

1958**'Abd al-Mun'im Shumays, 'Ghana: A Liberated African State' (Excerpts)****Citation:**

"'Abd al-Mun'im Shumays, 'Ghana: A Liberated African State' (Excerpts)", 1958, Wilson Center Digital Archive, 'Abd al-Mun'im Shumays, Ghana: Dawla afriqiyya mutaharrara [Ghana: A Liberated African State], series kutub siyasiyya #66 (Cairo: Dar al-Qahira li-l-taba'a, 1958), 5-11. Contributed, translated, and annotated by Cyrus Schayegh. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/291037>

Summary:

Already in the interwar decades, radio broadcasting became an important tool for seeking to shape public opinion at home and abroad. Thus, in the late 1930s, an Arabic-language "radio war" pitched Italy against France and Britain, both sides attacking the other for imperialist policies and intentions in the Middle East. With the onset of decolonization in Africa and Asia after World War II, also leading postcolonial countries began to use radio as a tool.

As Tareq Ismael's classic *The U.A.R. in Africa: Egypt's Policy under Nasser* (1971) and James Brennan's "Radio Cairo and the Decolonization of East Africa, 1953-64" (2010) show, these broadcasts attacked British rule and framed Egypt as decolonizing Africa's leader, a move that became ever more important as Egypt's international profile grew after the successes of 1956. (See the respective entries in this collection). At the same time, Egypt-based Arabic-language writers were keen to introduce decolonizing and early postcolonial countries to the Arabic-speaking public; they often framed political developments there in ways that were related to Egypt and/or claimed a certain lead role, in decolonization, for Egypt. While some books were written on Asia and Latin America, most concerned Africa, underscoring Egypt's location and leadership claims there.

A case in point is 'Abd al-Mun'im Shumays' *Ghana: Dawla afriqiyya mutaharrara* [Ghana: A Liberated African State], excerpts from which are reprinted here. One of many Arabic-language books on Ghana, on other African countries, and on Africa in general, it is one of the earliest such texts during the post-World War II wave of decolonization: it was published in 1958, a year only after Ghana became independent.

Original Language:

Arabic

Contents:

Translation - English

[p. 5] Greetings – to an African people

When the sun of freedom starts to rise, the free rejoice. And when people start to throw off the shackles of captivity and colonialism and enslavement, calls for freedom rise simultaneously in every place that is thinking, awake, and faithful. Freedom is the very lifeblood of human beings, and human beings without freedom lose everything. Their life turns to death, and their pursuits on earth become aimless and pointless – except for sucking blood and, as lackey agents, merciless robbery.

In the heart of the African continent, there are many people who live their lives in death, i.e. that have lived in slavery for dozens, nay hundreds of years. They keep toiling, expending their blood and energy for (the sake of) the white colonizer.

Despite the violence of colonialist means and despite the pressure tactics and oppression and artifice and deception, there appeared in that land that's blanketed with tyranny and that the Europeans have named the Black Continent – there appeared leaders who fought colonialism and rose against the colonizers. Among them is Kwame Nkrumah, the Prime Minister of Ghana.

This man is one of those who exemplify the fighting and combatting African. They represent the ideas of the great call that was manifest in the Bandung Conference and that has shown the world that the colored people have commenced to occupy their natural place.

One may call the Bandung Conference the liberation from the inferiority complex that has induced many African and Asian rulers to imitate Europe and to adopt [p. 6] the deceitful and flashy manners of modern European civilization, to the point of forgetting themselves and their deep-rooted, ancient civilization of their [own] country. Some even haughtily boasted that “my country is part of Europe.”

It was because of this complex – and not, as many scholars imagine, for reasons to do with progress – that our country was behind. For when people sense that they have lost their personality, their life becomes that of apes. This deception was among the reasons why the entire East became retarded. [This lasted] until God grabbed on behalf of his people leaders who were living with their people and feeling their feelings and sensing their sentiments and thinking their thoughts, and who understood the truth of the popular struggle and understood that a people is strong and comes alive only when relying on itself and that its resistance emanates only from its own traits.

[...]

It was humankind's bad luck that Europe reached the peak of its civilization just as Asia and Africa entered a period of civilizational gloom. Evil won over good. Evil and wicked waves were unleashed from Europe. Outwardly, they carried the signposts of civilization, inwardly wickedness and evil. There was colonialism in all its forms, from which humankind is still suffering on the two big continents [Asia and Africa]. The colonizers believed that these colored dark people are inferior beings....

[p. 7] When the colonialist veil was lifted, we discovered the true nature of the [colonized] people. We started to see the picture whose contours had been hidden for hundreds of years.

What is Ghana's picture? What can one see there?

This is the theme of my book, which I present to the Arab reader so that he will see how an African nation is being reborn. He will also get to know the signposts of a civilization that British colonialism tried to snuff out and put down

The manifestations of Ghana's civilization are ancient. The National Museum in Accra includes splendid examples of elevated art, reflecting the progress of the people in this country. The most famous group in Ghana as far as this art is concerned is the inhabitants of Accra. They distinguish themselves in the production of clay and gold statues. Some of these statues represent a story or a proverb, evincing true artistic skill.

This book informs the Arab reader about this nascent state, which we wish will realize all its objectives, including the most important one: freedom.

We want freedom for all African people. Hence, we are rejoicing in Ghana's freedom and independence, and in Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's fight for the freedom and independence of his country.

[p. 8] Doctor Kwame Nkrumah

Doctor Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's Prime Minister, is the progeny of a family of commoners, and hence considered an authentic son of the people. He belongs to the tribes of Naziman, where he was born on September 21, 1909, in the village of Nkroful, in the Western Gold Coast.

Although the parents of Ghana's Prime Minister were illiterate, they were determined to give their child every educational chance that they had not had. ...

[p. 9] On his way back to the Gold Coast [from the United States, where he had lived from 1935, receiving a BA from Lincoln College, Penn., in 1939, and a MA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1943, then working as a junior academic], in 1945 Nkrumah reached London. There he enrolled at the London School of Economics as a PhD student. At the same time, Doctor Nkrumah participated in a positive role in treating colonial problems, being elected vice president of the West African Student Association in 1945.

[p. 10] In his second year [at LSE, in 1947], Doctor Nkrumah returned to Africa, becoming the Secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention. Thanks to the political knowledge Doctor Nkrumah had obtained in America and the organizational experience he had gained during his stay in Britain, he was able to quickly become famous as a powerful political organizer and orator.

In 1948, Doctor Nkrumah was banished from Accra together with other national leaders during the disturbances of that year. Two years later, he was arrested again and condemned to a two year prison sentence, for organizing constructive (*ijabi* [literally, positive]) labor strikes. By the time of his release, in 1951, he had become the most famous political personality in the country and the leader of the largest national movement in the history of the Gold Coast. After a year, he became the first African president in the British Commonwealth, and the same year Lincoln University, from which he had obtained his first degree, awarded him an honorary doctorate.

[p. 11] Doctor Nkrumah stands out for his immense capacity for work. His day starts at 6AM, studying official dossiers and incoming mail. By 8am we find him either in the party headquarters or in this prime ministerial office. And when Ghana's legislative is in session, Doctor Nkrumah plays a positive role during the session, guiding and overseeing the discussions.

Doctor Nkrumah takes a light lunch after the closure of the [legislative] meetings, at noon, returning to his office to confer with his cabinet and leading bureaucrats and to meet with commoners, who come to him from across the country to submit their problems to him. When his official work day is over, Doctor Nkrumah receives the party leaders in his headquarters. Often, Doctor Nkrumah addresses the masses, which congregate in the sports arena, considered a public club for addresses in Accra. Doctor Nkrumah hereby targets the lack of knowledge of his citizens, keeping them up to date about his government's policy.

Doctor Nkrumah tells his citizens "I am your servant. You made me the man whom you see. It is my duty to periodically come to you to account for how I discharge my servitude to you. And when the people is not content with me, then it has the right to evict me from power."