West African Pan-Africanists and the Memorialization of Edward Wilmot Blyden

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West African Pan-Africanists and the Memorialization of Edward Wilmot Blyden

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Abstract

This thesis examines the debates between West African intellectuals over Pan-Africanism and African nationalism in the early twentieth century. It focuses on intellectuals in three major port cities: Freetown, Lagos, and Cape Coast. These intellectuals practiced different forms of Pan-Africanism that suited the political circumstances of their respective cities. In 1912, they asserted their separate Pan-African visions through the memorialization of Edward Wilmot Blyden, the “Father of Pan-Africanism,” after his death the same year.

West African intellectuals published newspapers which acted as forums for public discourse and political organization. When Blyden died, newspapers published obituaries that discussed his career and the significance of his life. Each city, and each newspaper, had a slightly different portrayal of Blyden. The different versions of Blyden printed in West African newspapers reflected different strains of Pan-African thought. Intellectuals manipulated Blyden’s legacy, highlighting certain aspects of his work and criticizing others, to communicate and legitimize their own views, on empire, race, and nationalism. In 1913 and 1914, intellectuals detailed their preferred courses for West Africa’s future at public ceremonies commemorating Blyden. There were multiple Pan-African conversations in West Africa.
Lay Summary

This study examines the different ways West Africans intellectuals discussed Edward Wilmot Blyden and his calls for African unity after his death in 1912. It uses newspapers printed in Freetown, Lagos, and Cape Coast, three cities that Blyden visited and stayed during his life. When memorializing Blyden, West African newspapers demonstrated their views on empire, race, and nation building. Although they all discussed African unity, they disagreed on what African unity should look like.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Aaron Wilford.
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In loving Memory of my dear father Edward Wilmot Blyden, who departed this life on the 7th of February, 1912. Aged 80 years.

“Grant him O Lord Eternal rest,
And let perpetual light shine upon him.”

- Isa

(Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails, February 7, 1913)
**Introduction**

*It will stand to his credit for ever that to Dr. Blyden it was due that the word Negro became shorn of the degrading associations which gathered around it in the fifties and sixties in Sierra Leone. It is due to the late Doctor that we of today prize the word and are proud to call ourselves even niggers if need be.*

*(Sierra Leone Weekly News, February 10, 1912)*

Edward Wilmot Blyden, born in 1832 in the Danish West Indies, was probably the most famous representative and defender of African people in the nineteenth century. On three continents, on lecture circuits and in books and articles, he valorized African history and culture and combated the denigration of black people. He was among the first to articulate solidarity between all people of African ancestry, well before there was a clear Pan-African movement, so that in the mid-twentieth century, long after his death, scholars identified him as the “Father of Pan-Africanism.” The Caribbean-born Blyden emigrated from the Americas at 18 because he believed that, as the son of Igbo parents, he was African; by his death in 1912, he was arguing that all black people were African.¹

By the time of his death, Blyden had led many West African intellectuals to adopt Pan-African ideals. These intellectuals discussed, altered, and spread Blyden’s ideas in the newspapers they published and exchanged. But they did not adhere to a single Blyden-inspired doctrine of Pan-Africanism nor did they share a unified memory of Blyden. The disagreements, discrepancies, and confusion concerning Blyden found in West African newspapers showcase a depth of Pan-African thought usually hidden in the shadow of a few more prominent thinkers. Instead of constructing a single intellectual history of Pan-Africanism, we should acknowledge

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the many intellectual histories, even within West Africa. West Africans used Blyden as the base for multiple forms of African unity.

Blyden developed his thinking in multiple West African contexts. He first came to the continent, to Liberia, as a colonist. He fought in a Liberian militia against what he then viewed as an uncivilized indigenous population in need of Christianity. He was a Presbyterian minister, a journalist, a professor, and a diplomat in service to the Monrovia government, but by 1871, after forging relationships with communities in the interior of Liberia, he soured on the Euro-American “civilizing mission.” His new outspokenness against Liberian colonization angered the local elite and, fearing credible rumors of being lynched by his countrymen, he temporarily resettled in Freetown, in neighboring Sierra Leone, for a few years.

In Freetown, Blyden had more freedom to elaborate on what Harry N.K. Odamtten terms his “intellectual transformation.” Blyden founded his own newspaper, The Negro, in 1872, and in articles and in public lectures he argued that Islam was more suited to African life than Christianity, which he thought suppressed African customs such as polygamy. He later refined his argument in his seminal work, Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race, published in 1887.

His book supplemented the reputation he garnered while touring the United States in 1889.

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3 Odamtten, Blyden’s Intellectual Transformations, 49, 52.


6 Odamtten, Blyden’s Intellectual Transformations, x.

where he stressed black “repatriation” to Africa as the inevitable solution to American racism.\textsuperscript{8} For the rest of his life, he worked for various colonial administrations and taught at several schools and colleges in British West Africa and Liberia.\textsuperscript{9} Blyden was a key inspiration for a West African network of formally educated Africans whose assimilation into European culture gave them status and entrée into local colonial administrations. Blyden attempted to formalize their network with the political vision of a united West African state; many accepted his vision believing they would be its national leaders.\textsuperscript{10}

Blyden’s principal intellectual contribution, coined the “African Personality” in 1893, was the idea that African cultures boasted a unique humanism that provided a spiritual foil to cold European rationalism.\textsuperscript{11} Blyden embodied the conundrum, faced by many repatriate intellectuals, of understanding oneself as African given one’s Eurocentric education and lack of connection to any specific African language or culture. Odamten describes the African Personality as a means for formally educated African intellectuals to “escape from the culture of mimicking European culture” and as a place of “belonging” for those who had felt they lacked a sense of commonality with other Africans.\textsuperscript{12}

By the end of the century, Blyden was accompanied by an American thinker, W.E.B. Du Bois, who shared in the transnational organization of African people and popularized the term


\textsuperscript{12} Odamten, \textit{Blyden’s Intellectual Transformations}, 186.
Pan-Africanism with the 1900 Pan-African Congress held in London. Du Bois’ invited Blyden to the Congress, but Blyden did not respond and did not attend. They did not agree on a single philosophy and Blyden was not interested in an American led redemption of Africa. Blyden never referred to himself as a Pan-Africanist and did not fit into the American-Pan-African movement; nevertheless, he was the cornerstone of early Pan-Africanism.

Scholars view Blyden as the originator of Pan-Africanism and nationalism in West Africa, proof for some that, as Odamtten puts it, “ideas about the Black Atlantic not only circulated in Europe and the Americas but were also distinctively developing in West Africa.” M. Yu. Frenkel centers Blyden at the core of a “nationalist ideology … evolved by Africans on the African continent in the second half of the nineteenth century.” Scholars also trace a direct lineage from Blyden’s notion of an African personality to the Négritude cultural movement and to Kwame Nkrumah’s nationalism of the mid-twentieth-century. But scholarship that offers this sweeping understanding of some Pan-Africanist ideas as “African,” overlooks how notions of Pan-Africanism changed with specific local circumstances and personalities. Throughout West Africa, at different times and different places, different intellectuals used Pan-Africanist

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15 Booker T. Washington was also a prominent black internationalist at the time often mentioned alongside Blyden and Du Bois. Blyden supported Washington’s transnational Congress on Africa (1895), although his health kept him from attending; Fierce, The Pan-African Idea in the United States, 26.
16 Odamtten, Blyden’s Intellectual Transformations, xix.
language to further various political agendas. Pan-Africanism was a language between Africans, not just a single political movement.

Histories of a single Pan-African tradition, even of siloed American or West African pillars of Pan-Africanism, miss the scope of Pan-Africanism’s impact. The dialogue between black elite organizations, such as the Pan-African congresses, and Europeans omitted the ways in which many Africans, in the diaspora and on the continent, constantly contested and renegotiated racist ideas and policies depending on the time and place. Pan-Africanism was necessarily local. Scholars have looked at Edward Blyden to define a West African form of Pan-Africanism; I examine his followers to show that there were multiple forms of Pan-Africanism in West Africa.

This thesis looks at how intellectuals put Blyden’s thinking into practice in three cities in British West Africa: Freetown, Lagos, and Cape Coast. I do so by examining how various newspapers memorialized Blyden when he died in 1912. Newspapers produced differing portrayals of Blyden, revealing just as much if not more about their writers and their politics than about the deceased. Historian Nozomi Sawada has written on public memorialization in turn-of-the-century Lagos, arguing that discussing the deaths of notable people allowed publishers to create a sense of shared identity for Lagosians (including Europeans) who differed in class and creed. In a brief analysis of the Lagos obituaries of Blyden, Sawada argues that the memorialization of figures like Blyden “presented an opportunity to discuss the idea of progress/civilization in African form, and made [readers] conscious of a broader connection to

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outside intellectuals.” West African intellectuals may have envisioned Pan-African futures, but there was no single “African form” of “progress/civilization.” Blyden may have been situated in a broader intellectual history of Pan-Africanists, but to many in West Africa he stood alone in his own school of thought. In memorializing Blyden, intellectuals dissected his life and discussed separate visions of African solidarity. Some emphasized Blyden’s reputation outside of Africa; some emphasized his Afrocentrism; others, while celebrating his significance, dismissed his thinking as outmoded.


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21 Sawada, 94.
The West African Intelligentsia

During the nineteenth century, both before and after abolition in slave-based societies in the Americas, tens of thousands of black people from the Americas emigrated from their homes. Those who were British subjects mostly went to Sierra Leone, the empire’s first colony on the continent, founded specifically for repatriation in 1787. From the United States, black freemen travelled to Liberia via the American Colonization Society (ACS) founded in 1816. The ACS was not an abolitionist project. On the contrary, many white Americans, including its elite founders, hoped the ACS would rid the United States of black freedmen who they saw dangerous allies to enslaved Africans. Indeed, many freedmen were abolitionists who challenged the ACS. Some relocated to the Caribbean where they could both evade the racist laws of North America and continue to organize against them. Others, such as Blyden, took fare with the ACS and travelled to Liberia.

Blyden first made his way to the United States in 1850 in pursuit of higher education. However, opportunity for black people was slim and admission to university nearly impossible. The added pressure of the Fugitive Slave Act, passed by the U.S. Congress that same year,
encouraged Blyden to seek opportunity in Liberia. He, like most repatriates, as migrants to Africa were known, understood his voyage as a return to their ancestral land. Many repatriates came to West Africa as ambassadors of the cultures they left and many found an American familiarity upon arrival in Liberia. The ACS and British imperialists, who saw Africans as a backwards people, hoped repatriates would civilize their African brothers and sisters and many repatriates were English-speaking Christians, allied with Christian missions, and eager to proselytize among the so-called heathens of the continent. A successful conversion of Africans meant refashioning African cultures, not just African religious practices. Though escaping racist societies, repatriates nonetheless reaffirmed the racist discourse that saw Africa in need of redemption and Eurocentric values as the source of this redemption.

Although Sierra Leone and Freetown were common destinations of organized repatriation, many other repatriates settled in the growing port city of Lagos, including some who had first entered the continent through Sierra Leone or Liberia. The Yoruba people of the Lagos region gave all English-styled black immigrants to the city the moniker Saro (a corruption of “Sierra Leone”) because their dress and manners were associated with Sierra Leone. In coastal cities throughout West Africa, repatriates and their descendants lived in their own identifiable neighborhoods.

By the late nineteenth century, members of this class were important players in local colonial bureaucracies and local commerce. Their success furnished their children access to missionary schools as well as schooling in Europe. They were able to become lawyers, doctors, clerks, and representatives in local governing bodies. Their elite status depended on the colonial administrations they helped sustain. Indigenous Africans could also buy European respect. Many traditional elites on or near the coast educated their children in the same English schools, occupied the same posts in the same colonial administrations, and some married into the larger class of formally educated elites.31

The West Africa that Blyden traversed was made of connections between these formally educated elites. In the late nineteenth century, West Africa was neither a recognized political state nor did it have a single cultural identity. Britain ruled four colonies in the region: Sierra Leone, the Gambia, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria. None shared borders or a single colonial administration. However, West Africa did have a coherent intellectual community evidenced by newspapers and the trans-territorial dialogue between them.32

Newspapers were read and passed on to neighbors making it difficult to accurately estimate readership.33 However, the number of readers more than likely outweighed the number of printed copies and newspapers undoubtedly shaped the reading public’s relationship with the colonial administration. In the absence of African representation in local government, newspapers trumpeted anti-colonial protest and early nationalism.34 Publishers defended their

right to protest by citing the same ideals and legal precedents that gave other British subjects protection to publish. Colonial administrators cited libel and sedition laws in return but were careful not to be seen as jeopardizing the civil liberties they claimed to champion.\textsuperscript{35} Historian Fred I.A. Omu describes the contest between colonial administrations and African newspapers as “probably the most momentous drama in the early pre-independence history of the territories.”\textsuperscript{36}

Formally educated Africans also debated with each other in their newspapers. Newspapers were stages where one could profess their dedication to British imperialism or to African nationalism, and at times to both simultaneously. Some newspaper publishers, such as Cape Coast’s J.E. Casely Hayford and Lagos’s John Payne Jackson (both discussed later), vilified other educated elites whose dedication to British hegemony was voiced as scorn for Africans not educated in Christian schools.\textsuperscript{37} Others saw these overtly anti-colonial publishers as halting the developmental progress they believed British imperialism ensured. As Historian P. Olisanwuche Esedebe writes, “the educated elite were no robots who behaved alike with mechanical precision.”\textsuperscript{38} Esedebe, looking in retrospect, categorizes the educated elite into three groups: the imperialists, the lukewarm imperialists who eventually turned nationalist, and the unwavering nationalists.\textsuperscript{39} This thesis examines how African intellectuals approached the same conversation, of the place of empire in West Africa’s future, in many ways. In 1912, imperialists believed themselves to be nationalists, and many nationalists imagined a West African state within the British empire; the territorial nationalism of the mid-twentieth-century had not formed

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\textsuperscript{36} Omu, “The Dilemma of Press Freedom,” 282.
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\textsuperscript{38} Esedebe, “Educated Elite in Nigeria Reconsidered,” 120.
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\textsuperscript{39} Esedebe, 120.
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yet. The different ways African intellectuals used Pan-Africanism to discuss the reshaping of their colonies and of racist systems, obscured in 1912 by their shared West African vision, becomes apparent in the newspaper obituaries and articles on Blyden.

Newspapers claimed to be the voice of the African public, but the perspectives they captured were overwhelmingly male and necessarily elite. They do not comprehend all nationalistic and Pan-African thought. The archive used for this thesis narrows this discussion to Anglophone newspapers and does not include those written in African languages, such as the Yoruba publications of Lagos. Still, these newspapers demonstrate how elite West Africans thought about themselves, as spokesmen for indigenous Africans, as national leaders, and how many secured these roles through print. They were vessels for Pan-African thought, both through their content and their local significance. As Sawada writes, “Lagos newspapers assisted in the construction of an envisaged society which would enable people to feel united in sharing a common past.”

In 1912, newspaper editors laid paths for West Africa’s future and cited Blyden to bolster their authority. Their ideas of what it meant to be West African and what West Africa was becoming was always mitigated through their locally fixed perspectives from the various coastal cities in which they published.

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40 Sawada, “Memorialization in Lagos Newspapers,” 100.
Freetown

Freetown, Sierra Leone reversed the flow of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Already a point of repatriation, this British settlement also became home to “recaptives,” Africans liberated from slave ships, beginning in 1807 when Britain extended its ban on the slave trade to its colonies.41 British patrol ships brought recaptives to Freetown regardless of where in Africa they were from.42 A city of black freedmen, Freetown was, in the words of E. A. Ijagbemi, “a child of the late eighteenth century Enlightenment in Western Europe.”43 It attracted droves of Christian missionaries, of European and African descent, who saw their proselytization as philanthropy.44 Freetown best illustrated the British Christian mission to colonize and convert West Africa.

Freetown was also an imperial project. Until the mid-nineteenth century, it was the administrative headquarters of all of British West Africa, overseeing Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and the Gambia.45 British imperialists regarded repatriates as agents of British cultural expansion.46 Freetown’s Fourah Bay College, founded in 1827, supplemented Britain’s influence with formal English education.47 Its students came from West Africa’s wealthiest families. It was the intellectual home of West Africa’s elite.48 As such, Freetown gained a reputation as “The Athens of West Africa.”49

45 Bangura, “Sierra Leone in Colonial West Africa,” 583.
Freetown’s residents, the Krio, which most scholars agree comes from *creole*, reflected the city’s cosmopolitan nature. However, most scholars also misdescribe the Krio as a homogenous group associated with only the first wave of black colonists—the Jamaicans, Nova Scotians, and Englishmen that came to Sierra Leone with Christianity and English already in hand. As historian Gibril Cole points out, Krio society as a whole drew from Christian, Muslim, indigenous Sierra Leonean, and diasporic traditions. Indigenous Africans took an active part in Freetown’s commerce and Muslim Krio were essential emissaries of British trade in the largely Islamic interior. The Krio were not only Europeanized Christians.

Still, some Krio were prejudiced toward neighbors who did not fit the Anglo-Christian mold. Recaptives, initially relegated to the outskirts of the city, found their way into the hermetic repatriate community only by educating their children in missionary schools. Some Krio wore African dress and took African names, but their conversion usually stopped at appearances. British officials furthered the social divide between Muslim and Christian Krio by delineating the former as its own “tribe.” With British favor, Christian Krio published newspapers, occupied clerical positions, and adhered to British values. For many their world did not stretch beyond Freetown. However, Blyden’s relocation to Sierra Leone in 1885 challenged this culture of assimilation.

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50 There are other scholarly assumptions on the origin of “Krio.” Wyse, for example, reveals that Krio may come from the Yoruba word *akiriyo*. Akintola J.G. Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1989), 6.


Blyden was well known in Freetown for his efforts to remedy the divide between Christian Krio and other Africans. Blyden, who now considered Christian missions to be disruptive to African life, praised the work of Muslim Krio elders who taught Islamic virtues and history in the adjacent settlements of Fula Town and Fourah Bay.\(^5\) He endorsed colonial education among Muslim Krio, whose fears of indoctrination kept their children from attending missionary schools. But Blyden, aware of their concerns, also pressured the administration to alter existing Eurocentric curriculum and construct several schools in Muslim communities.\(^5\) British officials welcomed these suggestions as a way to produce more oversight over Muslim Krio.\(^6\) Blyden integrated colonial and Islamic education. In 1902, he was appointed “director of Mohammedean Education,” the only individual to hold the position.\(^6\) Blyden reified the connection between Islam and Afrocentrism in his final publication, *African Life and Customs*, released in 1908 as a collection of essays initially printed in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*.\(^6\) (Blyden’s personal faith remained unclear to most; Christians resented his partnership with Muslims and Muslims questioned his hesitation to convert.)\(^6\) Until his death, Blyden rebuked Christian Krio contempt for indigenous and Muslim Africans.\(^6\)

Blyden helped create schools that highlighted African history and prepared Muslim youth for success in the colonial administration they lived under. The students of Freetown’s Islamic school, who best represented the conclusion of Blyden’s career, led his funeral procession.\(^6\) However, as the Europeanized Krio in Freetown remembered Blyden upon his death, they

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\(^5\) By the 1870s, Islamic education was common on the coast, not just the hinterland. Cole, *The Krio of West Africa*, 190, 196.

\(^6\) Cole, 203–5.

\(^6\) Cole, 205–7.

\(^6\) Cole, 207.


\(^6\) “Personal Tribute to the Late Dr Blyden – By a Friend,” *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, February 10, 1912, 7.
downplayed his career as an advocate for Islamic learning and African cultures. Rather, local Anglophone newspapers memorialized Blyden as a scholar from the diaspora who penetrated European circles and not as an African of the continent as he understood himself to be.

By 1912, Blyden’s influence in Sierra Leone shifted colonial policies away from strict assimilationism and helped destigmatize Islam among many in Freetown. The cultural separation Christian Krio once claimed was becoming less and less evident. Some Christian Krio wanted to steer the city back toward a Eurocentric mindset.

The first article of the February 16 issue of the *Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails* ("Guardian," for short) was an obituary for Blyden. It was an instructional piece written to elucidate the most important lessons of Blyden’s career. The *Guardian* did not, however, glorify Blyden as infallible. In memorializing Blyden, the newspaper matched him against their own Christian Krio ideal. The *Guardian* misrepresented Blyden’s religious views by declaring him undeniably Christian and downplaying his appreciation for Islam. The newspaper also criticized his contempt for the lavish life of formally educated elites as dangerous and misguided. The *Guardian*’s obituary reworked Blyden’s views to preserve Christian Krio hegemony.

The *Guardian* claimed it had settled the debate on Blyden’s faith. Despite Blyden’s closeness with Muslim Krio, the *Guardian* argued that “the Doctor himself was not a Mohommedan.” The *Guardian* admitted “he was not a declared Christian,” but it maintained that, in his final months of life, he allegedly proclaimed his Christian faith to an unnamed friend. The *Guardian* acknowledged that Blyden withheld a clear statement on his faith and often expressed his religious views vaguely, as in his famous quotation: “I am a Christian as Mohommed was and a Mohommedan as Christ would have been if he were in the world now.”

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66 All quotations in the next several paragraphs are from “Death of Dr. E. W. Blyden,” *Sierra Leone Guardian*, February 16, 1912, 2.
The *Guardian* saw this statement as somewhat meaningless but reassured readers that Blyden was actually Christian and they should be Christian. It went further; Blyden was decidedly not a Muslim, “and might have been a Budhist [sic] if he were not a Christian.”

When not able to rework Blyden’s views, the writer of the obituary criticized him instead. The *Guardian* took issue with Blyden’s main contribution, the African Personality, which threatened the favor Christian Krio enjoyed with the colonial administration. The *Guardian* made their disagreement explicit, writing that he “had too primitive [a] view of what the educated Negroes should be.” The newspaper summarized Blyden’s African pride as the misguided belief that educated elites should “recede to the interior and dwell in huts. He did not believe in stone houses or big salaries for native officials.” The *Guardian* complained that Blyden’s promotion of African rural life was “taken as gospel” by colonial administrators “to the detriment of intelligent and aspiring native officials.” The *Guardian* worried that Blyden’s views characterized all Africans, including formally educated elite, as unsuited for administrative positions. In its obituary, the *Guardian* revised Blyden to preserve the hierarchy that privileged the Krio elite.

The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* ("Weekly News") also protected the culture of formal education and Eurocentrism in its obituary for Blyden but did so by ignoring the parts of his life that did not further the Christian Krio image. The *Weekly News* buried their obituary on the sixth page of their February 10 issue; it even included memorial notes for two who had died in February of 1885 and 1909 before it discussed Blyden’s recent death. Yet, the newspaper also contained more hyperbolic language than the *Guardian*’s obituary. The *Weekly News* praised Blyden as a central figure in West Africa but not as a West African. The newspaper discussed his travels overseas, in the United States and Europe, but not his last decades in Sierra Leone. The
*Weekly News* praised Blyden as a hero of the “Negro race,” partially by removing his extensive West African career in its obituary.\(^6\)

Blyden’s foreign origin and time off the continent allowed the *Weekly News* to claim fraternity between the Krio and black counterparts in the Americas. The *Weekly News* underlined Blyden’s importance to “West African life and thought” but also reminded readers he was “not a Sierra Leonean, not even a West African by birth.” The newspaper pointed out to other educated elites that “we who have been born and bred in West Africa are apt to forget that the closeness between us and the West Indian and American Negro amounts almost to an identity.” These Krio used Blyden to identify with English-speaking Christians in the diaspora rather than advocate for closer participation with their African neighbors.

The *Weekly News* placed importance on Blyden’s connections with the broader Atlantic world. It posed Blyden as an example of black aptitude that upset Europe’s low expectations for Africans. His interest in Latin and other scholarly pursuits gave him “the great privilege … to be associated with European life and thought.” To mark the respect he gained in England, the *Weekly News* boasted of his “honorary membership in the Athenæum club,” London’s private circle of aristocratic intellectuals. The *Weekly News* called him “a traveller, a man who was now in England, now in the United States, now in France, now on the Coast.” While praising Blyden’s international recognition, the *Weekly News* ignored Blyden’s reputation as an advocate among Muslim Krio.

When the *Weekly News* discussed Blyden, they also discussed Pan-African connections with black people in the Atlantic without mentioning the solidarity Blyden tried to construct between Europeanized Africans on the coast and Africans in the interior. Blyden was, in the

\(^6\) All quotations in the next several paragraphs are from “Death of Edward Wilmot Blyden, LL.D,” *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, February 10, 1912, 6.
words of the *Guardian*, “the most learned man of the Negro race,” but to the elite of Freetown he was not an African. By reminding readers that Blyden was from the Caribbean, some Krio, as they were born on the continent, claimed to be more authentically African than he was.

In July of 1913, Freetown unveiled a bust of Blyden. The governor of Sierra Leone, Edward Merewether, led the ceremony. His speech was reprinted in the *Weekly News, Guardian, and the Colonial and Provincial Reader* (“Reader”). The *Guardian* followed with a short statement of praise for the governor’s participation. Only the *Weekly News* provided extensive commentary on Blyden, the speech, and the significance of this moment for the next generation of Africans. When in the hands of the Freetown elite, its Krio and colonial administrators, the bust conformed to Freetown politics. The unveiling of Blyden’s bust gave both the governor and some Krio an avenue to discuss West Africa’s future.

Although it sat in Freetown, the bronze representation was planned and funded by Blyden’s peers, African and European journalists and friends, in England. The *Weekly News*, in its coverage of the unveiling, stated the bust was crafted to the likeness of an elderly and ill Blyden in Liverpool. It did not “represent him as he was known to Africans who had seen him daily in his health and strength.” The *Reader* agreed. The English sponsors even miswrote Blyden’s birth date as 1830, two years early. However, these mistakes were seemingly inconsequential to Merewether.

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68 “Death of Dr. E. W. Blyden,” *Sierra Leone Guardian*, February 16, 1912, 3.
69 The *Reader* was founded in September of the previous year (after the death of Blyden).
72 “Personal Tribute to the Late Dr Blyden – By a Friend,” *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, February 10, 1912, 7.
The ceremony drew a large crowd; it provided an opportunity for Governor Merewether to make a public appearance connected with a West African icon. Merewether never met Blyden, yet spoke about his importance to Africa. Shortly before the ceremony, he read some of Blyden’s work and out of this extensive catalog, he quoted from a particular speech Blyden gave at a banquet in 1903: “The African will build no monuments. If his great men are honoured in that way it will be by aliens.” Merewether depicted Africa as newborn, without a longstanding cultural history. He talked about the ceremony as a watershed moment in which West Africa was creating its cultural history by memorializing a patriarch. Merewether acknowledged the statue’s foreign origin, but argued it was still an African monument, “the first of its kind in Sierra Leone,” according to the Guardian. Merewether posed the bust as a sign of development that subverted Blyden’s view of Africans and the “absence of hero-worship among the Africans.” It was proof that Freetown was drawing closer to his standard of civilization under his leadership. Merewether applauded Blyden’s intellect, but had little to say beyond this general description.

The Weekly News article followed its reprint of the governor’s speech with another brief memorialization that stressed Blyden’s Caribbean origin, as it had in 1912, but this 1913 rendition addressed his role in Africa. The Weekly News discussed the event, and not necessarily Blyden himself, as inspiration for African nationalism. The newspaper believed “the memory of

Even their lack of amity had only lasted a year from the time Merewether came in April of 1911 to when an ill Blyden passed the next February. As for the large crowd, Merewether can be thanked. Despite the behest of some of the educated elite, Governor Merewether asked the cordon of police to loosen their restrictions and allow the crowd closer. “Monument to the Late Edward Wilmot Blyden, L.L.D.,” Colonial and Provincial Reporter, June 28, 1913; “June 19th, 1913 Speech,” Edward Merewether, cited in Colony and Provincial Reporter, July 5, 1913; Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails, June 27, 1913; Sierra Leone Weekly News, June 28, 1913; Blyden actually arrived back in Freetown after April, “Our New Governor,” Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails, March 31, 1911, 3. Further reference to Merewether’s speech will be shortened as: “Speech at Freetown Bust Ceremony,” Merewether.

“Speech at Freetown Bust Ceremony,” Merewether.

“The City (From our own Correspondent),” Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails, July 4, 1913, 2.

“Speech at Freetown Bust Ceremony,” Merewether.
the ceremony” and “the daily view of that bust of a black man on the square should kindle in every Sierra Leonean the fire of patriotism and engender restless activity and useful aspiration in every black West African.” The monument itself was important because it was of a “black man” but not because Blyden was an African hero celebrated by Africans. The Weekly News argued West Africans had little incentive to memorialize Blyden whose efforts for Africans “proved to be but a small dust in the balance compared with what he set himself in later years to do for the white race.” The newspaper claimed some even saw him as an “‘opportunist’—others worse.” While Blyden was “a great and representative Negro,” his position on local issues, such as his advocacy for polygamy (which he saw as naturally African), “shocked the sensibility of West Africans of the best type.” The Weekly News did not clarify who the “best” West Africans were, but it seems that Blyden had once again come into conflict with elite Christian Krio of Freetown.

The Weekly News did not claim Blyden as a Sierra Leonean despite his work there. The newspaper wrote, “the black man in West Africa, in even Sierra Leone will build elaborate monuments to the memory of his own countrymen; but the hour is not yet, nor has the man appeared. He shall, in due course.” This Krio newspaper weighed Blyden with less grandeur than it did in 1912. Instead, it argued Blyden misunderstood West Africa’s natural course of development and would eventually be overshadowed by someone from the continent. Blyden was a “jet black Negro,” but he “was no Sierra Leonean.”

During different points in his life, Blyden embodied the educated and well-traveled West African ideal Freetown Krio were in the process of crafting. When he did not, Krio newspapers used critique to remedy the discordance between his cultural nationalism and the class system.

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80 All quotations in the next several paragraphs are from “The Blyden Statue, Unveiling Ceremony,” Sierra Leone Weekly News, June 21, 1913, 8.
they were embedded in. Blyden’s interference with Liberian politics led to his exile from the colony. While Sierra Leone claimed to be his haven of free thought, its Krio elite also feared his defense of Islam and indigenous customs would dissolve the authority some Krio claimed through their appeals to British standards of civility. Pan-Africanism, when recounted in these Krio newspapers, was shared between black intellectuals in cities that bordered the Atlantic. Freetown affirmed Blyden’s reputation as an early Pan-Africanist and African nationalist; its obituaries did not, however, encompass his Pan-African thought which transformed colonialism into the preservation of African life and rejected the civilizing mission Sierra Leone was founded upon.
Lagos

Lagos was West Africa’s most prosperous port. The start of British occupation in 1861 transformed it into a source for legitimate commerce which attracted Africans from the surrounding hinterland.\(^{81}\) Once the site of departure for enslaved Africans, Lagos was now a city of return for many from the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States, who came by way of Liberia, Sierra Leone, or directly to its port.\(^{82}\) According to 1911 figures, these English-speaking repatriates constituted one-tenth of a population that edged over 70,000; many were highly visible in public life as lawyers, doctors, clerks, and representatives for the local administration.\(^{83}\) As mentioned above, the local Yoruba called them Saro.\(^{84}\) These “black Englishmen” were also some of the loudest advocates for the practice of African customs.\(^{85}\) In the 1880s, a significant portion of Saro began wearing Yoruba clothes, taking on Yoruba names, and practicing Yoruba customs. Lagos had a thriving cultural nationalist movement that capitalized on Blyden’s death by illustrating him as the exemplary Saro, one who maintained his African pride despite his Eurocentric education.

By 1912, English education was out of fashion among many Saro in Lagos. The late nineteenth-century works of Blyden and Mary Kingsley, a British anthropologist and friend to Blyden, argued that Africans had unique qualities that made them distinct but not inferior to


Europeans. Their expert reputation and support for British imperialism made their discourse, directed against racial prejudice, palatable to European intellectuals. Colonial administrators could claim that, by denouncing Africans who did not meet racial stereotypes, they were protecting an essential African character. Local colonists subsequently accepted the inherent racial difference that was the African personality and believed Africans were incapable of becoming complete Englishmen; the Saro became objects of ridicule. Christian Krio in Freetown strove for legitimacy by meeting European standards of civilization; Saro cultural nationalists tried to integrate themselves into what they saw as African life, usually discernable as the customs Christian missions were interested in stamping out.

In the 1880s, a significant portion of Saro began to imitate other Africans. Saro who usually wore suits wore traditional Yoruba dress instead. Saro with English educations studied and practiced African institutions such as polygamy. The legacy of formal education pervasive among the Saro was still evident in their penchant for written protest. Saro newspapers openly discussed Afrocentric thought and produced outlets for Africans to discuss and participate in local politics. With these newspapers, Lagos became West Africa’s most productive source of nationalist rhetoric, that encouraged more African sovereignty under the colonial administration, and, at times, anti-colonial rhetoric, that saw the administration as hampering steps toward African sovereignty.

Lagosian cultural nationalism was already underway by the time of Blyden’s 1889 visit. He was welcomed into the local movement by prominent Saro like the Liberian-born editor of

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88 Zachernuk, African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas, 59.
the *Lagos Weekly Record*, John Payne Jackson.⁹² Although the product of American parents and a formal Americo-Liberian education, Jackson, like Blyden, rebuked other educated elites, often in other colonies, who saw themselves as separate from other Africans.⁹³ He went beyond Blyden by organizing locally in Lagos. Jackson supported British rule in Nigeria because it offered unity, although forced, between Africans in its borders. However, Jackson also battled routinely with the administration to secure more African involvement. He regularly wrote petitions on behalf of Saro and Yoruba Lagosians and their political organization, protested against many colonial policies, and advocated for self-rule.⁹⁴ Historian Fred I.A. Omu writes that Jackson “may not have been a great originator of ideas like Blyden,” but he was nevertheless “a matchless organizer and dynamic propagandist.”⁹⁵ In the hands of Jackson and other Saro, Blyden became an advertisement for the formally educated African’s return to indigeneity.

However, Blyden was not a particularly apt example of a cultural nationalist. Despite his extensive writings on the subject, Blyden died with the English manners he denounced.⁹⁶ He was also a friend of imperialists and some saw him as the epitome of the patriotic British subject; many imperialists argued formally educated Africans should feel indebted to Britain, not hostile towards it. He had a personal relationship with Frederick Lugard, who, a month after Blyden’s death, was appointed to amalgamate Nigeria’s southern and northern protectorates into a single colony.⁹⁷

Lugard was the infamous British imperialist who pioneered indirect rule. He described indirect rule—the practice of ruling colonized subjects through local rulers that became standard

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⁹² Omu, “John Payne Jackson,” 530.  
⁹³ Omu, 522, 526.  
⁹⁵ Omu, “John Payne Jackson,” 539.  
⁹⁷ Lynch, 205.
British imperial policy—in his 1922 publication *The Dual Mandate of British Tropical Africa*. But in 1912, he was best known as the military officer who, in 1903, led the conquest of the emirates of northern Nigeria. After his conquest, he reshuffled the provinces of northern Nigeria to his liking and, while he relied on local rulers, he continued with strict, and even martial, oversight. News of Lugard’s conquest preceded his arrival in Lagos; both he and amalgamation were unpopular among many Saro.

Fearing a repetition of the autocratic rule Lugard perfected in the North, the Saro of Southern Nigeria rivaled his authority through constant criticism levied in print and political organization. Jackson carved his own status as an early Nigeran nationalist through his organization of a Pan-Yoruba front to protest the land tenure reform paired with amalgamation. In kind, Lugard held his own enmity toward the educated elite; the two were natural adversaries. Lagosian newspapers remembered Blyden as evidence that the Saro could reclaim African identities seemingly erased by foreign education. Lugard, however, responded by highlighting Blyden’s own imperialist leanings, a means of undermining the anti-colonial protest associated with cultural nationalism.

Newspapers in Freetown celebrated displays of black civility tailored to European etiquette while publishers in Lagos portrayed themselves as Africans separate from black Americans or black Europeans and etched their own place in a Pan-African identity, alongside

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100 Apata, 118–19.
101 Apata, 117.
other Africans on the continent, that superseded their typical image as foreigners or black
Englishmen.¹⁰⁵

News of Edward Blyden’s death was met with an outpouring of grief and ink in Lagos. Local editors quickly published announcements of his death and prepared lengthy obituaries. The intelligentsia of southern Nigeria’s capital were in a general consensus on Blyden’s legacy. Despite his time overseas and the prestige he enjoyed among Europeans, Blyden, when recounted in Lagos, was an African whose local life featured more prominently than his international travel. Even with Blyden’s recognition abroad, the *Lagos Weekly Record* argued Blyden’s writings “were intended to apply more particularly to his own countrymen—the African.”¹⁰⁶ Like publishers in Freetown, Saro writers pruned Blyden to their own liking. What they extracted, however, fit Lagosian politics. Saro writers omitted Blyden’s closeness with European missionaries and colonial administrators. Lagosian newspapers used Blyden to demonstrate the characteristics of an ideal African cultural nationalist.

The *Lagos Weekly Record* ("Record") published its first obituary for Blyden on February 17. This announcement of his death stressed Blyden’s Afrocentric approach. It was Blyden’s ability to “look at things from the African standpoint,” that helped the *Record* distinguish him from other black internationalists. The *Record* mourned Blyden as a source of redemption for the formally educated elite who it considered too Europeanized to be patriotic Africans. Unattended, a European education could consume an African’s nationalistic ambition; however, Blyden


¹⁰⁶ All quotations in the next several paragraphs are from “Death of Dr. Blyden,” *Lagos Weekly Record*, February 17, 1912, np.
showed this was not a necessary transfiguration. He “exploded the false notion that knowledge of a foreign language and adherence to foreign ways availed to denationalize the African and transform him into something other than he was.” The Record argued Blyden’s “greatest work,” the “work which is destined to live and grow,” was to “reinvest as it were the lettered African with his racial character and political standing.” Although Saro culture was distinct from any one of the many cultures outside Lagos, Blyden’s Pan-African language offered them a sense of undeniable similarity between themselves and all other Africans. They were a part of an imagined African nation located on the continent.

The Nigerian Chronicle (“Chronicle”), whose obituary was not published until March, also looked to Blyden’s rejection of European education to reclaim an African identity. The Chronicle corrected a common misrepresentation of Blyden as an argument for European assimilation. Although Blyden was well-versed in European literature and philosophy, the Chronicle argued, “he did not favour Western learning for the African.” The newspaper distanced itself from anyone “who felt that the only way to understand [Blyden] and to carry out his intended reforms is to be equipped with the same instrument as himself.” Scholarship still fit within cultural nationalism, but came with Afrocentrism. Saro newspapers, such as the Record, repeatedly endorsed the study of Islam while denouncing Christianity as a tool of British racism. The formally educated elite’s reclamation of African authenticity relied on Blyden’s legacy as both a scholar and cultural nationalist.

Another Saro publication, the Lagos Standard (“Standard”) also saw Blyden as a cultural nationalist icon who placed Africa’s future in the hands of Africans on the continent. The

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107 The Record published a lengthy retelling of Blyden’s life in the following week’s February 24 issue, but his core contributions were recorded in the initial February 17 announcement.
109 Omu, Press and Politics, 115.
Standard explained that, contrary to Blyden, “American leaders seek to raise the Negro along the lines of European, or rather American civilisation.”¹¹⁰ Nineteenth-century Saro argued that European and American missionaries would civilize Africans by converting them into British Christians.¹¹¹ For the Standard, Blyden’s unorthodox approach was, “instead of looking towards America as the source from whence help was to come, and the emigrants as the instruments, he believed and taught that the salvation of Liberia and of Africa must come from within, instead of without, and her own sons the agents of her regeneration.” A young Blyden migrated to Liberia to colonize and convert West Africans, but the Standard reminded its readers that by his old age his ideas “were considerably modified, if not changed altogether.”

Lagosian newspapers believed Blyden’s work was ahead of the Saro and based on the continent. It was an unfinished project of “regeneration.” Although many Lagosian newspapers portrayed Blyden as a cultural nationalist, there was no single definition of cultural nationalism. This became even more apparent when the prototypical British imperialist, Lugard, himself memorialized Blyden as a cultural nationalist.

In 1914, Lugard, as governor of Nigeria spoke at the unveiling of Blyden’s portrait. A self-appointed committee of Lagosian Saro commissioned the portrait to honor Blyden and instill his memory in future generations.¹¹² Lugard unveiled the portrait to a crowd of Lagosian Muslims, Yoruba elites, and colonial clerks which likely included some of his fiercest critics.¹¹³ Lugard’s speech was a response to the nationalism that was ripening in the climate of Lagos.¹¹⁴ By usurping Blyden’s legacy from the Lagosian intelligentsia at a public memorialization,

¹¹⁰ All quotations in the next several paragraphs are from “The Late Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden,” Lagos Standard, February 28, 1912, 4.
¹¹³ “The Unveiling of the Blyden Memorial Picture,” Nigerian Chronicle, March 6, 1914, 3
Lugard could downplay Blyden’s more radical tenets. Even imperialists used Blyden to subdue anti-colonial nationalism.

Early Nigerian nationalism was not necessarily anti-colonial. The Lagosian press took pride in being regular critics of the colonial government with some even fearing the consequences of appearing too cordial.\textsuperscript{115} There were, however, Saro who were sympathetic to the administration. One such individual was Nigerian lawyer Sapara Williams, who opened the ceremony with a short speech and introduction for Lugard.\textsuperscript{116} Williams celebrated Blyden’s cultural nationalism; Williams also strove to secure political status through popularity among non-elite Lagosians.\textsuperscript{117} The two—cultural nationalism and colonial collaboration—were not antithetical.

Williams discussed cultural nationalism with a contention: if the West African intelligentsia were to recover an African identity, it would be as Africans under the colonial administration, not as those striving to live beyond it. Williams appealed to the common proclivity for a return to the African personality among the Saro stating, “Dr. Blyden … has shown … that if we, Africans, are to play an important role in the world’s stage, we must not place ourselves in a position uncongenial to our environments or inimical to our interest.”\textsuperscript{118} His proximity to Lugard complicates the usual scholarly understanding of cultural nationalism as an anti-colonial movement.

\textsuperscript{115} Omu, “The Dilemma of Press Freedom,” 280.
\textsuperscript{116} In her discussion of the ceremony, historian R.L. Okonkwo noted Williams as the keynote speaker. However, Williams was more accurately the speaker’s introduction who prepared the audience for a regressive picture of Blyden. Rina Okonkwo, “The Emergence of Nationalism in British West Africa, 1912-1940” (PhD diss., New York, City University of New York, 1979), 83.
\textsuperscript{117} Okonkwo, 83.
In his speech, the governor remembered Blyden’s amiable relationship with British imperialism. To Lugard, Blyden was “a man full of patriotism of the right kind whose thoughts were constantly for his country,” but his patriotism was also, “free from self-seeking and from envy, hatred and suspicion of other nations.” Lugard considered the adversarial nature of Lagosian cultural nationalism unbecoming of Blyden’s legacy. He discredited anti-colonialism as “jealousy or contempt of other nations and other races,” which he stated “is not patriotism and is not virtue.” It was not so much European education as antagonistic nationalism that “warps a man’s character and destroys his sober judgement.” He called upon the educated elite, notorious for protest, to abandon their false sense of patriotism.

Blyden, the deified patriot, polarized critics of Lugard and amalgamation. Despite Blyden’s former acclaim, few attended his 1914 memorialization. The Nigerian Pioneer (“Pioneer”), founded in 1914 as a conservative and pro-government offshoot of the Lagos Weekly Record, complained that the event was “sparsely attended.” Its writers said that the low turnout “speaks ill for the interest which is locally taken in matters concerning the welfare of Africa.” They criticized the absent by asking, could it be that the “large number of so called patriots stayed away through feelings akin so scornfully referred to in his Excellency’s speech?” Blyden’s legacy, Lugard’s interpretation of it, and the Nigerian Pioneer’s stage for public discussion contributed to a nationalist discourse that opposed anti-colonialism.

As Pan-Africanists and Nigerian nationalists interested in a common African identity, some intelligentsia trusted Lugard’s administration. “For some years,” the Pioneer wrote in

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commentary on the event, “the problems that face a united Nigeria will be difficult ones and we feel sure that in [Lugard] we have the best man to deal with them.”  

123 In his speech on Blyden, Lugard spelled out his imperial aspirations and prematurely bequeathed the colony to loyal Saro stating that, “before I leave it is my earnest hope that I shall have achieved something for Nigeria and for Lagos; that I shall have initiated some lines of progress and reform which the true patriots among you will carry further after I am gone.”  

124 On the eve of the First World War, Nigerian nationalism was a fitful ally to the colonial administration, but an ally nonetheless. Lugard did not need the support of all Saro nationalists. With only a few Saro nationalists, Lugard paired nationalism and colonialism and portrayed Blyden as a friend of his administration. Vocal advocates for unity across the protectorates, some Saro were not only colonial mediators but imperialists themselves.  

125 Blyden’s Lagosian memory served as the basis for both anti-colonial and imperialist cultural nationalism.

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123 “Blyden Memorial Unveiled by His Excellency the Governor,” *Nigerian Pioneer*, March 3, 1914, 7.
The nineteenth-century Gold Coast had several forms of African self-rule. The imperial Asante governed most of the region outside of a few coastal cities, such as the British colony of Cape Coast. In the south, Fante states, also resisting Asante incursion, made themselves facilitators for British mercantilism. These states validated their territorial claim after founding the Fante Confederation with its own constitution in 1868. Even in Cape Coast, Africans under colonial rule disputed and amended colonial policies while fulfilling crucial roles in the city’s administration. People in the Gold Coast maintained their sovereignty in various ways; there was no single African leadership.

Britain’s relationship to the various areas of the Gold Coast shifted by the end of the century. Eager to move out of their state of dependency on Fante cooperation, the British coerced Fante decline in 1872 by withholding funds from their former allies. The following year, they sacked the Asante capital Kumasi and, from the acquired territory, established the Gold Coast Colony in 1874. For some, life continued with little disturbance, so long as British commerce was equally undisturbed. However, the formally educated Africans of Cape Coast, who had once advised British politics in the region, struggled to conform to the new colonial policy of indirect rule.

A low maintenance project of commercial expansion, indirect rule prioritized African cooperation. It acknowledged certain African leadership deemed traditional, often elites willing

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129 Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, “‘We Shall Rejoice to See the Day When Slavery Shall Cease to Exist’: The ‘Gold Coast Times’, the African Intelligentsia, and Abolition in the Gold Coast,” *History in Africa* 31 (2004): 34.
to partner with the colonial administration, and it denied the processes, such as petitions and political coalitions, that traditionally gave Africans in Cape Coast leverage over colonial policies. Blyden’s view of British imperialism as a buffer between Africans he considered unpolluted by foreign influence and English-educated Africans provided a precedent for British officials to discuss indirect rule as beneficial to Africans. Blyden’s Afrocentric call for the preservation of indigenous customs was added to the white man’s burden. Indirect rule enacted Blyden’s otherwise abstract theories.

Indirect rule appealed to some African elites by claiming to work for their immediate benefit. After 1874, the British oversaw several railways and major roads from coastal cities to provinces and towns in the interior. Local leaders allowed and contributed to these projects, accepting compensation for their concessions and trade agreements. They also welcomed colonial authority to deter the power of coastal elites who formerly swayed British policies. Some non-elite Africans even exploited indirect rule and seized their own traditional authority. However, 1874 mainly diffused power from the coast to the interior. Many in Cape Coast became increasingly agitated as they saw a form of colonial rule that excluded them take shape.

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133 Getz, Slavery & Reform in West Africa, 117.
Cape Coast Africans were used to participating in the colonial administration. Fante elites, repatriates, and West African migrants alike could share the title of “educated natives.”\(^{137}\)

More than familiar with the administration, they wrote petitions and cited legal cases to influence colonial policy.\(^{138}\) They formed the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights Protection Society (GCARPS) in response to the 1897 Lands Bill—which would allow the crown to seize land—and successfully prevented it.\(^{139}\)

Their protest involved indigenous leaders and networks; educated African life could not be separated from what the colonial government considered traditional authority.\(^{140}\) Many in Cape Coast perceived indirect rule as the subjugation of African political representation. Formally educated elites often saw themselves as African leaders, representative of the region and not just individual communities in the Gold Coast, who would guide other Africans toward greater sovereignty. Among them was J.E. Casely Hayford, editor of the Gold Coast Leader (“Leader”), whom scholars have called Blyden’s leading “disciple.”\(^{141}\)

Born Ekra Agyiman, in 1866, in Cape Coast, Hayford was a Fante intellectual and former student of Blyden’s at Freetown who propagated Blyden’s work in Cape Coast.\(^{142}\) He celebrated Blyden’s call for West African unity and, like Blyden, believed European education negatively impacted Africans; both preferred Afrocentric education.\(^{143}\) However, in the context of indirect

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\(^{137}\) Unlike Freetown, the diasporic population in Cape Coast was a minority that survived through collaboration with indigenous leaders. Akurang-Parry, “A Smattering of Education,” 49; Roger Gocking, “The Historic Akoto: A Social History of Cape Coast Ghana, 1843-1948” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1981), 183; Akurang-Parry, “Abolition in the Gold Coast,” 28.

\(^{138}\) Akurang-Parry, “A Smattering of Education,” 51.

\(^{139}\) Akurang-Parry, 47.

\(^{140}\) Akurang-Parry, “Abolition in the Gold Coast,” 28.

\(^{141}\) Lynch, Blyden: Pan Negro Patriot, 238.

\(^{142}\) He studied the doctor’s works as a student in the 1870s. L.H. Ofosu-Appiah, Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford: The Man of Vision and Faith (Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Science, 1975), 1; Bouchemal and Senouci, “Blyden’s Philosophy and Its Impact on West African Intellectuals,” 150.

\(^{143}\) Bouchemal and Senouci, “Blyden’s Philosophy and Its Impact on West African Intellectuals,” 152–53.
rule, Blyden’s rejection of European education threatened the decades old standard of African political protest developed in Cape Coast.

The local curator of Blyden’s work, Hayford made significant alterations to Blyden’s politics that scholars ignore in light of the similarities between the two intellectuals. Blyden sought to instill racial pride, build Pan-African unity, and demonstrate the validity of Afrocentric scholarship. Hayford appreciated and lauded these efforts. However, Hayford did not expect Blyden’s principles to dictate West African law. Instead, Hayford preferred colonial policy informed by the context of Cape Coast—the circumstance of which Blyden was unfamiliar with during his life and certainly could not speak to from his grave—not by general notions of West African life. While, in 1911, Hayford described Blyden as “the greatest living exponent of the true spirit of African nationality and manhood,” in his 1912 obituary, Hayford publicly criticized Blyden to upend indirect rule.\footnote{J.E. Casely Hayford, \textit{Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation} (London: C.M. Phillips, 1911), 164.} With Blyden as his foil, Hayford’s \textit{Gold Coast Leader} portrayed the educated elite as pioneering nationalists. Hayford argued it was these educated elites, not the late Blyden, who should guide the course of British imperialism in West Africa.

The \textit{Gold Coast Leader} argued Blyden had ceased to be a political powerhouse decades before his passing in 1912. Blyden, who was lionized in Freetown and Lagos, though in different ways, was taken more practically in Cape Coast. Blyden inspired emerging Pan-Africanists, but his followers, who formed organizations like the GCARPS, actualized the legacy of African nationalism he is associated with. The \textit{Leader’s} obituary portrayed Blyden as a cultural icon, not a political leader.

The Gold Coast Colony had expanded beyond Cape Coast and British officials had seemingly subdued their most vocal critics by entrusting more power in rural leaders; the
educated elite’s relevance had waned. While Cape Coast mourned Blyden, the pressure of indirect rule left little room for nostalgia. The Leader’s announcement of his death was blunt:

Dr. Blyden is dead. Twenty or twenty-five years ago this news would have created feelings of despair and discouragement throughout all parts of the world where the Negro lives, but to-day the loss of Dr. Blyden can only be felt as a personal and not a racial loss. Dr. Blyden was a great man, but one who has watched his career during the later years of his life feels that for some years before his death the venerable doctor had ceased to be a force in the Negro world.

Twenty to twenty-five years before 1912, Blyden was on the victory lap of his career. He published his magnum opus in 1887, travelled from Freetown to Lagos in 1889, and was actively read by his friend Hayford in Cape Coast. Blyden’s last decade was not without productivity; he penned *African Life and Customs* in 1908. However, by then, many formally educated elites, who had once seen Blyden as an African leader, were disappointed that, despite his career, Blyden did little to organize a coherent and stable political movement among West Africans.

The Leader’s obituary portrayed Blyden as an idle figure and underlined the absence of a tangible political impact. Hayford had little to say himself about Blyden’s efficacy as a West African leader and demonstrated this by relying on an obituary from British journalist E.D. Morel’s *African Mail* which Hayford reprinted in his publication. Morel’s obituary reiterated Hayford’s portrayal of Blyden as somewhat ineffective. A decade earlier, Morel’s investigation of King Leopold’s reign in the Congo helped bring European attention to colonial atrocities; because of this, many respected his opinions about Africa. While Freetown’s newspapers applauded Blyden’s international notoriety, Morel denied his success. Morel considered the

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146 “The Death of Dr. E. W. Blyden” *Gold Coast Leader*, February 24, 1912, 3.
147 Blyden assumed there was African solidarity rather than create the infrastructure in Freetown and Lagos to sustain it. Agbodeka, *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast*, 35.
doctor “a pathetic figure and yet a singularly impressive one… In one sense Blyden was extraordinarily courageous. And yet, somehow, he failed to be the power he ought to have been, not so much among his own people…[but] as a world influence.” Morel wrote that, “the bulk of educated West Africans did not understand or appreciate [Blyden].” Blyden was still “admired … as an intellectual force. Nevertheless, he preached in the wilderness.” All this was reprinted in the Leader. Hayford, by citing Morel, depicted Blyden as a well-known but disregarded prophet. Although politically inept, Blyden was sincere in his dedication to the betterment of Africans.

The Leader recognized Blyden’s success in changing negative perceptions of Africans without condoning his optimism. In the Leader, he was neither a unifying force in the Black Atlantic—as he was portrayed in Freetown—nor an adequate mediator between the West African coast and interior—as he was portrayed in Lagos. Although not the Pan-African unifier some made him out to be, Blyden’s intellect was put toward rectifying the political and economic subjugation of black people. Even with an unfavorable appraisal of his politics, the Gold Coast Leader remained fond of the doctor as a folk hero:

We may criticise Dr. Blyden and his work: we may call him a dreamer—a splendid although impractical dreamer—but no one can deny his claims to greatness among the sons of men. By his demonstration of the intellectual capacity of the Negro, Dr. Blyden performed great services for his race, and even by this alone he is entitled to everlasting fame among the great benefactors of his race and his name, so long as the Negro Race exists, shall always be revered.

Although pioneering nationalists in the Gold Coast, like Hayford, discussed and championed Blyden’s ideas, they did not cite Blyden as the progenitor of their local political protest. Hayford

149 “The Passing of a Great Figure,” E.D. Morel reprinted in the Gold Coast Leader, March 16, 1912, 5.
150 “The Passing of a Great Figure,” E.D. Morel reprinted in the Gold Coast Leader, March 16, 1912, 5.
151 Langley writes the reverse in retrospect, but I simply note the attitude of those writing at the time. Langley, Pan-Africanism in West Africa, 112.
152 “Death of Dr. E. W. Blyden,” Gold Coast Leader, February 24, 1912, 3.
did not change his view of Blyden in 1912; he continued to celebrate the doctor. However, he saw Blyden as a cultural figure, a “splendid dreamer,” but not a diviner of West Africa’s fate. Blyden was an example of African nationalism but not its architect.

Hayford reiterated this in his coverage of Lugard’s speech at the 1914 unveiling of Blyden’s portrait in Lagos. Hayford acknowledged that Blyden held an undeniable level of influence over governors and colonial administrators across West Africa. However, he also posited, “whether that influence made for the happiness of West African natives is another matter.”153 While criticizing Lugard and indirect rule, Hayford was also criticizing Blyden. The Gold Coast Leader launched a calculated exegesis of Blyden’s ideas on cultural nationalism and the role of education. Blyden hoped the educated elite would blend into the broader African populace becoming indistinguishable; Hayford argued a robust intelligentsia was necessary and inevitable.

Blyden—both a familiar elder to West African intellectuals and a friend to British imperialists—was the colonial administration’s foothold in early nationalist discourse. Both Merewether and Lugard expressed their hopes for the future of West Africa at ceremonies for Blyden. The Leader took caution toward these “governing authorities of West Africa … [who] saw the use that could be made politically of Dr. Blyden’s theories.” Indirect rule, justified nominally by a regard for African cultures, operated, in the Leader’s opinion, as a form of imperial sanctioned division:

with the ostensible purpose of preserving native customs and institutions from the disintegrating influence of the educated native class started, as in Northern Nigeria, the policy of ‘governing through native chiefs’ and taking under their protecting wings the care of African customs and institutions from violence at the hands of educated sons of Africa.

153 All quotations in the next several paragraphs are from “Editorial Notes,” Gold Coast Leader, March 21, 1914, 4.
With its distrust of colonial admiration for Blyden, the *Leader* took a contrary position to Lugard. The newspaper assumed that Lugard’s speech was a disingenuous attempt to quell the “feeling of injustice … fermenting in the minds of educated natives in Lagos.” Lugard’s Blyden ruptured the fraternity between formally educated and traditional elites, unity previously embodied by the GCARPS, which by 1912 was under Hayford’s presidency but for the most part inactive. Moreover, many educated elites wanted to ensure their own oversight on West Africa’s evolution.

The *Leader*, afraid that the educated elite would soon be ostracized from imperialism, censured Blyden. In a case against the shrinking of the intelligentsia, Hayford addressed Blyden’s “vision of differentiation,” between the “natives into educated and uneducated classes.” These fixed categories, he argued, ignored the natural course of nationalism in West Africa. As Africa came onto the world stage, the “uneducated classes” would “evolve [into] an educated class who though more highly advanced in culture will yet remain true Africans and aspire to be leaders of their peoples and reformers of the customs and institutions of their country along the lines of progress and civilization.” The newspaper accepted Blyden’s respect for the African personality but rejected indirect rule as the best way to cultivate it.

While Cape Coast Africans had traditionally participated in British imperialism, Hayford articulated the sentiment of a transnational anti-colonial movement that directly opposed Lugard’s use of the patriotic Blyden. On behalf of its Lagosian correspondents, the *Gold Coast Leader* declared “educated natives all over West Africa are at present in a state of perplexity with respect to their future under the British Government.” The antagonism between the intelligentsia...

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155 All quotations in the next several paragraphs are from “Editorial Notes,” *Gold Coast Leader*, March 21, 1914, 4.
and the colonial administration was rooted in a disagreement on who would manage West Africa; their disagreement with Blyden’s writings was central to their disagreement with indirect rule. “The educated native,” in other words had “come to regard the Government as a non-beneficent force working for his disintegration and against the higher interests of his race.” The formerly imperialist intelligentsia took up anti-colonial rhetoric.

In 1913, Hayford began to sketch a National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), later realized in 1920.\textsuperscript{156} The NCBWA addressed the crown directly, as an organization of British subjects, circumventing colonial authority. Pioneers of Pan-African unity and nationalism, the Gold Coast intelligentsia did not see a necessary contradiction between the African personality and an imperial system. Rather, they believed the immediate administration hampered steps toward African sovereignty and intellectual and economic development by alienating the educated elite and discouraging political organization. During Blyden’s lifetime, Hayford envisioned a unified, self-rulled Pan-African territory. After Blyden’s death, he crafted this unity partly in disagreement with Blyden.

Conclusion

Edward Blyden was the cornerstone of West African intellectualism. Newspaper editors from across the region cited him and debated his views. Their discussions of Blyden helped them demonstrate their own stances on West African politics. One did not have to adhere to Blyden’s views to be a Pan-Africanist. Rather, Pan-Africanism was deeply personal and subject to one’s environment. Blyden’s legacy persevered because West Africans adapted him and his work.

A year after Freetown held its ceremony for Blyden, his bust was in a dismal state. Sierra Leone Weekly News correspondent Marilla Van reported on its condition:

As if to protect from dirt and all other elements indicative of untidiness the monumental embodiment perpetuating the memory of the late Dr. Blyden spiders have gratuitously weaved a veil of network around and about that monument, as it were to demonstrate to the world that they hold more sacred than members of their own species the statue of the late Doctor, which should, indeed, not only be highly regarded by the people whose country he adopted as his homeland.157

Van’s sarcastic tone contrasted with more effusive of the bust published elsewhere, such as in the Guardian, which called it “an inspiration to his countrymen, to the youths in Sierra Leone particularly, serving an incentive to labour in the cause of ones [sic] country and fatherland.”158

However, the bust’s poor cosmetic state and simultaneous esteem demonstrated how West Africans remembered the late Blyden. That is, Blyden survived in the minds and discussions of West Africans as a legend who conformed to the interests of those who referenced him and much less as a concrete, or bronze, figure.

When the dust had settled on the death and memorialization of Edward Blyden, West Africans were left with an amorphous but thriving legacy. Whether in Freetown, Lagos, or Cape Coast, people took significant liberty in mythologizing Blyden. He was one of the most

158 “The City (From our own Correspondent),” Sierra Leone Guardian and Foreign Mails, July 4, 1913.
recognizable Africans in the Atlantic world. As such, West Africa’s “hero was considered by the civilized world as the leading authority and exponent on all problems relating to the Negro race.”

Blyden exposed the gaps in scholarship on Africa and subsequently filled this gap for European, American, and African intellectuals. His name survived him and was ubiquitous in the study of what it meant to be African and what Africa would become.

After his death, Blyden appeared all over West Africa. He presided over debates on polygamy and Christianity. He imparted his thoughts on Africa’s relation to Israel, Islam in West Sudan, and European labor rights, among other things. He eased East African controversies in one Sierra Leone newspaper which promised “the Shades of Edward Wilmot Blyden will arise to improve the present situation of the Kikuyu controversy.” He presented the case against assimilation in London; and he rebuked this same argument for assimilation from Cape Coast. West African newspapers habitually reanimated Blyden in their publications and in turn he lent his authority to a host of arguments. The dead scholar survived in West African rhetoric.

West Africans harvested multiple legacies of Edward Wilmot Blyden. During Blyden’s lifetime, intellectuals celebrated his Pan-African thinking; as migrant elites solidified the West Indian Blyden as a West African, they too solidified themselves within regional unity. After his death, West Africans began more concentrated efforts to put Pan-African thinking into practice by organizing politically beyond their respective locales. Freetown encouraged African participation in American-led black internationalism; Lagosians organized a Pan-Yoruba front

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159 “Monument to the Late Edward Wilmot Blyden, L.L.D.,” Colony and Provincial Reporter, June 21, 1913.
160 “Monument to the Late Edward Wilmot Blyden, L.L.D. VI.,” Colony and Provincial Reporter, August 9, 1913
161 “Monument to the Late Edward Wilmot Blyden, L.L.D. (I-VII),” Colony and Provincial Reporter.
164 “Scrutineer,” Gold Coast Leader, March 14, 1914.
against amalgamation; and Cape Coast, with the NCBWA, represented West Africa’s largest attempt at regional unity. The nationalist sketches about Blyden propagated in newspapers came to similar conclusions despite the differences in local circumstance: Edward Blyden’s legend and impetus for change after death was more important and effective than he had been in life.

Edward Blyden, “the Father of Pan-Africanism,” who never declared himself as such, provided many examples of informal Pan-Africanism, in his emigration, in his transatlantic tours, in his work with indigenous communities. The intellectual history of Pan-Africanism stretches beyond the political organizations with which it is normally associated. It was a project constantly recreated and spread by people of African descent. Not all Pan-Africanists wrote manifestos or declared tracts of doctrine. Rather, they discussed and negotiated Pan-Africanism routinely. Intellectuals did this in newspapers. Further research can reveal how non-elite Africans did the same perhaps in less formal settings. Pan-Africanism, as it belonged to Blyden who never uttered the phrase, belongs to the Africans who acted on its tenets without philosophical discourse.
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Appendix

Timeline of Edward Blyden’s Life and other Events in West Africa
(Adapted from Hollis R. Lynch)\textsuperscript{165}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1832 August 3</td>
<td>Born on the Danish held island of St. Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Move to the United States and subsequent emigration to Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855/6</td>
<td>Editor of <em>Liberia Herald</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Published <em>A Voice from Bleeding Africa</em>, the first of his many pamphlets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>Ordained as a Presbyterian clergyman and became Principal of Alexander High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Liberian Educational Commissioner to Britain and the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862-1871</td>
<td>Professor of Classics at Liberia College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864-1866</td>
<td>Liberian Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866 Jul-Sept.</td>
<td>Visit to Egypt, Lebanon and Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Relocation to Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872-1873</td>
<td>Founder and Editor of the <em>Negro</em> newspaper in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Government Agent to the Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>British establish the Gold Coast Colony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-1877</td>
<td>Principal of Alexander High School at Harrisburg, Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877-1878</td>
<td>Liberian Ambassador to the Court of St. James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-1884</td>
<td>President of Liberia College, and up to 1882, Minister of the Interior</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Unsuccessful Liberian Presidential candidate after which he became based in Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886 Sept.</td>
<td>Resigned from Presbyterian Church to become ‘Minister of Truth’</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race</em></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889/90</td>
<td>Seventh Visit to the United States; two months’ tour of ‘Deep South’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890/91</td>
<td>First Visit to Lagos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Liberian Ambassador to the Court of St. James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Second Visit to Lagos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Eight and last visit to the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896-1897</td>
<td>Agent of Native Affairs in Lagos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-1899</td>
<td>Spent mainly in Sierra Leone as a private teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1901</td>
<td>Professor at Liberia College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1906</td>
<td>Director of Mohammedan Education in Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1912</td>
<td>Spent mainly in Sierra Leone ‘in retirement’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Publication of <em>African Life and Customs</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912 Feb 7</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912 March</td>
<td>Lugard announced as new Governor of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913 June 19</td>
<td>Unveiling of Blyden’s bust in Freetown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914 Feb 28</td>
<td>Unveiling of Blyden’s portrait in Lagos</td>
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