

## Wrong Country!

### Foreign motifs on banknotes - Guinea.

What's a Greek statute doing on a banknote from Belgium? Is that Niagara Falls in the U.S. & Canada on TWO Costa Rican banknotes? Why is the Vatican depicted on both sides of a French banknote? And the Eiffel Tower on a recent banknote from Cambodia? These and other examples of images from the "wrong" country will be explored in this and future installments of the IBNS Journal.

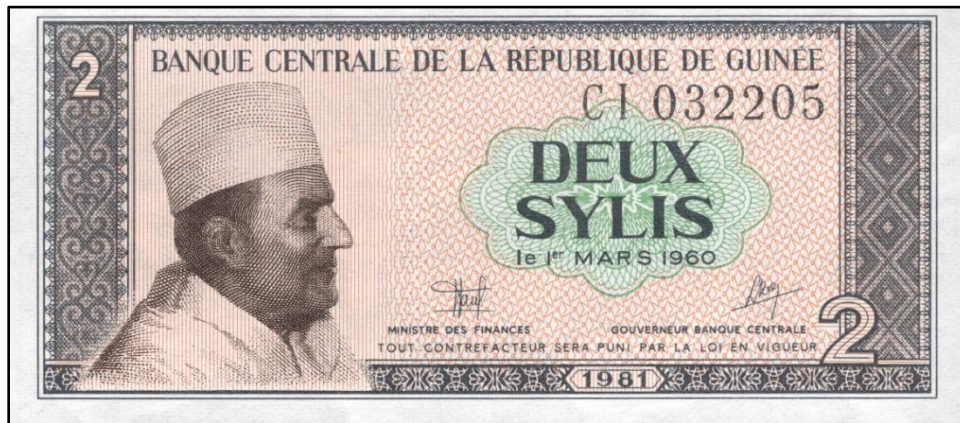
One of the main uses of a country's banknotes is propaganda. This can be as straight forward as promoting an important industry, historic and scenic locations, or points of pride for the country. One example is the many Caribbean countries banknotes with images of ideal places for tourism. Another example is several countries depicting coffee and coffee pickers due to the crop being a major source of exports. One of the most common and important functions tasked to a country's banknotes is lineage and history of the nation. One of the most common vignette types worldwide is portraits of local famous people, often tied to an important historical event. So, what would compel the authorities of a country to use motifs belonging to some other country? The reasons behind such a decision surely provide interesting stories and discussions. After all, there is a limited precious space available on a country's banknote series of say five to seven banknotes.

Most world banknote collectors can recall personages, buildings, or locations on banknotes that are not from the country of issue. There are many examples that have colonial or religious reasons for inclusion. This type of wrong country will NOT be included in this series. Examples would include:

- A Belgian 500 Francs banknote depicts waterfalls of the Lubilash River near modern-day Tshau, Congo on the reverse.
- Many banknotes from countries in the Commonwealth of Nations portray the current monarch and/or locations in the United Kingdom.
- The Statue of Liberty appears on notes of the Philippines and China. The Philippines was a territory of the United States while Chinese American Bank of Commerce established commercial interests in China including issuing banknotes.
- Six Middle East countries portray Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. This is due to not one, but three of the largest religious groups assigning Jerusalem as one of the most important sites of their religion.

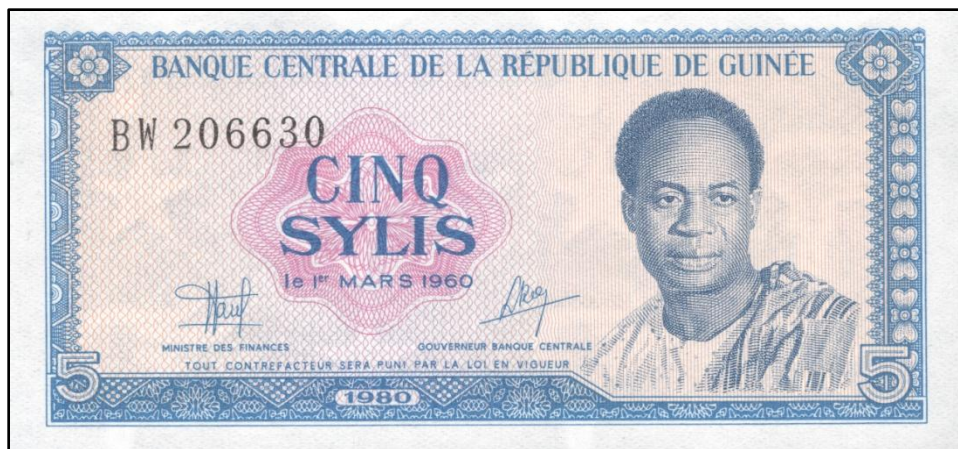
This first included example is unique as it involves a whole series of banknotes. The West African nation of Guinea switched from the Franc to the Syli in 1971. Syli translates to "alone" in English. One can suggest the move from Franc to Syli involved Guinea distancing itself from France, becoming alone. At the same time the President Ahmed Sékou Touré series of notes with his image were abandoned in favor of a series of well-known personages, most not from Guinea. The next series in 1980 continued these banknotes, adding yet more people not indigenous to Guinea.

The tiny 2 Sylis (100x45 mm) note of 1981 portrays the image of **King Mohammed V, the first king of Morocco**. The catalog numbers are Pick P21 and BNB B311. Like Guinea (formerly French Guinea), Morocco achieved independence from the same colonizer - France. King Mohammed V negotiated independence for Morocco in 1956 while Guinea followed in 1958. Both nations are predominantly Muslim. The King Mohammed V is revered in Morocco, but also Algeria, Tunisia, and Guinea. Another example of importance assigned to King Mohammed V in Guinea is a prominent government building in Guinea. Destroyed in a bombardment in 1996, the former Palais des Nations in Guinea was renovated, re-opened and re-christened the Palais Mohammed V (Palais is French for Palace, public building, or official residence). It is used to host high level government and international summits and is closed to the public.



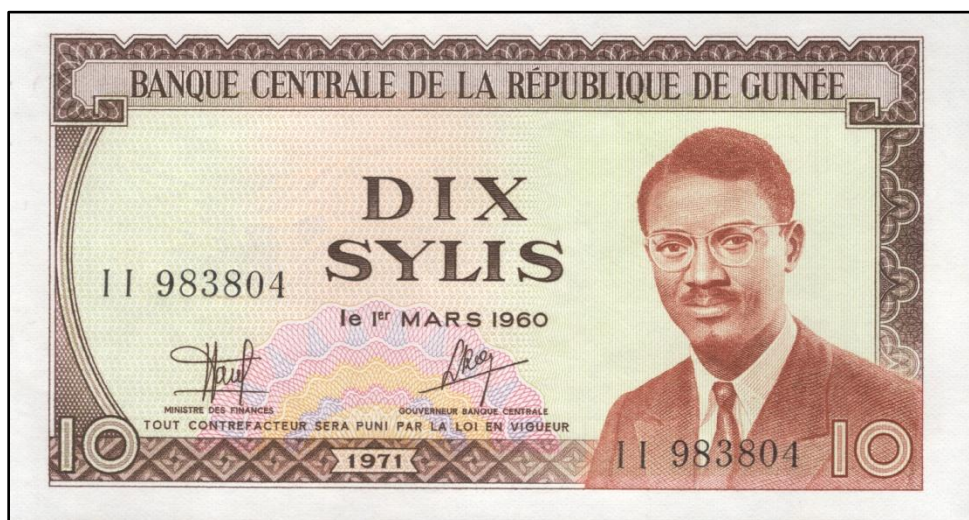
P21 front with King Mohammed V

The 5 Sylis of 1981 (Pick P22 BNB B312) features **President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana**. Francis Kwame Nkrumah was a Marxist politician, political theorist, and revolutionary. He served as Prime Minister of the Gold Coast from 1952 until 1957, when it gained independence from Britain. He was then the first Prime Minister and then the President of Ghana, from 1957 until 1966. An influential advocate of Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah was a founding member of the Organization of African Unity and winner of the Lenin Peace Prize from the Soviet Union in 1962. While his administration was originally socialist and nationalist, it later became authoritarian, with a single party system (his) and being named President for life. As is often the case, this did not occur and he was deposed in 1966. He lived in exile in Conakry, Guinea until his death in 1972 as the guest of President Ahmed Sékou Touré, who made him honorary co-president of the country.



P22 5 Sylis front with President Kwame Nkrumah

The 10 Sylis of 1971 and 1981 (Pick P16/BNB B306 & Pick P23/BNB B313 respectively) offer an image of **Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba of the Republic of the Congo**. Lumumba was a politician and independence leader who served as the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from June until September 1960, following the May 1960 election. He was the leader of the Congolese National Movement (MNC) from 1958 until his execution in January 1961. Ideologically an African nationalist and yet another Pan-Africanist, he played a significant role in the transformation of the Congo from a colony of Belgium into an independent republic. After a coup by the military, Lumumba tried to escape to Stanleyville to join his supporters who had established a new anti-Mobutu state called the Free Republic of the Congo. Lumumba was captured by Joseph-Désiré Mobutu supporters and sent to the State of Katanga. With the aid of Belgian partisans, he was executed by the separatist Katangan authorities of Moïse Tshombe. He is seen as a martyr for the pan-African movement.



P16 10 Sylis front with Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba

The 25 Sylis of 1971 and 1980 (Pick P17/BNB B307 and Pick P24/BNB B314 respectively) celebrate **King Béhanzin of Dahomey** (now Benin). Béhanzin was the eleventh King of Dahomey. Once taking the throne, he changed his name from Kondo. Like all the other leaders of this series of Guinea notes,

Béhanzin saw the Europeans as gradually encroaching on the West African Coast. He led the resistance to French colonization of his kingdom, during the Dahomey Wars. He was defeated by the French in the Second Franco-Dahomean War and exiled to Martinique.



P17 25 Syli front with King Béhanzin

There are three banknotes in this series which depict local personages. The diminutive 1 Syli (P20/B310) features **Mafori Bangoura** a woman's rights and independence activist and later politician. The 50 Syli (P18/B308 1971 and P25/B315 1980) portrays **King Alpha Yaya Diallo (King of Labe)**. The 100 Syli (P19/B309 1971 and P26/B316 1980) portrays **l'Almamy Samory Touré (founder of the Wassoulou Empire, and great-grandfather of Sekou Toure)**. Both were leaders of ancient Empires before the forming of present day Guinea.



P20 1 Syli with Mafori Bangoura



P25 50 Sylis with King Alpha Yaya Diallo



P26 100 Sylis with l'Almamy Samory Touré

So far, there are some common threads to those non-indigenous people portrayed on this set. All are native Africans of the West African or Central African area. These leaders shared desires for independence from European colonization, and most would be considered Pan-Africanists, wanting solidarity for indigenous African peoples.

Now we turn our attention to the highest denomination banknote, the 500 Sylis of 1980 (Pick 27/BNB B317). The commemorative note marked the first anniversary of the death of **President Josip Broz Tito**

**of Yugoslavia.** The Communist leader visited Guinea in 1961. Tito distanced himself from the U.S.S.R. and was one of the founders of the 120 member states of the Non-Aligned Movement, formed also in 1961. With the Cold War affecting nearly the entire globe, this group sought for its member states to not be forced to align with either the socialist Soviet Bloc (Warsaw Pact) or the capitalist Western Europe & U.S. (NATO). Tito directed Yugoslavia to provide major assistance to anti-colonialist movements in the Third World, including Guinea. Thousands of Yugoslav military advisors, doctors, engineers, among others travelled to Guinea after its decolonization while the French government tried to destabilize the country.



P27 500 Sylis front with President Josip Broz Tito

There are many more examples of people, places and things depicted on banknotes from other countries to explore. This example is unusual, with nearly the entire series depicting non-residents of Guinea. We now understand the reasons for the foreigners' inclusions in this series and the theme of the series.