skilled workers. Recognizing increasingly differentiated divisions of labor in African contexts, colonial powers proposed to increase the

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<sup>237</sup> Cooper (1996): 391

<sup>238</sup> Cooper (1997)

<sup>239</sup> Cooper (1996):378

<sup>240</sup> Cooper (1996):117

numbers of African capitalists and middle classes before permitting Africans to govern themselves. The above quote also demonstrates that despite facile distinctions often made between ‘civilized’ and ‘savage’ Africans, colonial development imperatives recognized the need to acknowledge more than a dichotomous class structure.

### From Colonies to Countries: Development Imperatives in the New World Order

Colonial powers eventually relinquished hopes of continued control and imagined postcolonial Africa in the nation-state which provided the most palatable possible global reconfiguration. As Frederick Cooper writes:

Colonial governments [were forced] to make a necessary imaginative leap... They came to envision a world that they no longer ruled but that they thought could function along principles they understood: through state institutions, by Western-educated elites, in the interests of progress and modernity, through integration with global markets and international organization... The one-time Apostles of Disorder – Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Nnamdi Azikiwe – were remade in the colonial imagination into the Men of Modernization and Modernity.<sup>241</sup>

Starting with the Gold Coast in 1957, black Africa gradually gained independence.<sup>242</sup>

Decolonization brought new characters to the world stage and with it new scripts explaining global powers, roles, and inequalities. Especially important in the reframing of the global order was the rivalry between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Cold War started at the close of World War II and took the form of a nuclear arms race, the formation of military

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<sup>241</sup> Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and Connection” *American Historical Review* (1994): 1539

<sup>242</sup> The first nations on continental Africa to gain independence were Liberia 1847, Egypt 1951, and Tunisia, Sudan and Morocco (1956). The majority of African colonies gained independence between 1957 and 1970. Importantly, Ethiopia was never formally colonized and Liberia was formed in 1847 under the purview of the United States but was also never formally colonized.

coalitions, and ideological alliances that played out in proxy wars, massive propaganda campaigns and sponsored revolutions across several continents.<sup>243</sup>

The ascendance of Keynesianism, decline of empire, rise of nation-states, and beginning of the Cold War signaled the emergence of a new world order in which global hierarchies in wealth and power were explained by differentials in size and strength of national economies and nuclear arsenals. A three tier global hierarchy was established with the industrialized U.S. and its allies calling themselves the ‘First World’; a conglomeration of communist countries known as the ‘Second World’; and the trailing newly independent nations relegated to the bottom tier and known as the so-called ‘Third World’. The discourses that explained and legitimized this global reordering were a part of a new development knowledge regime that determined the different truths about how to achieve progress. The status of African territories changed colonies to ‘less developed’ nations, necessitating revisions in development discourses. The new global order initiated new discursive boundaries as well as new possibilities and restrictions for Africans.<sup>244</sup>

As the leading superpower, the United States dominated constructions of the emerging development industry<sup>245</sup> as well as the production of knowledge associated with national development. The U.S. not only perceived Europe as desperate for economic assistance and aid, but identified development of ‘underdeveloped areas’ as

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<sup>243</sup> Proxy wars were fought on the African continent and included those in Angola and Mozambique. The CIA was also conspicuously involved in actions to subvert socialist or populist regimes through assisted coup d’etats and assassinations, including those of Patrice Lumumba and, allegedly, Sekou Touré.

<sup>244</sup> Foucault writes about truth regimes and the way power is structured in epistemological and discursive ways. He provokes reflection about the boundaries of ‘thinkable’ space and suggests that power is evident in its ability to police those boundaries by establishing epistemic limits and determining discursive agendas. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980)

<sup>245</sup> While seldom acknowledged, development work has assumed an increasingly more industrial dimension. As an industry development organizations are a site of tremendous economic production in the form of job creation, career opportunities, and an expanding array of ancillary goods and services that support the oftentimes altruistic mandates of non-profit or development organizations.

part of its new mandate as a global superpower. This sentiment emerged in the fourth point of President Truman's inaugural speech in 1949 in which he declared:

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people. The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques. The material resources which we can afford to use for assistance of other peoples are limited. But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible.<sup>246</sup>

The Point Four Program, also known as the Bold New Program, emerged out of this speech and began a variety of U.S.-sponsored assistance programs in newly independent nations. The program expanded the postwar notion of the world as malleable, and reinforced the idea that technical expertise from the 'First World' was necessary for development.<sup>247</sup> The United States championed the dissemination of technical development knowledge, and provided capital for 'developing' nations to grow, manage, and regulate their economies. The next sections explore details of post-war developmentalist visions and examine what they portended for West African nations in particular.

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<sup>246</sup> James Gilbert Ryan, Leonard C. Schlup, *Historical Dictionary of the 1940s* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2006)

<sup>247</sup> USAID and the Peace Corps program emerged at this time as extensions of the belief that Euro-American knowledge and expertise needed to be disseminated to less developed regions.

## Development Economics and Theories of Social Evolution

With Western Europe in disarray and the perceived threat of Soviet expansion, experts from the United States were forced to generate compelling accounts of the virtues and mechanisms of capitalist development. Persuading newly independent nations to side with the U.S. and pursue capitalist development was of utmost importance in the battle for material and military primacy. As Rajani Kanth writes, “Regardless of how Third World nations themselves viewed the matter...the *macro* logic of the world economy, locked now in a life-and-death struggle between a resurgent (but restructured) Western capitalism...and a militarily powerful Eastern-bloc socialism, dictated that the Third World would now be destined to be the pawn in a deadly East-West struggle for the hearts, minds, factories, and paddyfields of ex colonies” (emphasis in original).<sup>248</sup> Development economics and modernization theories emerged as the two pillars of Western development interventionism in this period.<sup>249</sup>

Western economists identified economic growth as the principal priority for so-called ‘Third World’ nations, and framed the relative and absolute growth in wealth as the keystone of ‘development’. They categorized former colonies as precapitalist societies and identified their social transformation into advanced capitalism as the teleological objective of development. A new sub-discipline of economics was founded on these principles and known as development economics. It’s founding doctrines were composed by Paul Rosenstein-Rodan at the World Bank, Kurt Mandelbaum and W. Arthur Lewis at the University of Manchester, Sir Hans Wolfgang Singer at the Economics Department of the United Nations, and Ragnar Nurkse at Columbia University. Together they suggested that poor nations were

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<sup>248</sup> Rajani Kanth, Paradigms in Economic Development (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc, 1994):4

<sup>249</sup> The Soviet Union advocated socialist and communist options to counter the United States’ insistence on capitalist development. While U.S. and U.S.S.R. ideologies were opposed, both superpowers espoused heavy state intervention.

caught in vicious cycles of poverty that they could only escape with focused capital formation, strategic government and private capital investment, and increased national savings.<sup>250</sup> Development economics gained momentum in late 1940s and quickly became the guiding force in policy making.<sup>251</sup> Development economists suggested that all societies would, eventually, reach industrialized modern states. As the American economist Clark Kerr expressed:

The best place to start is with a view of the end result; for industrialism is a great magnet which is drawing all human life to it and ordering the orientation of this life. Whether a society has been matrilineal or patrilineal, whether based on family or tribal ownership of land, whether responding to the Protestant ethic or the Bantu ethic, or whether it goes through a prior commercial revolution or not, it ends up following the logic of industrialization.<sup>252</sup>

One of the most influential notions proposed by development economists in this era came in the form of structural-change theories. Structural-change had two main threads: one emphasized the need to substitute agricultural economies with industries and institutions conducive to industrial manufacturing<sup>253</sup>, and the other focused on transferring ‘surplus labor’ from ‘unproductive’ areas to more productive capitalist sectors.<sup>254</sup> In effect, structural change aimed to industrialize agriculture and engage more populations in profit-generating labor.

W. Arthur Lewis was an especially prominent proponent of structural change theory as a process of economic growth. Lewis was born in Saint Lucia and emigrated

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<sup>250</sup> Capital formation here refers to the deployment of capital to generate more capital. Rosenstein-Rodan (1943) was particularly influential in proposing the notion of a “vicious cycle” of poverty, and suggesting, among other things, that poor nations reduce consumption (Kanth 1994).

<sup>251</sup> Kanth (1994)

<sup>252</sup> The teleology of industrialization was strongly argued by American economist Clark Kerr, but also received support from British economist Colin Clarke (1940) and American entrepreneur Carl Fisher (1939).

<sup>253</sup> Hollis Chenery and Moshe Syrquin, Patterns of Development, 1957–1970 (London: Oxford University Press, 1975)

<sup>254</sup> W. Arthur Lewis, “Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour” in Paradigms in Economic Development (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994): 59-98

to the United Kingdom where he enjoyed a successful career as a development scholar and became the first (and to this point only) black recipient of the Noble Prize in Economics (1979). Lewis proposed a ‘two-sector surplus model’ of growth which argued that tropical (undeveloped) regions contain large, unproductive subsistence sectors that, in effect, constitute ‘surplus labor’. His writings in the 1950s suggested, therefore, that the key to economic development is to maximize labor in capitalist sectors which will, in turn, increase production and open opportunities for capital accumulation. In addition to employing idle agriculturalists and placing people in “casual jobs”<sup>255</sup> in more productive forms of labor, Lewis also argued, “one of the surest ways of increasing the national income is to...create new sources of employment for women outside the home.”<sup>256</sup> Economic development occurs, he believed, when agriculture is made more marginal and labor is maximized in productive industrial sectors.

The ‘two sectors model’ attempts to explain the uneven distribution of capital within and between countries. It suggests poor regions are inhibited by subsistence production while rich regions acquire their wealth as a result of engagement in industrious capitalist production. For Lewis, and the generation of development economists he inspired, “the central fact of economic development is rapid capital accumulation (including knowledge and skills with capital).”<sup>257</sup> He believed accumulation necessitates a class of capitalists, in government or in the private sector, that can sagaciously invest capital and generate profit, thereby serving as a “saving class”. Lewis dismissed the ability of unskilled laborers and middle-classes to accrue meaningful savings as the former barely subsist and the latter are too busy “struggling

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<sup>255</sup> “Casual jobs” refer to workers engaged in temporary or ad hoc employment. According to Lewis in addition to petty retailers, this includes “workers on the docks, the young men who rush forward asking to carry your bag as you appear, the jobbing gardener, and the like” (Lewis, 1994:61).

<sup>256</sup> Lewis (1994): 62

<sup>257</sup> Lewis (1994): 72

to keep up with the Jones's" to significantly increase their savings.<sup>258</sup> He thus constructed a 'dual economy' that associated subsistence, agriculture and domesticity with non-productivity, backwardness and poverty, while pointing to urban capitalist production as the link to industrial development and economic expansion. In his theory, agriculture and backwardness stood in contrast to urban, capitalist production and economic development. Commenting on how this duality extends beyond the economic realm, Lewis wrote:

We find the same contrasts also outside their economic life. There are one or two modern towns with the finest architecture, water supplies, communications and the like, into which people drift from other towns and villages which might almost belong to another planet. There is the same contrast even between people; between the highly westernized, trousered, natives, educated in western universities, speaking western languages, and glorying in Beethoven, Mills, Marx or Einstein, and the great mass of their countrymen who live in quite other worlds.<sup>259</sup>

And so two mutually exclusive worlds were imagined; one characterized by idle backwardness and the other portrayed as the productive model of modern development. Lewis's theories suggested that capitalist sectors and the people who powered them through government and industry enjoyed a rich and modern way of life wholly distinct from and in opposition to traditional agrarian sectors. What was needed in this construction of development was structural change from one sector to the other.

A contrasting but also highly influential theory in development economics in the 1950s and 1960s emerged in the form of 'stages of growth' theory. Walt Whitman Rostow was probably its most famous proponent. His famous book The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-communist manifesto (1960) epitomized the 'stages of growth' perspective and, while contested, served as one of the central texts of

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<sup>258</sup> Lewis (1994)

<sup>259</sup> Lewis (1994): 66

development economics in the Cold War period. Clearly a rebuttal to communist ideologies, Rostow proposed a five stage model of economic growth.<sup>260</sup> “All societies”, he claimed, begin with “traditional” agricultural economies characterized by low-output production per head and the use of pre-Newtonian science and technology. However, when societies meet certain ‘preconditions’ they commence modern economic production and experience Rostow’s notorious “take-off” stage. According to Rostow:

In Britain and the *well-endowed* parts of the world populated substantially from Britain (the United States, Canada etc.) the proximate stimulus for take-off was mainly (but not wholly) technological. In the more general case, the take-off awaited not only the build-up of social overhead capital and a surge of technological development in industry and agriculture, but also the emergence to political power of a group prepared to regard the modernization of the economy as serious, high-order political business (*my emphasis*).<sup>261</sup>

With technological advances and an entrepreneurial class spearheading industrial growth, Rostow predicted the expansion of economic (presumably capitalist) development through the commercialization of agriculture and extension of urban industrialization. Accompanying the rapid growth of industries and increase in output per head anticipated in the ‘take-off stage’, industrializing economies would also yield enlarged profit, increases in income, and societies oriented towards high mass consumption. This evolution towards more ‘mature’ economies necessarily resulted in transformations in the structure of political and social configurations, including intensified migration to urban centers as well as increases in the “proportion of the population working in offices or in skilled factory jobs.”<sup>262</sup> Rostow, like other

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<sup>260</sup> Rostow described communism in pathological terms, calling it a “disease of the transition” from traditional to high consumption societies. This imagery furthered belief in ‘removing’ or ‘containing’ communist growth as one would quarantine a virus or excise a tumor. Henry Bernstein “Modernization theory and the sociological study of development” *Journal of Development Studies* (1971): 147.

<sup>261</sup> Kanth (1994): 102

<sup>262</sup> Kanth (1994): 105

development economists of the time, thus proposed a dichotomous scheme of global inequalities premised on a distinction between low-producing “traditional” economies and “modern” economies. In his creative macho flair, Rostow also alluded to Western nations as “well-endowed” while describing “low producing” regions of the world as “enfeebled” and “impotent”, adding to a host of ideologically charged and clearly biased analyses.

Alexander Gerschenkron, an influential economist after World War II, was another strong exponent of ‘linear stages’ of development. He suggested that by observing economic activity one could indicate the extent of ‘backwardness’ or economic ‘maturity’ in any given sector or society. Poorer regions needed only to ‘catch up’ with more advanced economies by hastening the transition from agricultural ‘backwardness’ to industrial ‘modernity’. All societies were assumed to evolve in identical fashion. This notion was drawn from an oversimplified reading of the experiences of Britain and North American countries, which portrayed their historical development as a linear, unidirectional series of stages. Developed nations, linear-stage economists argued, had accumulated wealth by separating farmers from their land and converting them into workers, consequently creating more intricate divisions of labor, increased production, and more technological innovation (especially in urban centers).<sup>263</sup> They saw, therefore, a progression from simple to more complexly organized societies; an evolution they believed correlated with economic growth within national boundaries. Economic modernization and mass consumption, they believed, were the basic, natural, universal and inevitable trajectories of all societies in their march of progress from traditional to modern economies. The explicit objective of development, therefore, was economic growth and its tacit mode of production was

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<sup>263</sup> Colin Leys, The Rise and Fall of Development Theory (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)

capitalist. Newly independent nations in Asia and Africa were thus encouraged to evolve through sequential and linear processes of technological, educational and entrepreneurial advancement. An inordinate but unfounded amount of hope was disseminated with these theories, as their teleological framing suggested the high living standards and mass consumption levels of Europe and North America would soon be enjoyed by poorer regions.

The theories proffered by development economists in the 1950s and 1960s often paid no attention to the uneven nature of capital accumulation, while also downplaying the trauma capitalist expansion had historically produced in the form of social dislocation, widespread pauperization, alienation across Western Europe and in the United States.<sup>264</sup> How wealth would be distributed in developing countries was effectively ignored. Instead development economists spread the utilitarian idea that a rising tide floats all boats and, so it followed, profit maximization served ‘the greater good’.<sup>265</sup> The fact that economic policies suggested by development economists aligned with U.S. foreign policy interests was neither questioned nor criticized. Development economists also ignored contradictions in the West’s supposed fight for the spread of democratic ideals, condoning authoritarian regimes in developing nations provided they were pro-capitalist.

Despite their commitment to ‘free market’ capitalism, development economists suggested that their strategies be carried out by national governments in order to expedite economic and social transformations. In addition to promoting strong state intervention, development economists placed high hopes on the expansion of business

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<sup>264</sup> The misery Charles Dickens so emotively captured and the proletarian plight that provoked Karl Marx and others to write about was completely effaced from development economics projections of capitalist development.

<sup>265</sup> Capitalist development, however, typically allows wealth to amass in relatively small groups of owners of capital while wage workers compete against each other to ensure their livelihood. Capitalist nations that have avoided gross social inequalities have put social protections and massive institutions of social welfare in place (i.e. Scandinavian countries).

élites as a catalyst of modern development. Development planning, they claimed, would be propelled by the know-how of Western experts, the achievements of local capitalists, and the strategic planning of national governments. Despite their popularity, the flaws of these development economists were quite evident. Their theories stemmed from violent abstractions of the historical experience of a few select nations as well as essentialized descriptions of ‘traditional’ societies in the ‘Third World’ and ‘modern’ societies in the West. They predicted unidirectional economic growth, and (incorrectly) constructed ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies as mutually exclusive and antagonistic opposites. These flaws notwithstanding, development economists went on to influence (and be influenced by) modernization theories in general and the ‘modernization school’ in particular.

### Modernization as Development

The above discussions highlight the importance of industrialization and economic growth to notions of development in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the strength of economic growth theories in this period rested on notions of modernization.

Modernization theories fit roughly into two categories: ‘critical variable’ theories and ‘dichotomous’ theories.<sup>266</sup> Whereas critical variable theories focused on the introduction of particular factors needed to transition away from traditionalism, dichotomous theories emphasized the evolution from one type of society to another through a variety of processes and transformations. A major shortcoming of critical variable theory was that it made modernization synonymous with key variables and, as such, reduced modernity to a single or a couple of features like industrialization or urbanization. Most modernization theorists, however, adopted the dichotomous

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<sup>266</sup> Dean Tipps “Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1973): 199-226

model, and described a variety of practices, ontologies, and epistemologies that distinguished ‘traditional’ from ‘modern’ societies. Instead of isolating variables, they indicated mechanisms for developing from simple to more complex societies. Modernization theory in its most common variety, therefore, comprised the mechanisms of transition associated with the introduction or expansion of “market economies, monetization, urbanization, industrialization, the spread of mass communications and literacy.”<sup>267</sup>

The modernization school gathered steam in the 1950s and featured heavily in development discourse until the late 1960s. Financial support was provided for its dissemination by the U.S. government and private foundations eager to accrue information and exert influence on emerging nation-states. Interdisciplinary from its inception, the modernization school encouraged a new generation of anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, economists and demographers to investigate the so-called ‘Third World’. Daniel Chirot defends the description of modernization studies as a ‘school’ arguing it comprised a “social movement with its own sources of funds, close interpersonal links and rivalries, its own journals and publication series, a sense of shared mission and camaraderie, and, of course, its hangers on, peripheral allies, and even its acceptable heretics.”<sup>268</sup> In general, subconsciously and consciously, modernization theorists aimed to increase Western linkages in regions susceptible to the menace of communism, and provide explanations for global differences in social organization, market mentalities, and social development. Like development economists, modernization theorists made claims to their capacity to establish scientific truths about the trajectory of former colonies based on their knowledge of European and North American societies. Their theories built on colonial narratives

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<sup>267</sup> Bernstein (1971): 151

<sup>268</sup> Daniel Chirot, “Changing fashions in the study of the social causes of economic and social change” in *The State of Sociology* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981): 261

about the deficiencies of primitive peoples, and extended Enlightenment thinking about the glories of the Western world. The Age of Enlightenment in Europe forwarded the notion that only one path towards civilization existed, and societies were staggered at different points along this trajectory. ‘Western’ nations, it was argued, represented the pinnacle of social evolution, the top echelon in the hierarchy of nations. As Stuart Hall writes, the “Enlightenment provided the language in which “modernity” first came to be defined. In Enlightenment discourse, the West was the model, the prototype, and the measure of social progress. It was western progress, civilization, rationality, and development that were celebrated.”<sup>269</sup> This was the milieu in which a ‘science of society’ emerged, characterized by its representation of ‘the West’ as an advanced version of ‘the Rest’.<sup>270</sup>

In the 1950s the American sociologist Talcott Parsons translated texts by Max Weber that deepened presumed divisions between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies. Weber had developed a dichotomous scheme of societies based on the transition from feudal to capitalist economies. The prerequisites for modernity, Weber contended, were the relinquishment of “patrimonial” or “prebendary” relations; introduction of rational forms of law; establishment of free labor; and expansion of cities.<sup>271</sup> These transformations facilitated capital accumulation and, alongside the growth of bureaucracies, distinguished traditional and modern societies. A strong exponent of social evolution, Parsons seized Weber’s dualistic model as the foundation for the modernization paradigm in the 1950s but added the unilinear telos of Enlightenment thinkers to describe the evolutionary processes from traditional to modern society.

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<sup>269</sup> Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power” in Modernity: An introduction to Modern Societies (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1996): 221

<sup>270</sup> Stuart Hall (1996) describes how Enlightenment dichotomies developed in respect to ‘American savages’ and constructions of native peoples of America as ‘ignoble’ ‘barbarians’. Part of his argument entails the notion that conceptions about the ‘West’ as ‘advanced’ would have been impossible without the existence of contrasts made possible by ‘the Rest’.

<sup>271</sup> Hall (1996)

Parsons's highly influential structural-functionalist model described traditional societies as governed by ascriptive relationships, restrictive cultural mores, technological backwardness, and general irrationality.<sup>272</sup> Social life in the West, on the other hand, was represented as the ideal-typical secular, industrialized, meritocratic, rational, bureaucratic and modern society. While modern societies were characterized by certain mentalities and features, the capacity for economic growth was always identified as the most important element of modern development.<sup>273</sup>

The modernization school promoted this dichotomy for descriptive purposes but, more importantly, their theories were used to indicate how social progress would proceed. A centralized state, they argued, could facilitate transition from primitive social organization to complex, rational configurations. Systematic transformation of traditional societies could then be expedited through the use of Western knowledge and expertise in various industrial and social sectors. Modernization theorists became default 'experts' and Western epistemology was elevated to new heights. Knowledge, they suggested, resided in the West, if not in Western experts, and non-western people were required to imbibe as much Western culture and know-how as possible for their own advancement. The principles of modernization theory are by now abundantly clear and we turn our attention, therefore, to the application of modernization theory in African contexts.

### Africa and the Modernizing Mission

As young Africans assumed positions in government and the private sector, Western social scientists advocated the need for modern behavior and mentalities to accompany

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<sup>272</sup> Parsons derived his theoretical foundation from classic functionalists such as Spencer and Durkheim who emphasized the norms, customs, traditions and institutions that provide solidarity in societies (Bernstein 1971),

<sup>273</sup> Bernstein (1971)

the growth of political and economic institutions. Modernization, they explained, required the relinquishment of African traditions that, purportedly, accounted for backwardness in the region. Rapid industrialization, urbanization and secularization would need to take hold in African nations, as would new social norms and practices characteristic of Western lifestyles. African moral economies, for example, were viewed as a hindrance to capital accumulation and schemes for their elimination were devised. Viewed negatively, one could say modernization strategies aimed to remove or destroy traditional African values. A more positive reading, however, would suggest that they created climates conducive to economic growth and social advancement along Western lines.<sup>274</sup>

The rapid transformations envisioned required intentional action on the part of African governments, business people, as well as ‘ordinary’ Africans. In their guidebook published in 1965, social scientists Charles Obukar and John Williams explained:

There has been nothing like it before: a whole continent bridging centuries in a decade. Until colonialism the African people lived in the traditional ways, undisturbed by the outside world. Then came foreign rule, and our people were forced to watch the rest of the world go by as they waited for the time when they would again be in a position to decide their own fate. That time has come now, and it is the object of this guidebook to help ordinary men and women in the difficult task of adjusting their lives to the new ways...[W]e have to equip ourselves with knowledge and training; we, the African people, will have to learn many new ways. Traditions as we knew them may disappear, sad as it may seem to the older generation. At the same time we have to learn to overcome those habits that have kept many of us back in the past.<sup>275</sup>

Their guidebook offered advice on how Africans should comport themselves at home and work in order to advance individually as well as nationally.

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<sup>274</sup> Bernstein (1971)

<sup>275</sup> Charles Obukar and John Williams, *The Modern Africa* (London: Macdonald and Evans, 1965):1

Education, they stressed, was key. The challenge, they described, was for Africans to acquire “as much knowledge as modern educational methods [could] bring them through schools, universities, and colleges, in towns and villages right into the smallest hut in the farthest corner of Africa.”<sup>276</sup> Western education would ensure socialization into the habits, manners, and mentalities needed in modern nation-states.

Following the foundation laid by W. Arthur Lewis, Obukar and Williams advocated special attention be paid to attitudes about women. Traditional beliefs that projected women as “beasts of burden”, carrying firewood and heaving pails of water, would have to give way to more modern conceptions of women as economic contributors and potential wage earners.<sup>277</sup> They insisted all the resources and manpower for improvement already existed in Africa, and only knowledge and capital were wanting. Like other social scientists of the time, Obukar and Williams encouraged government intervention in the planning and administration of modernization projects, but they also emphasized the responsibility of African individuals to make ‘good’ decisions.

The imperatives of modernization brought several African populations into development scrutiny. First and foremost were political persona and government bureaucrats who were charged with planning development projects and making African nations internationally competitive. Other important segments of the population were entrepreneurs and budding capitalists classes whose responsibility it was to build productive industries. Amongst their varied schemes, modernization experts proposed to ‘infect’ African businessmen with ‘achievement motivation’ that

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<sup>276</sup> Obukar (1965):3

<sup>277</sup> Obukar (1965)

mirrored the spirit of capitalism in the West and was assumed to be absent or woefully inchoate in African contexts.<sup>278</sup> Expanding and augmenting the influence of capitalist classes was perceived as indispensable to capital formation and capital absorption in developing nations. While capitalists were portrayed as all-important, Western-educated Africans were also central to economic and political development. African doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers and technicians, it was argued, would become the heart of civil society and a crucial component of emerging democracies.<sup>279</sup>

According to development economists and modernization theorists, African development could be evaluated by the size of modernizing classes and institutions, or by the extent to which Africans embraced or mimicked modern attitudes and practices. In rural areas the end of traditional subsistence agriculture was foreshadowed as agriculturalists, namely peasants, farmers, and small landowners were expected to migrate to urban centers or assume more mechanized and large-scale modes of production.<sup>280</sup> While the majority of development theories emanated from the West, they influenced and reflected conventional thinking of the time. Hurried modernization, or development ‘catch-up’, was seen as both a necessity and possibility for African territories long held back by their own backwardness. The challenge as Julius Nyerere articulated it was that “we [Africans] must run while others walk.”<sup>281</sup>

### Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire: Socialist and Capitalist Examples

Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire provide interesting examples of how development and modernization theories were operationalized in the first couple of decades after

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<sup>278</sup> Leys (1996):110

<sup>279</sup> S.M. Lipset, “The Changing Class Structure and Contemporary European Politics” *Daedalus* (1963):271-303

<sup>280</sup> Uma Lele, “Rural Africa: Modernization, Equity, and Long-Term Development” *Science, New Series* (1981): 547-553

<sup>281</sup> Lele (1981):548

independence. In both countries rapid industrialization and modernization were pursued but the focus of state intervention was very different. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah outrightly rejected capitalist development, and sought to build the economy with state enterprises and local expertise. Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire opted to modernize agriculture and develop its capacity for capitalist production with the assistance of foreign experts. The decisions of these African presidents reflected their personal proclivities as well as the strengths of their respective nations. The next sections review the availability of expertise in both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire before detailing their development objectives and modernization strategies in families, agriculture and industry.

#### Education and Expertise in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire

Since development and modernization depended on the use of Western expertise, Africans were presented with two options: they could 1.) recruit foreign experts or; 2.) cultivate local expertise. In the Gold Coast missionary and colonial schools had created relatively large number of people with numeracy and literacy (especially amongst the Fanti and Ga populations). By the 1940s the Gold Coast had more Western-educated and skilled manpower than any other country in black Africa.<sup>282</sup> Educational facilities in the Gold Coast expanded in response to pressure from indigenous populations. They believed a curriculum that considered the history and culture of local institutions while also teaching Western lessons “would provide progress, moral upliftment, religious education, industrial and technical training.”<sup>283</sup> By 1906, consequently, there were 17,636 primary school attendees, and African

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<sup>282</sup> Allen, Charles et al, Tales from the Dark Continent (New York: Time Warner Paperbacks, 1986):30

<sup>283</sup> Francis Agbodeka, Ghana in the Twentieth Century (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1972): 41

teachers instructed at the primary level duties.<sup>284</sup> A few short years later the Gold Coast became the first African colony with technical/training colleges.<sup>285</sup> Achimota College was formally opened in 1927, and it soon gained the reputation of being Ghana's finest educational institution.<sup>286</sup> By 1946, a quarter of the Ghanaian population was literate, and educated Ghanaians were fast replacing European officials and technicians in the colonial administration.<sup>287</sup>

As indicated elsewhere in this thesis, education in Côte d'Ivoire was not prioritized by French *colons* (settlers), nor were there intense demands from indigenous populations for its provision. Local pressure for expanded educational opportunities in Côte d'Ivoire did not mount until 1969.<sup>288</sup> Instead, in the years prior and following independence, Ivorians depended on foreign expertise for their educational and technical needs. Highly paid French *instituteurs* were recruited to teach at primary levels, while French technical assistants (*cooperants*) instructed at higher levels.<sup>289</sup> In 1960, 35% of 5-14 year olds were enrolled in formal education in Côte d'Ivoire, whereas the figure was close to 56% in Ghana. In the 5-19 year old age bracket, only 29% of Ivorian children were enrolled with approximately 55% enrollment in Ghana – suggesting high attrition in Côte d'Ivoire after the primary level and steady primary and secondary enrolment in Ghana.<sup>290</sup> Furthermore, vast numbers of French students attended the University of Abidjan, whereas the majority of students in Ghana's three local universities in 1965 were Ghanaian. Comparative

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<sup>284</sup> Remi Clignet and Philip Foster, "Convergence and Divergence in Educational Development in Ghana and the Ivory Coast" in Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971): 271

<sup>285</sup> Agbodeka (1972):42

<sup>286</sup> Agbodeka (1972):103

<sup>287</sup> Martin Kilson, "The Grassroots in Ghanaian Politics" in Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971): 104

<sup>288</sup> Riots in 1969, 1970 and 1971 prompted what was known as the "student problem". Students during this period agitated for more African representation in management positions. Christopher Zartman and William Delgado, The Political Economy of Ivory Coast (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984):5

<sup>289</sup> Clignet and Foster (1971):271

<sup>290</sup> Clignet and Foster (1971):273

educational data for 1965 are included below. The data demonstrate that Ghana had approximately three times as many primary educated students than Côte d’Ivoire, more than ten times as many secondary attendees, and more than double the number of tertiary-educated Ivorians.

**Table 1.1:** Levels of Education in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire -1965

Gross population estimates for 1965 are: Ghana 7,990,000; Côte d’Ivoire, 3,900,000. Age distributions for the younger segment of the population are generally similar.<sup>291</sup>

Level	Ghana	Côte d’Ivoire
Primary	1,137,500	353,700
Secondary <sup>292</sup>	312,700	28,100
Higher <sup>293</sup>	4,300	1,900

French bureaucrats held local positions in the colonial administration and continued to perform administrative duties in Côte d’Ivoire well after independence. Côte d’Ivoire even retained a French finance minister until 1965, and relied heavily on counsel from French advisers to direct other ministries.<sup>294</sup> The French presence was strongest in the civil service as well as the private sector where they established more large firms than in any other African country.<sup>295</sup> Additionally, following an agricultural boom in the 1950s, large numbers of workers from Mali and Burkina Faso migrated to Côte d’Ivoire and added to the foreign work force. As a result, a plethora

<sup>291</sup> Clignet and Foster (1971):272

<sup>292</sup> Figures for Ghana include returns for students in secondary grammar schools, middle schools, and teacher training colleges since these types of institutions are included under the general rubric of “l’enseignement secondaire” in Côte d’Ivoire.

<sup>293</sup> Figures for Côte d’Ivoire relate to enrollments at the University of Abidjan only, since returns for a small number of students in “les grandes écoles” are not available.

<sup>294</sup> John Rapley, Ivoirien Capitalism: African Entrepreneurs in Côte d’Ivoire (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 1993): 67

<sup>295</sup> Elliot Berg, “Structural Transformation versus Gradualism” in Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971): 221; Zartman and Delgado (1984):13

of jobs in the 1950s were occupied by non-Ivorians, provoking xenophobic riots in 1958.<sup>296</sup> Despite local protest almost a quarter of the agricultural labor force was accounted for by non-Ivoirian Africans in the 1960s.<sup>297</sup> Foreign expertise and labor was extensive in Côte d'Ivoire until the late 1970s when the government attempted to Africanize its bureaucracy and indigenize the private sector. This, however, proved a herculean task because, as of 1971: an estimated 65,000 French citizens resided in Côte d'Ivoire (approximately four times the number at independence); between 80,000-300,000 Lebanese resided in the country and exerted a strong economic presence; and, woefully, only 10 percent of 798 identified executives and technicians were Ivorian.<sup>298</sup>

#### Ghana: State-led Development and Modernization

The Gold Coast was Britain's model colony in West Africa, providing abundant natural resources and goods for extraction. The most important and high-yielding were gold, ivory, palm oil, cocoa, coffee, and rubber.<sup>299</sup> When indigenous (namely Fanti and Ga) populations became agitated by the paucity of health, education and communication facilities in the colony, the colonial state responded with development programs. The first state-led development effort in the Gold Coast was undertaken in the 1920s, and overseen by British Governor Guggisberg.<sup>300</sup> The Guggisberg Ten-

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<sup>296</sup> Zartman and Delgado (1984):61-62

<sup>297</sup> Paul Lubeck, The African Bourgeoisie (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987): 21

<sup>298</sup> Lynne Krieger Mytelka, "Foreign Business and Economic Development" in The Political Economy of Ivory Coast (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984): 156; Even up until 1979 French interests were estimated to handle 45 percent of business transactions and to make up 81 percent of all profits. Bonnie Campbell, "The State and Capitalist Development in the Ivory Coast" in The African Bourgeoisie (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987): 293.

<sup>299</sup> T.E. Anin, Essays on the Political Economy of Ghana (London: Selwyn Publishers Limited, 1991):34

<sup>300</sup> Laterite road infrastructure had begun in the Gold Coast in 1902, and bridge and railroad construction in 1906. The telegraph had been introduced in 1903 (Agbodeka 1972:38). The

Year Plan, as it was known, started in 1920 and completed its stated objectives by 1927 – it was widely considered a success. The project completed railway lines between Koforidua, Kumasi, and Sekoni; improved feeder roads to already constructed laterite roads; built a Deep Water Harbor at Takoradi; constructed schools and hospitals; and erected a host of post offices and telephones facilities.<sup>301</sup> The plan referred to development as industrialization but, ironically, derived its funding from peasant farmers whose revenues, from cocoa especially, had begun a period of prosperity in the Gold Coast. As one scholar notes:

There were no plantations, no foreign capital. It was the Ghanaian Cocoa Farmer who was the rural entrepreneur throughout the Southern and Central forest belt and who made the Economy what it was and is...Cocoa built the roads, harbours, railways, schools, hospitals, and universities; it capitalized domestic trade and its local markets; it gave impetus to the Nationalist movement...and it has continued to finance the State and its Military Rulers.<sup>302</sup>

Through the Guggisberg Plan, small farmers had funded the first large-scale state-led development projects. Ghana's farmers remained independent, free producers through the colonial period and, by the 1950s, they had turned Ghana into the world's leading exporter of cocoa, with an average output of 370,000 tons per year.<sup>303</sup>

When Nkrumah assumed control of the state he advocated farming “along East European and Soviet lines, with Tractors and other ‘advanced’ farm implements. The rural farmer, [he contended], with his primitive cutlass and hoe was expected to ‘wither away’.”<sup>304</sup> While cocoa production provided the lion's share of Ghana's revenues at independence, Nkrumah shifted development attention away from

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Guggisberg Plan, therefore, built on existing ‘developments’ using funding from farmers and labor from the same.

<sup>301</sup> Agbodeka (1972):98

<sup>302</sup> Dennis Austin, quoted in Anin (1991):44

<sup>303</sup> Dan-Bright S. Dzorgbo, Ghana in Search of Development (Surrey: Ashgate Publishers Limited,2001):2

<sup>304</sup> Anin (1991):147

agriculture and towards industry. He saw “industry rather than agriculture [as] the means by which rapid improvement in Africa’s living standards [would be] possible.”<sup>305</sup> Nkrumah also intended to stifle entrepreneurial growth in order to promote his visions of socialist development. Entrepreneurs not only embodied the values of capitalist expansion, they also represented a political bloc that had opposed Nkrumah during his ascendance to power. He sought, instead, to build a strong state-led industrial economy that promoted import substitution and, in so doing, halted dependence on foreign nations. Nkrumah reportedly declared, “Every time we import goods that we could manufacture we are continuing our economic dependence and delaying our industrial growth.”<sup>306</sup> The early sixties, therefore, saw the proliferation of state-owned enterprises and the extension of the Ghanaian state into all sorts of industrial activity. State and para-statal factories began operations in Building Construction, Air Transportation, Brick and Tile production, Diamond Mining, Pharmaceuticals, Laundries, Bakeries, Fishing, Publishing, Fruit Processing and Shoe Making (to name a few). In the nine years Nkrumah directed development in Ghana, approximately 600 factories were authorized to commence operations.

In addition to intensive factory production, Nkrumah also authorized construction of the Akosombo Dam in the Volta region. The Volta dam project was, in fact, the fulcrum of his development initiatives. Completed in the early sixties, the dam was considered a resounding success. However, funding for the project was obtained from the U.S. and British governments as well as the World Bank in the form of long-term loans.<sup>307</sup> The contradiction of Nkrumah’s effort to avert neocolonial development was that he agreed to finance his projects for economic independence

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid

<sup>306</sup> Anin (1991): 144

<sup>307</sup> Emmanuel Hansen and Kwame Ninsin, The State, Development and Politics in Ghana (London: Codesria Book Series, 1989)

with funds from the same Western powers he reviled. Other problems ensued. Many of the factories proposed by the Nkrumah administration did not undergo feasibility studies<sup>308</sup>, and as the states' corporations grew its capacity to monitor and regulate its enterprises diminished. Nkrumah's economic development projects were, on the whole, impractical and profligate. Spending in the Nkrumah government rose from £13 million to £71 million in nine years with only modest GDP growth, while internal government debt grew from £39 million in 1960 to £204 million in just five years.<sup>309</sup> Cocoa production decreased, inflation increased, and capital investment diminished. The administrative demands and financial strains created by Nkrumah's development projects proved unsustainable and, more importantly, unpopular. Nkrumah was ousted in a coup d'etat in 1966, halting progress on many of his economic development initiatives. A series of military regimes followed, each with alternative development objectives.<sup>310</sup> By the early eighties basic goods were in short supply, and the economy was in such great crisis that officials began discussions with the World Bank to introduce Economic Recovery Programs (also known as Structural Adjustment Programs).

In terms of modernizing Ghana's social milieu while Nkrumah was in power, however, there were numerous discussions and efforts to regulate marriage, re-order family relations, and abolish the matriarchal system.<sup>311</sup> These reforms aimed to remove mandatory dowry, to determine which customary laws to respect (especially those concerning polygamy), and to identify '(il)legitimate' children and clarify

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<sup>308</sup> One of several ill-conceived industrial projects was the Wenchi Mango Factory which was designed to produce canned mangoes – for which there is no demand in Ghana. Funding was obtained from the Yugoslavs and a stringy type of mango unsuitable for canning was eventually produced (Anin 1991:111).

<sup>309</sup> Berg (1997):200

<sup>310</sup> Perhaps most notable is Jerry Rawlings' tenure in office during which time he advocated the eradication of corruption, promoted decentralization of federal power, and opened up space for private enterprise.

<sup>311</sup> Akan groups (including the Ashanti) in Ghana practice matriarchal systems of inheritance – authority and material possessions are both passed own on the mothers side.

parental obligations to them. Discussions in parliament on the question of polygamy were especially heated, with particular concerns raised about what effects outlawing polygamy might have on women. One female MP expressed her concern saying, “the ratio is one man to nine women. Therefore, I see no reason why one man should be forced by law to marry only one woman. If that is done, the rest of our womenfolk will find it very difficult to get married with the result that many of them will become prostitutes.”<sup>312</sup> As part of these debates feminist movements gained momentum in Ghana seeking to defend the interests of “betrayed wives, neglected girlfriends and subordinated widows.”<sup>313</sup>

#### Côte d’Ivoire: Foreign Capital and Agricultural Development

Unlike Nkrumah, Houphouët-Boigny presided over his nation’s development strategies for over three decades. The colonial state before him made few attempts to initiate development projects.<sup>314</sup> Instead, France paid attention to the promotion, production, and export of cash crops from Côte d’Ivoire. When Houphouët-Boigny rose to power he opted to: continue nurturing the Ivorian economic relationship with France; increase cash crop production and export; and commit the nation to economic liberalism and the promotion of private enterprise. Speaking at independence Boigny announced,

These arrangements which we have chosen, and which are going into effect now, offer assurances of stability and security – conditions that

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<sup>312</sup> Dorothy Dee Vellenga, “Attempts to Change the Marriage Laws in Ghana and the Ivory Coast” in Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971): 140

<sup>313</sup> Vellenga (1971):136

<sup>314</sup> The only remarkable development policy put in place was the *Fond d’investissement pour le développement économique et social* (FIDES) which was intended to “modernize” France’s overseas territories. This policy was largely ineffective in implementing actual projects. Peter Nyong’o Anyang’, “The Development of Agrarian Capitalist Classes in the Ivory Coast, 1945-1975” in The African Bourgeoisie (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987): 196.

are indispensable to the creation of economic and social environments in which the African people can attain a standard of living comparable to that of the peoples of the great modern nations. These institutional arrangements are such as to attract investments in all forms – imports of capital, technicians and methods – which are indispensable to our territories.<sup>315</sup>

Côte d’Ivoire strengthened bilateral trade arrangements with France, leading to the largest percentage of French imports and exports to any African nation, as well as the most gross (but not per capita) bilateral French aid to the continent.<sup>316</sup> The Franco-Ivorian protocol of 1961 ensured France received preferential tariffs for “coffee, cocoa, wood, banana, and pineapple exports from Côte d’Ivoire in exchange for a steady price in French imports for wheat, printed cotton cloth, and a variety of mechanical and electrical equipment.”<sup>317</sup> With steady trade and large investments from France as well as cash crop export to other nations, Côte d’Ivoire transitioned from colony to nation-state with tremendous economic success; leading to descriptions of its development in the 1960s as *le miracle ivoirien*.

Agriculture in the 1960s produced large revenues that were channeled towards infrastructural development projects including the San Pedro Project which built a major port and extensive networks of roads, and the Bandama River Project, which constructed the largest hydroelectric facility in Côte d’Ivoire. Education facilities were expanded, and massive housing projects were authorized with the intention of permanently eliminating slums.<sup>318</sup> City developers in the capital Abidjan emphasized the need for “modern” architecture, and used the slogan “Construct beautiful, big, and

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<sup>315</sup> Thomas Patrick Melady, Profiles of African Leaders (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961): 122

<sup>316</sup> Zartman and Delgado (1984)

<sup>317</sup> Mytelka (1984):152

<sup>318</sup> The campaign against slum dwellings started with their demolition but seldom completed the housing facilities that slum dwellers were supposed to have available as alternative lodging.

forever” to encourage the construction of grandiose structures.<sup>319</sup> The government attracted foreign capital for these and other projects by emphasizing the nation’s political stability and economically liberal orientation, and by offering favorable investment incentives through Côte d’Ivoire’s Investment Code.<sup>320</sup> Foreign funds received by the government were diverted to developing small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and providing public assistance to agriculture. Less than four percent of the total grants and loans obtained by Côte d’Ivoire between 1960 and 1974 were allocated to industry.<sup>321</sup> Agricultural development was the envisioned mode of economic advancement.

Agriculture contributed to more than one-third of Côte d’Ivoire’s GDP, provided approximately half of exports and employed close to 75 percent of the labor force. In the early 1970s, Côte d’Ivoire overtook Ghana as the world’s largest producer of cocoa, and also became the leading producer of coconuts and tinned pineapple. It became the world’s third largest exporter of coffee, and produced significant amounts of timber, bananas, avocados, cotton, sugar cane, rubber, and rice.<sup>322</sup> The government imported French equipment and technical expertise to enhance agricultural growth and efficiency amongst planters and small farmers.

Cash crops were either produced on small plots by peasant farmers or on large plantations by meagerly remunerated laborers. The French had aggressively employed forced labor on their plantations until the practice was officially abolished in 1946 and replaced by “voluntary” labor. Houphouët-Boigny, the then leader of the *Syndicat Agricole Africain*, was one of the most prominent supporters of voluntary labor. It was

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<sup>319</sup> Michael Cohen, “Urban Policy and Development Strategy” in The Political Economy of Ivory Coast (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984):65

<sup>320</sup> Gilles Michel and Michel Noel, “The Ivorian Economy and Alternative Trade Regimes” in The Political Economy of Ivory Coast (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984)

<sup>321</sup> Mytelka (1984)

<sup>322</sup> Lubeck (1987); Michel and Noel (1984): 79

intended to provide field workers with options for sharecropping or monthly salaries, and also to require landowners to supply accommodation and food to laborers.<sup>323</sup> Improved conditions were argued to increase moral and productivity. From 1947 onward, wage earning workers campaigned for higher compensation. Also, Europeans were gradually pushed out of plantation ownership in the 1940s. While European planters owned approximately 55 percent of coffee production in 1942, they owned only 6 percent of production in 1952. By 1947, it was estimated that African planters produced close to 90 percent of total cash crop exports.<sup>324</sup>

Despite contributing to labor improvements in the late 1940s, when Houphouët-Boigny assumed control of the national state he systematically denied labor protections, and worked to discount the cost of labor for planters. Shortly after independence, Houphouët-Boigny's government refused appeals for minimum wage for agricultural workers. He also opened immigration policies but restricted the numbers and types of immigrants eligible to move to urban areas.<sup>325</sup> As part of its efforts to entice migrant labor, the Ivorian government also offered to grant double nationality to foreign Africans who chose to work in Côte d'Ivoire. These actions guaranteed an abundant supply of inexpensive agricultural labor for planters to "recruit". Despite changes in terminology, many of the conditions for "voluntary" workers in the 1960s, especially those from foreign countries, resembled forced labor. The abundance of (migrant) labor coupled with capital loans from the state allowed small farmers, petty commodity producers<sup>326</sup>, and planters to expand rural capitalism.

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<sup>323</sup> Nyong'o (1987): 212

<sup>324</sup> Campbell (1987):283. Campbell also writes, "Ivorianization of government management, administration and technical operations was much slower. It began in 1979 and intensified through 1984, increasing from 58.6% to 69.1% respectively, in part because of expatriate flight" (Campbell 1987:286).

<sup>325</sup> Mytelka (1984):152

<sup>326</sup> Petty commodity producers included rich peasants and medium-sized agriculturalists, as well as those engaged in associated businesses such as trucking, stocking, catering and the like.

Houphouët-Boigny's administration suggested that agriculture was the "natural vocation" of Côte d'Ivoire's peasantry, but believed more capitalist (i.e. efficient and productive) farming had to be established.<sup>327</sup> Planters who used modern technical methods were praised by Houphouët-Boigny as "men who could avail themselves of the use of more advanced productive forces and thus be an example to their primitive brothers and sisters."<sup>328</sup>

The government also intervened in agricultural production by setting the prices of certain cash crops. At the beginning of each season, the prices for coffee, cocoa, cotton and palm oil were fixed. Official producers sold their crop at this domestic price, and a government-operated Stabilization Fund covered the difference if world prices fell below local prices. Farmers and planters were assured a stable cash flow for the next season in spite of fluctuations in international pricing. Additionally, the Ivorian government provided new technologies to planters and also exempted plantation products from customs duties.<sup>329</sup> A host of public enterprises emerged in the 1960s to support agricultural development in Côte d'Ivoire. In the 1970s, an approximated third of agricultural production depended on public enterprises in the form of transportation, shipping, refining services, construction and electricity. Financing for agricultural and agro-associated investments oftentimes came from foreign capital which continued to flow into Côte d'Ivoire because of government guarantees for select investment opportunities. The government, therefore, became a partner with the private sector, helping to bolster its development in agriculture, taking funds to support its agricultural initiatives, and earmarking opportunities for foreign investors. Consequently, while the government's development strategies focused

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<sup>327</sup> Mytelka (1984):151

<sup>328</sup> Nyong'o (1987):193

<sup>329</sup> Rapley (1993)

almost exclusively on agriculture, Côte d'Ivoire enjoyed industrialization because of private foreign investment.<sup>330</sup>

In terms of social modernization reforms, Houphouët-Boigny's government introduced the Ivorian Civil Code in the 1964. The national code revised family law by abolishing three main practices: payment of a bride price (or dowry); matriarchal inheritance<sup>331</sup>; and polygamy (which would be disallowed after the then current generation). The code also required citizens to register family name, birth, marriage and death, and laid out stipulations for marriage, separation and divorce. Obligations to children born in and outside of wedlock were outlined as were details regarding succession and wills. As one scholar noted, however, "it was made clear from the outset that the government had no intention of enforcing all the provisions of the code everywhere and immediately."<sup>332</sup> More focus was placed on agricultural production and the economy more generally.

After enjoying nearly two decades of constant growth, the Ivorian economy experienced a jolting crash in the late 1970s. International interest rates soared, and cash crop prices plummeted leaving the government as well as agriculturalists in precarious positions. These changes coincided with European exodus as well as capital flight. In the early 1980s Côte d'Ivoire, like Ghana, turned to the World Bank for economic assistance. Houphouët-Boigny maintained power through these changes. He died in office in 1993 at the age of 88. One of his last large development projects was the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, the largest church in the world standing at 520ft tall and occupying 30,000 square feet built in his home town Yamoussoukrou.

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<sup>330</sup> Zartman and Delgado (1984)

<sup>331</sup> Akans in Côte d'Ivoire, like those in Ghana, were the groups targeted by the eradication of matrilineal inheritance.

<sup>332</sup> Zolberg (1971):28

He also allegedly had between \$7 and \$11 billion in personal assets at the time of his death, including over a dozen properties in Paris and other locations in Europe.

### Conclusion

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire both attempted, in very disparate ways, to grow their economies and rapidly modernize their populations. The impulse to construct development objectives towards these objectives reflected development thinking of the time. Their different post-independence orientations – Ghana to import substitution and African socialism, and Côte d'Ivoire to agricultural development and private investment – demonstrate a variety of development combinations that were attempted based on ideological and practical proclivities. While both nations experienced economic prosperity at a point, they also saw economic downturn and industrial regression. Despite desires on Nkrumah's side to avert neocolonialism, neither he nor Houphouët-Boigny could escape the necessity for foreign capital to fund development projects. In both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire managerial expertise was employed from the West, but this too created more foreign dependence (in the form of equipment imports and/or contracted technicians and advisors). African nations were trapped in structural dependencies. In the end it was the prevalence of backwards African traditions that accounted for stifled economic development, but rather domestic resource mismanagement and economic precariousness in the international market.

The inaccuracies and shortcomings of modernization theory thus come into sharp relief. In academic circles, the universalizing, teleological, and evolutionary premises on which it rested were attacked as “unrealistically coherent” and oversimplified.<sup>333</sup> Some of the most devastating critiques, however, came from dependency and world systems theorists. These scholars emphasized connections

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<sup>333</sup> Leys (1996): 383

between the development of the Western ‘core’ and simultaneous underdevelopment and dependency of the ‘periphery’.<sup>334</sup> Although arguments about peripheral dependency had been made by Hans Singer and Raúl Prebisch as early as 1949, Andre Gunder Frank’s work in the late sixties initiated a new era in development discourse. In general, Africanist dependency theorists contended that the ‘original state’ of underdevelopment assigned to African nations overlooked the systematic impoverishment of those regions by imperial conquest, simultaneous enrichment of European centers, and continued structural inequalities characteristic of global economic relations. Additional critiques of modernization theory highlighted its inherent Eurocentric bias, “the self-confidence of ethnocentric achievement” that identified the West as the center of progress.<sup>335</sup>

Modernization theory extended longstanding conceptions of Africa as a place of deficiency and the West as its redemptive, ‘civilizing’ savior. This narrative subordinated African knowledges and ontologies in favor of Western epistemes and practices. Its effects are still felt today as African wisdom is ignored until verified by Western Science. Perhaps the most enduring error of modernization theory, however, was its insistence that modern Western societies were temporally ahead of developing regions, and that the latter need only ‘catch-up’. This notion denied the coequality of African and Western peoples, and embedded the still commonly cited trope of African ‘backwardness’. The idea that Africans need to surrender traditionalism for the sake of modernity still holds sway in the general public and notions about transitioning traditional societies into more modern ones continue to be dispersed.

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<sup>334</sup> Dependistas from Latin America championed this critique of development, and greatly influenced African scholars and Africanist exponents of dependency theory.

<sup>335</sup> Ali Mazrui, “From Social Darwinism to Current Theories of Modernization: A Traditional Analysis” *World Politics* (1968): 82

Critiques of developmentalism and modernization theory mounted in the 1970s as global economic crises crippled African economies, corruption escalated and political chaos ensued. The 1980s ushered in debt regimes and neo-liberal economics, and developmentalism on the African continent faded as an appropriate approach to national development. Indebted to the World Bank and IMF, and facing Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan's resolve that There Is No Alternative (TINA) to deregulated capitalism, African countries were compelled to create new development discourses and directives. The demise of developmentalism marked the end of an era but modernization theory left an indelible and still visible mark on development discourse and practice.

## CONCLUSION

African middle classes encompass a range of people with both rural and urban lifestyles. Their ‘modern’ forms pursue greater material security and higher social stature through engagement with global markets which, in turn, affords diverse modes and standards of living.<sup>336</sup> To be sure, the current GDPs of African nations pale in comparison to many other countries, but groups of Africans, both on the continent and in various Diasporas, enjoy all the possible benefits of economic, political, technological, and cultural exchange. We must remember, however, that the social conditions within a given context largely determine the range of lifestyle possibilities available to groups and individuals

The social conditions of colonialism restricted African mobility in economic and political terms, and lifestyle choices available to Africans varied dramatically according to occupation and exposure to Western education. While some Africans prospered during this time, all were vulnerable to racial discrimination and limits imposed by the color bar. However, education in European institutions (both on and off the African continent), proficiency in widely spoken European languages, and trans-Atlantic travel gave some Africans the opportunity to articulate and disseminate their visions of progress for Africans in speech and print; thereby providing a voice for ‘Africa’ despite the fact that their experiences and ideas were not representative of the majority of Africans at the time. Enticed by elements of Western life yet concerned with elevating the plight of black peoples, groups of Western-educated Africans congealed as a class in the independence era through various nationalist struggles. As African nations emerged, Western-educated Africans assumed control of the state and

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<sup>336</sup> It is a conceptual trap to attempt to date the beginning of the ‘modern’ period, but if pressed I would identify it with European imperial expansion and encounter with other cultures in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

set in motion state-led development initiatives intended to improve social conditions for rights bearing African citizens.

This thesis has attempted to detail this transition from colony to country in West Africa, with examples from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire aimed at illustrating transforming notions of 'development', and highlighting the interlacing importance of education, the state, and development ideas in rearranging class structures. Looking historically at the morphing meanings of development and acknowledging the longstanding existence of African classes allows us to identify, contextualize and, ultimately, better understand the nature of contemporary middle classes in West Africa and their relation to national development. During colonialism, African middle classes included literate and non-literate groups, those in urban and rural places, professionals, artisans, petty commodity traders, farmers and others with relative material security, social stability and status.

Western-educated Africans were a segment of the middle classes who stood between 'traditional' and supposedly 'modern' ideas and institutions and occupied an important middling group. Western-educated African middle classes grew in significance (though not always in size) because of their ability to communicate to colonizers as well as to each other about liberatory projects. However, as African states appeared and national ruling classes emerged, Western-educated African middle classes also grew as part of administrative bureaucracies, expanding demand for professionals, and development policies aimed at ushering in 'modern' social practices.<sup>337</sup> Examples from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire show that the degree and speed

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<sup>337</sup> It is important to remember that while serving in official capacities for the state many administrative staff people and civil servants do not necessarily wield significant political power. Only a handful of occupations automatically place individuals in elite political positions, and positions of authority within the state bureaucracy do not always translate to material wealth. Functionaries (especially those with simple administrative responsibilities) are part of the governing body but not necessarily the ruling classes. Academic literature often focuses on ruling classes during this period but the state, we must acknowledge, is operated by people belonging to a variety of class positions.

with which Western-educated segments of the middle classes grew was affected by each state's particular development ideologies, policies, and projects.

In the Gold Coast, local residents had long pursued formal education in Western-style institutions and a vibrant literary community propelled political foment against the British in newspapers and magazines. Western-educated African middle classes in the colony included missionaries, bureaucratic administrators, and professionals (such as teachers, doctors, and lawyers). When Ghana became independent, Western-educated segments of the middle classes were poised to grow. Nkrumah's administration prioritized rapid industrialization and self-sufficiency which necessitated building a skilled labor force and cultivating local expertise).

In Côte d'Ivoire, on the other hand, French colonial policies stifled mass education of Africans, and reliance on French bureaucrats and technical experts was not only a forced necessity but, eventually, a stated preference. Independent Côte d'Ivoire, under the leadership of Houphouët-Boigny, chose to prolong its dependence on France in order to accrue political and material benefits from its close association. As a result, groups of Western-educated Africans in Côte d'Ivoire were less numerous and less significant than in Ghana. Houphouët-Boigny's development focus on agro-industrial production further stymied the expansion of Western-educated segments of Côte d'Ivoire's middle classes in the two decades following formal independence.

As Western-educated Africans occupied their respective states and became ruling classes, their visions of progress (issued as development directives) necessarily affected the size and strength of local middle classes. This thesis has not attempted to account for how development policies were implemented nor has it provided empirical details of numerical changes of Western-educated middle classes in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Even without these empirical details, however, we know there are often tremendous disconnects between what governments proclaim and what transpires in

reality.<sup>338</sup> Also absent is analysis of how much control these first African regimes possessed over their own bureaucratic machines, state institutions, and nationals. I have not treated these important issues but have attempted to show how the meaning of ‘development’ has transformed, and how each iteration has produced dichotomous images of African class stratification. I believe the ways we see African classes affect the kinds of development actions taken. Resistance to *seeing* African middle classes continues the long practice of oversimplifying African societies which, invariably, leads to incomplete if not incorrect development projections. While ‘development’ lies in the implementation of policies and programs, not just envisioning them, it is important to know (and challenge) what development priorities and possibilities are seen.

This thesis has pushed us to see more than just the extremes in African societies and to consider African middle classes in constructions of development. Without including middle classes in examinations of both the history and present conditions of African nations, we reproduce erroneous and ultimately damaging representations of African people and their ‘development’. For Africans, there is no evolutionary transition from being ‘native’ to ‘civilized’, ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’, or even poor to rich. These categories when used in opposition to each other produce simplistic dichotomies that reproduce seriously flawed theories of development.

I have suggested that ‘modern’ African middle classes have a long history and that Western-educated segments of the middle classes assumed a particular significance in development ideas and projects at the end of colonialism in West Africa. As subjects of development, Western-educated West Africans challenged colonial suggestions of black inferiority and represented themselves, and other

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<sup>338</sup> Breakdowns in the implementation of policy are not necessarily the result of ill-intending or ill-advised state officials, but also occur as part of geo-political pressure and/or political deadlock.

Africans, as capable of self determination. Many of these Africans equated progress with membership in the comity of nations, and the nation-state became the central aim of development. Once independent, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire pursued distinct development strategies – African socialism in the former and state-assisted capitalism in the latter – however, both focused on achieving rapid industrialization and modernization. The first generations of Western-educated African professionals, civil servants, politicians and presidents in these countries appeared as ‘modern’ prototypes; proof positive of Africa’s potential to move away from traditionalism and enter (if not embrace) social configurations of the modern world. Development ‘experts’ in this transition period imagined that the more completely modern mechanisms and mannerisms were acquired, in rural as well as urban settings, the more quickly development would come. Whether in industry or agriculture, modernized Africans became objects of development, and more Western-educated (African and European) engineers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, and technicians were presumed to be needed to make supposedly backwards people into globally competitive citizens.

In highlighting Western-educated African middle classes as agents and objects of transforming visions of development I stress that development was more than just the integration of Africans into the comity of nations but also the expedited exchange of occupational practices, lifestyles, and consumption patterns typically associated with ‘modernity’. West Africa’s long history of trade and exchange between the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas produced a mix of social configurations and cultural practices that necessarily expanded the range of lifestyle choices available to its’ residents. The lifestyles we identify as ‘modern’ emerge from these cultural exchanges which, in many cases, were expedited by European imperial expansion as well as development initiatives. However, Europe did not create modernity and then

superimpose it on its colonial conquests. Rather, the modern world was developed over long periods of time through: 1.) specific relations of production (including slavery and the exploitation of labor in the Americas as well as in Africa); 2) Exchange of technologies; and 3) Sharing of knowledge from regions all around the world.<sup>339</sup> These market and cultural exchanges, however, were rarely neutral and, in fact, created a host of power dynamics and hierarchies between individuals, societies, and knowledge systems.

Africa's contributions to the development of the modern world were systematically discounted or undervalued by colonial representations that portrayed African people and traditions as savage and backwards while praising European civilization as the source of modernity and harbinger of progress. This ideology of European supremacy was infused into early development theories, and persisted even as Africans gained independence and assumed control of their own nation states. Unfortunately, Africans remain trapped in this historically produced fallacy that their ways of life are inferior to those emanating from the West. Many representations of development and constructions of modernity still insist Africa is behind or beyond the 'modern' (read Western) world. Considering African modernity and class formation is one of many ways to develop fuller appreciation of African social dynamics and eschew some of the flat representations of 'Africa' given by colonialism and

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<sup>339</sup> The modern world (i.e. the complex of nation-states shaped by Euro-American imperialist and capitalist expansion) was founded, in large part, through enslaved, indentured, and forced labor in the Americas, Africa and Asia. This underbelly of development produced commodities and wealth that Europe claimed as its own and as proof of its 'modern' progressiveness. Cotton, rubber, tobacco, spices, coffee, tea etc. as well as Christianity and Science were all exported from Europe as supposed products of European civilization and industrialization. This process ignored the fact that a host of people around the world contributed (and in cases created) the ideas and products Europe claimed. Sidney Mintz (1985) provides a fantastic account of this process in *Sweetness and Power*. He highlights how sugar originated in India and Persia and underwent various technological improvements by Arabs, before being mass produced by African slaves in the Caribbean and Americas for European consumption. Supposedly sophisticated English practices such as having tea and biscuits (which both need sugar) was not an expression of European cultural superiority or advancement but rather a product of multi-regional exchanges of people, ideas, and products.

contemporary media portrayals. Partial or wrong representations of African societies will, invariably, lead to inadequate development approaches.

Instead of furthering the myth of African stagnation in a backwards past we must instead acknowledge that development the world over is uneven, and modernity is co-produced and simultaneously experienced throughout the world system. Neither development nor modernity necessarily replace 'traditional' ways of being, rather they add to a range of lifestyle choices available to those who are exposed to them and who can afford them. This is not to say that only the well-to-do experience 'modernity' but, simply, that lifestyle choices are more limited amongst those with meager means. While the majority of citizens in West African nations remain economically deprived, growing numbers of Africans have the financial stability to expand their lifestyle choices. Whether one lives in line with longstanding traditions deriving from a particular cultural heritage or whether one adopts a lifestyle with more recent origins is ultimately a personal choice.

Notions about African modernity, therefore, have been entangled in development discourses and tied to wrangling over the disposal or replacement of African traditions. Despite attempts to exorcise traditional customs and mentalities from Africans there persists strong attachment to certain religious practices, socio-political customs, foods, styles of music, art forms, and modes of dress that are considered 'traditional'.<sup>340</sup> These traditional practices, however, are not static; they are constantly transformed with new technologies and ideas. Visions of development as a method of bringing 'traditional', 'backwards' societies into the modern world are inherently flawed. They deny the fact that the modern world was co-produced, and they also ignore the tremendous amount of ideological and technological

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<sup>340</sup> Belief in the occult is widespread in West Africans. Also, chieftaincy and royal titles are also still commonly held.

‘leapfrogging’ that occurs. and Projections of development must come to understand that Africans, even those doing traditional, backwards things, are part of the world is one – a mélange of economic and socio-cultural exchanges experienced unevenly in all regions. The Western world has championed certain lifestyles and dominated discourses but this has never wholly other onto replaced Access to certain lifestyles

In addition to forwarding certain positions on African modernity, this thesis bring us to the fairly straightforward but much forsaken conclusion that development policies, especially those constructed and directed by the state, affect the constituency and character of African class structures. Middle classes do not simply emerge; they are formed through social change and, in cases, through direct planning. I suggest visions and projects of African development led by the state provide an important lens into the formation of African middle classes.

Additionally, I insist that development thinking abandon presentist or idealized perspectives of ‘the middle class’, and consider instead historical formations of African middle classes. Despite colonial constraints and nationally-inscribed poverty, middle classes have long existed on the African continent and, as the historical cases of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire demonstrate, their composition in national contexts vary tremendously. There is no transhistorical or conceptually universal ‘middle class’. African classes must be identified in historical, socio-economic, political and cultural context. Future research can provide empirical detail of middle classes across different African regions, and the data collected will undoubtedly reshape conceptual models of development. Research can also identify different class-based development projects; capturing, for example, development visions of middle classes with various rural, artisanal, or political affiliations. Moreover, research can suggest how contemporary middle classes are responding to state-led development policies and institution-sponsored development programs. Opening our eyes to African middle

classes reveals a world of development questions which, in turn, reshapes perceptions of the modern world as well as constructions of African development.

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