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The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire in Africa

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The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire in Africa

By

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Committee in charge:

Professor James Vernon, Chair
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Abstract

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This dissertation is a study of British theater, publishing, and broadcasting in East and West Africa from the 1930s to the 1970s. Although traditional histories of the British Empire stop in the 1960s I argue that a cultural version of empire gained momentum during colonial independence and persisted for decades after. While historians of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East have studied the reinvention of empire after 1919 through international mandates and development regimes, they have ignored the cultural project that was vital in giving new forms of legitimacy to British imperialism. During the 1930s Britain introduced broadcasting services, publication bureaus, and film units into its African colonies under the rubric of colonial development. Over the following decades an increasing number of British organizations became involved in projecting Britain's influence and the English language through theater, radio, and mass-produced print. The organizations ranged from official institutions, such as the Colonial Office and the British Council, to non-state forms of overseas representation, such as the BBC and Oxford University Press. As the colonies moved closer to independence, British interventions in theater, publishing, and broadcasting collided with anti-colonial pressures abroad and at home; yet, these particular forms of British representation persisted beyond independence into the postcolonial period.

In short, Britain used the domain of culture to maintain its imperial influence after the end of formal political control. My study looks at the cultural work of a variety of forms of mass media, and I use Africa – a central locale of the decolonizing British Empire and the late Cold War – to examine its role. Africa's postcolonial public sphere was shaped by the cultural project of late empire not least because it engaged a variety of African agents and agencies who in turn sought to make cultural imperialism history. My larger project, therefore, leads to thinking about the cultural politics of the contemporary world and how the West continues to reach global audiences today.

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Acknowledgements

I saved this as the last section of the project to write and I do it with a sense of finishing one journey and starting another. I am happy for the opportunity to express my enormous appreciation for all the people who have contributed to my getting here. They've offered all the support and encouragement I ever could ask for and should take some credit for the chapters that follow. Any faults that remain are entirely my own.

I arrived in Berkeley seven years ago (almost to this day) without knowing very much about what graduate school and finishing a PhD would entail. It wasn't easy, but I got through both, and that is due in large part to the generosity and commitment of my adviser James Vernon. Throughout this process James has believed in where I was headed and has provided the right balance of patience, encouragement, and insight to help me get there. His sense of the attributes that make a good scholar inspire those around him, and I thank him for all his engagement over these years.

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It is with pride I say I come from the British Studies community at Berkeley and I attribute much of my thinking about the field to the reading groups, workshops, and conferences I have been part of there. I have particularly benefited from my supportive and challenging group of colleagues, including Jeff Schauer, Radhika Natarajan, Tehila Sasson, Sam Wetherell, Grahame Foreman, Riyad Koya, Caroline Shaw, and Penny Ismay, who all lent me their time again and again. In Berkeley I also met a group of fellow travelers and friends I will always be able to talk history with. In particular, Nora

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The ideas in this project developed in part through questions and feedback from all the different conference audiences in Britain and the United States that heard it. I am especially grateful to the participants of the Ninth Annual Decolonization Seminar in Washington, DC, whose discussions got me excited about the work on decolonization we are going to see in the future. I also want to express deep thanks to Jordanna Bailkin and Philippa Levine, who set examples in both their scholarship and their mentorship that I can only hope to follow.

The most fun part of this project was the research, which took me from Berkeley to London, Nairobi, Accra, and Austin. It was both an adventure and a grind and it would not have been possible without the support of three University of California, Berkeley centers. The Center for British Studies and the Institute of International Studies provided dissertation grants that allowed me to spend the time I needed in the British archives and follow all the unexpected leads I came across. The Center for African Studies provided two grants to do research in East and West Africa and also administered the African language program that allowed me to study Kiswahili in Berkeley and Mombasa. As I wrote up my research I was fortunate to receive support from the History department and the University of California Center for New Racial Studies, which made the finished product possible.

During my research I received help and insight from the archivists and staff at all the collections and archives I visited. I want to express my particular appreciation for Trish Hayes at the BBC Written Archives Centre for vetting all the external services files that I requested and Martin Maw at the OUP archive whose answers helped me discover all the reasons to add publishing to my project. In Kenya I received an enormous amount of assistance from Richard Ambani, who has an institutional knowledge of the Kenya National Archives that cannot be matched. I also want to thank the staff of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, Oxford University Press Eastern Africa, and Ghana Broadcasting Corporation for granting me permission to come to their work and sift through their various records and files. In speaking about doing research abroad, there are a few individuals who deserve special mention for their generosity. Jane Judd and Brian Zelly opened their home to me for each of my many trips to London and helped spell the loneliness that research abroad could sometimes carry.

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Chapter One

Introduction:
The British cultural project in Africa

In the middle of the twentieth century the British Empire went in search of new audiences to whom it could explain itself. This dissertation examines the production and distribution of British plays, books, and broadcasts in Africa from the 1930s to the 1970s. It shows how drama, publishing, and broadcasting were meant to be means through which Britain cemented itself in its colonies and somehow saved its empire.

In the following chapter I will introduce the topic and argument behind this work, "the cultural project of the late British Empire in Africa." I begin by placing British overseas representation within historical and contemporary understandings of public diplomacy and development. Next I look at the ways historians have explained Britain and its empire in the twentieth century, highlighting the deficiencies in the different narratives that my project addresses. I show how the cultural work I look at appears at a specific moment in the history of British imperialism: the late empire. This is one of the historical and methodological interventions I will describe in the third section of this introduction. The last section is a chapter breakdown that explains how British culture functioned in colonial and postcolonial Africa.

What was the cultural project of the late British Empire?

In this dissertation I argue that a cultural version of empire gained momentum during colonial independence and persisted for decades after. Although historians of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East have studied the reinvention of empire after 1919 through international mandates and development regimes, they have ignored the cultural project that was vital in giving new forms of legitimacy to British imperialism. During the 1930s Britain introduced drama performances, publication bureaus, broadcasting services, and film units into its African colonies under the rubric of colonial development. Over the following decades an increasing number of British organizations became involved in projecting Britain's influence and the English language through theater, radio, film, and mass-produced print. The organizations ranged from government-sponsored institutions, such as the British Council and the BBC, to non-state forms of overseas representation, such as missionary societies and private businesses. As the colonies moved closer to independence, British interventions in drama, publishing, broadcasting, and film collided with anti-colonial pressures abroad and at home; yet, these particular forms of British representation persisted beyond independence into the postcolonial period.

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In short, Britain used the domain of culture to maintain its imperial influence after the end of formal political control. But Britain's cultural work in Africa cannot be contained to straightforward cultural diplomacy.[1] The first reason for this was the complicated distinction between state and non-state activities and the array of British interests that became involved in delivering culture to Africa. Political scientists distinguish between cultural relations and cultural diplomacy by saying the former grows naturally and organically, without government intervention, while the latter is shaped and directed by the government.[2] I use the history of British activities in Africa to show how difficult it is to separate one from the other. Trade interactions, migration, book circulation, and communications all first appeared between Britain and Africa without state direction. Britain was often satisfied to let these forms of cultural relations proceed without intervention – it was an obvious way to conduct empire on the cheap. At other key moments the British state saw an imperative to intervene and advance its political and economic interests more directly. One key moment was in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when I start my study. I show the growing degree to which the British government invested itself in cultural relations with specific parts of the empire starting in this period. My narrative does not however depict a straightforward progression of increasing levels of state action. Instead, the government's involvement in certain cultural fields prompted the emergence of whole other fields, which attracted greater numbers of British actors from more and more varied interests. It was the wide array of British interests – state and non-state – that saw reason to form ties with Africa that characterized the cultural project of late empire.

A lot of the particularities of British cultural relations stem back to presumptions in this early period that a heavy-handed state was not only distasteful but untrustworthy. Some of the organizations I look at, including the British Council and the BBC External Services, were independent bodies that received public funds. They represented the British government's attempt to bridge its competing desires for control and distance. Institutional histories of these organizations (almost always authored from within) set out to prove the valuable contributions they have made and continue to make to British public diplomacy.[3] Academic studies centered

[1] For this discussion, I rely on Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," in "Public Diplomacy in a Changing World," eds. Geoffrey Cowan and Nicholas J. Cull, special issue, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (March 2008): 31-54, doi: 10.1177/0002716207311952. I realize Cull's taxonomy separates cultural diplomacy (i.e. the British Council) from international broadcasting (i.e. the BBC World Service). He does so based on the special requirements of news broadcasting, but in my discussion here I speak of the BBC's culturally oriented programs so it is appropriate to group it under the cultural diplomacy label.

[2] Richard T. Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Dulles, VA: Brassey Press, 2005). The British Council buys into this distinction, but puts itself on the other side of the fence than Cull or I do; the council feels its work is more aptly termed "cultural relations," not "cultural diplomacy," on the basis it is independent of government. Tim Rivera, *Distinguishing Cultural Relations from Cultural Diplomacy: The British Council's Relationship with Her Majesty's Government*, USC Center on Public Diplomacy Perspectives series (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2015).

[3] Harold Nicolson, "The British Council 1934-1955," in *Twenty-first Anniversary Report of the British Council* (London: British Council, 1955); Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984); Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld and

on these organizations also evaluate their effectiveness while demonstrating a preoccupation with explaining the relationship between the government and British cultural diplomacy.[4] Looking outside Britain to other global powers in the period, that trend seems to be common for institutional histories of public diplomacy.[5] In each case historians rely on the form and content of overseas information work to speak for the national character of the state as a whole. For Britain, the fact that two branches of the information apparatus were bodies that had operational independence became a way of explaining the uniqueness of British cultural diplomacy. Britain celebrated how the British Council and the BBC generated greater amounts of credibility among their audiences who realized they were not listening to a government voice.[6] My project shows how proponents of the cultural project did not see distance from government as their only route to credibility. Instead, the British Council, the BBC, and Oxford University Press all rooted their authenticity in their closeness to cultural authorities.[7] This does not mean government influence drops out of the picture, but it does move to the background. Instead of questioning an organization's independence, the more important questions to ask are how it presented its authority to audiences in other parts of the world and how the basis for that authority changed over time.

The agencies I examine, whether they did work in broadcasting, publishing, art, or film, pushed to have a role in international relations by alluding to the versatility of cultural work and how it filled many of Britain's needs all at once. In addition to serving Britain's diplomatic and strategic needs, cultural work could also further Britain's new developmentalist agenda. Historians have shown how the idea of colonial development emerged in Britain in the first decades of the century, when it was presented as a neomercantilist solution to problems such as high unemployment in Britain. The Colonial Development Act of 1929 set up a mechanism to fund colonial industries, provided they remained complementary to the metropolitan economy. But in the 1930s colonial living conditions and severe economic depression exacerbated social

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Nicolson, 1982); Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside Books, 1992).

[4] Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961-1995); Alban Webb, *London Calling: Britain, the BBC, and the Cold War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Simon Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012).

[5] For the United States see Gary D. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: The BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1956-1964* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1996); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battle of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency, 1945-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). More recent work has pushed outside institutional histories and examined cultural components of Cold War public diplomacy. See Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Claire Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[6] Briggs, *History of Broadcasting, Vol. 3: The War of Words*; Walker, *Skyful of Freedom*; Donaldson*, The British Council*.

[7] Cull ("Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories") argues this is how cultural diplomacy derives its credibility. The same is true for the cultural activities of an international broadcaster, while in the area of news it derives its credibility from evidence of good journalistic practices.

unrest and threatened Britain's hold on its territories in areas such as the Caribbean and Africa. By speaking to colonial welfare, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 was a departure from earlier policy; now, improving the standards of living of colonial subjects occupied a prominent position in imperial ideology, even if it was essentially a defensive operation.[8]

My period of study is the same late colonial and early postcolonial period as the building of the developmentalist state in Africa. As mentioned above, this state started in the 1930s from a particular crisis over the future of European imperialism. The concept of development received an enormous boost after the Second World War, when it increasingly stood in for the West's active project of intervention in the Third World in the context of the Cold War and decolonization. Development generated a discourse that lasted beyond political independence. In the 1960s and 1970s postcolonial African nations continued to understand themselves as underdeveloped and confronted the question of how to develop along narrow, Eurocentric terms.[9] That discourse appears throughout my topic, in which I describe how British cultural forms persisted in postcolonial Africa despite growing criticism. Like other historians writing after the post-development critique, I expose the contingent and experimental nature of British development in Africa. I show the practice of development in the late colonial world could serve to challenge imperial hegemony and British models of development were not self-evident, but uncertain and unrealized.[10]

British officials believed the cultural work of development would cement their values in soon-to-be-independent Africa. This was the era of the Cold War, when British rule was equated specifically with a model of liberal modernity. British development projects characterized new confidence in the potential of a modern empire that was peculiarly British and rooted in the individualism, democracy, rule of law, and capitalism that Britain produced and relied upon. There was still the matter of devising development that could successfully accomplish the work of liberal modernization. By the mid-1930s economic and political conditions around the empire were more contentious than ever, and so the British turned to culture. Among the projects that received Colonial Development and Welfare funds, the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service, the East African Literature Bureau, and the Colonial Film Unit are but a few examples that demonstrate how British cultural forms were increasingly incorporated into development aims.

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[8] Stephen Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914-1940* (London: Frank Cass, 1984); Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[9] Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and the Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[10] Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard, "Introduction," and Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept," in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the history and the politics of knowledge*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007); John S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948).

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My dissertation describes a period when Britain discovered African audiences. I track that discovery by tracing when and how organizations such as the British Council, the BBC, and private publishing firms expanded their work into Africa. I show how these interests were fully aware of, and in fact reinforced, the colonies' rule of difference. Colonial rule segregated urban and rural populations through spatially defined rights and obligations that British cultural organizations were all too happy to take advantage of.[11] In this period the BBC and the British Council did not seek to displace African culture, just to keep it separate from the English culture they sought to spread. For example, British broadcasters in the 1930s and 1940s saw a place for African-language broadcasting, but felt it should be left to local authorities.[12] British culture mapped closely with the categories of race and class as another tool for differentiation within African society.

Whether or not the cultural project was successful would depend on how Britain constructed and understood its audience. Work in cultural diplomacy and development share the key process of identifying specific populations at the exclusion of others. That must be kept in mind throughout the following chapters, especially as I describe how Britain sought to attract what it called the global audience. Whatever Britain called this new audience, the same mechanisms of dividing and distinguishing populations remained in place. They were born out a particular imperial crisis and shaped by a particular experience of decolonization. The next section describes how the cultural project of late empire aligns with the histories of modern Britain and decolonization.

When? Britain in the twentieth century and the history of decolonization

My topic confronts two absences in the field of twentieth-century Britain history. First, narratives of British history become increasingly insular as they move through the period of my study. Historians of interwar Britain have suggested attention turned away from external affairs towards internal, domestic life in their period. Historians of postwar Britain, by focusing on the welfare state, are no less insular. They have suggested that as the twentieth century was marked by imperial contraction, empire correspondingly became less relevant to metropolitan life. My project looks beyond signposts of imperial decline to instead ask what else Britain was doing overseas. My research shows that the times when the empire has been allowed to drop out of British history are actually moments Britain was working harder than ever to establish a relationship in its colonial territories.

That gets to the second absence in the scholarship that my topic addresses, which is the abrupt stop in histories of the British Empire at the moment the Union Jack came down in the colonies. Imperial historians have been satisfied for the most part to equate that symbolic act with the end of decolonization, as if colonialism could be undone that quickly. Meanwhile, African history scholarship also sees the transfer of power as a rupture, this time between

[11] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[12] K. W. Blackburne (Colonial Office), verbatim report of evidence to the broadcasting committee, 9 Nov 1949, National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew, CO 875/71/1 (hereafter cited as UKNA).

colonial and postcolonial periods. The African field is better at showing how colonial institutions, policies, and forms of knowledge did not dissipate overnight, but both it and the imperial history field suggest the British-African relationship was confined to decolonization and would break apart whenever decolonization ended. My project does more than simply adjust or extend the timeframe of the end of empire. I show that British organizations adapted to the circumstances of late empire in ways that allowed for the cultural project to outlive decolonization.

Many of the institutions discussed in detail in the following chapters had their origins in interwar Britain: political, economic, and cultural. Coming out of the Great War it appeared Britain might at last have to address the political demands of recently empowered groups, such as the labor and feminist movements in Britain and nationalist demands from Ireland, India, the West Indies, and the Middle East. By the end of the next decade, these groups had been quieted to various degrees, at least temporarily.[13] In their place, the British electorate opted for Stanley Baldwin and a Conservative-dominated government that promised fiscal responsibility and protection against the perceived threats of communism and fascism.[14] The 1930s could then be seen through the image of England that Baldwin related: one that was inward looking, suburban, and a far cry from the earlier phase of imperial supremacy.[15]

But if the political system showed signs of stability, the British economy proved how false those signs were. Since the start of the century the British had not been able to deny the presence of other economic superpowers; however, the fiscal effects of war made it much more difficult for them to compete with nations such as the United States. At the start of the 1930s Britain had not resolved its war debt or rising unemployment. The government was forced to abandon the gold standard in 1931 and adopt imperial preference in 1932, thus fundamentally altering the relationship between Britain and the different parts of its empire.[16] This was the same moment Britain embraced colonial development, or the idea of investing in infrastructure and industry in its empire. It did so according to the neomercantilist promise colonies could now prop up the British economy to an even greater extent than ever before.[17]

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[13] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[14] Jon Lawrence, "Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 3 (Sept 2003): 557-89; Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 259-293; Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[15] The best articulations of this view are in literary criticism that focuses on late modernist literature from the period. See Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature, and Conservatism Between the Wars* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[16] Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption, and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[17] Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*.

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The contrast between Britain's supposed political contentment and its halted economic growth was captured by the depictions of a cultural divide between North and South that suddenly appear in this period.[18] Realizations that large portions of the population were specifically excluded from southeastern suburban life were mapped onto larger concerns about the overall deterioration of British culture. Critics across the political spectrum assessed how both the working classes and the middle classes were falling prey to massification and Americanization.[19] Some called for public interventions that would re-educate Britons and elevate their tastes and practices to the levels they should be.[20] All of this adds up to show the interwar decades were neither a period of relative contentment, nor the moment Britain began to turn away from its empire. Instead, it was the very opposite: this was another moment Britain looked *to* its empire as the thing that could restore it to greatness once again.

It was no accident that in the late 1920s a new set of ideas and practices emerged in the British Empire that gave new legitimacy to the imperial project. Scholars who have examined this shift describe different types of interdependence in various parts of the empire. The idea of a Third British Empire took visible form in the late 1920s and imagined a cohesive community between Britain and the dominions, or the self-governing parts of the British world-system. In order to preserve imperial unity Britain was willing to concede constitutional control; in this light, the Montagu Chelmsford reforms in 1919, the Balfour Declaration of 1926, and the Statute of Westminster in 1931 signaled political strength, not weakness, in the imperial system.[21] Meanwhile, the adoption of Imperial Preference and the emergence of the sterling bloc sustained the economic needs of the empire.[22] But political and economic strategy alone cannot sufficiently capture the dynamic of this stage of British imperialism. Instead, the imperial system rested upon cultural self-confidence, or a series of powerful assumptions constructed around British ideals and practices. British cultural ties between different parts of the Anglo-world were institutionalized through bodies such as the Empire Press Union, the Imperial Relations Trust, and the BBC Empire Service. Although dominion status represented the reconciliation between national autonomy and imperial identity, the synthetic power of the

[18] J. B. Priestley, *English Journey* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1934); George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937); Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, *Mass-Observation*, Mass Observation series no. 1 (London: Frederick Muller, 1937); Ross McKibbin, *Class and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[19] F. R. Leavis, *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1930); Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Changing Patterns in English Mass Culture* (Fair Lawn, NJ: Essential Books, 1957); Priestley, *English Journey*; Light, *Forever England*; D. L. Le Mahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain between the Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[20] John Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924).

[21] John Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in British Politics," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol IV: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64-87.

[22] P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2000* (New York: Longman, 2002).

relationship was always imagined as stemming from Britain. In sum, the operating principle of the Third British Empire was the shared supremacy of British culture.[23]

The Second World War required Britain to mobilize all its people and resources in home and empire alike. Dominion and colonial populations rallied around an idealized image of Britain as the home of liberal rule and democracy, in contrast to the totalitarianism on display in the Axis powers.[24] That contrast was reinforced to them by newspapers, pamphlets, and radio broadcasts – all part of Britain's extensive information campaign.[25] Information was only one piece of the enormous expansion of the British state over the six years of war.[26] Despite the increasing intrusiveness of the state into their lives, Britons would remember the war as a moment of national unity, however fraught its inclusiveness actually was.[27]

Britons' collective memory of national unity carried into the postwar consensus between the political parties over the establishment of a universal welfare state and the mixed-and-managed economy.[28] Revisionist historians have since amended that record, and they do include Britain's position in the empire among other economic and social issues the Labour and Conservative parties diverged on.[29] They still fail to acknowledge the degree British national unity was built around imperial rule of different and the degree British welfare was enabled by colonial development overseas.[30] In the 1940s the concept of welfare was central to the political conversation in Africa as well as in Britain; however, welfare in Africa meant something very different from what it meant in Britain. Without taking the empire and colonial development into account, the construction of the welfare state was presented as a metropolitan story that continued the inward turn from the interwar decades when Britain confronted its declining global power. Even if Britain's adoption of Keynesian employment methods and focus on national health were strictly reactions to Britain's continued slip, telling the history in that manner produced a narrow understanding of British welfare. Only very

[23] Darwin, "A Third British Empire?"

[24] Marika Sherwood, *World War II Colonies and Colonials* (Oare, UK: Savannah Press, 2013); G. O. Olusanya, *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria* (London: Evans Brothers for the University of Lagos, 1973); David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa and the Second World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[25] Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

[26] David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources, and Experts in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); also see the work of the Mass Observation project.

[27] Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[28] Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London: Cape, 1975).

[29] The revisionist version is captured in *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945-64*, eds. Harriet Jones and Michael Kandiah (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

[30] A study of an earlier period that is successful at showing how British identities relied on understandings of difference in the empire is Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

recently have historians started to recognize the history of postwar British welfare through the lens of decolonization. Led by Jordanna Bailkin, historians have started to re-think the fundamental premise of the welfare state and the uneven ethic of community that supported it.[31] This dissertation comes out of that approach and brings the history of decolonization back into the history of twentieth-century Britain.

So, what was happening in the colonial empire at this time? Global recession followed by global war forced Britain to take seriously for the first time the labor conditions and standards of living in its African colonies. Britain shoehorned questions of welfare into the category of "development," beginning with the commitments of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. Here the colonial government committed metropolitan resources to education, health, housing, and infrastructure with the aim of producing a healthier, more efficient, and more predictable workforce. Correspondingly, the numbers of administrators, planners, and experts that comprised the colonial state jumped dramatically from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, a period that would later be termed the "second colonial occupation."[32] Scholarship on this phase of British rule in Africa describes it as an attempt to give new legitimacy to colonialism amidst shifting global opinion. It has also been careful to expose the unevenness of the development structure, which did not attempt to diversify the export-based colonial economies.[33] British colonial development in the beginning of the postwar period demonstrates that Britain did not see its empire ending any time soon.[34] This remained true even as administrators received more and more scrutiny from the populations they governed. After the Second World War African populations had a new set of expectations about the state and how it should maximize productive resources and provide social services. Like with the welfare state in Britain, colonial development introduced a relationship between state and society that could be a rally to opposition just a much as a premise for consensus.

Though most often studied by different scholars who address different historical trajectories, the similarities between the developmentalist state in colonial Africa and the welfare state in Britain are difficult to ignore. Discussions of British social democracy that don't consider the empire are thus missing an enormous opportunity. Through the construction and management of the welfare state, conduct of politics in Britain changed to be more technical than ideological, while British rule was moving in the same direction in administration of the

[31] Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012); Radhika Anita Natarajan, "Organizing Community: Commonwealth Citizens and Social Activism in Britain, 1948-1982," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013); Anna Bocking-Welch, "The British Public in a Shrinking World: Civic Engagement with the Declining Empire, 1960-1970," (PhD diss., University of York, 2012).

[32] D. A. Low and John Lonsdale, "Introduction," in *History of East Africa, Volume Three*, eds. D. A. Low and Alison Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

[33] Michael Havinden and David Meredith, *Colonialism and Development: Britain and its Tropical Colonies, 1850-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[34] Frederick Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective," *Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 167-96. This contradicts R. D. Pearce, who sees the decade 1938-1948 to be the turning point in British official thinking towards empire, saying that this was when Britain committed itself to African independence (*The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy, 1938-1948* [London: Frank Cass, 1982]).

colonies.[35] In addition, in the decades after the war the British government became more responsible for the success or failure of the economy – both in Britain and in the colonies – than it had been ever before.

Narratives of the 1950s and 1960s mostly maintain the division of labor between postwar Britain and decolonization, but neither scholarship adequately explains British experiences of the Cold War. Histories of 1950s Britain show Conservative governments correcting some of the hastily adopted changes from the immediate postwar and installing a fragile affluence and family values in their place.[36] There was a sense of denying inevitable change, in this case the permissive society that would be identified with the next decade.[37] Historians of the late empire in Africa also have trouble with the 1950s, struggling to get from transformations in the practice of empire in the 1940s to Harold Macmillan's winds of change speech in 1960. Britain's Cold War story mostly appears in the evolution of the Anglo-American relationship.[38]

America had cast a shadow over Britain's practice of empire for a while, but Britain had been able to hold off the United States' disapproval until the middle of the 1950s. Even Suez was not the end-all to America's support of British imperialism, as events in the African colonies would show in the next decade. In other ways though, the Suez crisis exhibited how Britain's different attempts to re-legitimize imperialism were not working.[39] Imperial unity from the interwar decades was supposed to function through the (renamed) Commonwealth, which included non-white nations now as well. The Commonwealth was a fragile construct against attractive American culture, the strength of the American dollar, and the nuclear capacity of the American military.[40] Meanwhile, in the colonial empire colonized populations' scrutiny of European development hardened into anti-colonial nationalism during the 1950s. Britain was forced to declare the extent it was willing to go to hold on to key colonial possessions. This was on display very clearly in the security regime and violence they had to impose on the Kenyan and Malayan populations in the mid-1950s.

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[35] Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) traces the development of the technocratic ethos in postwar Britain. For the empire, see Sabine Clarke, "A Technocratic Imperial State? The Colonial Office and Scientific Research, 1940-1960," *Twentieth Century British History* 18, no. 4 (2007): 453-80, doi: 10.1093/tcbh/hwm017; and Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*.

[36] Peter Hennessy, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London: Penguin, 2007); David Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951–1957* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009).

[37] Mark Jarvis, *Conservative Governments, Morality, and Social Change in Affluent Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

[38] Some examples of this are Ian Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship: Britain's Deterrent and America, 1957-1962* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Matthew Jones, *Conflict and Confrontation in South East Asia, 1961-1965: Britain, the United States, Indonesia and the Creation of Malaysia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[39] Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[40] Catherine R. Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area: From Devaluation to Convertibility in the 1950s* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Introduction: The British cultural project in Africa

There is no doubt that Britain's plans for imperial unity and colonial development and welfare had not worked out the ways it had intended. Indeed, confrontations such as Mau Mau and Suez were determinant in both how and when Britain gave up political rule in Africa. But I want to emphasize there was a whole other story going on too. At the same time as the state of emergency in Kenya, British organizations were also staging plays at the British Council's inter-racial center in Nairobi, publishing schoolbooks on East African oral histories, and transmitting educational and cultural programs over the BBC. These activities are representative of what I refer to as the cultural project of late empire. They were informed by and intersected with the political and economic conditions of late colonial rule. However, as my dissertation shows, they were not confined to British colonialism, and instead continued past it. Cultural work in Africa opens a perspective on Britain's experience of the Cold War that is not purely strategic or economic.

In most British histories, decolonization was a political project that occurred mostly overseas, cut off from Britons' attention and daily life. When empire reappears, it is in a very specific context; namely, the appearance of commonwealth migrants in Britain. Before Jordanna Bailkin exposed the wide range of global forces that shaped the welfare state, the impact of decolonization was filtered through descriptions of race and national identity in Britain. Despite its much older history, standard accounts of colonial migration start in 1948, the year of the Nationality Act and the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*. Both were profound evidence empire was critical to Britain in the postwar.[41] The array of factors that propelled migration to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s demonstrated that commonwealth migration was just as a much a process of empire as it was a consequence of decolonization. The presence of a small but growing black population in Britain forced Britain to confront empire and decolonization in a direct manner. Race was one of the ways welfare behaved as a means for differentiation, just as understandings of development functioned overseas.[42] The race riots in Notting Hill and Nottingham in 1958 injected the topic of race into the political conversation in Britain, where it was soon wrapped up with debates about decolonization.[43] Last, commonwealth migration provided one of few avenues scholars have looked down for evidence of the end of empire in British culture.[44]

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[41] Winston James and Clive Harris, eds., *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain* (New York: Verso, 1993).
[42] Radhika Anita Natarajan, "Organizing Community"; Virginia A. Noble, *Inside the Welfare State: Foundations of Policy and Practice in Postwar Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[43] Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[44] Bill Schwarz, ed., *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Amanda M. Bidnall, "West Indian Interventions at the Heart of the Cultural Establishment: Edric Connor, Pearl Connor, and the BBC," *Twentieth Century British History* 24, no. 1 (2013): 58-83. Works that show how empire constituted a crucial component of British life during decolonization include Stuart Ward, ed., *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Introduction: The British cultural project in Africa

If Britain and its empire were mutually constituted, and that remained true through the entire span of imperialism, how does it affect a history of the end of empire? The answer might lie in comparison between British and African histories of decolonization.

The unremitting empire that I depict does not square with the field's prevailing image of the British Empire as a thing that stops with the transfer of power. Overviews of the British Empire traditionally tell a story of rise and fall, and choose to cut off the fall at a moment in the 1960s.[45] Along the way, Britain tried to hold on by linking itself to the dominions, but it could not withstand the rise of America or the loss of India, which each accelerated the pace the British Empire reached its end. Africa is the gaping hole in that narrative. By the middle of the twentieth century the British Empire had been reconstituted around Africa. In the 1940s and 1950s Britain believed African labor and resources could fill the void left by India. Different colonies in Africa occupied different places in the British imagination. For example, Kenya and territories in southern Africa offered another chance for settler colonialism.[46] Meanwhile, Britain could scrutinize West African colonies such as Nigeria and the Gold Coast to measure the success of colonial development and local government initiatives. Under the microscope, Africa (and the Middle East) became the places Britain clearly saw evidence of superpowers' rising influence in the 1950s. Also, security crises and colonial violence from Africa reverberated among certain parts of the population in Britain.[47]

If Africa represented another "last chance" for the British Empire, historians have said its commitments there prompted a fast exit.[48] That was sometimes due to the even greater ideological and economic influence wielded by the superpowers, whom which Britain could not compete, or growing nationalist sentiment that Britain could suppress if it wanted to, but now saw better reason not to.[49] In either case, both sides of the political spectrum in Britain were in agreement Britain should grant independence to its West and East African colonies in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The left had adopted the language of self-determination in addition to international cooperation.[50] Meanwhile, the Conservative-led government saw African

[45] A sample of imperial history surveys demonstrate this point in their titles alone: Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Books on British decolonization most often place the end of the period in the 1960s: Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); A. N. Porter and A. J. Stockwell, *British Imperial Policy and Decolonization, 1938-1964* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1987); Frank Heinlein*, British Government Policy and Decolonisation, 1945-1963: Scrutinising the Official Mind* (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

[46] Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*; Jean Patricia Smith, "Settler Colonialism after Empire: Race and the Politics of British Migration to Southern Africa, 1939-1980" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013).

[47] Webster, *Englishness and Empire*.

[48] John Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire*, ed. Anil Seal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 73-154.

[49] Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*.

[50] Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics.*

independence as the logical fulfillment of Britain's imperial mission.[51] In this telling – where Africa is the central locale of the late Cold War and decolonizing empire – the end of the British Empire is still shown as Britain withdrawing instead of being forced out. A closer look at African politics from the 1940s to the 1960s opens up some of flaws in that narrative.

African history as a field of its own right emerged during the same postwar period as colonial state expansion and the anti-colonial nationalism that rose in opposition. Inside the struggle for political and economic change, the first generation of African history was shaped by nation-building agendas.[52] After the Second World War African populations were not seduced by the promise of new health, education, and welfare services. Instead, they read the developmentalist rhetoric and state expansion as a sign of a weaker, not a stronger, colonial power, which laborers seized upon through general strikes in Nigeria in 1945, Mombasa and Dar es Salaam in 1947, and Southern Rhodesia and the Gold Coast in 1948. The strikes forced colonial officials to reexamine their image of African society as rural and tribal and instead recognize the political power of urban workers.[53] The unrest in the Gold Coast in the late 1940s demonstrated how Africans realized the importance of seizing control of the political reform process. British officials tried to stick to their ruling fiction of self-government (albeit an accelerated version), but in doing so they opened the door for politicians such as Kwame Nkrumah who could mobilize popular support.[54] In other British colonies, such as where there was a settler population to protect, the colonial government resorted to fierce repression in attempt to hold onto its rule. In Kenya in the 1950s the British colonial government responded to the Mau Mau uprising by declaring a state of emergency and promoting a campaign of protracted violence. Those illiberal practices starkly revealed how unsustainable colonial rule was.[55] African nationalist histories have exposed how the expansion of the colonial state in this period was only an illusion; rather, Britain was increasingly forced to bow to popular demands.

But the fact transfer of rule was a product of negotiation with urban elites (and not rural insurgents) paints decolonization as a more mediated and uncertain process. Decolonization was not a two-man contest, where nationalist liberators took on the colonial power. Instead, as one historical survey described, it was a "mosaic of political struggles *within* African society"

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[51] Harold Macmillan, *Pointing the Way, 1959-1961* (London: Macmillan, 1972); Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[52] For examples from the first nationalist wave of African historiography see in particular the scholarship coming out of Ibadan in the 1950s and 1960s, such as Kenneth Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) and the scholarship of J. F. Ade Ajayi. In addition, see A. Adu Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the western Sudan, 1788-1861* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Though most of these scholars focused in period of initial European contact, the nationalist themes were picked up by non-academics such as Basil Davidson and Thomas Hodgkin who made the themes relevant to current political struggle.

[53] Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society.*

[54] Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana: 1946-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[55] Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005); David M. Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005).

where colonialism served only as the background to some of the largest and most lasting political battles.[56] Before the realization of African independence, African politicians such as Kwame Nkrumah sought to establish their popular legitimacy in the eyes of the colonial power.[57] To secure an appearance of popular support, so-called nationalist leaders had to disarm their rivals, dismantle alternative political structures, and maneuver around divisive issues. In the Gold Coast, Nkrumah provided a clear illustration of these tactics, when he waged political battle with the Asante nationalist party and subjugate the chieftaincy into his national agenda.[58] Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya were other places where ethnic, religious, and class divisions determined the tone and shape of African politics in the lead-up to independence.[59] Although the British identified several of the power struggles as originating in the pre-colonial period, social divisions had almost always been exacerbated if not outright created by the nature of colonial rule.[60]

Though Britain was an outsider in these clashes, its presence was always felt: as the governing power, Britain still dictated some of the terms of African independence.[61] At a moment when the balance of global power seemed dangerously precarious, Britain sought to identify moderate leaders in Africa whom they could trust with British-African relationships in the postcolonial era. However, as the path to self-government played out in the 1950s, the colonial power had to settle for the candidates they got. That left Britain in the position of convincing itself that men such as Nkrumah, Obote, and Kenyatta were the best partners it could hope for – perhaps even the partners it sought all along. A pattern emerged where British officials latched on to the popular legitimacy that those figures constructed, as well as their educated, elite backgrounds, and used it to re-form their impressions. African independence was not a prescribed product; rather, it fell out of the complicated interaction between Britain's adherence to the principles of self-government and the construction of popular legitimacy in an African nation. Nor did independence end this interplay; the same process continued into the postcolonial period, when Britain and other international powers yielded great influence in African decision-making.

Thus we can see Britain did not passively roll over to African nationalists or drop out of the picture after transfer of power in Africa. Instead, other international players, both superpower and not, joined Britain in the competition to build economic partnerships and

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[56] John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *Africa: A Very Short Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2007), 120.

[57] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Independence* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).

[58] Jean Marie Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951-1960* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

[59] James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958); Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*; Tabitha Kanogo*, Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905-1963* (London: James Currey, 1987).

[60] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

[61] See Cain and Hopkins (*British Imperialism*) for how Britain factored financial implications into negotiations over independence terms.

political alliances with African nations. The contrast between British and African histories of the end of British rule in Africa demonstrates the importance of looking to the years after the transfer of power when telling a history of empire.

Contributions and their significance

My dissertation represents three interventions into the fields of British and imperial history. First, this project breaks British cultural relations free of the political and institutional histories it has been confined in so far. What I call the cultural project comprises efforts from an array of official and non-official organizations and individuals. Even more importantly, British initiatives in Africa during the period of study relied on both old and new media. This dissertation looks closely at theater, publishing, and broadcasting, and could just as easily describe film. The relatively new media of radio, film, and mass-produced print shared the ability to spread language and traditions of expression across a vast space cheaply. The media was a crucial part of the message and reflected Britain's specific vision of modernity. In addition, many of the British actors that my project examines were involved in producing and disseminating broadcasts, publications, and films simultaneously, though they relied on a relatively small canon of culture. For example, in the 1960s the works of William Shakespeare were produced and distributed around Africa in performance, book, broadcast, and film forms. The same could be said of the works of African literary figures such as Wole Soyinka and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who enter the story partway through the period. In my study the cultural project spread across agencies and media forms but can be understood as a single project: a combined effort to forge cultural connections between Britain and Africa.

Second, it is only by examining all of these actors and media together that I am able to identify when the British cultural project emerged and when it changed. Those shifts help demarcate the period of late empire. I locate the origins of the cultural project to a particular moment in the twentieth century that saw tentative steps to accommodate nationalist movements and the reconfiguration of the imperial economy. Though we now call it the late empire, it was certainly not seen so at the time; rather, projecting British culture through plays, books, broadcasts, and films was an attempt to give new legitimacy to the imperial project so that it would continue.

If the beginning of the late empire is relatively clear, its end is less certain. My work is significant for the larger study of empire because it examines the period after British rule, a period that is not often included in traditional histories of empire. I demonstrate that the start of the postcolonial era represented another moment when the constituents of British imperialism were reconfigured in a way that gave new legitimacy to the imperial project. This time, organizations such as the BBC and Oxford University Press were trying to refashion themselves as equal parts global and British – a reflection of the simultaneous roles they sought to act in. That reconfiguration was the end of the late empire. It was more gradual than political independence (where most imperial histories choose to end) and it did not resort to relocating decolonization to the metropole (as histories of migrants and race in Britain often do.) By the

early 1970s, the reconfiguration was complete and the period of late empire had come to a close, although like all phases of empire it had lasting effects.

The final intervention my project makes is both historical and methodological. It identifies Africa as the central locale of the late Cold War and decolonizing British Empire. Africa's postcolonial public sphere was shaped by the cultural project of late empire not least because it engaged a variety of African agents and agencies that in turn sought to make cultural colonialism history. Telling this story demands the use of African archives – both official and non-official – and language. As I outline below, the next three chapters set up the cultural project of the late empire, detailing some of the metropolitan organizations and forms of culture that comprised it. The metropolitan perspective makes it difficult to do more than guess at the ways British culture functioned in Africa. It is only through the resulting critique – the subject of the final chapter – that I can draw conclusions about the types of engagement that characterized the whole period. The final section of this introduction will show how I plan to tell that story.

Chapter breakdown

In this dissertation Chapters Two, Three, and Four describe the period of late empire through Britain's work in drama export, book publishing, and broadcasting. Though the chapters examine different organizations and different media forms, they demonstrate together how the conditions of late empire and decolonization impacted the direction and manner of British cultural relations. Each chapter shows how the project latched on to the practice of British colonial development, why it attracted the participation of a wide range of British organizations, and how British culture and traditions of expression continued to spread in Africa after African independence.

Chapter Two introduces the objectives of the British cultural project by describing the efforts to promote William Shakespeare's plays in Africa from the 1930s to the 1960s. The chapter begins by explaining the work of the British Council, a quasi-state body established in the 1930s with the specific task of projecting British culture overseas. To promote national culture, the British Council first had to determine what that culture was. The council's officials and advisers relied on a canon that was for the most part English, "highbrow," and unchanging. The council all but ignored Africa for its first two decades, assuming that African audiences would not be attracted to this type of European elite culture. However, by the middle of the 1950s Britain saw why its old-fashioned approach to cultural relations was not effective in the Cold War and decolonizing world. The discussion shows how decolonization changed the mediation of British culture through drama export. The British Council continued to reach for William Shakespeare after African independence, but now sold Shakespeare as accessible and universal – key characteristics of the cultural identity Britain sought to project in the postcolonial period.

The "Shakespeare in Africa" chapter introduces the central themes of the next two chapters on publishing and broadcasting. By focusing on Shakespeare the chapter demonstrates how British actors defined the ideal types of British culture to introduce to

African audiences, as well as the types of British culture that they specifically excluded. Chapter One ends in the 1960s as British cultural authorities learned of African adaptations of Shakespeare. These versions prompted debates over the value of translation and demonstrated the competing interests that propelled the British cultural project in Africa after independence – subjects that would be taken up in more detail in the rest of the dissertation.

Chapter Three focuses on the history of British publishing in Africa to show how a range of metropolitan interests, each imaging a specific role for African literature, determined the development of regional publishing industries. The chapter looks closely at East Africa and uses editorial files and production lists to describe the three stages of the industry, from missionary presses, to a colonial development project, to African branches of metropolitan firms. It shows how book publishing fit naturally into the rhetoric of the civilizing mission and the practice of colonial development; however, as the industry grew over time it shifted away from publishing in the vernaculars to focus almost entirely on educational textbooks in English.

Chapter Four again shows how a new type of cultural project enabled the Third British Empire through the development agenda. This time it was the spreading of Britain's influence through the medium of wireless. This chapter relies upon production files, sound archives, and listener reports to demonstrate how the BBC African Service aimed to create programming that would attract and inform a wide range of audiences across the different regions of Africa. Over the following decades, as broadcasting became a domain of the Cold War, the broadcasters at the BBC African Service were forced to navigate between the principles of independent broadcasting and the needs of British overseas representation. How they accomplished this would form the basis on which British disinterestedness would be judged in the postcolonial period.

Together these three chapters describe when British cultural agencies started to focus their attention on Africa and measure their success by how they performed there. The initiatives I study all emerged in the early 1930s out of perceived crisis over the future of the imperial project. Through theater, print, and broadcast media, Britain sought to establish the English language and British traditions of expression in wider and wider parts of the world. Britain's early initiatives in these fields reflected interwar understandings of cultural relations both in their content and in the audiences they sought to attract. Africans were therefore impacted only indirectly. Over the 1940s Africa moved to the center of the British imperial imagination. This was the result of political changes to the shape of the empire as well as a new commitment to development. My research show how British officials interpreted those shifted in terms of their specific work. It was through the rhetoric and practice of colonial development that the British cultural project first entered Africa. The 1950s act as a key decade in each of these chapters because Britain realized it was fighting the Cold War the wrong way and in the wrong places. It fell to a specific set of cultural initiatives to save Britain's global prestige and their success would depend on the degree to which they attracted audiences in the colonies. Furthermore, Britain attached newfound importance to those audiences, not in the role of colonial subjects, but in the future role of postcolonial citizens. The British cultural project

pivoted towards areas such as Africa at the exact moment Britain recognized the end of its political rule there.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four each finish in the immediate period after African independence with Britain continuing the cultural project of empire. Cultural initiatives from the colonial period were challenged on some fronts but persisted and even grew on several others. Though it faced increasing international competition in the cultural field in Africa, Britain celebrated the lasting impact of its colonial influence. British culture had now become the means through which the legacy of the British Empire could be assessed.

If those three chapters build up the cultural project of late empire, the final chapter tries to take it apart. Chapter Five picks up at this moment in the middle of the 1960s and follows it for another decade. Until that point, British cultural work had demonstrated the ability to persist through a broad distribution of agency among both British and African actors. That flexibility also allowed for new types of engagement that threatened the project's entire purpose. The chapter returns to each of the places where the earlier chapters left off. In the field of drama, British culture's universality and accessibility was realized through African adaptations of Shakespeare. Shakespeare was translated into different languages, altered to African settings, and supplemented with African cultural forms to the extent British onlookers no longer recognized anything of themselves in it. Both British and African critiques of Shakespeare called into question whether one national culture had a place in the middle of another. Meanwhile, in publishing, African writers and their works had become increasingly important to metropolitan publishers. This section discusses the responses from the very African writers who British firms were competing to publish, such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and their attempts to organize African forms of publishing that were capable of circumventing the dominance of British firms. The structure of British culture therefore both prompted and provided the means for postcolonial critique. The same was true for broadcasting, where the BBC recognized its success hinged on incorporating African language and culture into its work. Though the BBC sought to continue this trend into the postcolonial period, it faced another form of postcolonial backlash: the national state. The last section of the chapter demonstrates how the BBC recast itself as a disinterested party that still cultivated British prestige.

Decolonization fundamentally changed the premise of British cultural relations to Africa as well as the ways in which that culture functioned within postcolonial civil society. The dissertation finishes in the early 1970s, still a far leap from present-day findings that the BBC World Service does more to improve perceptions of Britain overseas than any other institution.[62] I do not claim to make that jump in time here. At the same time, there was still evidence of decolonization in those findings. It isn't in the fact that in the twenty-first century

[62] Human Capital 2010, *BBC Global News: International Research Report for the BBC*, January 2010, 52, cited in Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, "Corporate Cosmopolitanism," in *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan contact zones at the BBC World Service (1932-2012)*, eds. Gillespie and Webb (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

Britain still found a way to name itself a global power, but more about the measures it used to do so.

I demonstrate that the start of the postcolonial era represented another moment when the constituents of British imperialism were reconfigured in a way that gave new legitimacy to the imperial project. In the absence of formal empire, metropolitan organizations such as the BBC, the British Council, and Oxford University Press attempted to refashion themselves as international agencies that reflected their subject matter and audience. Rather than the limited appeal to targeted audiences that they had fostered earlier, British organizations now sought to appeal universally to a global audience. Their definition of the global audience – which relied specifically on its inclusion of postcolonial citizens, or formerly colonized populations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – still holds power today.

Therefore, my task of explaining how Britain transitioned out of its formal empire also uncovers an understanding of the global audience that became crucial to the success of communication and information networks in the postcolonial and late Cold War eras. My larger project then leads to thinking about the cultural politics of the contemporary world and how the West continues to reach global audiences today.

Chapter Two

Shakespeare in Africa:
The British Council and Drama Export to Africa

> There is a tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
> On such a full sea are we now afloat,
> And we must take the current when it serves
> Or lose our ventures.
> - William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*

> In bringing this Company to perform Shakespeare, we have provided not only exactly what the Eastern Nigerians like best, but exactly what we in Britain are best equipped to do.
> - UK Deputy High Commissioner to Eastern Nigeria, 1963

One warm evening in January 1963, hundreds of Nigerian citizens crowded outside the doors of the largest theater in Lagos. They were there to cram their way into the show advertised on posters overhead: "The Nottingham Playhouse Company is here to perform *Macbeth*!" With James Cairncross and Judi Dench in the title roles, some of the playgoers had traveled more than a hundred miles to the capital for the chance to attend opening night. There was a black market for tickets, which were selling at £2 10s. over face value by the day of the performance. When the curtain finally rose that evening, those lucky enough to have gained entry collectively leaned forward. They were ready to be entertained and they were not disappointed. In the ninety minutes that followed there was rarely a moment when the audience was silent. During the first act they laughed uproariously, seeing a white man who believed in witches. A few minutes later, they booed and hissed loudly as Lady Macbeth entered. Later in the evening James Cairncross began to recite, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow," and a chorus of audience members finished the rest of the soliloquy with him. By the final death, the front rows appeared ready to rush the stage, and the stage manager was heard yelling, "Curtain – down"… "curtain – down." At last the curtain fell, closing on the first night of the Nottingham Playhouse Company's tour to West Africa.[1]

[1] "Shakespeare and Shaw in the Sun," *Stage and Television Today*, April 4, 1963, 16; Simon Carter, interview, *Africa Abroad*, no. 66, Transcription Centre, 16 Dec 1963, transcript, Transcription Centre Records, Harry Ransom Center,

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How a small repertory company from the East Midlands came to perform to a packed house in Nigeria is the topic of this chapter. The Nottingham Playhouse Company followed its Lagos performance with fifty more shows in cities and towns around Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. Although the tour was hectic, it had been designed very carefully. From the venues to the scenery to the plays themselves, each detail was important in what was a new phase of Britain's overtures to its former colonial empire. The Nottingham players traveled to West Africa under the auspices of the British Council, an organization founded in the 1930s with the purpose of projecting national culture overseas. In 1940 the council was incorporated by royal charter that set the body's operational independence, while still allowing for its funds to come from government grants-in-aid. The British Council was one arm of what was thought of as Britain's overseas information services; other arms were the British Broadcasting Corporation External Services and the Information Services of the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office, and the Colonial Office. Each office or organization had its origins in the 1930s, when Britain was paying close attention to how it was perceived by European populations. By the 1950s and 1960s British overseas representation was consumed with a different conflict and audiences largely outside Europe. This chapter covers that shift by looking at one particular field in the information apparatus – drama export – and one particular part of the world – the former colonies in East and West Africa.

The West Africans who attended the Nottingham performances in 1963 comprised a new audience for the British Council. Up until that point the council had designed its cultural export around a very select audience. In most parts of the world that audience was elite, educated, and urban, which meant that in the African colonies Africans were all but excluded. It was an approach that reflected the times and attitudes the British Council was born out of, when Britain sought to keep pace with what European countries such as France were doing in the field. However, by the 1950s it was clear to most of Whitehall that the council's dated approach no longer served national interests. At this point Britain's more pressing concerns lay outside Europe and called for a style of cultural relations closer to the American or Soviet model. British officials believed if Britain were to remain a global power in any sense, it needed to appeal to broader audiences. With its experience in cultural export and its position outside Whitehall, the British Council appeared well suited for the task of selling Britain to Cold War audiences around the world – provided the council was willing to shift emphasis away from its traditional high-minded activities. Such were the political circumstances that brought drama export to the forefront of British cultural relations in Africa in the early 1960s. Drama performances offered British officials a means to provide entertainment, culture, and education to audiences around the world. To have a drama tour answer so many strategic needs simultaneously would take finding a formula that worked: which performers, where they went, and what they performed.

University of Texas at Austin, container 5.2 (hereafter cited as Transcription Centre Records); Judi Dench, *And Furthermore* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011).

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By examining the British Council's drama export from the 1930s to the 1960s, this chapter will describe how understandings of British culture evolved during decolonization and the Cold War. The British Council was tasked with promoting national culture, but it first needed to identify what that culture was. The council was formed during a period of increasing anxiety about cultural decline at the hands of mass commercial culture inside Britain and it reflected those anxieties in the culture it projected outwards. The council's officials and advisers idealized a canon that was for the most part English, "highbrow," and unchanging. These were the works and performers they reached for when planning the music recitals, art exhibitions, and drama performances they would send overseas. When the council was called out for its English/British slippage or if it wanted to demonstrate that British culture could also be diverse, its advisers expanded their view to include Irish playwrights or Scottish artists.[2] The British Council sought to infuse an image of cultivated standards in the cultural wares it packaged and sold overseas. Although the council was sometimes forced to acquiesce on the Britishness of certain works or performing groups, it would do so in order to preserve the understanding of British culture as one of high taste and quality.

The British Council resisted change to its cultural program until the late 1950s. Until that point officials in the British Council preferred to work with elite audiences because those were the most likely audiences that would be attracted to and understand the types of culture the council wanted to promote. But when the first African colony became independent (Ghana in 1957) it was evident the council's approach was incompatible with the decolonizing world. Metropolitan culture did not have an obvious role in civil societies that were working to shape their own national cultures. Meanwhile, now that Britain no longer had a territorial empire to rely on, its global position in the future depended more on how the English language and British traditions of expression spread around the world. Therefore, during decolonization Britain recognized the need for new efforts to reach greater audiences in the former empire. This chapter describes how the British Council sought to make its cultural wares more accessible. Government and council officials chose not to alter the content of what they considered "British culture," and instead focused on changing the way that culture was supposed to behave.

Enter William Shakespeare. Over the entire period of study Shakespeare was central to the projection of British culture overseas. Almost every drama tour that the British Council sponsored had at least one Shakespeare play in its program. The programs typically included works by Sheridan or Shaw as well (showing that British culture was also diverse because it had Irish works too), but Shakespeare was the crown jewel of British drama export and remained so. But, while British officials consistently reached for Shakespeare as the embodiment of their national culture, they did so for different reasons at different times. In the beginning of the period, when Britain had just begun to promote itself overseas, Shakespeare performances were believed to fit neatly into the English and highbrow understandings of national culture.

[2] For examples of criticism the British Council was English-centered and used Scottish, Welsh, and Irish works only when it needed to, see press articles from the late 1940s in UKNA, BW 1/24.

This was made even more true by the fact Shakespeare productions in Britain in the early twentieth century were not overtly political.[3] Shakespeare was still prominent in Britain's drama export a quarter century later; the Nottingham Playhouse Company's three-piece repertoire of *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Arms and the Man* (Shaw) is only one example. By then, Shakespearean plays were presented to postcolonial audiences as universal and accessible, as opposed to English and highbrow.[4] How successful this shift was in accommodating postcolonial audiences and rebranding Britain's role in the world would remain to be seen.

Culture for policy's sake

In 1934 a new body titled the "British Committee for Relations with Other Countries" was established with the aim of encouraging a better appreciation of Great Britain in the wider world. The group of businessmen and officials that assembled wanted to see this new organization – soon renamed the British Council – promote the ideas and feats that distinguished Britain from other cultures and civilizations. Among others, these distinctions included the English language, British literature and arts, and British political practices.[5] In interwar Europe there was nothing new in the idea that the promotion abroad of language, literature, and other aspects of national life could be a means of encouraging understanding and goodwill, particularly when "understanding and goodwill" were translated to mean political allies and economic trade partners. Indeed, by the 1930s all of the other leading European nations had been engaging in this type of work for decades, and France and Germany considered it to be a crucial component of their foreign policies. The model for an institutionalized form of cultural promotion was the Alliance Française, which started in 1880 and expanded to centers all over the world, overseeing the teaching of the French language and arranging lectures and exhibitions on French arts. In 1933 the British Foreign Office estimated that the Alliance Française was spending in the area of six million francs a year on this form of cultural promotion.[6] From Italy the Dante Alighieri served a similar role, and though the Germans did not yet have a centralized institution, they were working hard to re-establish a positive reputation in other countries' eyes.

The British Council's novelty lay in its use by the British government to finally join the international competition to project national culture abroad. Until then, the British government

[3] Dennis Kennedy, "British Theatre, 1895-1946: Art, Entertainment, Audiences – An Introduction," in *Since 1895*, edited by Baz Kershaw, Vol. III of *Cambridge History of British Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 29-30, PDF e-book.

[4] For other works on the history of Shakespeare performance in Africa, see Lemuel A. Johnson, *Shakespeare in Africa (and other venues)* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998); Rohan Quince, *Shakespeare in South Africa: Stage productions during the apartheid era* (New York: P. Lang, 2000); Jane Plastow, ed., *African Theatre: Shakespeare In and Out of Africa* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2013).

[5] "Making Britain Popular: New Council's Plans," *Daily Mail*, March 20, 1935; "British Culture Abroad: New Council Formed," *Times*, March 20, 1935.

[6] Memorandum on the Alliance Française, 1933, UKNA, FO 431/1, in Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 3.

had held a very utilitarian stance vis-à-vis national culture, whether within or beyond its borders. (In 1930s Britain there were no state subsidies to the arts, no national theater, and no Arts Council until it was founded the following decade.) This did not simply reflect the Treasury's ethos of cheap government; it was founded in the belief that British culture did not need any additional promotion because it spoke for itself. Self-promotion was not only undignified, it was unnecessary.[7] However, by the late 1920s and 1930s, as all other European nations were stepping up their cultural presence overseas amidst the global economic depression, the British government was forced to consider new means of preserving its material interests. The impetus that brought the British Council into being was thus twofold: first, to garner Britain's response to the cultural propagation of other European countries, especially totalitarian ones, and second, to stimulate needed trade with more parts of the world.

At its inception the British Council was meant to act for several government departments, including the Dominions Office, the Colonial Office, and the Department of Overseas Trade; however, for its first decade the council behaved as an instrument of the Foreign Office. Individuals in the Foreign Office such as Rex Leeper and Sir Robert Vansittart had pushed hardest for the council's creation in the early 1930s, and as a result they expected their diplomatic agenda to trump Britain's commercial needs in the council's work.[8] Giving these officials greater sway was their control over the British Council's revenue, which came from an annual grant-in-aid in the Foreign Office vote. The size of the grant increased exponentially in the first ten years as the council established itself in areas of the world the government deemed critical for British foreign policy, namely western and southern Europe and the Middle East.[9] The third priority area for British Council work in this period was Latin and South America, where British commercial interests hoped to grow their export trade. The empire, whether the white dominions or the colonial territories, was notably absent.

The British Council's work in Europe during the 1930s was organized around a notion of international exchange. Britain began the state-sponsored export of culture to keep up with its European neighbors; therefore, the British Council's initial efforts in the field mimicked the Alliance Française and similar organizations. The council established an institute or center in major cities across Europe, with particular concentration in Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal. At these institutes they offered classes in English, supplied British newspapers and books, hosted lectures by well-known British scientists, and held exhibitions of British art. In addition, the British Council's officers helped to organize exchanges between British and visiting orchestras and dance companies.[10] All of these activities were presented in a positive tone to preserve the

[7] Harold Nicolson, "The British Council 1934-1955," in *Twenty-first Anniversary Report of the British Council* (London: British Council, 1955), 4.
[8] Donaldson, *British Council*, 19-28, 41-45.
[9] To give a sense of how the government grant to the British Council grew over this period, the grant was £5,000 for the 1935-36 year, £433,099 for 1940-41, and £2,179,880 for 1945-46. See Donaldson, *British Council*, Appendix 5, 382-3.
[10] Nicolson, "British Council," 15-20; Donaldson, *British Council*, 31-40.

British Council's public image as an independent body. The British Council's royal charter in 1940 confirmed the council operated separately from the British government. But in case there was any confusion, Foreign Office and other government officials took care to emphasize to the council that the government set its agenda and budget. As one Foreign Office official succinctly phrased, "the object was not culture for culture's sake, but culture for policy's sake."[11] Behind the scenes the British government fully recognized how it blurred the line between political and cultural work, but it hoped that appearance of an arms-length relationship would mollify overseas publics to the British Council.

In contrast to Europe, the council's work in the Middle East was more indicative of what it would later attempt in the colonial empire. The Middle East was considered a priority in this period because of both its strategic importance to the British government and the manner it fit into imperial ambitions of key individuals in the British Council. One of these figures was the chairman, Lord Lloyd, who came to the British Council after serving as a colonial administrator in Bombay and Cairo. Lloyd – a prominent opponent of Indian Home Rule – saw the British Council as a place he could pursue his romantic imperialism without having to incorporate calls for self-government. During his tenure as chairman, Lloyd melded his imperialist vision with Foreign Office's more immediate strategic aims. He explained in a speech to the Royal Central Asia Society,

> We should give the world free access to our civilisation, and free opportunity to form its own judgment on our outlook and motives… We have in many places a wary and critical audience to convert, but our opponents' lack of discretion has worked largely in our favour. Everywhere we find people turning with relief from the harshly dominant notes of totalitarian propaganda to the less insistent and more reasonable cadences of Britain. We do not force them to 'think British', we offer them the opportunity of learning what the British think.[12]

Beginning in 1937 Lloyd pushed for increased public funding so the British Council could invest heavily in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.[13] Within a few years, as the war unfolded, the British Council found itself having to withdraw quickly from most of the European nations where it was active; by 1942, the only four European countries that remained accessible to the British Council were Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Iceland. That meant that a greater amount of the council's attention and increasing resources shifted to the Middle East.

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[11] Rex Leeper quoted in Louise Atherton, "Lord Lloyd at the British Council and the Balkan Front, 1937-1940," *The International History Review* 16, no. 1 (Feb 1994): 27, doi: 10.1080/07075332.1994.9640667.
[12] Lloyd, 1939, quoted in Nicolson, "British Council," 12; Donaldson, *British Council*, 57-8; Neil Kinnock, introduction to *A Story of Engagement: The British Council 1934-2009* by Ali Fisher (London: British Council, 2009), 8.
[13] Donaldson, *British Council*, 85.

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As the British Council grew its staff and activities in the Middle East, its officials saw how their work there was different from that in Europe. The council's regional representative oversaw activities in nine areas: Aden, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, and Turkey. In each place the council had to adapt its outlook to the different political relationship Britain had there. For example, Aden was a British colony, Palestine was a British mandate, and Egypt was an independent nation. Even more noticeable to officials working outside Europe was the broader definition of culture that the British Council adapted in the Middle East. In Europe, the desire for international exchange had led to a relatively narrow sense of cultural work. But in the Middle East the determined need was in number of different fields, including education, science, medicine, engineering, and agriculture. By the early 1940s these fields were being classified together under the broad heading of development work. For the British Council to address what it saw as the region's needs would therefore be a departure from the council's traditional activities in Europe.

After being ignored by the British Council in the 1930s, the empire became an area for expansion in the 1940s. In 1940 Lord Lloyd was appointed secretary of state for the colonies, which he held concurrently with his position as chairman of the British Council. He was thus able to oversee the council's entry into new parts of the colonial empire such as the Caribbean, Asia, and West Africa. Lloyd's imperialist aims were focused on the colonial empire at the exclusion of the white dominions, even though the latter were seen as the basis for several other imperial networks in this period.[14] British Council and Dominions Office officials believed that the council's work in those parts of the world would be redundant and might do more harm than good.[15] In the colonies, on the other hand, they believed there were greater gains for the British Council to make – particularly in the growing field of development.

Under Lloyd's leadership, the British Council recruited former colonial administrators to join its new empire division and investigate the type of work the council should and could pursue in the colonies. For West Africa, the council's inquiry focused on language and literature, the areas where it was seeing progress in the territories and colonies in the Middle East. But even inside this supposedly cultural topic, council officials soon learned that any success would depend on West Africa's general development as a whole. Existing organizations that ran circulating libraries, reading rooms, and literary societies in the colonies informed the British Council it was possible to reach elite society (Europeans and a few educated Africans), but there was an enormous hurdle to connect to anyone beyond that group. They advised the British Council not get too far ahead of itself. For example, before the council could hope to improve reading habits of schoolchildren, it would have to train and support those habits in teachers.[16] By the 1940s it had become clear that any future work in Africa – both official and non-official – was going to be oriented around development.

[14] For example, bodies such as the Imperial Relations Trust, the Empire Press Union, and the BBC Empire Service all sought to cement ties between British and dominion populations during this period.
[15] Alice Byrne, "The British Council and the British World 1934-1954," *Groupe de recherches anglo-américaines de Tours (GRAAT) Online* no. 13 (March 2013): 30, http://www.graat.fr/2byrneg.pdf.
[16] Margaret Wrong, "Memorandum on the activities of the British Council," 23 June 1941, UKNA, BW 2/317.

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Colonial development – both its rhetoric and its agenda – had become so pervasive it was nearly impossible to avoid, and yet that was exactly what the British Council was expected to do. In one way, the development agenda helped the British Council because it provided an additional source of revenue. Postwar austerity brought large cuts to Britain's information apparatus, including the grants-in-aid to outside organizations, such as the BBC and the British Council. When the British Council saw direct reductions to the amount it got from the Foreign Office vote, it supplemented part of that loss with funds from the Colonial Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office, and the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. (The Colonial Office and Commonwealth Relations Office were expected to help fund the British Council now that it was working in new areas of the world.) Council officials felt they were hurt by the arrangement whereby they negotiated with each overseas department separately instead of single comprehensive vote.[17] In contrast, the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund was not directly affected by austerity measures and therefore offered support on a different basis. The British Council was able to take advantage of this source of funding in 1948, when it began receiving Colonial Development and Welfare monies to run hostels and clubs for colonial students in Britain. By the 1950s the council's work in this capacity was felt to have the most continuity and assured basis of all of its operations.[18] Though colonial development boosted the council's activities in Britain, it became a barrier to the council's work overseas.

One effect of the austerity climate was to seek out and erase possible overlaps in departmental responsibilities. With the British Council now working in its territories, the Colonial Office feared losing some control over what went on there. In August 1948 the Colonial Office issued a definition document between the two bodies that sought to demarcate the separate spheres of culture and development. The British Council had charge of the former, which the policy contained to drama, music, exhibitions, lectures, and specialty films and broadcasts. Meanwhile, the Colonial Office retained full responsibility for work in colonial development.[19] Through the definition document the Colonial Office aimed to curtail the broader understanding of culture the British Council had adapted in certain parts of the world. But, in spelling out what constituted a cultural activity and what a development objective, British officials faced how slippery these spheres really were. The more concrete distinction as they made it was the intended audience. The British Council was to cull audiences from the top echelons of society, while the Colonial Office was in charge of the population as a whole. For the most part, education and library activities fell in the category of development because of their orientation to general audiences. A division along this line saw how the British Council could offer a course on British life to UK-bound university students, but could not teach English to secondary students. In similar vein, the council could lend out recordings and films of

[17] Note of meeting between British Council and Foreign Secretary, 27 July 1951, UKNA, BW 1/101.
[18] British Council, deputation, 21 Dec 1951, UKNA, BW 1/101.
[19] The policy that became known as the "definition document" was circulated in Arthur Creech Jones, circular despatch, aims and work of the British Council in the colonies, 9 Aug 1948, UKNA, CO 875/73/4.

Shakespeare and Dickens, but not hold film screenings on malaria prevention or soil erosion.[20] Most Colonial Office officials justified the necessity of the definition document, not only for removing redundancy, but also to prevent any misconceptions from forming that the British Council was a government or propaganda organ.[21]

In contrast to foreign states, where the British Council did not operate where it was specifically not wanted, decisions about the council's work in the colonies were made in London and not overseas. That became an issue in colonies such as the Gold Coast, where the administration in Accra was reluctant to cede any ground to an alternative body. In the mid-1940s the Gold Coast governor Sir Alan Burns felt his government could better carry out all of the British Council's functions. When the British Council defended the strategy behind maintaining appearance as an independent body, Burns acquiesced slightly to allow the council to work on libraries and a multi-racial institute in Accra.[22] Even so, the British Council representative assigned to the Gold Coast spent most of the 1940s resisting attempts by the colonial government to absorb his work into the government Public Relations Department.[23]

The Gold Coast also demonstrated how local administrations thought of the British Council as a malleable organ that they could direct according to political and social circumstances. By 1950 the Gold Coast government was looking for anything that might divert the public's attention from politics and so saw new purpose in the British Council's cultural work. In particular, the government hoped to institutionalize means of bringing leading sections of the African and European populations together in public life. Therefore, colonial officials approached the British Council with the idea of the council expanding outside Accra, building regional centers, and initiating associational groups and meetings at those centers.[24] Ultimately, the government wanted to have a center in every region; however, it wanted to start by adding activities in Kumasi and Takoradi.[25] Now it was the local British Council's turn to resist expansion. Since arriving in the colony the council's staff had dedicated themselves to establishing and running a cultural center in the capital. The representative in charge personally directed choral, orchestral, and dramatic groups out of this center, and after working at it for three years he boasted how he'd molded them into the best artistic groups of their kind in West Africa. He explained that not only did the groups bring together elite African and European members of society, but it compelled them to develop a persistent work ethic to be able to produce high quality work. But, the representative protested back to London, were he to split his attention now, the groups' standards would slip and the accomplishment would

[20] Ibid. For more about defining responsibilities in library and book work in particular, see Douglas Coombs, *Spreading the Word: The Library Work of the British Council* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1988), 41-3.
[21] However, a few argued that they had swung the pendulum too far and thus reduced the British Council to an irrelevant body of no help to them (Jeffries to Webster, 2 Dec 1950, UKNA, CO 875/73/4).
[22] Burns to Creech Jones, 12 April 1947, UKNA, BW 93/6.
[23] A. P. Williams to controller of Empire Division, 21 April 1947, UKNA, BW 93/6.
[24] Murray-Aynsley to Oxbury, 1949, UKNA, BW 93/6.
[25] B. C. D. Jones to Gold Coast governor, Feb 1953, UKNA, BW 93/6. Kumasi was the main city in the Asante region and therefore a center of African politics. Takoradi, on the other hand, was an industrial port city where the British faced constant labor strife.

have been for naught.[26] Furthermore, it was impossible to imagine reproducing the Accra success elsewhere. In a reference to the industrial city of Takoradi, one council officer described, "Accra can handle with confidence a production of *Candida*; here we do uncomplicated one-acters and cantatas in Fanti."[27] In this instance regarding the Gold Coast, the officials administering the British Council from London faced what became a persistent question. Were they to work at the beck of British colonial needs, it would be at the expense of fostering British artistic traditions in the African colonies. At the same time, the British Council's presence and funding relied on its ability to demonstrate its political relevance to the British nation.[28]

Though the British Council was organized differently in different colonies, everywhere it directed itself almost exclusively towards the elite, educated, and urban populations. Such a narrow audience fueled critique of the council back in Britain. The British Council had been attacked in the British press since its start, with the most consistent and vicious attacks coming from the Beaverbrook newspapers.[29] In the 1940s hundreds of articles in the *Daily Express* and the *Evening Standard* divulged details about the council's extravagant expenses, pedantic events, and inconsequential audiences. Although Lord Beaverbrook's feud with the British Council was well known, the stories still struck a nerve during economic austerity. As one member of the public explained, "As a worker and tax payer I resent being ordered to work harder, to smoke, eat and bath less and to save more, to help maintain a useless and extravagant herd of officials and to give dubious foreigners luxurious entertainment quite beyond the means or dreams of the British working classes."[30] Taxpayers were not the only ones asking whether the British Council's activities were beneficial and vital to Britain; even government officials questioned if this was the best way to fight the Cold War.

In 1951 the council's Deputy Director-General wrote to another of its executives, "Only one mean bit of Fleet Street, and Whitehall, seem to seek our elimination, the former by outright murder, the latter by starvation."[31] That year the British Council pleaded with the three overseas departments for assurances there would be no more cuts for at least the next few years, having had three direct reductions to its budget over previous years.[32] Being put into the larger group of information services was crucial to the council's survival in this period, but it

[26] Jones to Wilmot, April 1951, UKNA, BW 93/6.
[27] A. C. Davis, 1953, UKNA, BW 93/6.
[28] Roberts to Wilmot, 1951, UKNA, BW 93/6.
[29] Many describe the Beaverbrook press's notorious campaign against the British Council as result of a political feud between Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Lloyd; but regardless of the origins, the campaign took on dimensions far beyond either man and lasted to the end of the century. The British Council pushed back through the press, such as Harold Nicolson's marginal comment in the *Spectator* on March 28, 1952, and pamphlets, such as *The Beaverbrook Press and the British Council* (1954) by the British Council Staff Association. In her 1984 official history of the council Frances Donaldson described Lord Beaverbrook as "one of the few deliberately wicked men in British history" (63).
[30] J. Hume-Sprey to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1947, UKNA, BW 1/24.
[31] G. H. Shreeve to Lord Ramsden, 20 Dec 1951, UKNA, BW 1/101.
[32] Executive committee, 27 July 1951, UKNA, BW 1/101.

also needed to distinguish its particular value. The council repackaged itself as a Cold War weapon by stressing the persuasive power it had among "neutrals and waverers." The problem with the information services and the BBC, argued council officials, was they could only tell the foreigner that British democracy was a good thing. In contrast, the British Council "shows him its best fruits and invites him to judge for himself."[33] When that phrasing was put in a 1951 letter to an MP, the council heard back, "It is not going to be much help if, in order to support it, the country has to go bankrupt."[34]

The council's work in the performing arts was critical to the way it sought to distinguish itself from other information services. But, within the government grant, the portion for the arts was shrinking even faster than the rest. The estimations for 1952 reduced the arts allocation to 1% of the British Council's total budget, a snub that was so egregious it led the chair of the drama advisory committee to resign.[35] He was one among many inside the British Council who saw high culture as the organization's raison d'être. In the 1950s council officials continued to argue they alone influenced elite, high-minded populations, in contrast to the groups of students and clerks that other information services were interested in. The government might have thought Hamlet was Hamlet, and it didn't matter if Laurence Olivier was in the role, but to the British Council it was Olivier that made all the difference.[36] While that distinction had propelled the council forward in the 1930s, it seemed less relevant by the 1950s. Postwar governments reduced the British Council's budget for high culture because they saw high-minded audiences as less vital to Britain's overseas representation. The Cold War world looked different and Britain needed to win over different audiences.

The audiences Britain faced in the colonies were now undeniably organized around nationalism. Writing in the late 1940s, a British journalist in Barbados captured the opportunity that was lost when the British Council preached only to the converted. He asked,

> When will they get away from the charmed circle of Government officials, from the people who go to cocktail parties, from the well bred old ladies living in secluded mansions in the best part of the town? When will they go out to the hills and the beaches, the forests, the shacks and the villages, where a fine race, slowly awaking to consciousness of nationhood, slowly becoming aware of the beauty and variety and interest possible in life, is looking up and listening for the first signs of a chance to express itself in song and dance and picture and story?[37]

[33] R. Davies to Lord Lloyd, 2 Oct 1951, UKNA, BW 1/101.
[34] Lloyd to Davies, 11 Oct 1951, UKNA, BW 1/101.
[35] Esher to Butler, 17 Dec 1951, UKNA, BW 1/101.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Sidney Cunliffe-Owen, article draft, 30 May 1948, UKNA, BW 1/24.

This critique not only highlighted how the British Council was preoccupied with the wrong audience, but it suggested that its approach to promoting high culture was misguided. "Look at Gauguin, listen to Bach, read Shakespeare, they cry. Ah, but we are not all Shakespeares. We don't want to be told, *at this stage*, what or how Shakespeare did. We want to be told how to do it ourselves."[38] The British Council – a nationalist project at heart – was being instructed to take a leading role in encouraging colonial nationalism.

When the idea first emerged in the 1940s it was seen as anathema to the British Council's prescription to promote British culture.[39] How could one national culture flourish in the presence of another? But, by the late 1950s more people in Britain were considering what civil society and culture would look like in their former colonies after independence.[40] Decolonization, especially in the context of the Cold War, provided a new impetus to marry Britain's cultural relations program with the development of national culture in areas such as Africa and the Caribbean. Such a shift would demand a more flexible understanding of British culture than the British Council had yet been willing to employ. The next section will describe in more detail the works and performers that the British Council did and did not categorize as worthy of export during the period of the late empire. It will explain why the British Council resisted certain types of change to its cultural program in this period as well as how the circumstances of decolonization finally pushed it to change.

All the world's a stage

The British Council's work in drama export demonstrated the types of audiences and performances preeminent to Britain's cultural relations in the mid-twentieth century. The British Council started to incorporate drama and dance performances into its work in the late 1930s. A drama and dance advisory committee that represented organizations such as the Society of West End Theatre Managers and the Critics' Circle took up the task of recruiting and sponsoring British companies to go on tours overseas. The council could not afford to fund the entire trip, but the advisory committee arranged for small advances – up to £1000 or so – to be repaid against any earnings. In accordance with the council's other fields of work, this committee's main criterion was that they promote metropolitan culture of the highest standard, or the best that Britain had to offer. The committee members established a policy that the British Council would only sponsor tours by professional companies, along the lines of the Royal Ballet and the Old Vic Theatre Company, and they were not interested in considering groups or works that they were not familiar with.

The certainty with which the council's advisers declared what comprised British theater implicitly reflected ongoing anxiety about the decline of culture inside Britain.[41] Just as with its committees on music, film, and books, the council's drama advisers came from the political and cultural elite. They represented only the elite, West End version of theater, which they had

[38] Ibid. (emphasis in the original).
[39] Representative to Barbados to Cunliffe-Owen, 14 June 1948, UKNA, BW 1/24.
[40] L. T. Thomas, British Council policy in Ghana, Feb 1958, UKNA, BW 93/7.
[41] F. R. Leavis, *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1930).

clear financial, political, and cultural interests in preserving. When the drama advisers spoke of theatrical traditions in Britain, they did not mention the rowdy Victorian music hall, variety shows, or even the 'repertory' of provincial theaters. Instead, the British Council idealized a stage that was conservative, refined, and satisfied the tastes of metropolitan bourgeois audiences.

In the interwar decades the council's advisers feared this form of traditional theater was coming under challenge from multiple directions. First, theatrical modernism had introduced new aesthetics and politics onto the British stage, and by the 1930s dramatists such the Irish Fabian George Bernard Shaw had gained inclusion into a more modern canon. Though only slowly accepted by the West End, Shaw was a mainstay for regional repertory theatres that started to appear around Britain in the first part of the century. The relative success of provincial companies such as the Birmingham Rep and the Cambridge Theatre Festival represented a second challenge to London theatre: a movement to democratize the stage beyond the capital. However, until the introduction of Arts Council funding in 1946, which made it easier for new groups to enter the field, regional theater remained small.[42]

By far, the largest threat to British theater in the first half of the twentieth century came from the cinema. By 1939, 23 million Britons attended the cinemas each week and 70% of them came from urban areas – clear evidence film had replaced live entertainment for how many Britons spent their leisure time. The arrival of cinema was most devastating for popular theater forms such as the variety show, but the audiences diminished in all types of theater over the first half of the century. By the outbreak of the Second World War British theater had become the domain of small, relatively specialized segments of society.[43] In a certain manner, this pattern reinforced the British theater tradition that members of the cultural elite were seeking to preserve. They saw in the stage a cultural form that could resist massification and Americanization, a place where aesthetic and critical standards could be upheld.[44]

British theater, then, fit neatly into the British Council's design for cultural export. The drama experts who advised the British Council on which drama was worthy of export were able to deny their own anxieties about the future of British theater and national culture. In projecting a national theater tradition to outsiders, the British Council was also safeguarding a particular and unchanging version of its culture. For that to continue being true, however, the council had to maintain its cultivated standards about which performances and performers went overseas under its name. No surprise then that British Council officials sought to use drama to reach sophisticated, educated audiences overseas.

The British Council hoped to see British theater companies realize their national responsibility and commit to performing only British works when touring overseas. Instead, the council settled for getting the right British companies to go overseas. In 1947 the British Council was very excited to add its name to a commercial tour in Australia and New Zealand by the Old

[42] Before the Arts Council, the success of a regional theater depended on the dedication and resources of its benefactor, such as Annie Horniman in Manchester or Sir Barry Jackson in Birmingham.
[43] Kennedy, "British Theatre, 1895-1946: Art, entertainment, audiences."
[44] Ibid., 23-4.

Vic Company, headed by Laurence Olivier and Vivian Leigh. The company chose a program of three diverse pieces: the Shakespeare drama *Richard III*, the Sheridan comedy *The School for Scandal*, and a modern Thornton Wilder play *The Skin of Our Teeth*. When it sent the program to the British Council's drama committee, however, the committee members unanimously agreed to the first two pieces, but were very uncomfortable with the third because its author was American. They demanded the Old Vic select an alternative play by a British author instead.[45] The council's protests were to no avail; although the British Council name was on the tour, it was the theater company that was paying for the actors' passages and letting its headliners perform away from Britain for such a long period.

Over the next decade this pattern of acquiescence became common for the British Council – on certain matters at least. In 1957 the British Council gave lukewarm approval for the Glyndebourne Opera to represent Britain at the Théâtre des Nations festival in Paris. The program comprised of Verdi's *Falstaff* and Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*, the latter in French. The council approved of the selection because, it reasoned, it still reflected great credit upon British musical taste in international eyes. In addition, the Welsh baritone Geraint Evans would sing Falstaff and the scene and costume designs of both operas would be British; therefore, even if the company was more international than British in character, it could still be thought of as a British creation.[46]

But it is misleading to say the British Council was becoming more flexible in its approach to cultural export. The British Council made allowances, even so far as sponsoring non-British works, so that it could maintain what it deemed the standards of high culture. The British Council only wanted to work with a select group of well-established companies. It did not want to be associated with the newer and more political types of works and groups that were emerging during the period. In 1959, the year after Glyndebourne went to Paris, Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop was invited to the same festival. This time, the British Council refused to give any endorsement or funding. The company expected to perform *The Hostage*, a play that examined Irish nationalism and contained lines the British Council felt were insulting and derogatory to England.[47]

As the British Council gradually incorporated the colonial empire into its overseas activities, it did so with a firm understanding of a cultural hierarchy that placed colonial populations in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean at the bottom. British Council officials believed audiences in Western countries had sophisticated tastes and high standards and must be served only the very top performances from Britain. They assumed audiences in other places were less discerning. Therefore, when the Oxford Repertory Company proposed going to the United States in 1945, the drama committee argued against it. The committee members advised the council not send "any ordinary English rep company" to the United States, where

[45] Drama and dance advisory committee (hereafter cited as DDAC), 22 Jan 1947, UKNA, BW 120/1.
[46] DDAC, Dec 1957, UKNA, BW 120/1.
[47] DDAC, 30 Jan 1959, UKNA, BW 120/2.

artistic standards were high, but it instead consider sending Oxford to the West Indies, where standards were believed to be much lower.[48]

As Britain's work in overseas representation grew, the British Council's willingness to sponsor only a select type of theater became a hindrance to its larger mission. The British Council had a policy that it would only give financial support to professional companies. Throughout the 1940s it refused to sponsor any amateur companies "on the grounds that the standards of their performance fell below professional competence."[49] When the tours it did sponsor, such as the Old Vic to Australia, received acclaim and press, it prompted more overseas stations to request they be included in the future. The council acknowledged that amateur companies, especially those associated with the universities, were more likely to be available for lengthy tours and could meet the new demand. When the question of reversing the amateur policy was first raised, however, council executives decided against it. They justified there was a limited amount of public funding to go around and the council should assist the highest quality performances first.[50] But a decade later, after the council had secured greater funds to use on drama tours, it found itself hamstrung by its own policy. When the Royal Shakespeare Company informed the British Council it was going to stop doing foreign tours, the drama advisers bemoaned that it left them with only one established company (the Old Vic) to call on.[51]

It was at this point, in the early 1960s, that the British Council finally widened the field from which it selected its drama tours. In the end of 1961 the executive committee decided to remove its ban on sponsoring amateur and provincial companies to represent the British Council. Council officials made it clear that they were by no means lowering their high standards and that Western audiences would continue to see the same respected performers. Instead, the looser policy towards amateur and provincial theater was to serve drama export's new territories – namely, the former empire.[52] At this same time Britain was passing political control over to new national governments and the Colonial Office was withdrawing its administrative and political apparatus. The British Council, which had a limited role in Africa until then, was now one of the few remaining British institutions and was correspondingly increasing its activity there. Many in the British Council still believed former colonial audiences were not ready for high-quality performances, which the audiences would not appreciate or find relevant. The council's executives realized how tours from university and school companies might be more accessible and thus more effective. Although the council had acquiesced on so many other components of its cultural program before then, the decision to broaden the field for drama export was still significant. The shift marked one of the ways decolonization was impacting the understanding of national culture that Britain promoted overseas.

[48] DDAC, 11 Sept 1945, UKNA, BW 120/1.
[49] DDAC, 21 June 1951, UKNA, BW 120/1.
[50] Ibid.
[51] DDAC, 24 Oct 1961, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[52] Executive committee, 5 Dec 1961, UKNA, BW 120/3.

Chapter Two: Shakespeare in Africa

Decolonization brought large changes to the British Council's work in the developing world. Since an independent committee under Lord Drogheda had first put it forward in the early 1950s, there was a growing idea in Britain that cultural relations should be more educational than cultural, especially in areas such as Africa. The Drogheda committee recommended Britain dedicate more of its budget to overseas representation, observing that even with additional expenditure, Britain was still far behind other states in the field. The report recommended the British government increase its expenditure on overseas information services by approximately 25% over the next three years, for a total of £12.5 million. The report pointed out this amount still paled in comparison to, for example, the £65 million the United States spent on comparable services in the past year.[53] The even more significant part of the report's recommendations came in the "change of emphasis" the committee found necessary in many areas, including the mission of the British Council. Weighing the consistent criticism leveled against the council, the Drogheda report explained that observers should not look for national gain in each singular activity (an art exhibition, a drama tour, et cetera) but should instead study them as a whole and cumulative process. In this manner, the British Council's work could be compared to the BBC's program schedule, which used entertainment to attract a foreign listener, who would then stay for the news and political commentary.[54] In other words, and in contrast to what the council's proponents for the arts advocated, British cultural projection was only a means and not an end. That became even clearer when the Drogheda committee advocated there should be a "fundamental re-orientation of the work of the British Council – a change of emphasis from cultural to educational work and from the more developed to the less developed parts of the world."[55] The report identified the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and the British colonies as pressing priorities for the British Council. It issued that those places should see new efforts in English language teaching, adult education, and specialist education, at the expense of most parts of the council's work in western Europe.[56] Delivering British culture *per se* was only to be an entry point to these more important activities.

For areas in the colonial empire, the Drogheda report's recommendation to refocus was not evident until after independence. The Definition Document still parceled educational work to the colonial government; therefore, in colonies such as the Gold Coast the British Council continued to focus on elite segments of the population. It was only at the moment of independence, in imagining the new nations' future, when the British Council addressed how unsuccessful it was at attracting African populations. In 1958 a council memo about the new nation of Ghana reported how the percentage of Africans in attendance at British shows was – as usual – painfully small.[57] British Council officers offered the same telling explanations for this

[53] *Summary of the Report of the Independent Commission of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services*, April 1954, Cmnd. 9138, 10-11.
[54] Ibid., 32.
[55] *Overseas Information Services: Report of the Drogheda Committee*, 13 Nov 1953, 3, UKNA, CAB 129/64/15.
[56] *Independent Commission of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services*, 33-6.
[57] Thomas, British Council policy in Ghana, Feb 1958, UKNA, BW 93/7.

lack of success they usually did in West Africa. They observed, for example, a "noticeable dearth of cultural institutions" in Ghana as well as "an almost total lack of intellectual curiosity amongst Ghanaians."[58] They saw further proof that the attendance problem wasn't only Britain's, as the Alliance Française had the same experience. What made the 1958 memo different from earlier reports was that it went on to explain why the time had come for the council to adopt a new policy that focused on attracting Africans.

With Ghana now an independent country, the restrictions of the definition document no longer applied and the British Council was free to work in many more fields than it had before. It would maintain a few of its cultural activities, but its new emphasis would be in education. The most promising field, or the one that offered the biggest dividends, was teaching English. The council was already concerned about the English language in West Africa, where officers referred to the standard of written and spoken English as appallingly poor. The British feared it would deteriorate further as Africanization took place among secondary teachers.[59] By offering English classes to teachers and government officials in Ghana, the British Council hoped to see those groups develop an interest in what it offered in music, art, and drama.[60] After independence in Africa and other parts of the world, the British Council was finally adopting to the Drogheda recommendations earlier in the decade. The Drogheda committee had found the British Council was well positioned to further particular Cold War aims because it operated outside the British government. By maintaining a presence in many of the former colonies, the British Council carried this advantage into the post-independence period. At the same time, council officials became quickly aware of their delicate position in former colonies.[61] The British Council's presence was the decision of the current national government, so it had to prove its impartiality and disinterested conduct continually. One British official summarized, "The best approach now is to show [Ghanaians] how to achieve a practical advantage for themselves and the country, with our help."[62] Cultural and educational aims could serve one another towards this end.

By the early 1960s the British Council had begun to recognize how it could use theater to serve multiple purposes simultaneously. Prior to this realization the council had characterized its work in drama as strictly cultural, as its record in the field demonstrated. But since the late 1940s strict cultural export in the council's government grant had been losing out to more educationally oriented projects. Government investigations did not dismiss theater tours altogether, but thought private capital instead of public funds could be used to pay for them.[63] Many of the council's arts advisers were dismayed by the pattern, feeling the reductions pulled the council too far from its original purpose. But in the late 1950s the British Council's drama advisers saw how a different approach could ensure that drama export

[58] Ibid.
[59] Thomas, British Council policy in Ghana, Feb 1958; Cartledge, Dec 1960, UKNA, BW 93/7.
[60] Thomas, British Council policy in Ghana, Feb 1958, UKNA, BW 93/7.
[61] Philips to regional representative in Sekondi/Takoradi, 19 Dec 1957, UKNA, BW 93/7.
[62] Fry, 15 April 1958, UKNA, BW 93/7.
[63] *Independent Commission of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services*, 38.

continued. After learning the Old Vic was doing a commercial tour to Australia in 1960, the drama advisory committee hoped to arrange for the company to stop in India for six weeks at the end.[64] Meanwhile, follow-up reports on the Drogheda committee's findings had led the British government to provide the council additional funds to expand its work in English-language teaching in certain countries, including India. The program included an allotment for drama work that contributed towards the teaching of English, and in the 1959-60 fiscal year that allotment was £12,000.[65] To open up this avenue of funding, the drama advisers realized, all they had to do was sell the Old Vic's performances as more than strict culture.[66] Thereafter, the British Council's drama export was no longer spoken of in the high culture terms it had been prior. Instead, the council incorporated British theater into a larger rhetorical mission of development.

Decolonization impacted the types of culture the British Council exported overseas. The eventual acceptance of more types of performing groups came about after British officials began to imagine what cultural life would look like in their former colonies after independence. For the British Council, changes in the empire determined more than just the field from which it selected its drama tours. Instead, the exigencies of decolonization and the Cold War impacted Britain's approach to cultural export as a whole. The final section of this chapter examines drama export to East and West Africa in the 1960s to demonstrate the new ways that British culture was meant to foster British-African relations after independence.

British theater in Africa after decolonization

As more and more nations became independent the need to find new ways to appeal to their citizens only got higher. With independence in Nigeria (October 1960) and Sierra Leone (April 1961) the British Commonwealth Relations Office gained two more West African nations in the early 1960s. The High Commissioners for the former colonies soon joined the chorus of concern that Britain lacked a way to appeal to wide numbers of West Africans. Like in Ghana, the limited work the British Council had done through orchestra concerts and plays did not appeal to the vast majority, and had been limited to the urban capitals. Meanwhile the Americans and the Soviets had each sponsored very popular tours including tours by a jazz ensemble, a circus, and an ice show. The Commonwealth Relations Office believed Britain could not afford to wait for the long-term effects of Commonwealth scholarships and other assistance and it asked the British Council to supply activities of a more immediate and general appeal.[67] There was also a general feeling that in West Africa the British had a harder task cut out for them than South Asia or the Middle East, where there was a longer history of British cultural work. Lord Head, the UK High Commissioner in Nigeria, exposited that to be effective the British would need to be more creative than they had been elsewhere.[68]

[64] DDAC, 11 Dec 1959, UKNA, BW 120/2.
[65] DDAC, 8 Oct 1958, UKNA, BW 120/2.
[66] DDAC, 11 Dec 1959, UKNA, BW 120/2.
[67] Executive committee, draft minutes, 4 July 1961, UKNA, BW 55/12.
[68] Ibid.

However, the British Council was reluctant to attach its name to the types of activities the Commonwealth Relation Office had in mind. The council's representatives in West Africa felt that they had worked very hard to cultivate a reputation for high quality in the education, cultural, and social development fields. The Sierra Leone representative explained that any lapse, such as a popular music or sporting event such as what the High Commissioners were suggesting, would signal the British Council had become purveyors of popular entertainment, thus breaking down everything it had worked for until then. As a cautionary tale, the representative referred to what had happened to the United States Information Services in Freetown, which had added more popular entertainment to its services and radio broadcasts and become less reputable as a result.[69] Although the British Council was changing its pattern of work in West Africa, it still did not have any interest in influencing the masses.[70] So, when the idea of a major tour going around West Africa first came up in 1961, the Commonwealth Relations Office wanted it to be a variety show or something with obvious popular appeal, while the British Council countered with a combined lecture/recital tour by the director of the Windsor Rep, John Counsell, and his wife, actress Mary Kerridge. The council's drama advisers believed this sort of restrained work would be useful for the future because Counsell and Kerridge could also survey the theatrical scene in the region and gather details of what could and could not be accomplished there. However the British government did not get behind the idea and it fell through.[71]

By the following year the British Council and the British government had found a different drama tour that they could both get behind. In 1963 sixteen members of the Nottingham Playhouse Company would do an extended tour of West Africa that would take them to eight places in Nigeria, four in Ghana, and one in Sierra Leone. Nottingham was the British Council's second choice (the Windsor Rep was not free that year), but, having decided by that point to widen the field from which it chose its drama tours, the council was very satisfied with the choice. Nottingham was still a professional theater company and thus believed to be of higher quality than a university company. In addition, the British Council advisers were impressed by the enthusiasm the director, John Neville, and the other members of the company displayed when they were asked to represent the British Council in West Africa.[72]

The fact the Nottingham Playhouse was a regional company, instead of a national company along the lines of the Old Vic, gave it a background more suitable to serving Britain's interests. By the 1960s Nottingham had a national reputation as an exemplar of the revitalized repertory movement in Britain.[73] It gained this reputation from seasons that combined revivals

[69] Sanderson to Commonwealth I, 30 June 1961, UKNA, BW 55/12.
[70] Executive committee, draft minutes, 4 July 1961, UKNA, BW 55/12.
[71] DDAC, 9 March 1961, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[72] DDAC, 11 July 1962, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[73] The Nottingham Playhouse Company was founded in 1948, after the Companies Act of that year made it possible for a theater company to apply for exemption from entertainment tax and be eligible to seek association with the Arts Council (John Bailey, *A Theatre for All Seasons: Nottingham Playhouse, The First Thirty Years 1948-1978* [Gloucestershire, UK: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1994], 4-5; Anthony Jackson, "1958-1983: Six Reps in Focus," in *The*

of classic plays, such as works of Shakespeare and Sheridan, with contemporary drama, such as plays by Harold Pinter and Shelagh Delaney.[74] Like the members of many regional theaters in the postwar period, the Nottingham Playhouse actors were committed to reaching new theater audiences and experimenting with different theater styles.[75] Those interests explained John Neville and the actors' enthusiastic response upon being asked, but also suggested how they could act as ambassadors to areas where colonial rule had only recently ended. By working with a regional company such as the Nottingham Playhouse, the British Council sought for its cultural activities to be more accessible and attractive to wider audiences.

Just as it had in earlier decades, the British Council believed the content of the tour mattered almost as much as the performers. In the months leading up to the actors' departure the British Council worked with the company to set the program. They decided immediately that one of the three plays should be *Macbeth*, since it was a set book in West Africa that year.[76] It took longer to determine the other two selections because the British Council's drama advisers wanted to be careful they did not overestimate the level of sophistication among audiences in this part of the world. (Without knowing much about West Africa, the drama advisers only assumed audiences there would be less sophisticated than those in South Asia.) They finally agreed on a repertoire of Shakespeare and Shaw: *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Arms and the Man*.[77] The latter was a small-cast play, which would allow some of the actors to have a rest on those nights.[78] The comedies would keep the material accessible, while the repertoire and headliners, James Cairncross and Judi Dench, kept it a distinguishably British event.

When the Nottingham Playhouse Company kicked off its tour in Lagos, Nigeria on January 11, 1963, the actors were not sure what to expect from the audience. In a radio interview back in Britain one cast member recalled the impression the first audience made. "We were doing *Macbeth* in Lagos to a very large audience of schoolchildren, and at moments when we didn't really expect it at all they laughed with great enthusiasm. This was very bracing and we said we'd better be careful not to let this happen next time. It didn't ever really completely fall away because *Macbeth*, if you're not careful, can be quite a funny play."[79] He continued that there was no audience in the whole of the ten weeks that was not exciting to perform to, especially since the reactions were in a manner that was new to the British cast. "When we were doing *Twelfth Night*, which was very popular, I remember one night in particular, a lot of school children as well as grown-ups. At the moment when Sebastian was clearly going to meet and recognize Viola the audience went up in a burst of enormous,

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Repertory Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain, eds. George Rowell and Anthony Jackson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], 132-3).

[74] Bailey, *A Theatre for All Seasons*, "Playhouse Productions" appendix, 183-98.

[75] For more about British repertory theater in this period, see Rowell and Jackson, eds., *The Repertory Movement*, 89-99.

[76] DDAC, 11 July 1962, UKNA, BW 120/3.

[77] DDAC, 14 Dec 1962, UKNA, BW 120/3.

[78] Carter, interview, *Africa Abroad*, no. 66, 16 Dec 1963.

[79] Ibid.

spontaneous applause. Now you'd never get that in England, you'd never get such a warmth and response."[80]

In addition to the demonstrative audiences, the British cast members found they had to adjust frequently to changing settings and circumstances. Before leaving England the Nottingham players had been anxious over what to do for their set design. They were not familiar with any of the venues where they would perform, but knew they would not have much time to rehearse in each town before their first show. Any scenery would have to be designed in a way that could be adapted to each new space. At last they worked out an arrangement where the Nottingham Company sent plans for simple scenery to Nigeria in the end of 1962. The local British Council hired two Nigerian carpenters who worked for the theater department at University College Ibadan to make the pieces. The carpenters then accompanied the Nottingham tour around Nigeria and Ghana, where they were responsible for breaking down and reassembling the set pieces in each location. The scenery also went to Sierra Leone with the company before it was returned back to Ibadan, for the university theater's future use.[81]

After only a few performances British officials realized how large a success they had in their hands and scrambled to take as much advantage of it as they could. The drama tour was a hit from the start. In Lagos, where the Nottingham players performed in the theater, there was quickly a black market for tickets, which went for more than £2 over face value. In another city, an opportunistic businessman printed up and sold a duplicate batch of tickets. The fraud wasn't realized until audiences arrived at the theater; the Nottingham actors had to delay their performance until 200 extra seats had been squeezed into the hall so everyone could see the show.[82] The British Council was surprised to learn playgoers from the entire surrounding area were willing to pay and willing to travel so they could see Shakespeare in this form. Officials quickly looked for ways they could increase audience numbers even further. The original plans had the Nottingham Company performing inside, at theaters, cinemas, or whatever was available. But at many stops, such as Nsukka in southeastern Nigeria, the indoor space was small and could only seat a few hundred. After seeing that they could indeed fill a larger space, the British Council moved the performances to the open-air sports stadiums instead.[83] At these occasions the Nottingham players performed on a makeshift stage to audiences of 1,300 at a time in the Nsukka and Enugu sports stadiums. Recalling the vultures that were perched atop the cinema screen behind them, Judi Dench remembered thinking during *Macbeth*, "For goodness' sake twitch when you're killed, they're waiting to pick your bones."[84]

The officials behind the Nottingham visit were excited to see that with the company they received both actors and ambassadors. In the months leading up to the trip and during the tour itself British officials were constantly impressed by the company members' enthusiasm

[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] "Shakespeare and Shaw in the Sun," *Stage and Television Today*, April 4, 1963, 16.
[83] Carter, interview, *Africa Abroad*, no. 66, 16 Dec 1963.
[84] Dench, *And Furthermore*.

and willingness. Council staff remarked to each other how these well-known actors set a magnificent example for other British visitors to Africa. In particular, the "free, unfussy, unself-conscious way in which the Company mixed with local people of all kinds – Governors to schoolgirls"[85] leant even greater strength to Britain's cultural message. Some British officials, such as the High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, believed it was this type of personal contact that might allow the new Commonwealth task (a Commonwealth based on friendship and understanding, instead of Britain at the head of the table) to succeed.[86] One of the events that led to the High Commissioner's impression occurred on the actors' final night in West Africa. For the sendoff party a headmaster in Sierra Leone arranged for his students to perform a scene from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in Krio. The students performed the death of Caesar scene, and the British visitors were impressed by the liveliness and excitement that the Krio language added to the performance.[87] That moment, which came more than two months into the tour, signified more than Commonwealth friendship. Shakespeare was performed in a language that had been discouraged under colonial rule, but was resurgent in independent Sierra Leone. It showed to everyone present that British actors were not the only ones who could interpret the works of Shakespeare.

The overall purpose of the Nottingham Playhouse Company tour was to export British drama to West Africa, and Shakespeare proved an excellent vehicle through which to accomplish this task. The Nottingham Company sought to adapt the plays in their program to audiences who might not be able to follow all the dialogue but could still follow the action without difficulty. They succeeded to the greatest degree with the comedies, particularly *Twelfth Night*, which was wildly praised. One report back to London read, "The comedy was highly pointed so that the audiences were able to react with enthusiasm and delight. The general feeling amongst all levels of opinion was that this was a colorful, vivid and highly entertaining production."[88] On the other end, the reviews for *Macbeth* were more disappointing, with regards to both the production and the performances. This occurred even though more parts of the audience were familiar with that work, having studied it at school. The British Council's staff and advisers felt much of this was because of the material – *Macbeth* was always known to be a difficult play to present. But the officer who was acting as tour manager also noted it was the council's traditional audience of Europeans and well-educated Africans who voiced the loudest dissatisfaction with the *Macbeth* production, not the audiences the tour had been meant for.[89] The British Council was operating in a new setting now – an era without the constraints of the definition document – and so he felt the British Council's concerns had shifted as well. For all three works the most responsive and attentive audiences were secondary and college students. Finally, the reports coming back to London from the field

[85] J. P. Stevens, general report on Nottingham Playhouse Company tour, April 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[86] 14 March 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[87] Carter, interview, *Africa Abroad*, no. 66, 16 Dec 1963.
[88] Kano representative, 29 Jan 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[89] Stevens, general report, April 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.

gave enormous credit to the origin of the material at hand. One representative concluded, "The image of Shakespeare received a brilliant shine."[90]

The type of cultural relations – culture that had political value – the British Council had sought in Africa since starting work there fifteen years earlier had finally been realized. Officials in both the British government and the British Council celebrated their achievement. In Ghana, where nearly 15,000 people saw the Nottingham performances, the UK High Commissioner reported that the three-week trip did more to cement Anglo-Ghanaian friendship than a year or more of diplomatic activity.[91] The British Council representative in Eastern Nigeria echoed those sentiments, "This is without doubt the greatest single impact [the British Council] have made on the Region since Independence and possibly before… Some 7,000 people (from the Governor-General downwards) saw the Company in action, over 1,500 column inches of space were devoted to it in the Eastern Nigerian press, there was extensive coverage on the radio and television."[92] In Northern Nigeria the British Council representative compared the British tour to what other nations were doing in the field and concluded that theirs was not only bigger, better, and better-organized, but of more value to local audiences.[93] The Deputy High Commissioner in Eastern Nigeria also positioned Britain's success against its competitors. "Neither the American Holiday on Ice show nor the Russian Circus troupe made anything like the impact which the Nottingham Players have made. In bringing this Company to perform Shakespeare, we have provided not only exactly what the Eastern Nigerians like best, but exactly what we in Britain are best equipped to do."[94]

For the British Council the decision to send a drama tour around West Africa answered a call that had been issued at the start of decolonization: to serve African and British demands simultaneously.[95] The Nottingham tour fulfilled three demands being made of British cultural relations in postcolonial Africa. First, theater provided entertainment, and the tour therefore satisfied Britain's aim to stay competitive with the United States, the USSR, and other international powers. Second, drama export was a cultural activity that was consistent with what the British Council had been doing overseas since the organization's start; therefore, it quieted anxiety about a slipping mission. Last, the presentation of known plays in the English language also fell into educational work and was thus part of the growing development mission that defined Britain's continued presence in the region. The increasing importance of drama to Britain's cultural relations was reflected in the government grant-in-aid. For the 1956/57 fiscal year, the government grant-in-aid allotted the council £15,000 to support drama and music tours overseas. Seven years later, that amount was £160,000. With the new budget, government officials also instructed the council's advisers they could not concentrate all of the funds on Europe; instead, they must pay attention to demand in areas such as Africa and South

[90] Kaduna regional representative, 8 April 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[91] 13 March 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[92] Port Harcourt regional representative, 18 March 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[93] Kaduna regional representative, 8 April 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[94] 5 February 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[95] Thomas, British Council policy in Ghana, Feb 1958, UKNA, BW 93/7.

Asia. The council was now to make its decisions on a combination of local, political, and artistic factors.[96]

Following the Nottingham Playhouse's accomplishments in West Africa, the British Council granted dramatic tours a greater amount of leeway in the performances they brought overseas. British drama export to Africa continued to rely on Shakespeare, while also looking for new ways to incorporate Africans into its cultural program. In the middle of 1963 the producer Peter Potter led a group of seven actors on a nine-week tour to Mauritius, Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The group prepared three plays for the tour – *Julius Caesar*, *Arms and the Man*, and *The Prisoner*, a heavy modern drama by the Irish playwright Bridget Boland. Though the program also featured Shakespeare and Shaw, this tour was organized a little differently than the Nottingham Playhouse tour in West Africa. In each colony or country Peter Potter's group linked up with a local company or drama group, whose members acted in small roles and as extras in the productions. For example, for the production of *Julius Caesar* in Mauritius the cast contained over 100 extras from the island's European and African communities. In addition, Potter's group recruited amateur stage managers, prompters, electricians, and costume makers from the local communities in each colony or country where they played.[97] In addition to giving 17 performances in Mauritius, Potter and the professional actors also found time to lecture and give acting demonstrations at schools and attend social events, all of which further endeared them to the public.

Peter Potter's tour made a measurable impact in British cultural relations at some stops, but incited tension at others. In prior years a Russian ballet, a German quintet, and an American orchestra had all visited Ethiopia as part of those powers' cultural export. The British believed their event topped the competition because theater offered more to national development than ballet or music. Local British officials thought Peter Potter's group was visiting at a crucial moment in Ethiopia's cultural development. In 1960 a Unesco fellow, Tsgaye Gebre-Mdehin, had arrived to run the Municipality Company at the National Theatre and was working to establish an acting school and produce more sophisticated and socially relevant works. The council's representative in Addis Ababa feared the new phase could move in a dangerous direction if Britain did not influence it. The representative was relieved to see how the local press gave warm reviews to Peter Potter's full-length costumed productions of Shakespeare and Shaw. He saw it as a large step towards developing a tradition of important English-language works alongside Ethiopian ones within the country's national culture.[98]

While the British Council deemed the stops in Ethiopia and Mauritius a success, its drama was received less favorably in Uganda and Sudan. One of the reasons *The Prisoner* was chosen as the company's modern selection was because of a specific request from Uganda. Potter was not prepared to require script approval from the Uganda Censorship Board; however, upon arriving in Uganda his group was informed that they needed to put on a special

[96] Drama and music tours overseas: The role of the British Council, 20 May 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[97] Mauritius representative to drama advisory committee (formerly DDAC; hereafter cited as DAC), 2 Dec 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[98] Ethiopia representative to DAC, 2 Dec 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.

performance for the censors before they could stage the play publicly. Then, the morning they were scheduled to open *The Prisoner* the actors were informed the play had in fact been banned in the country. The censors did not state the official reason for the banning, but in private informed the British Council representative in Uganda that they believed it would offend some parts of the population. Radio Uganda, the state-controlled broadcaster, explained the ban, "the play tells the story of a Cardinal in what is easily recognizable as a Communist prison."[99] When British officials in London heard of the decision they took it as more evidence the Soviet influence in Uganda had increased. Peter Potter's group also encountered problems during their stay in Sudan, where they presented a Shakespeare recital of scenes from different works. One performance in El Obeid in southern Sudan became the subject of an official complaint on the grounds that certain actions offended local susceptibilities. The British Council attempted to negotiate between the Sudanese government and the British actors, but could not find a modification that both sides would agree to. The final performance in Khartoum was accordingly cancelled.[100]

Despite these political tensions, British officials touted the Peter Potter tour as another successful demonstration of selling British culture in Africa. The fact that smaller groups, such as the Nottingham Company and the Potter ensemble, were responsible for the conspicuous success also helped the council with an upcoming event: the Shakespeare Quatercentenary in 1964. In the early 1960s when the council had still been deciding whether to rely on amateur or provincial companies for drama export, there had been concern over how they would handle the high demand around this major anniversary. The council's drama advisers anticipated that every region of the world would expect a visit from a British company, while the major British companies would already have demanding schedules at home.[101] But within a few years smaller companies such as the Nottingham Playhouse and the Oxford Playhouse had grown huge reputations in places such as West Africa and South Asia, while Peter Potter demonstrated that a few individuals (instead of an entire company) could still accomplish quite a lot. With these groups, the British Council believed, Britain would be able to provide some sort of event to each part of the world and ensure the anniversary did not pass unnoticed.

With the Shakespeare Quatercentenary the British Council strove to build on its recent accomplishments. One important ingredient was to reuse the same names that had helped generate that standing.[102] Following the success of his tour in 1963, Peter Potter was invited to return to Mauritius and repeat the experiment with another of Shakespeare's plays. This time Potter and three British actors led local amateurs in a special production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Next, Potter and his group returned to Addis Ababa, where they staged the same comedy, again with local amateurs. The final stages of the Potter tour were stops in Uganda and Libya, where the group gave public and school performances of a Shakespeare recital. This was where the aim to tie drama export to education could be seen most clearly,

[99] Quoted in Uganda representative to DAC, 2 Dec 1963, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[100] Representatives' reports on Peter Potter tour, DAC 63(6), UKNA, BW 120/3.
[101] DDAC, 14 Dec 1962, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[102] Report on forthcoming tours, DAC (64)3, UKNA, BW 120/3.

especially when British officers in rural areas of Uganda wrote back to London about African pupils realizing the high standard of what they were watching. "That words, phrases and actions were not always understood does not seem to be to matter very much – the point is that a great number of African boys and girls have seen a few of Shakespeare's plays in miniature, well acted and spoken."[103]

The British Council had less success reproducing the Nottingham Playhouse's West African tour. The Commonwealth Relations Office had been thrilled with how the Nottingham tour had gone, particularly because West Africa had become a high priority. Both the Commonwealth Relations Office and the British Council wanted to take advantage of their momentum in the region with another large event, ideally featuring the same company, in two or three years, but they could not put plans in place in time for the quatercentenary.[104] Instead, the council proposed Britain kept the Nottingham name fresh in West Africans' memories with a scaled-back visit by the company's director, John Neville. When Neville was not available the council decided to postpone any British tour in West Africa until another year with better availability.[105]

But council officers in Nigeria did not want to lose the opportunity to celebrate Shakespeare. In their search for an alternative they strayed even further from the council's traditional approach towards cultural export. The council's officials looked for local drama groups that had performed Shakespeare in the past. They landed on the University of Ibadan's Travelling Theatre. This touring company was the brainchild of Geoffrey Axworthy, a British academic who had moved to Nigeria in 1956 to start a drama program at University College Ibadan.[106] By 1963 the school offered degrees in drama and theater arts – the first university in West or Central Africa to do so – and British Council members referred to the school as "the

[103] Regional director of Mbale quoted in Shakespeare quatercentenary tours – progress report, DAC 64(2), UKNA, BW 120/3.

[104] Report on forthcoming tours, DAC (64)3, UKNA, BW 120/3.

[105] Ibid. The British Council continued to look for a way to stage Nottingham's return to West Africa for the rest of the decade. The Commonwealth Relations Office attached great importance to following up on the heralded success in 1963 within a few years, and the council arranged for the Nottingham Playhouse to travel to West Africa for 13 weeks starting in December 1965. One week before the actors were slated to leave, the trip was cancelled – first because Ghana had severed diplomatic relations with Britain and then because of the coup in Nigeria. The British Council scrambled to arrange for the company to visit Southeast Asia instead. By 1969, desperate to regain some traction in the region, the British tried one last time, though this time is was a much-reduced show. Judi Dench and James Cairncross returned for two months, traveling around both cities and rural areas. Once again their material was Shakespeare (DAC, 8 Feb 1966, UKNA, BW 120/3; UKNA, BW 128/26).

[106] For more about the start of the drama program at Ibadan, see Geoffrey Axworthy, et al., *The Faces of Nigerian Theatre* (Calabar, Nigeria: Centaur Publishers, 1990); Robert C. Wren, *Those Magical Years: The making of Nigerian literature at Ibadan* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1990); Dapo Adelugba, "Professor Martin Banham: A Personal Tribute," in *African Theatre in Performance: A Festschrift in Honor of Martin Banham*, ed. Dele Layiwola (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000); Ahmed Yerima, *Modern Nigerian Theatre: Geoffrey Axworthy years, 1956-1967* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Kraft Books, 2005).

nucleus of the beginnings of professionalism in Nigeria."[107] Axworthy's ambitions in Nigeria extended beyond Ibadan, and so in 1961 he created the Travelling Theatre, a means to carry theater to audiences that he considered to be in remote parts of Nigeria.[108] The Travelling Theatre did not catch the attention of British Council officers until its second year, and that was because of Axworthy's selection, *The Taming of the Shrew*. The group followed that up in 1963 with *The Comedy of Errors*.[109] It made sense, then, that soon thereafter, when the local British Council wanted to find a means to celebrate William Shakespeare, it remembered this group. In 1964 the British Council's office in the Western Region gave the Travelling Theatre £1,000 to take a Shakespeare festival around Nigeria.

The Travelling Theatre recaptured the enthusiasm and response the council had experienced the prior year, while also adding a new degree of novelty. The group's itinerary took them to all of the cities and large towns the Nottingham company had visited, but also added more stops that had been out of reach. In each town the students drove their lorry to the largest space available, which was most often a football field. They used the afternoon to erect their set, a replica of an Elizabethan stage they had built onto the lorry's large trailer. They began the three-hour performance as soon as it got dark. The show, which was titled "A Shakespeare Festival," comprised extracts from seven plays linked together by a tape-recorded narration.[110] British onlookers who caught the performance were struck by the setting more than anything else. "The performances were enchanting. The caliber of the acting was high, in some extracts very high indeed. The youth and freshness of the cast gave well-worn scenes a new vigour and bloom… But it was all this combined with the novelty of presentation which gave the performances their real appeal, the stage appearing by magic out of a 'lorry' and standing floodlit in the centre of a dark, open space."[111] When his group finished its tour Axworthy estimated a total of 60,000 Nigerians had seen it perform. About 20,000 of them were from the Eastern Region, where the local council representative detailed the spontaneous participation and sometimes-riotous enthusiasm of audiences at all seven shows. He summarized his report by calling the Travelling Theatre "a little 'Nottingham Playhouse'."[112] The Travelling Theatre had accomplished all the Nottingham players had done and more – a point

[107] Western Region representative in 1963-64 annual report for Nigeria, 30 April 1964, UKNA, BW 128/16; Martin Banham and Clive Wake, *African Theatre Today* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1976), 6.

[108] There was a long history of traveling performance in West Africa, in Nigeria as well as in other areas. For scholarship on this history, see Karin Barber, John Collins, and Alain Ricard, eds., *West African Popular Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Catherine M. Cole, *Ghana's Concert Party Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), PDF e-book. For examples of other scholarship on the twentieth-century history of African theater, also see Barber, *The Generation of Plays: Yorùbá Popular Life in Theater* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) and Yvette Hutchinson, ed., *African Theatre: Histories 1850-1950* (Oxford: James Currey, 2010).

[109] The production of *Comedy of Errors* is described in Sonny Oti, "Epoch and Echo: Stage Lyrics of Martin Banham Days at Ibadan," in *African Theatre in Performance*, ed. Dele Layiwola.

[110] Reports on tours, DAC (64)1, UKNA, BW 120/3.

[111] Ibid.

[112] M. R. Snodin in April 1963-64 annual report for Nigeria, 30 April 1964, UKNA, BW 128/16.

realized by none other than the artistic director John Neville himself. The next year, when Neville was planning Nottingham's return trip to West Africa, he was inspired to use the same lorry set-up as the university group. He believed it would enhance what Nottingham was meant to do in West Africa, which was to play in any setting and accommodate the largest possible audiences.[113]

One of the reasons the British Council embraced the Travelling Theatre so heartedly was because it was looking for any signs of interest from Africa in the mid-1960s. In their reports back to London, representatives chronicled all of the evidence they had that the mission to promote British culture was taking hold. In one such report, for example, the representative in Nigeria's Western Region told London that regional groups had performed seven British plays in 1964. They included performances by the three most important groups in the region, the University Drama School (Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and the Irish work *Playboy of the Western World*), the University Dramatic Society (Shaw's *Pygmalion*), and the Ibadan Players of the Dawn (Priestley's *Dangerous Corner*), whom he noted had an African producer. In addition, St. Luke's College had staged another Shaw play, *The Devil's Disciple*, while the Government College Ibadan ("whose standard is good") did a performance of *Macbeth* and another of *Sweeny Todd*.[114] The list was telling for several reasons, one being that the British Council officer gave no indication what other non-British performances were performed in his region. Almost all groups he mentioned were attached to the university or to colleges, likely the council's best chance to see signs of British drama. Finally, the representative discounted any group that did not perform European material, which meant, for example, Wole Soyinka's 1960 Masks, known around the nation for their political satire, received no mention. In the annual reports that followed, the list of performances of British plays got shorter. Meanwhile, the list of local theater groups got longer and left the confines of the university. Whether the British Council was ready to acknowledge it or not, Nigeria and other African nations had stopped importing drama to show on their stages. A striking illustration of this was on display the following year, when the University of Ibadan Travelling Theatre went on the road again. This time the students left Shakespeare behind. After seeing their performance of Nkem Nwankwo's *Danda* at the Lagos City Stadium, one newspaper reviewed, "This will be an important hint to Professor Geoffrey Axworthy that the Nigerian audience needs more Nigerian plays than Shakespeare's plays."[115]

Conclusion

Decolonization prompted a noticeable change to British drama export. By the mid-1960s, the British Council's budget had room to send greater numbers of drama tours to more areas of the world than it had ever covered before. In Britain, that led the council to expand its focus from a small number of national companies to a wider tier of provincial and university groups. Overseas, too, the British Council slowly adopted a more open understanding of

[113] DAC, 11 May 1965, UKNA, BW 120/3.
[114] Western Region representative in 1963-64 annual report for Nigeria, 30 April 1964, UKNA, BW 128/16.
[115] Dapo Ajaui, "Danda – Excellent," *Daily Times*, April 6, 1965.

theatrical performance and granted space for new performers and different theater styles in its overseas cultural mission. The two trends provided evidence British cultural relations had finally shifted away from its original conception and was moving closer to a model that could have influence in the Cold War. Through theater, Britain had found a way to stay competitive with what other great powers were doing in cultural relations. Shakespeare performances were Britain's answer to the Russian ballet, the American jazz ensemble, and the German orchestra. Through more accessible performance styles and African participation, Britain hoped to attract postcolonial citizens, on whom Britain's global role would depend in the future.

Shakespeare's plays remained central to British cultural export throughout the period, but how they were spoken of and used did change. By rebranding Shakespeare as a universal and accessible form of culture, the individuals who participated in the cultural project sought to ensure Britain's relevance in the postcolony. They aimed to do so without lowering the high standards they thought distinguished the British cultural project from that of other nations. This was equally true for the work of the BBC as for the British Council. The British Council experienced its greatest success, measured by both its artistic and its political aspirations, with the drama tours it exported to Africa in the early 1960s. That the accomplishment came immediately after African independence was not a coincidence. Over the next decade the council repeatedly tried to reproduce its success, but was limited by a rising political and cultural backlash.

British culture did not completely drop out of postcolonial national cultures in Africa. As Chapter Five will examine, it was sometimes appropriated in ways the British did not always like. By the end of the 1960s British officials found themselves facing performances of Shakespeare that were unrecognizable to the original, high-minded, elitist, English version. They started to question just how universal they wanted British culture to be. Their question was not confined to the British Council or to theater. Instead, it extended to British initiatives in publishing, broadcasting, and film, demonstrating in each medium that cultural export did not always behave in the manner it was intended.

Chapter Three

"Bringing Literature to Africans": British publishers and the East African book trade

This chapter is about literature, but more specifically books. At the beginning of the period of this study, books were a relatively rare item in most parts of colonial Africa. The few that could be found were usually religious and were almost always imported from Britain. However, among British representatives in Africa, whether they were missionaries, government officials, technical experts, or businessmen, there was a sense that books were about to take off across the continent. It presented the British with an increasingly urgent opportunity. As a member of the International on Christian Literature summarized in a survey of Africa in 1934, "The few who demand good literature will assuredly multiply. They will need good literature both in the vernaculars and in European languages. If they cannot get good literature they will read bad."[1] The threat of bad literature – however it was defined – became the impetus for the development of a British publishing industry in Africa.

This chapter will describe the efforts of British agencies to provide books in Africa during the final decades of the British Empire. Looking closely at East Africa, it will demonstrate how a broad range of British interests, including missionary societies, government officials, and private firms, became interested in producing and distributing books in the African colonies in this period. Among them were the CMS Bookshop in the 1940s, the East African Literature Bureau in the 1950s, and Oxford University Press in the 1960s. The chapter argues that the book publishing industry is one area where Britain used the domain of culture to maintain its imperial endeavor as its formal political control was ending. It uses the career of one man to illustrate the separate stages of the industry's growth, from missionary activity, to government intervention, to private competition. Charles Granston Richards first arrived in East Africa in 1935 to be the manager of the CMS Bookshop, which he developed into one of the region's first publishers. In 1948, when the Colonial Office began a colonial development project in publishing, they asked Charles Richards to serve as its director. He worked in this position for 15 years until 1963, when he moved to Oxford University Press where he was the manager of their new Eastern Africa branch. Although Richards spent time serving the interests of a missionary organization, then a colonial development project, and then a for-profit publishing firm, he did not parse apart these interests, but instead saw them as parts of a single grand project – the development and use of the printed word in Africa.

[1] Margaret Wrong, *Africa and the Making of Books: Being a Survey of Africa's Need of Literature* (London: International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa, 1934), 9.

Chapter Three: Bringing literature to Africans

By following Richard's career one can distinguish the stages through which book publishing developed in East Africa. In the 1940s the CMS Bookshop was one of the first mission presses to do local publishing on a large scale, but by the 1950s it found it could not keep up with the increasingly competitive industry. Next, funded out of British Colonial Development and Welfare money, the East African Literature Bureau was an example of government-led initiatives in publishing; however, the premise of the development organization limited it from growing into a profitable enterprise. Finally, in the 1960s British commercial firms expanded into the East African market, although their quick domination could not have been possible without the efforts of their earlier counterparts. Each of the three organizations was a leader in the industry for at least a short while, and their work transformed the conditions through which book publishing took place.

Although the three stages of British publishing were quite different in many respects, certain parameters remained the same. Throughout the entire period British publishers had to contend with low literacy rates and an enormous number of vernacular languages as they sought to create organizations that could efficiently serve the needs of all of the East African territories. In so doing, the publishers at the Church Missionary Society, the East African Literature Bureau, and the Eastern Africa branch of Oxford University Press had to prioritize their interests, whether they were evangelical, developmental, or financial. The agendas and practices of the different types of organizations that were working in publishing were reflected through overall shifts in British book production in East Africa, which resonate to this day. As the editorial files and production lists examined here will show, vernacular publishing – once a priority for British publishers in East Africa – was virtually non-existent by the end of the 1960s.

Despite their large differences, the central claim that this chapter makes is for continuity between the different stages of book publishing in East Africa. The backgrounds and interests of the three organizations here varied considerably, but their concerns converged around the common aim of locating a market for British books in East Africa. Therefore, through their work to build up local publishing, British publishers were also establishing British values and traditions of expression as well as the use of the English language in parts of their empire that would soon be independent.

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The history of publishing books in East Africa begins as part of the older story of European missionaries going to Africa to spread the word of the Gospel. The first section of this chapter will describe the activities of one of these missionary organizations, the British Church Missionary Society (CMS). CMS was founded in 1799 by a group of activist evangelical Christians who were committed to abolishing the slave trade and promoting social reform in Britain. They started overseas mission work a few years later and steadily extended their activities into Africa and Asia throughout the nineteenth century. CMS missionaries began to work in East Africa in the 1870s, and by the end of the century the society had established itself as one of the most active missions in the region. A key part of CMS's work in East Africa involved printed material, such as Bibles and hymnbooks that they had translated into vernacular languages. The first CMS

missionaries did set up a small printing press to run off their newsletter and some pamphlets, but almost all of their printed material was imported from the metropole.

When Charles Richards arrived in Kenya in the end of 1935, the CMS Bookshop was still a relatively small operation. Its stock was limited to materials that were directly related to the society's work, and consisted mainly of Bibles, prayer books, and portions of Scripture in English and East African vernaculars. There was also a small amount of religious literature and educational books from local school syllabuses, but nothing in the area of general literature.[2] Although some of the other evangelical missions had begun to experiment with local printing, all of the books on the CMS Bookshop shelves still came from overseas. When they wanted to publish materials in vernaculars, such as for example, a book of hymns in the Luo-Kavirondo language, CMS missionaries in Kenya would translate the work and then send the manuscript to their London office. The book would be published in London, often through the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge or the British and Foreign Bible Society, printed in either London or Plymouth, and then shipped back to East Africa. It was a slow system, and not a system that was designed for large-scale production on any sort.

But Charles Richards envisioned something much larger in East Africa. Even before arriving to the region he felt there was a crucial role the Christian writer could play there, particularly as African society changed. In the 1930s there were not any funds to start up a publishing side of the CMS Bookshop, so instead Richards focused on widening the range of their stock. He understood producing and distributing translations would always be the foundation of the work done at the CMS Bookshop. But he also felt that shouldn't mean the books could not be presented in a more interesting fashion and particularly in a manner that accounted for the burgeoning interest in education in the colonies. Richards knew educated Africans were going to start reaching for materials to read, and he wanted to make sure those books continued to teach the Christian faith throughout all stages of life. For the rest of the decade the bookshop concentrated on broadening their stock so as to attract Africans across the literacy spectrum.[3] Richards was happy to see that as the CMS enterprise expanded it also began to have influence on the stock of local commercial bookshops. For example, in the late 1930s a few of the Indian bookshop owners in Nairobi came and bought from CMS at a small discount, then restocked directly from the publishers if the titles sold well. By the end of the decade the bookshop had also become the agent for a number of British publishing firms, including Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, and Nelsons, as there was still no local publishing in the region.

The CMS Bookshop's operations shifted from book selling over to book publishing during the Second World War. The bookshop saw an increase in sales in the beginning of the

[2] Charles Granston Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor: Recollections and reflections on the work of 40 years, 1935-1975, in the development of literature and publishing chiefly in the Third World" (unpublished manuscript, ca. 1980), Charles Granston Richards Papers, PP MS 12, box 1, folder 0, 10, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, University of London (hereafter cited as Richards Papers).

[3] Richards, draft of forward to the work and aims of the CMS Bookshop, Nairobi, 1944, Richards Papers, box 1, folder 7.

war, despite the often-considerable delays between shipments of books from Britain.[4] Charles Richards started to fear the shipping delays were standing in the way of Africans having access to material, and he appealed to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for permission to publish some of its titles locally. Richards then used the profits from the local reprints to establish a publishing fund, which he applied towards producing new titles.[5]

Under Richards's leadership, the bookshop began producing titles under two imprints. First they had the CMS Bookshop, Nairobi imprint, which was meant for books of religious instruction and devotion. One of the first works that came out under this imprint was by Richards himself: a booklet in Swahili titled *Sala Zangu* or "My Prayers" in Swahili, which was meant to serve as a devotional companion to the service of the Holy Communion.[6] The second imprint, Ndia Kuu Press, began a few years later and was intended for books of a more secular nature.[7] The name Ndia Kuu was a translation of CMS London's Highway Press imprint into Mombasa Swahili or Kimvita. Despite being the more secular press, the colophon was inspired from a cry of John the Baptist, and the image depicted an African male walking along a path across a composite East African landscape.[8] CMS began publishing Ndia Kuu titles in 1944 with the series *The Peoples of Kenya,* a number of short books in English on the different ethnic groups in the colony. The authors all came from the white missionary community, whom the CMS publishers thought were the most qualified experts who could write on the subject. The second series from Ndia Kuu was a set of six *Nature Guides* on the geography, flora, and fauna in the region. CMS went on to translate a few of these titles into African languages, but once again all of the authors and most of the translators were European. For the rest of the decade the CMS Bookshop in Nairobi published books at an average rate of one new title a month. Although more and more of its publications were in a language other than English – either Swahili or one of the less common vernaculars – the authors and translators were almost always European.

As its activities in publishing grew, the CMS Bookshop slowly professionalized its operation. The missionaries were aware their venture into publishing was still in an experimental stage, and Charles Richards would later look back on those early publications as "horrible productions" and "not at all exciting."[9] Richards was speaking first to the quality of printing jobs in Nairobi. As this was the very beginning of local book publishing in the area, there was no Nairobi printer with experience in printing books; instead, the printers were

[4] Ruth Allcock, organization of CMS Bookshop, Nairobi, March 1953, Church Missionary Society Papers, MSS 61/656, Kenya National Archives (hereafter cited as CMS Kenya Papers).
[5] Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor," 12.
[6] Richards, *Sala Zangu* (Nairobi: CMS Bookshop, 1941).
[7] Richards, "Books in the Service of the Church," address to the Cathedral Committee of the Christian Council of Kenya, 16 April 1945, Richards Papers, box 1, folder 9.
[8] The image was designed to represent John the Baptist's cry, "Prepare we the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God," and would serve to remind CMS missionaries of their first priority. (James A. Lyall, "'Our Part in the Great Priority': The First Annual Report of the Highway Press, the Publishing Department of the CMS Bookshop" 25 Oct 1950, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/652).
[9] Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor," 12.

accustomed to producing newspapers, magazines, and stationary. These early CMS Bookshop publications were therefore serving as trial runs, and Richards's work with the printers would establish precedents for future developments, whether it was around different options for layout or the financial structure of the printer-publisher relationship.[10] By the end of the war Richards felt the CMS Bookshop had grown much closer to what he had envisioned when he began working there a decade before. He believed it had been invigorated by its entry into publishing and now stood as one of Kenya's "greatest civilising agents."[11]

In 1949 the CMS mission in East Africa formalized its publishing business a step further by setting up their own publishing department and forming a publishing advisory committee to oversee editorial decisions. By this point Charles Richards was no longer working at the CMS Bookshop because he had been seconded to the new East African Literature Bureau, which was formed the year before. CMS retained his expertise through the advisory committee, of which he was a vital member. One of the chief aims for Richards and the other members of the committee was to keep the price of CMS books low so Africans could afford to purchase them. With this aim they were very careful to avoid overprinting, even when it meant an exceedingly slow process to bring a manuscript to publication. Once they had decided to publish, the publishing department would get estimates from local printers, such as Boyds and Patels, so it could determine the retail price. The advisers would forward the estimates to their territorial bookshops in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, and Kampala, asking for their interest. With those responses, the advisers would go back to the printers for new estimates, then back to the territorial bookshops for confirmation, until a print order was finally agreed upon.[12]

At its peak in the early 1950s CMS published an average of two books per month, including reprints. The price of the titles ranged from 20 cents to 6/- (East African shillings), but the average price was 1/-, and the average price of books in vernaculars was even lower.[13] One way they kept the price of vernacular books down was to print with newsprint instead of machine-finished paper, but the publishers felt it was still important to keep a good, bright, and attractive cover in order to attract African consumers.[14] Still, although they aimed to keep prices low, the CMS publishers were not printing many of their titles on a large scale. The typical print order for books that were not on educational syllabi rarely exceeded 1,500 to 2,000 copies, even in the more widely read languages of English and Swahili.[15]

As forerunners in a new industry, the CMS publishers struggled to learn the demand for their publications and the factors that went into that demand. In the early 1950s the publishing department began to track their sales by language. They soon observed that the largest share

[10] Ibid.
[11] In 1944 Richards wrote about the bookshop, "a good bookshop, open to all and stocked with all the best in literature, is one of the greatest civilising agents and one which a bookloving people such as we have in Kenya need." (Draft of forward to the work and aims of the CMS Bookshop, Richards Papers, box 1, folder 7).
[12] Publishing advisory committee (PAC), 1951-1952, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/652.
[13] Lyall, "Our Part in the Great Priority." These figures are from the period January 1950 to March 1951.
[14] PAC, 17 Jan 1950, CMS Kenya Papers, MS 61/652.
[15] PAC, 17 Jan 1950 and 15 Feb 1950, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/652.

of sales – over 40% – came from books in Kikuyu, even though they had only a small number of Kikuyu titles on their active list.[16] Almost all the Kikuyu sales occurred during January and February, which was the busiest book-buying time because of the beginning of the school term. Further examination of this trend revealed to the publishers the dramatic difference between school-approved and non-school titles in the vernaculars. For example, by 1951 CMS had sold 38,200 copies of their first Kikuyu reader and 27,500 copies of their second Kikuyu reader; however, non-school readers such as the Kikuyu translation of *Pilgrim's Progress* and the biography of Samuel Adjai Crowther had sold approximately 400 copies each.[17] From these numbers, the publishers knew their book sales in the vernaculars occurred almost entirely for schools; therefore, placement on an educational syllabus was the single factor behind a guaranteed demand.

More importantly, once the publishers could read the conditions of the market, they began to make publishing decisions based on their data. Once the CMS publishers realized non-school books in Kikuyu were not selling they became very reluctant to publish new titles of that type. For example, at the meeting where it recognized the sales pattern of Kikuyu titles, the publishing advisory committee immediately rejected the three non-school books in Kikuyu it had been considering. The new publishing strategy came at the expense of developing the areas where readership was the lowest. As the CMS publishers oriented themselves more towards the market, they moved away from their initial purpose of reaching the uneducated portions of the African population. The shift in the CMS publishers' priorities had resounding effects later on in the shape of the book market in the region.

The early 1950s were the years when the CMS Bookshop was at its peak as a publishing and bookselling business. This was because it were still one of the only local publishers in the entire region – there were no other Kikuyu school readers available, so CMS held the entire market. But not long after its sales figures started to slip. A few years after its establishment in 1948, the East African Literature Bureau started publishing school readers in the vernaculars, cutting into the largest source of the mission press's profits. Meanwhile, many metropolitan publishing houses such as Oxford University Press and Thomas Nelson and Sons set up their own offices in the region, which meant they no longer needed CMS to act as their agent. Before long, new businesses in Nairobi were passing the CMS Bookshop in both volume and geographic reach of business, even in the area of religious literature.[18]

Unlike other publishers and booksellers in Nairobi that could freely adjust to the industry's rapid changes, the CMS Bookshop was accountable to an additional set of critics: its

[16] Analysis of market – Dec. 1949-June 1950, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/652. At that point the bookshop was selling 16 Kikuyu titles, out of a total active list of 141 titles in nine languages. The next largest share was in Swahili (42 active titles, which accounted for 18% of CMS's sales), followed by English (30 titles, 15% of sales).

[17] PAC, 6 Dec 1951, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/652.

[18] The other large bookshops in Nairobi were the East African Standard, S. J. Moore, The Bookshop Ltd., and D. L. Patel Press. All were general booksellers, and two of them (EAS and Patel) had their own printing presses. In religious literature, CMS had been supplying a large proportion of the Catholic schools in the territories, but Catholic firms were now expanding their own business (CMS Bookshop Nairobi to CMS London, 11 Dec 1952, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/656).

missionaries. Already in 1951 the members of the publishing advisory committee were showing concern about moving too far away from their initial purpose in Christian literature. One quarterly report showed that of the 29 books the press had published in the last fifteen months, eleven fell into the category of religious, nine were educational, and nine were of general interest. The bookshop manager expressed his disbelief they could not have religious books at least balance the sum of the other two categories.[19] This was due to the advisory committee reacting to the market trends and trying to reposition the CMS bookshop within the increasingly competitive market. The manager was not the only one who noticed; the 1952 annual report identified that a mere 15% of the books sold that year were titles with a definite Christian message. Over the next few years increasing numbers of CMS missionaries expressed the fear their bookshop was losing its identity as a specifically Christian enterprise.[20]

By the mid-1950s a large number of the missionaries had concluded the bookshop's publishing activities were no longer compatible with the CMS mission. The missionaries felt the publishing staff had let the business component of publishing distract them from their calling to serve Africans and spread Christianity.[21] The tension of trying to survive in the increasingly competitive world, but remain true to its missionary background, became too much for the CMS Bookshop to maintain. In 1957 the missionary society negotiated the sale of all of its Kenyan bookshops to a British school stationary company.

The departure of the CMS Bookshop from the publishing and bookselling world in East Africa was not the sign of a failing industry, but of a growing one, as it had found it increasingly difficult to compete with the more commercially oriented ventures. The evangelizing rhetoric that had propelled CMS's work was now replaced with a developmentalist model, in the form of the East African Literature Bureau (EALB). The second section of this chapter will describe the EALB, a British colonial development project that had the specific purpose of jump-starting a publishing industry in East Africa.

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As the Second World War was coming to an end British officials in both the metropole and the colonial territories realized there was a growing gap in the supply of suitable literature for Africans. They were also certain this need would only grow over the next decade, not only from the spread of primary education, but also from demobilized troops who had become literate while serving overseas. Therefore, in October 1945 the governments of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zanzibar invited the journalist Elspeth Huxley to tour East Africa, study the need for popular literature there, and evaluate the existing commercial firms and local government services that might be able to meet that need.[22] Huxley's findings confirmed there was an unfulfilled gap in provision of literature, and this was a problem that now threatened the achievements of colonial development. She expounded it was absolutely essential something be done soon to provide sufficient good and desirable literature to meet the skyrocketing

[19] Lyall, Highway Press quarterly report Jan-March 1951, 5 April 1951, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/652.
[20] S. G. Bishop, third annual report, July 1952, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/656.
[21] Summary of opinions of CMS Bookshop's European staff, 1952, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/656.
[22] Conference of East African governors, July 1947, Richards Papers, box 2, folder 17a.

demand. Otherwise, the British would suffer the consequences: East African readers who had been educated at the public expense would either relapse into illiteracy, or, worse, would turn in desperation to bad and undesirable literature, thus granting it space to enter the public domain.[23]

Huxley was motivated by the belief literature could play a clear role in the greater British project to shatter the apathy of the African. The benefit literature had over other media such as broadcasting, film, and still pictures was its cheapness and its relative permanence. In her words, literature therefore would "undoubtedly remain one of the most important means of enlightenment and persuasion."[24] The reason she characterized the problem as quickly growing was because at that point the private sector did not think it could make money in East African books. In the eyes of potential investors, the vast number of languages that were spoken in the region meant there was an extremely limited market for publications in any particular vernacular; however, vernacular titles had to be priced cheaply, or else Africans could not afford them. Also, although literacy rates were growing, it was not yet clear whether this would translate into a reading public. In other words, private publishing firms did not believe Africans would be willing to purchase books they did not have to. Therefore, as Huxley's report concluded, the colonial governments needed to step in and subsidize publishing activities.

This happened in 1948 with the establishment of the East African Literature Bureau, a service under the new regional government, the East African High Commission. To direct the new organization the governors looked to the man who stood out for having the most on-the-ground experience in publishing: Charles Richards. When the governors contacted CMS to ask whether it would release Richards, the missionary organization readily agreed, feeling that it was to its advantage that one of its own men, and a man with Christian conviction and vision, would oversee the new institution.[25] As for Richards, he realized the resources of the intergovernmental department would allow far more scope to do the work he wanted to, particularly in the area of fostering African authorship. In a letter to the CMS regional secretary Richards described the literature bureau "not as a deviation from the purpose for which I joined CMS in 1935, but as a development from it." [26] Even while at the EALB, Richards did not lose track of his work in Christian literature, and along with sitting on the CMS publishing advisory committee he also remained chairman of the literature committee of the Christian Council of Kenya.[27]

As a long-term, multi-faceted, inter-territorial development scheme the establishment of the East African Literature Bureau was an example of the Colonial Office's attempts to consolidate colonial government in the postwar period. The bureau began its activities in 1948, which was the same year as the set up of the East African High Commission. The latter was an

[23] Ibid.
[24] Quoted in Ibid.
[25] Executive committee, 9 May 1956, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/967.
[26] Richards to CMS regional secretary, Nairobi, 9 Aug 1955, CMS Kenya Papers, MSS 61/967.
[27] Richards sat on CMS committees for the rest of his working life and into retirement (Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor," 17).

administrative device responsible for services that were common to the territories of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Along with the literature bureau, these services included customs and excise, the postal service, railways and harbors, and the desert locust control. As director, Richards was responsible to the High Commission instead of any one colonial government. In addition, the bureau's funding was from the regional allotment of Colonial Development and Welfare monies, instead of being included in one particular colony's development plans. Over its first eight years the bureau received over £275,000 from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, which was more than 95% of its running costs. The East African governments were required to provide the working capital for a publishing fund in the amount of £25,000 in 1948, but they contributed only £12,000 for the rest of early period. However, the burden shifted after 1956; from 1956 to 1960, Her Majesty's Government provided one-third of the £157,634 budget and the East African governments two-thirds, and from 1960 to 1964 the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund share was even smaller.[28] By that point the bureau had begun looking to other sources of funding, particularly the large American foundations known to be active in its area of work. The bureau made appeals to the Carnegie Corporation for assistance with its library activities and to the Rockefeller Foundation for support in encouraging African authorship.

Though it had been designed within a framework of regional cooperation the bureau had to constantly balance the variations in publishing needs across the territories. Like the CMS Bookshop, the EALB had its headquarters in Nairobi and branches in Tanzania and Uganda.[29] This set-up reflected practical considerations: at the time Nairobi was the only place in the entire region with adequate printing facilities. It would be another decade before facilities in Uganda and Tanzania improved to the point the bureau was able to print there.[30] From Nairobi, therefore, Charles Richards and his staff had to find a system that was centrally organized enough to operate efficiently while still allowing space for local input from the branches. Whether it was books, textbooks or periodicals, each section of the bureau was constantly mindful of the differences between the territories, their languages, and their education systems.[31]

Under Richards the East African Literature Bureau developed a little differently than Huxley's proposal. Her report expected the bureau to obtain its own press and publish all of its own books, thus filling the literature gap in the quickest way possible.[32] However, Charles Richards's vision was more long-term, and he repeatedly stated that their purpose was to *support* the system, not *become* the system.[33] He believed that while government did have a

[28] East African Common Services Organization, *East African Literature Bureau Annual Report 1961-62* (Nairobi, 1962), v. From 1960-64 the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund contributed £40,744 and the East African governments £103,677.
[29] Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor," 21.
[30] East African Literature Bureau, *Annual Report 1959-60* (Nairobi: East Africa High Commission, 1960), 10.
[31] Richards, "A Proposed Literature Organization for East Africa," 1947, Richards Papers, box 2, folder 17b, 2-4.
[32] Conference of East African governors, July 1947, Richards Papers, box 2, folder 17a.
[33] Richards, "Bringing Literature to the Africans," *East African Standard*, August 15, 1950.

place in the provision of the printed word, it was important government have neither too much control nor too much power.[34] Therefore, Richards felt the bureau's primary function was to help other agencies – missionary or commercial – bring manuscripts to press by streamlining some of the work, such as translation and copy-editing. In addition, the reason Richards emphasized the necessity of a publishing fund to the governors was so the bureau could publish books that would not be handled by commercial firms, or in order to allow for experimental publishing to measure a title's success.[35] The catchall role of the bureau was encapsulated in its annual reports, which explained it acted "in the several capacities of critic, literary agent, editor, financier and publisher." Added to that were the tasks of translator, illustrator, sales rep, and even author, since a number of EALB books were written by staff members themselves.

The early publications of the East African Literature Bureau showed its orientation towards development as well as its origins in the missionary presses it succeeded. In its first year the EALB published 19 titles in nine languages under its Eagle Press imprint.[36] Many of the vernacular titles were on topics that bridged the civilizing mission and colonial development. For example, there was a Meru story that taught morals and sex to girls and a Kikuyu pamphlet on cleanliness in the home.[37] With the latter, the bureau immediately started to prepare translations in other languages, and within two years there were versions available in English, Swahili and Meru. The exceptions to vernacular publishing were a few English-language titles that were technical manuals on subjects such as soil conservation and health. They had been prepared with the Soil Conservation Service and the Red Cross respectively and were meant to be a demonstration of the ways the bureau would complement other British development projects.

Of all the titles of that year, the one Charles Richards was most eager to publish was the Swahili work *Uhuru wa Watumwa* (The Freeing of the Slaves) by James Mbotela. The book was an account of Mbotela's father who had been a slave in the Arab slave trade. He was captured by a British anti-slavery patrol in the late nineteenth century and went to settle in the Church Missionary Society's freed slaves' community near Mombasa. In 1934 Sheldon Press in London published Mbotela's book in English for the CMS Bookshop, and it was the first book written by a Kenyan Charles Richards ever read.[38] By the late 1940s Mbotela's book was out of print; however as soon as he had settled in as EALB director, Richards set about obtaining the rights. *Uhuru wa Watumwa* became one of the more successful titles from the bureau's early book list, and after reprints in 1951 and 1956 the bureau sold off the Swahili-language and English-language rights to private British firms.[39] In Richards's eyes this book served as a model for the

[34] Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor," 22.
[35] Colonial Office, "East African Literature Bureau," 17 March 1949, UKNA, CO 822/129/2.
[36] East African Literature Bureau, *Annual Report 1948-49* (Nairobi: East Africa High Commission, 1949).
[37] F. M. Inoti, *Mwari uri muuno uti nda* (Nairobi: Eagle Press, 1949); Emmie Mary Holding, *Ũtheru thĩinĩ wa mũcĩĩ* (Nairobi: Eagle Press, 1949).
[38] Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor," 15.
[39] East African Literature Bureau, *Annual Report 1958-59* (Nairobi: East Africa High Commission, 1959), 9.

bureau's work in East Africa in terms of building a competitive industry and fostering African authorship.

Richards stated he would always prefer to see a title come out through the normal publishing trade, even when it meant passing the bureau's successful titles up to larger publishers for successive reprints.[40] Ultimately this does end up happening in several cases: Evans and Thomas picked up *Uhuru wa Watumwa* and Macmillan and Oxford University Press each picked up several EALB titles in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Overall, however, local publishing did not grow as quickly in the 1950s as Richards wanted. He explained in an article, "Publishing is done where possible through commercial firms, but when speed and cheapness are essential the Bureau's own Publishing Fund is used, and the books then appear under the Bureau's own imprint."[41] For the first ten years, over three-quarters of the bureau's production list were published under the Eagle Press imprint and funded out of its publishing fund. The bureau continued to operate according to this model into the 1960s, despite the increasing number of complaints from government officials about its unprofitability.

The EALB played an important role in the practice of colonial development through its impressive production of educational and instructional works. After ten years of publishing, the bureau's 1959 catalog listed 420 active titles in 22 different languages. It did not focus on vernacular publishing as much as the CMS Bookshop; therefore, titles in English and Swahili comprised over half the book list. The larger vernaculars of Luganda and Kikuyu were also represented accordingly, and then there were very small numbers of titles in eighteen other languages.[42] Among this final group the titles in a given language were typically one or two school readers and one or two books about domestic life and civics. Yet, after the departure of the missionary presses the East African Literature Bureau was still doing more vernacular publishing than almost anyone else. One Kenyan publisher remembered how as a kid in the 1950s he had grown up reading books in his mother tongue through the bureau's children's titles. It wasn't much, but "the East African Literature Bureau did a lot more for the mother tongue than anyone else then."[43] Finally, the rubric of colonial development and welfare was pervasive across the bureau's entire book list. Over a quarter of the active titles in 1959 were categorized under education and sub-categorized as adult literacy or general education. The other substantial categories were books on health, agriculture, and administration, all areas of other British development projects in East Africa.

Encouraging African authorship was a primary goal of Charles Richards's, and although he did not have the chance to do much while at CMS, he felt it would be more possible at the EALB. At CMS the publishers solicited manuscripts primarily from their friends in the missionary community and from other European settlers in the region. If the bureau was going to make African book-minded, Richards believed, it needed to stimulate a native literature.[44] In a 1950

[40] Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor," 22.
[41] Richards, "Bringing Literature to the Africans."
[42] East African Literature Bureau, *Annual Report 1958-59* (Nairobi: East Africa High Commission, 1959).
[43] Henry Chakava, interview, 5 July 2013, Nairobi.
[44] Richards, "Bringing Literature to the Africans."

newspaper article Richards boasted about the diverse background of the bureau's authors, who ranged from the "'mzee,' narrating oral tradition for recording and publishing in the *Treasury of East African Literature*, to the Government officer or missionary writing a textbook or handbook on subjects which range from intestinal parasites to an explanation of the working of the 'rule of law'."[45] He was perhaps speaking too soon, as it ended up being far more of the latter (the government official or the missionary) than the former. After a decade of publishing only one-third of the titles on the East African Literature Bureau's book list were written by Africans.[46]

The one category where African authorship was more prominent was in the general literature section of the bureau's book list: fiction, poetry and plays. This was a small part of the total list – only 52 titles of the total 420 – but more than half of the works were written by Africans. It was also literature titles the EALB was most often able to see published through the normal publishing trade. Half of the bureau's 52 literature titles were published by British commercial firms such as Macmillan, Longman, Nelsons, and Oxford University Press, all of which had become more active in the area by the late 1950s.

When Richards looked back on the bureau's work in support of African literature, one example stood out in particular. In the middle of the 1950s the East African Literature Bureau started a writing competition that it financed with a grant it obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation. The panel of judges was drawn from the literary public of East Africa, and the bureau planned to publish the winning work. The 1961 competition was for a novel in English, and the winner out of 47 submissions was a Makerere University student named James Ngũgĩ. Charles Richards thought Ngũgĩ's manuscript stood apart from almost all of the other writing that was coming out of East Africa then. It was so good, Richards felt, it deserved to be published by a firm with an international audience.[47] He passed the manuscript to Heinemann, which made *The River Between* one of the early titles in its well-known African Writers Series. Despite the background behind one of his first published works, Ngũgĩ (later Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o) became one of the most outspoken critics of the British cultural project later in the 1960s, a fact Richards failed to recognize whenever he boasted about his role in publishing Ngũgĩ. Chapter Five of this study will return to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Heinemann's African Writers Series, and the international market for African literature. In the meantime, the final section of the chapter will describe the next stage in the development of a publishing industry in East Africa.

As a civil servant Charles Richards was expected to retire when he turned 55, which was in 1963, after Tanganyikan and Ugandan independence, and a few months before Kenyan independence. The East African Common Services Organization replaced Richards with a Kenyan from the staff, and over the next decade the EALB staff was fully Africanized. The EALB continued to operate as a department of the East African regional government until 1977, when it split into national organizations that were folded into the different Ministries of Education. There is still a Kenya Literature Bureau today that is mostly involved with textbook production.

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[45] Ibid.

[46] East African Literature Bureau, *Annual Report 1958-59* (Nairobi: East Africa High Commission, 1959).

[47] Richards, handwritten note, Richards Papers, box 3, folder 51; Richards, "No Carpet on the Floor," 37.

Chapter Three: Bringing literature to Africans

Back in 1963 Charles Richards was not ready to retire from publishing, and he took up an offer from Oxford University Press (OUP), which wanted him to develop its one-man office in Nairobi into a full-fledged branch of the press. Richards ended up staying at Oxford for only two years, before he moved to be the director of the World Council of Churches' Christian Literature Fund. However, as an example of a British commercial firm that expanded its activity into East Africa, the remaining section of this chapter will stay with Oxford University Press and its presence in the region during the rest of the decade.

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As one of the many British publishing firms interested in capturing Africa markets, Oxford University Press was an actor in the East African book trade long before it opened a branch there. During the decade following the Second World War the publishers at Oxford and at other British firms saw the Colonial Office investigating heavily in education in the colonies. Although the OUP publishers were not certain whether this would translate into a new reading public, they saw an enormous untapped market for school textbooks and were eager to grab a share of it before their competitors (other British firms such as Longman and Macmillan) got there first. At first Oxford University Press offered agency to the CMS Bookshop, which acted as its bookseller in the region until 1954. That year OUP sent a representative to Nairobi to establish an office. Over the next nine years the Oxford office in Nairobi was responsible for promoting forthcoming titles and running the warehouse, but the office did not do its own local publishing. Sometimes, if he became aware of a manuscript that would sell well in the region, such as one the East African Literature Bureau recommended, the OUP representative would pass it to London, which might take up the rights and then export the publications back to East Africa.

Beginning with this office in the 1950s OUP's business out of Nairobi grew from this office until 1963, when, on the eve of Kenya's independence, the press converted the office into an OUP branch that would do its own local publishing. This practice – setting up an office in the 1940s and 1950s, and then turning it into a branch in the 1960s – was common for OUP, as the publishers also expanded to South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, and Ethiopia during the same period. In his history of the press, Peter Sutcliffe described the pattern, "As the old Empire dissolved, the Overseas Education Department set out to build a new one."[48] Meanwhile, the overseas market had become a crucial part of Oxford University Press's business in the same postwar period. By the 1960s overseas sales represented almost 75% of the publisher's total turnover in books and propped up the academic side of the press.[49]

When it started publishing locally OUP Eastern Africa expected to continue the East African Literature Bureau's strategy of publishing some works in less-common vernaculars. One of the first publications Oxford obtained print estimates for was an anthology of four plays in Luganda the publishers thought could be appropriate for junior secondary schools. The OUP

[48] Peter Sutcliffe, *The Oxford University Press: An Informal History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 266. For a more detailed examination of the organization of Oxford University Press in this period, see Wm. Roger Louis, ed., *The History of Oxford University Press, Volume III: From 1896 to 1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[49] Sutcliffe, 268.

publishers first heard about the plays from Richards's replacement at the East African Literature Bureau, who tried to help OUP and other British firms with local publishing in any way he could.[50] After receiving the estimates OUP also consulted with the Uganda Ministry of Education to determine whether the publication would find a market in schools.[51] The publishers did not hear back from the ministry for 18 months; at that point, the Uganda government said it would appreciate the title, but the OUP publishers had already moved away from publishing in languages other than English or Swahili.

At the Church Missionary Society publishing in the vernaculars was a crucial though unprofitable part of the mission to bring enlightenment to semi-literate Africans. The East African Literature Bureau was also able to publish in the vernaculars, but those had been the titles ordinarily subsidized by the government. Oxford University Press was a strictly commercial venture, and each branch was expected to show a profit every year. Therefore, the Oxford publishers in Nairobi went after the profits, which they believed lay in English language textbook series.

When Oxford University Press began publishing out of Nairobi it received a great deal of help from existing institutions. For example, early on into its life as a branch, Oxford was already receiving large profits from the *New Peak Reading Course*. The series of readers had originally been developed by the EALB and then refined by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), a state organization set up to develop the national education curriculum after independence. The Oxford publishers pushed for and obtained the *New Peak* rights – a guaranteed market of thousands for as long as the readers remained part of the national curriculum. The first *New Peak* readers were published in 1963 and by 1973 they were on their ninth reprint. But Oxford was not the only publisher asking for textbook rights. It lost out to Longman over the KIE-developed series *Tujifunze Kusoma Kikwetu* (Let's Read Together), an ambitious reading scheme of readers in 15 local languages for use in primary schools. Whether Longman, Heinemann, or another, almost all of the competition Oxford faced in the 1960s came from British publishing firms that had expanded to the African market. One African publisher estimated that by 1968 there were close to 80 British publishers operating in some form in Kenya.[52] Like OUP these firms benefited greatly from the groundwork the East African Literature Bureau had been doing since 1948.

For most of the 1960s the OUP Eastern African branch focused on the educational market. In Kenya it was estimated that textbooks represented 80% of the value in the total book market; therefore, the OUP branch staff recognized how crucial it was that they develop textbooks that would get assigned in schools. They developed additional volumes of the East African versions of the *New Oxford English Course* as well as other textbooks and teaching manuals for subjects ranging from geography to art. In addition the publishers kept a careful

[50] Noah L. Sempira to Oxford University Press, Nairobi, 22 April 1963, Oxford University Press East Africa, MS 19 (hereafter cited as OUP EA).
[51] Simon A. de G. Abbott to M. B. Nsimbi, 16 Sept 1963, OUP EA, MS 19.
[52] Henry Chakava, *Publishing in Africa: One Man's Perspective* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Bellagio Publishing Network, 1999), 10.

eye on the national ministries of education for any indications as to where the market might head. Due almost entirely to textbook sales the Eastern Africa branch was successful during its first decade as a branch. Its turnover in 1964 was £167,000 and it had reached £543,000 in 1971; meanwhile, its net profits rose from £8,000 the first year as a full-fledged branch to £42,000 in 1971.[53]

Outside the highly profitable textbook market, Oxford also pursued titles that had other indications for high sales, especially when the material was believed to meet the high standards of the OUP imprint. In 1962 the OUP representative had a meeting with Julius Nyerere, then Prime Minister of Tanganyika, to discuss the national curriculum. During the meeting Nyerere mentioned he had been working on translating Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* into Swahili.[54] The OUP rep was very excited to hear this and he eagerly wrote to London about the economic possibilities for such a book, especially given there was very little available for secondary schools in Swahili.[55] In addition, they could be certain the work would be in line with the high standards expected by the Oxford name: Nyerere was reputed to have excellent Swahili, and the original story was Shakespeare. While the prime minister finished the translation and an introduction about the book's role in East Africa the publishers negotiated with his office about how they would produce the translation. This would be one of the first works to come out under the new Eastern Africa branch, and the publishers expected to edit it in Nairobi, print it in Dar es Salaam, and distribute it through their warehouses in the three commercial capitals. They believed the main value would be in secondary schools and they expected to price the book accordingly.[56] Nyerere's representatives responded that they wanted the book to be done well but were more anxious it was priced as cheaply as possible.[57]

Although they considered the Swahili Shakespeare an absolute top priority, the OUP staff lacked the in-house expertise to take it through to publication. When the full manuscript arrived at the office in the end of 1962, OUP did not yet employ a Swahili proofreader or even have a fluent Swahili speaker in the office. The publishers scrambled to send the proofs to expert linguists they had heard of in the area. The next year it ended up being the TANU party secretary in Tanganyika who assembled the final proofs. As she was working OUP contacted her to request that she also translate the back of the title page, including the information about the copyright and performance rights.[58] Despite these issues and delays, *Juliasi Kaizari* finally went to print in June 1963 with an initial order of 10,000 copies. The play sold relatively well, and the branch ordered reprints throughout the 1960s and 1970s. However, despite its initial optimism, the press ended up carrying a loss on the title. This was due to the remarkably low price of 2/75

[53] East Africa Branch Accounts 1964-73, OUP Financial Records, Archives of the Oxford University Press, Oxford (hereafter cited as AOUP).
[54] Clyde Sanger, "Shakespeare in Swahili blank verse," *Guardian,* August 27, 1963.
[55] Abbott to Collings, 21 Feb 1962, OUP EA, MS 106.
[56] Abbott to Joan Wicken, 7 April 1962; RAC Norrington to Wicken, 22 May 1962, OUP EA, MS 106.
[57] Wicken to Abbott, 2 May 1962, OUP EA, MS 106.
[58] Houghton to Howell, 8 April 1963, OUP EA, MS 106.

that it had finally agreed upon with Nyerere, who thought unaffordable books were not compatible with his socialist program.

The publication of *Juliasi Kaizari* was one example where the publishers at OUP Eastern Africa did not prioritize profit margin over all else. It was also an exception. In the coming years they did publish several titles in the literature and drama fields, but as with *Juliasi Kaizari* it was always with the school market in mind. The cover blurb for OUP Eastern Africa's New Drama from Africa titles advertised that the series was "meant to provide the general reader, senior secondary schools and universities with good, mature and relevant scripts which can be used for informal play-reading and performances on the stage."[59] One of the titles that could have fit into this series was the next of now-President Nyerere's Swahili translations of Shakespeare. During the first years of his presidency Nyerere continued to translate Shakespeare in his spare time, and this time it was *The Merchant of Venice*. While Nyerere had chosen *Julius Caesar* because of his shared name, he was attracted to *Merchant of Venice* because of the underlying message about the dangers of capitalism. By 1968 Oxford University Press had published other works by Nyerere, such as his writings on freedom and socialism. They were the first publisher he went to for his translation, which had the working title *Tajiri wa Venisi* or wealthy person of Venice. However, as the publishers prepared to go to press, the president contacted them to say he wanted it changed to *Mabepari wa Venisi*, a much more antagonistic title that referred to the capitalists or imperialists of Venice. Nyerere realized that this was not a direct translation of Shakespeare's title, but he thought it was an appropriate one.[60] The change did not resonate with several of the Oxford staff in Nairobi, who felt it was important to do a faithful rendering of the original. However, as the translator Nyerere got his way – on that point at least.[61] When Nyerere first sent OUP the manuscript he asked if they could get the price down to 2/-, even less than *Juliasi Kaizari*. He explained, "I do realise that prices have gone up since 'Julius Caesar' was first published, but unfortunately incomes in Tanzania have not gone up in proportion!"[62] This time, feeling they should learn from their prior mistake, the publishers held to their principles and priced the translation at 4/-, an amount that could at least put them in the black. While Nyerere was incorporating Shakespeare's texts into his own economic program, his publishers continued to dominate the regional book industry. By 1970 the publishing industry in East Africa was still controlled by foreign publishers, in much part due to the activities of organizations such as the East African Literature Bureau and Oxford University Press.

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This chapter demonstrates the complex motivations of British involvement in the development of a publishing industry in East Africa. As it describes, during the late empire many different types of British organizations sought to further their interests in East Africa through the means of publishing. It is possible to see the growth of the publishing industry through three distinct stages, but a broader study reveals how the different organizations represented a

[59] OUP EA, MS 119.
[60] Wicken to Lewis, 29 April 1969, OUP EA, MS 107.
[61] Jonathan Kariara to Lewis, 7 May 1969, OUP EA, MS 107.
[62] Quoted in Wicken to Lewis, 2 May 1969, OUP EA, MS 107.

single greater project. Altogether the result of their work was what the British felt was an essential part of a functional civil society: a vibrant, competitive publishing industry that was responsible for the production of an enormous range of reading material. As it became increasingly clear that formal political and economic control in East Africa was ending, this is what the British wanted to remain in the former empire: a civil society that was inherently British.

Although this particular discussion has focused on East Africa, a very similar pattern could be seen in Britain's West African colonies. British books had a longer history in West Africa because Britain had a longer missionary presence there. However several of the players were the same. For example, in Nigeria the Church Missionary Society dominated the book trade in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. CMS was also active in the Gold Coast, although it faced stiffer competition there from other British missionary book depots. Then, at the same time it was starting its regional publishing scheme in East Africa, the British Colonial Office looked at doing the same in other parts of the empire.[63] The colonial governments in West Africa realized that their region did not lend itself to such a large-scale project nearly as well, due mostly to the even greater numbers of spoken languages and not covering a continuous region.[64] State-sponsored publishing in the late colonial period therefore took place in either smaller schemes, such as the Gaskiya Corporation in Zaria, Nigeria, or through subsidies to mission and school publishers.[65] In the same manner as had happened in East Africa, West African colonial publishing was organized with the intent of attracting British businesses to the region. When that happened, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was a set of familiar names that arrived, including Nelsons, Longman, and Oxford University Press.

Within the cultural project of the late British Empire, the mechanisms of production and distribution of books appears to be more important than their specific literary content. At the same time, the two proved to be impossible to separate completely. In this history each of the British interests had to decide which books, in what languages, and by whom they wanted to promote. Their decisions demonstrate the divide between the type of postcolonial civil society they imagined in Africa and the type that the British contributed towards. At specific moments British publishing interests felt it was to their advantage to incorporate African figures such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Julius Nyerere into their work, even when those same figures became outspoken critics of that work.

The final chapter of the dissertation, Chapter Five, will pick up with the agendas and practices of British multinational publishers and their relation to postcolonial literary culture. Although the production of African literature was gradually sidelined in the local industry, African writers and their works were becoming increasingly important to metropolitan publishing houses. That discussion will compare the business models of two British firms,

[63] L. J. Lewis, Report on literature production and distribution in British West Africa, 1949, NAG, RG 3/5/1182.
[64] West African Directors of Education, 18 Dec 1950; Acting Governor of Nigeria to West African Council, 6 Jan 1951, NAG, RG 3/5/1182.
[65] Husaini Hayatu, ed. *50 Years of Truth: The Story of the Gaskiya Corporation Zaria*. Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1991.

Oxford University Press and Heinemann Educational Books, while they competed to recruit African writers and publicize their works to African, metropolitan, and international markets. It then examines the responses from the very African writers the British firms were competing to publish, including Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and their attempts to organize African forms of publishing that would be capable of circumventing the dominance of British firms.

Chapter Four

This is London Calling:
British broadcasting to Africa during the late colonial period

As an institution that transmitted the English language, British entertainment, and British news to sites all over the world, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was an obvious part of the cultural project of late empire. The BBC started domestic broadcasting in the 1920s and inaugurated its external broadcasting arm, then named the Empire Service, in the early 1930s. The latter was built on short wave, a relatively new discovery that allowed broadcasters to transmit over long distances cheaply. As the technology improved over the next decades, British officials envisaged it solving several issues in the empire all at once. They spoke of the medium as a means to forge cultural ties with Britain, as an avenue for education and development, and as a tool of government control. In the span of one day, they could transmit a radio adaptation of *Othello*, a lesson on English grammar, a lecture on soil erosion, and information about a new government ordinance. The convergence of technology and content made the BBC an important player in how Britain communicated with its empire in the period right before the empire disintegrated.

This chapter is about the growth of British external broadcasting from its beginning in the late 1920s until African decolonization in the early 1960s. It is a history that has been told many times over, in scholarly treatments and individual memoirs.[1] The BBC Empire Service started in the interwar period to function as an important channel between Britain and its diaspora of white English-speakers. Although contemporaries spoke of the unifying power of the broadcast medium, they limited its use to certain parts of the British world. Over the following decades British external broadcasting took on new diplomatic functions as the BBC extended its broadcasts to wartime and then colonial audiences. The expansion was

[1] The most detailed history of the British Broadcasting Corporation is Asa Briggs's five-volume series *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*. With the exception of Volume III, *The War of Words 1939-1945* (1995), which describes the BBC during the Second World War, Briggs's series focuses almost completely on British domestic broadcasting. Scholarship on the BBC external services only began to appear in the past decade; see for example the special issue, "BBC World Service, 1932-2007: Cultural Exchange and Public Diplomacy," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 28, no. 4 (2008): 441-623; Simon Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World*; and Alban Webb, *London Calling: Britain, the BBC World Service, and the Cold War*. In addition, several former employees of the BBC World Service have authored histories of British external broadcasting, including Gerald Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting*; Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service*; and John Tusa, *A Word in Your Ear: Reflections on Changes* (London: Broadside Books, 1992).

characterized by a targeted approach to specific audiences that fit into Britain's different strategic and development aims. As certain BBC services became increasingly specialized, British broadcasters also maintained their worldwide service in English. In their programming for overseas audiences, BBC broadcasters faced a recurring question about the overall purpose of British external broadcasting. In deciding whether to act as a universalizing force or behave as a specialized service, the BBC also determined how international audiences would view and interact with Britain in the future.

This history of the BBC external services differs from earlier accounts because it focuses on the African audience – both real and imagined. The chapter describes the British programs Africans heard on the radio during the late colonial period, whether they came from the general worldwide service or were specific programs designed just for Africa. Prior to decolonization, African audiences were one of the lowest priorities for Britain and the BBC. The original conception of the Empire Service was to serve white audiences in the British world, at the exclusion of colonized populations. Then, as the BBC became increasingly specialized to reflect Britain's strategic priorities, Africa was not believed to be a priority area. Although the BBC did not address itself to Africans, Africans still heard the BBC. Throughout the late colonial period British broadcasts were essential to the development of colonial broadcasting. The BBC reached colonial audiences through its privileged position in colonial government and would continue to do so until it lost that position.

In this chapter I argue that Britain did not prioritize the African audience until after it had lost it. The chapter ends in the early 1960s, when the Suez crisis and impending decolonization finally forced the BBC to direct itself towards audiences in the African colonies. With African independence, however, Britain lost its monopoly on broadcasting in its former colonies. The British found themselves having to compete for postcolonial listeners at the very moment that audience had become the most crucial.

A single voice to the diasporic audience

It was not long after the British Broadcasting Corporation was formed that its officials started to speak of how the new technology could be used for the empire. The first general manager (later director-general), John Reith, was a high modernist who had emphasized the national role and reach of broadcasting earlier in the 1920s in order to secure the BBC's position in Britain. By the end of the decade, Reith's rhetoric shifted from the national community to the imperial community, where broadcasting had the means to connect and coordinate between the different parts of the British world.[2] It would also require a different technology than what broadcasting in Britain had been developed around. In the 1920s the BBC had developed a network of long-wave and medium-wave transmitters to carry its national and regional programs to British listeners. The usefulness of short-wave signals was still being discovered in this period. In contrast to long and medium waves, short-wave communications relied on bouncing a signal back and forth between the surface of the earth and the

[2] John Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949), 113.

ionosphere. Those bounces, which were usually referred to as hops, made it possible to send a signal a long distance using a relatively low-powered transmitter.[3]

The potential of these developments for the British Empire were just being understood in 1927, when the Colonial Conference discussed wireless broadcasting for the first time. The conference saw several strategic benefits to imperial broadcasting. Reith spoke positively about how broadcasts would generate emotional ties within a cohesive empire, while other officials emphasized the risk of not getting Britain's foot in the door. Already, signals from other nations such as the United States, where a number of enterprising short-wave stations had begun to operate, and Holland, which was eager to reach the Dutch East Indies, were reaching audiences in the British dominions. Colonial Office officials noticed the mounting pressure to offer a comparable British service.[4] The initial discussions in 1927 demonstrate that from its start, British imperial broadcasting was meant to foster imperial identity and combat international competition.

The technological advancements in short wave had come far in the mid-1920s, which was what led Reith and others to speak excitedly of the medium as if it was limitless. At the same time, the BBC was cautious about what still needed to be learned before this could become an effective means of long-distance communication. Engineers in different parts of the world struggled to learn the erratic behavior of short waves, which changed as they passed through different seasons and times of day on their way around the globe. In the late 1920s broadcasters could not yet accurately predict which frequencies would deliver reasonable reception to certain places at specific times, and the BBC did not want to follow the American model and rush to unsatisfactory service.[5] One BBC official explained, "We stayed our hand so as not to put out noises combined with all sorts of atmospherics and inaccuracies and periods of silence and generally unpleasantness, merely to satisfy what might be called the sentimental feeling abroad just to hear something which is neither music nor intelligent speech."[6] The delay did not go unnoticed, particularly during a period of anxiety over Britain's imperial future. Editorials in the *Times* accused the corporation of perfectionist policies at the expense of imperial interests.[7] In response BBC engineers argued they could not open a long-distance service until they trusted short waves to deliver the same intelligibility, continuity, and quality the BBC carried to the domestic public.

Outside the Colonial Office and the Dominions Office, government departments such as the Overseas Trade Department, the Empire Marketing Board, and the Treasury were also interested in the BBC's progress.[8] These departments also saw enormous potential for imperial broadcasting, but focused on the economic trade that could grow out of cultural and

[3] Much of this discovery stemmed from the work of English physicist E. V. Appleton. In 1924 Appleton performed a series of experiments using BBC signals to prove the existence of the ionosphere.
[4] Colonial Office Conference, 1927, Cmd. 2883, 58-60.
[5] P. P. Eckersley, "Empire Broadcasting," *Times*, August 12, 1927, 11.
[6] Quoted in Briggs, *Volume II: The Golden Age of Wireless* (1995), 343.
[7] Hugh S. Pocock, "Empire Broadcasting," *Times*, August 22, 1927, 6.
[8] Trade propaganda committee, minutes, 4 April 1930, UKNA, CO 323/1103/1.

sentimental connections. The developments in long-distance broadcasting occurred at the same moment Britain's relationship with the white dominions was becoming less formal. While different sections of the British government were encouraged by the prospects of imperial broadcasting, they did not express the willingness to fund it. By 1930 the BBC had had some success with rudimentary experiments and wanted to construct a high-powered short-wave transmitter in Daventry, England. The corporation's five-year proposal required £40,000 for the transmitter and then £42,500 each year to run an empire service.[9]

All discussion over the benefits external broadcasting would bring Britain ran into the same unresolved issue: who should pay for external broadcasting? Reith and the corporation's chief engineer advocated for official support to experiment with short-wave transmissions so the BBC could introduce an external service once it had mastered it. They sought assurance that external broadcasting was a public good, categorically different from domestic broadcasting, which was funded by license revenues. The BBC did not see how those same funds could go towards an external service that was inaudible to British license holders. Meanwhile many parts of the government believed the intended audiences should fund the service. However, at the Imperial Conference of 1930 the dominion governments made it clear they preferred to put their resources towards developing their own national systems, and dominion listeners were not likely to want to pay for programs from Britain that would never be as interesting or as clear as their own.[10] As for the colonies, the Colonial Office explained it was illogical to attempt to collect license fees from the very small number of short-wave set owners. In addition, Britain could not justify asking the colonial governments to contribute to the service because the revenue in colonial budgets came from native populations, and the BBC service was expected to benefit only white listeners.[11] The matter was finally resolved during the economic crisis of the next year, when all British departments had to tighten their budgets. The BBC's contribution to the government cuts was to provide the Empire Service.[12] Though there was general agreement that overseas broadcasting was in Britain's interest, government departments were not willing to devote funds to unspecified benefits. From the Empire Service's start, the amount of financial support was divorced from the actual cost of building and maintaining the service. This would become a common pattern in the second half of the twentieth century.

In its proposal to build an empire service, the corporation also described what such a service would sound like and what type of listeners it was meant to attract. John Reith and the BBC chief engineer first imagined a network of relaying posts positioned around the British world. Broadcasting from Britain would thus stand in for all broadcasting developments in the

[9] British Broadcasting Corporation – Empire Broadcasting, Nov 1929, UKNA, CO 323/1103/2.
[10] Report on Empire Broadcasting, Appendices to Imperial Conference, 1930, Cmd. 3718, 134-6.
[11] Minutes from meeting to discuss empire broadcasting service, 11 March 1930, UKNA, CO 323/1103/1. Arnold Hodson was the only colonial governor willing to contribute to the cost of the Empire Service, but he made the offer twice – first as governor of Sierra Leone, then as governor of the Gold Coast. BBC officials wryly suggested the Colonial Office assign Hodson a different posting every six months so that then they would have their funding (Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 32).
[12] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told,* 18-9.

empire. By 1930 this vision had been reconfigured, although the BBC Empire Service was still intended exclusively for white audiences. The reason for the change was something the BBC had not anticipated: the governments of Canada, Australia, and South Africa were already allowing local broadcasting services to develop in ways not necessarily compatible with the British model.[13] Although the BBC's short-wave experiments reached these parts of the world, the quality was poor in comparison to that of local stations. Listeners who tuned in directly did so for the novelty and nostalgia associated with listening to Britain, but there was not a general demand for daily programs.[14]

British overseas broadcasters began to distinguish between two kinds of audiences: local broadcasting stations, which they saw as potential rebroadcasters, and the direct listener, who tuned his set to the signal from Britain. Rebroadcasting was essential if they were to reach listeners in the dominions, where the BBC competed with local broadcasters. This was due to the inadequacies of shortwave technology. Despite recent advancements, long-distance transmissions in the 1930s were still characterized by distortions, interference, and fading, all of which made intelligibility difficult. If British programming was to be heard by greater numbers of people in these places, the BBC's best strategy was to schedule its transmissions at times convenient for local stations' high-powered receivers to pick them up and relay or rebroadcast the output over their medium-wave networks. With re-broadcasting, the BBC's targeted audience was not the Canadian or Australian who listened to CBC or ABC, but rather the broadcasting station deciding if and when it would relay British programs.

The BBC determined its greater responsibility lay in reaching the individual whom they termed the "lonely listener in the bush."[15] These were British expatriates who lived in remote parts of the tropical empire and owned a shortwave set, but did not have anything else to listen to, or sometimes even a newspaper to read. The Empire Service, the BBC asserted, would serve as their only source of news and their only connection to British civilization.[16] The image of the lonely listener resonated powerfully in the overseas broadcasting mission in the 1930s. King George V had this type of listener in mind when he delivered his Christmas broadcast in 1932, days after the Empire Service opened. The king's speech began, "I speak now from my home and from my heart to you all; to men and women so cut off by the snows, the desert, or the sea, that only voices out of the air can reach them."[17] The isolated Briton – characterized by his

[13] Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, 26-33.

[14] British Broadcasting Corporation, *The Empire Broadcasting Service* (London: BBC, 1935), 11; Emma Robertson, "'I Get a Real Kick Out of Big Ben': BBC versions of Britishness on the Empire and General Overseas Service, 1932-1948," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 28, no. 4 (October 2008): 459-73, doi: 10.1080 /01439680802310274.

[15] The first director-general, John Reith, coined this term in the late 1920s and by the next decade BBC officials regularly used it to refer to their isolated listeners.

[16] BBC, *Empire Broadcasting Service*, 11.

[17] "A History of Christmas broadcasts," Official website of the Royal Monarchy, accessed March 20, 2011, http://www.royal.gov.uk/ImagesandBroadcasts/TheQueensChristmasBroadcasts /AhistoryofChristmasBroadcasts.aspx.

race, language, and nostalgia for Britain – was at the center of how the BBC saw itself serving the empire.

British broadcasting used the diverse locations of its listeners to demonstrate its worldwide reach. It used its common programming to cultivate a shared identity. When it began transmitting, the Empire Service was on the air for ten hours each day, spread across five intervals based on defined areas of reception: an Australian transmission, a North American transmission, and so on. But soon after, British broadcasters became aware that just as they could not predict ideal reception conditions in different parts of the world, they also could not anticipate their audiences' preferred listening times. They abandoned the zonal basis for their transmission schedule in favor of a schedule where time alone determined the audience for any particular program.[18] The new schedule capitalized on the capability of a single transmission to attract simultaneously audiences from several parts of the world. For example, transmission 3, which was between 1400 and 1700 GMT, was an evening listening time for South Asia, an afternoon interval for the Middle East and Mediterranean, and a morning program for parts of North America. The program output was thus expected to be appropriate for all of these audiences at all of these times of day.[19] What resulted from this model was that broadcasters at the BBC began to conflate the simultaneous character of the broadcasting medium with a universal (as opposed to specialized) approach to programming.

But just how universal was it? The Empire Service was designed to be exclusive to the white English-speaking populations living in the British dominions and colonies. A lot of the programming came from the home services and was chosen because it might prompt sentimental feelings for Britain. [20] Whether it was an orchestra concert, advice about English gardening, or the religious service on Sundays, the British programs did not have an obvious appeal for most overseas audiences. The corporation justified its programming by explaining that regardless of how the service was set up, its output would comprise European-style programs that would not appeal to other races. While native populations would naturally develop interest in broadcasting over time, the British assumed local stations would be established by then and those stations would provide programs to suit native interests.[21] British broadcasters did not anticipate the multitude of ways colonial broadcasting would develop across the British Empire.

In the 1930s and 1940s broadcasting systems varied incredibly across Britain's colonies and territories. The different arrangements determined how much BBC content was available to African listeners. One colony where broadcasting started relatively early was Kenya: in the late 1920s the colonial government granted Cable and Wireless, a commercial company, a 30-year contract to operate a broadcasting service. Cable and Wireless based its service out of Nairobi and generated its revenue through the sale of wireless licenses. License sales steadily increased over the decade, but radio sets were almost exclusively in the hands of the colony's

[18] BBC, *Empire Broadcasting Service*, 6.
[19] Ibid., 15.
[20] Ibid., 8-13.
[21] Ibid., 8.

European and Asian populations. Although license figures are an imperfect measure, the following figure is telling: in 1943 Cable and Wireless issued 4,045 private licenses to Europeans, 1,136 to Asians, and 4 to Africans.[22] BBC officials in London viewed the Nairobi station as potential rebroadcaster that they could only hope would be interested in BBC programming. They were disappointed; in the end of 1938 the Nairobi station was on air for 26 hours each week, but the only British output it relayed were sporting events and important speeches.[23]

In contrast to the commercial station in Kenya, broadcasting in the Gold Coast was a government service that aimed to reach a larger portion of the African population. The Gold Coast service commenced in 1935 through a system of wired broadcasting or rediffusion. In this system, the colonial government relayed overseas radio programs and local entertainment through an overhead line network that radiated outwards from local stations. For a small monthly fee subscribers were lent a receiving set that was essentially a small loudspeaker connected to the network by a long wire.[24] Although the Gold Coast also began operating a wireless transmitter in 1940, rediffusion remained an important means through which the African population received broadcasts. The technology had many advantages in that it was a low-cost service and did not require the listener have access to electricity. Colonial, and later Ghanaian, authorities recognized one additional advantage to rediffusion: the subscriber could not tune to any other station.[25] The only station the majority of Gold Coast listeners received was their local one – and in the colonial period almost all of its content came from the BBC.

The early experiences of colonies such as Kenya and the Gold Coast demonstrated to the Colonial Office how broadcasting policy related to other long-term plans for economic and political development. In 1936 the British government appointed a committee under Lord Plymouth to evaluate the different manners in which broadcasting was and could be used in colonial settings. The committee's report highlighted the Gold Coast system and recommended that colonial governments develop broadcasting as a public service for more than just the Europeans and educated groups in their territories. Instead, what the Plymouth Committee envisaged was the development of an "instrument of advanced administration, an instrument, not only and perhaps not even primarily for the entertainment but rather for the enlightenment and education of the more backward sections of the population and for their instruction in public health, agriculture, etc."[26] In addition the committee wanted to see every endeavor be made to ensure colonial broadcasters, whether commercial or state-controlled,

[22] UKNA, CO 875/4/5345.

[23] Manager, Cable and Wireless, to F. A. W. Byron, 14 Nov 1938, National Archives of Ghana, Accra, CSO 7/5/20 (hereafter cited as NAG).

[24] Byron, "Memorandum on Wireless and Wire Broadcasting in the African Colonies," 16 Oct 1943, UKNA, CO 875/1/14. Although less extensive than the Gold Coast, rediffusion systems were already in place in the Falkland Islands and Sierra Leone when the Gold Coast inaugurated its system in 1935. The prior systems were also the initiative of the colonial governor, Arnold Hodson, and his chief engineer, Byron, during their earlier postings.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Colonial Office, *Interim Report of a Committee on Broadcasting Services in the Colonies* (Plymouth Report), Colonial No. 139 (London: HMSO, 1937), 5.

distributed British programs, even requiring them whenever possible to transmit the BBC news bulletin.[27] By this point it had become a given that the development of colonial broadcasting services would be a joint project between the Colonial Office and the BBC, which offered technical expertise and training facilities in addition to its overseas programs. This arrangement, however, presupposed that the BBC Empire Service was aligned with the imperatives of colonial governance.

In 1937, in a letter to the Colonial Office, the governor of the Gold Coast demanded, "Can't anything be done to censor broadcast news to the West African colonies?" He elaborated on the enormous risk at play. "It is the worst possible propaganda for the people to hear all about the Trinidad strikes, especially if the strikers are successful. As you know we have our share of professional agitators. At present they are quiescent but they are bound to say to the workers here 'Go then and do likewise!'"[28] The broadcast news the governor referred to were the daily bulletins that had been introduced on the BBC Empire Service in 1934. Overseas broadcasting before then had sought to foster cultural ties by featuring talks, music, and sporting events. There were no regular news bulletins due to opposition from British news agencies that wanted to protect the monopoly of their wire services. In 1934 the BBC created an empire news desk separate from that of its domestic services. From then on every Empire Service transmission included a short news bulletin, which covered the important events that had taken place in the empire and the world during the past 24 hours.[29] These bulletins were meant specifically for the "lonely listeners"; it was assumed diasporic Britons near population centers already received the news. Also, since the BBC did not have a news gathering operation outside Britain, the material for its bulletins came from Reuters.[30] Unlike other Empire Service programming, news bulletins were not available for rebroadcast, owing to Reuter's copyright.[31]

The Gold Coast governor's demand that particular news be censored was difficult on both technical and principled grounds. The Empire Service was designed for reception throughout the world, and its transmission schedule made special censorship from the point of view of each colony virtually impossible. Therefore, as the response from Whitehall explained, any censoring would have to be done at the West African end. To do this, Gold Coast broadcasting authorities would have to take down the news from the BBC transmission, make their omissions, which would come across as gaps, and then rebroadcast it over their wired system. The Colonial Office left this option open to the governor, but cautioned that such drastic action might hurt the British imperial project of linking up the different parts of the empire.[32]

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[27] Model license agreement, enclosed in despatch from Lord Plymouth to the colonies, 16 March 1934, NAG, CSO 7/5/16.

[28] Hodson to William Ormsby-Gore, 25 June 1937, UKNA, CO 323/1495/31.

[29] BBC, *Empire Broadcasting Service*, 9.

[30] BBC, "The Empire Broadcasting Service," Feb 1935, enclosed in colonial secretary's despatch of 8 May 1935, NAG, CSO 7/5/13.

[31] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 59. Reuters briefly lifted its ban on rebroadcasting the news during the Munich crisis and then permanently removed it after the outbreak of the Second World War.

[32] Ormsby-Gore to Hodson, 26 July 1937, UKNA, CO 323/1495/31.

The far more significant part of this exchange was the debate that ensued within the Colonial Office. Some of the officials who reviewed the issue believed control of information was a crucial factor in maintaining colonial rule; here, the content of the BBC news bulletin was a tool at the government's disposal. But many other British officials spoke of the BBC's value in different terms. They repeatedly pointed out that the principal object of the British broadcast was consistently reporting a true version of the news. They trusted the BBC to compile its bulletin with strict attention to objectivity; therefore, local administrations should not tinker with it.[33] Moreover, they believed the BBC's honest and impartial approach made Britain stand out among its foreign counterparts. As one Whitehall official noted, "There is something to be said for broadcasting British versions of untoward events in the Colonies etc. to counteract any distorted or exaggerated versions which would no doubt reach the Colonies from other sources."[34] Although the Colonial Office questioned the short-term effects of unbiased and consistent reporting in the colonies, its officials spoke of the BBC news in terms that equated it with British values in general. Whether the "war of words" against Goebbels in the 1940s or the Suez crisis in the 1950s, BBC external broadcasters and the British government would return to this critical issue again and again in the upcoming years.

British overseas broadcasting began as a means for Britain to cultivate cultural ties with the rest of the British world. The Empire Service was produced and transmitted from the metropole, thus reinforcing Britain's position in the center of the imperial network. A BBC postcard from 1936 showed that British broadcasters drew the world that way, with themselves in the center and their transmissions radiating outwards to all parts of the empire.[35] But the imperial network was quite a lot looser than the BBC wished to depict. British broadcasters constantly faced the problem of how to keep imperial audiences interested in what it offered. The Empire Service sought to balance the different parts of its worldwide audience with an array of programming, from cultural series to news bulletins. However, in the colonies the contradictions of imperial broadcasting quickly became visible. In most parts of the colonial empire, broadcasting services represented a culmination of different state interests. Under the rubric of development, colonial governments saw broadcasting to be an avenue for education as well as a tool of control, and they set up systems that best served all of their needs. From its start, therefore, there was a separation between how dominion audiences and colonial audiences heard and interacted with the BBC. Finally, the introduction of newscasts raised new questions about how Britain should present itself and other parts of the world to different broadcast audiences. The issues and questions raised in the 1930s would not go away in the 1940s, when wartime circumstances brought fundamental changes to British external broadcasting.

[33] [Author unknown], 17 July 1937, UKNA, CO 323/1495/31.
[34] Ormsby-Gore to Hodson, 26 July 1937, UKNA, CO 323/1495/31.
[35] BBC, promotional Christmas card, Dec 1936, National Library of Australia digital collections, MS 1924, series 26, item 1281, http://http://nla.gov.au/nla.ms-ms1924-26-1281.

Chapter Four: This is London Calling

Broadcasting in multiple languages to targeted audiences

During the Second World War British external broadcasting took on a size and importance that was previously unimaginable. The total number of BBC employees more than doubled, BBC program output tripled, and BBC transmitter power nearly quadrupled. The transformation was the most obvious in the overseas services, where, as just one example, the size of the staff increased almost six-fold during the first two years of the war.[36] The rapid transformation would have a profound affect on the shape of BBC external broadcasting through the postwar period. However, during the first years of the war most of the change was hasty, improvised, and piecemeal, as the corporation struggled to find transmitters, studio facilities, and office space to provide the services the British government suddenly required from it. The relationship between the Ministry of Information and the BBC was contentious and uncertain for the first several years of the war, but the two bodies reached a tacit agreement by 1942. The British government would be responsible for all broadcasting policy and the BBC for implementation. In a memorable description, the chairman of the BBC board of governors described it as bound by silken cords that sometimes felt like chains of iron.[37] That the war forced a closer collaboration between the British government and its broadcasters than ever before was certainly clear, and this relationship would always be a factor in the development of programs for Africa. Within that relationship the news editors and producers at the BBC still thought of themselves as broadcasting professionals in their own right, regardless of government direction.[38] Editorial independence – whether it was actual or fictional – was an essential part of how the BBC presented itself to the world.

The first transformation to overseas broadcasting – the introduction of foreign language services – actually predated the war. Four years after the beginning of the Empire Service, a committee chaired by Lord Ullswater reviewed the BBC charter. Its report recommended "in the interest of British prestige and influence in world affairs," the Empire Service should be expanded, including the appropriate use of foreign languages.[39] The recommendation came in reaction to what Britain's European competitors were doing. Over the past few years, Germany, Italy, Russia, France, and Holland had all made substantial developments in their short-wave services, and now featured regular broadcasts in English and other European languages. The British regarded the majority of these – the German, Italian, and Russian broadcasts in particular – as blatant propaganda, but since they did not have a counter-service they had no way to correct the record. Listeners in Europe and other parts of the world wondered why Britain was so behind.[40]

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[36] For detailed staff figures from the period, see Briggs, *Volume III: War of Words*, appendix A, 663-5.
[37] Alan Powell, quoted in Ibid., 31.
[38] This is a common theme in the BBC files; for an example concerning liaison with the Colonial Office, see Ryan to J. B. Clark, 27 July 1943, British Broadcasting Corporation Written Archives Centre, Caversham, Reading, UK, R34/305 (hereafter cited as BBC WAC).
[39] *Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935*, Feb 1936, Cmd. 5091 (Ullswater Report), at paragraph 122.
[40] Eliot Watrous to BBC, 4 Dec 1936, BBC WAC, E2/249/1.

The BBC had refused to join in because until then it believed overseas broadcasting was only for the empire. British broadcasters had designed the Empire Service programs and news for the diasporic audience; if other populations chose to listen in, that was an added benefit. Were the BBC to begin foreign language broadcasting, it would be leaving the confines of the British Empire and targeting audiences that were by definition not British. Furthermore, BBC officials believed their competitors' propaganda polluted the airwaves and they did not want any suspicions to spread to them. John Reith explained, "It is more in British interests – and also a subtle form of propaganda for the British point of view – to avoid any action that might lead listeners, who have turned to British bulletins as a reliable source of information, to think that we too were joining in the babel of broadcast nationalist propaganda."[41] The broadcasters in the Empire Service feared seeing all their successes disappear. They believed it was a situation similar to what they had faced a decade earlier, when Britain was pressured to rush into overseas broadcasting just because other countries were doing it. Instead, the Empire Service officials emphasized, British prestige and its reputation for integrity arose from the fact the BBC was *different* from those other countries.[42]

Despite these reservations, BBC officials felt pressure from Westminster to look at the technical and administrative requirements to transmit in other languages. It was clear the transmissions would have to come from Daventry, as that was the only high-powered station equipped to do transmit short waves.[43] The larger question was what languages, in what transmissions, and in what form – just news, or talks and other programs too. When the BBC surveyed the different parts of the empire on these questions, it received mostly negative responses. Uganda, Nigeria, and Northern Rhodesia were among the replies that explained the small number of BBC listeners and lack of wireless receivers in the colonies did not yet justify the introduction of languages services. The government of Sierra Leone added that the new services would be to the BBC's disadvantage, since it would mean listeners could no longer pick up transmissions meant for other regions.[44] But concerns such as these were far less important to the government than Britain's other political concerns. As British officials considered the possible uses of non-English broadcasts, their discussions categorized foreign languages by the different impacts they could make. For example, if they decided the objective was to strengthen the hold over the British Empire, the BBC might use the established languages of the dominions, such as French for Canada and Afrikaans for South Africa, and non-European languages for the rest of the empire, such as Hindi, Malay, or Swahili. On the other hand, if the real aim was to improve the British position in politically crucial locations, the corporation should begin broadcasting in Spanish and Portuguese for South America and Arabic for the Middle East.[45] When the BBC finally began to broadcast in other languages in 1938, the first languages were indeed Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic, and by the end of the decade the

[41] Reith to Herbert Morrison, 19 June 1936, BBC WAC, E2/249/1.
[42] Minutes, [no date – Sept or Oct 1937], BBC WAC, 2/249/5.
[43] Suggested use of languages other than English in the Empire Service, June 1937, BBC WAC, E2/249/3.
[44] Responses to colonial secretary's despatch of 28 Aug 1936, BBC WAC, E2/249/1.
[45] Use of languages other than English in the empire broadcasting service, June 1936, 4, BBC WAC, E2/249/1.

Empire Service had been renamed the BBC Overseas Service. Foreign language broadcasting had become core to the BBC's role overseas and would continue to act as a measure of the audiences and regions Britain deemed most important to its interests.

The BBC African Service was one part of the massive wartime expansion of broadcasting, even though African audiences were a relatively low priority for British officials. Within Britain's overseas broadcasting, the largest share of resources was dedicated to reaching European audiences. During the Munich crisis the corporation added transmissions in French, Italian, and German to its foreign-language broadcasts, followed by Spanish and Portuguese broadcasts to Europe in addition to those to South America. To combat German propaganda in southern Africa the BBC also began in 1939 a weekly newsletter in Afrikaans directed towards white populations in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. The number of foreign languages the British broadcast in went from nine the week before the war to 45 by the end (a figure that was still less than the Germans' 52), but more than half were European languages, and the only language for sub-Saharan Africa was Afrikaans.[46] The internal organization of the corporation conformed to the new size and shape of overseas broadcasting. A reorganization in the summer of 1940 created four divisions within the Overseas Service: European, Empire, Latin American, and Near Eastern. Then a year later the European Service was separated from the Overseas Service completely. This allowed for the Empire Service to be divided even further into North American, Eastern, Pacific, and African branches, where the latter also produced programs for the Caribbean.[47] Over the course of the war the appearance of the overseas services reflected the BBC's increasing specialization. The continued reorganizing made room to give attention to the needs and interests of particular audiences, but it also meant the old model of broadcasting in a single British voice was gone.

The Second World War created a political atmosphere that emphasized the importance of broadcasting, and both the BBC and colonial officials took advantage of the available funding and attention. As a result of administrative and technical changes in its organization, the BBC was now capable of producing programs specifically for listeners in Africa. This was to take place under the new African Service, which was headed by John Grenfell Williams. As a white South African, Grenfell Williams was familiar with the primary audience the African programming was meant to serve. Indeed, throughout the war, the majority of program offerings on the service were directed at white listeners in southern Africa. The South African Broadcasting Corporation carried the BBC for 12 hours each day; in response, BBC producers provided programs such as *Song Time in the Laager*, *Radio Trek*, and *Springbok Greetings* that

[46] Briggs, *Volume III: War of Words*, 18. By the early 1940s the empire was represented through the weekly programs in South Asian and East Asian languages, as well as the Arabic Service, which retained its importance from the late 1930s. Weekly broadcasts in Hausa and Swahili were initially in the plans for major expansion that the Ministry of Information asked be drawn up at the end of 1940, but as the BBC and the government ran into limitations of infrastructure, they were two of the languages that got cut. They would not be broadcast over the BBC until 1957, the first year of African independence (Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 119-20).

[47] The Caribbean was served primarily by the North American Service, but BBC officials thought the African Service was the better place to put out specialized programs for West Indian audiences (Extract from monthly report: empire countries and USA, 30 October 1941, BBC WAC, E2/3).

were specific to South African interests. There was also the Afrikaans transmission, which had been increased to one hour each day by 1944. The preference shown to South Africa, which had the status of a dominion and a larger white population, did not extend to other areas during the war. For example, the Gold Coast system carried British broadcasts to 21 population centers in the colony; yet, BBC programs for West Africans were few. In other overseas services, the BBC recruited early on a myriad of translators, announcers, and producers with first-hand experiencing of living or broadcasting in those parts of the world. But the broadcasting corporation still lacked expertise on colonial Africa, which meant it had to rely upon colonial officials, information officers, and other British observers in Africa to collect and report any on-the-spot knowledge. As a result, all the local feedback broadcasters received about their African programming was filtered through the particular agendas and activities of the colonial state.

As the BBC was to learn, there was not a single mind behind British colonialism in Africa. In London the Colonial Office stressed the aims and practice of long-term colonial development, while in Africa the colonial governors prioritized programs that would make it easier to maintain their rule. In 1939, right after the war began, the colonial secretary Malcolm MacDonald met with BBC officials to discuss British broadcasting in the empire. He was particularly concerned they make both the white and the native populations feel they were Britain's partners in the present war. He felt it was particularly important Britain's war efforts were not derailed by the types of nationalist protest several colonies had experienced in the late 1930s. MacDonald and the broadcasters discussed how Britain would relay war news to African listeners, which brought them to examine what they saw as the peculiarities of the native listener. They agreed that for financial and practical reasons the BBC could only focus on speaking to the educated native who spoke English and who owned a wireless set.[48] Throughout the war, the Colonial Office advised the BBC about how best to reach educated groups in the colonies with the assumption that those populations would very gradually increase until the broadcasts reached everyone. The Colonial Office's interests corresponded to John Reith's beliefs about the role of broadcasting: that radio was a tool to raise educational and cultural standards. However, as broadcasters and officials in London attempted to put together programming towards this outcome, local feedback from Africa revealed the problems with these plans.

The BBC and the colonial secretary had agreed that they could only really hope to reach Africans who owned wireless sets, but in the 1940s that figure was minute. Most of Kenya's rural districts would not receive their first wireless set until the next decade. Nigeria estimated there were about 3,000 wireless sets in the colony by 1950, distributed among a population of 25 million. For those who did have access to the wireless, it was often because there was a set in a public space such as a market or a social hall. In several places, including the Gold Coast and Nigeria, large amounts of African listening occurred through wired rediffusion services.[49] In the

[48] Cecil Graves to Frederick Ogilvie, 5 Oct 1939, BBC WAC, R49/339.

[49] In addition to its 3,000 wireless sets, Nigeria also counted 12,000 wired receiving sets, for a total of 15,000 sets, or 1.2 per 2,000 people (Unesco, *Statistics on Radio and Television, 1950-1960* Statistical reports and studies ST/S/8 [Paris: Unesco, 1963], 56, 60).

1940s, radio licensing among Africans was more likely to occur in urban and educated or semi-educated parts of society than elsewhere, but it was almost entirely in public spaces. This was at odds with the model of the individual listener that the BBC's overseas programming had been designed around.

In 1941, in consultation with the Colonial Office and the Ministry of Information, the BBC proposed it start a weekly 15-minute newsletter for West Africans. This was one of the first programs specific to African audiences, and its planning exposed some of the problems that would plague the African Service in future decades. First, although the program was only meant for one region, it proved difficult to find an evening time slot that could work for a broad audience. There was a two-hour time difference between Nigeria and the Gold Coast, and colonial officials reported that Africans tended to go to bed early. The BBC eventually went ahead with the best time for the Gold Coast, because the slot was a better fit with its other overseas schedules.[50] The more significant issue was the matter of content. For the first three editions of the newsletter, the BBC and Colonial Office arranged for K. A. Busia, a Ghanaian student at Oxford, to do a series of talks. Although everyone in Britain was pleased with the result, the feedback from West Africa told a different story. The governments of Nigeria, Gold Coast, and Sierra Leone all reported Busia's talks were "confined to lengthy and repetitive expositions of views of Intelligentsia to which it is not necessary to give publicity."[51] To help the BBC derive maximum benefit from its transmission, the West African governors suggested programs that would be more useful. The common theme behind many of their ideas was to use the British war effort to head off native complaints. For example, the governors suggested one program on "Wartime life in Great Britain, with varied illustrations of war effort and attitude with special reference to high taxation cheerfully borne," and another on the "comparison between present conditions in British West African Colonies and those in countries which directly or indirectly have come under German control." So not to be too obvious, the governors also stressed to Britain that "news not views" should predominate in programming, and propaganda must be carefully concealed.[52]

A year later the feedback from West Africa showed BBC programs were still missing their mark. London broadcasters had tried to incorporate the request for locally oriented programs and now ran talks on topics such as the role of West African exports in the war effort.[53] But the colonial governors explained that their populations would welcome more light music and dance music, instead of all the talks they had received. They further recommended the BBC follow the German example and do a more skillful job of interspersing talks and music to ensure closer listening.[54] The BBC material that had gone over the best by far were the two or three occasions the producers brought Africans in Britain to the microphone to send messages to friends and relatives at home. The governors felt a regular "Africans in London"

[50] John Grenfell Williams to E. E. Sabben-Clare, 13 June 1941, BBC WAC, E2/583.
[51] Reported in G. C. Latham to Grenfell Williams, 1 Aug 1941, BBC WAC, E2/583.
[52] Bernard Bourdillon to colonial secretary, 14 August 1941, UKNA, CO 875/3/6.
[53] Grenfell Williams to Sabine, 10 Feb 1943, BBC WAC, E2/583.
[54] Governor of Sierra Leone to colonial secretary, 20 April 1942, BBC WAC, E2/583.

feature could arouse a lot of interest, particularly if it was set to music.[55] What the colonial governors were describing was a newsletter similar to the BBC program *Calling the West Indies*. *Calling the West Indies* had started in 1939 to give West Indian servicemen an opportunity to read letters to their families back in the Caribbean. It soon fell under the direction of the Jamaican journalist Una Marsden, who gradually introduced interviews, literary discussions, and music, and in so doing established a tone and format for much of the BBC's Caribbean programming in the 1940s and 1950s.[56] While officials at the BBC celebrated the success their programs had in the Caribbean, they did not feel they could do the same for somewhere like West Africa. One of the factors that made programs such as *Calling the West Indies* viable was the number of West Indians in Britain whom the BBC could call upon for segments and material. It would be much more difficult to fill a regular weekly program for West Africa.[57]

In an effort to reproduce the model that worked for Caribbean audiences, the BBC soon introduced *Calling West Africa*, a 15-minute program on the African Service two evenings a week.[58] Unfortunately *Calling West Africa* did not gain the same following as its West Indian counterpart. The broadcasters in London sought to find personalities that would appeal to West African audiences, but like most of the African Service programming, they continued to hear the complaint their programs contained far too much talk.[59] The broadcasters were incredulous that a large number of their listeners truly felt this, but they did agree to compromise a little more often in their West African programs and from time to time give listeners the things they specially asked for.[60] Therefore, *Calling West Africa* evolved into a more varied biweekly program, with poetry readings, illustrated talks on music, and even a few musical items sandwiched in between the topical talks on education and nutrition. The program's variety – however limited – made it an exception in the early days of broadcasting to Africa. The other regional programs on the African Service, such as *Calling East Africa* and *Calling Southern Rhodesia*, were almost entirely talks, as were many of the South African programs.[61] In each of those programs the audience was thought to be almost entirely white settlers in contrast to the African audiences in West Africa.

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[55] Bourdillon to colonial secretary, 16 April 1942, BBC WAC. E2/583.

[56] The program was soon renamed *Caribbean Voices*. For more about the BBC's programs for the Caribbean in the 1940s and 1950s, see Glyne Griffith, "'This is London calling the West Indies': the BBC's *Caribbean Voices*" in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. Bill Schwartz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 196-208; Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Darrell Newton, "Calling the West Indies: The BBC World Service and *Caribbean Voices*," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 28, no. 4 (October 2008): 489-97.

[57] Grenfell Williams to Latham, 5 Aug 1941, BBC WAC, E2/583.

[58] BBC, African Service schedule for week 24, 30 April 1943, BBC WAC, E2/3.

[59] Officers in the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone continued to report on complaints that there were "far too many talks" on the African Service, and "talks tend to be very annoying." (Collins to Lamping, 15 March 1944, BBC WAC, E2/583).

[60] Etienne Amyot to Edmett, 20 June 1944, BBC WAC, E2/583.

[61] R. J. Montgomery, Autumn schedule African Service, 10 Aug 1944, BBC WAC, E2/3.

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While the BBC showed reluctance to adjust to listeners' tastes, it was more willing to adjust to what it perceived as listeners' needs. Early on in the war, officials and broadcasters were concerned about how to simplify the language of the news broadcasts and provide the right amount of geographical and political background so a wider audience of educated and semi-educated Africans could understand them. They were motivated by a mix of concern about the greater war effort and paternalism towards colonial populations. (There were a lot of references to "simple minds" going around the BBC in this period.) The announcers on *Calling West Africa* were reminded they needed to speak considerably slower here than in the pieces for European audiences. As one BBC memo commented, "If they miss the opening and closing announcements they are apt to get the whole programme wrong, and we get the most extraordinary summaries of what they think they have heard!"[62] Once again, however, British broadcasters had to defer to local officials, who emphasized the dangers of moving so far from a formal style where listeners felt patronized. It was a complicated act, as one recommendation from West Africa revealed: "Talks by Africans should be 'gossipy', typical, objective and factual with accounts of personal experiences. Abstract theorizing should be avoided, as also any tendency to 'talk down to' listeners."[63] Meanwhile, whenever the East African governments felt the BBC had over-simplified its content, they would argue materials for Africans must be produced in Africa. After the war the BBC continued to struggle to find an appropriate balance in its content and tone to African audiences.

The BBC's programs that targeted particular audiences around the world were shaped by the presence of international competition. However, during the second part of the Second World War, the BBC also found that it was competing against, well, itself. The other BBC transmission that could be heard in sub-Saharan Africa was the General Forces Programme. As the overseas services sectioned off different regional services, it also retained a General Overseas Service (GOS). This short-wave broadcast was the remaining world service of the BBC because it could be heard in all parts of the world throughout the day. By 1944 the worldwide service dedicated 21 hours each day to the General Forces Programme, meant to serve British troops stationed around the world.[64] This program was unique to the BBC for two reasons. First, as a link between servicemen and their families it was one of the few times a program was heard by audiences both overseas and at home in Britain. Second, because the General Forces Programme was meant to entertain British servicemen, it prioritized light music and variety programs over the types of educational and informational material found on other British programs. These lighter programs were produced with all types of servicemen in mind, regardless of their national or regional identities.[65]

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[62] Treadgold to Overseas Presentation, 26 October 1944, BBC WAC, E2/583.

[63] Bourdillon to colonial secretary, 19 September 1941, UKNA, CO 875/3/6.

[64] This short-wave station had first come into being in November 1942 as the General Overseas Programme and was re-named the Forces Overseas Programme in January 1943. In February 1944 the Service was extended to listeners in Britain and became the General Forces Programme (BBC, "The General Overseas Service," 8 Nov 1946, BBC WAC, E2/336/2).

[65] C. Max-Müller, report on GFP/GOS, 1946, BBC WAC, E2/336/2.

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The appearance of the General Forces Programme was a relief to the BBC producers responsible for Africa because it took off some of the pressure to provide something for everyone in their vast region. Until that point, the broadcasters had felt a need to include some lighter programs for the forces in Africa, which came at the expense of the more serious material they believed their primary audience most wanted.[66] Now, as the African Service director explained, they were free to return to their primary functions of supplying news and information.[67] The BBC did not anticipate that as the war wore on, the programs meant for servicemen would also attract a considerable civilian audience overseas. In West Africa listeners followed the light music and variety programs over to the lighter world service. African listeners preferred the forces programming to the African Service because they felt it was much better balanced. As one report explained, "There appears to be far too much talking on the African Service – we are being instructed instead of entertained!"[68]

The "clash in needs" the BBC identified between military and civilian populations stemmed from listeners' different environments and habits. One BBC official explained,

> In the case of the serviceman or woman, listening is generally in canteens, mess-decks or barrack rooms, with all the resulting disadvantages of noise and conflicting tastes. Under these conditions attentive and sustained listening is difficult, and the claims of minorities can seldom be catered for. This accounts for the preference shown by Forces listeners for short self-contained programmes of the lighter type, which provide background entertainment and which are 'heard' rather than 'listened to'. Consequently, preference is shown to light entertainment at the expense of more serious programmes. In contrast, the civilian overseas can listen in comfort and has control of his own set.[69]

This explanation revealed that the BBC did understand how the social and environmental setting of a wireless set was an important factor to consider in programming. When the audience was British servicemen, the BBC formulated a specific program offering that accommodated the audiences' tastes. However, BBC officials were not responsive to the tastes of African audiences, even though the vast majority of African listening also occurred in noisy and crowded public spaces. The rest of the British overseas programming for Africa focused on reaching the individual listener in his home and sought to reform all other types of listening habits.

The enormous expansion of British overseas broadcasting during the Second World War meant that the BBC began producing programs specific to colonial audiences for the first time.

[66] Grenfell Williams to Byron, 10 Oct 1945, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.
[67] Grenfell Williams to Goatman, 19 Feb 1943, BBC WAC E2/3.
[68] Byron to Grenfell Williams, 4 Sept 1945, BBC WAC E1/29/1.
[69] Max-Müller, report on GFP/GOS, 1946, BBC WAC E2/336/2.

However, it did not have a monopoly such as the one it enjoyed in Britain. When the BBC did not respond to the preferences of its audiences, it opened up space for other broadcasters to fill the demand. Going into the postwar period and facing a new series of demands from the British government, colonial officials, and local audiences, the BBC African Service had to confront the question of how it could keep an African audience listening.

Austerity and shifting strategic needs

A government report from 1954 remembered back to the end of the war when the BBC was renowned everywhere as the greatest broadcaster in the world. The next line of the report stated, "This favorable situation could not last."[70] The dramatic (and erratic) expansions in British overseas broadcasting between 1939 and 1945 were all justified by the conflict at hand. Once the war was over, British broadcasters had to repeatedly defend their importance in a climate of austerity. So began a new phase in the relationship between the BBC Overseas Service (renamed the External Services in 1948) and the British government, one marked by successive reviews and cutbacks. At the very beginning of this period there was a hope to reduce the European services and re-emphasize connections with the British Commonwealth.[71] That type of thinking lasted less than a year. Almost immediately after VE Day the BBC halved the lengths of its Italian, Austrian, and Polish services, among others.[72] But nine months later, the broadcasters found themselves scrambling to fill the Foreign Office's demand for a new service in Russian. The British information services were gearing up for another global war; just like the last war, colonial listeners would for the most part be a tertiary concern.

The BBC's expansive role during the Second World War forced broadcasters and government officials to fix a new arrangement for external broadcasting policy and financing in the postwar.[73] In 1946 a White Paper on broadcasting proposed a relationship whereby the corporation had editorial independence, but was expected to operate under the guidance of the government "as will permit it to plan its programmes in the national interest."[74] By the following year this language had become a key part of the BBC license agreement. Because "the national interest" was a purposely vague concept, each year the Foreign Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, and Colonial Office negotiated with the Treasury which services and for how many hours per week the BBC would transmit overseas. Within these negotiations the Colonial Office had oversight over only a small number of services because the majority of the foreign language services were directed towards audiences in Europe and came under the purview of the Foreign Office.[75] The financial agreement between the BBC and the British government had

[70] *Summary of the Report of the Independent Committee of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services*, April 1954, Cmd. 9138 (Drogheda Report), 42.
[71] *Broadcasting Policy*, 1946, Cmd. 6852, at paragraph 51.
[72] Briggs, *Volume IV: Sound and Vision*, 144.
[73] Until 1939 the BBC provided the Empire Service from its license revenues; then, at the outbreak of the war, the Ministry of Information took over responsibility for funding British external broadcasting.
[74] *Broadcasting Policy*, 1946, Cmd. 6852, at paragraph 60.
[75] K. W. Blackburne, verbatim report of evidence to the broadcasting committee, 9 Nov 1949, UKNA, CO 875/71/1. In addition to the European services, the Foreign Office was also primarily responsible for other priority regions,

been meant to show a distance between the two bodies that would help cultivate the corporation's reputation for editorial independence. But the *Economist* provided another way to look at the relationship and its implications: "The BBC in effect regains its prewar independence, but at the end of a long leash which could, in certain circumstances, be twitched by remote Parliamentary control."[76] In the 1950s and 1960s the Foreign Office twitched the leash far more frequently than the Commonwealth Relations or Colonial Offices.

Partitioning different regions, languages, and audiences had long-term implications for the BBC's worldwide reach. The prescribing departments simply wanted to dictate where the emphasis should go, and left it to the BBC to find the money from other parts of their annual budget. For example, when the Foreign Office demanded to see a Russian service, the BBC complied within a month, but then had to make adjustments to its estimates for the next financial year. This happened again in 1949, with the introduction of Urdu, Hebrew, and Indonesian services. Meanwhile, the Treasury sought to limit the amount for external broadcasting in line with other austerity measures of the time. The annual grants-in-aid for the late 1940s and early 1950s increased in only very small increments that did not reflect rising costs. Each year the corporation was forced to make adjustments to its initial estimates, but because the prescribing offices did not want to see it reduce services, these cuts almost always came from capital expenditures.[77] By 1956 repeated deferments of capital expenditures had taken their toll. With the exception of two new transmitters in Malaya, there had been no modernization or addition to British transmitting facilities since 1942.[78] In the same period American and Soviet external broadcasting, as well as that from many other countries, had steadily increased. Foreign competitors were not only broadcasting more hours to more places, but their higher-powered transmitters delivered stronger and more reliable signals.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, British foreign policymakers saw Africa as a relatively low priority, particularly in comparison to other audiences like the Russian, Urdu, and Hebrew speakers they were scrambling to reach. Therefore, programming for Africans increased only very slowly as British broadcasters tried to cut every corner they could and still deliver the services expected from them. However, this was the same period that colonial development schemes in broadcasting began to take off. The schemes all relied on British output, at least to some extent, which meant more and more Africans were beginning to hear the BBC.

A delicate balance of programs

With the introduction of the Light Programme in July 1945, which replaced the transmission of the General Forces Programme to Britain, the BBC once again had a clear divide

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such as those served by the Latin American and Middle Eastern services. After Indian independence in 1947, the Commonwealth Relations Office took over responsibility for South Asia. The contributions by the Colonial Office remained very small during the 1940s and 1950s, though the grant-in-aid for the GOS came from all the prescribing departments together.

[76] "Controlling the BBC," *Economist,* October 11, 1947.

[77] J. B. Clark, *London Calling*, December 10, 1953.

[78] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 221.

between the programming for its domestic and overseas audiences. Beginning in 1947, the BBC restored the title of General Overseas Service (GOS) for the whole of the English-language output on its worldwide network so it no longer referenced "forces" specifically. This was meant to reflect Britain's demobilization, but it also signified a gradual move away from the types of light programming the BBC had included for the forces during the war. For example, the director of the GOS wanted to cut back the music request program *Forces Favourites*, even though it was by far the most popular program on the service. The GOS also switched back to using mostly men for continuity announcers.[79] (During the war, it had introduced women's voices, because they were believed to have more appeal to servicemen.) Meanwhile the colonial territories that had benefited from the particular tone the BBC had acquired during the war were asking what they could expect in the future. The superintendent of broadcasting in the Gold Coast inquired whether they could rely on continuing to receive the General Overseas Service and particularly the forces programs.[80] The response from the BBC assured him the GOS would continue for some time to come, though with changes. It explained, "Obviously, the gradual decline of a Forces audience will mean more concentration on the needs of civilian listeners, but I imagine that there will always be good material for your purposes."[81]

In spring of 1946 BBC aerials were directed towards West Africa for a total amount of more than twenty hours each day between the African Service and General Forces Programmes. But the two services were not planned in conjunction with each other, and during the period of overlap in the evenings local officials were left to determine which service they would relay.[82] (Listeners with private wireless sets – about 1,000 in the Gold Coast – could choose which service to listen to, provided that they could pick up a strong enough signal from Britain.) Sometimes the choice was obvious. For example, the colonial broadcasters carried the General Forces Programme and *Forces Favourites* on Sunday evenings instead of the African Service, which had a talk in Afrikaans followed by a book discussion. But at other times, the two services did not coincide in their timing, which meant that the Gold Coast station had to be willing to jump in or out of a half-finished program.[83] Broadcasters in the colonies considered this a wasted opportunity, as well as the occasions when the two services carried interesting programs simultaneously. The Gold Coast Broadcasting Department was an example of a colonial system that had been organized around what was available to it from Britain. Whether intentional or unintentional, the particular structure of British overseas broadcasting left colonial broadcasters with choices about how best to relay British programming to local audiences.

Until then all the audience reports the BBC received had come through the colonial governments. London broadcasters could not determine how representative any of the

[79] Max-Müller to Clark, 27 Sept 1946, BBC WAC, E2/336/2.
[80] Byron to Grenfell Williams, 4 Sept 1945, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.
[81] Grenfell Williams to Byron, 18 Oct 1945, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.
[82] This discussion is based upon a comparison of *London Calling* with the Gold Coast rediffusion schedule for the week of April 7-14, 1946.
[83] T. A. Huxtable to Grenfell Williams, 30 July 1946, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.

information they received was, and therefore they saw no reason to change course. In 1946 the colonial government in the Gold Coast took the initiative of comprehensively surveying the habits and preferences of its listening audience. The broadcasting department sent a questionnaire to over 6,000 wired diffusion subscribers in the colony and then used the staff at the rediffusion stations to follow up. The result was the first audience report from West Africa, although it was still skewed towards the European population in the colony.[84] At the time, the Gold Coast relayed British services for an average of eight hours each day (one to two hours of Africa-specific programming and six to seven hours of GOS), spread across morning, mid-day, and evening periods. In between those periods, the colonial system transmitted government broadcasts in English and West African vernaculars and played gramophone records.[85] The survey revealed the most popular item in the schedule was Wickham Steed's program on *World Affairs*, which listeners could hear over the GOS in the late afternoon or over the African Service in the evening. The programs officer in the colony explained Wickham Steed's popularity came from the trustworthy and understandable reputation he had built up during the war. The demand for the program was so high the government had decided to cancel one of its own propaganda periods in order to accommodate the BBC schedule.[86]

Meanwhile, the program *Calling West Africa* only ranked fourth on the list of BBC programming. The report from the Gold Coast explained, "Listeners definitely want this programme, but complain that it does not serve its purposes."[87] The primary reason for this was most of the program content did not appeal to West Africans. One example was Victor Silvester's ballroom dancing lessons, which had been extremely popular in Britain, but had almost no appeal in West Africa. Explained one Gold Coast officer, the Silvester lessons might have been acceptable on the regular BBC program, which was oriented towards Europeans and elite Africans, but it certainly did not belong on anything titled *Calling West Africa*. For the program's music segment listeners had once enjoyed broadcasts by Fela Sowande, a Nigerian composer who worked in the classical European tradition. Sowande had focused on using simple language and analogies when he introduced musical works; that, coupled with his Nigerian background, brought listeners to tune in. However, when Sowande became unavailable the BBC switched to a man named Scott Goddard, whose descriptions of abstract musical concepts failed to interest West Africans.[88]

The BBC welcomed the audience report, which it called a pioneering study towards linking British broadcasting and Gold Coast listeners. Some of the information was not a surprise, including the criticism levied at *Calling West Africa*. The head of the African Service

[84] The returns came from 4,013 Africans (the majority of whom were either Fanti or Ga), 1,539 non-Africans, and 496 schools, offices, and clubs. It was estimated that the result represented a listening audience of over 50,000 people in the colony and that the largest groups of listeners assembled around African-owned rediffusion boxes (Huxtable to Grenfell Williams, 6 April 1946, BBC WAC, E1/29/1).
[85] Gold Coast Broadcasting Department, "Your Programme For the Week April 7 - April 13," pamphlet, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.
[86] Huxtable to Grenfell Williams, 6 April 1946, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.; Amyot to Treadgold, 2 June 1944, BBC WAC, E2/583.

was also hearing negative feedback from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Gambia, which he took to mean BBC could not hope to serve four different colonies with a single program.[89] But other aspects of the Gold Coast report surprised the BBC, namely, that programs specifically designed for the forces would be rebroadcast instead of certain programs on the African Service.[90] Although the African Service schedule was for five and a half hours a day, of which at least three hours had a good signal to West Africa, the Gold Coast Broadcasting Department only relayed a small amount of programming to its listeners. The 1946 Gold Coast audience report and the amount of forces programs the colony chose to carry demonstrated the continued disconnect between the African programming that was planned in London and what was actually heard and enjoyed in Africa.

In the mid-1940s BBC officials saw the feedback from West Africa as representative of only a very small part of its audience in Africa. That was because BBC producers still did not feel African listeners were the audience they should target. Instead, they continued to design the majority of their programs for white listeners in southern and central Africa. That opinion only started to change after 1950, when the BBC's white audience suffered a sizable blow after the South African Broadcasting Corporation stopped its daily re-broadcast.[91] A consistent direct audience remained, but after that moment BBC producers starting making more references to "balance" in their scheduling discussions.[92] For example, one report in 1955 explained, "The GOS cannot hope to please all its listeners all the time. It has to try and provide a balanced diet for many different palates and at the same time make sure that each of them has a share of its favourite dish."[93] Within its diverse audience the BBC found it was becoming more difficult to ignore West Africa, particularly since West African listeners sent more than 3,000 letters a year to the BBC in the mid-1950s. At the same time, the majority of the letters were addressed to the request program *Listener's Choice*, a popular music program that had replaced *Forces Favourites.* The producers at the General Overseas Service regarded *Listener's Choice* to be one of the compromises that they had to make in the schedule for their worldwide service and stated there would not be more like it. "For those who required a unvaried diet of light entertainment," the same 1955 report issued, "the GOS cannot appeal, and there are plenty of commercial radio stations in the world to satisfy them."[94] Although its audience had become increasingly diverse, British broadcasters continued to apply a hierarchy of cultural standards to its program output. In Africa the task of producing programs specific to local demand was left to the colonial stations.[95]

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[89] Grenfell Williams to Huxtable, 29 April 1946, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Overseas Audience Research, "The Audience of the BBC's General Overseas Service," 1 Jan 1955, enclosed in Bernard Moore to R. H. Young, 7 April 1955, UKNA, CO 1027/82.
[92] In 1955 the BBC estimated that 1% of the adult European population in South Africa, or about 20,000 listeners, picked up its signal every day (Ibid.).
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Blackburne, verbatim report of evidence to the broadcasting committee, 9 Nov 1949, UKNA, CO 875/71/1.

Chapter Four: This is London Calling

Conspicuously absent from the Gold Coast audience survey was the output the BBC considered the most important component of its overseas services: the news. The director-general described the primary aim of overseas broadcasts the provision of "an accurate, impartial and dispassionate flow of news."[96] By the postwar period, the regular news bulletins had become fixed points around which all of the other programs on the Overseas Services were planned; broadcasters at the BBC considered them "focal points round the clock."[97] They were more widely rebroadcast around the world than any other kind of program. The 1100 and 1300 GMT news periods were key listening times when nearly the entire world was awake, and stations from Jamaica to Africa to India to Singapore relayed the BBC during those periods.[98] Within the different types of newscasts they prepared at Bush House, BBC producers thought of the GOS news as the backbone of their coverage. By 1955 they transmitted 11 world news broadcasts each day. These bulletins lasted 9 minutes and 15 seconds each, which included the time announcement that consisted of either the Greenwich time signal followed by an announcement or the chimes of Big Ben on the quarter hour. The rest of the 15-minute period allotted to news would feature either home news, a commentary from an expert, or a sports round-up, depending on the time of day.[99]

By the 1950s the overseas presenters at the BBC were more conscious than ever of their global reach and the importance of maintaining a certain conduct on the air. A 1955 handbook reminded the announcers on the General Overseas Service that they served as the important ambassadors, particularly because many listeners did not appreciate the BBC's true status and regarded it a department of the British government. For the qualities of an on-air persona, the handbook described, "His cardinal virtues must be authority, courtesy, precision, presence-of-mind, confidence, alertness, and omniscience. There is only one deadly sin – carelessness."[100] The description was followed by a list of general rules and helpful hints the BBC had accumulated over the past decades. Some of the hints referred to particular grammatical things, such as the point that it was more correct to say "The United States *is*" instead of "The United States *are*" as well as the reminder that the Star-Spangled Banner was a national anthem and should not be faded out in the middle. There was also a long list of offensive words and phrases that must be avoided when describing different ethnic groups, nationalities, and religions in the world. Finally, BBC presenters were reminded once again that they were meant to form bonds with many different parts of the world at once. While the 1940s handbooks had emphasized that the British Commonwealth referred to only the dominions, and not the colonies, by the 1950s the advice simply stated, "Be careful in your use of the words 'Dominion', 'Colony', 'Commonwealth', and 'Empire'." Last, announcers should "Assume you

[96] BBC Board of Governors paper G68/46, 14 Nov 1946, quoted in Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 216.
[97] BBC, *Overseas Presentation Handbook*, 3rd ed. (London: BBC, June 1955).
[98] Ibid., 36.
[99] Ibid., 28.
[100] Ibid., 16.

are talking to friends, and do it in a common idiom which does not imply the background peculiar to prosperous Englishmen."[101]

Whether the guidelines were minute or substantial they alluded to vast experience and knowledge that British broadcasters could use to claim a monopoly over delivery of the world news. This was particularly the case in the colonies, where broadcasting stations such as the Gold Coast relied heavily on BBC content and made decisions about their development priorities based on what was available to them from Britain. Meanwhile, BBC officials continued to think of the primary GOS audience as British people overseas and English-speaking foreigners. They believed these populations were most interested in hearing world news, and the BBC was the most qualified to deliver it to them. Well into the 1950s, African audiences did not figure into either the universal or the specialized types of programming Britain offered.

The development of broadcasting and broadcasting about development

In the decade after the war there were still gaping differences between Britain's colonies with commercial stations, such as Kenya, and those with government stations, such as the Gold Coast. However, the broadcast news was one area where almost all the British colonies in Africa followed a similar formula. In Kenya the Nairobi wireless station strengthened its signal and improved its programming variety over the 1940s. The station began transmitting regular broadcasts in Asian and African languages, while an Information Office scheme improved local propagation by providing district offices with wireless sets for public listening.[102] British programming was mostly absent from the weekly schedule; however, the station continued the wartime pattern of rebroadcasting the BBC news three times a day.[103] After each world bulletin the colonial station presented a 15-minute local newscast, which was supplied by material from the *East African Standard* and the government Information Office.

Although broadcasting in Kenya and the Gold Coast were different in many respects, the two colonies treated news bulletins in the same manner. Officials in the Gold Coast had designed their service around the programs they received from Britain, which included the GOS news. Similar to Kenya, the Gold Coast also relayed between four and six British news bulletins each day in the late 1940s. Colonial broadcasters also transmitted local news bulletins in English and in five West African vernaculars.[104] The Gold Coast Information Services Department prepared the local bulletins, which comprised items from sports and social clubs, trading companies, and colonial government departments.[105] Despite their different approaches, broadcasters in both Kenya and the Gold Coast understood that short but regular news bulletins were a central feature of a broadcast schedule. They also adhered to a formula where world and regional news came from Britain and local news the colony. Finally, they did not

[101] Ibid., 22-25.
[102] Cable and Wireless, programme schedule, 8-21 December 1946, BBC WAC, E1/10/3.
[103] VQ7LO Nairobi (Kenya) Broadcasting Station, 18 Feb 1947, BBC WAC, E1/10/3.
[104] Gold Coast Broadcasting Department, "Your Programme For the Week April 7 – April 13," pamphlet, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.
[105] John Wilson, "Gold Coast Information," *African Affairs* (1944): 111-5.

believe local news should be kept separate from government control; instead, the Information office or department provided most of the local content.

The development of colonial broadcasting accelerated quickly in the 1950s, but the imagined division of the news remained unchanged. The Plymouth Report of 1936 remained a key document in the development of colonial broadcasting after the Second World War. Its description of broadcasting as a tool of advanced administration helped secure in 1949 a central allocation of £1 million for broadcasting under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act.[106] The structure of the allocation, which included monies for a BBC colonial transcription scheme in school broadcasts and BBC training programs for colonial broadcasters in London, also ensured colonial governments expanded their systems in terms that were acceptable to broadcasters and officials in Britain.

The BBC and the Colonial Office ultimately hoped to develop colonial broadcasting stations to the point where they resembled miniature versions of the BBC. In 1953 the Gold Coast government requested a commission of BBC experts visit the colony and make recommendations as to how its broadcasting services could be further developed. The commission recommended the government form a separate entity, the Gold Coast Broadcasting System, to take over the existing services that were part of the Information Services Department. The commission understood the government would retain some control over the broadcasting service, at least for a few years, but stated its control should be as light as possible so the body and its staff had a chance of developing a spirit of independence.[107] Two years later a similar commission from London prepared a similar set of recommendations for Kenya that detailed a gradual shift from commercial broadcasting to a colonial government service to an independent corporation. Although both sets of plans detailed the establishment of news sections staffed by professional journalists, their responsibilities did not extend beyond events of regional significance. British broadcasting experts did not help African colonies plan for international news operations because they assumed the stations would continue to take the BBC world news.[108] At the eve of African independence British officials continued to imagine and impose a metropolitan/colonial division of labor between world and local news.

Despite its cultivated reputation as authorities for delivering world news the BBC still had difficulty collecting news stories from all over the world. The difficulties became more and more pronounced in the period after the Second World War, when development and decolonization became crucial narratives in the news from Africa. Over the course of the 1950s the BBC increasingly looked to Africa as a *source* of international material. Until that point, it had struggled to incorporate talks and discussions on the empire into its transmissions for British and European audiences. For example, in a twelve-month period in the late 1940s, the

[106] For much more detail about British colonial development see Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914-1940*.
[107] Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, *50 Years of Broadcasting in Ghana*, Golden Jubilee pamphlet (Accra: GBC, July 1985), 12-13.
[108] Clark to Millar about Ghana on 1 April 1957, BBC WAC, E1/1431/1.

BBC ran only 113 programs on its home services that had any relation to the colonial empire.[109] Broadcasting officials had begun to see how this ran contrary to the shifting attitude towards the British Commonwealth they had been tasked to promote. In 1949 the head of the overseas services explained, "It was the BBC's constant aim to try and develop in its broadcasts the real meaning of the Commonwealth and to explain to Colonial listeners that they were regarded as part of the family."[110] Therefore, British broadcasters began to look at ways to record and transmit more material from sub-Saharan Africa. The first way they could do this was to directly pick up local broadcasts. This would rely upon London receiving a strong enough signal from the colonial station. One of the first times the BBC attempted this was in 1946, when the Gold Coast opened its new Legislative Council, under an African majority for the first time.[111] The signal from Accra was strong enough for the BBC to record and rebroadcast later in its *Radio Newsreel*; however, the process required such a large amount of coordination between Britain and the Gold Coast it would be a while before it became a common practice.

Another avenue the BBC took for getting material from Africa was to send correspondents into the area. The corporation was not yet ready to make a permanent position in Africa, but believed a well-planned short trip could be almost as effective. In 1950 the BBC sent two members of the European Services to West and East Africa respectively. It hoped to get at least 12 feature pieces and 12 to 24 talks from actuality material recorded during the trips. In addition, British officials reasoned, upon the reporters' return the European Services would have two more speakers qualified to cover colonial topics as they arose.[112] The BBC wove material from its correspondents' short trips in 1950 into its external output for more than two years. Whether describing economic planning in West Africa, mass education in Somalia, or the groundnuts scheme in Tanganyika, the pieces focused overwhelmingly on development. That was because both the correspondents and their producers back in London felt the subject of development would most effectively dissipate British and European audiences' general ignorance about the British Empire. The BBC also realized it had to tread carefully in the way it described development. As one of the reporters observed, the story was not simple. He explained British broadcasters did not want to come across as smug or self-congratulatory, which would make overseas listeners, especially those in Eastern Europe, less apt to believe them.[113] Though the BBC thought of its European audiences foremost when collecting pieces from Africa, it is important to remember that colonial audiences around the world heard the BBC newscasts too. Until the mid-1950s the majority of broadcasts that African audiences heard from their continent were filtered through this context: meant to explain the setting and conditions in Africa to audiences in other parts of the world.

[109] BBC General Advisory Council, broadcasts on colonial topics from September 1948 to August 1949, UKNA, CO 875/70/8.
[110] BBC General Advisory Council, 28 October 1949, UKNA, CO 875/70/8.
[111] Huxtable to Grenfell Williams, 10 May 1946; Grenfell Williams to Huxtable, 18 July 1946, BBC WAC, E1/29/1.
[112] BBC WAC, E1/32.
[113] M. J. Esslin, 3 July 1950, BBC WAC, E1/32.

Chapter Four: This is London Calling

Losing the Cold War and finding the African audience

As the successive reviews and cutbacks continued into the mid-1950s, the BBC found itself grouped with the British Council, the Central Office of Information, and the departmental information offices under the broad label of overseas information work. All the organizations and departments pointed to the escalating Cold War and Britain's declining prestige as urgent reasons to increase the overall resources given to the information effort. But the austerity climate also pinned the different organizations against each other in competition over available funds. The BBC drew heavily on its ability to reach mass audiences whenever it found itself arguing against the British Council and the Information Office, which focused on reaching the influential few instead. In the middle of the 1950s the annual grant-in-aid to the BBC external services was a little over £5 million out of the total £12 million Britain spent on information services each year.[114] Whether this was the correct amount and whether it was distributed the most effective way was the subject of study for the committee appointed under Lord Drogheda in 1952. Chapter Two described how this committee recommended the British Council shift its emphasis from cultural to educational work and from more developed to less developed parts of the world. The recommendations for the BBC external services fell along the same lines. In the early 1950s British external broadcasting still retained much of the shape it acquired during the Second World War, albeit in a diminished capacity. The Drogheda committee heard the corporation's anxiety about how out of date its transmitting network had become. The committee recommended a large-scale capital investment program, to the tune of £500,000 per year for at least five years, for Britain to modernize its equipment and install high-powered relays in new parts of the world where the British signal was being crowded out. To find the funds, the Drogheda committee recommended the BBC drop seven foreign language services: French, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish.[115] Just as it had with the British Council, the Drogheda committee tried to move the BBC away from its old-fashioned orientation towards Western Europe so it could pay attention to the rest of the world.

The Drogheda committee certainly had good reason to issue its recommendations, as signs were everywhere that Britain was losing the information war badly. In the field of broadcasting, the United States and the USSR passed Britain in external output in the late 1940s and early 1950s; both superpowers continued to grow their services while the BBC tried just to maintain what it had. China came onto the external broadcasting scene very quickly in the later part of the decade and would also pass Britain in output by 1960. Britain also had to pay attention to regional powers. For example, Radio Cairo – one of the strongest signals to reach the East African colonies – tripled its output between 1950 and 1956 and added broadcasts in Swahili and Somali. The sudden explosion in external broadcasting worldwide was in anticipation of the transistor radio revolution in the developing world. In the decade between 1955 and 1965, radio set ownership would increase by a factor of five in the Middle East, a

[114] *Summary of the Report of the Independent Commission of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services*, April 1954, Cmd. 9138 (Drogheda Report).
[115] Ibid., 46-51.

factor of six in China, and a factor of twelve in Africa and India.[116] Despite mounting evidence that Britain needed to remodel its approach to external broadcasting, the Drogheda committee's recommendations were put to the side in the middle of the 1950s. This meant that British broadcasting was in an even weaker relative position at the end of 1956 when the crisis over Suez occurred.

In BBC lore, the Suez crisis stands as a pivotal moment for the corporation, one in which the broadcasters' conduct was nothing short of exemplary. That telling refers to the BBC's decision to transmit Opposition leader, Hugh Gaitskell's, statement over the GOS and the Arabic Service. What the broadcasters felt was a test for their journalistic integrity prompted enormous outcry from the Foreign Office and parts of the Conservative cabinet, proclaiming that the BBC had undercut the national interest. The cabinet was already looking to make cuts to the BBC's grant-in-aid and threatened to defund external broadcasting even further, if not take it over completely.[117] But, by the next year, it became clear neither action would take place, leaving the Suez crisis to appear in the corporation's history as a moment when its principles were threatened, but it ultimately withstood government pressure.

The Suez crisis is significant in the history of British external broadcasting in another, much more important manner. The events of Suez revealed a global order where Britain was no longer near the top. It proved definitively what the Drogheda and other review committees had been saying for years, which was that Britain was fighting the Cold War in all the wrong places. The year after the crisis, the British government appointed another review of its overseas information activities and finally adopted several recommendations that had been pending since the early 1950s. The government committed to a long-term program of replacing and modernizing the BBC's transmission equipment around the world. It also agreed to double the Arabic Service output, to more than 9 hours a day, and restore the General Overseas Service to 24 hours a day. Last, the government allowed for the BBC to start new services in Hausa, Swahili, and Somali. Although the BBC broadcast in over forty languages in the 1950s, this would be the first time it would have a program in an African language. To offset the costs of the additional services, the BBC was forced to reduce or eliminate several of its Western European languages.[118] Seeking to recover its global position in the late 1950s, Britain ended its focus on Europe and turned towards the developing world.

If Suez was the first indicator that the British needed to put more of their broadcasting resources into the Third World, the second was the wave of African independence that started in 1957 with Ghana and accelerated after 1960. The BBC recognized African audiences as a priority right as Britain was losing its African colonies. The British corporation introduced its

[116] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 239.

[117] For evidence the government already hoped to make sizable cuts to the external services, see draft proposals to the BBC, 1 Nov 1956, UKNA, CO 1027/78. For discussion about the reaction of different members of the government to the BBC's Suez coverage, see Briggs, *Volume V: Competition*, 73-137. The accounts of the Suez crisis in Mansell (*Let Truth Be Told*) and Walker (*Skyful of Freedom*) are examples of how the Suez crisis became portrayed in BBC histories.

[118] *Overseas Information Services*, July 1957, Cmnd. 225, 5.

half-hour broadcast in Hausa in March 1957, one week after Ghana had become independent. The Somali and Swahili transmissions were added to the schedule a few months later. The idea for African-language transmissions had been raised in the Colonial Office the year before while it prepared for Ghana's independence. The officials were looking for ways to demonstrate Britain's interest in Ghanaian affairs and thought they could do so with a half-hour cultural magazine once a week.[119] When the idea reached Bush House, broadcasters pushed for it to be a daily show that focused on world news instead. As more African colonies became independent, Britain continued to expand its program offerings for African audiences. In the early 1960s the BBC doubled its transmission time in both Hausa and Swahili to an hour each day, including an evening program. It also broadcast the world news twice a day and added a special "News of the African World" segment.[120] Also in the early 1960s, the BBC started a new French service for West and Equatorial Africa, where the programs differed in content and accent from the French for Europe service. And the BBC introduced a full series of English programs specific for African audiences. The English for Africa service grew and grew over the rest of the decade; among a few of the programs it contained were *Focus on Africa*, *Good Morning Africa*, and *African Theatre*.

Was it too little, too late? When Ghana became independent on March 6, 1957 its broadcasting station was relaying five BBC news bulletins a day. One week later the Ghanaian cabinet ordered the Ghana Broadcasting System (GBS) to drop all but one of the relays immediately and replace them with bulletins from their own news department. At that time, in a carry-over from the late colonial period, both the director of broadcasting and the head of news at GBS were BBC employees whom had been seconded to Ghana from 1955 to 1960. The two men were horrified by the Cabinet's order, particularly because they did not feel the GBS news section could handle the responsibility of both home and world coverage.[121] When news of Ghana's decision reached Britain it prompted another set of reactions, starting with the BBC head of external broadcasting. J. B. Clark, who had worked at the BBC since the very beginnings of the Empire Service, declared it was a completely arbitrary action, a slap in the face, and a sign of poor diplomatic relations to come.[122] Others at the corporation characterized that the move had come out of the fervor of nationalism, but that would eventually pass and then sense in Ghana would prevail.[123] Meanwhile, officials at the Commonwealth Relations Office were much less surprised in what they felt was a natural development in the transition from colony to nation. They reassured themselves that Ghanaian broadcasters would need to obtain material for their newscasts somewhere and would presumably do it by monitoring the BBC and Reuters. Although the newscasts themselves were not BBC, at least the content would still be British.[124]

[119] Clark to controller of overseas services, 6 Sept 1956, BBC WAC, E2/690/1.
[120] BBC WAC, E1/1439/1.
[121] Millar to Clark, 17 March 1957, UKNA, DO 35/9648.
[122] Cockram, note, 21 March 1957, UKNA, DO 35/9648; Clark to Millar, 1 April 1957, BBC WAC, E1/1431/1.
[123] [Author unknown] to Clark, 22 March 1957, BBC WAC, E1/1431/1.
[124] A. H. Joyce, 2 April 1957, UKNA, DO 35/9648.

But Ghana's decision to drop the BBC bulletins marked the beginning of the end for Britain's monopoly on broadcasting to Africa. Within a few years it had become obvious that British outlets were only a few of the international sources Ghana looked to for news. In addition to the BBC and Reuters, Voice of America, Radio Brazzaville, and TASS stories were also prominent in Ghana's newscasts. Furthermore, other British colonies in Africa were appearing to follow the example set by Ghana. For example, by the late 1950s Nigerians had become fed up with the section of the BBC broadcast that began, "And now for some home news from Britain." One man explained to the *Daily Times*, "Just how this idea of London comes to be regarded as the 'home' of Nigerians beats the imagination of all right thinking people."[125] Officials at the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation were already under pressure to drop the British news altogether, and they pleaded with the BBC to change the introduction.[126] The "Home news" remained in the bulletin though and was one of the reasons that so many of Nigeria's regional stations dropped the BBC following independence in 1960.[127] After Ghana and Nigeria, other new nations such as Tanganyika, Zambia, and Kenya also used independence as the moment to reduce drastically or drop altogether the amount of British output they transmitted over national airwaves.

African governments' decision to drop the BBC was a real threat to the British cultural project in Africa. Until that point, British broadcasters had enjoyed a broadcast environment with very little competition because they relied on African stations to relay their programs. In several places, the colonial government had control over the receiving end of broadcasting as well as the transmitting end. Private set ownership in the African colonies remained very low, even in the mid-1950s. The number of receiving sets in the Gold Coast tripled between 1950 and 1955, but there were still only nine sets for every 1,000 people in the colony in 1955. That was one of the highest amounts for sub-Saharan Africa; in Kenya it was less than three and in Nigeria it was less than two. A little over half of the sets in the Gold Coast in the mid-1950s were government-provided wired loudspeakers.[128] Those listeners had no choice over the station they listened to. They could only receive the government station, and in the colonial period that meant they heard a lot of BBC. When he took power in 1957, Kwame Nkrumah recognized the same benefits to wired rediffusion that colonial officials had seen. The Ghanaian government continued to build the wired diffusion system and doubled the number of wired sets by the end of the decade.[129] When the Ghana Broadcasting System decided to drop the BBC, it took thousands of African listeners out of the BBC audience.

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[125] Sunday Folawiyo, "Why 'Home' News from Britain," *Daily Times*, October 10, 1958.
[126] C. F. MacLaren to Winther, 23 Oct 1958, UKNA, CO 1027/329.
[127] Unlike most African states in the 1960s, broadcasting in Nigeria after independence comprised federal, regional, and commercial stations that existed side by side (BBC WAC E1/1430/2).
[128] Unesco, *Statistics on Radio and Television, 1950-1960*, 56, 60. Data about radio ownership was self-reported from each of the colonies and countries. For most parts of Africa in this period the figures are based on extremely rough estimates.
[129] GBC, *50 Years of Broadcasting in Ghana*.

The wired rediffusion system in the Gold Coast was a bit unique, but in other colonies the colonial government found ways to control the stations that African populations heard. Kenya estimated there were 13,000 wireless sets in the colony in 1950, but almost all of them were in the hands of the colony's European and Asian populations. African populations in many rural districts in Kenya received their first or second wireless set in 1953, as part of a Coronation gift scheme. The set was either placed in the African District Welfare Hall or put in the hands of a local chief. The sets were "saucepan radios" that operated on dry batteries; they were precursors of the transistor radios that would appear all over East Africa a decade later. The local population was responsible for taking care of and replacing the batteries. This was because, as information officers in Nairobi explained, one of the scheme's objectives was to make Africans realize that the government did not provide broadcasting for free.[130] The Information Office in Nairobi hoped the sets would mean more Africans would hear its broadcasts, particularly the announcements and propaganda related to the state of emergency. As the provincial commissioner in the Rift Valley distributed the allotment, he warned recipients they were to listen only to broadcasts by the Kenyan government or the BBC. If it were found they were not observing the rule, the government would immediately remove the set.[131] Kenya was another colony where the BBC relied on the support it received from the colonial government to reach the African listeners that it did.

The BBC lost its privileged position in African broadcasting over the late 1950s and early 1960s – exactly the same time that the transistor revolution started to reach the continent. The rate at which Nkrumah's government in Ghana added wired loudspeakers to the system was still less than the number of new wireless sets Ghanaians purchased. By 1959, 68,000 of the 109,000 receiving sets in Ghana were wireless.[132] Over the 1960s Africans across the continent gained access to wireless sets they could tune to the stations of their choosing. Amongst their choices were their national broadcaster or one of the growing number of foreign broadcasters trying to reach Africa. The next chapter will show how the BBC tried to find ways to stand out amidst all of the competition it faced. African audiences represented a new market for broadcasters all over the world, and British broadcasting in the postcolonial period was clearly going to be different.

Conclusion

British external broadcasting functioned as a measure of how Britain saw its strategic needs in the changing world order. Between the 1930s and the 1960s the BBC addressed itself to a series of different audiences. The BBC Empire Service had its origins in the interwar period, when Britain saw broadcast technology a means for re-creating the imperial community. The Empire Service was built around an imagined audience of white diasporic Britons scattered

[130] C. A. Hayes to S. O. V. Hodge, 17 June 1953, KNA, DC/TAMB/3/18/4. For more of the history of saucepan radios in Africa, see Rosaleen Smyth, "A Note on the 'Saucepan Special': The people's radio of Central Africa," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 4, no. 2 (1984): 195-201, doi: 10.1080/01439688400260191.
[131] Hodge to district commissioners, 21 May 1953, KNA, DC/TAMB/3/18/4.
[132] Unesco, *Statistics on Radio and Television, 1950-1960*, 60.

around the world. In the 1940s, in response to the Second World War, a collection of targeted audiences replaced the singular audience that British broadcasters were used to. Instead of speaking through a single voice, the British adopted foreign languages and interests in order to make themselves more familiar to wartime audiences across Europe and other strategic areas. Going into the 1950s, as broadcasting increasingly became a domain of the Cold War, the BBC continued to broadcast to its wartime audience. However, before the end of the decade, the Suez crisis and African and Asian decolonization would demonstrate to Britain it needed a new approach. Just as it had before, Britain looked to the BBC as the means to redefine its position in the world.

Britain did not imagine the African audience until it was losing its empire. African audiences had for the most part been excluded from Britain's strategic concerns during the period described above. The imperial community that the BBC Empire Service addressed itself towards in the 1930s excluded Africans on the base of their race and language. Then in the 1940s and 1950s Africa did not present as much of a foreign policy concern as other parts of the world. Although officials in Britain did not think broadcasting to Africa was a priority in this period, officials in Africa did. Colonial governments incorporated the BBC worldwide service into their colonial development plans. African audiences first received the BBC in the context of British colonial rule. Though African listeners were not the BBC's intended audience, they were among its audience, and their perceptions of British broadcasting from this period would impact their decision whether or not to listen to it later.

The British found themselves having to compete for postcolonial listeners at the very moment that that audience had become crucial for Britain's revised position in the world. British broadcasters recognized that if they were to continue having an influence in postcolonial Africa, they needed to reconfigure the context and the content of their broadcasts. The following chapter examines the first decade of the postcolonial period and looks at how the BBC and other British agencies attempted to fit their work into a different strategic context: that of the decolonized world.

Chapter Five

Patrons of Postcolonial Africa

"What does this independence mean?"[1] Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o posed his question in *Homecoming*, his collection of essays published in 1972 by the British company Heinemann Educational Books. It was his fifth title to come out under Heinemann in just under a decade. It was also the first time he published under his Gikuyu name – until that point, his name appeared as James Ngũgĩ. Ngũgĩ appeared in Chapter Three, which described the novel he submitted to a writing competition organized by the East African Literature Bureau, a British colonial project. He was still a student then, in the early 1960s, but the competition helped him earn the attention of Heinemann, who then published his novel in their new African Writers Series. By the end of the decade, Ngũgĩ had had two other novels and a play published by Heinemann also, and all were directed to both the international and African book markets. Ngũgĩ's publications also brought him to the attention of other British agencies working in Africa, such as the BBC African Service, which asked him to write a play for its radio drama series. As an African writer whose works helped British organizations such as Heinemann and the BBC demonstrate their support for postcolonial culture, Ngũgĩ and other writers like him are at the center of the following discussion.

Ngũgĩ figures into this chapter in another more important way. During his early career, he certainly benefited from having his writing published and broadcast to audiences around Africa, Britain, and other parts of the world. But when he looked at the British institutions that helped him gain acclaim as a writer, he saw how entrenched they had become in postcolonial Africa. Ngũgĩ became a forceful critic of the influence Britain and other foreign powers had over how African writers expressed themselves. He saw how he and other African writers were forced into a situation where they had to adopt foreign languages and narratives so they could have a chance to be published. Ngũgĩ's decisions in the 1970s to change his name and stop writing in English were efforts to remove colonial influences over his ideas and writing; but, while he could affect how his work reached its audience, he could not eliminate the British cultural project in Africa altogether. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o stood as a product of the cultural project of the late British Empire and also one of its strongest critics. As this discussion will explain, he represented the paradox that made it possible for the British cultural project to endure beyond African independence.

[1] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1972), 56.

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In earlier chapters I demonstrated how the British cultural project contained a flexibility that allowed it to be adapted to changing political circumstances. This flexibility emerged in the late colonial period, when British agencies in Africa realized they would not always enjoy the degree of support provided by colonial rule. Organizations such as the British Council, British publishing firms, and the British Broadcasting Corporation began to incorporate Africans and African culture into their work in anticipation of decolonization – before that support fell away. Embedded in colonialism, British cultural agencies in Africa changed their practices slowly and selectively in the run-up to independence.

One of the arguments in this dissertation is the transfer of political power was not an end date of the cultural project of late empire. In this chapter I examine the conditions under which the cultural project continued to evolve in the decade after African independence. I return to the projects set in motion during the period of late empire in order to explain how they endured. In the first years after independence, the British Council became even more involved in educational aid and development. British publishers started to take up African literary writers and publish their works for audiences in more parts of the world. Meanwhile the British Broadcasting Corporation introduced new services in East and West African languages and devoted more of its schedule to Africa-specific programming. Each of these developments met British political and cultural objectives simultaneously. Importantly, these developments were also the means through which British agencies now saw themselves as patrons of African culture.

Britain's work in the field of culture was spurred on by the presence of more and more foreign competitors in areas where the British once held a monopoly. In the Cold War environment the British were alarmed whenever they heard word of another power having influence in one of the former colonies. This included the United States, which was one of Britain's biggest competitors in the field of culture in Africa. Although the United States was an ally in the Cold War, British officials were dismayed to see evidence of Americanization in commercial and cultural networks in the former colonies. American educational aid, publications, and broadcasts all shared certain traits with the British versions – namely, the English language and Western values – but British officials also found a lot of fault with American forms of culture. The British believed paperback westerners, commercial radio, and Hollywood films all undercut the values and traditions Britain sought to propagate. Britain's views towards the United States stood as proof that its cultural relations in the decolonizing Cold War world did not straightforwardly map onto a West versus East dichotomy. Instead, Britain sought to define and promote the features that made its culture and industries particularly British.

As an enduring colonial presence, British organizations working in postcolonial Africa both gained an advantage and became a target for criticism. A British official working in Lagos in 1969 described this paradox while explaining the "complex and special feelings" Nigerians had for Britain. He pointed at the number of Nigerians receiving British educations, reading British books, and working for British businesses. In his opinion, "This is the real substance of Anglo-Nigerian relations, and gives us an advantage denied to any other country." But if the

colonial legacy was Britain's head start, it was also its handicap. Even the High Commission officer could not deny it, and his letter went on, "At the same time much more is expected of us, and the habit of criticising the former colonial masters is deeply ingrained. Our help is taken for granted, while our shortcomings receive no mercy."[2] His last sentence articulated what a lot of British actors and agencies felt about their work in the postcolonial era. That was because it was through their patronage of African arts that the British agencies described here first became aware of the postcolonial critique their actions gave fuel to.

In the 1960s British agencies gave greater encouragement to forms of African expression than they had ever done before. The history of British theater, publishing, and broadcasting in postcolonial Africa demonstrates that pattern clearly. More specifically, British agencies promoted a select group of African intellectuals – almost invariably from the educated and elite segment of society – and enabled their thoughts to reach wider audiences across the continent and the world. Well known African figures such Wole Soyinka and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o took advantage of their voice in performances, publications, and broadcasts to criticize British colonialism and neo-colonialism. In other words, the British cultural project created the conditions for its own critique.

In this story the points of connection between British agencies and African artists was almost invariably through a small group of British experts in African culture. A large number of British agencies, including the British Council, British publishing firms, and the BBC, relied on the same handful of individuals for advice about African writers and writing. Names that appear again and again in this history include Geoffrey Axworthy and Martin Banham at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria; David Cook and Gerald Moore at Makerere University in Uganda; and James Gibbs at the University of Malawi. All of these men were academics who moved to Africa during the late 1950s or 1960s, where they set up the literature, drama, or extra-mural departments at the universities. This work brought them into contact with the first and second generations of postcolonial African writers while they were students. Outside the university, these British cultural intermediaries also served as readers for publishing companies, judges in drama and literature competitions, and radio presenters on African cultural programs. They therefore came to function as gatekeepers between African talent and the British agencies that were suddenly interested in it. In addition, when a writer's work was performed by a university theater company, published by a British firm, or adapted by the BBC, it gained a set of credentials that other British organizations recognized. Therefore, African writers who enjoyed success in one field would quickly draw attention from other fields. So although British organizations demonstrated much more interest in African culture as decolonization neared and unfolded, they confined their interest to a specific group of African writers. As a result of individual and institutional connections, British sponsorship of African culture remained an elite project at heart.

British cultural work in Africa relied upon an African cultural elite that were also its loudest critics. They realized how British cultural producers never fully left their mission to

[2] E. G. Willan to B. R. Curson, Information review – Nigeria, 31 May 1969, UKNA, BW 128/35.

project British culture and values. British agencies represented African culture as it compared with their own; therefore, the British created a caricature of African culture as primitive or as a pale imitation of the British original. The African critique against British influence grew louder over the course of the 1960s and early 1970s. Yet it did not grow enough to rid Africa of British influence in cultural production. In addition to the advantages Britain still held from its colonial rule, local conditions in Africa made it difficult for Africans to create their own alternatives. As patrons of African culture, British agencies created the conditions that would allow for specific forms of the British cultural project to endure.

"The assumption was that theatre was to be taken to the people": British theater in postcolonial Africa

This section examines British theatrical traditions in postcolonial Africa from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. This period differed from the earlier period because cultural export was no longer prioritized as a means of forming ties between Britain and Africa. In lieu of direct cultural promotion, British agencies sought smaller, indirect ways to maintain the theater success they had experienced in the earlier period. Even if it wasn't an obvious part of the British cultural project, university theater groups continued to present Western theater styles to audiences across Africa. As groups that called themselves African theater, it was they, and not their British predecessors, whose performances prompted backlash against the British influence in postcolonial culture. This strand of the British cultural project finally ends in the mid-1970s, when African performance styles more forcibly displaced British traditions – although key British works remained an exception.

Had British drama export had any impact on African theater? British officials in the former colonies were not sure how to go about answering the question. When they looked carefully, they could find evidence that African performers and audiences were at least familiar with British works. For example, a report from Northern Nigeria listed five British works being performed by amateur and university groups in 1969. The titles included older works by Shakespeare and Shaw (*Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Pygmalion*) as well as modern pieces (*A Taste of Honey* and *A Slight Ache*).[3] Almost a decade after British rule ended, it was a positive sign to see different ensembles recognize and select British works, particularly since they rarely performed pieces from other foreign nations to the same extent. Britain's advantage from the colonial period had seeped into postcolonial cultural production, at least in one small way.

The performances in Northern Nigeria took place independently of the British Council, which had moved even further away from the cultural and national work that had occupied it earlier. What the council still did in drama was more geared towards educational aid and development. In beginning of 1969 British Council officials were excited to bring James Cairncross and Judi Dench back to West Africa. Cairncross, Dench, and the rest of the

[3] F. H. Cawson, Annual report 1968-1969, 1969, UKNA, BW 128/35.

Nottingham ensemble was meant to visit West Africa for a second time in the end of 1965, but the trip was postponed when Ghana severed diplomatic relations with Britain, and then cancelled after the coup in Nigeria. When the actors finally returned in 1969, their visit was billed a Drama in Education tour. Though they did do a few general performances, the majority of Cairncross and Dench's attention went towards giving lectures and recitals in schools, universities, and training colleges, assisting in theater and playwriting workshops (including one drama workshop that was televised from Kaduna), and advising amateur dramatic societies.[4]

Cairncross and Dench's itinerary reflected how development and education were now part of the council's central mission, while culture was a mere connecting thread. In the late 1960s the council organized other tours for individuals interested in African performance culture, and those too were presented as educational. For instance, the council brought the University of Leeds professor Martin Banham back to Nigeria for a series of lectures on drama in Ibadan and Lagos. Banham had taught drama at the University of Ibadan for almost a decade starting in 1956 and was extremely well known among Nigerian writers. Seven months after Banham's tour, the British Council organized another tour by Edward Blishen, a British critic and a presenter on the BBC program *African Writers Club*. Blishen devoted the majority of his time to giving seminars and lectures on education, children's writing, and West African literature in teacher training colleges. With the council's support he also led a drama workshop in Kaduna and launched the Northern States Playwriting Competition.[5] Council-sponsored tours no longer focused on displaying culture, the way the Nottingham Playhouse's performances of Shakespeare and Shaw had been only six years earlier. Instead, Cairncross, Dench, Banham, and Blishen were now billed as specialists with a particular type of expertise in cultural production. They then joined the growing group of specialists and experts being sent by foreign governments and international agencies to different regions of Africa in the postcolonial period.

By the end of the decade of African independence the British Council had evolved into an educational aid organization. The British Council spent approximately £265,000 a year in Nigeria by the end of the 1960s, and both it and the British government hoped to increase that amount by another £60,000 as soon as it could resume activities in the Eastern Region.[6] By one UK High Commission official's estimate, only about 5% of those funds went towards cultural activities of the type the council had done during the colonial period. The rest of the budget was devoted to work such as English Language Teaching, teacher training, and libraries. Within the British government the Ministry of Overseas Development had been added to those responsible for prescribing council work – further proof the council was seen more and more through its aid activities.[7] By the end of the 1960s almost 40% of the council's worldwide funds

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Willan to Carson, Information review – Nigeria, 31 May 1969, UKNA, BW 128/35.
[7] In 1964 the newly-elected Labour government created the Ministry of Overseas Development in order to combine the Department of Technical Cooperation and the overseas aid functions of the Foreign, Commonwealth Relations, and Colonial Offices into a single department. Between 1964 and 2010 responsibility for British overseas aid went back and forth between being the distinct responsibility of a separate ministry under Labour

came from the Overseas Development vote.[8] Meanwhile, educational work was now described through the same terms and objectives that cultural work had been in the earlier period. For example, one council official in West Africa justified that fostering educational links was "an influence which is profound and far-reaching without in any sense being propagandist. It is truly cultural in that it affects the growth, development and maturation of a way of life."[9] The British Council started to move away from its traditional cultural work at the end of the colonial period; within a decade, the move was almost complete.

The almost complete shift in the British Council's activities could be explained in a few different ways. One explanation was that the British Council adapted its work to the needs of the new countries in which it operated. That was the language the council itself used to explain why it dedicated so many resources to educational aid at the expense of cultural promotion.[10] The council also justified that it did so as an arm of British foreign policy, and the more development work the council did, the more funding it received from the British government.[11] But underneath that justification laid a reluctance to abandon the older mission. Therefore, an alternative explanation was not that Britain *chose* to shift its attention, but that it *had* to, because it had lost its relevance after independence. This was a gradual feeling, but one that could not be ignored by the late 1960s. At that point the British Council saw the obvious generation gap in attendances at their courses and events. Council officials felt older Nigerians remembered past council work, such as the wildly popular Nottingham Playhouse tour, but younger generations were much more skeptical about the former colonial power.[12] In addition, instead of being doused in British culture and institutions their whole lives, younger audiences grew up in a world where they had many domestic and foreign cultures to choose from. Meanwhile, other countries including the United States, the Soviet Union, West Germany, and France appeared to be constantly improving their cultural presence in West Africa at the same time Britain was pulling its back.[13] The Cold War intensified across the African continent after European decolonization, and Britain was experiencing the effects.

In the early 1970s the British Council sought to reverse the trend against culture and restore balance to its activities in Africa. The representative in Nigeria described, "Cultural activity may now be a more sensitive area than in pre-Independence days but it is by no means

governments and being distributed through the Foreign Office under Conservative governments. See Charlotte Lydia Riley, "From the 'Racist Masterplan' to the 'Decade of Development': British overseas development policies in Africa, c. 1940-1960s," in *Legacies of Tangled Empires: British and French Decolonization in Africa*, eds. Andrew W. M. Smith and Chris Jeppesen (London: University College London Press, forthcoming).

[8] Willan to Carson, Information review – Nigeria, 31 May 1969, UKNA, BW 128/35.

[9] R. A. F. Sherwood, Annual report 1969-1970, 1970, UKNA, BW 128/36.

[10] P. G. Lloyd, Annual report 1972-73, 1973, UKNA, BW 128/37.

[11] Sherwood, Annual report 1971-72, 1972, UKNA BW 128/36. The council reflected Britain's diplomatic strategy here; for example, the 1971-72 budget for Nigeria was 30% greater than the year before (a total of £434,000) as Britain poured resources into it after the Nigerian Civil War.

[12] Sherwood, Annual report 1970-71, 1971, UKNA, BW 128/36.

[13] Ibid.

taboo."[14] First the council attempted to repeat what had worked in the past. In 1971 it arranged for the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company of Edinburgh to visit Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon in what was the first full-scale tour by a professional British company in eight years. The tour was met with some success but failed to make an impact among younger generations.[15] In addition, several officials in Britain thought it was too extravagant, given the council's new orientation towards aid.[16]

Therefore, British Council offices in Africa were left to find smaller ways to maintain an involvement in culture. Since the early 1960s local offices had occasionally given small grants to local arts and theater performances on an ad hoc basis.[17] In addition, the council broadened the fields for which it distributed bursaries to study in Britain so a certain number went to students for literature and arts.[18] In the absence of larger programs, these grants became the way the British Council remained a cultural organization, though with a significant difference. In contrast with the late colonial period, when the council endorsed exclusively British culture, the British Council was now patronizing African artists and arts.

African versions of British theater

One way the British Council kept a hand in theater was through its support of certain types of local theater, such as the ensembles that comprised the university traveling theater movement. Starting with the University of Ibadan's traveling theater in the early 1960s, university theater tours caught on quickly across Britain's former colonies in Africa. In the mid-1970s, a drama lecturer in Malawi described the widespread pattern, "In their footsteps and tyre-marks have followed the University Travelling Theatres, setting out in land-rovers, lorries, buses and kombies from Ibadan, Legon, Makerere, Nairobi, Ife, Lusaka, Chichiri and Zomba to entertain, educate and keep the universities in touch with the communities which support them."[19] Though scattered across the continent, many of these ensembles looked to the British Council as a source for funding. The British Council's support was often small (in the realm of £1,000, for example, or in-kind assistance, such as loaning them Land Rovers and drivers) and the council was only one of several sources that helped fund the tours.[20] However, the council was satisfied by its role, if for no other reason than because it was evidence Britain had not abandoned culture altogether.

[14] Lloyd, Annual report 1972-73, 1973, UKNA, BW 128/36.
[15] Sherwood, Annual report 1970-71, 1971, UKNA, BW 128/36.
[16] A. F. Keith to Barbara Deavin, 6 July 1971, UKNA, BW 128/36.
[17] J. D. W. Hughes, 2 July 1970, UKNA, BW 128/36.
[18] Sherwood, Annual report 1971-72, 1972, UKNA, BW 128/36.
[19] James Gibbs, "The Travelling Theatre," University of Malawi Chancellor College – Department of English newsletter, Oct 1974, Transcription Centre Records, container 3.4.
[20] For example, for its first tour in 1965 the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre received assistance or donations from the British Council, the Ministry of Development and Community Planning, three university sources (the Principal, the Arts Faculty, and the Charitable Fund), Esso, Coca-Cola, the *Uganda Argus*, and four amateur theater companies.

Chapter Five: Patrons of postcolonial Africa

To the British Council, university traveling theaters were a familiar entity. The council first got involved in sponsoring traveling theater because the University of Ibadan performed Shakespeare for three of its first four tours. But the council also had a deeper connection to the Ibadan group and other ensembles that followed. The touring companies described here were often the brainchild of British expatriates such as Geoffrey Axworthy at Ibadan, David Cook at Makerere, and James Gibbs at Malawi. They were key figures in the group of British intermediaries the council regularly looked to for expertise on African literature and culture. After learning of the individuals behind it, British Council had a natural trust in the university traveling theater model. The next part of the discussion examines what the traveling theaters saw themselves accomplishing in postcolonial Africa.

"The Makerere Travelling Theatre has no expensive props. Its stage is a makeshift platform. Its auditorium often the bare blue sky. Instead of 'toffs' in evening dress paying 20/- a time for a seat, the audience of the Makerere boys is the ordinary housewife, the market vendor, the factory worker and the barefoot urchin."[21] This was how an East African newspaper attempted to capture the spirit and objectives of mobile drama in Uganda in the mid-1960s. The description could have been written by the Makerere participants themselves, it encapsulated their vision so closely. In 1964 lecturers and students from Makerere University began planning a tour to rural regions of Uganda and Kenya for the following summer. They declared their primary aim was to pioneer popular drama among the general public. David Cook, one of the co-founders, explained, "The whole point of the tour was to get people to discover that they liked drama and to demonstrate that there is a vast popular audience for drama in East Africa now."[22] His record of the Makerere group's season was published in the East African literary magazine *Transition* under the title "Theatre Goes to the People!" The title alluded to the emerging mission for theater that university tours saw themselves contributing towards in the post-colonial period: namely, the idea of "theater for development."[23]

David Cook's stated purpose for recording the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre's experience was to offer a guidebook for future mobile drama groups in Africa.[24] Indeed, the early initiatives from Ibadan and Makerere acted as a model that other groups then adapted for their own purposes. This was evident in 1970, when lecturers and students at the University of Malawi sought to form their own traveling theater and contacted members of similar troupes in West and East Africa. At the same time, there were large variances in this model of theater. For example, the project from the University of Ghana at Legon was professional and profitable. The Legon students received a research grant from the university equal to what the ten

[21] Billy Chibber, "Varsity Variety," *Daily Nation*, May 12, 1965.
[22] David Cook, "Theatre Goes to the People!" *Transition* 25 (1966): 23-33.
[23] Examples of scholarship on theater for development in Africa include Penina Muhando Mlama, *Culture and Development: The popular theatre approach in Africa* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1991); Zakes Mda, *When People Play People: Development Communication Through Theatre* (Johannesburg: Witwatersand University Press, 1993); L. Dale Byam, *Community in Motion: Theatre for Development in Africa* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1999); and Martin Banham, James Gibbs, and Femi Osofisan, eds., *African Theatre in Development* (London: James Currey, 1999);
[24] Cook, "Theatre Goes to the People!" 23.

students in the ensemble would receive in government service for the same period. They rehearsed for six weeks and then went on tour around one or two regions for a month, performing mainly in schools and teacher training colleges. The Legon ensemble would earn about £1,000 from such a tour.[25] The Ghanaian approach was quite different from that of the students at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. In 1974 the Nairobi traveling theater was proud to say it covered more miles than the rally race the East African Safari. One student explained, "We decide on our route, send out posters and then jump on the lorry… We never make any prior arrangements about accommodation, after the show we ask if there is any one who can put us up – we've never been disappointed!"[26] They prioritized being flexible and mobile, feeling it better fit their mission to bring theater to the people.

But in all parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the image of the educated elite volunteering to go into rural areas and perform to the general public was a powerful premise of university traveling theater. Thus, Cook's article in *Transition* described the Makerere tour first arriving at a village. "There was barely ever a sign of animosity on these publicising tours. At one blow these students broke all barriers of suspicion between the educational haves and have nots. Here the students patently were splitting their sides to bring people free entertainment. There was no gainsaying this appeal."[27] Many of the participants' accounts of the tour reflected how they saw nominal or free admission as an essential part of the mission.[28] Cook went into detail on his group's thinking. "We wanted to introduce drama to people who had no chance of seeing it, and didn't know whether they would like it, let alone whether they would be prepared to pay even the most nominal sum to see it, in advance."[29] But the Makerere Free Travelling Theater also had to cover its expenses, so the actors solicited donations partway through each performance. In 1965, the ensemble collected 2,000/- during 35 shows this way. The donations compensated each actor the equivalent of one month's vacation salary in government service, so they and their families did not sacrifice all of their vacation income. The decision whether or not to charge admission was just one decision of many every group had to make in determining how they would attempt to deliver theater to the people.

The varied approaches taken by university traveling theaters in the 1960s and 1970s were important for looking at the debates that arose over the place of theater in postcolonial African society. University traveling theater saw itself as delivering theater to the people; however, by declaring this aim, it attracted a critique from African literary and intellectual circles. Critics described the university theater model as shortsighted and focused on its expatriate origins, its repertoire, and its Western performance style. In particular, intellectuals such as Wole Soyinka and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o contrasted the colonial-type performances with their own ideas for the role theater should take in postcolonial society. As described in this

[25] Emmanuel Yirenkye quoted in Gibbs, "The Travelling Theatre," Transcription Centre Records, container 3.4.
[26] Quoted in Ibid.
[27] Cook, "Theatre Goes to the People!" 29.
[28] Lydia Kayanja, "The Makerere Travelling Theatre in East Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5, no. 1 (May 1967): 141, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818573.
[29] Cook, "Theatre Goes to the People!" 28.

manner, university traveling theater in the 1960s and 1970s was a colonial holdover that was out of touch with other more authentic and effective trends in African theater.

University tours were propelled by an aim to bring theater to the people, making the implicit (or sometimes explicit) assumption that the general public did not have a performance culture already. Just like the British actors on earlier British Council tours, company members pointed to their makeshift performance spaces to demonstrate how far removed they were from traditional theater.[30] It was with pride that the Makerere lecturer David Cook listed the range of performance spaces the Free Travelling Theatre used on its first tour in 1965:

> We acted in such various places as a boxing ring, a bandstand, the facade of one of the Uganda Hotels (where a splendidly varied audience was assembled), a modest wooden social centre, a community hall of a housing estate where the 'stage' consisted of a series of shallow steps, the social halls of the Kilembe Mines and Tororo Cement Factory, the vast social centre in Kisumu, and the tiny intimate Garrison theatre in the same town. Perhaps the most unexpected of all our stages was at a Catholic training college in Gulu which had no assembly hall, yet where our evening open-air performance was rained out just before it was due to begin; we retired to the woodwork shop… But with the colorful curtain up and the music going the place looked and felt surprisingly like a theatre within fifteen minutes.[31]

He and the other participants presumed the variety and flexibility in traveling theater leant authenticity to their mission. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was one of the first critics to expose the narrowness of that thinking. Ngũgĩ later explained, "Where it tried to break away from the confines of the closed walls and curtains of a formal theatre building into the rural and urban community halls, the assumption was that theatre was to be taken to the people. People were to be given the taste of the treasures of the theatre. People had no traditions of theatre."[32]

University traveling theater also came under fire for the relatively uncritical manner in which it reproduced Western ideas of performance. The student companies focused on providing entertainment at the expense of other more dynamic functions of theater. Before setting out on tour, they rehearsed pieces as they planned to perform them, allowing only a limited amount of space for audience participation. David Cook observed how the Makerere students were not prepared for the audiences to react as they did. "Though we discussed the

[30] For example, see Kayanja's ("Makerere Travelling Theatre") description of setting the stage for open-air performances and Cook's ("Theatre Goes to the People!") description of all the considerations that had to go towards set design before a tour.
[31] Cook, "Theatre Goes to the People!" 26-27.
[32] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The politics of language in African literature* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986), 41.

question of loud audience response a good deal in advance, most of the actors had thoroughly Westernised expectations of their audiences, and were shocked at first to hear the non-stop burble of talk throughout the performances. But they soon got used to it when they realised that the chatter *was* about the play being performed, and was an expression of positive, indeed dynamic reaction and participation."[33] Although they acknowledged the opening for a more dynamic interaction, the Makerere ensemble did not do anything to bring those reactions into their performance. Instead, they saw the audience's loud responses and laughter as something they needed to work around. Cook went on to explain how his performers had great difficulty in the climactic scene of *Julius Caesar* in Swahili, where they found themselves shouting down the audience. At one performance in their tour, they had to halt the show to moderate the audience and then start again. In another stop, at Kilembe, the Makerere students were never able to quiet the audience and later called it a failed performance.[34] For the first decade after independence, university traveling theaters presented theater as a one-sided message from the stage to the seats. It was the same form that playgoers experienced when they visited, for example, the National Theatre in Nairobi or attended a national school drama competition. The individuals who sought to encourage drama in the same manner it had taken place during the colonial period argued they were not creating an artistic monopoly because the encouragement of any form of theater was likely to stimulate other forms.[35] Their critics responded that the stronger the colonial tradition became, the harder it was for writers and actors to break free from it.[36]

The most common criticisms leveled at the university traveling theaters came in response to the material they chose to present. Chapter Two described how the first such group, from the University of Ibadan, staged Shakespeare productions for three of its first four annual tours. It was the fact they performed recognizably British works that led the British Council to see student tours as an obvious route of supporting local groups. But in the period immediately after independence, the University of Ibadan student group was also criticized for reproducing the same repertoire as the colonial period. Following the Ibadan example, other university traveling theaters also included Shakespeare in the programs they brought to rural areas. They did not escape criticism for performing works that were out of touch with postcolonial Africa, but they attempted to lessen such a critique by including African works as well and by staging Western works in African languages and contemporary settings.

In Uganda and Malawi in the 1960s and 1970s the traveling theaters presented an eclectic program of established and new works by both African and foreign writers, but repeatedly ran into a problem with language. The members of the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre tried to take a practical approach to their tours, where they would face a variety of audiences and spoken languages. Before going on the road, the students rehearsed a collection

[33] Cook, "Theatre Goes to the People!" 31.
[34] Ibid., 31-2.
[35] David Cook and Miles Lee, "Introduction," in *Short East African Plays in English* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1968), viii. The book was reprinted in 1970 in Heinemann's African Writers Series.
[36] Ngũgĩ, *Decolonising the Mind*, 39-41.

of one-act plays with the idea they would choose three or four to perform each night. For its first year, the ensemble prepared eleven works: seven in English, two in Swahili, one in Luganda, and one in Runyoro. Although they tried to stage two African-language performances at every stop, over two-third of their performances ended up being in English – a language very few members of the audience could understand. This provided great fuel to the critique that university traveling theater was ignorant of its audiences' needs.[37] The students attempted to circumvent the problem by doing an introduction each night, where they outlined the plots in Swahili and when possible the local vernacular. They did not see an alterative. Their ensemble comprised of three Kenyans, three Ugandans, three Tanzanians, and a student from Malawi. The actors' native languages were not only different from one another, but also usually different from that of the audience.[38] When the ensemble performed one of the four African-language works – either Nyerere's translation of *Julius Caesar* in Swahili or a short vernacular comedy that had been written by a member of the ensemble – the performers did not know the language well and had difficulty speaking the lines.[39] When deciding what language to perform in, traveling theaters such as the Makerere ensemble did not consider broader questions about language and audience, but instead took the most practical solution available to them. Though their performances often succeeded at providing entertainment, they failed to deliver a strong message or have a transformative effect.

Over the next decade university traveling theaters sought to overcome language barriers by emphasizing other elements of the performance, such as setting, costume, and movement. The students wanted the audience to identify with the plot, so they staged European works in African settings with African characters. They found that several of Shakespeare's plays lent themselves very well to this purpose. For example, in 1974 the University of Malawi Travelling Theatre adapted *Julius Caesar* to present-day southern Africa. The students chose costumes that would draw attention to their characters' dispositions: the actor playing Brutus dressed in a Member of Parliament's suit, while the actor playing Antony wore a tracksuit. The Malawi ensemble also attempted to use each of its different performance spaces in the best way in could. When it performed in halls, the plebeians scattered themselves amongst the audience as a way of surprising and then interacting with the playgoers. When the group performed back at Chancellor College, it staged the play on the college steps. A man in attendance wrote, "The audience mingled with the crowd; the crowd mingled with the audience; we had the feeling that it was all being played out in the real world we live in." He also appreciated the costume choices, but worried the audience might not have fully understood the implications in presenting Brutus as an African politician.[40]

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[37] Ngũgĩ, "The Language of African Theatre," in *Decolonising the Mind*.
[38] Cook, "Theatre Goes to the People!" 33.
[39] Lydia Kayanja's write-up ("Makerere Travelling Theatre") and the *Daily Nation* story ("Varsity Variety") both described how actors in the ensemble often relied on rote memorization to perform or advertise shows in languages they did not know.
[40] Adrian Roscoe, "Travelling Theatre Broadsheet 1974 No. 1; 1st Chancellor College Drama Festival," Nov 1974, Transcription Centre Records, container 3.4.

Chapter Five: Patrons of postcolonial Africa

A more African African theater

By the early 1970s, it had become common for university traveling theater to incorporate African elements into it performances, whether through language, costume, setting, or interactions with the audience. However, observers who had been critical of the model remained unsatisfied and expressed the need for even more authentic forms of African theater. They created their own theater movements to demonstrate how theater could have more relevance to the people it reached. One of the better-known writers who did this was the Nigerian Wole Soyinka. Soyinka believed very strongly that African dramatists needed practicing African theaters to write for. In the first half of the 1960s, he started two theater companies to serve this purpose. The first, 1960 Masks, included some of the top actors, producers, and technicians in Nigeria. They staged acclaimed West African works that had come out the past few years, such as Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forest* and *Kongi's Harvest*, J. P. Clark's *Song of a Goat*, and Sarif Easmon's *Dear Parent and Ogre*.[41] (These titles will all return in the second section of this chapter, which describes publishers such as Oxford University Press and Heinemann scrambling to publish these works from Britain.) Because the members of 1960 Masks had other professional obligations, the company could not tour; therefore in 1964 Soyinka founded Orisun Theatre, a repertory company based in Ibadan.

Soyinka's own works featured prominently among performances by 1960 Masks and Orisun Theatre. Soyinka wrote in several different forms, including political dramas and satirical comedies, but almost all his pieces combined English speech with Yoruba chants, songs, and dance. He took this style to another level in the mid-1960s, when he produced the satirical revues *The (New) Republican* and *Before the Blackout* with his company. The performances featured a string of familiar characters from Yoruba towns, including market traders, politicians, chiefs, traditional priests, and leaders of syncretistic religions. They appeared in sketches such as "How to get your slice of the national cake" and "Send me to Eton, Dad." As producer, Soyinka kept the form extremely flexible so the ensemble could change up the sketches for different audiences and settings. A work such as *Before the Blackout* allowed Soyinka far more space to maneuver than written or broadcast forms that were subject to censorship. An article in the *Daily Express* explained before a performance of *Before the Blackout* in Ibadan, "Unlike the television version which was subjected to almost crippling censorship by the T. V., the Thursday show will come out in full bite under the umbrella of the vast freedom provided by the stage."[42] The flyers for *Before the Blackout* picked up on that theme and advertised, "First sampled in Diluted Doses on WNTV."[43] In Soyinka's eyes, this was the type of theater Africans needed at that moment. It contained familiar elements, contradicted any views that theater needed to be serious, was flexible and responsive, and conveyed an impression that no critique could go too far.

[41] Segun Olusola, report from study group on drama in Conference of African Writers of English Expression, Makerere University College, Kampala, 11-17 June 1962.
[42] "Wole Hammers Hard at Society," *Daily Express*, March 9, 1965.
[43] Transcription Centre Records, container 3.1.

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Soyinka's work in West Africa was one example of postcolonial African theater; another quite different take could be seen in East Africa. In the mid-1970s the University of Nairobi Travelling Theatre transformed into a more radical ensemble and began to challenge the presence of non-African elements in theater. Its transformation was part of a larger trend taking place across the country, where playwrights and directors created new works and forms of performance that could fully break away from Western traditions. They targeted what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o characterized as bourgeois practices of writing, directing, and performing plays as well as theater's base in schools and universities.[44] When he became involved in the Kamĩrĩĩthũ Community Educational and Culture Centre in Limuru in 1977, Ngũgĩ realized an answer to the dilemma over language the university traveling theaters had grappled with. The solution was to make theater intrinsically local so it could be rooted in the audience's own history and space. He later explained, "The question of audience settled the problem of language choice; and the language choice settled the question of audience."[45] In the production of *Ngaahika Ndeenda* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩrĩĩ, Limuru workers and peasants collaborated on how their history was represented throughout the writing and directing stages. Everything from the initial reading of the script to the selection of the actors to the dress rehearsal was done in the open, while spontaneity and participation were fully encouraged throughout the performance.[46] Therefore, the performances confronted every point in the critique against colonial theater traditions. Ngũgĩ believed the production of *Ngaahika Ndeenda* was a major step for Kenyan theater despite the confrontation it prompted between him and the Kenyan state.

Through university traveling theaters, the British Council and other organizations had hoped the British cultural project could continue, this time through African ensembles. The same features that attracted them to university theaters were what drew the opposing critique. That critique grew to the point that it prompted other African writers and theaters to create their own forms of African theater that more directly addressed their nations' needs.

Soyinka's and Ngũgĩ's theater initiatives were only two examples of projects that fall under the broad heading of African postcolonial theater. Both projects are briefly described here in order to show how the critique of colonial theater traditions carried forth new forms of performance in postcolonial Africa. The success that both Soyinka and Ngũgĩ's performances met might function to suggest the British cultural project of empire was finished by the mid-1970s, at least in the theater field. Yet, although Ngũgĩ and other critics continued to attack foreign traditions as both irrelevant and harmful, British works and traditions never disappeared completely. Certain components of British theater – led by the works of William Shakespeare – continue to exist alongside the newer and more radical theater produced in Africa to this day. Their persistence is due first to the role of British culture during the colonial period, and second – as Shakespeare exemplifies – to that culture's malleability in different political contexts. The next section will examine the same two features of the British cultural project of empire in the field of publishing.

[44] Ngũgĩ, *Decolonising the Mind*, 39-41.
[45] Ibid., 44
[46] Ibid., 54-8; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics: Essays* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 47.

"It had to be a world literature before it had been fully a local literature": Publishing postcolonial African writing

In 1961 one of the London editors of Oxford University Press traveled to newly-independent Nigeria in search of "budding Shakespeares and Byrons."[47] The editor expected to discover the next famous African writer, take his works back to London, and publish them. He was part of a new scramble for Africa that was taking place in the early postcolonial period. Instead of rushing to claim land and resources, as European nations had done in the nineteenth century, British publishers in this period rushed to claim writers and titles for the new market of Third World literature.

Over the prior decade, a handful of African literary works had appeared on the metropolitan literary scene. In 1952 Faber and Faber published *Palm-Wine Drinkard* by the West African writer Amos Tutuola. Tutuola based his narrative on Yoruba folktales, which he depicted through a modified Yoruba English. British and American critics received the text – the first African novel in English to be published outside Africa – with enthusiasm, but described it in terms of primitiveness and naïveté. For example, Dylan Thomas wrote in the *Observer* how it was a "brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story" written in "young English," while the *Listener* called it a "very curious" work that had "much in common with other primitive literature."[48] Reviews such as those sparked a protest among critics and intellectuals in Nigeria who were embarrassed this was the first work of African literature Westerners read. They feared Tutuola's text reinforced Western ideas of Africa as backward and thus crowded out other styles of writing from international publication in the future.[49] Six years later their fears subsided somewhat, after another Nigerian novel of a very different style was published in Britain. William Heinemann published *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe in 1958; it would become the most widely read African novel in the world. The publisher received the manuscript through Achebe's supervisor at the BBC in London, where the novelist was training as a broadcaster.[50] With Achebe, British critics did evaluate African literature outside the confinement of naïve art. The *Times Literary Supplement* described, "His literary method is apparently simple, but a vivid imagination illuminates every page, and his style is a model of clarity."[51] In the first years after it was published, *Things Fall Apart* did not get enough attention for Heinemann to sell the paperback rights to a mass-market British firm, such as Penguin.

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[47] Rex Collings to J. Rogers, 25 Feb 1963, AOUP, LG 229/221(1).

[48] These reviews and a series of others are quoted in Gail Ching-Liang Low, "The Natural Artist: Publishing Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in Postwar Britain," *Research in African Literatures* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 15-16, doi: 10.1353/ral.2006.0094.

[49] Bernth Lindfors, *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola* (Washington, DC, Three Continents Press: 1975).

[50] This is retold in many places, including, "Working with Chinua Achebe: The African Writers Series. James Currey, Alan Hill, and Keith Sambrook in conversation with Kirsten Holst Petersen," in *Chinua Achebe: A Celebration*, edited by Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (Oxford: Heinemann International Literature and Textbooks, 1991), 49.

[51] Philip Stanley Rawson, "The Centre Cannot Hold," *Times Literary Supplement*, June 20, 1958, 341.

Instead, in 1962 the firm subcontracted the rights to Heinemann Educational Books, and *Things Fall Apart* was re-published in paperback as the first title in the African Writers Series.[52]

As some of the first African writers to see their novels published outside Africa, Tutuola and Achebe were forerunners to the history discussed in this chapter. Their works came out through British presses and were directed at the British book trade, which kept the titles separate from the publications produced and distributed through regional publishing industries, such as those described in Chapter Three. British and African reactions to *Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *Things Fall Apart* foreshadowed debates that would be central the publication of African literature over the following decade. Those issues, each of which will be described in more detail below, included the question of whether African literature should be judged on the same set of standards as metropolitan works. Second, Tutuola's and Achebe's contrasting styles raised attention to the expectations of narrative and language that Western publishers and audiences expected to see in African literature. The last point was over access to audiences. The fact the *Times Literary Supplement* even reviewed Tutuola's and Achebe's works was because they were published in hardcover editions by British firms. The same two conditions made it much less likely audiences in Nigeria, where the novels were set, would ever read the works. The 1960s was a decade of relative optimism about the possibilities of African independence, and each of these debates concerned more than a new novel or two. Instead, they encapsulated questions about the institutional and cultural relationship between Britain and Africa in the postcolonial era.

Earlier in the dissertation Chapter Three described how a range of imperial interests shaped the development of regional publishing industries in Africa. The chapter ended in the middle of the 1960s, when increasing numbers of British publishing houses had begun to open branches in East and West Africa. These branches were intended primarily to serve the growing demand for textbooks for African schools. Branch publications were contained to their regional markets because of local and regional curricular considerations as well as national language policies. The discussion of publishing that follows begins in this same moment – the early 1960s, immediately after African independence. Instead of studying British publishing in Africa through branch activity, as was done in Chapter Three, this chapter discusses the interests that metropolitan houses had in publishing African literature. As separate companies within a publishing group, branch rights differed from metropolitan rights. An author's contract specified one or another, that is, the Oxford University Press Eastern Africa branch in Nairobi or Oxford University Press in London.[53] A work published by the latter was evaluated and edited in London, but could then be marketed and distributed more easily to markets around the world.

For most British publishing firms, technical and educational sales provided the profits that supported the general list. In the postwar period, the overseas market became crucial to

[52] James Currey, *Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series and the launch of African literature* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008), 28.

[53] In Britain Oxford divided its different imprints between Oxford, where the prestigious Clarendon imprint for academic books was located, and London, where the general and educational divisions were located. The overseas division was run out of London because it was almost completely concerned with general and educational books.

keeping the books balanced. For example, in 1967 exports of books and branch publications amounted to almost three-quarters of OUP's total turnover.[54] Negotiations and sales of international rights almost always adhered to imperial lines, even as European empires broke up. When a British publisher sold American rights to a title, the contract language often stipulated "World rights in the English language excluding the United States of America and its dependencies." The corresponding language in the American agreement defined, "World rights in the English language excluding the traditional British Commonwealth market."[55]

Metropolitan publishers determined the editorial strategies for international publishing, including the publishing of African literature. Despite having branches throughout the world, it was editors in London that decided which types of books would be published from Britain and which types from the branches, and they decided the types of authors and genres they sought for their different book lists. More often than not, the creativity and importance of a piece of African writing was very low in the factors that determined metropolitan publishing decisions. This did not go unnoticed by the growing ranks of African writers. By the mid-1960s it became apparent to them that almost nothing in the book publishing industry had changed since independence. If an African writer hoped to see his work published, he had to write in a European language, adhere to European conventions, and produce a narrative that would be of interest to European audiences. It was all in order to have his writing reach audiences, whether in Britain, other parts of the world, or even audiences in other parts of Africa. This – the institutional structure of publishing in Africa – was what African writers spoke of in the late 1960s when they expressed, "the major difficulty for African writing in English was that it had to be a world literature before it had been fully a local literature."[56]

The discovery of African literature

Rex Collings, the Oxford publisher who went to Nigeria to discover an African Shakespeare, was from OUP's London business. Collings came to London after working at Oxford's office in Nairobi (where he worked with Charles Granston Richards); before that, he had done his publishing apprenticeship at Penguin. Collings was brought to the Overseas Editorial division to develop textbooks for overseas audiences, but he made it his mission to see the press also do something for African literature. In the early 1960s he had to work hard to persuade his supervisors in Oxford what they could gain from these titles too. For Collings, the top African writing deserved to be published on its merit alone, without needing to prove there was a reliable market awaiting it.[57] But he realized that at Oxford University Press this was not enough, so he provided economic and political justifications that more risk-adverse editors could understand. First, he explained how in addition to textbooks African schools required literary works in order to teach language and literature. After independence, national

[54] Sutcliffe, *Oxford University Press*, 266-8.
[55] James Currey describes this practice in *Africa Writes Back*, 10.
[56] Summary of Conference on African Writing in English, University of Ife, 16-19 Dec 1968, Transcription Centre Records, container 3.6.
[57] Collings to Neale, 4 July 1962, AOUP, OP1619/12161, in regard to Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*.

governments expected that literature to be more African than European. Second, Collings's experience in East Africa had showed him British firms might find it more difficult to operate in Africa after independence. Therefore, Collings argued Oxford had to think beyond its immediate profits. "I am convinced also that there is still a place for us in African publishing if we can plainly show that we are not in fact only interested in selling enormous quantities of primary school books by expatriate authors… Politically therefore it is also important that we should publish. If we don't I think we will have missed the bus."[58]

Collings might not have been able to argue with such force if it were not for Wole Soyinka. On his trip to West Africa the OUP editor heard from Joan Littlewood (an acclaimed theater director from London) there was a Nigerian playwright whose works blew her over. She hoped to produce *The Lion and the Jewel* on a London stage very soon.[59] Collings arranged through the OUP Ibadan branch to find the playwright and have his scripts sent to London for review. Although British publishers were only just learning of him, Soyinka was already a well-known figure in Nigerian artistic circles by 1962. In the mid-1950s Soyinka studied at the University of Leeds; while he was in the United Kingdom he also edited a satirical student magazine, contributed to the BBC program "Calling West Africa," and worked as a script reader at the Royal Court Theatre. Between 1957 and 1960 several of Soyinka's plays were produced in Ibadan (*The Swamp Dwellers*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, and *The Trials of Brother Jero*), the cultural center of Nigeria, and a few works were produced in London (*The Swamp Dwellers* and excerpts from *The Invention* and *A Dance in the African Forest*). In 1960 Soyinka received a Rockefeller Research Fellowship to return to Ibadan, when he formed his first theatrical company 1960 Masks. They premiered Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forest* as Nigeria's official independence performance in October 1960. When Rex Collings visited Nigeria in 1961, therefore, Soyinka was already a common name across Nigeria with an enormous range of theatrical, poetic, and prose writing to his name.

With Soyinka, the editors at Oxford University Press were quickly aware of the level of talent they had encountered.[60] The reader reports they solicited from British Africanists provided confirmation. Take, for example, what Gerald Moore wrote about *A Dance of the Forests*, "To my mind it is the outstanding play so far produced in Africa, alike in its boldness of conception, the range and power of its dramatic effects and the beauty of its language."[61] Moore had no doubts that the play should be published in Britain, and neither did the editorial managers at Oxford University Press. After detailing how impressed he was by the sophistication of *The Lion and the Jewel* an OUP manager concluded, "As an authentic African play it certainly deserves publication by somebody, and possibly by us."[62] His doubt came from the question of educational sales, which still loomed over any final decision. Several editors were concerned about the sex and violence in Soyinka's plays because it might dissuade schools

[58] Ibid.
[59] Collings to T. Tani Solaru, 22 Feb 1962, AOUP, OP1619/12161.
[60] Neal Burton to Solaru, 5 July 1962, AOUP, OP1619/12161.
[61] Gerald Moore to Collings, 2 Aug 1962, AOUP, OP1619/12161.
[62] John Bell to Collings, 19 July 1962, AOUP, OP1619/12161.

from assigning them, thus limiting sales.[63] When the press finally decided to take Soyinka's works, the publishers still saw it as a risky move on principle, one justified only by the quality of the material. In September 1962 Soyinka signed contracts with Oxford University Press for *The Lion and the Jewel* and *A Dance of the Forests* to be published the following year in the press's Three Crowns Series.[64]

Between 1963 and 1969, Oxford University Press published seven of Soyinka's plays; however, the Nigerian remained an exception, rather than the rule, to the press's general approach to publishing African literature. A few years later, in an exchange about possibilities for African fiction, one Overseas Editorial editor explained, "We are less likely to promote a single work on its own merits than we are an author, such as Soyinka, who shows signs of ability to develop and mature. This means, as far as new creative literature is concerned, we tend to think in terms of authors in our list rather than of individual titles."[65] A more clear way of explaining Oxford's decision-making might have been: 'with the exception of Wole Soyinka, we require proof of an educational market.' Throughout the 1960s the Three Crowns series suffered from somewhat of an identity crisis over the tension between literary importance and educational sales.

A large problem in establishing a clear identity for Three Crowns lay in the relationship between London and the overseas branches. In London Rex Collings wanted to see the series grow larger and cover all types of creative literature. However the press had a general policy it did not publish novels for overseas markets – those titles should be left to the branches.[66] But the branches were under the same pressure as London to publish only titles with virtually guaranteed sales, or in other words textbooks. On occasions, when it felt it could places the titles in schools, the Nairobi branch produced literature in Swahili or a common vernacular. Given how much published material was already available in English, the branches saw novels in English to be a risky venture. Of course, if a branch received a really good manuscript in English that had a chance to sell well internationally, it was expected to pass it up to London.[67] Oxford University Press expected its overseas branches to answer to London. With both the London and the African arms oriented towards educational sales, there was very little space to publish African literature in English.

The Three Crowns list remained fairly small in the mid-1960s and its literary titles were almost all plays. Rex Collings and other Oxford University Press editors recognized plays and theater as an area that did not interfere with the policy about novels and that neatly fit under the umbrella of educational sales. Already in 1962 the editors were writing to each other that the dramatic form had been recognized as a very useful approach to language practice in

[63] Solaru to Burton, 28 June 1962; Bell to Collings, 19 July 1962, AOUP, OP1619/12161.
[64] The history of the Three Crowns series is told is more detail in Caroline Davis, *Creating Postcolonial Literature: African Writers and British Publishers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[65] Anthony Toyne to Solaru, 27 Sept 1966, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[66] Toyne to Lewis, 22 Sept 1966, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[67] Collings to Richards, 12 Aug 1964; Toyne to Solaru, 27 Sept 1966, AOUP, LG229/221(1).

secondary schools and universities. They realized British drama not longer sufficed.[68] An additional advantage in publishing drama was that the editors had more measures for what qualified as publishable work. They looked for pieces that were successfully performed and acclaimed in West Africa. They also saw competitions held by the British Council, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the BBC African Service as a way to discover new plays and playwrights to consider.[69]

Commercial pressures came to dominate decisions of whether to publish or not. Here, the school certificate reading lists were everything. British publishers paid close attention to the deliberations going on in the West and East African Exam Councils as to how the school certificate selections would change after African independence. The West African Exam Council's committee on literature was another institution from the colonial era and struggled with some of the same questions as British publishers. For example, members of the committee argued with each other for a long time over whether to select the play *Edufa* by Efua Sutherland. The debate centered on whether a play that made so little sense in European terms could still garner their recommendation.[70] Oxford editors had been asking themselves the same question, and Rex Collings turned to Ivor Wilkes, a British Africanist working at the University of Ghana, for help. "Our difficulty is that here in London we can only judge the plays from within the Western tradition. The plays may be written in English, good English, and may follow the conventional Western pattern of acts and scenes, but the content, the ethos seems to be quite different." About Sutherland's writing, Collings asked Wilkes, "Firstly to tell us what the tradition is within which they are written and secondly to advise us whether these plays are 'good' or 'bad' within that tradition."[71]

After learning of a new play or an unfamiliar playwright, the Oxford publishers rushed to see the manuscript, hear advice from West African experts, and inquire with their exam council contacts – all in a race against time. An Oxford representative in West Africa wrote back to Collings, "The worst thing would be to decide what we wanted to do to [the African plays] and to find them taken up elsewhere."[72] He followed it with a memo titled, "Disasters: Or Rumours of Disasters," where he reported hearing Heinemann had gotten Raymond Sarif Easmon's *Of Parents and Ogre*, and – worse – the play might appear on the first year literature course in West Africa.[73]

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[68] Burton to Collings, 4 June 1962, AOUP, LG229/221(1).

[69] Collings to David Neale, 26 June 1962; C. O. Botchway to the Publisher, 20 Dec 1962, AOUP, LG229/221(1). Both Collings and Botchway (from the OUP office in Accra) recommended publishing Raymond Sarif Easmon's *Dear Parent and Ogre* because of the prize it won in the CCF's competition and because of it was the first African play produced by the British Council Dramatic Society in Sierra Leone. Botchway described the Sierra Leone performance, "A great success, financially at least."

[70] Burton to Collings, 1 Jan 1963, AOUP, LG229/221(1).

[71] Collings to Wilkes, 11 Jan 1963, AOUP, LG229/221(1).

[72] Burton to Collings, 8 Feb 1963, AOUP, LG229/221(1).

[73] Burton to the Publisher, 8 Feb 1963, AOUP, LG229/221(1). The rumor was not true and Oxford came out with Easmon's play the next year.

Chapter Five: Patrons of postcolonial Africa

In the first years after West African independence, the West African Exams Council and the British publishing firms each looked to the other for decisions about works to prescribe and to publish. The publishers realized how sales of almost any title rested in the council's prescription. They did not want to publish until they had as close to verification as possible that an author such as Soyinka or Easmon would appear on the school certificate list. At the same time, the exams council did not want to prescribe a book until it was certain enough copies could be made available for the academic year. In March 1963, the West African Exams Council informed the Oxford publishers it was prepared to prescribe two of the plays that Oxford was considering (*Sons and Daughters* by Joe de Graft and either *Foriwa* or *Edufa* by Efua Sutherland) for the 1966 examination *if* OUP could guarantee it would publish the works by early 1964. The Oxford publishers responded within a week to say they had moved ahead on the de Graft publication.[74] By 1967 Joe de Graft was the second highest selling writer in the Three Crowns Series, after Wole Soyinka.[75] The letter from the exam council concluded with mention it was also speaking with Heinemann, as if Oxford didn't already know it was only one of many vying for place on the school certificate list.

In the minds of Oxford University Press publishers, finding publishable works by African authors in the early 1960s was a race. It soon became clear their largest competitor was the educational publisher Heinemann. As another British publisher that sought to add African novelists, poets, and playwrights to its booklist, Heinemann resembled the educational arm of Oxford University Press in a number of ways. Heinemann Educational Books was established in 1960 under Alan Hill as a separate company within the Heinemann Group of Publishers. For over two decades Hill had worked at the parent company, William Heinemann, where he was responsible for building an educational list that would continue to keep the general list afloat. After seeing how well William Heinemann did with *Things Fall Apart* Hill became interested in the book market in Africa. In his memoirs he explained how certain he was that Achebe was not an isolated phenomenon. Here Hill's thoughts were very similar to Rex Collings's when he visited West Africa. Hill thought, "There must be other writers comparable to Achebe, awaiting a publisher with the confidence and resources to launch them on a world-wide market."[76] Therefore, after becoming head of the new educational company, Hill recruited Van Milne, a West Africa specialist from Nelsons, to come over and help get Heinemann involved in West Africa. The African Writers Series was launched two years later.

As Heinemann's involvement in African literature grew, it attracted a number of other firms' publishers who had interests and backgrounds in the African market. At the beginning of 1963 Keith Sambrook also moved to Heinemann from Nelsons, where he had worked for nine years. At Nelsons, Sambrook had developed student textbooks for the Caribbean and African markets. In 1956 he moved to the Gold Coast, where he set up the university press at Legon in

[74] Caroline Davis, "The Politics of Postcolonial Publishing: Oxford University Press's Three Crowns Series 1962-1976," *Book History* 8 (2005): 235, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30227377.
[75] S. W. Smith to Charles Lewis, 1967, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[76] Alan Hill, *In Pursuit of Publishing* (London: J. Murray in association with Heinemann Educational Books, 1988), 122-3.

conjunction with Nelsons. He was next posted to Nigeria to establish local publishing out of Nelsons's branch office in Lagos.[77] Sambrook arrived at Heinemann Educational Books only months after the African Writers Series had been started. (He arrived at the office on his first day to find Ngũgĩ's final manuscript for *Weep Not, Child* on his desk.) Over the next decade Sambrook helped establish Heinemann's branch companies all over the world, including those in East and West Africa, and contributed to the editorial and marketing strategy behind the African Writers Series' success. James Currey was another publisher attracted to Heinemann because of its work in African literature. Currey came to Heinemann in 1967 from Oxford University Press. His background included working in Oxford's Cape Town branch for five years, between 1959 and 1964, followed by work on the Three Crown series and African academic publishing in Oxford's London offices. In addition to working on the African Writers Series at Heinemann, Currey oversaw the school and university textbook lists for Africa.[78] He also worked with Sambrook to develop the Arab Authors and Caribbean Writers Series, though neither garnered the same success as the African series they were modeled after.

The reason for going through these personal histories is three-fold. First, the backgrounds of only a few individuals are enough to demonstrate that the network of British publishers working on books by and about Africans was small in the 1960s. African literature reached the international market in this period through personal connections, both between different British publishers and between publishers and authors. Second, it shows how African literary publishing was organized in conjunction with the educational division of the press, keeping in mind that the educational division was also the profitable division. The third reason is about timing and momentum. Heinemann Educational Books launched the African Writers Series in 1962 at almost the exact same moment Oxford University Press launched its Three Crowns series. Each series was headed by leading West African writers: for Heinemann it was Chinua Achebe and for Oxford Wole Soyinka. Yet, by the end of the decade, Heinemann had emerged as the clear leader in African literary publishing. The momentum helped it grow even faster; publishers such as James Currey sought to work there (and brought their contacts with them), and African writers sought to be published by them. The small differences in Heinemann's and Oxford's approaches to publishing African literature came to have a large impact.

Heinemann's editorial strategy was less limited than Oxford's; therefore, Heinemann had more room to experiment in African literature.[79] Alan Hill and other Heinemann editors imagined the African Writers Series as a Penguin for Africa: in other words, cheap paperback

[77] Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, xv-xvi.
[78] Ibid., xvii.
[79] The history of Heinemann and the African Writers Series appears in publishers' accounts (Hill, *In Pursuit of Publishing*; Currey, *Africa Writes Back;* Becky Clarke, "The African Writers Series – Celebrating Forty Years of Publishing Distinction," *Research in African Literatures* 34 [2009]: 163-74, doi: 10.1353/ral.2003.0027) as well as scholarly works (Gail Low, *Publishing the Postcolonial: Anglophone West African and Caribbean Writing in the UK, 1948-1968* [New York: Routledge, 2001]; Phaswane Mpe, "The Role of the Heinemann African Writers Series in the Development and Promotion of African Literature," *African Studies* 58 [1999]: 105-22, doi: 10.1080 /00020189908707907).

editions of general books by Africans. Rex Collings at Oxford had also tried to follow the Penguin model with the Three Crowns Series, but he ran into problems with his press's policies about literary and non-educational works. In comparison with Three Crowns, the African Writers Series came much closer to the Penguin model. The first titles in Heinemann's series were mostly reprints of books that William Heinemann or other publishers had produced in hardcover. These included *Things Fall Apart*, its sequel *No Longer at Ease*, *People of the City* by the Nigerian writer Cyprian Ekwensi, and *Mine Boy* by the South African Peter Abrahams.[80] The extent to which Heinemann emulated Penguin's success could be seen in the series' covers: novels and other fiction were brought out with orange covers, like Penguin books, while nonfiction works, such as Kenneth Kaunda's autobiography *Zambia Shall Be Free,* had blue covers, like Pelican titles.[81] (In Africa, the signature orange cover was associated with Heinemann and not Penguin; within a few years university bookshops in Africa were seen advertising that they carried the "orange series.")

But Heinemann quickly saw there was not a large enough body of African-authored works to publish only reprints. This brought the series' editors to express interest in new novels and writers to debut in their series. The first author where this was the case was Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (then James Ngũgĩ.) In the span of one year Ngũgĩ had two novels published in the African Writers Series: *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between*. As Chapter Three described, an earlier version of *The River Between* won a prize in the East African Literature Bureau competition, leading Charles Granston Richards to pass the manuscript to Heinemann. At almost the exact same moment, the Heinemann editors learned of Ngũgĩ's *Weep Not, Child* through a separate avenue. In June 1962, Ngũgĩ attended a conference of African writers at Makerere University with Chinua Achebe. The way the story goes, Achebe was in his guesthouse one evening when Ngũgĩ knocked on the door, introduced himself, and handed Achebe the manuscript of his novel. Achebe was impressed, so impressed that he handed the manuscript to his Heinemann editor, Van Milne, who was also at the conference. The editor phoned London, where he took Alan Hill out of a meeting to ask if he would take on the book unseen. Hill gave his approval right then, and Heinemann signed Ngũgĩ.[82]

Weep Not, Child was the seventh title to appear in the African Writers Series, but its publication forced the Heinemann publishing group to decide how to release new African fiction. British publishers in the 1960s saw paperback as a relatively new format, reserved mostly for reprints. Its cheapness had made it an obvious format for the first African Writers Series books, where the market was seen to lie primarily in Africa. For earlier titles in the series,

[80] William Heinemann published Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* in 1960; it was reprinted in the African Writers Series in 1963 as AWS #3. Cyprian Ekwensi was first published in Nigeria by Onitsha in the late 1940s and had children's works published by Oxford and Cambridge University Presses in the 1950s. *People of the City* was his first full-length novel and was published in Britain by Andrew Dakers in 1954. It became AWS #5 (1963). Peter Abrahams's *Mine Boy* was published in 1946 by Dorothy Crisp; it was his third novel to be published in Britain. *Mine Boy* became AWS #6 (1963).

[81] Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, 20.

[82] "Working with Chinua Achebe," 153; Hill, *In Pursuit of Publishing*, 126.

Heinemann was not concerned the paperback format would prevent reviews or lessen library sales in Britain, either because the titles were reprints or because the publishers only saw a market in Africa. But with Ngũgĩ's novels the Heinemann educational editors wanted to attract reviews and library sales in Britain too, and so they proposed the parent company, William Heinemann, publish a hardback edition the same time the African Writers Series paperback came out. One of editors, Keith Sambrook, explained to the parent company, "Now, the most one can offer a writer through the A. W. S. is a paperback market in Africa and 7½% royalty. We want to be able to offer a hard-covered edition, world sales, full promotion and royalty on the hard-cover of at least 10%. We need to be able to do this to get and keep the best writers."[83] Sambrook was able to persuade the reluctant British publishers they had some interest in producing a few carefully selected African writers in Britain. However, Sambrook had to give in on publishing in Britain and Africa simultaneously. Instead, William Heinemann insisted on the conventional 18-month delay between editions of *Weep Not, Child*, to ensure the paperback sales did not cut into hardcover profits. They would do the same for *The River Between* and Ngũgĩ's third novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, in 1967.[84] The residing arrangement allowed Ngũgĩ to be read and reviewed by broader international audiences, but delayed his introduction to African audiences. It also revealed how metropolitan interests trumped African interests, even at Heinemann.

Heinemann's African Writers Series had one great advantage over Oxford University Press and other British publishers in its recruitment of African writers. They had Chinua Achebe. Getting Ngũgĩ demonstrated to the Heinemann editors how Achebe was a magnet for emerging African talent. Later that year they asked the author if he would work as editorial adviser to the African Writers Series, and he accepted the position despite its being unpaid.[85] Achebe was much closer to literary developments in Africa than his colleagues in London. For example, four months after he'd joined the African Writers Series, Achebe reported hearing Mbari Publications of Nigeria was producing a short novel that had been smuggled out of South Africa. Heinemann reprinted the work by Alex La Guma, titled *A Walk in the Night and Other Stories*, in 1967. Achebe also pushed the series' other editors to look beyond the familiar area of West Africa for new authors and works. With his endorsement, they signed authors such as Tayeb Salih from Sudan and Sahle Sallassie from Ethiopia.[86] Over the ten years Achebe acted as editorial adviser, the African Writers Series published 100 titles from 21 countries. When he stepped down from the post in 1972, he wanted to see it stay in African hands. The publishers approached Ngũgĩ about the position, but he did not have the time. Heinemann replaced the position with a system where editors in Nairobi, Ibadan, and London all consulted with one another, with no one office having the final word.[87]

[83] Keith Sambrook in 1963, quoted in Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, 12.
[84] Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, 115.
[85] Maya Jaggi, "Storyteller of the Savannah," *Guardian*, November 18, 2000.
[86] Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, 143, 201-202.
[87] Ibid., 7-8.

By that point, however, the African Writers Series had established itself among African writers as the top option to reach larger audiences. Achebe was a key factor in Heinemann's success in every way, and it is important to remember that his contributions as an editorial adviser came on top of the profits brought by his titles. William Heinemann was the originating publisher for all five of Achebe's novels and controlled the subsidiary rights; then, the African Writers Series brought paperback editions to the mass market. In the mid-1980s, looking back over the series' twenty-year history and more than 250 books, Alan Hill realized almost one-third of total revenue came from Chinua Achebe's titles.[88] Achebe and a handful of other big-selling writers carried the series because they kept it profitable overall, even if every title was not so.

The success of the African Writers Series came at the expense of Oxford's Three Crown Series. Some of the Three Crown titles met success, namely Soyinka's single plays, such as *The Lion and the Jewel*. However, the editors in London labored to find African authors of a high enough quality to be placed next to Soyinka on a bookshelf.[89] In addition, they found themselves constantly defending the series' place within Oxford's overall business plan. Rex Collings – the editor who argued the hardest for Oxford to publish African literature – became so frustrated with Oxford's reluctance to pursue anything other than sales that in 1965 he left the company and moved to Methuen. Four years later, Collings started Rex Collings, Ltd., a publishing company focused on the African market. His departure really hurt the Three Crowns initiative – in part because it lost its headliner, Soyinka, who decided to move with Collings.[90] Without Collings arguing otherwise, the Oxford managers became more insistent that the only creative writing they publish was that which would be adopted by teachers and examiners.[91] They pursued this despite what they were hearing from African branches, which was that with each passing year Oxford University Press needed all the public goodwill it could get.[92]

With African editorship and a much longer booklist, Heinemann believed it succeeded where Oxford did not, in terms of being more authentic in its patronage of African writing. The series published 100 titles in its first decade and 140 more in its second. In the early 1970s, an average of twenty titles a year came out in African Writers Series covers. James Currey, one of the series editors, would later say, "A lot for a single publisher. Not many for a continent."[93] But, African writers began to criticize Heinemann for what they saw as an undiscerning attitude. Wole Soyinka labeled the series an "orange ghetto" of African writing and hoped none of his titles would ever appear there. (He failed.)[94] After publishing two novels with Heinemann, Nigerian writer Kole Omotoso condemned the series for lumping together an enormous

[88] Hill, 144.
[89] Neale, 8 Feb 1963, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[90] Davis, *Creating Postcolonial Literature*, 98. Oxford University Press did publish two other Soyinka titles in the late 1960s (*Kongi's Harvest* in 1967 and *Three Short Plays* in 1969), but both works were acquired under Collings.
[91] Toyne to Lewis, 26 Sept 1966; P. J. Chester, 5 April 1967, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[92] Lewis to Toyne, 31 Oct 1966, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[93] Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, 22.
[94] Soyinka's novel *The Interpreters*, which Andre Deutsch published in hardback in 1965, was reprinted in the African Writers Series in 1970.

number of diverse and unrelated writers. With the same inevitable cover design (often from a clichéd motif of African life) and a string of African-sounding names, the overseas audience was led to believe all African writing was alike.[95] Heinemann produced an enormous amount of titles, but on terms that were usually less favorable to the authors than even those offered by its competitors. For example, Oxford gave authors in its Three Crown Series royalties of 15%, which was double what they would receive under a standard Heinemann agreement.[96] Ayi Kwai Armah, a Ghanaian writer who had five novels published or republished by Heinemann, used even stronger terms than Soyinka or Omotoso when he described the African Writers Series. He called it, "a neo-colonial writers' coffle owned by Europeans by slyly misnamed 'African'."[97] All of these charges stood as proof that even Heinemann was not exempt from the growing criticism leveled at British publishers working in Africa. The next part of the discussion will describe how, upon realizing the direction African literature had been set, African writers sought to circumvent the domination of British publishing.

Africanizing African literature

In June 1962 more than 30 African writers came together in Uganda for a conference of African writers in the English expression. The conference had been called by the Mbari Writers' and Artists' Club of Ibadan, Nigeria. The Mbari Club was established the year before by a group of intellectuals who represented a sort of "Who's Who" of Nigerian creative arts, including Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, J. P. Clark, and Christopher Okigbo. Its premises were located next to one of Ibadan's busiest markets and included a courtyard that acted as a performance space, an Africana library, and a room for exhibitions and meetings.[98] Mbari's activities were funded by an international organization called the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which operated out of Paris.[99] The congress also provided the funding to bring such a large group of names together in Kampala in 1962. Although the Mbari Club was only a year and a half old, its

[95] Kole Omotoso, "The Missing Apex: A Search for the Audience" (paper presented at the international conference on publishing and book development, Ife, Nigeria, December 16-20, 1973) in *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies: Proceedings of an International Conference on Publishing and Book Development*, eds. Edwina Oluwasanmi, Eva McLean, and Hans Zell (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: University of Ife Press, 1975), 257-8.

[96] J. P. Clark's agreement with Oxford University Press was for royalties of 15% on UK and overseas sales (Davis, *Creating Postcolonial Literature*), which was significantly greater than the 7½% royalties that Heinemann offered Ngũgĩ for the African Writers Series paperback and the 10% royalties it offered for the hardcover edition.

[97] Larsony or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction," *Asemka: A Journal of Literary Studies* 4 (1976): 1-14, quoted in Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, 75.

[98] "Mbari – A New Venture in Nigerian Culture," *Nigeria Magazine* 30, no. 74 (Sept 1962); Wren, *Those Magical Years*.

[99] The Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) funded a wide variety of cultural organizations and publications around the world. Other than the annual grant, the CCF was not too involved in the early operations of the Mbari Club. When Mbari became a bigger name after the 1962 conference in Kampala, which was completely paid for by the CCF, the latter asked its name be mentioned in future publicity and publication articles. In 1966 an editorial in the *New York Times* revealed the funding link between the CCF, the Fairfield Foundation (another source of Mbari funds), and the American CIA. Although the initiative for Mbari's establishment had been conceived in West Africa, its output and its role in forging transnational connections were also part of the global Cold War over culture.

members already felt it had made an impact in Nigeria by providing a space for West African writers to come together. The chairman of the conference explained how an Africa-wide conference would carry that trend to other parts of the continent. "Mbari wanted writers to meet and know one another, talk about common problems and derive a sense of fellowship in a continent where, owing to vast distances and poor communications and educational facilities, Africans tend to write in isolation."[100] The Mbari conference was a landmark event in postcolonial African writing, most notably in the numbers and names it brought together. The 30 authors, playwrights, and poets who convened in Makerere hailed from Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Southern Rhodesia, and South Africa. Langston Hughes and the Jamaican playwright Barry Reckord had been invited as guests, as well as three observers from French-speaking West Africa. Among the group, the nationalities that were publishing in greater amounts were noticeably over-represented (nine Nigerian writers and seven South African writers were in attendance) at the expense of the areas perceived as "unproductive" in comparison.[101] When the imbalance was noted it became another part of the fellowship the attendees sought to foster, where West Africans could use their experience to help East Africans catch up, so to speak. The same was said for established writers, such as Achebe and Soyinka, and hitherto unpublished writers; indeed, it was at the Mbari conference where the student James Ngũgĩ gave Chinua Achebe his *Weep Not, Child* manuscript.

In the effort to identify the common problems they shared, the ensemble of English-speaking writers quickly focused on the issues of audience and language.
They had come together on the basis they all wrote in English; therefore, the discussions around language and audience were most focused on *how* to use English, not whether African writers should be using English at all. (That question would come to dominate discussions in later years.) Many of the writers who spoke described the difficulties they had in translating their thoughts and feelings into a colonial language that would be read by foreign audiences. As South African writer Ezekiel Mphahlele explained, their decisions about language and audience then determined their style and subject:

> The problem of an audience is a real one for the African writer. Often he finds that what he has to say, and the way he wants to say it, can only be appreciated by his immediate audience. Because he has to be published overseas, he has to chop and change his material and adapt his diction for his would-be publisher's audience. His tone automatically changes too. He slips into prosy explanation of his setting and gets bogged down in anthropological information.[102]

[100] Ezekiel Mphahlele, "The Makerere Writers' Conference," *Africa Report* (July 1962): 7-8, Transcription Centre Records, container 1.3.
[101] Mphahlele, "Makerere Writers' Conference"; Bernard Fonlon, *Afrika* 8 (August 1962).
[102] Mphahlele, "Makerere Writers' Conference."

Mphahlele concluded this was why the predominant theme of West African writing had been of the encounter between an indigenous and a European culture: West African writers thought about how they wanted to put themselves across to a foreign audience, and that was the subject they always returned to.

The issues the writers had with audience, language, and style constantly returned to the institutional structures through which African literature was published in the 1960s. It is important to note, however, that the Mbari conference represented an effort to reform British publishing, not to remove it. This was obvious from the get-go, as a group of European publishers were invited to attend the meeting. The publishers in attendance included Charles Granston Richards (then at the East African Literature Bureau), Van Milne (Heinemann), Andre Deutsch (representing himself), and representatives of Oxford, Cambridge, and Northwestern University Presses. The final day of the conference featured a panel on publishing, when five of the publishers explained how they evaluated African writing and then took questions. The writers in attendance criticized several parts of the publishing process, especially when they heard the editors did not make it a point to consult African readers in determining what works to deem publishable. Several writers pointed out that Amos Tutuola's *Palm-Wine Drinkard* would never have been published if the British editors had consulted an African critic before taking it up.[103] At the same time, the writers cautioned, what were very good works could easily get overlooked when African readers were not consulted. As more writers joined in this complaint, Andre Deutsch and Van Milne staunchly defended their good faith and intuitive experience. By the end of the panel, they had no more to say to the audience than that the writers needed to trust them.[104] The publishing panel was one of many moments during the Mbari conference when African writers questioned if British publishing best served their needs. They left the conference with the feeling they must each do more to develop and identify good writing in their local areas, taking advantage of writers' workshops and local publications and literary journals whenever possible.[105] Again, all of these proposals aimed to supplement British publishing, not displace it altogether.

The writers assembled in Makerere in 1962 were in agreement that the development of indigenous publishing was important for the future of African writing. Over the rest of the decade new ventures that aimed to diversify publishing opportunities for Africans appeared in different parts of the continent. The ventures were not usually focused on removing British influence altogether; rather, they saw British firms as partners in the larger enterprise to increase African titles overall. One of the better-known ventures was Mbari Publications, run out of the Mbari Club in Ibadan. Right when the Mbari Club began it had set out to publish writing that overseas firms were not yet or would never be interested in.[106] Mbari published poetry collections, plays, and novels throughout the first two-thirds of the decade and was the first publisher for many major figures, including Soyinka, J. P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, and

[103] Ibid.
[104] Dennis Duerden, "Mbari Writers' Conference in Uganda," Transcription Centre Records, container 1.3.
[105] Mphahlele, "Makerere Writers' Conference."
[106] Conference of African Writers of English Expression, Makerere University College, Kampala, 11-17 June 1962.

Kofi Awoonor. Mbari also welcomed writing by black South Africans whenever they were able to smuggle their works to Nigeria. Whenever Mbari Publications had a new work, the Mbari Club would advertise it through their newsletter, which had a subscription list across Africa, Europe, and the United States. But the Mbari Club also promoted other publishers' titles this way too. The newsletter's reading recommendations listed African writing from all different publishers – most of them British.[107] Mbari Publications had a greater reach than most indigenous publishers in the mid-1960s, but it did not try to compete with British publishers.

Like almost all African publishers, Mbari struggled to fund its publications. Mbari was luckier than most African publishing initiatives because it had the support of an international agency, the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Other African projects looked into forming a partnership with a British firm, which could provide capital at the beginning, offer expertise, and reduce some the of the risk involved in publishing. This was the avenue the governments in Ghana and Zambia pursued with firms such as Longmans and Macmillan to publish their school textbooks and reading materials.[108] A British-African partnership was also behind the start of the East African Publishing House that started in Nairobi in 1965.[109] Even with foreign assistance or investment, however, funding remained an enormous barrier for indigenous publishing. In large part that was because profitable titles proved hard to come by.

British firms interested in African writing found local publishers such as Mbari to be very useful for identifying emerging writers and titles. They treated Mbari as a feeder list; the African publisher would test local interest and sales, then the British publisher could decide whether to commit. That was how Wole Soyinka and J. P. Clark came to be published in Oxford's Three Crowns series and Alex La Guma and Christopher Okigbo in Heinemann's African Writers Series – all the authors were first published by Mbari. The more successful an Mbari publication was, the more likely it caught a British firm's attention. The British firms fought for originating rights, and when they got them, took over all future profits. African publishers were thus in a catch-22: either they took on works at a loss, or they started to break even and quickly lost the titles.

By the middle of the decade several of the more successful African writers sought to use their acclaim to break the cycle. In 1965 Wole Soyinka wrote to his editors at Oxford University Press that he had started a new publishing venture in Ibadan called Orisun Editions. He explained, "We are going in for the Nigerian market principally – short stories, one or two books of Poetry etc etc, but we feel that the greatest market will be in cheap acting editions for schools and the constantly expanding amateur groups." The Nigerian writer made it clear he was not trying to cut ties with the British company, saying instead, "We are entirely in favour of

[107] *Mbari Newsletters*, Transcription Centre Records, container 3.5.

[108] Longmans' proposals for co-operation with the Bureau of Ghana Languages, March 1962, NAG, RG 3/5/1063; Simon D. Allison, "State Participation in Publishing: The Zambian Experience," and A. K. Brown, "State Publishing in Ghana: Has it Benefited Ghana?" in *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies*, 59-69, 113-27.

[109] The East African Publishing House was a venture set up by the East African Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs. It started through a partnership with Andre Deutsch, although the agreement was soon modified (East African Publishing House, press release, 16 Feb 1965, Transcription Centre Records, container 3.6).

some kind of working arrangement with Oxford University Press especially anything that will take the actual burden of publishing off our backs."[110] Soyinka therefore wanted to inquire about Oxford's position on titles in the Three Crowns series. He was especially interested in who held the rights to his own work.

Soyinka did not expect there to be a problem with his plans to publish acting editions of his own plays. In a more detailed set of plans he sent a few months later, he showed how he planned to use the original type that was set up for the Mbari editions, from back before he signed with Oxford. As innocently as they were presented, Soyinka's plans set off alarms in London. With Orisun he planned to print 9,000 copies initially each of *Swamp Dwellers* and *The Trials of Brother Jero*. Both titles had appeared in *Five Plays*, a collection Oxford had brought out the year before.[111] The Ibadan branch wrote to Rex Collings, "As you can see, a real copyright problem is involved. Whereas the sale of such editions might not militate against the sale of 'Five Plays', it would certainly not help it."[112] The editors were even more concerned with Soyinka's plans for the future. In a year or two he wanted Orisun to produce an edition of *The Lion and the Jewel*, which was his most profitable title with Oxford and had been prescribed by the West African Exams Council. Allowing for local editions of this title was "out of the question," the Oxford editors told one another, because it "would kill our edition for schools."[113] Finally, Soyinka's ultimate vision for Orisun was not contained to Nigeria. He ultimately expected to take the profits the acting editions were sure to generate, use them to publish original works, and then expand the company to other markets.

Orisun Editions never became any sort of competition for British publishers, for a few different reasons. First, the initial profits did not appear: Oxford did not relinquish rights to Soyinka's major plays, and the African venture was only able to publish a few of the smaller titles. Second, increasing government censorship and the secession of the Eastern Region overtook Orisun, Mbari, and many other literary initiatives coming out of Ibadan in the 1960s. (Another of those ventures was Citadel Press, the publishing company Chinua Achebe and Christopher Okigbo tried to start in 1966. Like Soyinka, they hoped having titles by authors of their fame would provide the lift-off the company needed.[114]) The Biafran War split parts of the Nigerian literary community, as Chinua Achebe, Gabriel Okara, and Christopher Okigbo went to work for the Republic of Biafra (the latter would be killed as a result), while Wole Soyinka was arrested. Though Orisun's fate was not entirely due to the domination of British publishing in postcolonial Africa, it demonstrated how much African publishing relied on British publishing to even get off the ground as well as the myriad of other local conditions African publishers had to contend with.

By the early 1970s, there had been an obvious hardening of opinion against British publishing. A large conference on publishing and book development held in Ife, Nigeria in 1973

[110] Soyinka to Collings, 25 Jan 1965, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[111] Neale to Soyinka, 16 June 1965, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[112] B. E. to Collings, 17 May 1965, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[113] Ibid.; Collings to Neale, 1 Feb 1965, AOUP, LG229/221(1).
[114] Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, 33.

concluded that African-British partnerships had thus far failed. This was primarily because the African partner had been "invariably used as representatives of publishers, not publishers themselves."[115] The African publishers, booksellers, and writers in attendance at the conference decried the continued domination of British publishing as neo-colonialism. In its place was a stronger demand for indigenous African publishing than there'd been ever before.

More than one hundred African, European, and American delegates were in attendance at the conference, with the publishing, bookselling, and library professions represented very well. Besides Chinua Achebe, there were few African writers present. That partly explains why African writers received so much blame during discussions on the current state of literary publishing in Africa. The conference recognized how publishing overseas could bring an author critical attention, monetary rewards, and literary prizes, all of which were very tempting. But, the delegates implored, African writers had to resist the urge to write for the overseas market, even when it meant foregoing "the jingle of foreign exchange and the glitter of foreign fame," as one presenter described.[116] Achebe, in a response titled "A Writer's View," mostly agreed. He felt he and his fellow writers had a responsibility to support indigenous publishers and should be prepared to gamble on such publishers' chances at least once or twice in their writing careers.[117] He himself had tried this route earlier in the decade when he arranged to have a new Enugu press, Nwamife Publishers, publish his poetry collection *Beware, Soul Brother.* Achebe's experience with lending his name to an African publisher went better than Soyinka's had in 1965. Heinemann Educational Books did later obtain the title for its African Writers Series, but the British firm subcontracted the rights from the original African publisher. In addition, the agreement was for the Commonwealth market *excluding* Nigeria, which was left all to Nwamife Publishers.[118] In Achebe's mind, the relatively unprecedented agreement was a move in the right direction.

Of course, there was only one Chinua Achebe. The problem remained for how new African writers could ever get to a position like his where they held that sway. Although a chorus of criticism against foreign publishing came out of the University of Ife conference in 1973, the conference did not affect the structure of publishing that was in place. African publishers continued to feel they only saw a manuscript after European and American firms had passed on it. They did not have the capital reserves to take on unknown or risky titles. Meanwhile, British publishers at the top of the hierarchy continued to dictate whom, what, and on what terms African writing was published.

To Kenyan publisher Henry Chakava, who began working in publishing in the early 1970s, a British publisher working in Africa could be described in one of three ways. "[There are] the good, who are sensitive to political change and developing economies; the bad, who attempt to continue a relationship of colonial privilege after history has passed them by; and

[115] Omotoso, "The Missing Apex: A Search for the Audience," in *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies*, 254.
[116] Ibid., 252.
[117] Chinua Achebe, "Publishing in Africa: A Writer's View," in *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies*, 45-6.
[118] Currey, *Africa Writes Back*, 34.

the wicked, whose motivations are entirely commercial." He went on, "Sometimes one can find all three attitudes in the same company."[119] The history of publishing in Africa for the first decade after independence supports his characterization. African independence brought a wave of British publishers to the continent, each in search of writers and writing that could answer their commercial, political, and cultural needs all at once. As they competed with one another to develop literary series for African and international markets, expatriate publishers believed they had stepped into a new role as patrons of African writing. However, no matter how many relationships they fostered or titles they produced, the fact remained that companies such as Oxford University Press and Heinemann Educational Books were in Africa to make profits.

Foreign publishing control impacted more than just the unprofitability of African publishing, as new African writers made decisions about language, subject, and style based on the overseas publisher and the overseas audience. Once the pattern was in place, it became harder for writers and publishers in Africa to break out of it. African writers who sought local alternatives were often unsatisfied with what they found, as political and economic conditions often made it difficult for African initiatives to establish themselves and build readerships. Altogether, this explains how foreign publishing in general and British publishing in particular continued to dominate the avenues for publication in Africa. The writers who were most capable of circumventing the British publishing control were the Soyinkas, the Achebes, and the Ngũgĩs – writers whom international audiences were already aware of after British publishers had made them so. Once there was a demand for their writing, these individuals were able to seek alternative means of making their voice heard. The best-known instance of this came in the late 1970s, when Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o renounced writing in the English language. Since then, all of his publications have been in Kikuyu. International audiences are still able to enjoy his writing, however, because it is translated into English and other foreign languages and sold to international markets.

The third section of the chapter looks at another British institution that relied upon advantages it gained during the colonial period to position itself as a patron of African culture in the postcolonial period. Through broadcasting the BBC African Service offered another way for Africans in one place to reach audiences all over Africa as well as the rest of the world.

"Calling Africa":
Finding the African audience and reinventing the BBC

As the African colonies moved closer to and ultimately attained independence, the BBC found itself transmitting in a different strategic context than it was previously. Britain's short-term aim of preserving colonial rule gradually gave way to a longer-term project of maintaining a presence in the former empire. This section will look at the two avenues British broadcasters

[119] Henry Chakava, "Dealing with the British," *LOGOS* 10, no. 1 (1999): 52, doi: 10.2959/logo.1999.10.1.52.

took to ensure they continued to have an influence in Africa. First, through new language services they increased Africans' access to the British world news. Second, through cultural programs on the BBC African Service they provided a venue for African writers and intellectuals to reach audiences across the continent. In both avenues, the BBC took advantage of the relatively strong position it held in Africa at the beginning of the postcolonial period. BBC newscasts were tainted by their colonial associations, but were already recognizable as the standard of what a news bulletin should sound like and contain. Through training programs and secondment arrangements that had been in place since the mid-1950s, the BBC had access to a pool of African talent it could develop its African Service around. Last, in a manner that almost mimicked the claims of London publishers, British broadcasting had the resources and technology to allow Africans to reach wider audiences than they could through local broadcasting.

News and cultural programming were each key components of what the BBC labeled its Decade of Africa. At the beginning of the 1960s, it appeared Britain had lost its ability to project itself to African audiences. In response, the corporation set about building the BBC African Service through transmissions in five languages: Hausa, Swahili, Somali, French for Africa, and English for Africa. These comprised specialized broadcasts to Africa while the General Overseas Service (renamed the World Service in 1965) continued to transmit programming that was believed to have universal interest. By the end of the decade, the BBC was confident its African audiences read disinterestedness, high quality, and wide reach into all the British broadcasts they heard. To Britain, those qualities were the proof it could have a lasting presence in postcolonial Africa.

British world news to Africa

Within all the education, information, and entertainment the BBC produced for its worldwide audience, the news stood out as the single most important element of British transmissions overseas. Broadcasters started referring to the news as the backbone of the General Overseas Service in the early 1940s and they continued to do so in the postcolonial period. BBC news bulletins were utilitarian, uniform, and ubiquitous. Positioned at regular intervals throughout the 24-hour transmission schedule, each bulletin began with the same tune and the same words every single day. These newscasts signposted the rest of the General Overseas Service (GOS) schedule and determined the basis for other programming and engineering decisions. When the BBC added African languages services in Hausa, Swahili, and Somali in the 1950s and then expanded those services in the early 1960s, every new transmission included a timeslot for the news. One of the reasons news carried such importance at the BBC was that news delivery was a relatively easy area for broadcasters to convey the impression of disinterestedness. Delivery of news, therefore, acted as the vector through which the reputation of British broadcasting was recast from a partisan voice during colonialism to an apparently disinterested source during the late Cold War and postcolonial eras.

Because the BBC's African-language programs were a product of decolonization they were

designed primarily for direct listeners. This was a departure from the earlier type of BBC broadcasts that reached the continent; those were meant to be rebroadcast by local stations. After losing their monopoly British broadcasters recognized that their material had to stand up on its own and attract direct listeners to tune in. One question they faced was which listeners? The corporation's audience research in Africa was still rudimentary in the early 1960s, but it did not stop officials from identifying the audiences they most wanted to attract. British broadcasters believed that the most important listeners to concentrate on were the cadres of civil servants in the newly independent African nations. They felt this was the kind of audience that would listen attentively to political commentary and was interested in good Hausa or Swahili translations. Therefore, whenever the BBC adjusted its African schedule, it was careful to position newscasts for a time that would fit into civil servants' routines. These times were not always convenient for other parts of the population, such as farmers and traders, but the British did not think those listeners would understand the level they broadcast at anyways. Instead, the BBC could hope to reach these groups indirectly through the intermediaries who listened to its programs.[120]

To produce high-quality programs in African languages the BBC relied on staff on secondment, or loan, from the African stations. In contrast to their ten-week training courses, which they saw as a form of assistance, BBC officials thought of secondment as a reciprocal arrangement. British broadcasters needed translators and announcers to staff the new African language services. A foreign language service that transmitted seven hours each week demanded a staff of at least six people who knew the language as their mother tongue. In return, the African candidates would gain even more experience and BBC "know how," turning them into valuable assets for their home stations when they returned. When the system of secondment began, administrators in Africa spoke highly of its value and planned around the absences. They assumed they could assign returning staff to senior administrative or training positions, which also helped fulfill the directive to Africanize.[121] Indeed, some of the BBC's African-language newsreaders eventually became directors of national broadcasting in their home countries; that was the case, for instance, for David Wakati at Radio Tanzania and James Kangwana at Voice of Kenya. But problems between the British and African stations arose when the BBC expanded its African language services and requested larger numbers of broadcasters for longer periods of time.[122] Stations such as Kenya Broadcasting System and Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation quickly became exasperated because the British were essentially poaching their best men, thus depriving the African stations of the little professional experience

[120] Hausa programmes, 1961, BBC WAC, E1/1439/1.

[121] For example, in Kenya the broadcasting station promoted returning secondments to positions such as Head of African Programmes and Coast Regional Controller (Patrick Jubb to E. Tangye Lean, 7 Nov 1961, BBC WAC, E31/28/1). After Kenya's independence the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and then Voice of Kenya continued to be under increasing pressure to Africanize (Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, press release, 14 Sept 1964, KNA, AHC 1/34).

[122] Tony Dean to D. P. Wolferstan, 20 Aug 1958; G. M. Gaymer to Reiss, 2 Sept 1958, KNA, AHC 18/77; Gaymer to Chalmers, 25 March 1960, BBC WAC, E30/1/1.

that they had. “Our growing pains are of a more serious kind,” the director of Kenya Broadcasting System appealed to London, after the BBC offered East African secondments the chance to extend their BBC time from two to three years.[123] After independence, when many African stations dropped the BBC, the arrangement felt even more one-sided.

Secondment from African stations explained in part how the BBC maintained a reputation for high quality, even while broadcasting in unfamiliar languages. Officials at the BBC were more interested in working with attachments from Africa than trying to hire locally in Britain because the former already had microphone experience and would stay the full length of their contracts. There was one more added value: these were individuals whose voices were already known and enjoyed by the targeted audience.[124] For example, one of the main voices heard on the BBC Swahili Service in the late 1950s was Stephen Kikumu, whose supervisors in Kenya had described as “a natural broadcaster and probably the most popular one in the whole of East Africa.”[125] Announcers and translators of Kikumu's caliber gave the new BBC transmissions legitimacy. As more and more foreign stations crowded the airwaves in East and West Africa, the difference in the BBC's personnel did not go unnoticed by listeners. In the words of a Tanzanian policeman on why he listened to the British news: “Many East Africans are in the BBC. This is why the BBC is trustworthy, because it gets its expertise from many parts of the world.”[126] Furthermore, the British ensured that whatever language they broadcast in – English, Swahili, et cetera – they adhered to high linguistic standards. Before a man or (every so often) a woman could be attached to the BBC he or she had to pass translation exercises and take voice tests, which were recorded and sent to London for review by British experts.[127] The BBC felt its attention to standards paid off whenever listeners commented on the difference it made. A trader in Nigeria wrote in, “When you come on the air I stop work so that customers at my market stall can listen to you. I would like to say that we are all highly appreciative of the standard of Hausa spoken by your broadcasters: it is better than that used in any other Hausa broadcasting service.”[128] His sentiment was echoed by Swahili speakers in Kenya who believed the Swahili spoken on the BBC was far better than that spoken on their local station.[129]

As much as the British worked to improve their news service through better world coverage and high quality foreign language bulletins, they were helped by changes taking place in African news broadcasting after independence. In the 1950s colonial planners considered the BBC in Britain the model of what they should ultimately be working towards in the colonies, or in other words, developing broadcasting services to the point where they functioned as an public service organ independent of government. In the Gold Coast the colonial government

[123] Jubb to Wolferstan, 7 Sept 1959, BBC WAC, E30/1/1.
[124] Wolferstan to Jubb, 12 Aug 1959, BBC WAC, E30/1/1.
[125] Dean to establishments division, 21 March 1958, KNA, AHC 18/77.
[126] Quoted in Swahili Service questionnaire – May 1972, Sept 1972, appendix B, BBC WAC, E3/186/1.
[127] Wolferstan to Reiss, 2 Sept 1958, KNA, AHC 18/77.
[128] Quoted in BBC African Audience Research, Hausa Service questionnaire – September 1969, 11 Feb 1970, 11, BBC WAC, E3/174/1.
[129] For examples of complaints about standards of VOK's Swahili news, see Oluoch to Permanent Secretary, 30 April 1963, KNA, AHC 3/24; Koske to A. Senuasi, 28 Sept 1970, KNA, AHC 1/34.

had reached an intermediary step in this course of development, and at independence the Ghana Broadcasting System was a department under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Over the following few years, government ministers began taking a more and more aggressive line with the broadcasting station's news department. For example, during the events in the Congo in 1960 there were accounts of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Kwaku Boeteng, arriving at the GBS newsroom, tearing up bulletins that contained certain phrases from the BBC and Reuters, and substituting his own versions.[130]

Meanwhile, in Kenya broadcasting services did develop into the model of an independent corporation, but the arrangement did not last under the new national government. In July 1964, seven months after Kenya's independence, Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta broadcast that his government had nationalized Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and renamed it the Voice of Kenya (VOK). "Will the government allow freedom of expression through this medium, or will this powerful instrument be monopolized by government alone?... We expect the Voice of Kenya to become a quorum of the free expression and opinion by the peoples of this country. I would like to emphasize, however, that this privilege must not be abused."[131] In the months following the Kenya government's decision to nationalize broadcasting, listeners suspected the government of issuing news blackouts on particular world events such as the Congo crisis in the end of 1964. Having lost the re-broadcast to the BBC world news, Kenyans described how they had to decide between buying more powerful wireless sets or losing the BBC news altogether.[132]

In Britain broadcasters and government officials were dismayed by the wave of nationalization of media in the former colonies, since it was an abrupt turn against the model they had been promoting. The stories that reached Britain demonstrated how state control of information impacted all levels of researching, preparing, and transmitting the news. When East African secondments returned to their home stations many found it difficult to apply their BBC training to their work under the state.[133] The prime minister of Kenya had argued that one benefit of being part of the government was Voice of Kenya could now procure a greater amount of provincial material from the network of reporters and information officers already in place around the country.[134] But the general public in Kenya soon noticed how the Voice of Kenya news did not conform to what they had come to expect from a newscast. In stark contrast to the style of the BBC, the Voice of Kenya bulletins became known for mundane coverage, unnecessary repetition of news items, and poor editing, such as reporting events from days earlier as "Today".[135] Examples of African newscasts filtered back to London, where there was a sense Britain was on the verge of losing Kenya, Ghana, and the other former

[130] J. R. E. Carr-Gregg to B. Cockram, 19 July 1960, UKNA, DO 35/9648.
[131] Jomo Kenyatta, 1 July 1964, "Prime Minister Speech on Voice of Kenya" (recording), digitized copy at Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, accessed 15 July 2013.
[132] "News Ban Defended by Kenya," *Daily Telegraph*, November 30, 1964.
[133] Brian Eccles to Watrous, 22 Feb 1962, BBC WAC, E40/202/2.
[134] Kenyatta, "Prime Minister Speech on Voice of Kenya."
[135] P. J. Gachathi to director of broadcasting, 15 July 1965, KNA, AHC 1/34.

colonies forever.[136] The only way the British could respond was to fortify the tools they still had at their disposal.

After independence the British believed their real competition for African audiences were not African stations, but other foreign broadcasters. When Nigeria was about to become independent the then colonial government pinned heavy consequences on the BBC losing its monopoly over the airwaves: "At best the Americans might come in. And there are others far less desirable who might clamour for a place."[137] It was an understatement of sorts – by the end of the decade Africans were the targets of news bulletins from around the world and in a swath of languages. The USSR, which was the largest external broadcaster in the world, tripled its transmissions to Africa in the early 1960s, and by the end of the decade it was transmitting in twelve African languages.[138] In the late 1960s Swahili- speakers in Tanzania could choose among 47 foreign stations that broadcast to their country.[139] Foreign broadcasters, whether coming from London, Cairo, Washington, or Peking, all sought the same thing. They hoped African audiences were not satisfied with what they got from their local service and would thus look to outside sources for news and information about the world.

In the postcolonial period broadcasting was clearly a domain of the Cold War, and, in technological terms at least, the British were losing. The BBC constantly feared listener attrition due to the relatively poor reception of its signal compared to the new and powerful transmissions of its rivals. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the British government finally gave approval to a major program of relay transmitter construction, including a new transmission station at Ascension Island in the South Atlantic and a more powerful station in the East Mediterranean.[140] The new relays were a big improvement for reception of the BBC in West and Central Africa, but Britain remained behind the United States' 250 kW relay station in Liberia and West Germany's relay in Rwanda.[141] Also, Britain still did not have adequate coverage of East Africa, where listeners continued to complain about the unreliable and weak service. That remained the case until the mid-1980s, when Britain finally built a transmitter in the Seychelles. The corporation was frustrated the government did not approve even more capital expenditure, but reassured itself that as long as the BBC was audible it would retain its audience. A BBC publication in 1970 explained, "People will still search for it hardest because they believe in it most."[142]

Despite its long association with colonial broadcasting and despite its having a weak or unclear signal, the BBC remained the source of world news for groups of African listeners. In

[136] See for example, Carr-Gregg to Cockram, 3 Aug 1960, UKNA, DO 35/9648.
[137] Governor-general of Nigeria to secretary of state for the colonies, 14 Jan 1959, UKNA, FCO 141/13703.
[138] BBC, *BBC Handbook 1964*, 80; *BBC Handbook 1970*, 99.
[139] See BBC WAC, E3/186/1.
[140] The director of external broadcasting explained, "Ascension puts in a signal with one hop [from London], louder, clearer, and on frequencies which can be received on many of the cheap transistors." (Lean, "Atlantic Relay – A new stage in world broadcasting," in *BBC Handbook 1967*, 17-9).
[141] BBC African Audience Research, Hausa Service questionnaire – Oct 1970, Jan 1971, 3-4, BBC WAC, E3/174/1.
[142] BBC, *BBC Handbook 1970*, 98.

Britain the evidence of the BBC's relative position in output and transmission strength made it all the more crucial to preserve its reputation for objectivity, informed comment, and attractiveness. Therefore, in the 1960s the corporation strove to maintain the head start it had gained in these attributes during the colonial period.

The first way British broadcasters set about doing this was by improving their news gathering and reporting network in the postcolonial period. In 1960 the BBC appointed its first correspondents to East and West Africa, bringing the total number of correspondents on the continent to four. By the middle of the decade, however, permanent correspondents were stationed in each geographical region of Africa, and the corporation was prepared to post additional reporters as breaking news developed. For example, in spring of 1967 officials in the BBC's news departments anticipated of the succession of Biafra from the rest of Nigeria and correctly assumed there would not be free movement between the two regions after the political break. They decided to send an additional correspondent to Nigeria; therefore, Keith Carter was sent to Lagos to cover the activities of the federal government, while Angus McDermid (the usual West Africa correspondent) entered Biafra by way of Douala.[143] The stories that Carter and McDermid were able to get past Nigerian censors became how audiences in Britain and all over the world learned about the developments and ramifications of the civil war. Even audiences in Northern Nigeria tuned to the BBC to hear breaking news of events taking place within their own borders.[144] The BBC did not recognize Africa as a place where news came from until the 1960s. Once the corporation did view Africa that way it scrambled to provide all the coverage necessary to portray the continent as the center of the decolonizing and late Cold War world.

Second, British broadcasters ensured they delivered the news in a more reliable, authoritative, and attractive style than any of their African competition at the very least. Prior to independence, news departments at African stations were typically small and locally focused. Meanwhile, the BBC had had a protocol for turning copy from around the world into balanced, smoothly run newscasts in place since the Second World War. When the corporation started its African services, the BBC accommodated them the same way as its dozens of other services. The presence of African broadcasters on secondment at Bush House made the task possible. Within the World Service news department sub-editors and translators collaborated in the preparation of news bulletins. The entire process was meticulously timed so that the news department could be confident its copy was as up-to-the-minute as possible, while still leaving room for translation. Meanwhile, to ensure all BBC bulletins were uniform in their format and length, the translator was responsible for instructing the news desk to adjust to particularities of a given language, such as the speed of spoken Swahili or Hausa compared to English.[145] As a final check, BBC administrators would record transmissions from time to time and have other staff in the section check them for presentation and linguistic standards as well as translation

[143] Keith Carter, "Report on News Visit to Nigeria," June 1967, BBC WAC, E44/40/1.
[144] African Audience Research, Hausa Service questionnaire – September 1969, 11 Feb 1970, BBC WAC, E3/174/1.
[145] J. F. Wilkinson to G. T. M. de M. Morgan, 17 Nov 1961, BBC WAC, E40/202/2.

and accuracy.[146] In the areas of news gathering and news reporting, the BBC had an enormous head start over national broadcasters in the former colonies. That head start allowed it to gain a reputation for wide coverage and high-quality newscasts in the postcolonial period.

Finally, once it no longer broadcast within the context of colonialism, the BBC consolidated its reputation among Africans for probity and an equal consideration of all viewpoints. In the 1950s, when the BBC advised colonial officials on future broadcasting systems in the colonies, the BBC pushed for the systems eventually to become independent of the state. British officials sought to inaugurate a tradition of news reporting in the soon-to-be former colonies that was modeled after that of the BBC. As it happened, British hopes in this direction were quickly shattered after independence, when nationalist and totalitarian governments in Africa quickly took hold of broadcasting for their own devices. However, a different seed had been planted in its stead. Whether events in Suez or political representation in Kenya, the late colonial period had seen the BBC broadcast an increasing number of stories and positions that reflected poorly on Britain. The news coverage might have angered the broadcasters' original audience of diasporic Britons, but it started to convince African audiences the BBC was committed to objectivity. In the 1960s the BBC found itself once again vilified by governing powers in Africa; only this time, it was not the colonial state, but the postcolonial state. Meanwhile, from the perception of African audiences, the farther their national service moved from British news style and traditions, the more they appreciated what they had from the BBC.

African theater over the British airwaves

During its Decade for Africa, British broadcasters struggled to identify the right balance between specially targeted programming, such as the Swahili-language service or the program *Calling Nigeria*, and programming designed for broader audiences. Over the 1960s, the BBC maintained its African-language programming so it did not lose ground against other foreign broadcasters. However, the portion of the African Service that truly grew in this period was the "English for Africa" programming. From London BBC producers strove to create programs that would attract English-speaking audiences in all parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Eventually, they hoped, the focused programs in English such as *Calling Nigeria* and *East African Sports Club* could give way to these broader daily and weekly programs.[147] Through the General Overseas Service, the BBC recognized how it gained greater audience trust when it offered broader programming. Audiences in different parts of Africa were less likely to worry they were targets of propaganda when they listened to Africa-wide programming compared to something just meant for them. The second reason the British were interested in this approach was that it helped them make the claim they worked for Africa's needs. BBC African Service programs claimed to link up different regions of Africa that would otherwise be separate. Meanwhile

[146] See for example Morgan, 3 April 1962, BBC WAC, E1/1439/1.
[147] Graham Mytton, "40 Years of Broadcasting from London in African Languages," in *Africa Bibliography 1996*, ed. Chris H. Allen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), xvi.

Britain retained a role in that relationship, as it provided the source of the link and the English language.

In a manner similar to the worldwide service, British broadcasters were careful to allow a range of views to be represented on the BBC African Service. In 1963 the service introduced a series titled *Countries of the Commonwealth*, where individuals from different colonies and former colonies in Africa were interviewed about the ways they identified with other parts of the British world. The British Commonwealth was a significant topic in the early 1960s: new nations like Sierra Leone, Tanganyika, and Uganda had to decide whether to join it, while South Africa had recently decided to leave it. Through an interview with a man from Kenya, listeners heard that many Kenyans were suspicious about the Commonwealth idea. The Kenyan explained, "They feel that it is just an extension of British imperialism – an attempt by Britain to retain its hold on its former possessions."[148] The program aired in April 1963, eight months before Kenya became independent and decided whether it would become a member of the British Commonwealth. Not only did the BBC include the segment, but it selected that quote for the press release announcing the program. It stood as one instance where the BBC portrayed itself as a service for Africans by distancing itself from Britain's strategic interests.

In the postcolonial period cultural programs provided an important avenue for the BBC African Service to portray itself as serving Africa. Another way the BBC African Service sought to serve Africa's needs was through cultural programs. In the 1960s and 1970s the BBC intersected with several parts of the British cultural project as discussed herein. For example, the BBC Swahili Service produced radio versions of both of Julius Nyerere's Shakespeare translations – *Juliasi Kaizari* in 1964 and *Mabepari wa Venisi* in 1971. For the 1964 production, the British producers selected John Mwakitawa, a Kenyan who was at the BBC on a training course, and James Kangwana, another Kenyan who had been seconded to the Swahili Service, to play the lead roles. They set the play to music from *Ben-Hur*.[149] Another way British broadcasters supported African language and literature was through writing competitions. In 1967 the BBC launched a competition for short stories in Swahili. Nasor Malik, who had worked for the Swahili Service since it started a decade earlier, explained, "It gave a chance for established writers to send in new stories, and also contributed to the emergence of new writers who did not previously realise that they could write entertaining stories and get money for it."[150] After selecting the winning pieces, which they broadcast, the BBC arranged for Longmans to publish five of the stories in its series of fiction for East Africa.[151] These examples were each one-off programs the BBC was able to publicize well. However, the more significant way the BBC encouraged African literature and culture was through two regular series on the African Service: *African Writers Club* and *African Theatre*.

[148] BBC African Service, press release, 31 March 1963, KNA, DC ISO/8/9.
[149] Wendy Stillwell to Geoffrey Woodland, 17 March 1964, BBC WAC, E1/1446/1.
[150] Quoted in Mytton, "40 Years of Broadcasting," x.
[151] The series was called *Hekaya za Kuburudisha* (Entertaining Stories) and came out through Longman Kenya in the 1970s.

Chapter Five: Patrons of postcolonial Africa

Starting in 1962, *African Theatre* was designed to take advantage of the popularity of radio drama and also answer several of the BBC's other ambitions for Africa. Each month the African Service produced a half-hour radio play in English written by an African playwright. Writing in 1970, with the program still going, a BBC producer explained the three distinct aims they had with it.[152] First, *African Theatre* allowed the BBC to provide easy listening material without losing substance. Like with the *African Writers Club* and the music programs they already broadcast each week, *African Theatre* was intended to add variety to the BBC's program schedule and improve its overall popularity. Second, the radio drama series afforded an opportunity for work for the growing group of semiprofessional African actors living in Britain by that time. The BBC producers believed it was important to use African actors (therefore, African accents and mannerisms) as a main way of conveying the African setting through the radio medium. That they had a large pool of talent to hire from was reflected in one producer's comment in 1965, "London tends to be a magnet for aspiring actors from all over the world!"[153] Each production meant an offer of two days of paid work.[154] The BBC said its third aim was to encourage African writers to write plays for radio and provide them a venue to be heard by wider audiences. This should sound very familiar after learning what British publishers sought to do in Africa during the exact same period. In a similar manner, cultural programs such as *African Theatre* helped disguise any political interests Britain might have in maintaining in a broadcasting presence in Africa. With *African Theatre* and other cultural programs the BBC aimed to show the contributions it made to postcolonial Africa and thus stay in its audience's favor.

To accomplish its aims the BBC relied on the same group of African writers as other British organizations positioning themselves as patrons of African writing. Almost all the playwrights and novelists in the first generation of postcolonial African writers in English contributed at least one play to the program and sometimes they contributed several. The BBC wanted to see its series include all the writers that were being deemed important for African drama. For example, British producers were upset in the late 1960s that they had not yet broadcast a play by the Ghanaian writer Joe de Graft, even though Oxford University Press had published *Sons and Daughters* five years earlier. It took quite a lot of effort to cut the two-hour stage production down to a half-hour radio play, but the producers believed the result, however messy, was worth it so they could include de Graft among their writers.[155]

Although the BBC was willing to make exceptions, it preferred writers produce original scripts specific to radio. The radio play format had particular needs: the plot could not rely on any visual effects and had to use a relatively small number of characters (no more than 9 max) with distinctive names. Also, the plot had to get going quickly and introduce its main characters in a more upfront fashion than a stage drama might. In 1965 the BBC asked Wole Soyinka if it

[152] Shirley Cordeaux, "The BBC African Service's Involvement in African Theatre" *Research in African Literature* 1 no. 2 (1970): 148, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818573.
[153] Cordeaux to Sondhi, 26 Jan 1965, BBC WAC, E40/212/2.
[154] Gwyneth Henderson to Tunde Aigyebusi, 11 Dec 1970, BBC WAC, E40/212/1.
[155] Gordon to Joe de Graft, 10 Jan 1969; Gordon to de Graft, 29 Jan 1969, BBC WAC, E40/212/1.

could produce his play *Camwood on the Leaves*, a radio play that first appeared over the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation in the early 1960s. Later that year, *African Theatre* carried Soyinka's *The Detainee*, which he wrote specifically for the BBC. The BBC producers contacted Soyinka later in the 1960s asking if he had any other original works for their program, but when he did not, they decided to produce his well-known plays – excerpts from *Lion and the Jewel* and *The Swamp Dwellers* – as a next best thing. When Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was a student at Leeds, the *African Theatre* producer Shirley Cordeaux contacted him to ask if he was willing to try writing a radio drama. She was able to tell him Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, and Peter Nazareth had all already contributed plays to the BBC series.[156] Ngũgĩ composed the script for *This Time Tomorrow*, a drama set in Nairobi slums the government had targeted in its urbanization program. Ngũgĩ instructed, "They (the slums) are sort of self-contained, a world of their own, so their destruction is also a destruction of a world, a way of life… In production, the actors should be made aware all the time that in fact slums are a creation of the main city and the whole socio-economic environment in present-day Africa."[157]

As a series designed around drama from Africa, the BBC employees in charge of *African Theatre* found themselves in a position of deciding what qualified a play – or playwright – as African. The first criterion they set out was that the radio plays should be written by Africans. However, over the years this criterion was not always adhered to, particularly when West Indians or Asians who had lived in Africa for a prolonged period of time wanted to participate. The producers reasoned that those individuals such as Peter Nazareth or Kuldip Sondhi had experiences that allowed them to speak to African audiences successfully; therefore, the African Service should broadcast the works. And then, over time, even white authorship – though not particularly encouraged – was not a bar, provided the material had relevance to Africa.[158] Being of African origin then became of lesser importance than the primary consideration, which was that the play was set in Africa and used Africans as many of its main characters. This was how the producers ensured the series stayed true to its purpose for the African Service.[159]

From London, the BBC wanted plays that its entire African Service audience would be interested in. The list of *African Theatre* plays included soap operas, adventure tales, a few comedies, and many more tragedies. In making their decisions the African Service producers most wanted to see plots that incorporated what they believed were common African problems. Several themes appeared again and again in the *African Theatre* productions. The most common theme was the conflict between older, past ways of life in African society, and new, Western practices and technologies. Another version of this conflict that appeared quite often on *African Theatre* described religious differences between past and present Africa, with local witch doctors often playing a large role. Family life and urbanization were two other

[156] Cordeaux to Ngũgĩ, 15 Jan 1965, BBC WAC, E40/212/2.
[157] Ngũgĩ to Cordeaux, 3 Oct 1966, BBC WAC, E40/212/2.
[158] John Gordon to Berridge, 13 Oct 1969, BBC WAC, E40/212/1; Veronica Manoukin to M. F. C. Roebuck, 27 March 1968, BBC WAC, E40/212/2.
[159] See, for example, John Gordon to Nkem Nwankwo, 16 Oct 1967, BBC WAC, E40/212/2.

reliable story lines.[160] Alfred Hutchinson from South Africa gained a lot of his reputation as a writer from having six plays appear on *African Theatre* in the 1960s. Those included his work *Pirate Taxi*, which told of a man's shock at urban life after moving to Johannesburg from a rural region of South Africa. British producers enjoyed the play because they believed the difference between rural and urban life was true across Africa. They rejected some of Hutchinson's other works, however, for being too local. After reading Hutchinson's latest submission, *Migrant Saturday*, in 1969, a BBC producer replied that he found it too "intensely South Africa." He went on, "This play needs to consider more the audience we are broadcasting to – listeners all over Africa but mainly in the West and East – and I don't think it would get through."[161]

Over the 1960s and 1970s the BBC African Service received hundreds of scripts from Africans all over the world. The corporation saw this as proof of its role in encouraging African writers and writing. In 1966 the African Service sponsored a radio playwriting competition that strengthened that claim even more. The BBC advertised the competition over the air, through British Africanists such as David Cook at Makerere University, and through other literary connections it was aware of, such as the Mbari Club in Nigeria.[162] The entries had to be in English, approximately 4,000 words in length, and be suitable for radio broadcast. By the end of the year, the BBC received 340 entries, led by Zambia, Nigeria, and Uganda. Since the plays had to be in English, it was not surprising that the majority of entries came from university students, teachers, and civil servants – a representative portion of the listening audience as well. In the process of adjudicating the submissions, one BBC producer marveled at how some of the plays demonstrated how radio could work on several levels. She noted how the winning script, a Nigerian play titled *Until Further Notice*, could bring a good laugh to one listener, while another would be aware of the irony of the situation, the subtlety of the author's use of language, and his skill in painting a character.[163] Both it and the third place play ended up being produced and broadcast over the BBC's Third Programme. It was one of the few times that an African Service broadcast moved over to the domestic services of the BBC.

In order to attract the best African writing the BBC relied on the coverage and resources that it alone offered. Although the BBC received hundreds of submissions from unknown African writers, it continued to solicit writing from the cadre of established names. In contrast to national broadcasters, which each had their own radio drama programs, the BBC offered African writers continent-wide exposure. In addition, from London the BBC could draw from a deep pool of acting talent and names that were recognized all over the continent. Finally, the studio and technical facilities at Bush House in London were superior to the set up at the BBC's African counterparts, and in London they also had a larger budget and more experienced producers. British broadcasters relied on the uneven development between African and British broadcasting to convince African writers to take their plays to London.

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[160] Cordeaux, "The BBC African Service's involvement in African Theatre," 151.
[161] Gordon to Hutchinson, 21 March 1969, BBC WAC, E40/212/1.
[162] *Mbari Newsletter* 1 (Aug 1966), Transcription Centre Records, container 3.5.
[163] Cordeaux, "The BBC African Service's Involvement," 150.

Chapter Five: Patrons of postcolonial Africa

While the BBC highlighted the advantages to having one's works produced in London, African writers were aware of the disadvantages. They saw an inherent problem in the premise of *African Theatre*, which was its disconnect between the writing, production, and listening phases of a play. This disconnect was apparent in several ways. Many African writers whose plays were produced by the BBC never actually heard them on the radio. Imagine the frustration of one writer in Lagos, who wrote to London describing how he had tried to pick up the BBC signal on the day his play was to be broadcast: "Radio Moscow, Deutshe Welle, Voice of America, a good many oriental stations and even the greatest nuisance, Radio RSA [S. Africa] came on the dial but BBC would just not turn up!"[164] In addition, in any given *African Theatre* production the cast originated from many different places in Africa. While the British broadcasters celebrate the diversity and Pan-Africanism of their productions, it presented a problem for some writers and listeners. One writer commented on the production of his play, "The pronunciation of names was annoying to Nigerian ears."[165] His complaint led the BBC to ask writers to submit phonetic descriptions of all African words and names with their scripts. But British producers could not resolve all issues so easily. Other listeners complained, for example, it was difficult to believe that a Ghanaian woman was the mother of a character from South Africa.[166] Whenever the BBC heard complaints such as these, it defended itself through the quality and reach that it offered African writers. As one producer justified in 1970, while their presentation of a play might not be a hundred percent authentic in accent or feel, "our standard of radio acting and broadcasting technique achieves a result nearer to the author's ideal realization of his material."[167] In the BBC African Service, the discussion returns once again to a situation where African writers identified ways British agencies exhibited control over their artistic output.

Going into the postcolonial period British officials identified Africa as a top priority for British broadcasting for the first time. However, independence cut off the BBC from a large portion of its colonial audience. In the increasingly competitive field of foreign broadcasting, British broadcasters were left to find other ways to connect with African listeners. The BBC resolved to create an identity for itself in postcolonial Africa through a combination of approaches. First, the BBC built upon its comparative advantages in news gathering and news reporting to increase access to the world news in English and in African languages. In comparison to their national stations, African listeners read into the BBC news the principles of disinterestedness, consistency, and high quality. Those principles became the foundation upon which African listeners returned to the BBC as a relatively trustworthy source. Second, the BBC used cultural programs such as the radio drama series *African Theatre* to demonstrate its support of African culture. British broadcasters positioned themselves as a link between different parts of Africa and encouraged writers to use them to reach wider audiences. In so doing, British broadcasters also edited the language, narrative, and performance that would

[164] Fela Davies to Henderson, 8 July 1970, BBC WAC, E40/212/1.
[165] Ibid.
[166] See BBC WAC, E40/212/2.
[167] Cordeaux, "The BBC African Service's Involvement," 149.

appear under the label of African drama. The BBC's continued presence in Africa after independence was criticized at different times by the African writers and listeners it claimed to serve. But their remonstration with British broadcasting paled against the excoriation the BBC received from the postcolonial state. The BBC received that criticism as evidence it needed to strengthen its mission even further and ensure that British values and traditions of expression did not disappear from postcolonial Africa.

Conclusion

The cultural project represented a form of empire that outlived the formal British Empire. With the transfer of power Britain withdrew the agencies and bodies that had comprised the official structure of its colonial rule. However, quasi-state and private bodies, including the British Council, British publishing firms, and the BBC, all remained. It was left to them to continue the project of establishing the English language and British forms of cultural production in postcolonial Africa. Through its unofficial agencies, Britain sought to maintain cultural links with its former empire and therefore preserve its position in the world as an imperial power. In order to remain involved in Africa, British agencies such as the British Council and the BBC had to adjust their mission so it better fit the needs of the African postcolony. The British agencies moved further and further away from their original purpose of promoting British national culture. Instead, they sought out African figures, African languages, and African culture to incorporate into a more broadly defined role of fostering links between Britain and Africa.

British colonialism helped produce a cultural elite that became several of Britain's chief critics in the postcolonial period. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, with whom the chapter began, was only one of a cadre of postcolonial African writers that saw through the sudden interest British agencies expressed in African culture. To this elite, African independence was limited because many of the structures of cultural production continued to be under British control. The British cultural mission had been derived from a firm belief that British culture was superior to all others. No matter how many times British agencies such as the British Council, Oxford University Press, or the BBC reconfigured themselves, they would always retain elements of that thinking. While acting as patrons of African culture British agencies created a caricature of it. They portrayed African culture as primitive or naïve or as a pale imitation of the British original. If African writers wanted to gain the access to international audiences that British agencies could offer them, they needed to represent Africa on those terms. To postcolonial critics, British agencies controlled more than the commercial and cultural structures of theater, publishing, and broadcasting. Through those structures, they also controlled the language, audience, and narrative that Africans communicated to the rest of the world. British organizations relied on African writers, but continued to set the terms of the relationship.

The persistence of the British cultural project in Africa during the postcolonial period is a demonstration of the strength of British international imperialism. In the absence of formal empire, the British agencies discussed here sought to refashion themselves as international agencies that reflected international subjects to international audiences. At the same time, they

retained qualities that made them particularly British. In projecting a set of cultural values that were simultaneously seen as both British and international, these cultural bodies created a version of British imperialism that continues to last today.

Conclusion

And so we end on an idea that appears quite similar to the one where we began: an international imperialism propelled by a belief in the supremacy of British culture. In the 1920s and 1930s, after Britain ceded constitutional control over its white dominions, British culture provided a way for the empire to reimagine itself. In place of formal political and economic ties, Britain envisioned that a common culture, identifiable through its language, history, and race, would hold the British world together. The reimagining behind this system created institutions such as the BBC Empire Service, which were handed the task of reinforcing British cultural self-confidence. Britain's colonized populations were excluded from this version of the British Empire and would remain so for the next several decades.

With African and Asian decolonization Britain again lost an enormous part of its territorial empire. This time, almost nothing remained. Once again Britain sought to reconfigure its empire, this time to include the populations it had specifically excluded before. Although British international imperialism of the 1960s promoted many of the same British ideals and practices and relied upon the same cultural institutions, it was significantly changed. The British world had been expanded to incorporate diverse populations from all over the globe. The Empire Service aptly reflected the change in its new name, the World Service. Instead of celebrating sameness, as it had done earlier with its diaspora, Britain now looked to the diversity in the British world as what would give life to a lasting form of empire.

Decolonization was vital for British cultural relations in the second half of the twentieth century. British cultural agencies are recognized around the world today, including among younger generations that have only known the postcolonial period. That is largely due to the transformation in British cultural relations during decolonization. In response to losing the empire, British agencies such as the British Council and the BBC had to adjust their approaches and accommodate new audiences. Although empire had made these institutions recognizable worldwide, it was decolonization that legitimized them. That was the moment when British cultural agencies demonstrated the flexibility to distance their work from the workings of formal empire. It was this flexibility that made it possible for them to remain in the decolonizing world and thus ensure Britain continued to have a presence in its former empire.

One of the central claims of this study is that empire did not stop on the date of political handover. The *longue durée* history of the British Empire describes an endlessly dynamic imperialism that repeatedly reconfigured itself. I argue that African and Asian decolonization was a moment when the British Empire reconfigured itself once again. Therefore, although the study examines decades that are often packaged into declinist narratives about the end of empire, it describes decolonization as something else. British decolonization was less about Britain losing something and more about it forging something new: a cultural basis it could use

to connect with the global audience. Put differently, when the British Empire formally came to an end the cultural forms of British imperialism were reanimated in different guises, allowing them to project Britain's global presence within and beyond the postcolony.

Clearly this continued after the early 1970s when this study ends. Yet although the cultural institutions I have examined continued to change – albeit more gradually – over the rest of the twentieth century, the optimism surrounding African independence had decidedly waned by the early 1970s. By that point African nations had oriented themselves away from the former colonial power and towards international organizations and structures that could provide forms of aid and expertise. Britain was still one of those sources, but it was one among many and the British agencies discussed here continued to adjust their work to account for the changing international environment. That is another story and requires further study.

Nonetheless, it is clear a central component of that new landscape and the continuing projection of British culture in the world was the promotion of the language it coped in: English. After summarizing all of the cutbacks, policy changes, and uncertainties the British Council had faced over the decades, its official historian described, "It has nevertheless always possessed one golden egg – the English language."[1] Starting in the early 1960s, English language teaching became a core element of the British Council's role in Africa. When the council asked African national governments what they wanted from it, the answer almost invariably was the teaching of English.[2] Between 1962 and 1977 the British Council ran the Ministry of Overseas Development's Aid for Commonwealth English program, which posted English language teaching experts to colleges and universities in countries such as Kenya and Uganda. Then, for the next 12 years the council managed the Key English Language Teaching scheme, which was involved in teacher education and curriculum development around the world. By 1980 the British Council was teaching English to 200,000 students a year in other countries and had more than 650 English teaching specialists working overseas.[3] The programs reflected how international development took on increasingly specialized forms of assistance. They were also a demonstration that British culture – in this case the English language – was still an important component of British development activities.

British overseas assistance in English language teaching incorporated materials from several familiar sources. The British Council worked with the BBC to produce "English by Radio" programs and accompanying materials to transmit in the broadcaster's different language services. By 1980 the BBC broadcast English lessons for more than 60 hours a week over its different networks.[4] Meanwhile, the *New Oxford English Course* was one of the most influential

[1] Donaldson, *British Council*, 35.
[2] For Ghana see Dundas, Expansion plan for Ghana, 23 Dec 1960; Cawson, Work of the British Council in Ghana, Dec 1962, UKNA, BW 93/7.
[3] Peter Carrington, Written Answers of 18 May 1981, 420 Parl. Deb., H. L. (5th ser.) 826WA, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1981/may/18 /the-english-language-usage-and-teaching.
[4] Ibid.

(and certainly most remunerative) textbook series to come out of Oxford University Press.[5] Oxford overseas editors in the 1950s developed regional editions of the series, which the branches took over the next decade so they could adjust the textbooks as political circumstances required. English language teaching overseas was supplemented by the number of foreign visitors that traveled to Britain specifically to study English at schools and other institutions. A 1984 survey put that figure at almost half a million visitors and estimated they spent £237 million while in Britain.[6] The director-general of the British Council used those numbers to explain why he believed English was "Britain's real black gold." In an interview in the *Times*, he applied business terminology to the pattern of English language teaching that Britain profited from, whereby English was a *product*, promoted by an *industry*, in which the British Council acted as *brokers*.[7] By the 1980s signs were everywhere that English was more than just an invisible export – it was also an entire business of its own.

With such language it was no wonder the British government and the British Council were implicated as chief collaborators in the increasing spread of English in the world.[8] As applied linguists took up the debate over the existence and forms of English linguistic imperialism, they often drew from the history of British imperialism at will and as it suited their purposes.[9] They did not always recognize how organizations behind the teaching of English shifted their approach towards the language after the empire's end. Whether at the BBC World Service or the British Council, gone was an attachment to a particular version of British English, and in its place was a multitude of accents from all over the world. On the BBC's television and radio broadcasts, the sight and sound of commentators from all over the world helped the corporation make the claim it had become a world organization. Meanwhile, the British Council tried not to sound so imperial when it explained what it sought to accomplish through English. The director-general Sir John Burgh attempted to walk this line in an interview in 1985 by explaining they did not "actively propagate *British* English as a commodity or as the proper model for foreign users. It so happens that for all sorts of reasons – including of course, that the very name *English* suggests to many foreign learners that we in this country speak the 'purest', and, therefore, the best form of the language – British English is often the preferred model…"[10]

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[5] Frederick George French, *The New Oxford English Course – East Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); French, *The New Oxford English Course – Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Vivian Ridler, *E. C. P. & O. E.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), Richards Papers, box 4, folder 66; Wm. Roger Louis, ed., *The History of Oxford University Press, Volume III: From 1896 to 1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 570-1, 745-6.

[6] William Greaves, "Selling English by the Pound," *Times*, October 24, 1989: 14.

[7] Ibid. (italics in the original).

[8] Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Alastair Pennycook, *The Cultural Politics of English as an International* Language (Hawlow, UK: Longman, 1994); Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism Continued* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[9] On the other side of the debate about whether English and English language teaching are imperialistic are Henry G. Widdowson, "EIL, ESL, EFL: Global issues and local interests" *World Englishes* 16, no. 1 (1997): 135-46; David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[10] *English Today* 3 (July 1985), quoted in Tom McArthur, ed., *Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

He was quoted in the *Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*, an entire volume dedicated to all the ways the English language was unique. The introduction described English as having both a oneness in its standard form and a manyness in all of the different spoken Englishes that existed around the world.[11] Reading the description was reminiscent of how the BBC spoke about all of the languages in which it broadcast the news, saying that while the "local accents" varied according to the audience, "the voice" remained recognizably the same.[12] But how much was that still a specifically British voice?

In the postcolonial period there was a risk of distancing too much from *British* English, *British* traditions, and *British* culture, and replacing them with a more generic international form. If the Britishness became unrecognizable, Britain would lose its remaining status as the link between parts of the postcolonial world. That is the pattern we have started to see now, another full generation after the formal end of the British Empire. Take, for example, the Booker Prize, one of the places the British cultural project had found itself a postcolonial home. Starting in 1969, the London-based literary award was made annually to what was deemed the best novel written in English. The award stipulated the writer had to come from a country belonging to or formerly part of the British Commonwealth and the novel had to be published in the UK. For over four decades the body of prizewinning novels reflected how the legacy of the British Empire was contested and reinterpreted in the former colonies and in Britain.[13] But in 2013, after 45 years, the Booker Prize changed its rules and removed its Commonwealth requirement. Now the award goes to any book in English published in the UK, including translated works and those by American authors. The Booker Prize has become less British and more international.

This study has been about some of the key institutions used to project British culture abroad to a new global audience in the era of decolonization. Many of the organizations are still with us. They have not only retained a sense of their Britishness, but remain marked by their imperial roots. As of 2015 the British Council operates in twenty sub-Saharan African nations; all but two are former British territories or present-day members of the Commonwealth. The Oxford University Press has fourteen overseas branches, ten of which are in former British territories. And the BBC's worldwide service continues to transmit in English 24 hours a day. And yet, these organizations also conceive of themselves and address their audiences as global citizens. The cultural project of the late British Empire was reinvented several times over the twentieth century. While its forms and audiences continue to change there still remains to this day the powerful influence of an imperial internationalism first conceived a century earlier.

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[11] Tom McArthur, "Introduction," in *Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*.

[12] See for example, BBC, *BBC Handbook 1966* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation), 81.

[13] Luke Strongman, *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002). One of the best illustrations of how the prize reflected Britain's relationship with its former empire was Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, which not only won the prize in 1981, but was awarded the Booker of Bookers Prize in 1993 and then the publically chosen Best of the Booker award in 2008. Several of the African writers discussed here, including Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, attributed Rushdie for putting into words what they saw themselves doing, stating this was the time "the empire writes back."

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