Race, Time, and Architecture:
Dilemmas of Africanization in Ghana, 1951–66

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This article is part of a broader research project on the Africanization of architecture and construction in Ghana during the late colonial and early postindependence periods.[1] It examines the state-sponsored and state-supported emergence and advancement of Indigenous architects and institutions in charge of architecture and construction, and their emancipation from colonial control. Introduced by the colonial government of the Gold Coast during the interwar period in a half-hearted effort to Africanize the public service, Africanization became a key aspiration of the country's governments during the shared British-Ghanaian rule that began in 1951 and after Ghana gained independence in 1957. Kwame Nkrumah, first as leader of government business (1951), then as prime minister (1952), then as president (1960), supported the Africanization of colonial institutions as a necessary step on the path toward independence. This support was based on both his opposition to chiefdoms, or "traditional" institutions, which he considered unsuitable as a framework for an independent state, and his belief in the importance of the modern state for the country's development. In particular, Nkrumah and the elite members of the Convention People's Party (CPP) considered institutions in charge of architecture and construction to be essential for the implementation of governmental development plans. Accordingly, the policies of Africanization included support for "qualified Africans"

to take over positions at all levels of these institutions.[2] This effort included assistance for Africans seeking to gain professional education both abroad and in Ghana, as well as support, although less decisive, for African-owned construction and construction material industries.

During the last decade of colonial rule in the Gold Coast and the first decade of independence in Ghana, the state was hardly the only agent of architectural production, which also involved economic and political elites, foreign enterprises, churches, and local communities. Nevertheless, the substantial volume of work carried out by state institutions such as the Public Works Department (PWD) and its successors during the 1950s and 1960s left an enduring mark on the landscapes of Ghanaian cities. This work has been discussed by architectural historians studying British architects active in the region; the adaptations of metropolitan modernism to the climatic, social, and technological conditions of West Africa; and architecture's instrumentality in Ghana's social and economic modernization.[3] Historians have also written about the coproduction of architecture in West Africa within networks of technical assistance from across Cold War divides, and they have begun to offer biographical accounts of first-generation Ghanaian architects.[4]

Complementing this scholarship, this article discusses the consequences of the Africanization policies for architecture and construction in, first, the Gold Coast, then later in Ghana—a topic that architectural historians have mentioned only in passing.[5] Their reluctance may have been due to critiques of the Africanization policies by several African thinkers. Among them was Frantz Fanon, who saw Africanization as "a transfer of power previously held by the foreigners" to the national bourgeoisie.[6] The stress on class violence in Fanon's analysis was taken up during the 1970s by African Marxist economists, including Bade Onimode,

who studied "superficial indigenisation" in Nigeria.[7] More recently, Achille Mbembe has underscored the racial dimension of Fanon's critique as a process that obstructed Pan-African solidarities and led to ethnic rivalries in the newly independent countries, thus undermining their polity.[8] Expanding this critique beyond French and British colonialism, Amílcar Cabral wrote about the "Africanization of cadres" in Lusophone Africa as changing only the "external aspects of colonial domination."[9] Building on these debates, Mbembe contrasts the open-ended, unfinished character of decolonization with the historically specific colonially designed procedures of Africanization and their often disappointing results.[10]

It is this historical specificity of Africanization that is the focus of this article, but rather than viewing Africanization as an outcome of a colonial blueprint, in the analysis that follows I emphasize the uncertainties of the process. I examine the ways in which professionals and administrators in Accra navigated the opportunities and limitations of the Africanization policies, how they measured their successes and failures, and how they corrected course. Moving beyond the challenges of policy implementation, this article also touches on the ways in which Africanization responded to the broader politics of decolonization.[11] As pointed out by Fanon, these politics were informed by categories of race and class, but they intersected with others, including Cold War ideologies and their own racialized hierarchies. Accordingly, I understand Africanization as a range of governmental policies that were negotiated, implemented, and contested by professionals and administrators in ways that often reflected, responded to, and intervened in the politics of decolonization of the Gold Coast, and later Ghana.

Within the overarching topic of the Africanization of architecture, the scope of this article is restricted to architectural labor.[12] I explore how first the British-Ghanaian and then the postindependence administrations in Accra implemented policies of recruiting, training, promoting, and retaining African architects with the aim of replacing non-Africans at all levels of the PWD and its successor institutions, notably the Ghana National Construction Corporation (GNCC). Furthermore, I discuss the consequences of these policies for architectural education and the professionalization of architecture. According to mid-1950s estimates, 90 percent of private residential buildings in the Gold Coast were designed by local draftsmen and licensed surveyors.[13] This meant that the central role in the design and construction of buildings claimed by architects—a profession introduced in the colony by British administrators and dependent on metropolitan models of training and validation—was neither obvious nor unchallenged. This article clarifies the reasons that led successive European and African administrators and professionals to continue with the European professional model of architectural practice. In so doing, it contributes to and expands upon discussions of architectural history and the history of Africanization of public service in British West Africa, the political economy and labor history of the region, and the Africanization of specific professions.[14]

In the next section, I outline two obligations that professionals and administrators at the PWD and the GNCC faced during the 1950s and 1960s. The first was to Africanize the staff of the PWD and its successor organizations. The second was to deliver on governmental development plans, starting with the colonial plan inherited by Nkrumah (1951–57) and prolonged after independence (1958–59), followed by the Second Development Plan (1959–61), which was then replaced by the Seven-Year Plan (1964–66).[15] Archival documents from Accra, Kumasi, and London show that decision makers at the PWD and GNCC often perceived these two obligations as conflicting, and that they saw this conflict in temporal terms. Within a shared developmentalist narrative of transition to "modernity," they struggled to reconcile the short intervals within which they were obliged to meet investment schedules with the extended periods required for the education and training of Africans.

In order to understand how these professionals and administrators negotiated this temporal clash within a broader set of conflicts central to the politics and economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana, I examine the dilemmas of recruitment, standards, and allocation of architectural labor that professionals and administrators faced during the last decade of colonial rule. These dilemmas continued into the 1960s, and the Ghanaian decision makers' responses to these challenges expanded in the wake of independence and the country's opening toward the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Finally, I focus on another dilemma that was less explicitly debated by decision makers in Accra and yet was an essential part of the implementation of the Africanization policies: an understanding of the racial categories on which these policies were founded. By illustrating the shifting understanding of who counted as an African and who counted as an Other, I argue that the destabilization of these categories and their continuous redefinition were instrumental in the Africanization process itself. The exploration of race, which the term *Africanization* implies, adds a West African vantage point to historical debates about the racialization of architecture after World War II.[16]

Africanization against Development

The government of the Gold Coast colony introduced the policies of Africanizing the public service during the interwar period, thus earlier than most "indigenization" or

"localization" efforts in other British African colonies.[17] These policies put an end to the late nineteenth-century practice, based on prejudice conveyed by late Victorian racial theories, of restricting African employment in British West African colonial administration. As the Gold Coast's governor, Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, explained in 1926, the Africanization policies were motivated both by "the spirit of justice" and by the necessity of saving on the cost of European staff.[18] During the 1920s and 1930s, educated elites in the Gold Coast objected to the slow pace of this process, and to its aim of a 50:50 ratio of African and European public servants—a ratio that, according to 1939 British projections, would be sufficient "during the next half-century."[19]

This temporal prospect was challenged in the wake of World War II by African elites and new political parties, including Nkrumah's Convention People's Party. In anticipation of Ghana's self-rule and in response to investments financed by the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, the government accelerated its Africanization efforts. A. L. Adu, a Gold Coaster, Cambridge graduate, and high-level colonial administrator, was appointed in 1950 as the first commissioner of Africanization, with the mandate to ensure "that the maximum number of suitably qualified African candidates become available for appointment to the higher grades of the Public Service."[20] During the 1950s, the British-Ghanaian government extended its attention to African businesses, including contractors and builders, who had been structurally disadvantaged by imperial policies that favored British and European enterprises.

The Africanization policies pertained to all branches of colonial administration, including the Public Works Department, the main institution in charge of design, construction, and maintenance of governmental buildings in the Gold Coast. The implementation of these policies at the department during the last years of colonial rule was documented in the PWD's yearly reports. In 1951, 24 Africans were employed in senior positions at the PWD, most numerous being accountants (6) and administrative assistants (5), but none were architects.[21] That was a significant rise since 1949, when there had been only 8 Africans holding such positions at the department.[22] According to the first postwar PWD report (1952–53), 35 Africans were then employed at the department, equaling 22 percent of the senior staff, and in the following years the numbers continued to increase: to 54 in 1954 (27 percent), 64 in 1955 (31 percent), 77 in 1956 (32 percent), 84 in 1956–57 (34 percent), and 110 in 1957–58 (40 percent) (Figure 1).[23] These figures demonstrate a continuous and accelerated growth in the numbers of Africans among the PWD's senior staff. But the percentages also show that this growth
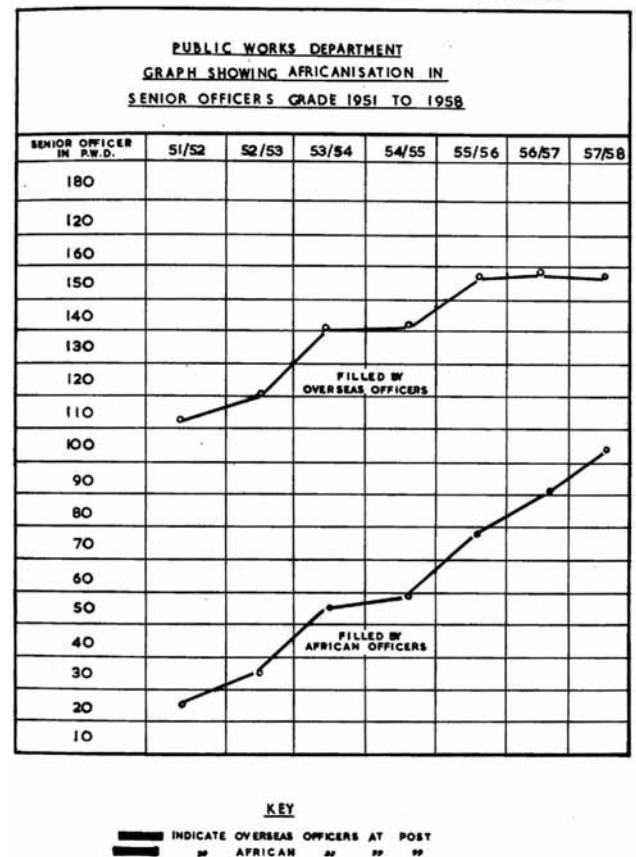
Figure 1 "Public Works Department Graph Showing Africanisation in Senior Officers Grade 1951 to 1958" (*Annual Report 1957–58* [Accra: Public Works Department, 1961], A.3).

was paralleled by an expansion of the department's senior staff, which until the late 1950s nearly equaled the growth rate of African hires.

That skyrocketing rise in the department's personnel was in response to the PWD's growing responsibilities concerning the late 1940s Ten-Year Plan for economic and social development, which was scaled down and implemented between 1951 and 1957 (Figure 2). Yet in spite of this rise, staffing fell short of the department's needs; for example, from 1951 to 1956, the PWD's workload increased more than fivefold while its staff grew only by a little more than twofold.[24] The workload per senior staff member was significantly higher than in Nigeria, and economic advisers linked the resulting lower degree of supervision of construction investments in the Gold Coast to the higher costs of these investments in comparison with Nigeria.[25] The numbers of vacancies in the PWD's senior staff suggest the challenges of recruitment: in 1953, there were 70 vacancies, which was equal to 45 percent of all the posts filled at the department; in the following years, high numbers of vacancies continued (37 in 1954, 57 in 1955, 80

Figure 2 "P.W.D. Expenditure 1950/51–1957/58" (*Annual Report 1957–58* [Accra: Public Works Department, 1961], A.4).

in 1956, 96 in 1957, and 95 in 1958).[26] The PWD struggled to fill these posts because of a shortage of professionals in the Gold Coast and increasing international competition; the department's reluctance to increase salaries to meet market rates was another factor.[27] Staff shortages were exacerbated by the departure of several consultants who left the service to establish more lucrative private practices; these included George Paton, the designer of Accra's Ambassador Hotel (Figure 3). Even when the PWD was given additional funding in 1955 to expand its workforce, it was not able to fill all vacancies.[28] Staff retention was further undermined by the anxieties of some British PWD officers about the country's impending constitutional changes.[29]

Already by the early 1950s PWD leadership had become convinced that the workload required to meet development goals was difficult to reconcile with the department's obligation to Africanize its staff. As one officer put it, "The magnitude of the Development Plan conflicts with the progress of Africanisation."[30] Professionals and administrators at the PWD often saw this conflict as a temporal one. As the department's annual report for 1954–55 explained, "The senior professional/technical staff of the Department is predominantly expatriate and is likely to remain so for some time, since the number of African officers now under training is only a minor proportion of the total staff requirements which continue to increase as the result of the implementation of the Government's Development Plan."[31] Officers contrasted the monthly and yearly intervals within which they were obliged to deliver on development plans with the comparatively longer spans required by the training programs for Africans.[32]

Figure 3 A. G. Paton, "The Accra [Ambassador] Hotel," sketch design, 9 Jan. 1955 (UK National Archives, Kew).

Conflicts about time were central to the political economy of decolonization in the Gold Coast. During the years leading to the country's independence, economists and politicians debated the priorities and timetables of governmental investments, including the highly politicized question of allocating surpluses obtained by restricting the price of cocoa paid by the state to cocoa farmers. Government officials and external advisers considered the advantages of long-term projects against the need to enhance the government's tax revenue to cover rising annual recurrent expenditures.[33] Writing in 1953, Saint Lucian economic adviser W. Arthur Lewis argued in favor of improving agriculture and public services in the Gold Coast, adding that "very many years will have elapsed before it becomes economical for the government to transfer any large part of its resources toward industrialization."[34] In particular, he pointed out that such an extended timetable would facilitate the Africanization program, as it would allow for private firms investing in Ghana to train a local workforce.[35] President Nkrumah at first had accepted this schedule as part of a gradual transition beyond colonialism, but by the early 1960s he abandoned it and fast-tracked a large-scale, socialist-inspired industrialization program. Nkrumah acknowledged Lewis's advice as sound "from the economic point of view," but added, "I cannot always follow this advice as I am a politician and must gamble on the future."[36]

However, rather than showing economic and political concerns in opposition to each other, documents from the PWD and its successors demonstrate that these concerns were intertwined in the conflicting obligations of administrators and professionals. In order to capture this intertwinement, in the following sections I focus on the dilemmas that European and, increasingly, African decision makers negotiated within colonial path dependences and within geopolitical openings facilitated by decolonization and the Cold War. The concept of dilemmas draws on debates in the 1950s and 1960s in the field of developmental economics that addressed the relationships between short-term capital investments and long-term technical assistance in training and institution building.[37] These debates informed the decisions of high-ranking officials in Accra, who shared what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls the "transition narrative."[38] This narrative created a division between "tradition" and "modernity," and assumed an overarching temporality of transition from the former to the latter. It was within this temporality that professionals and administrators attempted to synchronize investment schedules with their diverse priorities.

At the same time, the dilemmas discussed in this article often went beyond the technicalities of developmental economics. Decision makers at the PWD and its successor organizations faced what environmental historians have described as conflicts around temporalities, which occasionally interrupted the transition narrative.[39] Such conflicts revealed controversies about inherited systems of value, including professional standards, and about bureaucratic categories, which included racial classifications.[40] The next sections investigate how the negotiation of such value systems and categories by professionals and administrators in Accra was instrumental in the acceleration of the Africanization of architecture in Ghana.

Recruitment, Standards, Allocation

In March 1958, the minister of health in Accra sent a memorandum to the Standing Development Committee. Addressing the expansion of the Korle Bu Hospital in Accra, he informed the committee that the Public Works Department was unable to undertake the design of the hospital buildings because of the shortage of architectural staff. In order to prevent further delays, he advised the commissioning of W. F. Vetter, a consultant on hospital architecture to the World Health Organization, to produce the design in association with a local firm of private architects who would liaise with the Ministry of Health.[41]

In the course of the 1950s, the PWD often sought similar arrangements with private consultants in response to the department's acute staff shortages. However, this procedure clashed with the department's obligation to support the Africanization of the architectural practices in the country. A 1959 list of consultants eligible for governmental contracts shows only one Ghanaian: J. S. K. Frimpong, a graduate of the Bartlett School of Architecture in London.[42] In addition to taking governmental commissions, such as the hospital in Mampong, Frimpong worked for African clients, most prominently the Asantehene (the king of the Asante people) in Kumasi, but his untimely death prematurely ended a promising career.[43] In the wake of Ghana's independence, several expatriate architectural firms attempted to present themselves as "African," notably the consortium Plan Group, a brainchild of the expatriate firm Nickson and Borys, and the Ghana Architectural and Civil Engineering Company, which employed one Ghanaian among its partners.[44] By the 1960s, officials in Accra were occasionally challenging foreign enterprises that employed small numbers of Ghanaians in order to benefit from the Africanization process, and it was not until the end of the decade that the first private architectural offices fully operated by Ghanaians were established.

In light of these setbacks, PWD leadership turned to direct employment of professionals as a more promising avenue for Africanization, which may have influenced the department's decision to dispense with the services of

consultants by the mid-1950s.[45] This turn was supported by a change in the legal machinery related to employment policies. After World War II, the practice of hiring Europeans for senior posts regardless of their qualifications was replaced by a unified civil service, with all positions open to all races.[46] At the same time, a governmental report (1947) advised offering expatriate candidates a supplement "to induce them to leave their homes and families and spend their lives in less healthy and less congenial surroundings."[47] The colonial administration took pains to argue that this supplement was not a continuation of the older system based on racial discrimination, but rather a response to the challenges of competing for professionals on the international market. Africans rejected that argument, and by the mid-1950s it became politically unsustainable. The introduction of the equal salary system followed.[48]

In order to negotiate between its double obligations of Africanization and development, the PWD introduced a policy of employing non-Africans only on temporary contracts. Their term was to be related "to the expected availability of a suitably qualified African."[49] These temporary contracts were introduced to provide the workforce necessary to fulfill the development plans while allowing time for Ghanaians to be educated or to gain practical experience. All employment contracts for "development work" (as opposed to "regular establishment" focused on maintenance and training activities) were temporary, and the vast majority went to non-Africans.[50] However, British professionals often shunned short-term contracts.[51]

In another attempt to accelerate the Africanization process, PWD officers debated the qualification requirements of candidates. From the first Africanization report (1951), the policy that "vacancies . . . should be filled by suitably qualified Africans in preference to expatriates" was restricted by a clause stating that recruitment of Africans could not lead to "lowering of standards [or] qualifications" of senior staff.[52] This question of standards added to the challenges faced by PWD officers. In his 1951 report, Adu showed that between 1932 and 1951 only two Gold Coasters studied architecture in the United Kingdom, and concluded that there was "no immediate method of solution [to the recruitment challenge] so long as we keep to our resolution not to relax standards of qualifications."[53] He was proven correct, given that the School of Architecture at the College of Technology in Kumasi, which was modeled on British institutions and based on British academic standards, would not admit its first students until 1958 and would not start to produce graduates until the following decade.[54]

In the years leading to independence, educational standards were the subject of controversy in Accra and in London. Professionals and administrators considered giving more weight to practical training, in line with the recommendation of the 1953 Africanization report that the firms granted governmental contracts be required "to train an agreed number of [African] engineers and all grades of technicians and artisans."[55] Some suggested that the practical experience of African candidates should offset their lack of academic qualifications and proposed trial appointments of such candidates with lower salaries.[56] This proposal was rejected, however, as were more fundamental suggestions of moving beyond British models of architectural education. One such suggestion was included in the United Nations' 1956 "Report on Housing in the Gold Coast," delivered by U.S. housing expert Charles Abrams, Russian French architect Vladimir Bodiansky, and German architect Otto Koenigsberger. They argued that the British system of training highly specialized professionals, among them town planners, architects, civil engineers, and quantity surveyors, should be replaced by an approach in which "general practitioners" or "community planners" would receive academic, technical, and practical training.[57]

This proposal was challenged from political, developmentalist, professional, and educational positions. Officials on London's Advisory Committee on Colonial Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology doubted its feasibility and asserted that it would further complicate the Africanization program, arguing that the position of a community planner would hardly match the various vacancies in the PWD.[58] The proposal was also met with skepticism by architects based in the colony, including the small number of British-educated African architects in the Gold Coast. Likely concerned about the reputation of the profession and its distinction from the work of draftsmen and surveyors, Gold Coast architects agreed that courses should be designed specifically for the colony but insisted on standards equivalent to those required by professional institutes in the United Kingdom.[59]

The shortage of formally qualified Africans and the slow pace of their education resulted in yet another dilemma for decision makers in Accra: how to allocate available African architects across administrative, professional, and educational positions. As stated in the 1953 Africanization report: "The Africanisation of the Service is being prejudiced by the public demand for increased services and amenities."[60] In general, the authorities prioritized development objectives, and hence professional and administrative roles, over educational needs. This was because building up a cadre of educators required sending graduates overseas for further education, which would take them away from urgent responsibilities concerning development programs.

Further obstacles for the education sector stemmed from the practice of "bonding" Africans whose studies abroad were funded by the government. After graduation, they were required to work for the state administration for a specific

period of time. Consequently, administrators at the College of Technology in Kumasi (renamed the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, or KNUST, in 1961) often lamented their impaired ability to hire recent graduates returning from overseas.[61] This resulted in a tendency to hire teachers and researchers from abroad, which further undermined the process of Africanization of the KNUST staff.

Challenges of Cosmopolitanism

Two years after Ghana gained independence, the authors of the annual report of the Public Works Department, now called the Division of Public Construction, announced that "Africanization of the Senior Service continued, and for the first time the number of Africans holding senior posts exceeded those held by others."[62] According to the report and the accompanying diagram, among 242 senior staff employed in permanent ("regular") positions, 122 were Africans (Figure 4).[63] The estimates concerning architects were less positive: in comparison to the previous year, the department had lost its only African architect.[64] In all of Ghana, there were only 40 architects employed in total and 15 vacancies for them in government service; the country's expected demand for architectural professionals during the following ten years was estimated at 75 to 100.[65]

The delayed report was published in 1963 by the Ghana National Construction Corporation, a new institution in charge of design, construction, and maintenance of government buildings. The establishment of the GNCC testified to a wider opening of Ghanaian architecture and construction toward resources and expertise beyond the British Empire. This opening had already begun during the 1950s and included intensified exchanges within British West Africa, with other British colonies, and with the Commonwealth. Particularly important for Nkrumah and the CPP were contacts with the United States, including the African American diaspora, as well as with U.S.-based international organizations such as the United Nations.[66] Contractors from Francophone Africa and Western Europe were arriving, too. International exchanges accelerated after independence, including an agreement with the Israeli construction firm Solel Boneh, which in 1958 created what was then called the Ghana National Construction Company, a joint venture with the Ghanaian government (Figure 5).[67] In 1962 the company was nationalized and merged with the Division of Public Construction to create the GNCC.[68]

The growth of the corporation's staff and resources was facilitated by Ghana's opening toward socialist countries at a time of escalating Cold War competition in the region.[69] Following Nkrumah's turn toward socialism, including state-centered development, egalitarian welfare
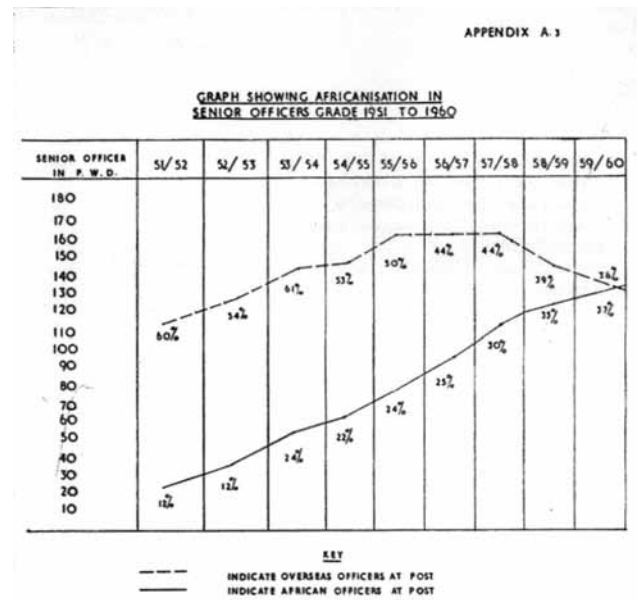
Figure 4 "Graph Showing Africanisation in Senior Officers Grade 1951 to 1960" (*Annual Report of the Ghana National Construction Corporation (Formerly Division of Public Construction) for the Period 1959–60* [Accra: GNCC, 1963], A.3).

distribution, and mass mobilization of society, Ghana signed low-interest credit and barter agreements with the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites, as well as with China and countries of the Non-Aligned Movement such as Yugoslavia. As a result of these agreements, architects, planners, and engineers from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia began to join the GNCC. By the mid-1960s they constituted the core professional workforce at the corporation (Figure 6). They were joined by architects from India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the Philippines, West Germany, and the United States. The corporation was also hiring rising numbers of KNUST graduates, a group that, beginning with the first cohort that matriculated in 1958, included women. Leadership positions at the corporation were assumed by Ghanaians, including the Howard-educated Victor (Vic or Vik) Adegbite, who became chief architect, and Ghanaian men and women filled the drafting positions in the Architectural Department (Figure 7).

The injection of foreign, non-British staff into state institutions did not dispel the dilemmas of recruitment, standards, and allocation of architectural labor, but it transformed and sometimes expanded the ability of Ghanaian leadership to respond to these issues. While in the late 1950s some of the most prominent public buildings in Accra were designed by private firms from the PWD list of eligible consultants, by the 1960s such designs were produced by the GNCC, typically with Eastern European project architects (Figure 8). Continuing late colonial practice, the GNCC
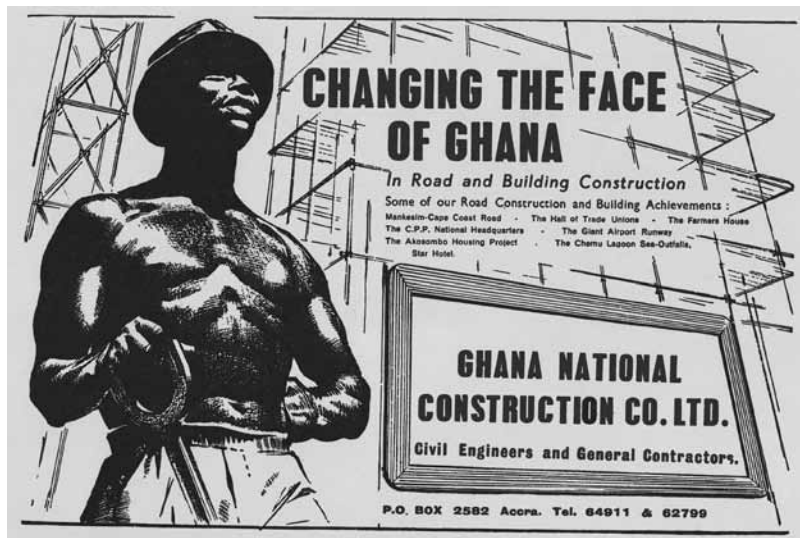
Figure 5 "Changing the Face of Ghana," advertisement of the Ghana National Construction Company (*G.N.C.C. / Newsletter: A Quarterly Magazine,* Nov. 1961).

employed foreign architects on temporary contracts, and their work was perceived as a bridge between the colonial period and a future time when Ghanaians would take over. Similar dynamics were at work in other institutions, notably at KNUST, which often hired Eastern European educators to fill positions while Ghanaians completed their graduate training abroad.[70]

Several large-scale designs were nevertheless delivered by foreign consultants, in particular the master plan for the new town of Tema by the Greek office Doxiadis Associates.[71] Institutions from socialist countries designed projects too, among them sports and cultural facilities by Bulgaria's Technoexportstroy, as well as two neighborhoods in Accra and Tema and a factory for large-scale concrete prefabricated panels by the Soviet Union's Gipragor. Other industrial plants were financed and designed by institutions from China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union, which took over some design work from Ghanaian organizations.[72] At the same time, projects such as the printworks in Tema, designed by an East German institute, required a significant amount of administrative work from Ghanaian high-ranking professionals, including coordination, supervision, and quality control (Figure 9).[73]

The rising numbers of foreign, non-British architects in Ghana only intensified the concerns of Ghanaian leaders about professional standards. In 1961, an editorial in the *Ghanaian Times* accused university administrators in Accra and Kumasi of setting higher degree requirements for African hires than for whites, and administrators within and outside the government expressed concerns about qualifications earned from foreign institutions.[74] This issue increasingly pertained not only to foreigners but also to Ghanaians, including those who accepted scholarships from socialist countries to study at architecture schools in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and China. After the 1966 coup that toppled Nkrumah, the Ghanaian government produced

a comparative study of Eastern European educational systems and formulated recommendations concerning degree parity.[75] In at least one case, a graduate of a Soviet institution was required to take a professional exam in Ghana to have his architectural degree recognized.[76] This shows that the opening toward socialist countries was beneficial for the Africanization process in that it expanded the educational opportunities for future Ghanaian architects. But it also hindered this process when foreign degrees were not recognized, which often forced educated Ghanaians to emigrate.

Finally, persistent staff shortages meant that Ghanaian decision makers continued to struggle with the allocation of architectural labor. While the Nkrumah administration considered it imperative that Africans be put in leadership positions, there was never enough qualified staff to take on such responsibilities. Consequently, when Adegbite, then the chief architect of the Ghana Housing Corporation, became chief architect at the Division of Public Construction in 1962, he was instructed to assign GHC architectural work to officers at the division, "so as to make it unnecessary to fill the Chief Architect's post in the Ghana Housing Corporation" (Figure 10).[77] In continuation of the practice from the 1950s, appointments directly related to investment programs were privileged, while those related to education were not. At the same time, when debating a controversy around the teaching appointment of Ghanaian architect John Owusu-Addo, the leadership of the College of Technology agreed that architectural educators "should have some good practical experience on the job before coming on to the staff."[78] Shortage of staff was also an obstacle to expanding educational programs in Kumasi beyond British precedents, notably the "live projects" directly involving students and staff with "critical and urgent problems" faced by local communities.[79]

This overview shows that the dilemmas of recruitment, standards, and allocation faced by professionals and

Figure 6 Images from the headquarters of the Ghana National Construction Corporation, Accra, mid-1960s: Hungarian architect Charles Polónyi (top), other Eastern European architects (middle), and an office Christmas party (bottom) (stills from a movie by Witold Wojczyński, mid-1960s, private archive of Witold Wojczyński; courtesy of the Wojczyński family).

administrators at the PWD during the 1950s continued into the decade after independence. During this period, decision makers applied several strategies to mediate between the slow-paced Africanization process and fast-tracked development plans. These strategies included time-limited employment, whether in the form of bonding African graduates to governmental posts for specific periods of time or offering temporary contracts to non-Africans while African equivalents were being educated and trained. Neither was entirely

successful: the employment of bonded graduates in administrative positions undermined other sectors of architectural practice in Ghana, notably higher education, and British professionals were often reluctant to accept short-term contracts in public service.

By contrast, temporary contracts were attractive to Eastern Europeans who traveled to Ghana through the networks of socialist technical assistance. Their presence brought about a subtle shift in perception by Ghanaians of the role of temporary contracts. During the 1950s such contracts were introduced primarily to "phase out" British professionals and administrators, but by the 1960s temporary employment of Eastern Europeans was aimed at "buying time" for Ghanaians. The difference in foreign personnel stemmed from the change in Ghana's geopolitical position in the wake of independence, but it also brought about a shift in the ways in which professionals and administrators in Accra understood who counted as an Other. This shift, and the negotiation of the racial categories that were the basis for the Africanization process, is the focus of the next section.

From Africanization to Ghanaization

Unlike the dilemmas of recruitment, standards, and allocation of architectural labor, the racial categories of the Africanization policies were rarely discussed explicitly at the PWD and the GNCC. In particular, the frequent changes to these categories in the PWD reports quoted above were neither explained nor acknowledged. The schedules included in the 1951–52 annual report distinguished between "African" and "European" staff, and the following reports replaced "Africans" first with "West Africans" (1955–56) and then with "Ghanaians" (1957–58). Parallel to this shift, the category of "Europeans" was replaced first with "overseas officers" and then with "expatriates."[80] When read together, these reports seem to reiterate a modernizing narrative of transition from colonial-era racial categories to distinctions based on citizenship. However, on closer examination, it becomes clear that some of these terms were contested, used interchangeably, and that their racialization persisted into the 1960s in ways that were consequential for the Africanization process.

The 1951 Africanization report by Adu already testified to the controversies around the understanding of who counted as an African. Adu expressed his frustration about the fact that he was required to discourage overseas professionals of African descent from applying for government positions in the Gold Coast. He wrote that "non-West Africans," such as West Indians of African descent and South Africans, were not included in the Africanization policies and would need to be offered "expatriate terms."[81]
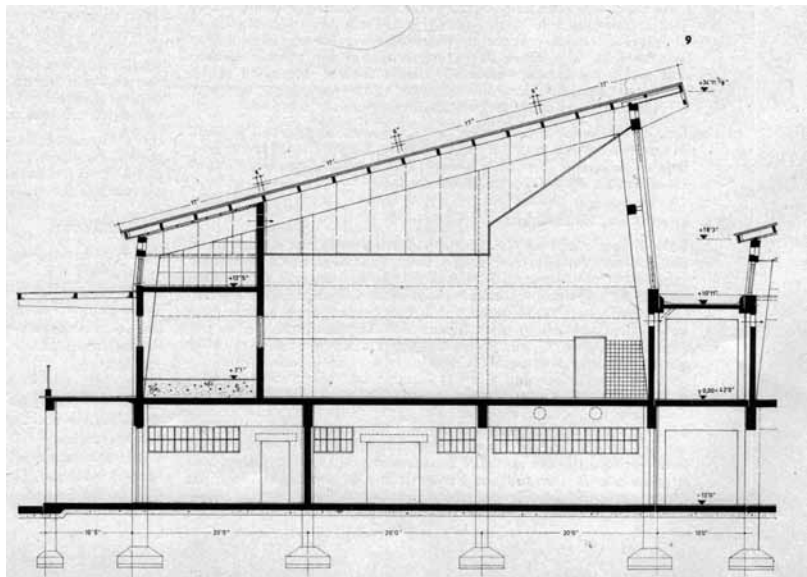
Figure 7 Victor Adegbite (foreground, right), Kwame Nkrumah (foreground, center), and others at the construction site of the State House Complex, mid-1960s (private archive of Victor Adegbite; courtesy of the Adegbite family).

Figure 8 Ghana National Construction Corporation, Victor Adegbite (chief architect), Witold Wojczyński, Jan Drużyński (project architects), State House Complex, Accra, 1965 (private archive of Witold Wojczyński; courtesy of the Wojczyński family).

Figure 9 VEB Industrieprojektierung Leipzig (East Germany), governmental printing house, Tema, early 1960s, section (*Deutsche Architektur* 3 [1964], 542).

Even after the salary supplement for overseas hires was removed, these terms included the requirement of temporary contracts in line with the policy that permanent contracts be offered only to Africans. Taking issue with this practice, Adu wrote that if "people of African descent . . . are so anxious to come and work in the Gold Coast as our kinsmen, then I feel that they ought to come in on the same terms as ourselves."[82]

While Adu's claim about the geographical restriction of his mandate seems to be corroborated by the use of the term "West African" in a later PWD report (1955–56), this term was used neither in Adu's letter of employment nor in the earlier report of the Select Committee on Africanization that called for the creation of his position. Instead, the report frequently referred to "local" candidates.[83] This ambiguous term echoed the "localization" policies in British East African settler colonies that opened the public service not only to Africans but also to settled Asians and locally born Europeans.[84] Its use would have raised concerns among Gold Coast elites who insisted on excluding long-settled Lebanese entrepreneurs from the support granted to Africans by the Africanization policies.[85] Furthermore, Adu's claim contrasted with the forthcoming policy of "regionalization" of the public service in Nigeria into Federal, Northern, Western, and Eastern services. Introduced in 1954, Nigeria's policy meant that Indigenous people in each of these regions were preferred over other candidates, including people from other parts of the colony, let alone from abroad.[86]

In spite of these ambiguities, Adu's understanding of his mandate as restricted to residents of West Africa was significant for the Africanization policies in the PWD during the final years of colonial rule. On the one hand, this definition was too narrow to include all architects of African descent keen to work in the country. It would have excluded V. H. Cooper, who was born in Port Antonio, Jamaica, in 1917, served during the war as an RAF navigator, studied architecture in Cardiff, and moved to Ghana in 1957 to work for the Tema Development Corporation.[87] Similarly excluded would have been African American professionals, among them the architect and Harvard graduate Max Bond, who worked in Ghana in the mid-1960s.[88] On the other hand, the definition was too broad to retain African professionals in the country. For example, during the late 1950s Sierra Leonean and Nigerian universities were competing for African lecturers with the College of Technology in Kumasi, an institution whose opening Adu considered "one of the most significant events in the history of Africanisation."[89] The college's efforts to Africanize its staff were undermined when its high-ranking administrators accepted positions in Nigeria.[90]

While the opening of the Gold Coast to other British colonies and the United States complicated the understanding of who counted as an African in PWD employment policies, the arrival of Eastern European architects in the wake of independence fractured the understanding of who counted as an Other. During their work at the GNCC, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, and Yugoslav architects were categorized as "expatriates." In the PWD tables, this term was the last in a sequence of racialized categories originating from the colonial-era binary distinction between Europeans and Africans.[91] However, in 1960s Ghana, this binary became triangulated in view of the propaganda from both sides of the Cold War.

Socialist propaganda distributed in Ghana differentiated between Eastern Europeans and Western European colonizers. In this narrative, Eastern Europeans were presented as conveyors of European technology and culture, yet without

the burden of Western European colonialism, imperialism, racism, and capitalist exploitation of the African continent. The Soviet Union claimed the status of an antiracist power that liberated Central Asia from czarist colonialism, and Eastern Europeans purported to share with Africans a history of colonial occupation (by the Prussian, Habsburg, czarist, and Ottoman empires).[92] The Nazi genocide in Eastern Europe during World War II was presented by Eastern European envoys in Accra as the most recent installment in a history of political domination, economic hegemony, and cultural peripheralization of the region since the late eighteenth century.[93] For example, Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński reported himself saying to a Ghanaian chief: "My country has no colonies . . . and there was a time when my country was a colony. . . . That was what we called fascism. It's the worst colonialism."[94]

Such narratives, which implied a hierarchy of colonialisms, with the "worst" among them being the one imposed on Europeans, were rejected by African writers, among them Aimé Césaire.[95] These writers were aware of the ambiguous position of Eastern Europeans as both subjects of imperial violence and active participants in European colonialism, both on other continents and in the ethnically diverse "borderlands" of the region.[96] That ambiguity came to the fore in the Ghanaian press, where Eastern European pronouncements of antiracism and anticolonialism were sometimes published next to accounts of racist attacks on African students in the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. Several Ghanaians compared the latter to racist violence in the Jim Crow–era United States.[97] Others, including former Ghanaian students in Moscow, pointed out that the Soviet Union criminalized racism—even if they themselves were sometimes victims of racist attacks in Soviet cities.[98] Ghanaians who traveled to Soviet Central Asia would have noticed how racialized hierarchies inherited from Russian imperialism reverberated in the paternalism of the Soviet modernization of the region, which was presented by Soviet propaganda as an example of socialist development in a non-European context.[99] In turn, elite Ghanaians who studied at British universities sometimes absorbed the racialization of Eastern Europeans in Western Europe, with Poles described as "Orientalized Irish" or the K-word by some early twentieth-century British imperial figures.[100]

These older perceptions of Eastern Europe as Western Europe's "first Orient" received a second life in Western Cold War propaganda.[101] In West Africa, this propaganda was sometimes instrumental in the professional rivalry between British and Eastern European architects. The latter rarely identified with the Soviet narrative that distinguished them from Western Europeans, instead seeing themselves as members of a single design culture of modern architecture, on par with their British colleagues. However, few British architects shared this view. For example, Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry compared the modernization of Africa with Soviet development but devalorized the latter as coercive and thus of lesser value.[102] This assessment echoed the claim in Western Cold War discourse that cultural value can be produced only by "free" labor specific to the "free world," hence, it is irreconcilable with the "nonfree" labor claimed to characterize socialist societies. Along similar lines, in a 1957 speech at the opening of the School of Architecture in Kumasi, British architect Anthony M. Chitty described architecture in Soviet Russia as "completely subjected to politics and to the party line, sterile, ugly, without emotion."[103] This discourse was exacerbated by the increasing sense of beleaguerment among British architects in Accra, whose professional prospects were undermined by the progress of Africanization and by the increasing employment of Eastern Europeans at the GNCC.

This controversy over the understanding of Europeanness was consequential for the Africanization of architecture in Ghana, as demonstrated by the conflict between two professional organizations of architects. The first among them was the Gold Coast Society of Architects, founded in 1954 with the aim to become an "allied society" of the Royal Institute of British Architects.[104] Per the RIBA's alliance requirements, the majority of the society's members needed to be "citizens of the Commonwealth or British Protected Persons."[105] Accordingly, the membership comprised British and Ghanaian architects, the latter typically with degrees from British schools of architecture, though Adegbite, a graduate of a U.S. institution, was accepted as well. In his recollection, the society was more of a social club than a professional one, and he suggested that its members had little sympathy for Nkrumah. For example, Adegbite recalled that his acceptance of the commission to design the CPP Headquarters and the Farmer's Building in Accra was met with the threat of expulsion from the society (Figure 11).[106]

After Ghana gained independence, the main conflict between the society (renamed the Ghana Society of Architects) and Nkrumah's administration pertained to architectural training. The GSA was instrumental in the accreditation of the School of Architecture in Kumasi. The school was accredited by the RIBA, with the GSA put in charge of preliminary marking of the RIBA's intermediate exams. Yet in June 1962, when, for the second time in a row, none of the students passed the whole exam, the government commissioned a report from Adegbite and V. N. Prasad, an Indian planner, UN expert, and head of the Department of Architecture and Regional Planning at the Institute of Technology in Kharagpur, India. Adegbite and Prasad were critical of the GSA's approach to the marking of the exams and recommended continuing the school's

Figure 11 Victor Adegbite, Convention People's Party Headquarters, currently Ministry of Information, Accra, 1959 (author's photo, 2022; photographed with permission of the Ministry of Information, Ghana).

relationship with the RIBA only until the university could take over control of its degrees and diplomas.[107]

According to Adegbite, KNUST's vice-chancellor, Robert Patrick Baffour, inquired about the creation of a Ghanaian institution "oriented towards a positive input in Ghanaian architectural practice and education in light of the new concepts in nation building of the Country."[108] Against proposals by the GSA to create a West African Institute of Architects allied to the RIBA, the Ghana Institute of Architects was created in 1962 (Figure 12).[109] Ghanaian architect and planner Theodore Shealtiel Clerk, educated at the Edinburgh College of Art, became the GIA's first president. Acknowledging the cosmopolitan character of architectural labor in Ghana, the institute opened its membership "to all Architects practicing in Ghana, provided they are qualified to practice as Architects in the country of their origin, or the country in which they have received their training."[110] In contrast to the GSA, which took instructions from the headquarters of the RIBA in London, the GIA was run locally in Accra by Ghanaians closely linked to the government. According to Clerk, institutional independence allowed Ghanaian architects to "help to mould both the shape of Architecture, Architectural education and the future of the Architectural profession in this country."[111] A further difference between these two organizations was the composition of their membership. While the African cohort was largely the same in both groups—most founders of the GIA were GSA members—the European members were decisively different. In the GSA, they came from Britain and the Commonwealth; in the GIA, they were predominantly Eastern European employees of the GNCC and other state institutions. In 1964, half of the GIA's thirty-eight members were Eastern European.[112]

The motivation of Eastern Europeans to join the institute was far from clear, but the fact that their qualifications were not recognized by the RIBA, and that they were therefore excluded from the GSA, was likely significant. The hostility that some of them experienced from British architects
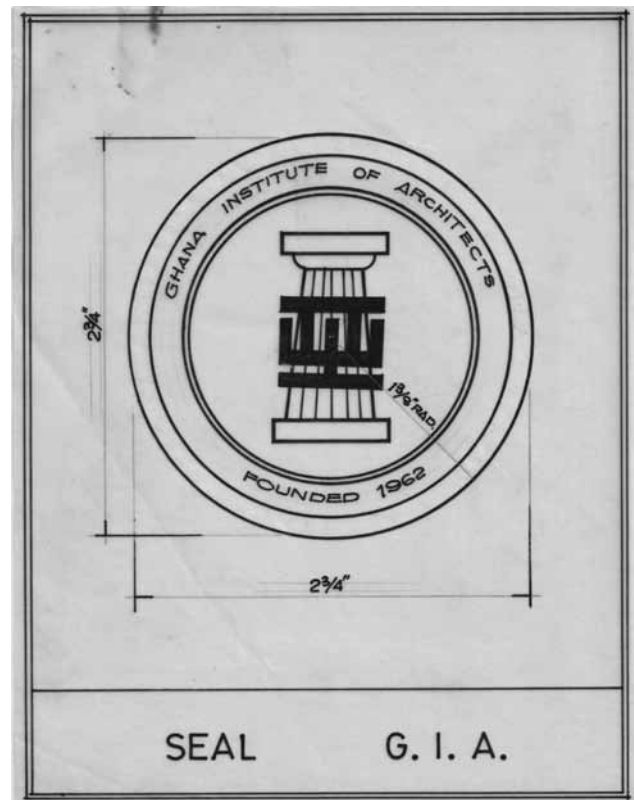
Figure 12 Seal of the Ghana Institute of Architects, n.d. (private archive of Victor Adegbite; courtesy of the Adegbite family).

may have also played a role. As employees of Ghanaian state institutions headed by founding GIA members such as Adegbite, they may have felt compelled to join. Perhaps they expected to elevate their professional status in Ghana, or they wanted to support their Ghanaian colleagues against an institution associated with the former colonial power.

The motivation of the institute to include Eastern Europeans was clearer. The participation of Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, and Yugoslav architects made the GIA's membership larger than the GSA's, giving the institute a

stronger position in its bid to absorb the older organization, as it eventually did in 1965. Furthermore, a sizable membership strengthened the GIA's hand in a crucial negotiation with the government for the legal recognition of the architectural profession. The relevance of membership numbers was confirmed by the Professional Bodies Registration Regulations (1971), which specified that a professional organization would be registered by the government provided that it represented at least 75 percent of persons in the country who were trained and qualified in that profession.[113] Finally, the fact that Eastern European architects joined the GIA allowed the institute to present itself as a model organization under Ghanaian leadership, gathering professionals from around the world and across racial, professional, and political divides in order to contribute to Ghana's development.[114]

The controversies surrounding the professional organizations of architects were part of a larger shift in Ghana's policies, which was reflected in the increasing preference for the term "Ghanaization" over "Africanization." Besides the rejection of the proposed West African Institute of Architects, another example of this shift was the replacement of the colonial-era West African Building Research Institute with national organizations in both Ghana and Nigeria.[115] The revision of the GIA bylaws in the early 1970s was yet another case in point. The new bylaws restricted membership to residents of Ghana and declared that "no firm shall be registered as an architectural firm if . . . the majority of partners or directors are not members of Ghana Institute of Architects [or] none of its partners is a Ghanaian."[116] That regulation was part of the policies of Ghanaization of the country's economy that were promulgated in the course of the 1970s.[117] It led to the transfer of ownership and management of enterprises, including architectural offices, to Ghanaian citizens, thus opening a new chapter in the history of Ghana's architecture.

Beyond Africanization

In 1975 the architect and KNUST lecturer Henry Nii-Adziri Wellington published a short manifesto in *Environ*, the journal of the School of Architecture in Kumasi. Wellington took issue with the mimicry of European cultural practices and, in particular, with the application of foreign architectural typologies that he noticed in Ghana. He proposed instead a process of "indigenization," replacing "modern block[s] of flats" with "modern units of multi-family indigenous housing," and replacing "expensive 'low cost housing'" with "homelets" that would "preserve the communal life." Concluding the text, he wrote emphatically, "But if INDIGENISATION MEANS EUROGHANASATION, THEN WE WANT NOTHING!"[118]

While Wellington was primarily interested in architectural innovation, his broader point was to distance himself from the policies of indigenization, Ghanaization, and Africanization—ambiguous terms that his neologism mocked—and he implied that he was speaking on behalf of a community that shared that sense of distance. One would suppose that this community included young Ghanaian architects staffing public institutions and private offices, teachers and students at the School of Architecture in Kumasi, members of professional societies such as the GIA, and readers of journals such as *Environ* and the GIA's newsletter. As part of this community, Wellington imagined himself at the historical threshold of transition from colonial rule to independence: a time of possibility for a different future for Ghanaian architecture.

The Africanization policies from which Wellington distanced himself were the same policies that, at least in part, produced the professionals he saw as capable of transforming Ghanaian architecture. This article has examined how these policies were introduced, advanced, negotiated, and implemented by state institutions during the last decade of colonial rule in the Gold Coast and the first decade of independence in Ghana. Confronted with the double obligations to Africanize the PWD and its successors and to meet governmental development goals, decision makers such as Adu and Adegbite negotiated recruitment strategies across what they perceived as temporal conflicts between Africanization and development. They also aimed at accelerating the pace of the Africanization process by revisiting the standards of education and training in the country, and by allocating African professionals across various branches of government. Less explicit but at least as controversial were negotiations around the racial categories underlying the Africanization policies, which confronted late colonial racial classifications and Cold War racialized imaginaries.

This exploration into the dilemmas of recruitment, standards, allocation, and racialization of architectural labor has emphasized the horizon of choices available to decision makers in Accra—a horizon informed by the opportunities and limitations brought about by decolonization and the Cold War. The first and most consequential among these choices was the decision by Nkrumah and the CPP elite to build the institutions of the new state, including those in charge of architecture and construction, on the basis of colonial-era precedents. The economic constraints and political obligations that came with resources and expertise from Britain, and later from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, restricted the pace of retiring foreign standards and models. The European model of the architectural profession was maintained, while alternative visions, such as those proposed by UN experts and KNUST educators, were given less attention and even less support.

While discussing the reasons for the long life of colonial precedents and their reproduction in the framework of Africanization policies, this article has also shown how this reproduction was complicated and sometimes interrupted, as these precedents were themselves diverse, contradictory, and contested. An example is the move away from professional and research organizations that embodied late colonial visions of an integrated British West Africa, and their replacement by Ghanaized national organizations. Furthermore, while Ghana's opening beyond the British Empire did not end colonial-era path dependences, it provided Ghanaian decision makers with new ways to address them. This was the case with the ambiguous understanding of the concept of Europeanness, which proved instrumental for Ghanaians in speeding up the institutionalization of the architectural profession and gaining control over architectural education.

What remained largely uncontested across the 1950s and 1960s, however, was the overarching commitment to statist developmentalism, whether late colonial or socialist inspired, and the temporality of the transition narrative from "tradition" to "modernity." The dilemmas discussed in this study were negotiated, debated, and modified within this temporality, which was only rarely interrupted, and almost never by architectural professionals. It was up to the next generations of Ghanaian architects, including Wellington's, to propose alternative narratives.

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Abstract

This article discusses the Africanization of architectural labor in Ghana during the late colonial and early postindependence periods (1951–66). It focuses on the state-supported emergence, advancement, and emancipation of Indigenous architects and institutions in the context of decolonization and the Cold War. Using archival materials held in Accra, Kumasi, and London, the article shows how professionals and administrators negotiated between their double obligations: to fast-track governmental development plans and to Africanize the Public Works Department and its successors. These decision makers addressed temporal dilemmas concerning recruitment, standards, allocation, and racialization of architectural labor. In so doing, they redefined both colonial-era racial categories and racialized Cold War imaginaries of who counted as an African and who counted as an Other. This study advances the architectural history of postcolonial Ghana and broadens the debate about racialization of architecture beyond North America and Western Europe.

Keywords: decolonization; Cold War; Ghana; West Africa; race; modernization; Africanization

Notes

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33. Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, 135–36.

34. Quoted in Tignor, 125.

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46. Bennell, "Colonial Legacy," 136.

47. Quoted in Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 444–45. The report was published by the Commission on the Civil Services of British West Africa, chaired by Walter Harragin (1945–46).

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50. *Annual Report, 1953–54*, 54.

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