

THE POLITICS OF SOCIALIST EDUCATION IN GHANA: THE KWAME NKRUMAH IDEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, 1961–6*

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ABSTRACT

This article reconstructs the trajectory of the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute (KNII) to shed light on the politics of socialist education in 1960s Ghana. On the basis of archival evidence, it explores the changing role of the institute in the making of Nkrumahism as public discourse and documents the evolving relationship between the universalism of Marxism-Leninism and the quest for more local political iconographies centred on Nkrumah's life and work. Secondly, the article analyses the individual motivations and experiences of a sample of foreign lecturers. The article suggests that ideological institutes offer insights into the processes by which official ideologies were created and disseminated, a foil through which to interrogate the usages and appropriation of social sciences education, and a window onto the multiple ways in which local and foreign agents negotiated their identities and political participation in African socialist experiments.

KEY WORDS

Ghana, Education, Ideology, Political Culture, Postcolonial, Socialism.

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INTRODUCTION

Kwame Nkrumah, the man who led Ghana to independence in 1957, harboured grand ambitions. Not only, like other postcolonial leaders, did he want to ‘jet propel’ his country into modernity, he also aspired to unite the African continent while simultaneously turning Ghana into a socialist state.¹ To realize those ambitions, an institution that would become an ideological powerhouse was established in Winneba, a small coastal town forty miles west of Accra. On 18 February 1961, in the presence of Leonid Brezhnev, Nkrumah laid the foundation stone of what became known as the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute (KNII).² The very nature and ultimate goals of the institute were subject to contrasting understandings: while Hungarian historian and former KNII lecturer Tibor Szamuely described it as a ‘kind of cross between Socratic Athens, the London School of Economics and the Moscow Institute for Marxism-Leninism’, other observers and foreign powers perceived it as a dangerous site that offered military training to African revolutionaries.³

The KNII played an important role in the Ghanaian regime’s self-representation abroad: the list of visitors to Winneba included Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Malcolm X, Che Guevara, and representatives of foreign communist parties, such as James Klugmann of the Communist Party of Great Britain.⁴ The importance that the Convention People’s Party (CPP) government attributed to the KNII was confirmed by its rapid expansion. By the time of the coup that put an end to CPP rule on 24 February 1966, the campus reportedly included eighteen bungalows for senior staff; facilities capable of hosting around 550 students; a car park of 10 automobiles, 2 tractors, 3 jeeps, and 4 buses; and a poultry farm.⁵ In 1965, the entrance was decorated with a sculpture of Nkrumah on a plinth by Polish artist Alina Slesinska.⁶

The KNII has been frequently mentioned in discussions of Nkrumah’s rule, but its structure and functioning remain understudied.⁷ The military government that ousted Nkrumah

1 K. Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (Edinburgh, 1957), x; K. Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (London, 1963).

2 K. Nkrumah, ‘The Kwame Nkrumah Institute: laying the foundation stone and the inauguration of the first course of the ideological section of the institute, Winneba, February 18, 1961’, in S. Obeng, *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah, volume 1* (Accra, 2009), 268–77. The Institute was also referred to as Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Economics and Political Science, or simply as Winneba Ideological Institute.

3 T. Szamuely, ‘Ghana: the prophet of the utterly absurd’, *The Spectator*, 11 Mar. 1966; Arquivo Histórico Diplomático, Lisboa, M1, Proc °91 Situação no Ghana, 1962–1964, Secret report, ‘Winneba institute, Ghana’, 15 June 1962.

4 Che and Nyerere are mentioned in M. Condé, *La vie sans fard* (Paris, 2012), 197–8; Malcolm X’s visit to the Institute is mentioned in L. A. Lacy, *The Rise and Fall of a Proper Negro: An Autobiography* (New York, 1970), 209. The unpublished documents related to Klugmann’s visit are located in the Marx Memorial Library and Workers’ School (MML), London, JK 20/18.

5 Public Records Archives Administration Department (PRAAD), Accra branch, PRAAD RG, 3/5/1636/299–300, J. H. K. Folson to Principal Secretary, 6 Apr. 1966. Unless otherwise specified, all references to PRAAD documents refer to the Accra branch of the archives.

6 *Ibid.*; PRAAD, RG 11/1/154/4, Copy of letter of K. Addison to The Chairman, Ghana Educational Trust, 21 May 1962, 1; H. Fuller, *Building the Ghanaian Nation-State: Kwame Nkrumah’s Symbolic Nationalism* (New York, 2014), 127.

7 For example, the KNII warranted a single mention within the collection of papers that more than any others marked the collective effort of Ghanaian scholars to reassess Nkrumah’s life, work, and legacy. E. A. Haizel,

inscribed the institute within its attempt to expose Nkrumah's involvement in the subversion of other African countries, painting a monolithic picture of a party school where the curriculum focused on 'socialist ideology' (itself a fluid and contested term), with the aim of training cadres loyal to Nkrumah.⁸ Later discussions have repeatedly emphasised the gap between the intellectual pretensions of the institute and the poor quality of its teaching and students.⁹ As a result, the actual evolution of the institute has either been ignored or treated as a grotesque incarnation of all that was wrong in Nkrumah's Ghana. It is only recently that a more nuanced appraisal of the institute and its significance has begun.¹⁰ Mjiba Frehiwot, for example, has provided a more positive assessment of the KNII as a proponent of Pan-African education.¹¹ The institute has also been the subject of historical investigation by Matteo Grilli — who has situated the trajectory of the institute alongside that of the Bureau of African Affairs and the African Affairs Centre — and by Robert Todd.¹²

While Grilli convincingly used the KNII to illuminate the multi-layered nature of Ghana's foreign policy, and Todd provided an exhaustive chronological account of the KNII's evolution, in this article we use the institute as an entry point to the study of what we call the 'politics of socialist education'. This concept is developed along two key dimensions. The first, inspired by Jean Allman's discussion of the Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Ghana, refers to the changing place of the KNII within the intellectual and political landscape of the country.¹³ Although both the IAS and the KNII embodied Nkrumah's commitment to infuse institutions of learning with his political vision, the two sites capture complementary aspects of the politics of knowledge production in 1960s Ghana. The IAS was expected to project Nkrumah's idea of the 'African personality' and his Pan-African aspirations, bringing to the fore tensions between 'colonial' institutions and ways of knowing and the struggle for an

⁸ 'Education in Ghana, 1951–1966', in K. Ahrin, *The Life and Work of Kwame Nkrumah: Papers of a Symposium organized by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon* (Accra, 2001), 55–87, 78.

⁸ *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa: Documentary Evidence of the Interference of Nkrumah in the Affairs of Other African States* (Accra, no date), 44–8.

⁹ For example, Szamuely, 'Ghana'; T. Jones, *Ghana's First Republic 1960–1966: The Pursuit of the Political Kingdom* (London, 1976), 61.

¹⁰ An early exception is represented by the work of sociologist Dominic Kofi Agyeman, who conducted a comparative analysis of the impact of ideological and political education under Nkrumah and Kofi Busia. Despite significant ideological differences between them, Agyeman concluded that the effectiveness of political education under the two governments was constrained by the same incapacity to link political nationalism with economic participation. D. K. Agyeman, *Ideological Education and Nationalism in Ghana under Nkrumah and Busia* (Accra, 1988).

¹¹ M. Frehiwot, 'Pan-African education: a case study of the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute, print media and the Ghana Young Pioneer movement', in C. Quist-Adade and V. Dodoo (eds.) *Africa's Many Divides and Africa's Future: Pursuing Nkrumah's Vision of Pan-Africanism in an Era of Globalization* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2015), 296–322, esp. 299–302.

¹² M. Grilli, 'African liberation and unity in Nkrumah's Ghana: a study of the role of "Pan-African institutions" in the making of Ghana's foreign policy, 1957–1966' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pavia and University of Leiden, 2015); M. Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism: Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization* (New York, 2018); R. B. Todd, *The Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute, 1961–66: Towards a History* (unpublished manuscript, 2018).

¹³ J. Allman, 'Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies and the politics of knowledge production in the Black Star of Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 46:2 (2013), 181–203.

Afro-centric knowledge.¹⁴ Although the KNII was even more radical in its commitment to overcome the intellectual and political heritage of colonialism, the construction of a new body of knowledge acquired very different forms.

Focusing on the KNII allows us to observe the crucial role that the social sciences were expected to play in shaping and institutionalising an ‘official ideology’ for the party-state, rather than in the articulation of a global academic project. A close analysis of the KNII also opens a window onto the fluid interaction between the universalistic narratives of Marxism-Leninism and the quest for more localised political iconographies centred on the figure of Nkrumah. The second aspect of the ‘politics of socialist education’, informed by Jeffrey Ahlman’s account of life under CPP rule, refers to the discursive formations and concrete strategies adopted by different actors negotiating their participation and involvement with the Ghanaian party-state.¹⁵ However, in contrast to Ahlman’s focus on ordinary Ghanaians, the emphasis on the experience of foreign lecturers leads to a more nuanced appraisal of the transnational dimensions of the Nkrumahist project.¹⁶

This article attempts to fill a gap in the most studied period of Ghana’s history, while also offering a contribution to the literature on African socialisms. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, scholars (typically political scientists rather than historians) tried to understand how authentically ‘Marxist’ African socialist regimes were and to explain the reasons for their disappointing political and economic performances.¹⁷ It is only in recent years, with the Cold War receding in the background, that less teleological accounts have been produced. This shift is most evident in a string of excellent historical and ethnographic works on Ethiopia, Guinea, and Tanzania.¹⁸

In line with this literature, the starting point of this analysis is the necessity of shedding a preconceived and univocal notion of what ‘real’ socialism looks like while making the ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions that characterised the historical experiences of these regimes an integral part of the story. In light of the dramatic expansion of the range of sites explored in recent histories of African socialisms, including rural theatres and urban drive-ins (as well as the experiences of African students in ‘allied’ socialist countries), it is surprising that little is known about party schools and ideological institutes on

14 K. Nkrumah, ‘Opening of the Institute of African Studies, Legon, 25 Oct. 1963’, in Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, vol. 2, 272–85.

15 J. S. Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State and Pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens, Ohio, 2017).

16 For this, an important source of inspiration has been J. Ahlman, ‘Phantoms of the archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi pilot called Hanna, and the contingencies of postcolonial history writing’, *The American Historical Review*, 118:1 (2013), 104–29.

17 Classic works concerned with issues of ‘authenticity’ and classifying different forms of African socialism include W. H. Friedland and C. G. Rosberg, Jr. (eds.) *African Socialism* (Stanford, California, 1964); C. G. Rosberg and T. M. Callaghy (eds.) *African Socialism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Assessment* (Berkeley, 1979); A. R. M. Babu, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?* (London, 1981); D. Ottoway and M. Ottoway, *Afrocommunism* (New York, 1981).

18 D. L. Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution* (Berkeley, 1999); J. Straker, *Youth, Nationalism and the Guinean Revolution* (Bloomington, 2009); P. Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (New York, 2015). On the legacies and memories of African socialisms, see M. A. Pitcher and K. M. Askew (eds.), *African Socialisms and Postsocialisms*, special issue of *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, 76:1 (2006).

African soil.¹⁹ By dissecting the short-lived trajectory of the KNII, this article suggests that ideological institutes offer insights into the processes by which the official ideologies of African regimes were created and disseminated, a foil through which to interrogate the usages and appropriation of social science education, and a window onto the multiple ways in which local and foreign agents negotiated their identities and political participation in African socialist experiments.

NKRUMAHISM AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Some historians have claimed that Nkrumahism evolved out of a quest for a new, indigenous form of African socialism, one which emphasised the classless nature of African society and the importance of the ‘African personality’, ultimately emerging as a variant of scientific socialism resembling Soviet orthodoxy.²⁰ However, Nkrumahism defies any simple definition. As Jeffrey Ahlman rightly pointed out, Nkrumahism was not merely a ‘philosophy of decolonization’; rather, it provided a ‘language’ that, by virtue of its plasticity, could be appropriated and used by different actors to redefine their identities, build relationships with state structures, and even articulate dissent.²¹ Even when considered as the discursive infrastructure of what Louis Althusser called the ‘State Ideological Apparatus’, Nkrumahism was not a monolithic set of tenets that originated in the leader’s writings and circulated homogeneously through society.²² While maintaining a stable core of anti-colonialism and Pan-Africanism, its relationship with Marxism-Leninism evolved under the influence of factors such as the evolution of Nkrumah’s own writings, the changing role of the pro-communist wing within the CPP, and the different contexts in which the notion of ‘African socialism’ was deployed.²³

The KNII contributed to the construction and dissemination of the regime’s syncretic political iconography alongside institutions such as the Young Pioneers and the Workers Brigades, as well as newspapers such as the *Evening News*, which combined messianic

19 L. Fair, ‘Drive-In socialism: debating modernities and development in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania’, *The American Historical Review*, 118:4 (2008), 1077–1104; T. R. Müller, ‘“Memories of paradise”: legacies of socialist education in Mozambique’, *African Affairs*, 109:436 (2008), 451–70. Despite few historical discussions, some accounts show the important role envisaged for socialist political education in sub-Saharan Africa. See, for example, F. Chung and E. Ngara, *Socialism, Education and Development: A Challenge to Zimbabwe* (Harare, 1985). Although it was mainly targeted at the formation of trade unionists, and was primarily sponsored by the World Federation, the Université Ouvrière Africaine in Sékou Touré’s Guinea presents some interesting parallels with the KNII. See F. Blum, ‘Une formation syndicale dans la Guinée de Sékou Touré: l’université ouvrière africaine, 1960–1965’, *Revue Historique*, 667:3 (2013), 661–91.

20 For example, Jones, *Ghana’s First Republic*, 18.

21 Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 5–6.

22 L. Althusser, ‘Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)’, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York, 2011), 85–126.

23 For further discussion, see Jones, *Ghana’s First Republic*; T. P. Omari, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Anatomy of an African Dictatorship* (Accra, 2000); D. Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946–1960* (Oxford, 1970), 387–421. On the ideological evolution, see especially B. D. G. Folson, ‘The development of socialist ideology in Ghana, 1949–1959, part I’, *Ghana Social Science Journal*, 1:1 (1971), 1–20; ‘The development of socialist ideology in Ghana: II — the period of “African socialism”: 1959–1962’, *Ghana Social Science Journal*, 1:2 (1971), 1–20; ‘The Marxist period in the development of socialist ideology in Ghana’, *Universitas*, 6:1, 3–23.

representations of Nkrumah with columns on Marxian political economy, and *The Spark*, ‘more purist in its Marxism than Nkrumah himself’.²⁴ Amidst such diversity, the KNII represented the institutional site where the task of constructing an official ideology was most closely connected with teaching in the social sciences. Unfortunately the scant scholarly discussions of the KNII are characterised by an almost total neglect of what was actually being taught. Trevor Jones’ otherwise detailed history of Ghana’s First Republic (1960–66), for example, simply states that it ‘was never made clear what was the most important component of the ideological training given at Winneba — whether it was Nkrumah’s eponymous brand of socialism [...] or “scientific socialism”’.²⁵ Archival material suggests the necessity of going beyond this dichotomy and retrieving a more complex story on the quest for Nkrumahism as state ideology, and on the role of education within the regime’s attempt to create a ‘new type of man [...] who submerges [him]self in service to his nation and mankind’.²⁶

Before the opening of the KNII, Winneba had hosted a CPP party college established under the auspices of the National Association of Socialist Students Organization on 5 January 1958. Although the French intelligence services suspected the involvement of the Nigerian socialist Baktole Akpata (later a lecturer at the KNII) and of Ivan Potekhin — the doyen of Soviet Africanists — in its creation, the party school seemed to aim primarily at shaking the ‘inferiority complex’ of Africans towards the West, rather than explicitly disseminating socialist ideas.²⁷ After a visit in 1959, Nkrumah decided that the party college needed to be re-organised as a school that could teach the party’s socialist ideology to loyal party members and eventually host representatives of African nationalist movements.²⁸

But what kind of institution was best equipped to achieve this dual task? The academic status of the KNII was highly contested. In 1962, the direction of the institute was not entrusted to an academic, but rather to Kodwo Addison. A former trade unionist, prominent member of the CPP Marxist wing and, from 1963, Honorary President of the Ghana-USSR Friendship Society, Addison became one of the key figures of the Nkrumah regime, as shown by his appointment as one of the three members of the

24 A. Mazrui, ‘Nkrumah: the Leninist czar’, *The Anniversary Issue: Selections from Transition, 1961–1976*, 107. On *The Spark*, see the testimony of its editor, K. Batsa, *The Spark: Times Behind Me from Kwame Nkrumah to Hilla Limann* (London, 1985); on the Young Pioneers see Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, and M. N. Tetteh, *The Ghana Young Pioneer Movement: A Youth Organization in the Kwame Nkrumah Era* (Accra, 1999). On the intellectual evolution of Nkrumah, see A. Biney, *The Social and Political Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York, 2011).

25 Jones, *Ghana’s First Republic*, 61.

26 K. Nkrumah, ‘Building a socialist state: to the CPP study group, Accra, 22 Apr. 1961’, in Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, vol. 1, 322–35, 334–5.

27 Centre des Archives Diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires étrangères (CADMAE), La Courneuve, Box 15 (Politique Intérieure), Letter from V. A. Garès to P. M. Henry, 14 Mar. 1958; CADMAE, Box 27 (Documents réservés: Politique intérieure), 6848/A-29, Ghana: Formation des Militants du Parti Gouvernemental: Ecole du Winneba, April 1958. In contrast, Potekhin was present at the inauguration of the IAS.

28 PRAAD, RG 17/1/170, Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the African Affairs Committee held on November 12th 1959 at Flagstaff House at 7 p.m, 2. For further discussion on the years between 1959 and 1961, see Grilli, ‘African liberation and unity’, 114–6.

Presidential Commission that acted on Nkrumah's behalf when he was abroad.²⁹ Addison worked to obtain university status for the KNII, stressing that it was 'the first of its kind' and the lecturers had a 'more scientific approach to the teaching of Socialism under the streamlining of Osagyefo's [literally "the Redeemer", as Nkrumah was frequently called] philosophical outlook'.³⁰ In other words, the 'scientific' nature of the content being taught was grounded in Nkrumah's ideas.³¹ In contrast, the National Council for Higher Education pointed out that the KNII did not fall within the either UNESCO definition of higher education or the Ghana Education Act and that it therefore should be ranked as a technical school.³²

The KNII's unconventional academic status became intertwined with the CPP's quest for control over Ghana's intellectual life. By the end of Nkrumah's rule, ministers had already been forced to attend short courses at the institute and there were discussions about the possibility of also sending all the members of the House of Representatives.³³ Furthermore, the institute's rise to prominence paralleled the increasing suspicion with which the government viewed the University of Ghana.³⁴ Nkrumah's appointment as chancellor of the University in 1961, along with the proclamation of the 'death of the ivory tower' (and of a university that did not actively contribute to the socialist and Pan-African revolution), solidified the government's commitment to exercise a tighter control over academic appointments and ideological orientation.³⁵ Although, as Jean Allman has shown with reference to the IAS, the University of Ghana was expected to maintain a key role in projecting Nkrumah's ideas, it was at the KNII that the leader's vision came to

29 PRAAD, RG 17/2/466, Ghana-U.S.S.R. Friendship Society — A Public Organisation Functioning Under Ghana-U.S.S.R. Cultural Pact, Minutes of National Executive Meeting of Ghana-U.S.S.R. Friendship Society held on Sunday, 30 June 1963, 6. Addison lost his position in the commission in 1965, in parallel with Nkrumah's desire to take direct control over the institute (Todd, *The Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute*, 181).

30 PRAAD, RG 11/1/153/59, Letter from K. Addison to the Chairman, National Council for Higher Education, 3 Oct. 1963.

31 On the other hand, 'Nkrumaism, in order to be Nkrumah-istic must be related to scientific socialism'; K. Nkrumah, 'Guide to party action: seminar at the Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Ideological Studies, Winneba, 3 Feb. 1962', in Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, vol. 1, 436–48, 438.

32 PRAAD, RG 11/1/153/25, Letter from E.C. Quist-Therson to the Chairman [National Council for Higher Education] [1963].

33 *Parliamentary Debates, First Series — Volume 40, National Assembly Official Report, Session 1965, 10 Jun. 1965 – 17 Sep. 1965* (Accra-Tema), Dr. Kwasi Nsarkoh, 30 Aug. 1965, 247. Increasing emphasis was also placed on the organization of short courses for public employees. For example, see PRAAD, RG 3/5/1635/272, Letter from A. D. Brown, Ag. Secretary for Education, Ministry of Education to Kodwo Addison, 6 Dec. 1965; PRAAD, RG 3/5/1635/273, Letter from D. A. Brown to all Principal Education Officers and Senior Education Officers, 15 Dec. 1965. District commissioners were also requested to identify and select suitable party members for ideological training at the KNII. For further evidence on the implementation of these initiatives in the Volta Region, see PRAAD, Ho branch, SOG/MS/078.

34 For an overview of the evolution of the university under Nkrumah, see F. Agbodeka, *A History of University of Ghana: Half a Century of Higher Education (1948–1998)* (Accra, 1998), 138–61.

35 K. Nkrumah, 'Flower of learning (2): at his installation as first Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, during the inauguration of the university, 29 Nov. 1961', in Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, vol. 1, 402–8, 406.

be constructed as the pillar of a 'total' epistemology that overcame the distinction between theory and political practice.³⁶

This epistemology made an understanding of the world in line with party teachings the basis for self-appraisal and for participation in the life of the community. As pointed out by Nkrumah at a seminar at the Institute, Nkrumahism should 'be all-pervading' and 'influence all thinking and action'.³⁷ The willingness to make ideological training a precondition for the acquisition of academic knowledge led to suggestions that only those who had taken a short course at the KNII should be allowed to enrol in a university degree program.³⁸ In 1964, upon Ghana's formal declaration as a one-party state, the difficult relationship between the government and the university reached its peak when party activists broke into the University halls and vandalised its property.³⁹

During the same time period, the KNII started projecting a long shadow over the life of the university. The task of explaining to university students and staff the ultimate meaning of *Consciencism*, the most convoluted text of the Nkrumahist corpus, fell to key KNII figures.⁴⁰ These included the philosopher William Abraham (who was a lecturer at the KNII and head of the Philosophy department at the University of Legon) and the Nigerian economist Samuel Ikoku. One of the primary editors of the party magazine *The Spark*, Ikoku was described in British intelligence reports as 'one of the most poisonous and dangerous members of the entourage' and 'one of the central personalities of Nkrumah's Byzantine court'.⁴¹

Even alternative socialist organizations came to be seen as potentially subversive: Addison ordered that the university's Marxist Study Forum be renamed the Nkrumahist Forum.⁴² This seemingly inconsequential anecdote captures the essence of the evolution of Nkrumahism, as it is not merely found in its intellectual evolution from 'African socialism' to 'scientific socialism', but also in its transformation as a political platform, one that subordinated or incorporated other political and epistemic paradigms in the pursuit of hegemony.

The earliest debates about curriculum design at the KNII referred to a three-month course (November 1961–January 1962) for militants and nationalist agitators from other African countries. At this stage, the curriculum of the institute was closely linked

36 However, the IAS maintained a special status for Nkrumah and received separate funding, independent of the University. T. Manuh, 'Building institutions for the New Africa: The Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana', in P. J. Bloom, S. F. Miescher, and T. Manuh (eds.) *Modernization as Spectacle in Africa* (Bloomington, 2014), 276.

37 Nkrumah, 'Guide to party action', 438.

38 *Parliamentary Debates*, Mr. P. Ansah, 30 Aug. 1965, 175.

39 In practice, this was already the case; see Austin, *Politics*, 387–421. On the vandalism, see Agbodeka, *A History of University of Ghana*, 148.

40 K. Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution* (London, 1964).

41 The National Archives (TNA), London, DO 153/49, J. D. M. Blyth, 13 Nov. 1964; TNA, FCO 65/721, Letter from H. Smedley to L. Glass, 28 Sept. 1970. For an example of Ikoku's application of socialist concepts to Nigerian politics, see S. G. Ikoku, *Nigeria for Nigerians: A Socialist Analysis* (Takoradi [Ghana], 1962). It has been repeatedly claimed that Abraham was the ghost author of *Consciencism*, TNA, DO 153/49, H. Smedley, 4 Apr. 1964.

42 Lacy, *The Rise and Fall of a Proper Negro*, 224–6.

with political practice and served the cause of nationalist agitation so that other African countries could be guided to independence. A list of teaching topics drafted in September 1961, for example, mentioned trade unionism, party organization, electoral mobilization, local government administration, and political education for the youth and women movements.⁴³ Visits to Ghanaian organizations such as the Trade Union Congress, the CPP's headquarters, the Young Pioneers, the Builders Brigades, and the National Council of Ghana Women had to impress upon domestic and foreign students that Ghana was successful and well-suited for leadership in Africa.⁴⁴

In 1960, around the time when Ghana became a Republic, the expression 'Nkrumahism' started being used in the public sphere.⁴⁵ The following year, the country formally embraced socialism as the country's ideology, and the expression became more common.⁴⁶ The 1961 general strike and the assassination attempt against Nkrumah in Kulungugu in 1962 led the government to purge some key figures of the regime and to invest more effort in the creation of loyal citizens.⁴⁷ By the 1962–3 academic year, the curriculum of the institute included short courses along with a two-year program of study in political science. The introduction of the latter marked a turning point in the intellectual identity and mission of the institute, as the social sciences became the main pillars of the institute's pedagogical project. The 1962 timetable reveals an emphasis on seven subjects: English, French, economics, political theory and practice, African studies, civics, and a more practical module which taught bookkeeping and accounting.⁴⁸ In contrast, the 1963 timetable for the first year of the Diploma in Political Science (Table 1) separated theory from the practical courses, reduced the number of hours devoted to African Studies from two to one per week, and introduced an elementary course in statistics.

By this stage, the creation of the socialist citizen and the Nkrumahist subject thus increasingly depended on political and economic theory, rather than on practical training. In 1963, applied economics and political economy accounted for 25 per cent of the weekly instruction. The latter course drew in large part on Marx's *Capital* and consisted of lectures on topics such as 'The Objective Character of Economic Laws and the Social Forms Preceding Capitalism', 'The Essence of Capitalist Exploitation', 'The Deepening of the General Crisis of Capitalism and the Advance to Socialism', and a Leninist lecture on 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism'.⁴⁹ That same year, a new course on the

43 George Padmore Research Library of African Affairs (GPRLAA), Accra, BAA 52/423/1–2, untitled document, 14 Sept. 1961.

44 *Ibid.*

45 An early example is 'Nkrumahism the Key-Word', *Evening News*, 1 July 1960.

46 Grilli, 'African liberation and unity', 159.

47 Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 156. The individuals accused of the assassination attempt included Tawa Adamafo (Minister of Information and Broadcasting), Ako Adjei (Foreign Minister), and Cofie Crabbe (CPP executive secretary).

48 PRAAD, RG 17/2/884/5, Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Economics and Political Science Timetable. Ebenezer Moses Debrah, a diplomat who was sent for ideological training at the KNII in 1962, reminisced that there was 'No textbook, no syllabus. All they did was shout', and claimed that, although he was perceived as a civil servant with 'no ideology', he played an important role in establishing the syllabus and a timetable. J. U. Gordon, 'Interview with Ebenezer Moses Debrah', *Revisiting Kwame Nkrumah: Pathways for the Future* (Trenton, New Jersey, 2017), 52.

49 *Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute Prospectus* (Accra, nd [c.1963]).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00–8.50	Political Science	Statistics	Applied Economics	Philosophy	Private Studies
9.00–9.50	Political Economy	Political Science	Government	Philosophy	Government
10.00–10.30	Break				
10.30–11.20	History	Constitutional Law	English	African Studies	Nkrumahism
11.30–12.20	History	Contemporary African Politics	French	Political Economy	Nkrumahism
12.30–13.20	Nkrumahism	Contemporary African Politics	French	Political Economy	Applied Economics

Table 1. Weekly timetable for the first year of the KNII Diploma in political science, 1963. GPRLAA, BAA 437.

political economy of socialism was introduced which dealt more explicitly with the planned Eastern European economies.⁵⁰ The course in philosophy, which in 1962 also addressed ethics and psychology, affirmed in 1963 the primacy of Marxism as ‘the science of victory of Socialism’.⁵¹ On the other hand, the course in ‘Applied Economics’ was very close to a conventional course in development economics, while the few surviving lecture notes from the course in constitutional law show a total absence of Marxist interpretations of the emergence of the state.⁵² While this suggests that it would be inaccurate to reduce the KNII to a centre for the dissemination of Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism, it is undeniable that over time Marxism acquired a more prominent place in the institute’s pedagogical identity.⁵³

Yet, at least in the early days of the institute, the relative importance attributed to socialism depended on the audience targeted. This can be seen in the ten-week course organized for foreign students in 1962, when Ghana had already formalised its adherence to socialism as its main ideology. Significantly, the Bureau of African Affairs — the office in charge of Pan-African propaganda that organised the course for foreign students — removed all references to ‘Nkrumahism’ and ‘socialism’ from the curriculum.⁵⁴ While in principle

50 *Ibid.* 17. Evidence of the use of summaries of Marx’s *Capital* as the main reading comes from the few surviving lecture notes in GPRLAA, BAA/437.

51 GPRLAA, BAA 437/46, Philosophy, First & Second Year, Lecture by Comrade Pavel Kovely [sic], 2 Dec. 1963.

52 This pluralism came to be seen as a problem. Addison noted that ‘if each subject enjoys full autonomy, we can pursue differing perspectives in Political Economy, Principles of Economics, and Applied Economics. But these subjects must share a common perspective if our Institute is to perform its duty as an ideological centre’, PRAAD, RG17/1/440, Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute Director’s Report for the Year 1963/64, Nov. 1964, 3. For a comparative discussion of socialist political economy at the KNII and the University of Ghana, see G. Serra, ‘From scattered data to ideological education: economics, statistics and the state in Ghana, 1948–1966’ (unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015), 229–60. GPRLAA, BAA 437, Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute of Economics and Political Science, First Year, Constitutional Law, Lecture One, by Dr. Ekow-Daniels, 5 Nov. 1963.

53 This can also be seen in the curriculum reform proposed in November 1965 by the British communist Pat Sloan, PRAAD RG 17/384, ‘Memo on educational plan for KNII, Winneba, Nov. 1965 (for the Council if approved by Osagyefo).

54 GPRLAA, BAA 423, Development of the Kwame Nkrumah Institute, Winneba, as the Institute of Political Science.

Nkrumahism rested on the notion that socialism in Africa and Pan-Africanism were inextricably linked, in practice the 'creation' of Ghanaian socialist citizens and foreign Pan-African militants could follow parallel routes.⁵⁵

From the point of view of the program of study in political science, in which most of the students were Ghanaians, 'Nkrumahism' looked very different. Initially part of the 'Political theory and practice' module, in 1963 Nkrumahism became a separate subject to which three hours per week were devoted. Although, unsurprisingly, Nkrumah's writings were central readings, the course was primarily concerned with linking Nkrumah's life and works with political practice while also increasing party loyalty, defined as 'adherence to the Party and its Government together with enthusiastic devotion to the person and office of Osagyefo'.⁵⁶ Students were taught how to behave towards the national flag and anthem, as well as the importance of refusing bribes, resisting nepotism, working hard, and leading by example.⁵⁷ These guidelines were very detailed, for example: 'If you meet someone who tries to confuse you with any type of argument,' a lecturer told his students, 'tell that person plainly: "I have a duty to Ghana. I must serve Ghana always"'. But if the person persisted, the student was to 'not talk to him anymore'.⁵⁸

Teaching 'Nkrumahism' at the institute implied a reconceptualization of the connection between political practice, social sciences, and the cult of the leader. The integration of these three aspects can be observed in the exam paper for December 1963, in which students were given three hours to answer the following questions:

1. 'Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah has lived a full life'. Discuss.
2. To what extent do the social effects of colonialism influence the building of a newly independent state?
3. 'Africa Must Unite'. Prove it.
4. Show as fully as possible how a Party Vanguard Activist can be fully loyal to the Party and Government.
5. Write a short essay on Collective Responsibility.⁵⁹

As Gregory Mann has found in the case of sociology in socialist Mali, at the KNII, the social sciences were invested simultaneously with an analytical and a talismanic function: they were expected to provide the heuristic tools to describe society while at the same time evoking a sense of possibility that resonated with political rulers' dreams of transformation.⁶⁰ As Nkrumah himself said, Nkrumahism was expected not only to sketch out the goals and aims of socialist construction, but also to provide 'intellectual tools by

55 Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*. For a detailed discussion of the ways in which the relationship between socialism and Pan-Africanism was reflected in the institutional makeup of the country, see Grilli, 'African Liberation and Unity'.

56 GPRLAA, BAA 437, Nkrumahism, First Year, Lecture Six, by Comrade A.K. Gaituah, 2 Dec. 1963.

57 *Ibid.* For further discussion on the broader discourse built around hard work and sacrifice as pillars of postcolonial state building, see Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 115-47.

58 GPRLAA, BAA 437, First Year, Nkrumahism, by Comrade A.K. Gaituah, Lecture 5, Supremacy of the Party, 4.

59 GPRLAA, BAA 437, First term examination, first year, Examiner: A. K. Gaituah, 10 Dec. 1963.

60 G. Mann, 'Knowing the postcolony: sociology and socialist government in 1960s Mali', in D. Gary-Toukara and D. Nativel (eds.), *L'Afrique des savoirs au sud de Sahara (XVI^e - XXI^e siècle): acteurs, supports, pratiques* (Paris, 2012), 103.

which these aims are achieved' and to 'offer the ordinary man and woman some concrete, tangible and realizable hope of better life within his or her lifetime'.⁶¹ Yet, in contrast to Mali, in Ghana the talismanic function of the social sciences was part of a more radical epistemic project. Indeed, the attempt to redraw the boundaries between analysis and political imagination was aimed at the construction of a new synthesis that ultimately found its highest expression in the leader's vision and persona. This was always the case, whether Nkrumahism was presented as an alternative to Marxism grounded in African traditions and culture or as the highest application of scientific socialism to African conditions.

This process carries implications for the political uses of the social sciences in 1960s Africa. The historical literature, including writings on other 'African socialist' countries such as Kenya and Senegal, has located the most significant political use of the social sciences in the conceptualisation of development and in the mobilisation of technocratic forms of expertise.⁶² The employment of these cognitive tools, reified in the practice of development planning and mediated by the creation of a new class of African technocrats, could bypass the ideological dichotomies institutionalised by the Cold War, circulate as a language shared with international organizations, and facilitate political leaders' attempts to present the state as the engine of economic progress and social advancement.⁶³ The pedagogical mission of the KNII differed in two important respects. The first refers to its scope of application. Rather than forming a class of technocrats, the KNII embodied the dream of using the jargon and conceptual apparatus of the social sciences to provide party cadres, and eventually society as a whole, with a language and a vision that was simultaneously grounded in historical narratives of colonialism and exploitation and forward-looking in its utopianism. The second aspect pertained to the relationship between social sciences and the process of imagining the state. By directly inscribing the life and works of Nkrumah within an established Western canon of philosophy, economics, and political science, the KNII reified Nkrumah as the 'philosopher-king', simultaneously consecrating him as the father and messiah of the nation and as the apogee and terminal point of an intellectual trajectory that began with Marx (or, as in *Consciencism*, with Thales).⁶⁴ In either case, at the KNII economics and political science did not affirm a vision of the modern state as a technocratic agent. Rather, they

61 Nkrumah, 'Guide to party action', 438.

62 D. Speich, 'The Kenyan style of "African socialism": developmental knowledge claims and the explanatory limits of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 33:3 (2009), 449–66; M. Diouf, 'Senegalese development: from mass mobilization to technocratic elitism', in F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds.) *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1997), 291–320. For a discussion of the complex relationship between developmentalism and authoritarianism in Nkrumah's Ghana, see K. Skinner, 'Who knew the minds of the people? specialist knowledge and developmentalist authoritarianism in postcolonial Ghana', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:2 (2011), 297–323; G. Serra, "'Hail the census night": trust and political imagination in the 1960 population census of Ghana', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 60:3 (2018), 659–87.

63 For a discussion of how development plans can travel between 'policy circles' (and a case study of Nigeria's first postcolonial development plan), see M. Morgan, "'On a Mission" with Mutable Mobiles', Working Papers on the Nature of Evidence: How Well Do 'Facts' Travel?, 34 (2008), London School of Economics and Political Science, 188.

64 Nkrumah, *Consciencism*. See also A. A. Mazrui, 'The rise and fall of the philosopher-king in East Africa: the view from Uganda', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 15:3, 98–108.

institutionalised new forms of 'political theology' that found their main justification in the epistemology of the social sciences.

The institute's contribution to the consolidation of Nkrumahism increasingly included the formal definition and 'certification' of the regime's ideology. In 1962, Kofi Baako, who held several ministerial positions in Nkrumah's government, defined Nkrumahism as 'an applied religion' and a 'non-atheistic social philosophy', while in 1964 he defined it as 'socialism adopted to suit the conditions and circumstances of Africa'.⁶⁵ However, as perceptively noted by a British intelligence report, his definition 'was never an official one'.⁶⁶ Two months after Ghana was formally proclaimed a one-party state, Nkrumahism was defined as 'the ideology for the new Africa, independent and absolutely free from imperialism[...] drawing its strength from modern science and technology and from the traditional African belief that the free development of each is the precondition of the free development of all'.⁶⁷ This definition was 'finalised by the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute in consultation with the President', formally proclaimed by Addison, and disseminated via directors and editors of the key newspapers and news agencies, trade unions, and party organizations.⁶⁸ In this way, the institute was the main channel through which it was made official.

But this new definition did not contain any reference to Marxism or socialism; rather it emphasised the Pan-Africanist outlook of Nkrumah's thought. While this might appear surprising in light of the fact that in 1964 the KNII popularised the expression 'Marxism-Nkrumahism', British intelligence assumed that this ambiguity was perhaps intentional.⁶⁹ Presumably, this distinction was aimed at keeping the use of scientific socialism as a tool of nation building separate from a more vague definition that could 'travel' more easily across the ideological divide of the Cold War.

Regardless of its veracity, this hypothesis suggests that there is no simple answer to Trevor Jones's question about the dominance of 'orthodox' Marxism-Leninism versus a homemade version of African socialism as the main component of training at the KNII.⁷⁰ Even in the years of 'scientific socialism', alternative ways of conceptualising Nkrumahism were produced and disseminated. Yet, within the competing representations of the state and the leader circulating in Ghanaian society, in the last two years of Nkrumah's rule the institute increasingly assumed the role of a gatekeeper for what constituted 'real' Nkrumahism. By exercising this function, the KNII embodied the regime's highest expectations of the role that the social sciences should play in the creation of the

65 Omari, *Kwame Nkrumah*, Appendix B, 194; TNA, DO153/49, GHA, 6 Mar. 1964, Baako.

66 TNA, DO 153/49, Letter from A. F. G. Hornyold to C. Duke, 18 Mar. 1964.

67 'What we mean by Nkrumaism...', *Daily Graphic*, 17 Mar. 1964.

68 TNA, DO 153/49/8, Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute, 'Nkrumaism', 13 Mar. 1964. The initial definitions prepared by Addison and Gaituah, Ikoku's comments and new definition, and Nkrumah's finalization of it are in PRAAD, RG17/1/380.

69 TNA, DO 153/49, Confidential - 6. Nkrumaism. Indeed, all the three initial definitions proposed by the KNII shared the notion that Nkrumaism was 'SIMPLY SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM THE PATTERN OF WHICH [sic] IS BASED ON THE HISTORICAL AND DIALECTICAL [sic] MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF AFRICA', PRAAD, RG17/1/380, No. 1 Definition of Nkrumaism, No. 2 Definition of Nkrumaism, No. 3 Definition of Nkrumaism.

70 Jones, *Ghana's First Republic*, 61.

regime's political iconography and eventually in the engineering of a new revolutionary subject.

BEYOND 'OPPORTUNISM': NEGOTIATING INVOLVEMENT WITH THE NKRUMAHIST STATE

As Jeffrey Ahlman has convincingly shown in the case of institutions such as the Young Pioneers and the Workers Brigades, under Nkrumahist rule, ordinary Ghanaians were experimenting with forms of political discourse and participation, testing the boundaries of repression and patronage, and finding new ways of expressing their anxiety over political change.⁷¹ Following this approach, the KNII can also illuminate how different agents negotiated their relationship with an increasingly authoritarian state. Indeed, while the KNII occupied a central role in the construction of Nkrumahism as the official ideology of Ghana, it also acted as a catalyst for the hopes, motivations, and experiences of the people who chose to become involved with it. Yet, both in contemporary discussions and in later appraisals of the KNII, all these aspects have been minimised under the rubric of 'opportunism'.

'Opportunism' was a central trope in Nkrumahist discourse. The regime contributed to the institutionalisation of a dichotomy between the seemingly mutually exclusive attitudes of self-aggrandisement and genuine commitment to the socialist transformation of society.⁷² Entrusted with the difficult task of eradicating 'opportunistic' (the moral equivalent of 'capitalist' and 'colonial') attitudes and building a 'new type of man', the KNII itself was a product of this context.⁷³ However, in 1965 the Institute came under attack in parliamentary debates, which lamented that 'a dangerous tendency is developing in this country among some opportunists who regard their training at the KNII as a step toward getting higher appointments and fat salaries.'⁷⁴ This shows how the categories that informed official discourse also offered a lexicon for the articulation of an 'acceptable' critique of the institutions that were at the centre of the transformation envisaged by the regime.⁷⁵

The records regarding Ghanaian students, albeit fragmentary, are consistent with the fact that many students considered their time at the KNII as a means to upwards social mobility or even as a valid alternative to a university career.⁷⁶ While the previous section has shown that the KNII's prestige increased as the position of the university deteriorated in the eyes of the government, several sources report that students' low educational

71 Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*.

72 See especially K. Nkrumah, 'Dawn broadcast, Accra, 8 Apr. 1961', in Obeng, *Selected Speeches*, vol. 1, 310–19.

73 Nkrumah, 'Building a Socialist State', 334.

74 *Parliamentary Debates, First Series- Volume 40, National Assembly Official Report, Session 1965, 10th June 1965–17th September 1965* (Accra-Tema), Mr. P. Ansah, 30 Aug. 1965.

75 Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 6, 21.

76 All the lists are contained in PRAAD, RG 17/2/30. This also includes a list of students who are 'above average', presumably referring to Addison's 1964 proposal of starting a three-year programme for particularly striking students, *Nkrumah's Subversion*, 46. In contrast with the two-year programme, admission to the three-year Bachelor in Political Science required a 'High School Certificate or its equivalent', PRAAD, RG 17/1/440, Director's Report, 2.

qualifications did not measure up to the intellectual status the regime envisaged for the KNII.⁷⁷ Although the exact number of students remains difficult to assess, archival registers of a large sample of 435 graduates suggest more than 25 per cent of the students possessed only a primary or middle school qualification and thus could not have attended university, while the most common qualification was a teacher training certificate.⁷⁸

Moreover, students were not exclusively selected for their academic achievements. By 1965, for example, admission criteria included ‘party membership, educational background, the ability to pass the entrance examination, experience in life and character’.⁷⁹ Ikoku recalled how the first cohort of the institute’s graduates found their way into ‘the civil service, the ministries, the State corporations, the party press and radio’.⁸⁰ It is for these reasons that, during the inauguration of the 1965–6 academic year, Addison felt compelled to declare that ‘no one, I repeat, no one must think that coming into this Institute is a licence for automatic appointment into a high position.’⁸¹ When these words were uttered, the coup that overthrew Nkrumah was only months away. In the popular imagination, the KNII remained an iconic representation of the ‘opportunism’ that characterised CPP rule.

By inheriting categories internal to the Nkrumahist state, the historical literature has perpetuated a simplistic characterization of the KNII’s students and lecturers. The point, however, is to go beyond opportunism versus selfless dedication as the *sole* driver of the choices made by a wide range of different historical actors. Instead, it is necessary to place the KNII within a more complex and contingent set of perceptions and actors that shaped the relationship between different individuals, social groups, and the regime. For example, data on the previous occupations of those who attended the institute — an aspect that so far has been ignored — reveal that only very specific segments of Ghanaian society embarked on a program in political science. This stood in partial contrast with Nkrumah’s dream of an institute capable of educating everyone ‘from members of the Central Committee to the lowest propagandist in the field’ and non-violent positive actionists, such as ‘Party Vanguard activists, farmers, co-operators, trade unionists, and women organisers’.⁸² Instead, a sample of 126 students for which occupational information is available indicates that only 8 per cent of the students reported their primary employment as being in party organizations such as the Young Pioneers or the Workers Brigades. The overwhelming majority of the students were employed in white collar jobs in the public sector. Fewer than 1 per cent were self-employed, while only one petty trader graduated from the

77 The most significant exception is the memoir by the Czech philosopher Evzen Menert, who favourably compared his Winneba students to their counterparts in Prague, E. Menert, *Na západ od Londýna: nepřítel souvislé vyprávění o Ghane a okolí, přerušované zcela nesouvislými úvahami o doplněné ódu na bridž, anglický kolonialismus, pivo a armádu* (Prague, 1967).

78 Authors’ calculations based on PRAAD, RG 17/2/30. Addison declared that the students totalled 75 in 1962–3, 133 in 1963–4, 239 in 1964–5 and 260 in 1965–6, PRAAD RG 11/1/148/6, Letter from K. Addison to the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 1 Dec. 1965. An alternative estimate claims that the institute enrolled 100 students in 1962, 210 in 1963, and 475 in 1964, *Nkrumah’s Subversion*, 46.

79 PRAAD, RG 11/1/148/6, Letter from K. Addison to the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 1 December 1965; on the pride associated with passing the KNII entrance examination, see Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 158.

80 S.G. Ikoku, *Le Ghana de Nkrumah* (Paris, 1971), 89.

81 K. Addison, ‘There is no room for Party opportunists’, *The Nkrumahist*, 4:1 (1966), 19.

82 Nkrumah, ‘The Kwame Nkrumah Institute’, 276.

KNII. Teachers and educational campaigners were the biggest group, accounting for 18 per cent of the students in our sample.⁸³ Farmers, who struck a powerful chord in the Nkrumahist imagination, were notably absent.

These data indicate the self-exclusion of those employed in the private sector from ideological education, revealing the unevenness of the penetration of Nkrumahism as ‘certified ideological education’ in Ghanaian society. In 1964 Nana Wetey Agyeman Larbi II, Omanhene of Owutu, was the first chief to join the Institute. He authored a statement in which he declared that he joined the KNII because he felt that he had to ‘go out as a crusader and assist vigorously the building of socialism’ and eradicate imperialism and capitalism, which he defined as ‘the paths of suffering of the masses’.⁸⁴ Regardless of the Omanhene’s real motivations, the regime used his enrolment as a significant symbolic victory, reinforcing the narrative of the victory of the socialist state against ‘traditional’ authorities, who were often depicted by the party press as obstacles to the country’s modernization.⁸⁵

The motivations and attitudes of the institute’s lecturers have also been subjected to a simplistic understanding. Several Ghanaian scholars have claimed that the KNII faculty only paid lip service to socialism, thus stressing once again the primacy of opportunism.⁸⁶ The literature has also provided an inaccurate account of the lecturers’ national identities. David Rooney, for one, has argued that the Congo crisis strengthened the radical wing of the CPP, making the KNII a welcoming place for Soviet lecturers.⁸⁷ The few historians of the Cold War who mention the institute have accepted this interpretation at face value, suggesting that Soviet lecturers indeed had a decisive influence on the life of the KNII.⁸⁸

Instead, although the Institute employed a significant number of Eastern Europeans, very few of them were Russian. In the academic year 1963–4, for example, the four Eastern European lecturers (out of a total faculty of sixteen members) working at the KNII included the Hungarian historian Tibor Szamuely, the Polish statistician J. M. Perczynski, the Russian Boris Petruk (lecturing in philosophy), and the Czech Pavel Kovaly (also in philosophy). Other expatriates included the American Grace Arnold (who, however, had lived in the Soviet Union and taught at the Karl Marx Party School in East Berlin),⁸⁹ the Guadeloupe-born and French-educated Maryse Condé, and the British communist Pat Sloan. The memoirs and correspondence of some of these figures

83 On the relationship between teachers’ organizations, unionism, and the CPP government see S. Amoako, ‘Teaching and labor: teacher unionism in Ghana, 1931–1966’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 47:1 (2014), 55–75. For an impressive discussion of students’ background, characteristics, and experiences, see Todd, *The Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute*, 86–96, 105–9, 123–36, 146–55, 175–7, 192–3, 313–28.

84 MML, JK 20/18, No. 87, [untitled document], 19 Feb. 1965.

85 See for example the picture in P. Da Pilma-Lekettey, ‘Spotlight on the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute of Economics and Political Science or... Mecca for African freedom fighters’, *The Ghanaian*, 7:1, 28. On the troubled relationship between Nkrumah’s government and the chiefs, see R. Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: the Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951–1960* (Oxford, 2000).

86 Agyeman, *Ideological Education*, 11; R. Y. Owusu, *Kwame Nkrumah’s Liberation Thought: A Paradigm for Religious Advocacy in Contemporary Ghana* (Trenton, NJ, 2006), 132.

87 D. Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy* (Legon, 2007), 243.

88 S. Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956–1964* (Washington, DC, 2010), 241.

89 Margrit Pittman, ‘Grace Arnold, internationalist, dies at 77’, *People’s Daily World*, 16 June 1988.

allow us simultaneously to place the trajectory of the KNII within a fluid transnational space that was not monopolised by the Soviet Union and to gain glimpses of power relations and modes of political participation in the life of the institute.

Some of these aspects were grounded in debates about the intellectual identity of the KNII. This can be observed in the case of Pat Sloan, a Cambridge economics graduate and member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. In February 1964, Sloan introduced himself as someone who had been a communist for thirty years, who was an expert on the Soviet Union, but who was eager to see how an African country was 'exploring its own Socialist path'.⁹⁰ In April 1965, Sloan was appointed lecturer in socialism at the KNII, and he became a prominent contributor to the party press. Discussions taking place in the early days of the KNII stressed the importance of favouring Ghanaian nationals in hiring procedures, but it was also acknowledged that there were few 'unencumbered Ghanaian graduates who have identified themselves with this form of ideological activities', and that, at least at the beginning, there was no problem in recruiting expatriates with the right political pedigree.⁹¹ Sloan's experience reveals the existence of a significant tension between expatriate Marxists and 'indigenous' Nkrumahists.

In a 1965 memo on teaching reform, Sloan pointed out that the teaching of party organization should have carved a more significant role for the 'expatriate experience of Marxist parties abroad'.⁹² In a letter to Addison, he went as far as to call the expatriate communists 'the only fully-developed Marxist-Leninists here'.⁹³ When Sloan reviewed a pamphlet on 'categorical conversion' (a key idea in Nkrumah's *Consciencism*), he stressed the pamphlet's anonymous author was wrong in claiming that Nkrumah had invented the concept, since it had already found expression 'as an essential aspect of Dialectical Materialism' in the nineteenth century.⁹⁴ Indirectly, Sloan wanted to show that 'mature Marxists' such as himself were needed in Ghana. It was only on the basis of a solid study of the orthodox canon that a new ideology for Africa could be built, he argued: 'Authors who are not aware of this [scientific socialism] should not write on Nkrumaism. First, let them study Scientific Socialism and its development. Then let them turn to its application to the African social milieu.'⁹⁵

This was not simply a matter of disagreement on the intellectual genealogies of socialism. Rather it was the avenue for an internal power struggle over the identity and the future of the institute. Sloan's arguments were simultaneously a reflection of his vision for the KNII and possibly a strategy to advance his position in Ghana's ideological machinery. The British communist accused Addison of having adopted a highly personalistic and

90 PRAAD, RG 17/1/384, Letter from P. Sloan to President K. Nkrumah, 20 Feb. 1964.

91 GPRLAA, BAA 423/17, Letter from A. L. Adu to A. K. Barden, 3 Feb. 1962.

92 PRAAD, RG 17/1/384, Memo on educational plan for KNII, Winneba, Nov. 1965 (for the Council if approved by Osagyefo).

93 PRAAD, RG 17/1/448, Letter from P. Sloan to K. Addison, 9 Oct. 1965.

94 *Categorical Conversion*, Studies in Consciencism no. 6 (Accra, 1964); PRAAD, RG 17/1/448, 'Categorical Conversion' (Pat Sloan), 2. Indeed, *Consciencism's* treatment of categorical conversion shares some similarities with Engels's discussion of the first law of dialectics, 'The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and *vice versa*'. This, in turn, was derived by G. W. F. Hegel, as noted in F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (Moscow, 1954), 83.

95 PRAAD, RG 17/1/384, 'Categorical Conversion' (Pat Sloan), 2-3.

dictatorial rule, repressing initiative from below as well as open criticism, and thus failing to make the KNII ‘the model it should be in Ghana and in Africa’.⁹⁶ This correspondence also illustrates the prominence of the teachings and the life of Nkrumah as a trope that even expatriate ‘scientific socialists’ chose to adopt as a rhetorical weapon. For example, this is how a letter from Sloan, eager to prove his righteousness, began:

Dear Comrade Addison,

When I read in the AUTOBIOGRAPHY [of Kwame Nkrumah] the following words I felt they applied to me: ‘They must have thought that I was either a pretty weird character or that in a shrewd way I was trying on something too clever for them to see’. In Osagyefo’s case it was the lack of interest in money; in mine, my lack of interest in idleness.⁹⁷

But the tensions shaping the interaction between Addison and the expatriate lecturers did not only manifest themselves in the exegetic battle over Marxism and Nkrumah’s writings. This is evident in the experience of the Guadeloupian writer Maryse Condé, who came to Ghana ‘lonely, young, vulnerable’, jobless, and with four small children to look after.⁹⁸ She was appointed lecturer in French at the KNII through the intercession of a Nigerian lecturer, Akpata.⁹⁹ Condé’s memoir, presenting a vivid description of the KNII as a place marred by architectural ugliness, intellectual mediocrity, and excessive drinking, also illuminates some of the darkest aspects of the Institute’s life, claiming that Addison forced her to resign after she stopped having sex with him.¹⁰⁰ Although she initially found a great source of hope for political renewal in African socialism, her choice to move to Ghana followed the bitter disappointment that she felt when she observed first-hand the brutality of Sékou Touré’s rule in Guinea. There is a tragic irony in the fact that, after the 1966 coup, Condé was accused of being a spy on the Guinean government’s payroll. Condé’s encounter with the KNII (and with African socialism more generally) was marked by self-exile and disillusionment, two conditions that were central to the lives of other fellow KNII lecturers.¹⁰¹

96 PRAAD, RG 17/1/384, Letter from P. Sloan to K. Addison, 9 Oct. 1965.

97 *Ibid.* Addison’s response also adopts a similar style, PRAAD, RG 17/1/384, Letter from K. Addison to P. Sloan, 26 Oct. 1965.

98 Condé, *La vie*, 156.

99 *Ibid.* 168–71.

100 *Ibid.* 181–2. This qualifies the depiction of Addison as an ‘honest man’ and a disinterested pioneer of African unity presented in K. Budu-Acquah, *Toll for the Brave: Tributes to Fallen Comrades, Part One* (Accra, 1988), 14–16. Addison is depicted as a ruthless party man in Lacy, *Rise and Fall*, 223. Although it goes beyond the scope of this paper, the gendered dimensions of power relations governing life at the KNII merit further research. Addison remarked that he wanted to relax the political admission criteria for women (from members of ‘the Party and its integral wings’ to ‘all walks of life with sound Party back-ground’), to encourage them ‘to share fully in the national reconstruction’, PRAAD, RG 17/1/440, Director’s Report, 2. On gender and Nkrumahism, see Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 148–75.

101 For further discussion, see C. Badiane-Labruno, “‘Afrique où es-tu?’: L’expérience africaine de Maryse Condé”, in L. Cassin (ed.), *Mélanges en l’honneur de Maryse Condé* (Pointe-à-Pitre, 2018), 163–77. Self-exile also accounted for the choice of several African lecturers to join the KNII. The Togolese A. K. Tehoda, who taught physical education, went to Ghana after being imprisoned and tortured in connection with the assassination of Sylvanus Olympio in 1963; M. Condé, *Mets et merveilles* (Paris, 2015), 47–8. Similarly, Ikoku had been prompted to flee Nigeria after his indictment in the treason trial against Obáfẹ́mi Awólówọ’s Action Group.

Although in a very different way, the interplay of these two tropes can also be observed in the trajectory of the Hungarian Tibor Szamuely, who became a lecturer in history in 1964. Born in Moscow in 1925 into an exiled Hungarian family, Szamuely spent part of his childhood in England. He then returned to Russia and obtained his PhD in history from the University of Moscow. Accused of espionage, he was arrested and spent eighteen months in a labour camp, until he was allegedly released upon the intercession of Hungary's leader Mátyás Rákosi.¹⁰² In 1953 he returned to Hungary, and in 1957 he was appointed vice-chancellor of the University of Budapest. A party investigation found Szamuely guilty of violating 'principles of Party democracy' and relocated him to the Institute of History.¹⁰³ It was at this time that he determined to relocate permanently to the United Kingdom. In 1963, secretly disillusioned with communism, Szamuely joined the KNII at the invitation of Addison, where he taught a history course from 'The process of primary accumulation and the rise of the bourgeoisie' to 'National liberation movements of the early 20th century'.¹⁰⁴ Unlike his sojourns in Britain in the 1960s, when the Hungarian authorities had prevented him from taking his children with him, he was allowed to take his family to Ghana. In 1964, while still formally a lecturer at the KNII, Szamuely travelled to London with his family on the pretext of having to conduct research at the British Museum and never returned. In the aftermath of the coup that toppled Nkrumah, he wrote a series of articles in which he exposed the 'totalitarian' tendencies of Nkrumah's regime.¹⁰⁵ The University of Reading offered him a lectureship in political science, and he became a naturalized British citizen in 1970 as well as a darling of conservative circles.¹⁰⁶

These biographical snapshots reveal the inadequacies of existing discussions of the institute. Far from being merely 'opportunists' or Soviet 'Cold Warriors', the KNII was an important node in a series of transnational encounters that, under the veil of adherence to the Nkrumahist revolution, hid very different individual motivations, attitudes, and strategies. If the involvement of the Nazi pilot Hanna Reitsch in Ghana's first gliding school shows the power of a formal commitment to 'modernization' to erase past political trajectories, the experience of the KNII indicates that the embrace of an explicitly socialist or Nkrumahist identity also mattered.¹⁰⁷ The life stories of the KNII lecturers offer a rich catalogue of ways in which the language (and the credentials) of socialism were mobilised. On the other hand, the engagement of foreign intellectuals with the KNII, even when

102 TNA, FO 1110/1518, untitled document (minutes of a meeting between Szamuely and Robert Conquest, London, 1962).

103 R. Conquest, 'Introduction' in T. Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition* (London, 1974), vii.

104 Kwame Nkrumah *Ideological Institute Prospectus*, 23.

105 Particularly revealing is the exchange with Pat Sloan in the aftermath of the coup: P. Sloan, 'Utterly absurd', *The Spectator*, 5 May 1966; T. Szamuely, 'Utterly absurd', *The Spectator*, 19 May 1966. Sloan's intervention was a response to Szamuely's article 'Ghana: the prophet of the utterly absurd'.

106 L. Congdon, *Seeing Red: Hungarian Intellectuals in Exile and the Challenge of Communism* (DeKalb, Illinois, 2001), 146–7; the certificate of Szamuely's naturalization is in TNA, HO 409/22/2818. The evolution of Szamuely's stance can be observed, for example, in T. Szamuely, *Unique Conservative: Three Extracts from the Work of Tibor Szamuely* (London, 1973) and T. Szamuely, *Socialism and Liberty* (London, 1977).

107 Allman, 'Phantoms of the archive'.

resulting in material benefits, was also marked by disillusionment and frustration. The inclusion of these emotional dimensions is crucial in order to humanise the transnational history of African socialism.

CONCLUSION

In the immediate aftermath of the military coup that toppled Nkrumah's regime on 24 February 1966, the ideological apparatus embodied by the KNII collapsed. Addison was arrested, Ikoku was tortured and extradited to Nigeria, and the Eastern European lecturers were repatriated within forty-eight hours.¹⁰⁸ Sloan, who had purchased a plane ticket back to Kent even before he was officially asked to leave the country, described to Nkrumah the swift and uneventful way in which the students abandoned the institute, 'baggage on head like a lot of refugees' and without protest: 'The students showed no signs of morale, collective spirit or any form of resistance, and if this was their reaction, what of the rest?'¹⁰⁹ The cheering crowds celebrating the end of CPP rule provided an immediate answer to the question. The weekly journal *West Africa* reported that the people who were 'most deeply relieved' by Nkrumah's fall were the university staff, for whom 'it was constantly humiliating to find their newspapers full of rubbish' and 'to have to listen to party men of little education and less background laying down the law about economics and philosophy'.¹¹⁰ The new military government's concerns about the institute had to do with financial matters rather than with doctrine and ideology.¹¹¹ The former employees of the institute (474 people, including gardeners and cooks) asked the new military government to prevent the Winneba population from harassing them and requested 'alternative jobs' and the payment of the February wages.¹¹² The institute's bank account was frozen, while the NLC received numerous letters from creditors who were waiting to be paid for the provision of yams, kenkey, bread, corn, fish, meat, petroleum, leather goods — and even airplane tickets.¹¹³ The NLC settled the debts and dealt with the recovery of advances paid to teachers who had signed up for ideological training before the coup.

108 K. Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana* (London, 1968); Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 205.

109 Letter from P. Sloan to K. Nkrumah, 15 Mar. 1966, in J. Milne (ed.), *Kwame Nkrumah The Conakry Years, His Life and Letters* (London, 2001), 26. Allegedly, in order to escape prosecution, on the day of the coup KNII students burnt their textbooks. Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 205–6.

110 'Matchet's diary', *West Africa*, 6 Mar. 1966.

111 On the other hand, the chiefs of the Central Region asked the military government to undertake a systematic and far-reaching political reeducation campaign in order to eradicate 'from the minds of the people the Personality Cult of Kwame Nkrumah', PRAAD, Cape Coast branch, RG 1/11/67/2, Resolution passed by the Central Region House of Chiefs at a Meeting Held at the Cape Coast Town Hall on the 22nd December 1966 - Resolution on the Need for Intensive Political Education, 1.

112 PRAAD, RG 3/5/1636/344, Letter from E. K. Acquah, F. A. Dontoh, and B. K. Hansoh, signed on behalf of the entire workers, to the National Liberation Council, 4 Mar. 1966; PRAAD, RG3/5/1636/308, Letter from the Chairman of the Administrative Council, National Liberation Council, 5 Apr. 1966.

113 PRAAD, RG 3/5/1635/228, Letter from B. C. L. Odei, Managing Director Ghana Airways to Kodwo Addison, 9 Nov. 1965. All other surviving correspondence between the institute's creditors and the military government is contained in PRAAD, RG 3/5/1636.

The government converted the institute into a teacher training college.¹¹⁴ In 1992 the premises of the KNII became part of what is today the University of Education, while its Pan-Africanist aspirations live on in another institution with the same name.¹¹⁵

This study has challenged several claims often made in the literature about the KNII. The curriculum was not univocally designed by Soviet advisers who, on the contrary, did not play any significant role in the life of the institute. Likewise, KNII students were not only party officials, as claimed by the NLC after the coup; nor were they a representative cross-section of Ghanaian society, as Nkrumah had hoped. Besides correcting the historical record of a specific institution, the reconstruction of the short-lived trajectory of the KNII carries some implications for the analysis of intellectual change, agency, and transnational connections under African socialist regimes.

Recent histories have captured the richness of political imagination and practices under African socialisms. Yet, the trajectories of institutions such as the KNII that had the ambitious task of integrating the social sciences within the construction and institutionalisation of the state's official ideology have largely been neglected. While the use of education in the social sciences to create 'modern' citizens was not peculiar to socialist regimes (and even less so in the golden age of modernization theory), the concrete ways in which this was done changed substantially.¹¹⁶ Rather than using the social sciences to summon and mobilise forms of technocratic expertise that could bridge the Cold War divide, party schools and ideological institutes had the greater ambition of 'democratising' the language and conceptual apparatus of political economy and political science to forge new subjectivities. Within a conception of African socialist regimes as 'living laboratories' for the production of political discourse, the 'experimental' nature of institutions such as the KNII was not limited to the contamination of the universalistic outlook of Marxism-Leninism with the search for more local political iconographies.¹¹⁷ Instead, it can be found in their role as mediators between the state's reflexive attempt to construct and project an image of itself and its historical mission and a wide array of concrete strategies and discursive formations adopted by local and international actors.¹¹⁸

For this reason, the construction of official discourse, with its multiple intellectual genealogies, its formulaic repetitions and its obvious inconsistencies, should be read against the grain of individual and collective actions, choices, and identities.¹¹⁹ By replacing the

114 PRAAD, RG 3/5/1635/362, Letter from J.E. Pessey, Secretary to the National Liberation Council, to the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Education, 16 June 1966. Details on the collection of the advances are in PRAAD, RG 3/5/1638.

115 For example, see 'Continental Union Government now - Institute', *Modern Ghana*, 25 Jan. 2017. <https://www.modernghana.com/election/751707/continental-union-government-now-institute.html> [accessed on 8 Jan. 2019].

116 For example, to emphasise how studying economics implied the embrace of a radically different worldview, a commentator compared the teaching of economics to Africans to 'bush clearing', J. C. Roche, 'African attitudes to economic study', *African Affairs*, 59:235 (1960), 124-5, 127.

117 This is inspired by H. Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge 1870-1950* (London, 2011).

118 Lal, *African Socialism*, 232-5.

119 To describe the 'discursive hypertrophy' of socialist regimes, the liberal economist Peter T. Bauer spoke of a 'debasement of language', P. T. Bauer, 'Marxism and the underdeveloped countries', in *Dissent on Development: Studies and Debates in Development Economics* (London, 1971), 180-1.

faceless and nameless ‘Soviets’ (or other proxies for foreign communist regimes) with a diverse cast of ‘global’ individual characters, the history of socialist party schools can also enrich histories of communist presence and intervention in Africa.¹²⁰ Investigating the individual motivations of foreign actors can provide the starting point for a more realistic appreciation of the multicentric and dispersed nature of socialist transnationalism as it happened on the ground, beyond the realm of high Cold War diplomacy.

Rather than being merely a footnote in the history of a turbulent period, or an allegory of the worst aspects of Nkrumah’s rule, the KNII was a complex microcosm that can serve to enrich our understanding of the ‘politics of socialist education’ in postcolonial Africa. From Bamako to Mogadishu, the study of ideological institutes and party schools can provide precious insights into the processes by which political visions were formulated and disseminated as well as how individuals and social groups negotiated their involvement in the political and intellectual landscapes of African socialisms.

¹²⁰ For example, Mazov, *A Distant Front*; A. Iandolo, ‘The rise and fall of the “Soviet model of development” in West Africa, 1957–1964,’ *Cold War History*, 12:4 (2012), 683–704.

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