Practical Pan-Africanism in the _Lagos Weekly Record_, Nigeria, 1912

by

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To Bob and Rowena
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INTRODUCTION

Efforts to help the “Black Poor” of London in the late eighteenth century made Sierra Leone the home of hundreds of black freedmen from Britain and the Americas.¹ After Sierra Leone became an official British colony in 1808, it also became home to thousands of Africans freed from slave ships defying Britain’s ban on the slave trade enacted in the same year.² Many arrived literate in English and some came already wealthy.³ Others became wealthy in Sierra Leone, as their ability to speak English facilitated trade with European merchants. Newcomers and their children often had access to a Western education, earned a higher social status, and thought of themselves as distinct from the indigenous people of the area by virtue of their speech and culture. Over the nineteenth century, many Sierra Leoneans immigrated to different parts of West Africa, and one of the principal destinations was the port city of Lagos, Nigeria. The indigenous Yoruba of the Lagos area called them the “Saro” (a corruption of “Sierra Leone”) and thought of them as outsiders.⁴ The term Saro came to be associated with any West African

² Shillington, 1353.
educated elite in Nigeria, whether they were from Sierra Leone, Liberia, or elsewhere.⁵ Even indigenous elites from Southern Nigeria might be considered Saro.⁶

Around the turn of twentieth century, many Saro were at the same time pan-Africanists, just as that intellectual movement was flourishing in West Africa. They considered themselves, the Yoruba, and in fact everyone of African descent to be a part of a single African race. However, this notion of a single African people was complicated by the differences between themselves and other people in Lagos. It was further complicated by the similarities between the Saro and the British who had maintained colonial control over Lagos since 1861. This thesis is about one Saro journalist, John Payne Jackson, and how his newspaper, the Lagos Weekly Record, documented the complex relationship between the Saro and their African and British neighbors. Pan-Africanism in Lagos, I argue, was not vague theory, nor was it a dogmatic system of belief. Rather, pan-Africanist thinking, mobile and provisional as it was, informed the Lagosian Saro’s activism in the local politics of Lagos. To understand the Saro’s relationship with native Nigerians and with the British colonial government in Nigeria is to understand how pan-Africanist thought unfolded in practice.

**Pan-Africanism: The Roots, the Theory, and the Practice**

Pan-Africanism can be broadly understood as the collection of ideas, social movements, and political organizations that focus on the African continent and its diaspora.⁷ As stated by the African Union in 2013, the foundation of pan-Africanist thought is the belief that Africans of the

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⁵ Liberia was an American colony for African Americans. Like Sierra Leone, it had the purpose of “returning” African Americans to the continent.
continent and people of African descent in the diaspora “share not merely a common history, but
a common destiny,” which “encourages the solidarity of Africans worldwide.”\(^8\) The broadness of
pan-Africanism has consequently made scholarship on the subject similarly broad. Scholars have
viewed pan-Africanism as a distinct historical movement and as a school of intellectual thought.\(^9\)
Pan-Africanism was and is a theory and movement in constant flux, and so for this thesis I use
the lowercase pan-Africanism to describe sentiments and movements that acted on a generalized
notion of African nationalism.\(^10\)

In order to distinguish the various forms and theories of pan-Africanism, scholars have
identified different eras. In the mid-nineteenth century, African-American intellectuals, such as
Alexander Crummel, called for repatriation to Africa and outlined theories of a single African
race, ideas carried on by figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey in the first half of
twentieth century. A later era of pan-Africanism, in the mid-twentieth century, focused on the
decolonization of Africa, and scholars have focused on particular figures such as Frantz Fanon
and Kwame Nkrumah, among others.\(^11\)

A central figure in the overall history of pan-Africanism is Edward Blyden, a Liberian
repatriate originally from the West Indies.\(^12\) Blyden is often credited by scholars as “the father of
Pan-Africanism.”\(^13\) Blyden, in his travels throughout West Africa during the late nineteenth

\(^9\) Pan-Africanism has often been studied as a philosophical or ideological movement with historians such as Kwame
Appiah focusing on the foundations of its theory rather than any specific historical movement. See Kwame Appiah,
\(^10\) Sawada in her PhD dissertation also refers to Jackson as a pan-Africanist (lowercase p). Nozomi Sawada, “The
Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers: In Search of Unity for the Progress of Society”
\(^11\) For example see the works of Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, Leopold Senghor.
century, proposed theories of early pan-Africanism that became foundational for the West African intelligentsia. In doing so, he also helped develop a sense of West African nationalism shared by people from Sierra Leone to Nigeria.

Central to this West African intellectual network was Lagos, on the coast of what is now Nigeria.\textsuperscript{14} (Figure 1.) Many European merchants from various countries traded in the former slave port, and the British had a colonial presence there since 1861. Still, as a large, cosmopolitan commercial city, Lagos was to Blyden the center for a future West African nation.\textsuperscript{15} Impressed by the city’s metropolitan nature, he frequented Lagos, and the local Saro heard, adopted, and adapted his theories of pan-Africanism.

Among the educated elites in Lagos closest to Blyden was the Liberian-born John Payne Jackson. Blyden described Jackson as “‘an able man’ with ‘very strong race feelings.’”\textsuperscript{16} Jackson in turn described Blyden as “the highest intellectual representative and the greatest defender and uplifter of the African race.”\textsuperscript{17} Jackson’s relationship with Blyden helped thrust him into the limelight of Lagosian politics. His newspaper, the \textit{Lagos Weekly Record}, ran from 1891 and continued after his death in 1915, and was the city’s principal organ of criticism of colonial rule.\textsuperscript{18} It criticized European imperialism abroad and encouraged cultural nationalism at home in Lagos. Scholars have identified Jackson as a pan-Africanist, but he is usually overshadowed by figures of greater stature, such as Blyden. Jackson’s form of pan-Africanism marked both a continuation of Blyden’s theories and an expansion of early pan-Africanist thought that has yet

\textsuperscript{14} See Fig 1. – Map of West Africa.
\textsuperscript{15} Lynch, \textit{Blyden: Pan Negro Patriot}, 228.
\textsuperscript{17} John Payne Jackson in “The Late Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden,” \textit{Lagos Weekly Record}, February 24, 1912, also cited in Omu, “Journalism and the Rise of Nigerian Nationalism,” 525.
\textsuperscript{18} Omu, \textit{Press and Politics}, 30 and 50.
to be explored. Through Jackson and his Record, we can see how pan-Africanist notions of race and culture worked within the local politics of Lagos.

**The Lagos Weekly Record and Nigerian Nationalism**

The *Lagos Weekly Record* was the most popular Nigerian newspaper of its time, and it remains the most researched publication for scholars of Nigerian history, culture, and politics in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^{19}\) While historian Fred I.A. Omu details many Saro publications in his book on the early Nigerian press, he highlights the *Record* as the most successful publication both in readership and in influence.\(^{20}\) Omu’s discussion of Nigerian newspapers and their role in anti-colonial protest is central to this thesis. He provides the most detailed look at Jackson in both his aforementioned book and in an article that focuses on Jackson as a Nigerian nationalist.\(^{21}\) Omu describes Jackson as “the most outstanding journalist in the whole of West Africa,” whose publication was “an arsenal of ideas from which opponents of the government took their weapons.”\(^{22}\) This does not mean, however, that Jackson spoke on behalf of all Nigerians, or that he considered himself a Nigerian nationalist as Omu proposes.

Portraying Jackson as a Nigerian nationalist and the *Record* as a nationalist paper misses the complexity of the Saro’s relationship with Lagos and its inhabitants. Jackson indeed organized anti-colonial protest in response to British imperialism; Omu points out that most of the correspondence and petitions written to colonial officials in London and to local administrators were authored by Jackson.\(^{23}\) In doing so, however, Jackson was not acting solely

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\(^{19}\) Omu, 35; Sawada, “Educated Elite and Associational Life,” 49.


\(^{21}\) Omu, “Journalism and the Rise of Nigerian Nationalism.”

\(^{22}\) Omu, *Press and Politics*, 34–35.

\(^{23}\) Although Omu does not specify how many petitions Jackson wrote or when exactly Jackson took on this role, from the context of the chapter it seems Omu is referring to some period of time from 1897-1915. Omu, 35.
as a Lagosian. Rather, he, like Blyden, considered himself to be African and a citizen of West Africa.24 This thesis will examine Jackson as a West African nationalist (someone who envisioned a federation of sovereign African nations), an African nationalist (someone who admired and protected all African cultures), and a pan-Africanist (someone who believed that he and others of African descent were a single people with a common destiny).

Although Jackson is credited as the founder and editor of the *Lagos Weekly Record*, the publication reflected the views of multiple authors. The writers responsible for the *Record* were unnamed (at least in 1912), but historian Nozomi Sawada provides a list of agents working for the *Record* in 1919 showing the number of its employees, a total of eight at the time.25 The *Record* also repeatedly cited its counterparts from across West Africa who were also educated elites; among the cited newspapers were the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* and the *Gold Coast Nation*.26 About 700 copies of the *Record* were distributed each week, but the amount of times it was reread is unknown.27 While the *Record* is usually associated with Jackson’s voice, this thesis will pose it as reflective of the views of a group of writers and more broadly of the Saro in general who are cited and described by the journal. In doing so, the “writers of the *Record*” and “the *Record*” will be used interchangeably to describe the actions and opinions expressed in the publication. “The Saro” will be used when the actions of multiple educated elites are described by the *Record*. Articles in the *Record* had typos and used language that might seem incorrect to us, but I have left the writing as it was and, due to the frequency, will not use [sic] in any quotes.

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25 Sawada cites “List of Agents of the Lagos Weekly Record in 1919 Accra: Mr. T. Laing; Winnebah: Mr. G. E. Eminsang. B.L.; Ibadan: Mr. D. A. Obassa, Iddo gate; Kano: Mr. O. T. George, Sabon-Gari. & Mr. A. Victor Johnson; Lagos: Mr. C. W. George, Marins; Tika-Tore Printing Office, Broad Street; Sogunro Store, Akinsemoyn Street; Remington Store, Tinubu Square; Mr. Ibaru, 89 Ibale-Agbede; Olujare Medicaine Store, Borad Street; Mohammed Ali, 95 Offin Marins. Oshogbo: Mr. Chas. B. Randall. Sawada, “Educated Elite and Associational Life,” 52.
26 Cited in *Lagos Weekly Record*, February 17, 1912; *Lagos Weekly Record*, October 19, 1912, respectively.
1912, the Imagining of “Nigeria,” and the Beginning of Protests Against It

The events of 1912 were crucial in the development of Nigerian, West African, and pan-African consciousness, but they have been generally overlooked by scholars. Scholarship has instead focused on 1914 as the beginning of a new era in Nigerian history. This has been for good reason, as this was the year that the colony of Nigeria was created from the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigerian protectorates, a process that continued through the First World War. However, the amalgamation was originally announced in 1912, and the announcement was accompanied by a subsequent backlash from both Saro and native Nigerians. In 1912, Saro journalists’ criticism shifted from rhetoric to on-the-ground political organization among various peoples of Southern Nigeria—a moment when pan-Africanist thought became pan-Africanist action.

The amalgamation of the two protectorates meant the restructuring of legislative systems in the South. (Figure 2.) The British began restructuring the newly conquered Northern protectorate in 1903, but until 1912 Southern Nigerians had preserved some autonomy through treaties with the British. The amalgamation included British proposals for a land tenure reform, which the Saro associated with autocratic rule used in the Northern Protectorate and the limiting of autonomy. Though individual communities had property at stake, the Record also described the land tenure reform as an attack on all African sovereignty and way of life. The pressure of the land tenure reform therefore encouraged the Saro to ally with native Nigerians of various cities in what I argue was a pan-African movement.

29 See Fig 2. – Map of Nigeria, 1914.
The Saro’s association of land tenure with autocratic rule was in part due to the appointment of Frederick Lugard as Governor of Lagos in 1912. Lugard had colonized Northern Nigeria through military conquest. There he had put in place a system of indirect rule in which local leaders continued to run daily affairs, but were ultimately answerable to his authority. Upon Lugard’s appointment, his previous military conquests were commended by an unnamed English newspaper (cited by the Record): “it is a fitting sequel to a great career, a career which has already left indelible traces on the destinies of the Dark continent—both East and West—that to Sir Frederick Lugard should have fallen the task of welding the two Nigerias into one whole. The maker of Northern Nigeria, he returns to complete his work.”

Still, Lugard was not the major target of the Record’s criticisms in 1912 as he was in later years; instead, it was the British Empire. And so while scholars have chosen to focus on Lugard as the key figure of Nigerian history during this era, this thesis does not.

Blyden’s death in February 1912 also made the year a crucial time of transition for the Lagosian Saro and for Jackson in particular as they reflected on Blyden’s legacy. Pan-Africanist sentiment had been present in Lagos since the late-nineteenth century, and Blyden was its main champion. Mourning his death and simultaneously facing further British colonial domination, the educated elite of Lagos expanded on Blyden’s notion of a single African race. The Saro became the lead pan-Africanist thinkers of West Africa, and Lagos became the scene of a pan-Africanist activist movement.

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Context

If, however, Lagos was considered the heart of the pan-Africanist community, then it was also the seat of British power – the place from which British control over the region was extended. The city was governed by the British, and the majority of Africans permitted to participate in the administration of the crown colony were the educated elite, many of them from Liberia and Sierra Leone. Daily criticism of British imperialism was more common in Lagos largely because it was there that the British had the greatest presence.

While Jackson may now be remembered as a fundamental actor in early Nigerian nationalism, at the time, he, like many others of the educated elite, acted in between the colonial government and native Nigerians. Many Saro were both intermediaries and anti-colonial agitators. The Saro had to navigate this in-between status. As we will come to see, although they were fierce advocates of the sovereignty of native Nigerians, they did not consider themselves native Nigerians. They were African, but recognized they had little in common with the African cultures of the region that they so fiercely protected. They therefore knew little about the African race they claimed to be a part of.

A note on terminology: when referring to the indigenous peoples of Nigeria, I will use the term native Nigerians. This simplification does not encompass the diversity of cultures in Nigeria, but it does reflect the distinction that the Saro made between themselves and others. This thesis will not pass a moral judgement on the Saro. Since the Saro played a significant role in Nigerian history, historians have had the tendency to judge the Saro’s contribution on moral grounds. Nigerian historian E.A. Ayandele has described the Saro as “deluded hybrids” and colonial “collaborators.” Such approaches obscure the complexity of Nigerian politics and

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usually ignore Saro notions of pan-Africanism. This thesis will attempt to examine the Saro as they were on the eve of amalgamation, pressured on both sides by the British imperial authority amassing in Lagos and by their own convictions on the necessity of racial unity. The Saro associated with the *Lagos Weekly Record* were pan-Africanists, but they were fundamentally shaped by the specific circumstance of Lagos, 1912.
Figure 1. – Map of West Africa. United Nations, Feb 28, 2005. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/59/Westafrica.png

Figure 2. – Map of Nigeria, 1914. Copyright 2019 Mapsland https://www.mapsland.com/africa/nigeria/large-detailed-old-map-of-southern-and-northern-nigeria-1914
Chapter 1

FAMILIAR STRANGERS: SARO PERCEPTIONS OF OTHER AFRICANS

*Odo kii san ko gbagbe isun re*
No matter how far a stream flows, it never cuts off its source
—Yoruba Proverb

In December 1912, the writers of the *Record* complained that settlers in Liberia had done little to meet and integrate with their African neighbors. The Liberians, comprised of American immigrants and their children, coming “from their bondage in America have not realized that they were returning home.”

The Liberians referred to indigenous Africans in the region as “natives” (rather than “Liberians”). The *Record* felt that the use of “native” to distinguish the settlers from other Africans drew an unnecessary “distinction between themselves and their aboriginal brethren implying that they are not one and the same.”

Yet, the *Record* also used the term “native” to describe indigenous Africans in Nigeria. The writers of the *Record* held pan-Africanist notions of a single African race that did not always translate well into the actual situation of Lagos in 1912. Even connected by a notion of race, the Saro’s clothing, speech, and formal education distanced them from their African “brethren.”

The peculiarities that marked immigrants to Liberia as distinct were passed down to their children, such as John Payne Jackson, the renowned editor of the *Lagos Weekly Record.*

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3 “The Native, Liberia’s Greatest Asset,”
4 Among the immigrants from Maryland who travelled to Liberia around this time was Jackson’s mother, Ana Maria Scott. After settling in Liberia, Scott married another American immigrant, Thomas Payne Jackson. SPECIAL
was born in Liberia and educated there by an Episcopalian missionary from Virginia. Although born on the African coast and of African descent, Jackson remained distinctly Liberian in the context of Lagos. He and many of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean educated elites who moved to Nigeria struggled to find affinities with other Africans.

The Saro were visibly foreign to Lagos and Nigeria because they had modeled themselves in speech and dress after Englishmen. They understood themselves as African and sought to advocate for Africans, but did so while socially distinct from native Nigerians. In 1905, the *Record* published a statement that its goal was “to give greater prominence to the Native point of view.” The *Record* did not specify what the native point of view was, but intended to be an “exponent” of it. In an attempt to fulfill this role, the *Record* sought “a thorough comprehension on both sides of the views held by [Europeans and native Nigerians], and a united effort to bring these into reconciliation where they happen to clash or differ.” Despite the language of reconciliation, the *Record* specifically privileged the perspective of native Nigerians, and stated that it would often “take up a position which is directly opposed to and in antagonism with the prevailing view held by the European.”

Yet the native point of view was not comprised of one single perspective, nor was it strictly hostile to European views. While there were several different kingdoms and subgroups in Nigeria, there were three principal groups that comprised the majority of Nigerians and who would be directly affected by British imperialism. It is important to note these three ethnicities to show the diversity of populations in Nigeria, and to note who the Saro looked to for examples of how to be “African.”

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COLLECTIONS (Papers of the Maryland State Colonization Society), Subscribers Reports Census, 1817-1902, MSA SC 5977, Film Number M 13247-1, 1837 Census, Ann Mariah Jackson.


In Lagos and the surrounding area of southwest Nigeria were the Yoruba people. The Yoruba, due to their proximity to the coast and to the crown colony of Lagos, were in the most contact with the British colonial administration.\(^7\) As a consequence, however, the Yoruba had the longest history of resentment toward British influence and British control over trade and territory in Nigeria.\(^8\) The most significant subgroup of Yoruba speakers cited in the Record was the Egba. The Egba were the first to be in contact with European missionaries and, because of efforts to unify among themselves in the mid-nineteenth century, they maintained their sovereignty until the advent of the colony of Nigeria in 1914.\(^9\) The Egba city of Abeokuta was just north of Lagos, putting them in direct contact with the educated elite, and, as their sovereignty was threatened, they became great allies of the Record.

In the southeast, there was the Igbo speaking people, who, because many were farmers, were perhaps most threatened by the coming land tenure act. Unlike other ethnicities in Nigeria, the Igbo did not have a centralized political entity during the time of British imperialism. Instead, each Igbo village had its own government led by community elders or other traditional elites.\(^10\) The Igbo along with the Yoruba occupied the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria.\(^11\)

The Hausa-Fulani people of Northern Nigeria were the most politically unified and culturally impenetrable group to European missionaries, to the Saro, and to other native Nigerians. By 1912 they had a single system of self-governance that distinguished them from the various and diverse populations of Southern Nigeria. The Hausa once considered themselves a separate ethnicity, but Fulani pastoralists conquered and absorbed the Hausa states in 1804. The

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\(^11\) Blyden’s parents, who were born in Africa before being taken to the West Indies, were most likely Igbo. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, 210.
two Islamic groups became so intertwined over the course of the next 100 years that by the time British forces attacked and conquered Northern Nigeria in 1903 the two factions had essentially become one Hausa-Fulani people. Their practice of Islam rather than Christianity, their education in Arabic, and their emirate-based political organization set them apart from their Yoruba and Igbo neighbors. Despite the stark differences between the different ethnicities of Nigeria, the Record considered them all to be a part of the African race and to possess an inherently African perspective.

This chapter will examine how the educated elite worked through pan-Africanist theories of race as they interacted with other Africans. An examination of language used in the Record to describe race reveals that the Saro admired native Nigerians for practicing their individual African cultures. They defended African customs, but nonetheless felt distanced, culturally, by their formal education and did not participate in local customs. By having a generalized notion of African peoples and an admiration for all things African, the Saro created their own picture of a single African race. Yet, pan-Africanist thought did not erase the clear distinctions of culture and class that distanced Western-educated elites from native Nigerians. The Record detailed the desire for a single African race that held within it different cultures.

What Did It Mean to Be African?

The Saro, who by 1912 were almost entirely born on the continent as children of the original immigrants, considered themselves African. Yet, their idea of an African race became increasingly complicated as they met other Africans. For the Saro who resided in Lagos, it was not uncommon to meet and form relationships with Yoruba elites who were indigenous to Lagos.

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12 July, 137.
and the surrounding region.\textsuperscript{13} Despite the differences they saw between themselves and native Nigerians, the Saro found a shared heritage in the pan-Africanist belief that they were all of a single African race. Edward Blyden was crucial in reassuring the Saro of their African heritage and instilling pride in that heritage. A periodical from Sierra Leone was cited in the \textit{Record} and claimed that due to Blyden “the word \textit{Negro} became shorn of the degrading associations which gathered around it in the [eighteen] fifties and sixties in Sierra Leone. It is due to the late Doctor that we of to day prize the word and are proud to call ourselves even \textit{niggers} if need be.”\textsuperscript{14} Saro intellectuals in Lagos, however, adapted pan-Africanist thought to fit into their local context and into their own understanding of race, often with greater depth than what is usually ascribed to Blyden.\textsuperscript{15} In particular, their view was more practical and not as blindly optimistic as Blyden’s, nor was it as reliant on a dichotomy between Europeans and Africans. Because of Blyden’s prominence as an intellectual, scholars have used him as the archetype of a pan-Africanist thinker in West Africa around this time. Historian and philosopher Kwame Appiah argued that Blyden, and therefore pan-Africanists in general, “responded to their experience of racial discrimination by accepting the racialism it presupposed.”\textsuperscript{16} Appiah contends that the shared heritage of African descendants provided the base for pan-Africanist thought, but European attitudes solidified it—that is, that pan-Africanism was shaped by European racialist thought. However, the Saro had developed their own thoughts on pan-Africanism that did not rely solely on European racialism as the foundation.

\textsuperscript{13} Esedebe, “Educated Elite in Nigeria Reconsidered,” 113.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Sierra Leone Weekly} newspaper cited in “The Late Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden,” \textit{Lagos Weekly Record}, February 24, 1912.
\textsuperscript{15} I am not doing a strict comparison with all of Blyden’s ideas. Rather, I mean to use opinions and ideas from the \textit{Record} that are distinct from a some of Blyden’s work to highlight how scholars can expand upon the current understanding of early pan-Africanist thought.
\textsuperscript{16} Appiah, \textit{In My Father’s House}, 17.
The Saro relied on certain notions of European and other pan-African racial thinking, but they equated race with nation. The Record voiced the need for “race preservation,” and the importance for Africans to “unite and formulate a national policy” from an African standpoint.17 The national policy was dictated, if not heavily impacted, by European imperialism which the Saro intended to “set off against.” However, the Saro also argued that race-preservation was “only another name for self-preservation.”18 By forming a national policy in response to European racism, the Saro and other Africans were “acting upon the dictates of reason and commonsense such as would actuate any other people placed in like circumstances.” The difference between race and self-preservation was a nominal one, and the main concern was for a national policy, in this case self-governance, which was “as important for [the African] as for any other human being.”19 The Record argued for a national policy as a way for West Africa to remain culturally and politically independent from European imperialists. They did not agree with the European notion that there was “‘an element of conflict which operates like a natural law in the relations of European and African.’”20 The Record only considered race to be the term in which national identity in West Africa could be understood.

Race-preservation was an important aspect of nationalism in West Africa, but distinctions of race as understood in the US and South Africa were altogether denounced. While the mistreatment of black South Africans and black Americans was predicated on European racism, the Record argued that this racism was based on a shallow perception of color. The Record considered racial violence to be a threat to all human life that “engenders a loss for human

17 “The Movement to Unite by the Native of South Africa,” Lagos Weekly Record, May 4, 1912.
18 “The Movement to Unite by the Native of South Africa.”
19 “The Movement to Unite by the Native of South Africa.”
20 “The Relations Between Whites and Blacks in West Africa,” Lagos Weekly Record, May 18, 1912.


24 The article admits, “Here, perhaps the premises may be faulty, but too often the conclusion appears only too sound.” *Review of Reviews* quoted in *Lagos Weekly Record*, January 6, 1912.

Admiration for the “African Personality”

To make sense of what it meant to be African, the educated elite looked to the daily lives of other Africans on the continent. While, by 1912, many of Saro were born in Africa, they did not practice indigenous customs nor were they a part of any Yoruba communities, who often saw them as “aliens.” In the Saro’s aspirations both to consider themselves African and to protect the “native point view” of other Africans, they took up the defense of all things they supposed indigenous to West Africa.

The notion of a single African race was complicated by the differences between the various indigenous communities in West Africa, the multitude of societies and civilizations on the continent, and the variations of class and culture between the diaspora and non-elite indigenous Africans. Native Nigerians practiced different religions from each other, had centuries of different customs, and spoke entirely different languages (with dialects varying between subgroups). Although native Nigerians did not practice a common culture, the Saro believed that there was one African way of life. The “African life” as described by the Record was vague and multi-faceted. It included various customs and laws of native Nigerians that the Record admired. To show their admiration for the African way of life, the Saro intervened in the local setting of the Lagos colony to defend native Nigerian practices when possible. Still, despite the Saro’s admiration and defense of indigenous African cultures, they did not practice them.

The Saro believed that there was an African way of thinking that was inherently different from European thinking, one that for native Nigerians was both natural and suitable. An article reprinted from the Gold Coast Nation argued that African children “ought to be trained to think naturally, that is to use their own reason and judgement which is the only way they can think

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26 Wyse, “The Term ‘Creole’ in the Literature on Sierra Leone,” 410.
aright and with any degree of intelligence.” For the writers of the Gold Coast Nation, the success and evidence of this training would result in Africans “prizing their own country and things above everything else.” The passage from the Nation reflects what was a common belief among the Saro: that the character of Africans was revealed through their customs. Adopting European culture and language was not only unnecessary but harmful to this character. As the article explained, “where one thinks in any other but his natural way, he undergoes a change which is fundamental, involving the serious consequence of placing his mind and soul under bondage to others.”

The Record reprinted a letter sent to it by a Lagosian named Oni-Shango that reflected the belief that African cultures were unique and valuable. The letter described David Livingstone, the renowned nineteenth-century Scottish explorer and missionary. The author stated that “Livingstone sang the praises of the African under his simple and unsophisticated life.” The “simple and unsophisticated life” was actually valued by missionaries who preferred “the standard of practical Christianity to which the African had attained in his simple communal life,” that the European with “four hundred years of profession had not reached.” While little information is given about the author of the letter, it seems from the name that Shango was a native Nigerian or someone who had adopted a Nigerian name. Either way, the author and the writers of the Record believed that there was something inherently valuable about African life.

Saro arguments rested on a notion of pre-colonial African cultures similar to what Blyden had called an “African Personality,” though without using that term. To understand “the

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28 The Record’s summary and commentary on the Gold Coast Nation article in “Weekly Notes,” Lagos Weekly Record, June 22, 1912.
29 A letter from Oni-Shango, Lagos April 22nd quoted in “A Religious Propaganda which Traduces its Would-be Convert,” Lagos Weekly Record, April 27, 1912.
30 Oni-Shango, quoted in “A Religious Propaganda which Traduces its Would-be Convert.”
31 Shango is a Yoruba Orisha, one of the pantheon of deities.
African” in the abstract, the *Record* usually looked to the Yoruba who lived around Lagos, specifically the Egba group of Yoruba speakers. When discussing the Egba, the writers of the *Record* tended to superimpose their own views of African life onto this specific group of people. Part of the *Record*’s admiration for the Egba relied on what it believed was the timelessness of its culture and forms of authority. The *Record* praised a group of native Nigerians in Egbaland who lived in the nearby city of Abeokuta. It was due to the “Egba patriot,” the *Record* argued, that “the government of Abeokuta with its ancient and legitimate status” was destined for “recognition and perpetuation.” The writers of the *Record* focused on specific native Nigerian laws and governments, but did so to assert the sovereignty of Africans more broadly. Discussions of the Egba served as a microcosm of the Saro’s views on what was inherently African.

In another instance, the *Record* discussed the Egba practice of polygamy in an article on “the Native Marriage Question.” The “question” was discussed as if it applied to all “natives.” Along with Blyden, the Saro believed that Egba polygamy, practiced around Lagos, was a specific example of an African institution. Blyden had argued that, by practicing polygamy, women could avoid being prostitutes, unmarried maids, or overused as child bearers. Not only did the *Record* agree that polygamy was effective, but it also argued that local Lagosian laws should enforce polygamy. The *Record* argued that to “give recognition to native marriage,” the colonial government should make it “impossible for [natives] to marry except under … native law and custom.” The *Record* in fact suggested that there was a homogenous culture in the Lagos colony, stating that the law should place “all natives without any distinction under the

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33 Egbaland is where Egba people live, mainly in southern Nigeria around Abeokuta. Oyewole, “Egba.”
operation of the native law.” The statement was altogether rash, authoritative, and reflective of Blyden’s view that compulsory polygamy was beneficial to preserving the African personality. The Record did not indicate that any of the Saro would also follow this law, as they did not consider themselves “natives.”

Although in the case of Egba polygamy the Record took a bullheaded approach to preserving African life, it did not intend to instruct native Nigerians on how to live. The Saro acknowledged they had little knowledge on the subject. Instead, in fulfilling the “role of the exponent of the native point of view,” the Record attempted to let native Nigerians speak for themselves. The Record knew that most native Nigerian chiefs did not have a Western education and therefore often did not have enough facility in English to discuss matters directly with British officials. However, the writers not only considered native Nigerian chiefs wise, but believed the chiefs knew “so much if not more about the land tenure system of the Native than any of his educated brethren.” They also acknowledged that the educated elite were occasionally so out of touch with the African personality that their own “notions on the subject [of land tenure] have become confused by reason of their training.” The Saro were, after all, heavily assimilated into European culture, a symptom of their formal education in European-run schools.

39 “Sir Walter Egerton and the Native Marriage Question.”
41 In reference to the Lagos Weekly Record, June 3 1905.
42 “Weekly Notes,” Lagos Weekly Record, June 29, 1912.
43 “Weekly Notes,” Lagos Weekly Record, June 29, 1912.
Black Europeans

Upon Blyden’s death in 1912, the Record celebrated his efforts to destroy the “false, unnatural and fatal attitude … of an African in his own home,” who was “divorced from his own indigenous life, and with borrowed speech, borrowed habits and wonders of life, a borrowed dress and borrowed ideas and conceptions.” The Record feared that if it encouraged the same type of assimilation the Saro had undergone, then native Nigerians would be misled into “striving after a foreign life which can only prove a delusion and snare for [them].” The Record rejected any form of westernization or British assimilation that might affect native Nigerians. The writers nevertheless continued to live the so-called “borrowed life” of westernized upbringing. They were Africans in principle, but understood that they were not African in practice.

The Saro attempted to “look at things from the African standpoint,” as Blyden had done. Among the West African Saro, there was some disagreement about the nature of their own status in relation to other Africans. However, the Record was consistently adamant that, despite the Saro’s formal education, they could not replace nor speak for native Nigerians on certain matters. The Record argued that if the Saro were to be simultaneously African and westernized, then they had to contribute to the political benefit of Africans and attempt to work with native governments.

The Saro’s formal education was useful as a means of relaying African perspectives to colonial officials. The Record admitted that the Saro’s “knowledge of European methods may prove a help to the Native in his contract with the European,” but argued that “it is only in this

44 “The Late Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden,” Lagos Weekly Record, February 24, 1912.
45 “The Late Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden.”
46 “Death of Dr. Blyden,” Lagos Weekly Record, February 17, 1912.
way that they have an advantage over the aboriginal Native.” In its criticism, the *Record* identified Liberians, in particular, who “have acquired some insight into the life of the European and his methods.” The *Record* dismissed this insight, stating that “such life and methods do not apply to Africa.” To gain insight into the life and methods of Africa, as the *Record* understood them, the Saro would have to look to native Nigerians, or in the Liberian case, Africans indigenous to Liberia. The *Record* urged the Liberian and Lagosian Saro to adopt its notion of pan-Africanism, and it condemned them for “claim[ing] to be superior to the people who know more about the African life which they, the Liberians have to lead.”

The *Record* also criticized the Gold Coast educated elite for objecting to “an ‘uneducated’ native chief” being sent to speak in England on the laws regarding forests in Nigeria. In response to the objection, the *Record* stated that “this is a mistake which is too common with the educated Native and tells very much against him. He thinks his education covers everything and is the be-all and end-all of everything.” To the writers of the Record, formal education was not a sign of superiority. In fact, formal education often ignored and devalued the knowledge and practice of African customs.

Much of the *Record’s* understanding of what made someone “African” was missing from the Saro’s own daily lives. However, Blyden proposed that the educated elite were still African, despite lacking the African personality. The *Record* argued that “[Blyden] 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’s* pan-Africanist thought held that all people of African descent were African regardless of their

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50 “Death of Dr. Blyden.”
nationality or culture, and thus the Saro could find an African identity in the natural and unchangeable hue of their skin and consequently their race. Relying on a pan-Africanist notion of race, the Record reiterated the statement that, “the Ethiopian cannot change the color of his skin.”

Yet, the Record did not consider Blyden’s legacy, which posited that the Saro were African regardless of their formal education, to be an all forgiving pardon. Instead, the Saro had to act as revolutionary Africans and as Africans with political power. The Record argued, “the political effect of Dr. Blyden teachings has been to reinvest as it were the lettered African with his racial character and political standing.” Although knowledge of the English language did not transform the educated elite into Europeans, they did have to recover their “racial character” by maintaining a sense of African nationalism. Blyden’s death in 1912 and the planned amalgamation provided the perfect impetus for the Record’s anti-colonial movement to push beyond rhetoric and for them to reinvest in the political situation of Lagos. This will be further discussed in chapter 3, but pan-Africanist sentiment was stirring after Blyden’s death. The Record said of Blyden: “the work which is destined to live and grow, although of a revolutionary character, is the awakening he has produced with the African.”

The Record sought to transform the nature of the Saro’s formal education into a tool that could help them explore their inherent African character. By transforming British education into a tool of pan-Africanist nationalism, the Record argued that the true test of Saro education and “the highest and surest sign of intellectual development is where the leaven of foreign notions acts to quicken the conceptions of the African into greater activity and keenness.”

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51 “Death of Dr. Blyden.”
52 “Death of Dr. Blyden.”
53 “The Late Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden.”
54 “Weekly Notes,” Lagos Weekly Record, June 22, 1912.
education, when used in this way, was supposed to stoke the “revolutionary character” of the Saro without “taking them out of their natural groove, which would mean depriving them of their source of inspiration and bastardising them.”55 The writers of the Record argued that European education was a tool to be used rather than flaunted.

A successful use of formal education would be to act with a pan-Africanist mindset, that is, to act on behalf of native Nigerians. Native Nigerian chiefs were regularly summoned into colonial courts in Lagos to explain matters pertinent to locals, and the Record stated that these were things that “the educated native ought to be able to explain if he had not turned his back upon his own.”56 There was a sentiment of self-recovery for the educated elite that suggested they had a natural and inherent African character that was only obscured by westernization. As an example of “high intelligence and patriotism on the part of the educated African,” the Record cited Adegboyega Edun, the secretary to the Egba government. 57 The “Hon. A Edun,” as he was cited, was originally Rev. J.H. Samuel and attended an institution in England.58 Edun was said to possess not only “intelligence and fact, but the higher virtues of moderation and self-denial.” 59 Edun’s humility, and perhaps his willingness to change his name to reflect his Egba heritage, “enabled him to bring himself into attune with his own native government and methods without any trouble or friction arising by reason of his foreign training.”60 He successfully practiced pan-Africanism where the Liberian had failed. The educated elite, when working in concert with native Nigerians, could pose as a significant equal in law-making to that of British imperialist.

56 “Weekly Notes,” Lagos Weekly Record, June 29, 1912.
60 “Weekly Notes” and “Epitome of News,” Lagos Weekly Record, June 22, 1912.
The Record believed that a partnership of the educated elite and indigenous Africans was the means through which a West African nation could come into being. If the Saro were able to “realize that the aboriginal Native is their kin and kith,” as the Record proposed, “they could use their advantage with great effect in strengthening the ties of their relationship with the aboriginal Native.”61 The impact of a pan-Africanist bloc in the local setting of Lagos was considered to be beneficial to the whole of West Africa. If, for example, the Liberian educated elite were able to “cease to war upon their brethren and instead receive them with open arms of brotherly love, and … make the whole country an undivided whole, Liberia will then become a factor amongst the West African tribes and a factor which has to be reckoned with.”62 The writers of the Record thought as pan-Africanists, not just Nigerian nationalists, but applied their theories to the local setting of Lagos and encouraged other Saro across West Africa to do the same.

The Saro’s application of pan-Africanism in West Africa was naturally riddled with contradictions: pre-existing biases and distinctions of status based on education, wealth, and sophistication. What unfolded after Blyden’s death in February 1912 cannot be described as a full recovery of the writers’ “African selves.” While Blyden’s legacy promised a vision of renewed Africanness despite assimilation, the writers of the Record found themselves stuck in between being defenders of the “voice of the native,” on the one hand, and, on the other hand, being culturally British and admiring aspects of British colonial administration. Western education may not have been the antithesis to Africanness, but it often pulled individuals further away from the African cultures they sought to protect and emulate. Knowing that stepping deeper into assimilation made it more difficult to represent an African perspective, the educated

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61 “The Native Liberia’s Greatest Asset.”
62 “The Native Liberia’s Greatest Asset.”
elite vehemently opposed what they referred to as “Black Europeans.” Such “Black Europeans” may have been anti-colonial—they agitated the colonial government and challenged colonial authority—but, unlike the writers of the Record, they failed to value or completely ignored the perspective of Africans who were not formally educated.

The next chapter will look at how the writers of the Record navigated the colonial system in Lagos, and how they used it to their advantage. It will also examine more closely the tension between the Saro’s place in the colonial government and their admiration for native Nigerian cultures. There was a constant imagining of the African race, its internal similarities, and its distinction from European society, but in 1912, with the colonial pressure of amalgamation, the Saro of Lagos were forced to take up the practical defense of the culture and self-governance in Southern Nigeria. They did so by advocating for the African perspective, but on British term.
Chapter 2

UNDER THE COLONIAL GUISE: SARO RELATIONSHIPS WITH BRITISH IMPERIALISM

_Onye fee eze, eze efee ya_
If a person serves the king,  
the king will also serve that person  
—Igbo Proverb

The _Lagos Weekly Record_, among other West African newspapers, has been cited by scholars as a tool of early Nigerian nationalists.² Most of the educated elite newspapers in West Africa framed themselves as anti-colonial, and scholars consider John Payne Jackson an African nationalist. Yet, the Saro were not outsiders to colonial governments. While protesting the British presence in Nigeria, the Saro simultaneously lived alongside, worked with, and at times emulated the British. Secondary literature has also emphasized the mutual amiability between the educated elite and colonial officials.³ Members of the educated elite served on the Legislative Council of Lagos, worked with British colonial officials in Lagos, and corresponded with British officials overseas. Jackson printed the _Lagos Weekly Record_ at his Samadu Press, located on the southwest corner of Lagos Island, just down the road from the State Governor’s House.⁴ The Saro’s education afforded them a relationship and influence with colonial officials in Lagos that other Nigerians did not have.

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¹ Pachocinski, _Proverbs of Africa_, 193.  
² For example see Omu, “Journalism and the Rise of Nigerian Nationalism,” 525; Sawada, “Educated Elite and Associational Life,” 49.  
³ Such as Omu, _Press and Politics_, 34.  
Scholars have overlooked how these two dynamics—the Saro’s close relationship with the British and their opposition to British rule—overlapped. The Saro condemned British ideologies regarding race and religion, and identified and acted as a pan-Africanist front alongside native Nigerians. But they did so in the context of British imperialism. The Saro believed that British rule laid the foundation for a West African federation, as scholars have pointed out, but they also believed that European education could be used to further native Nigerian sovereignty. The Saro, while criticizing the colonial government, often used and appreciated its administrative structure. Working within the colonial system, they presented the African standpoint in British terms.

Connections

The Lagosian Saro had a long history of friendship with British officials. Jackson was friends with Gilbert Carter, governor of Lagos Colony from 1891 to 1897, after Blyden, the preeminent pan-Africanist scholar of his time, had introduced them. To remain in the governor’s good faith, Jackson avoided discussing Lagosian politics and instead criticized the British presence in other parts of Nigeria. During Carter’s time in office, Jackson even went so far to criticize Yoruba groups in the hinterland for refusing trade with the British, stating that “the action of the Egbas is having the most injurious and unwholesome effect upon the trade of this Colony and the peace and quiet of the interior countries.” Jackson maintained an influence on the governor and other colonial officials and, in 1892, he even found himself agreeing with them. The relationship between Jackson and Carter was further strengthened by the fact that,

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until 1900, Carter helped subsidize publication of the *Record*. The nature of Jackson’s relationship with Carter has spurred debates among scholars on the validity of Jackson’s nationalist identity. Omu has defended Jackson’s nationalism, arguing that, despite the subsidy, by 1897 his stance was decidedly anti-colonial.⁸

Jackson’s relationship with the governor became a unique asset that he could use to challenge the colonial authority. He had an input on issues in Nigeria that other Saro with formal connections to the colonial government did not. Some Africans in Lagos occupied positions as clerks or advisors in the colonial government, but their power was limited. The highest position an African could have in the colonial government was alongside other British officials in the legislative council, a body that proposed policies and oversaw colonial finances. Africans in the legislative council were, however, unofficial members.⁹ Even though the legislative council had the nominal ability to pass ordinances, the governor had near autocratic authority to accept or deny these ordinances.¹⁰ When the governor did seek policy advice, he most often went to an executive council which, in 1912, had no African members.¹¹ The Africans on the legislative council therefore had little influence on the governor as unofficial members.

Effective protest of the British colonial system required the educated elite to do so in the British forms of language and procedure. The Saro viewed their formal education as a tool which could be used to relay the perspective of native Nigerians. In one article, the *Record* stated that it had a responsibility to voice the opinions of native Nigerians to the British.¹² Responsibility “rests upon we his literate brethren who are in touch with the Government and understand the

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⁸ Omu, *Press and Politics*, 34.
¹⁰ Tamuno, 556.
¹¹ Tamuno, 556.
issue raised.” 13 Formal education was used as a necessary form of translation, a role so important that the educated elite “shall be guilty of unpardonable criminal negligence if we fail to enlighten our brethren in the interior to enable them to give the explanation wanted.”14 In enlightening native Nigerians and communicating their viewpoints to British officials, the educated elite were in effect partnering with native Nigerians.

Although the Saro were aware that a British education separated them from other Africans, they presented themselves to the British as a united coalition alongside native Nigerians. An example of appeals to the British government by formally educated and traditional Lagosian elites that conveyed a single pan-African identity was that made by the People’s Union of Lagos. The People’s Union was Lagos’s first formal political organization.15 It was originally created by two educated elites who had immigrated from Sierra Leone, but by 1912 the group had expanded to include local traditional elites and was concerned with issues across all of Nigeria. On August 17, the Record reprinted a telegram from the People’s Union signed by “Chief Ojora—Chairman” and co-founder “Orisadipe Obasa—Secretary.”16 Obasa was born in Sierra Leone. However, he was of Egba origin and his mother was from Abeokuta.17 Although little is known about Chief Ojora, his position as chairman shows that traditional elites worked alongside the Saro, blurring the line, in this case, between the Saro and native Nigerians.

The People’s Union telegram, directed toward the Secretary of State for the Colonies, stated that “a Committee … on the Native Land Tenure System of the Colony and Protectorate

13 “The Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Native Land Tenure Question.”
14 “The Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Native Land Tenure Question.”
16 “The People’s Union of Lagos and the Native Land Tenure Question,” Lagos Weekly Record, August 17, 1912.
should not be concluded without the Native’s view on the matter so vitally important to him.”

The emphasis on the native point of view echoed Blyden’s and the *Record*’s view of the importance of preserving the African perspective and personality. Not only did the writers of the telegram refer to native Nigerians as “natives,” but in a fashion akin to the *Record* they presented themselves as an authority on native Nigerian opinion.

As discussed in chapter one, the writers of the *Record* distinguished themselves from native Nigerians in 1905 by defending a “native point of view” that was not necessarily their own. However, as evident from multiple 1912 issues of the *Record*, Saro writers, the People’s Union of Lagos, and more broadly the Lagosian educated elite presented a pan-African perspective to the British comprised of both native Nigerians and members of the Saro: all the “various peoples and districts” of Lagos. Although at times the Saro felt distant from other Africans, when parlaying with the British the two diametrically opposed views were only that of the British and the African. The Saro’s affiliation was also noted by English officials, who referred to the People’s Union as a “mass meeting of the native community in Lagos,” though many in the Union were Saro.

The educated elite aligned themselves with native Nigerians, but this alignment did not necessarily require a disdain for all aspects of the British colonial government. In certain ways, the Saro acted as liaisons between native Nigerians and British officials and did so without outright hostility. Although the *Record* maintained that the African perspective was important, its commentary on the telegrams exchanged between the People’s Union and the colonial government was hardly anti-colonial. The *Record* acknowledged such correspondence as

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18 “The People’s Union of Lagos and the Native Land Tenure Question.”
19 “The People’s Union of Lagos and the Native Land Tenure Question.”
20 “The People’s Union of Lagos and the Native Land Tenure Question.”
successful in voicing the perspective of native Nigerians and stated that the telegram’s efficacy was due to the “sympathy and consideration of the Secretary of State.” Despite Jackson’s reputation for anti-colonial rhetoric, the Record and the associated Saro seem to have appreciated some of the English officials while also rebuking the colonial system they represented. The Record’s amiable tone in this specific article did not discount their efforts to protect the interests of native Nigerian land owners, nor did it overshadow the significance of the mass meeting of Saro and native Nigerians organized by the People’s Union. The Record appreciated some British officials and corresponded with the British colonial government, while simultaneously using that correspondence to voice Nigerian protests.

**British West Africa**

Many of the educated elites, including Jackson and Blyden, believed that the British colonial system could foster a pan-African movement by providing a common language and infrastructure to West Africa and cited the “progress made in the commercial activities” in West Africa as evidence. In other words, there were practical reasons that the Saro accepted certain aspects of British imperial rule. An attachment to British rule was not conceived from admiration for British culture. Blyden and Jackson preferred British imperialism over rule by other European imperialists, who took a more autocratic approach to colonial rule. The Saro allowed and even encouraged certain forms of British imperialism in West Africa because they believed it was the best way to achieve a pan-Africanist ideal, for instance, in the form of a West African federation.

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21 “The Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Native Land Tenure Question.”
The British system was considered relatively lax compared to French imperialism, which sought to bring African territory into the French nation. Blyden feared that French rule would “destroy the native rule and authority, [and] overthrow the native dynasties.” Jackson also believed that French and German rule would be comparatively strict and cruel, and that they could “take a leaf from the book of the English.” He even hoped that the colonial government in Lagos would help further the self-unification of the Nigerian country. Both Blyden and the Saro wanted to avoid the shattering of a West African community and to prevent fragments of it being taken under French control. They advocated for and accepted British imperialism with the expectation that it would be relatively hands-off. Their expectations were partially confirmed by the British use of “indirect rule” in Northern Nigeria.

The standard form of British colonial rule coined as “indirect rule” by Frederick Lugard was first pioneered and implemented in Northern Nigeria. Indirect rule separated the daily management of local issues, which was given to traditional or appointed indigenous rulers, from management of taxes and commerce overseen by colonial officials. In Northern Nigeria, indirect rule was implemented in 1906 through the pre-existing system of Fulani governance. Authority was given to emirs, an Arabic term for local governors, minimizing British contact with the majority of Northern Nigerians. Despite the partial nature of autonomy that local rulers exercised under indirect rule, the Record found no issue with the British imperialist policy there, and in fact commended its application in Northern Nigeria: indirect governance in the

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24 Lynch, 194.
26 July, 350.
north, the *Record* claimed, was “the most effective way to rule.”\(^{30}\) The alternative was tampering with the natural fabric of Hausa-Fulani governance that had been practiced in Northern Nigeria since 1808. The full extent of what the Lagosian elite knew about the political situation in Northern Nigeria is unclear. However, it is evident that the writers of the *Record* equated indirect rule with the preservation of African society, echoing the sentiments of colonial officials themselves. In June 1912, the *Record* acknowledged that indirect rule occasionally required the somewhat arbitrary organization of separate “tribes” and “clans” and the appointment of a “head ruler” for each grouping—part of the “invention of tradition” described by Terence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm.\(^{31}\) The organization of Northern Nigerian peoples “means laying a true and solid foundation for native government to rest and enabling the superstructure to evolve on right lines.”\(^{32}\) The *Record* accepted British imperialism in Northern Nigeria because they believed it facilitated the continuation of self-governance.

The *Record’s* seemingly blind acceptance of indirect rule in Northern Nigeria could have been a consequence of their geographic separation from the rest of Nigeria and the Northern protectorate in particular. The *Record* also may have been acting on their hopes that British rule would provide a common infrastructure to the various communities in Nigeria.\(^{33}\) Regardless, British rule, viewed as a unifying system that preserved indigenous governments, was not only seen as less harmful than other forms of European imperialism, but was believed to be conducive to a pan-African ideal. The Saro fostered their own nationalist movement through the colonial government in Lagos and believed the same type of nationalist movement could thrive in the

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Northern Protectorate under the system of indirect rule. The Saro were informed by both an African nationalist perspective—which valued indigenous sovereignty—and a pan-Africanist way of thinking—which advocated for the unification of African peoples into a single federation of West African nations. These two perspectives were not always completely coherent, but the Saro attempted to act on both.

The writers of the *Record*, while critical of British cultural influence, still cherished certain aspects of British colonial rule. The *Record* noted the English as “the best colonizers,” who gave Africans “the full liberties and privileges of British subjects.”

As shown by their opinions on indirect rule, the Saro held the notion that African society could in some instances survive under European influence. This notion differed from that of Blyden, who believed there were certain aspects of African societies that should be reformed as well as certain aspects of European societies that should be borrowed, as long as the social systems already in place in African societies were left relatively intact.

The *Record* disagreed and, while accepting certain British systems of government, rejected British culture—the sole exception was perhaps their English speech and dress, which as stated came with a price and responsibility. Thus, the educated elite appeared to be similar to English colonial officials in their mannerisms, but were wary of British culture in a way that Blyden was not.

**Mimicry**

The Saro respected the British colonial government while condemning the principles of the British civilizing mission. As discussed in chapter 1, the Saro were trained in European schools and acted as Europeans. However, the Saro, to a certain degree, played the part of the

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34 “French Rule at Porto Novo.”

European because this was how they hoped to further their protest against the colonial government. They did not accept the notions of the British civilizing mission that were key to perpetuating British assimilation. The Saro thought that the unification of West Africa under British rule was possible, but were also critical of British attempts to alter the African cultures of the region. As cited in the Record, “the work of bearing the white man’s burden, too takes the form of filling the white man’s pocket.”36 This section will look at the extent to which emulation of the British was considered acceptable.

The Saro of Lagos, while infamous among British governors for their anti-colonial stance, were among the Africans in Nigeria most sympathetic to British cultural and political influence. As stated in chapter 1, Jackson and the writers of the Record resisted and were critical of westernization and attempted to preserve the cultures of Africans indigenous to Nigeria. However, like all of the Saro, Jackson and his compatriots had also been assimilated into European culture by formal education in missionary or British schools. Nigerian historian Emmanuel Ayandele has characterized the Saro as “hybrids” and “fake black men,” who were “superficially and artificially white.”37 Ayandele may have been overly critical in his characterization of the Saro, but they did emulate many of the perceived behaviors of their British counterparts. Even the Lagos Weekly Record, written in English despite the fact that other contemporary newspapers in the city were written in Yoruba, was a testament to Saro emulation of the British.38

The advertisements published each week in the Record suggest that Jackson and the Saro relied on commercial ties to England and played a part in facilitating the spread of English trade

36 “Mr. James Bryce Defends the Backward Races,” Lagos Weekly Record, February 10, 1912.
38 Omu, Press and Politics, 27.
and culture in Lagos. An advertisement on the last page of every issue published by the *Record* in 1912 featured a sketch of an Englishman dressed in a three-piece suit and top hat. His head was bordered by writing that stated: “Let us clothe you in the latest London fashions” on the left, and “We make a speciality of Goods suitable for West Africa” on the right. Included in the advertisement were directions to send requests to “The England Clothing Co. (and save money),” along with the businesses’ location on “29 G. Titchfield St., Oxford St., London, Eng.”39 (Figure 3.) The intended audience of these advertisements was the educated elite, who could afford to order English suits and were used to dressing in European attire. To be clear, the existence of an English clothing advertisement on one page of the *Record*’s issues does not prove Lagosian-English cultural ties. Yet, six out of nine advertisements on the first page of every issue also feature companies or services based in England, several of which were “prepared to execute orders for every description of Goods suitable for the West African Markets.”40 (Figure 4.) In fact, a total of at least four out of the eight pages of every issue had advertisements for English companies, making it hard to deny that there was some link between the Saro and English commerce and culture. From the inclusion of English clothing advertisements in the *Record*, it would seem that the Saro defended native Nigerian political autonomy, but did not often practice the culture of native Nigerians.

While the Saro were prone to following the same European culture they discouraged native Nigerians from following, the extent of their mimicry stopped at clothing and language. The Saro resisted the British civilizing mission, mistrusted Christianity, and formed this opinion independently from Blyden. Due to the great variety of social systems in Nigeria and the prematurity of colonial rule in West Africa at the time Blyden’s death, he did not witness the

39 Printed in every issue of the *Lagos Weekly Record*, 1912.
40 Printed in every issue of the *Lagos Weekly Record*, 1912.
West African federation he envisioned. However, before his death in 1912, even he had come to realize that the aspects of European society he admired, such as British commerce and Christianity, were repeatedly used to assimilate native Nigerians or to impose authoritarian colonial rule. The writers of the *Record* were relentless in their criticism of the European civilizing mission, asking “whether Civilisation,” always mentioned alongside Christianity, “has not passed the dividing line and crossed over to the contrary extreme of barbarism.”

On issues of practical governance, the *Record* worked with and at times applauded the British colonial system, but the *Record* was also clearly opposed to British ideologies behind imperial motivations. Where Blyden was perhaps naïve in his initial adoration of European Christianity, Jackson and the writers of the *Record* were instead vehemently cynical. The *Record* held that the civilizing mission of British imperialism—that is the mission to indoctrinate colonized peoples with the customs of European Christianity and British culture—had the intent to “‘Europeanise’ the people and to make them to be out of touch with their fellows and disloyal to their chiefs.” The Saro had experienced first-hand how Europeanisation led to the isolation of Africans: the educated elite had themselves been isolated in this way. Addressing assimilation, the *Record* wrote, “the missionary teaches the native to read and write and wear European dress; the trader and government official come along and calls him an ape and heartily despises him because he imitates the European in his dress and manner.” Many Saro did not intend to become full Europeans, despite their similarities in speech and dress, and even those who did were mocked by their British counterparts as unnatural mimics.

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The Saro’s fear of Europeanization was based on a belief that “twentieth century christianity and civilisation” led to Africans being “mistreated and even murdered with impunity.”

In an article published shortly before Blyden’s death, the Record contradicted Blyden’s view on Christianity:

The fact of the matter is that both Civilisation and Christianity are given over to the production of materialism and which leaves no room for morality and humanity. Hence it is that we find religion lending sanction to the destruction of human life and the Church invoking the aid of God for success in destroying human life. On the other hand Civilisation signifies in its cardinal meaning material development, and an unscrupulous system of exploitation to this end which ignores morality and humanity alike.

In the Record’s estimation, the notions of Civilization and Christianity as the means of improving African societies were deemed rather to be toxic to human life in Africa. Jackson believed that the work of Christian missionaries in Nigeria was attached to European assimilation and that it threatened the African nationalism.

Jackson had a clear preference for Islam as an “African” religion, as discussed in chapter 1. He therefore broke a long tradition of African Christian missionaries in West Africa—such as nineteenth-century African nationalists like Samuel Crowther, Reversible Johnson, Holy Johnson, and Blyden, among others. An important distinction to note is that the Record’s distaste for Christianity was not purely ideological, but was instead based on the form it took when spread in West Africa. The Record argued that the spread of Christianity in West Africa was particularly tied to European domination of commerce rather than “the merits of the religion itself.”

Even Blyden himself, who was a practicing Christian, eventually could not defend Christianity, as it was seldom spread.

44 “Weekly Notes,” Lagos Weekly Record, August 24, 1912.
47 All of whom are discussed in July, The Origins of Modern African Thought.
48 “Christianity versus Islamism in West Africa,” Lagos Weekly Record, June 1, 1912.
in West Africa without being attached to racism, colonial rule, and, in centuries prior, slavery.\textsuperscript{49} Christianity, and British customs more broadly, had become synonymous with the negative aspects of colonial rule in West Africa and colonial rule in general.

The writers of the \textit{Record} hoped that the British colonial government could provide a system of political infrastructure for an African nationalist movement to spread across the multiple groups within Nigeria and even across West Africa. On the other hand, the spread of British customs attached to colonial influence was seen as inappropriate and occasionally oppressive. Saro resistance to Christianity or British notions of “Civilization” worked towards the practical defense of pan-African nationalism. When dealing with the British colonial government, the Saro walked a fine line. On one side, they used British forms of speech and education to advocate on behalf of native Nigerians; on the other they rejected any instance of British culture that might negatively impact what they saw as the inherent qualities of native Nigerians.

The Saro’s relationship with the British colonial government was both cooperative and adversarial. Jackson and many of the educated elite believed that British colonial rule was the mildest form of European imperialism. The Saro also did not hesitate to utilize their formal education to communicate with British officials and relay the perspective of native Nigerians. Scholars such as Ayandele have described the Saro’s relationship with the British as symbiotic: the British reign was legitimized through these educated elite intermediaries, and the intermediaries gained status and authority in the colonial system. From the language of the \textit{Record} in 1912, it is apparent, however, that when pressed with the threat of British autonomy

\textsuperscript{49} July, \textit{The Origins of Modern African Thought}, 226.
over Nigerian land, some Saro used their status and literacy to advocate for other Africans. The proposal of the amalgamation of the two Nigerian territories acted as a catalyst for pan-African thinkers to rise from among the Saro’s ranks. Although Nigeria was formally founded in 1914, the groundwork of a pan-African movement was laid in 1912.

1912 should been seen as a key year of early African nationalism in Nigeria; it was the first year that the northern and southern protectorates were viewed as one. Jackson and the writers of the Record voiced anti-colonial and pan-Africanist rhetoric through the conduits of the British colonial government. Despite increased resistance to British culture, the Saro’s use of correspondence with the colonial government and the empire overseas persisted, but this correspondence was used to further African nationalist agendas. The next chapter will look at 1912 as a case study for the ways in which the Saro enacted pan-African thinking to further a movement of African nationalism in the midst of British imperialism. Although the different groups of indigenous Africans in Nigeria were not unified under one nationalist identity, an early form of pan-Africanism responded to British pressure for land tenure reforms.
Fig 3. – The England Clothing Co. advertisement of European attire partially targeted toward West African markets but featuring a depiction of an Englishman. *Lagos Weekly Record.*
Fig 4. – Front Cover, featuring companies that have connections between Europe and West Africa. Lagos Weekly Record.
Chapter 3

PAN-AFRICANIST REACTIONS TO AMALGAMATION AND LAND TENURE REFORM

Magana a ciki bata maganin yunwa
Talk in the stomach is not medicine for hunger
—Hausa Proverb

Before 1912, a single Nigeria existed in the imagination of relatively few people. The British announced that year that they sought to combine two adjacent but economically independent colonies, Northern and Southern Nigeria. To many indigenous Africans in these two colonies, “Nigeria” was a foreign concept, and amalgamation accompanied what for many was an alien process of land tenure reform. Most significant for this thesis, amalgamation was to the Saro both a threat to African sovereignty and a catalyst for a pan-African movement that united the various regions of Southern Nigeria in common purpose. Scholars have identified the protest against amalgamation as the birth of Nigerian nationalism. Some Saro, notably John Payne Jackson, protested land tenure policies on behalf of native Nigerians, but their protest, I argue, was motivated by West African nationalism, not Nigerian nationalism. That is, their actions were reflective of their pan-Africanist sentiments. Their actions, in fact, simultaneously helped give shape to these sentiments.

This chapter grounds the discussion of the Saro’s pan-Africanism in the local debate in 1912 over amalgamation and land reform. In doing so, it explores one of the contradictions of

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pan-Africanism in Lagos: the writers of the *Record* were only in contact with the Yoruba people who resided in the immediate hinterland of Lagos. Though the *Record* presented its campaign as an effort to protect the interests of all Southern Nigerians, the physical distance to Igbo villages in the east made it difficult for the Lagosian elite to work alongside the Igbo people.

The *Record* did not even show an interest in working with their neighbors in Northern Nigeria, where the British land tenure system was already in place. While its silence on land tenure in the north undermines claims that the Saro of the *Record* were Nigerian nationalists, we can still claim they were West African nationalists. The land tenure system in Northern Nigeria was an instance of British autocratic rule. Implementing it in Southern Nigeria as well would have established a pattern, and thus the Saro believed it would have threatened all of British West Africa. The Saro’s local protest of land tenure reform in Southern Nigeria was portrayed by them to be a defense of African sovereignty in general.

**Constructing Nigeria**

In 1912, no edition of the *Record* made mention of a single place called “Nigeria.” The two Nigerian protectorates shared little more than the common border between them and a river that flowed through both of them and gave each part of their name. They were dissimilar neighbors. As discussed in chapter 1, the three major ethnic groups—Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani—each had different cultures and histories. Each developed their own relationships with the British at different times and on different terms. The British gained control over the Northern protectorate through military conquest and used the pre-existing Fulani system of governance to rule the north indirectly.³ British influence in the Southern protectorate, however, was gained

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through treaties with individual Yoruba and Igbo groups. Each protectorate had its own form of land distribution and forms of authority. Yet, in joining the two protectorates, the British hoped to cut administration costs and use the south’s rich economy to support the north.

The amalgamation required significant restructuring of the Southern protectorate, which in many places had remained independent from administration in Lagos. The British acquired different segments of the south through a gradual process lasting around half a century. Due to this regional segmentation of Southern Nigeria, the southern protectorate did not have a single government to rule the territory. The Crown Colony of Lagos, for instance, was overseen by a legislative council, a system completely foreign to the appointed chiefs in the Igbo region of eastern Nigeria. To consolidate the various systems of self-rule in Southern Nigeria, the British believed that “the entire legislative and administrative system [in the South] would need to be remodeled.” Discussions of remodeling the southern administration included suggestions to abolish Lagos’s legislative council. But the most significant proposal was a land tenure reform measure that was announced alongside the amalgamation in 1912. Modeled after the land tenure system in the north, the proposed reform sought to shift control over land transactions from African families to the colonial government, and would affect all of the Southern protectorate. The Record dedicated itself to opposing the reform.

Jackson and many members of the Saro considered the restructuring of land ownership to be a direct attack on the sovereignty of the Yoruba people and a threat to an African way of life. Their opinions were echoed by other Africans in Lagos as well. In August 1912, the People’s

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5 Osuntokun, 4.
6 Osuntokun, 6.
7 An unnamed English newspaper cited in *Lagos Weekly Record*, April 13, 1912.
Union of Lagos—examined in chapter 2—organized a mass meeting in response to the land tenure act. An article from England discussing land tenure reform and a remodeling of the Southern protectorate after the northern system was read aloud to the assembly of Lagosians. The Record reported that the audience shouted “with one accord … that no discussion was needed.” It was clear to the audience that land tenure reform “would convert native landowners into squatters, uproot and render asunder the basis of their national life, and upset all national and social institutions thereby causing a terrible calamity the consequences of which were incalculable.” Land tenure was viewed by the Lagosians, formally educated and not, as a major British encroachment on native Nigerian communities, specifically on those that had remained relatively independent despite contact with British missionaries and European merchants.

Although the Record and the Lagosian audience referred to land tenure reform as an attack on “native … national life,” the “nation” in question was exclusively the Southern Nigerian protectorate. When the British proposed the implementation of a land tenure reform in the south, the Record opposed it in extreme terms, but it did not criticize the British for implementing the same form of land tenure in the north, where it already existed. The Record was not simply unsympathetic to their northern neighbors. Instead, it considered the two protectorates to be so radically different that their difference called for separate forms of administration, arguing that “there can be no analogy between the land tenure system in Southern Nigeria and that of Northern Nigeria.”

Despite the Record’s insistence that the protectorates were fundamentally distinct, it also referred to the system of land ownership in the south as natural to “the indigenous native tribes

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10 “The Native Land Tenure Question: Mass Meeting at Enu Owa.”
of Africa.” The *Record* was not only arguing that all African people had a common form of land tenure, but it also asserted that the systems of land ownership in Southern Nigeria were tied to the African way of life and therefore ought to be untouchable. Specifically, it explained that “land is held in common as a patrimony and as a heritage descendible from family to family with reversion to the children or heirs as their only inheritance and means of livelihood.” The *Record* associated land ownership in the south with native Nigerian autonomy, livelihoods, and wellbeing. It argued there was an essentially African quality to indigenous land ownership by describing inheritance as a “perpetual and continuing right from a common ancestor to his heirs associated.” It was explained that this form of inheritance was absent “in Northern Nigeria and marks a difference in the conditions affecting land as between the two Protectorates.” A principal difference of the two protectorates was most importantly the amount of “economic trees such as the palm [in the south] … which while adding value to the inheritance increases the prize set upon it.”

The *Record*’s disdain for land tenure reform in the south in contrast to its acceptance of the same system in the north can be explained by two things. For one, the *Record* held contradictory views on land tenure in the north. As discussed in chapter 2, the writers of *Record* saw indirect rule as perpetuating a pre-existing Fulani rule in the north—understood positively. In June 1912, for instance, the *Record* argued that the Fulani system of emirs, although at one time foreign to northern Nigeria, was an African system of governance. Yet, by August the advent of land tenure reform in the south led the *Record* to denounce Fulani rule as foreign to West Africa. The *Record* stated, “it should be explained in regard to the land tenure system in Northern Nigeria that the country had been conquered by the Fulanis and was under Fulani

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12 “British Policy and Native Rights.”
domination … The land system of the country may and probably is affected by this domination and cannot be regarded as the real land system of the country.”\textsuperscript{14} The Record had in fact adjusted its opinions on northern land tenure to fit its anti-reform campaign in the south. The Record’s reference to the land tenure of the “indigenous native tribes of Africa,” cited above, was meant to further alienate Fulani rule as foreign to Nigeria.

Secondly, the Record considered land ownership in southern Nigeria to serve a fundamentally different purpose than it did in the north. The south was largely comprised of agricultural land and land was therefore synonymous with natural wealth. Wealth was inherited through the inheritance of land. Jackson feared that land tenure would inevitably lead to the end of native Nigerian landownership and the native Nigerian way of life.\textsuperscript{15} The Record suggested, furthermore, that the reform directly violated British policy since “so far as they knew the Egbas had not broken any of the stipulations of the Treaty subsisting between them and the British.”\textsuperscript{16}

An association between land and wealth was also commonly used by the British to advocate for land tenure reform. As the Record described the position, the British argued that reform would protect indigenous land from European buyers, referred to as the “European concessionaire.”\textsuperscript{17} A European merchant had in the past “come and with his money would buy up all the land from the people and render them landless.” As the Record mockingly explained, the British believed that the land tenure reform would “work for the happiness and contentment of the present and future generations of the sons of Africa in the West African Dependencies of the British Crown, and strengthen their loyalty and devotion to the throne and person of the King.

\textsuperscript{14} “Sir William Geary and the Question of the Native Land Tenure System,” \textit{Lagos Weekly Record}, August 24, 1912.
\textsuperscript{15} Omu, “Journalism and the Rise of Nigerian Nationalism,” 536.
\textsuperscript{16} “The Native Land Tenure Question at Abeokuta,” \textit{Lagos Weekly Record}, August 17, 1912.
\textsuperscript{17} “Land Tenure Question at Oshogbo,” \textit{Lagos Weekly Record}, October 5, 1912.
of England for all time.” The British believed their policies were so representative of indigenous interests that one Englishman claimed, “the educated native barrister at Lagos is just as much a foreigner to the Efik or Ibo people… as the Englishman is.” The British thrust themselves into the role of guardian of “the native” in a similar fashion as the Saro had.

Although the British claimed and may have even believed that land tenure reform was in the best interest of indigenous Africans, they were hardly in touch with Africans outside of Lagos. In response to the British argument that land tenure reform was necessary to prevent merchants from buying property from indigenous Africans, the Record pointed out that, “unfortunately for this argument the Government had quite recently given a concession of 311 square miles of land to a European merchant at Sierra Leone”—a point repeated in various articles. The British officials in Lagos were both socially and physically separated from people outside of the coastal city. Although the Saro were mainly concentrated in Lagos as well, in 1912 they made efforts to visit native Nigerians outside of Lagos. While the Saro were in no way perfect in their representation of non-Western-educated Africans, they were in contact with native Nigerians in ways that the British were not.

**Pan-African Organization**

Although anti-colonial publications agitated British officials and occasionally swayed their opinion, Jackson’s most important contribution to the anti-colonial movement was organizing mass meetings across the hinterland of Southern Nigeria. As discussed in chapter 2, organizations like the People’s Union of Lagos demonstrated the collaboration between Africans

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20 “Land Tenure Question at Oshogbo.”
with Western educations, traditional elites of Nigerian society, and Lagosian locals. However, the People’s Union only worked for the benefit of the Lagosian community. Jackson’s campaign against land tenure reform was not confined to the pages of the newspaper, nor to Lagos. In 1912, he spent five months in the hinterland outside of Lagos organizing mass meetings, talking with native Nigerians, and reporting the news back to his compatriots at home.\(^\text{21}\)

While British officials claimed that land tenure was for the benefit of indigenous Africans, they did little to actually notify Africans of the policy. In Southern Nigeria, where many regions were administered by legislative councils or local rulers, what surprised native Nigerians about the amalgamation process was “the scant consideration accorded the Native in the matter.”\(^\text{22}\) Discussions on the amalgamation seemed to imply to the Record “that the merchants and the Colonial Office authorities are the only factors chiefly concerned.” In efforts to highlight the reform as absurd, the Record offered a practical solution in which, “if there was anything more wanting to be done, let them be told and they would do it but let them not be deprived of their rights to their ancestral lands.”\(^\text{23}\) Some Yoruba communities near Abeokuta, a city about ninety kilometers away from Lagos, were only made aware of the policy around July, four months after the official announcement.\(^\text{24}\) The news of reform came to Yoruba groups around Abeokuta in the form of a rumor, and caused a panic in the region:

> The rumor of the movement on the part of some influential people in Egbaland to deprive the Natives of the country of the right of ownership over their lands has been causing widespread alarm and unrest. Many farmers had left their farms and come to Abeokuta in order to ascertain from the Chiefs of their different townships if there was any truth in these rumours and what could be their meaning. On Saturday-the 27\(^{\text{th}}\) July some 100 Chiefs and over 2000 people waited on the Alake for the purpose of ascertaining from

\(^{21}\) Omu, “Journalism and the Rise of Nigerian Nationalism,” 537.


\(^{23}\) “The Native Land Tenure Question at Abeokuta.”

\(^{24}\) The earliest talks regarding land tenure reform were cited in “The Question of the Rights of Property in Land,” Lagos Weekly Record, March 23, 1912.
their King what would be the meaning of a report that was causing such widespread feeling of unrest which, it was greatly feared, would very seriously affect farmers and farming and conduce to paralyse the trade of the country.25

There were few Africans involved in drafting the reform proposal: few educated elites, traditional rulers, or local farmers. The scramble of July 1912 shows the fallacy of British engagement with native Nigerians and undermines the notion that the system of land tenure used in Northern Nigeria could be easily applied to the south. Although the British did publish a notice in the Government Gazzette that invited “any Native of Lagos who were disposed to do so to come and give evidence of what he knew regarding Native land law,” this notice was confined solely to the population of Lagos.26 Jackson hoped to fill the information gap and reach out to Africans in Lagos’s hinterland.

Along with some Saro colleagues, Jackson visited several cities and towns outside of Lagos to inform them of the land tenure discussion. In September, Jackson travelled with deputations from Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan to the Yoruba city of Oyo, once a large empire in the Benin region that still held some sway over other Yoruba groups, and he met with the Alafin, its king. Upon arrival, a Rev. Hughes read aloud in Yoruba a letter from the “Chiefs and people of Lagos” concerning the land tenure proposals.27 The Alafin, in consultation with the spokesman of the chiefs of the Oyo region, announced his distaste for the land tenure policy. As a result of the Oyo visit, the deputation had recruited another representative for their protest movement.

25 “The Native Land Tenure Question at Abeokuta."
26 “The Land Tenure Question: Interview Between the Deputation From Lagos Abeokuta and Ibadan With the Alafin of Oyo,” Lagos Weekly Record, September 28, 1912.
27 “The Land Tenure Question: Interview.”
Several weeks later, the *Record* reported that the deputation had also travelled to Oshogbo, a tributary town of Ibadan, located to the east of Oyo. The deputation, which still included its members from across Yorubaland, “showed that the matter was a grave one as [the deputation] could not have left their homes and come all the way here unless the matter was a very important one indeed.” After hearing the deputation’s statement, the Ataoja of Oshogbo said that he, along with the other chiefs of the region, would “join in anything that would prevent the proposal being made law and the control of their lands taken from them.” It should be noted that each of these cities represented a conglomeration of various districts and communities, each of which had their own traditions and form of governance, evident from their various titles. The deputation also visited the towns of Ede, Ikirun, Iwo, and Illa, among others.

The tour lasted five months, continuing into 1913, and it reached much of Yorubaland. The deputation did not, however, reach the Igbo regions to the southeast. Its inability to reach Igbo regions was most likely due to inadequate transportation. Although the nature of the deputation’s travel and the exact reasoning for visiting the cities it did is unknown, it is clear that the activists were not focused solely on the benefit of Yoruba-speaking peoples. Although Jackson traveled exclusively in the Yoruba areas of Southern Nigeria, he and the writers of the *Record* characterized the protest as the defense of all of British West Africa, including the Northern and Southern protectorates.

The most salient evidence of Jackson’s West African nationalist attitude was found in the *Record*’s criticism of Englishman E.D. Morel. Morel became an international icon in 1902 after he led the “Red Rubber” campaign to expose atrocities committed by King Leopold II in the

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28 Today’s Osogbo.
29 “Land Tenure Question at Oshogbo.”
30 “Tour to the Hinterland,” *Lagos Weekly Record*, November 9, 1912.
Belgian Congo.\(^{32}\) Despite his reputation as a humanitarian and African sympathizer, the *Record* criticized him for his participation in the West African Land Committee, which advocated for land tenure reform in Nigeria.\(^{33}\) Jackson had once believed a West African nation could grow under British rule. Now, he feared that land tenure reform was the beginning of autocratic rule in West Africa. The writers of the *Record* even equated the land tenure reform with the autocratic rule of the Belgian Congo, arguing, “Mr. E.D. Morel the great protagonist against King Leopold’s Congo Land Policy stands to-day as the foremost and staunchest advocate for the introduction of a land policy, identical in every respect, into British West Africa.”\(^{34}\) Exaggerated as the claim might have been, it demonstrated the degree to which the *Record* believed that land tenure was harmful. The stakes of land tenure in Southern Nigeria extended beyond the territory itself. The *Record* did not specify that either of the Nigerian protectorates was under threat; rather, in the passage cited above, the land tenure policy was seen as a threat to all of British West Africa as it spread its way through both parts of British Nigeria.

Throughout 1912, the *Record* protested against land tenure reform as a matter of West African, or more generally African, sovereignty. As shown by the deputation’s tour of the Lagos hinterland, the populations of Southern Nigeria were not unified, not homogenous, and not connected to Lagos, despite being in the same protectorate. By appealing to these groups in person, Jackson and some members of the Lagosian Saro helped bring diverse people in Yorubaland together in common cause, giving real substance to pan-Africanist sentiment.

Before 1912, the *Record* was able to boast of its reputation as an anti-colonial publication. It had successfully protested and influenced the actions of British officials in Lagos.


\(^{34}\) “Native Evidence of Customary Law on West African Land Tenure.”
However, the years of verbal protest do not compare to the actual mobilization of people in Yorubaland, an effort led by Jackson and reported by the *Record*, following the amalgamation announcement of 1912. The efforts of the *Record* cannot be considered as Nigerian nationalism: they did not include Northern Nigerians. It is tempting to describe the movement as merely pan-Yoruba since it did not include the Igbo people of Southern Nigeria either. But the *Record’s* intent was to foster a wider West African form of nationalism, as demonstrated in the local setting of southwestern Nigeria. The movement against amalgamation and land tenure reform brought together multiple communities as West Africans rather than as Nigerians.

Chapters 1 and 2 referred to the Saro as single group to discuss some of the aspects of pan-Africanist thought they all heard or contributed to. But here, in the discussion of the organized opposition to amalgamation and land reform, it becomes apparent that when pan-Africanist thought was translated into action, only *some* Saro, or specifically the *Record*, could be cited. Historian P. Esedebe, instead of condemning all educated elite as Ayandele does, divides the Saro into three categories: those who whole-heartedly supported British imperialism and the “civilizing mission”; those who were both sympathetic and critical of the British and were likely to switch positions in their lifetime; and those who did not collaborate but who occasionally made concessions.\(^{35}\) Esedebe places Jackson in the second category, but he leaves open the question of why Jackson would switch positions. This chapter takes a behind the scenes look at Jackson’s motivations for protesting the land tenure reform. Not every member of the Saro participated in the deputation or protest against land tenure reform, but those who did were compelled by notions of pan-African unity and applied these notions in the immediate region surrounding Lagos.

\(^{35}\) Esedebe, “Educated Elite in Nigeria Reconsidered,” 120.
CONCLUSION

From the outside, Lagos was the dream home for the pan-Africanist, a city where Africans from the diaspora and the continent lived alongside each other and enjoyed the wealth of coastal trade. On the ground, in the reality of day-to-day life in Lagos, relationships among Africans were not utopian nor necessarily cordial. There were distinctions between the educated elite, mostly foreign to the city, and the locals, mainly of Yoruba descent. The illusion of the pan-African dream was further exposed by the looming context of British imperialism in which all Lagosians lived. Pan-Africanist sentiment thrived in Lagos, but it was shaped by the circumstances of time and place specific to Lagos in 1912.

Thus, pan-Africanism was not an abstract concept to the educated elite, known as the Saro in Lagos. Instead it was tied to the local politics of Lagos and the Saro’s understanding of their own place in West Africa. The Saro identity, that is, their heritage and purpose, was based on their own notions of a single African race. The Saro may have been distinct from other Lagosians, but to become truly African they looked to indigenous Africans, held their cultures in high esteem, and attempted to preserve those cultures as they were. Their western education, which accounted for their differences with other Africans, was to be used to help native Nigerians. From their own experience, the writers of the Record defined a difference between “Black Europeans” and “Lettered Africans.” While both were trained in western education, the latter had an African character and acted as such.
When the *Record* instructed the Saro on how to be African, they did so with the pressure of British imperialism and assimilation in mind. Other pan-Africanists, such as Edward Blyden, had an established and now commonly researched view that British imperialism could foster an West African federation. The *Record* did not take Blyden’s word for it, but examined British imperialism as it was manifested in Lagos. From their observation, the writers of the *Record* determined that while West African nations could thrive under British colonialism, the “Civilizing and Christian Missions” of British imperialism were threats to African nationalism best left untouched. The *Record* was therefore distinct from common pan-Africanist thought that prized western culture as a way to “develop” Africa.

The *Record*’s denunciation of the British civilizing mission was confined to writing, but tangible opposition was directed toward colonial law in the form of political organization in the hinterland. In particular, Jackson and the Saro confronted the amalgamation and land reform proposals of 1912. Opposition to land reform was a project that the Saro and native Nigerians both participated in, and one that the *Record* spearheaded. The *Record* referred to other educated elites, those who did not work in league with indigenous Africans, as colonial colluders. Considering these educated elites as accomplices rested on the fundamental belief that the educated elite were Africans and that all Africans should act as a united race. This pan-African sentiment prompted the *Record*’s criticism of other educated elites and inspired their action against the colonial government.

This thesis has described the Saro and their attempts to emphasize the perspective of indigenous Africans. Yet, this thesis hardly presented the direct opinions of native Nigerians, and when it did, it privileged the educated elite among indigenous Africans who were more closely associated with the Saro than with their indigenous backgrounds. In this thesis, pan-Africanist
thought and action were discussed through the Saro’s point of view. The silences in this thesis invite further research on the native Nigerian perspective of pan-Africanism, both as it was applied by the Saro and as it was produced by indigenous Africans who worked on their own accord.

Pan-Africanism is by definition, or lack thereof, broad and has been manifested in many ways. Although it is commonly searched for in the accounts of educated elites, efforts to organize, act, and do so under an African identity were prevalent in many places on the continent and in the diaspora. All of these instances, some heavily researched and some relatively untouched, comprise the history of pan-Africanist movements, but were unique and contribute individually to our understanding of pan-Africanism. From this thesis, I hope that non-academics and scholars alike will recall that instances of pan-Africanism are shaped by particular environments, and that these instances exhibit themselves in the day-to-day interactions of those who consider themselves African.
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