

Establishing ethos and envisioning a new Africa: Kwame Nkrumah's invention at the 1958 All-African People's Conference

Eric Opoku Mensah*

Abstract

In 1958, Kwame Nkrumah, the Prime Minister of Ghana, called for a conference of independent heads of state in Africa. It was a novelty in Africa. The conference was to provide a formal continental platform for the political deliberation of Africa by Africans. The paper carefully focuses on the nuances and purpose of Nkrumah's invention. First, the work argues that Nkrumah strategically invented a rhetoric which sought to establish his ethos as a Pan Africanist whose leadership was crucial in the quest to free Africa from colonial domination. Secondly, the paper examines, through Nkrumah's rhetoric, how the deliberative nature of the Accra conference was turned into an epideictic one. This paper has implication(s) for the role of rhetoric in the decolonisation of Africa.

Introduction

The year 1957 had marked an important milestone in the liberation struggle of Africans from Western colonial rule. Ghana had become the first Sub-Saharan country to gain her independence from British colonial rule. Zolberg, as noted in Thompson (1969), considered Ghana's independence at the time as "the most important event in the history of modern Africa" (p. 28). The new citizens were revering in their freedom and this small West African territory had become the major political agenda in the last quarter of the 1960 when the subject of colonialism in Africa came up for deliberation. Among the major actors in international politics, people became concerned as to the political future of Ghana in respect of her foreign policy direction and its ramifications for the rest of the dependent territories in Africa. Kwame Nkrumah, a man who had led Ghana to independence, quickly assumed a new space on the world's political stage, wielding a symbolically important flag of African nationalism which naturally attracted him to the attention of the many African nationalists and political actors who were deeply concerned about the colonial question in Africa and beyond.

With all the spotlights on the new nation Ghana and its leader, Nkrumah, he decided to act by taking advantage of the fresh political wind and media spotlight which had been brought about through the nation's independence. In essence, he had come to understand and appreciate the political climate in Africa at the time and decided to act quickly. How then did the year 1958 become so relevant to the anti-colonial struggle? The answer is simple. Nkrumah organised three key diplomatic activities in Accra at which he made key addresses which, perhaps, were to change further the subject of colonialism in Africa forever. The first event occurred in April when Nkrumah organised and addressed

*Eric Opoku Mensah holds a PhD in Rhetoric Studies from the University of Cape Town. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Communication, University of Cape Coast in Ghana. He holds seminars in Ghanaian Presidential Rhetoric, Political Communication and Media and Society. His current research concentrates on rhetorical practices in emerging democracies and the interface between the media and rhetoric. E-mail addresses: eric.opokumensah@ucc.edu.gh, eric.opokumensah1@gmail.com

the first ever Conference for heads of newly Independent African States in April. Seven months after this important meeting of the new African leaders, Nkrumah established the Ghana-Mali Union as a precursor to his dream of continental unity. The last and probably the most important event was the All-African People's Conference (AAPC) which was held in December 1958.

In his preparation for the Conference in December, Nkrumah was highly spirited and had prepared to speak to as many as three hundred delegates from within Africa and beyond (Rooney, 2007). In fact, this was, in the words of Hadjor (1988, p. 88), "the first genuinely All-African assembly" because of the good representation of Africans from every corner of Africa. There were twenty-eight African countries whose representatives were present in Accra. In addition, sixty-two nationalist organizations were represented at the conference (Armah, 2004). Nkrumah's timing for the conference was appropriate, especially just a year after Ghana's independence. According to Thompson (1969), the December 1958 conference was "timed to meet the needs and mood of a rebellious continent" (p. 61). In essence, the rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968) was ripe and Nkrumah was ready to provide an appropriate response.

In what ways did Nkrumah use the speech to establish his own ethos as a new leader among 'leaders' who did not have legitimacy in their own colonial territories? How did he create a balance by establishing his own legitimacy on the platform of African nationalism and at the same time as a source of inspiration to freedom to people who were in search for inspiration in pursuance of their own struggle? In what different ways did the speech take the audience through differing rhetorical journeys? What kinds of effects did the speech create within the audience as they were positioned as agents of Nkrumah's rhetorical end? How did the speech, though fundamentally deliberative in nature, become a platform for the celebration of the African spirit? My argument in this piece is simply anchored on the central issues which the above questions seek to probe.

Establishing Ethos

In December, Nkrumah was certainly not oblivious of what was at stake as he prepared to address the biggest continental audience of African freedom fighters he could ever imagine. This was certainly a huge opportunity for his vision of African liberation and the gathering in no doubt was very appropriate for the subject of his address. Nkrumah needed not just any kind of audience for his rhetoric if his vision was ever going to see the light of day. Unmistakably, Nkrumah had a rhetorical audience. Farrell (1993, p. 68) puts it correctly:

The potential of rhetoric is best realised through a prescribed form of engagement with an audience as an agency of art ... it is the rhetorical audience (the "one who decides") that functions as the efficient cause of the enactment of rhetoric as practical art.

Among some of the key delegates who were present in Accra were Jomo Kenyatta, Tom Mboya, I.T.A. Wallace Johnson and Franz Fanon, to mention only a few. If Nkrumah was going to make any headway with his address, he needed to forcefully define himself before his audience. In other words, it was imperative for Nkrumah to clearly establish his ethos, for this was, perhaps, the greatest strength he brought to his speech. To Aristotle (2007) "there is persuasion through character whenever the speech is spoken" (p. 38). Though a lot of the delegates had heard about Nkrumah, for most of them news about Ghana's independence was all over Africa. Some of the delegates had met Nkrumah during the April conference in Accra. It was going to be their first encounter with him. In preparation to send out a call for the conference a few months earlier, George Padmore had wanted

the conference to be entitled as a Pan-African conference. However, Nkrumah objected to that title and rather decided to call it the All-African People's Conference. This, according to Thompson (1969), was "to make it clear that Ghana and Nkrumah had begun a new tradition" (p. 58).

Certainly, Nkrumah had begun a journey which seemed to be set on a different rhetorical trajectory. A rhetoric that was his own which sought to establish him as a brand and to highlight himself at the forefront of the anti-colonial struggle in Africa. In the opening of the address, Nkrumah outlined the giant steps he had taken so far as a means of furthering the cause of decolonisation of Africa. The novelty and uniqueness of the conference was clearly highlighted in the opening of the speech. He signalled, "This assembly marks the opening of a new epoch in our Continent's history and it will be recorded in our annals as illuminations worthy of its significance as the First All-African People's Conference." The "new epoch" was under Nkrumah's direction as he had brought together freedom fighters to deliberate on the colonial issue on the soil of an independent territory. He noted:

Never before has it been possible for so representative a gathering of African Freedom Fighters not only to come together, but to assemble in a free independent African State for the purpose of planning for a final assault upon Imperialism and Colonialism.

Stating this historical meeting is not enough, the speech goes on to highlight on the successes achieved prior to this historic meeting. Nkrumah reminded the audience: "Only eight months ago I had the honour to welcome to our country political delegates on a different level—that is, the official representatives of the Governments of the independent African States." (That is, prior to his current effort at organising the present conference, he had met earlier in April 1958 the heads of governments of the newly independent states. This gradual built up of Nkrumah's achievement forms essentially a strategic means of establishing his ethos). Whilst the speech sought to, on the surface, apprise the delegates of previous efforts which had culminated in the present conference, it was an obvious rhetorical choice, a subtle means in bringing the speaker's ethos to the fore, giving him legitimacy to deliberate on the subject of the present conference. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) note that "the speaker must have qualifications for speaking on his subject and must be skillful in its presentation" (p. 52). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca continue: "... self-praise constitutes only an indispensable means to attain a legitimate end" (p. 319).

Further, the speech does not end with these latest records of Nkrumah's good will, but goes back thirteen years later to make alive Nkrumah's contribution during the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester. So far as the liberation of Africa is concerned, Manchester remains a hallowed place to African freedom fighters. It was in Manchester that a firm blueprint for decolonisation of Africa was laid for the first generation liberation fighters in Africa, a number of which were present in Accra. Nkrumah recollected:

The climax of our earlier Pan-African Congresses was the Fifth, which was held in Manchester in 1945, where I had the good luck to be made a joint secretary with Mr George Padmore, who is now my advisor on African affairs. That Congress was perhaps only less historic than this first All-African People's Conference.

In effect, Nkrumah demonstrated his pedigree on the subject of African liberation. If Padmore with all his experience and expertise is Nkrumah's advisor on African affairs, then what else could the delegates have expected from Nkrumah in terms of his competence in providing a clear direction on the African colonial issue? We cannot agree more with Salazar (2003) when he declares that:

... ethos qualifies, in rhetoric, the authority an audience accords a speaker to address a debatable issue. (It does not mean the audience, or parts of it, agrees with the speaker or even has trust, it simply recognises the latter's competence, defined itself in a variety of ways)" (pp. 4-5).

Thus, in a sense, there seems to be a correlation between the force of an argument and the level of prestige of the speaker (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969), a situation which we cannot be oblivious of, looking at Nkrumah's address.

Interestingly, in view of the reverence which has become associated with the 1945 Manchester Conference, Nkrumah's attempt to subordinate its importance to the AACP revealed his underlying attempt to make history and at least establish himself in the midst of great voices of African liberation. In other words, through his address, he attempted to place himself on a higher ethical plane. By this effort, he came across to his audience as a man who was not only endowed with practical wisdom but possessed the virtue and good will (Aristotle, 2007) necessary to lead the rest of Africa into freedom.

Thus, this public record of Nkrumah's foremost contribution to the liberation struggle is central to understanding Nkrumah's rhetoric on African unity. Though it does not begin with the AACP speech, at least Nkrumah's invention in the address somehow provided a vivid chronicle from his completion of Ghana's independence struggle and the beginning of his larger pursuit of Africa's decolonisation.

It should be noted the Accra Conference had a strong representation from the few independent territories in Africa. The greatest number of delegates who were present in Accra was from territories which still remained under colonial rule. Obviously, Nkrumah's image as presented before his immediate audience could only exude in them a deep feeling of reverence for the man who had not only led his people into independence but had provided a concrete platform for the deliberation on the state of Africa. To Aristotle (2007), "character is almost, so to speak, the most authoritative form of persuasion" (p. 39). Now with this gradual building of his premise for the present discussion, Nkrumah remarkably hit on his own words, words which would forever remain at the cornerstone of his foreign policy when he had declared Ghana's independence a year ago. He stated: "As I have always declared, even before Ghana attained her present sovereign status – 'the independence of Ghana will be meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa.'" By invoking Ghana's independence Nkrumah succeeded in two key things. First, on the national level, he intertwined the destiny of Ghana and the rest of the dependent territories in Africa. Secondly on the personal level, he "establish[ed] a sense of communion centred around particular values recognized by the audience" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 51) with the audience that was present before him in Accra. The double invocation deepened his ethos and provided him with enough legitimacy before the audience. Not only did Nkrumah invoke his earlier promise by referring to his words at Ghana's independence but he also used it as an occasion of renewal of his foreign policy promise, a promise that was to bring hope to black people in the remaining dependent territories in Africa. In effect, Nkrumah added a new layer of assurance and made fresh his sacred bonds with the larger African community. He intoned: "We have not moved from this promise nor shall we budge one jot from it until the final goal has been reached and the last vestiges of imperialism and colonialism have been wiped off this African Continent." Obviously, the masses of the people under colonial rule in Africa had high expectations in terms of receiving support from countries which had already become free. Therefore, Nkrumah's renewed promise became what Bitzer (1968) refers to as "a fitting response, a response that fits the situation" (p. 9).

The Different Rhetorical Journeys

As part of his invention, Nkrumah engaged his audience through the application of differing forms symbolism. In this situation, he made the auditors to constantly engage themselves in a form of assessment in relation to the central message of his address. In other words, their experience of different symbolisms allowed them to engage Nkrumah's rhetoric from different angles. In one of these experiences, the speech symbolically constituted the conference into a meeting of the CPP. Nkrumah declared, "my real role here today is that of a Leader of a Political Party, and it is as the Chairman of that Party that I want to address you." Why would the Prime Minister of a newly independent country refuse to address an international audience as the head of government but instead with his Party credentials? This can be viewed from several rhetorical stances. Before I get into that discussion, it is important to consider an idea first and foremost.

The success of Ghana's independence, perhaps, was greatly dependent on the successful machinery of the Nkrumah's CPP. Though the CPP had been formed less than a decade before Ghana's independence, it succeeded in becoming a mass party which quickly attracted ordinary people from all over the Gold Coast to fight for independence. Nkrumah had always had a strong belief in the CPP structures. He always believed it was the only Party that had the capacity to lead Ghana into independence. This belief rang true when the CPP, under his leadership, succeeded in claiming independence for Ghana from Britain.

After Ghana's independence, whilst the popularity of Nkrumah soured all over Africa, so did the CPP. Nkrumah became a symbolic extension of the CPP and the CPP, Nkrumah. With this premise established, I will attempt to answer my earlier question. Nkrumah's strategy in deciding to address the conference as a "Leader of a Political Party" first, heightened the serious nature of the address. Addressing the audience in his capacity as Prime Minister would have given the speech a deeper epideictic effect, since his new status will have naturally turned the address, to a large extent, into a celebration. Nkrumah's ability to minimise, if not eliminate completely, his Prime Ministerial status sustained the mood which he wanted the address to be characterised with. In that sense, he identified himself with the rest of the freedom fighters who were still in vigorous pursuance of freedom for their dependent territories. To Endres (2011), identification "reinforced commonality between the speaker and audience" (p. 6). Deliberating about the colonial question, therefore, became a shared experience between the Nkrumah and his different audiences.

On the other hand, the symbolic identification of the delegates as CPP members rubbed on them a sense of hope. Since the CPP had won victory for Ghana, it invoked a positive feeling within the international African audience as they reflected on their own struggles within their dependent territories. This kind of rhetoric which allows the audience to rationalise their position in different symbolic forms produces fresh possibilities and energies which hitherto were absent in them. The audience, after bridging the gap between themselves and the speaker (Nkrumah), can appreciate in whole Nkrumah's central message as it unfolds in the cause of the address. The delegates, as symbolic members of the CPP, owed it a duty to consider the deliberation of a Party leader with considerable respect, especially for his achievement as the first Party leader in Sub-Saharan Africa who had led his people to achieve independence for his nation.

From the symbolic representation of himself as Party Chairman and the audience as members of the CPP, Nkrumah turned to another rhetorical tradition which characterised his invention – the Christian religious tradition. According to Murphy (1997, p. 72), "rhetorical traditions organise the 'social knowledge' of communities and make available symbolic resources for the invention of arguments aimed at authoritative public judgments". Murphy continues to argue that "rhetorical traditions, serves a functional

purpose by providing people with an intelligible 'cultural grammar', through which they might speak to each other, define pressing problems as public, and address those issues" (p. 72). Christian religion formed a part of Nkrumah's rhetorical tradition. In other words, it was a rhetorical commonplace for Nkrumah's invention, particularly during the years of struggle before Ghana's independence. How did Nkrumah manipulate religious symbols for the purpose of his address? To understand the impact of Nkrumah's religious rhetoric, we need to appreciate the formation of Nkrumah's religious background as an African liberation ideologue and the role of colonizer's religion within the socio-political life of Ghanaians at the time of Ghana's independence.

Early missionaries who introduced Christianity in the Gold Coast collaborated with the British Colonial authorities to subdue the natives for colonial rule through religious indoctrination. Simms (2003, p. 467), a sociologist, refers to a statement made by Lord Lugard and notes that the missionaries taught the natives that "God had elevated Europeans above Africans, blessing them with 'brains, capital, and energy', and that God had charged 'the native races to progress' by submitting to the teachings of Christ and the policies of the colonial officials."

In view of this, curriculum in colonial missionary schools was designed to support the religious and political agenda of the British. Kwame Nkrumah was a product of colonial missionary education in the Gold Coast (Rooney, 2007) and also as a student in the United States, he had studied Christian religion and later preached in Christian churches for pecuniary rewards (Nkrumah, 1957). According to Simms (2003, p. 468), these colonial missionary schools produced "a cadre of anti-colonial thinkers that eventually led the Gold Coast revolution." With the advent of Christianity in the Gold Coast, the natives, even when majority of them were not necessarily adherents of the new Christian religion brought by the British colonialist, had naturally accepted Christian doctrines and values and had come to perceive it (Christianity) as superior as part of their colonial experience. If Nkrumah was to identify with the people, then at this point it was rhetorically crucial for him to speak authoritatively through the invention of metaphors whose sources invoke Christian religious images which the people, even after independence, still associated with political power and authority.

Through the ideological subordination of the natives by the use of Christian religion, anti-colonial ideologues like Nkrumah learnt to craft a rhetoric which sought to tap from the religious traditions and use them as counter-hegemonic tools. The fundamental part of the Christian doctrine which Nkrumah borrowed was the concept of Christ's redemption of mankind. In this direction, Nkrumah symbolically considered himself as a Messianic figure in the image of Jesus Christ in order to save the people of the Gold Coast from the supposed tyranny of the British colonial rule. Nkrumah saw his political persecution in the Gold Coast as akin to that of Jesus as he died on the cross to save mankind (Simms, 2006). These parallels which Nkrumah drew extensively would be given form in the discussion.

Nkrumah's exploitation of the Christian religious traditions and values, in view of the colonial situation, fitted perfectly into the rhetorical frame within the anti-colonial struggle and because the people of the Gold Coast appreciated, to a large extent, these Christian values, Nkrumah's argument probably became more meaningful to them. Nkrumah awoke in the masses a new sense of nationalism and he was ready to lead them from their woes as a colonised people. Murphy (1997, p. 72) argues that "rhetorical traditions exist as a linguistic potentiality, but can only be actualized in a collaborative performance of speaker and audience." For the Gold Coasters, Nkrumah's Messianic appeal fell within their value system and, therefore, resonated with them to the extent that they rallied behind Nkrumah to free the country from colonial rule.

Barbara Monfils' (1977) study on Nkrumah's symbolic religious representations provides illumination with respect to the rhetorical strategy by which Nkrumah employed in designing a rhetorical image of himself as Jesus Christ to be able to successfully immerse himself within the religious traditions which had been firmly established by the Western missionaries in the Gold Coast. She notes that "Nkrumah was described as 'Messiah', 'Redeemer', 'Saviour of Africa', 'Pillar of Fire', and with other similar epithets. Nkrumah's life was paralleled with Christ's (Monfils, 1977). Further, Nkrumah had his own version of the Beatitudes in the New Testament which was published in the Party's newspaper, Accra Evening News (Simms, 2006). If Nkrumah was symbolically Gold Coast messianic figure, then leading the Gold Coast into independence, in a sense, sanctioned his civil religious and political position in the new nation Ghana. This allowed Nkrumah to continue his Christ-like rhetoric image which he had begun before the nation's independence. As cited by Monfils (1977), the Accra Evening News, in extolling the ethos of Nkrumah, writes that "like Christ, Nkrumah was the only child of his mother and father" (Monfils, 1977, p. 322). So by 1958, as a result of Ghana's successful fight against colonialism, Ghanaians and African freedom fighters, in rhetorical terms, had to a considerable degree, been made to perceive and sanctioned Nkrumah's Christ-like image.

So at the AACP meeting, Nkrumah put up a rhetorical performance which was to serve as an exemplar of his already known Christian religious symbol. To succeed in his entire appeal to his audience, Nkrumah moved the context of the speech from a political party meeting into a pseudo Sermon on the Mount where all the audience, in the context of the address, were constituted into his disciples. He performed a homily by enacting the words of Jesus Christ albeit in his own political version. He began his sermon:

My first advice to you who are struggling to be free is to aim for the attainment of the Political Kingdom – that is to say, the complete independence and self-determination of your territories. When you have achieved the Political Kingdom all else will follow. Only with the acquisition of the Political power-real power through the attainment of sovereign independence will you be in a position to reshape the vexations problems which harass our Continent.

Nkrumah called on all each of the apostles of African nationalism to focus on achieving political independence, something which the colonialist had denied the African but instead, had constantly drawn the African's attention and focus onto the heavenly reward of after-life whilst denying him of real material prosperity on earth (Simms, 2006). Nkrumah's rhetoric sought to give a new meaning to this Christian teaching, making it relevant to the fundamental cause of nationalism. He continued his civil sermon by talking about "power" in the same sense as the biblical Christ discussed the power of the Holy Spirit to his disciples in the New Testament. Jesus instructed his disciples that the power of the Holy Spirit was to fulfil a purpose, which was to help the disciples spread the gospel throughout the world. Nkrumah in a similar fashion instructed his "disciples":

But this power which you will achieve is not in itself an end. It is the means to an end, and that is why the use to which power is put is so important. Today, African is convulsed with the desire to be free and independent, and coupled with this will to independence is an equal desire for some form of African union or federation.

The "power" which independence will bring to the other dependent countries was to be a means of bringing all Africans together for the growth of Africa. Whilst Jesus preached about the salvation of the world through the aid of the Holy Spirit, Nkrumah preached to the African disciples that the power of independence should be the ultimate medium for the salvation of the people of Africa. Nkrumah's effort in sustaining a Christian religious

rhetoric was a strategic means to employ an established tradition in his rhetorical invention (Murphy, 1997) as a means of achieving persuasion among his African audience.

From Christian symbolism, the speech moved on to appeal to the audience through the application of military symbolism. Nkrumah chose the peroration for this appeal to end the speech on a striking note, leaving his audience to think about themselves as real “freedom fighters” in the true sense of the words. With the presence of the hundreds of delegates before him, Nkrumah rhetorically conscripted them into a military troop. This symbolic positioning of his audience seems apt in view of the rhetorical situation. From 1947 when Nkrumah set foot on the Gold Coast till the time of Ghana's independence a decade later, he had become an ardent fighter for independence and had not ceased to be at the forefront of the anti-colonial struggle in the Gold Coast. Over these years in search of African freedom, he learnt the hard way and came to appreciate the tactics of anti-colonial warfare. He fought for constitutional review in the Gold Coast which opened the doors for the first nationwide elections. As a result, it opened the doors wide enough for black people to gain access and take charge of the deliberative space within the Gold Colonial Assembly. Now as the symbolic commander-in-chief of the liberation army, prepared for the battle ahead, Nkrumah reminded his soldiers of the hidden dangers of colonialism:

Do not let us also forget that Colonialism and Imperialism may come to us yet in a different guise – not necessarily from Europe. We must alert ourselves to be able to recognise this when it rears its head and prepare ourselves to fight against it.

Friends and Comrades, I enjoin you to let us close our ranks. For the day we stand in serried line, that day Colonialism in Africa is defeated. And we must bury that pernicious system with all the speed. Only with the internment of Imperialism will Africa be free from menace and live and breathe in liberty, where men of colour shall walk with head held high in human dignity. Fellow African Freedom Fighters still carrying the burden of Imperialism, pull together. We who have won our freedom stand uncompromisingly behind you in your struggle. Take heart, Unite your forces. Organisation and discipline shall command your victory. All Africa shall be free in this, our lifetime. For this mid twentieth century is Africa's. This decade is the decade of African independence. Forward then independence. To Independence Now. Tomorrow, the United States of Africa.

The words of Nkrumah marked an inspiration for his audience, giving them hope and strength for the “fight” ahead. Nkrumah had tasted the tactics of the colonialist and knew that independence was never going to be granted by the colonial masters until the native fought for it. He knew that achieving freedom in a colonial territory was never concluded alone on the negotiation table. If the dream of freedom was going to become a reality then there was the need for Africans to unite their “forces” by closing their “ranks.” For Nkrumah, the dream of having “the United States of Africa” was worth fighting for. It was the essence for fighting for Africa's independence. He believed that when the “forces” of African freedom fighters are united, total independence can be achieved in Africa. In the same sense, when there was the United States of Africa, Africans will be formidable against colonialism. Nkrumah warned: “Do not let the Colonial Powers divide us, for our division is their gain. Let us recall that our Continent was conquered because there were divisions between our own people, tribe pitted against tribe.” By asking for unity, he was rhetorically averting the repetition of the history of colonization in Africa.

As Nkrumah argued for unity among Africans, he constantly appealed to the arguments of association by highlighting all the things which bring Africans together whilst at the same time dissociating Africa from Europe (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). The speech highlights the fact that Africa has clear geographical and culture distinctions from

Europe. This argument is intended to appeal to some Africans who strangely believe in the legitimacy of colonialism. Some Africans have come to believe that European occupation of Africa was divinely sanctioned and therefore should not be contested. Nkrumah's dismissed such unwarranted viewpoints that seek to legitimise colonialism. Presenting Africa as a single unit, he presented imperialists in adversarial images which were calculated to influence his immediate and remote audiences to see advocates of imperialism as hostile and inimical to African interests. Nkrumah warned, "Our enemies are many and they stand ready to pounce upon and exploit our every weakness."

In another instance, Nkrumah alerted the freedom fighters, "we alone can grapple with the monster of imperialism which has all but devoured us." The picture which the speech draws about imperialists creates a forceful presence which brings closer to the audience something which earlier on had looked quite distant (Perelman, 1982, p. 37). In effect, it evoked what Aristotle (2007) refers to as "fear", thereby creating the desired emotions in the audience (Perelman, 1982). Nkrumah's deep concern for a united Africa is deeply reflected in the way he rhetorically draws attention to imperialism as a common enemy. I refer to a statement by Burke which illustrates perfectly a situation when a group identifies a common enemy. Burke (1973) notes that, "men who unite on nothing else can unite on the basis of a foe shared by all" (p. 193). Nkrumah's invention of symbolic strategies enabled him to insert the audience in different emotional settings for the success of his rhetorical appeals. His deliberation on African unity also brings to the fore the epideictic turn of the address. This will be the focus of the next section of the discussion.

The Celebration of Africa

The timing and setting for Nkrumah's address were both significant to his invention. Ghana's independence in 1957 became a great source of inspiration to the rest of dependent colonies in Africa who needed strategy and hope for the purpose of their own struggle. It was Nkrumah, who on the day of Ghana's independence, took time to extol the African personality and this address afforded him a great opportunity to celebrate the new African personality which he considered as an emerging process. The speech, in an epideictic turn, celebrates the beginning of liberation in Africa as well as the African. It becomes a means of creating inspiration for the freedom fighters in Africa. Nkrumah carefully reminded the delegates of the difficulties of African liberation and the gains which had been made by virtue of the organization of the AAPC. He noted:

This assembly marks the opening of a new epoch in our Continent's history and it will be recorded in our annals as illuminations worthy of its significance as the First All-African People's Conference.

We have had Pan-African Congresses before-in fact, five of them but all of these, by force of circumstances, were carried on outside Africa and under much difficulty. Never before has it been possible for so representative a gathering of African Freedom Fighters not only to come together, but to assemble in a free independent African State for the purpose of planning for a final assault upon Imperialism and Colonialism. The African journey for total independence has been long and tortuous, but had been with some successes.

The speech provides a momentary respite for the freedom fighters who had gathered in Accra to celebrate the independence of Ghana and more importantly of experiencing the rare opportunity of Africans to deliberate on the liberation of Africa "in a free independent African State." Certainly, the speech injects pride in the freedom fighters, a form of pride which African liberation fighters could only have imagined and dreamt about. For the freedom fighters who formed the immediate audience of the address, the reality of what was only a dream yesterday became a source of hope for the fulfilment of a larger future dream: the total decolonisation of Africa.

As a result, the freedom that seemed distant in the future was brought closer to the gathering ever than before. The setting for the meeting of African freedom fighters in a free land in Africa created a poignant presence (Perelman, 1982) for the audience. Through the invocation of history, Nkrumah brings the challenges of the Pan-African movement to the fore for public appreciation. It was only in the recognition of that unique history could the present be duly celebrated. For Nkrumah as an orator, this kind of historical education of the African in search for independence was fundamental to the struggle. This is because the African was not asking for freedom or a new civilization which never existed on the continent. Therefore, the engagement of the freedom fighters needed to be underpinned by the sense of reclaiming a lost freedom, personality, and a vibrant civilization which previously thrived in Africa some centuries back.

As an orator, Nkrumah, through an epideictic voice, in support of the argument of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), functions as an educator as he invokes the shared but perhaps forgotten values of Africans. Nkrumah remarked:

Much has been said and continues to be said about the inability of the African to rise above his low material wants. Frequent reference is made of his non-contribution to civilization. That this is an imperialist fact we all know. There have been great Empires on this African continent, and when we are all free again, our African Personality will once again add its full quota to the sum of man's knowledge and culture.

This reminder was crucial to the address because it sought to remove all inaccurate perceptions as regards the place of the African within the civilization of the world. It is a celebration of Africa's past and a rhetorical call for the enactment of this past glory in the near future. Through the speech, Africa's past glory is made to connect with its future in which the beauty of what Africa achieved in the past is invoked for celebration; whilst hoping for good things to happen in the future. Connected to the re-emergence of Africa's past civilization is also the emergence of the "African personality", an idea that Nkrumah popularised throughout Africa. This was first articulated clearly during Ghana's Independence Declaration Speech by Kwame Nkrumah on 6th March 1957. Nkrumah reiterated that "the African personality in liberty of freedom will have the chance to find its free expression and makes its particular contribution to the totality of culture and civilization." The African personality which Nkrumah idolised can only be realised through the total freedom of Africa. In other words, freedom is the only means to unlock the potential of the African. This means Africans do not only find themselves in physical bondage but also under a spiritual yoke. Therefore, the spirit of Africa needed to be freed from colonialism in order to unleash the potential of its people.

In a forensic tone, Nkrumah tried to provide an answer to colonialists' critics who justified colonialism by claiming that it was the only means of helping the African to attain a level of civilization. Nkrumah explained:

How can slaves, denied the right of free expression and free thought, become servants or expose of the arts? Culture and civilization throughout the ages have flowed from a leisured class, an aristocratic class, with the background and material endowments which have made possible the devotion of this side of human endeavour. I say that once Africa is free and independent we shall see a flowering of the human spirit on the Continent second to none.

In the peroration, Nkrumah called on the African audience to unite and become a formidable force for colonialism. The speech ends in the hope that through the unity of its parts, Africa will become a formidable force that can negotiate for its total freedom from Western imperialism.

Effects of the Speech

Nkrumah's address had both immediate and remote impacts looking at a number of political events which followed the address in Africa. Whilst it may not be entirely accurate to credit Nkrumah with the immediate political developments in most of the dependent territories in Africa, perhaps, it can be fairly argued that his address, which served as the opening for the Accra Conference, became an appropriate and inspirational guide for the entire deliberation at the Conference. So far as certain major political developments occurred immediately after the speech, which to a greater extent, followed the speech's rhetorical prescriptions, it can be further asserted that Nkrumah's speech may have had substantial impact on these political activities which dominated the African political landscape at the time.

From the time of the Conference in late 1958 to the end of 1960, as many as seventeen new territories had gained their independence in Africa. This was certainly a remarkable feat since the number amounts to more than a double times the total number of countries which were already independent before the Conference in Accra. Undoubtedly, the mood which was initiated and generated by Nkrumah in the freedom fighters at this first ever conference of independent African States in Accra brought a new energy and spirit in African consciousness and the quest to fight for the total decolonisation of Africa.

The Conference undoubtedly increased the tempo of nationalism in every corner of Africa. Indeed, Nkrumah's ethos among both the newly independent countries and the dependent territories cannot be underestimated. His high ethos among these constituencies is premised on two main reasons. First, his emergence as a leader of the first independent nation in Sub-Saharan Africa naturally provided inspiration to the other dependent territories. Secondly, on the heels of Ghana's independence, Nkrumah's call for the deliberation of the subject of decolonisation at the AAPC in Africa laid a firm foundation for his foreign policy which endeared him to fellow freedom fighters whose territories still languished under colonial rule.

In effect, many of the freedom fighters who were in Accra for the Conference testified that they left Accra with a resolve to change the state of affairs back in their respective colonial territories. Kanyama Chiume, a member of the African National Congress (ANC) based in Nyasaland at the time, confessed that "we went back to intensify the struggle for freedom ... with a conviction, in the light of the Accra spirit, that an independent Nyasaland will, like Ghana, be in a stronger position to help the liberation of Africa" (Thompson, 1969, pp. 61-62). Again, it is reported that when nationalism troubles erupted in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Prime Minister, Sir Roy Welensky blamed Nkrumah for it (Thompson, 1969). Further, there were also reports of riots that broke up in the Congo and "names hitherto unknown to the world, like Joseph Kasavubu, Lumumba, Tsombe and Ngagula have been spread across the front pages" (Nkrumah, 1957, p. 186). Thus, these troubles and many others drew the international community's attention to look back at Nkrumah's speech and the resolutions which were made by the delegates at the end of their deliberations.

Perhaps, another eventful development that is worth mentioning is the new realisation the speech enkindled among Africans about the need for unity. The central focus of Nkrumah's address was on unity and the delegates could not have gone back home, forgetting such a dominant rhetorical appeal in Nkrumah's address. He had warned, "do not let the Colonial Powers divide us, for our division is their gain. Let us recall that our Continent was conquered because there were divisions between our own people, tribe pitted against tribe." Nkrumah's action in calling for the conference logically underscores

his passion and justification for the conference. This awakening for unity was essential for a continent that had been divided by imperialist forces.

Prior to Nkrumah's rhetoric of unity at the Conference, invitation to the active political and trade union groups in almost every region on the continent was in itself a firm foundation for Nkrumah's invention at the Conference. Kwesi Armah (2004), a Ghanaian diplomat who served in Nkrumah's government, recalls that the Conference "brought many African nationalist leaders north and south of the Sahara desert into contact for the first time on African soil. They realised that it was in their mutual interest to preserve the independence and unity of Africa." (p. 58) Thompson (1969) presents the most vivid picture at the Conference when he notes how "Egyptians discovered Congolese nationalists, Kenyan labour organizers discovered their Moroccan counterparts, South African refugees found ears attuned to their needs" (p. 61). Thus, the attempt by Nkrumah to bring these differing groups together to deliberate on a common political interest was in itself a tool for uniting differing political and cultural experiences in Africa which hitherto was never a possibility. With the forging of new relationships across the various regions in Africa, Nkrumah also established life-long relationships which will later help in his continental political network (Thompson, 1969). Some of these political admirers continued to look up to Nkrumah for inspiration in view of his foremost leadership in the unification of Africa (Rooney, 2007).

Interestingly, whilst Nkrumah's decision to speak for African unity might have had positive ramifications for the political fortunes of Africa, his invention at the AACP also became the nursery for bitter animosity towards his political views and his personality. Some of the new leaders that emerged on the African political stage felt Nkrumah's effort for Africa's unity was not borne out of a genuine interest for Africa, but was only for his personal political gains. Whilst this analysis may be beyond the limits of the present discussion, let it suffice to indicate that this animosity will perhaps become the bane of African unity. This is quite obvious especially with respect to developments which occurred during the formation of Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa half a decade after the Accra Conference. Whilst this antagonism might have been born, perhaps, out of genuine reasons, it nearly killed the long-term impact of Nkrumah's invention at the AACP Conference. Years later, even with the antagonistic tendencies which the speech invoked among certain leading political figures in Africa at the time, the speech, in no doubt, established a critical foundation that was necessary for the unity of African. Nkrumah, through his forceful rhetoric, woke up the continent to speed up the liberation process.

Conclusion

Nkrumah's own fight in the Gold Coast became a rhetorical exemplar to the freedom fighters who had gathered in Accra. He had, by his examples, pointed to them the way and given his audience a sense of direction. Through his examples, he took a huge step on the Pan-African stage. He used the speech to clearly highlight his credibility to both his immediate African and remote international audiences. His rhetorical contribution on the liberation of Africa will later earn him an international space for the deliberation of the colonial question in Africa. In Accra, Nkrumah demonstrated his rhetorical prowess and showed his ability to provide leadership to the masses of freedom fighters ready to lead "a final assault upon Imperialism and Colonialism."

At the AACP Nkrumah was confronted with a unique rhetorical audience. He needed to persuade the delegates and, therefore, the rhetorical strategies needed to be multi-layered. As Party Chairman, Nkrumah subsumed his Prime Ministerial position under the CPP. In a sense, he reconstituted the meeting into a CPP meeting, thereby turning the audience into party members who had gathered for the purpose of deliberating on party strategy on Africa's decolonisation. Nkrumah indirectly invoked the success of the CPP in Ghana. He, therefore, presented the CPP, under his leadership, as the model that can offer the strategies for Africa's freedom.

Again, Nkrumah applied civil religion through an invocation of Christian tradition. He cast his audience, in symbolic terms, into his disciples to gather at his feet for eternal political principles which were to edify them to become “whole” in their search to free their countries from colonialism. Nkrumah situated his political leadership in Africa in a pseudo-religious context and changed the setting of his address into a spiritual one where freedom fighters who had gathered in Accra were made ready to go out into the rest of Africa to spread Nkrumah’s “good news” of the decolonisation of Africa. Through rhetoric, Nkrumah initiated his continental disciples to spread the gospel of African redemption from imperialism.

In another context, the speech turned the political deliberative gathering metaphorically into a military unit in preparation for warfare. This key symbolism casts the freedom fighters, once again, within the appropriate frame for the advancement of decolonisation in Africa. Lastly, Nkrumah used the speech to take stock of Africa’s journey to freedom and celebrated the gains made so far in Ghana and beyond. The speech used the successes in Pan-Africanism and Ghana as an inspirational tool for the daunting task ahead. All in all, Nkrumah used his address at the AACP as a timely rhetorical intervention in pursuance of the ultimate freedom of Africans.

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