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A HISTORY OF IDEAS: WEST AFRICA, "THE BLACK ATLANTIC",  
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**A HISTORY OF IDEAS: WEST AFRICA, “THE BLACK ATLANTIC”, AND PAN-  
AFRICANISM**

**Volume I**

**By**

**Harry Nii Koney Odamtten**

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## ABSTRACT

### A HISTORY OF IDEAS: WEST AFRICA, "THE BLACK ATLANTIC", AND PAN- AFRICANISM

By

Harry Nii Koney Odamtten

Specifically, "A History of Ideas" centers the lives and works of two West African thinkers: Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) of Liberia, Rev. Carl Christian Reindorf of the Gold Coast (1834-1917). The work first brings attention to the specific contributions of these two intellectuals and their nineteenth century cohort of West African intellectuals to the Atlantic world and their role in the making of intellectual traditions in Africa, the Black Atlantic, and the international Black world. This intellectual history also emphasizes West African thinkers' shared involvement with African Diaspora scholars in the philosophical evolution and organizational growth of ideas of Pan-Africanism. This dual biography also seeks to show the distinct West African perspectives about various discussions in the Atlantic world concerning the future direction of West Africa in particular, the Black Atlantic, and the human species in general. To this end, the dissertation illuminates West Africa's place in the formation of Atlantic bodies of knowledge and in turn help gain a greater understanding of the Atlantic dynamics of the nineteenth century intellectual world.

Most importantly the study significantly examines the ways by which Blyden and Reindorf through their scholarship were instrumental in establishing Pan-African ideas that helped launch the worldwide Pan-African Movement whose beginnings, I contend, should not continue to be understood as exclusive to the Americas.

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To my grandparents Christiana Fofo Odamtten and Evelyn Odarley Odonkor, my parents,  
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## **Introduction**

### **Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) and Carl Christian Reindorf (1834-1917)**

The central aim of this dissertation is to show the internal development in West Africa, an intellectual historiography of ideas, as opposed to an unbridled external influence in the emergence of modern African thought. This is done in two complimentary parts; the first part entails an examination of West African contributions to the history of ideas in the nineteenth century. This is accomplished through a dual intellectual and social biography of the nationalist, Pan-African activities, and Black Atlantic writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), and Carl Christian Reindorf (1834-1917). Secondly and inversely, the dissertation reviews and re-envisions the scholarship on the Black Atlantic and Pan-Africanism in a way, which illuminates the lives and scholarly activities of the two individuals as representatives of a West African intellectual class. Later in this dissertation, this intellectual history follows various scholarly trajectories and elucidates on several sub-texts, historical figures, and academic debates, within African and African Diaspora studies. Nonetheless these secondary analyses are all anchored and held together by the twin objectives stated above

Blyden penned *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, a collection of previously published essays, speeches, newspaper editorials, and journal articles from 1862-1887. In *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, distributed in 1887, Blyden synthesized his various writings on Africa and became arguably the first intellectual theoretician of Pan-Africanism. His other pioneering text on Pan-Africanism, is a series of essays culled from the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* was published in 1908 as *African Life and*



*Customs*.<sup>1</sup> In this work, Blyden elucidated on the concept of the African Personality-peculiar social organizational forms and characteristics he believed were distinctive to Africa and people of African descent. I define Pan-Africanism as the conceptualization that people of African descent, no matter their geographic location, share kinship, historical, sociological, and cultural connections that transcend their physical separations. I focus primarily on Reindorf and Blyden's contributions to the development of modern African history, the intellectual and social movement known as Pan-Africanism, and its broad trans-Atlantic reach.

Reindorf, together with West African writers, Abbé David Boilat (1814-1901), of Senegal, A. B. C. Sibthorpe (c. 1840-1916), of Sierra Leone, and Samuel Johnson of Nigeria were the co-founders of modern African historiography. Reindorf and his cohort represent the first African writers in the modern era to embark on historical writing of Africa's past. Boilat, in 1853 published his quasi-ethnographic and historical work *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, while Sibthorpe published a *History of Sierra Leone* in 1868, and Johnson completed a *History of the Yoruba's* in 1897.<sup>2</sup> Reindorf, the father of modern Ghanaian history, published in 1889, *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Tradition and Historical Facts Comprising A Period of*

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, [1908] *African Life and Customs: Reprinted from the Sierra Leone Weekly News* (London: African Publication Society, 1969); Blyden's other writings include *African Colonization. Rev. E. W. Blyden's Address at the Annual Meeting of the Maine Colonization Society, June 1862* (N. P., 1862); *The African Problem, and other Discourses: Delivered in America in 1890*. (London: W. B. Whittingham, 1890); *The African Society and Miss Mary Kingsley* (London, J. Scott, 1901); *The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America*, (Ann Arbor, Mich. : ProQuest Information and Learning, 2005). M Yu. Frenkel, "Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality" *African Affairs* 73 (1974): 277-289; Robert W. July, "Nineteenth-Century Negritude: Edward Wilmot Blyden" *The Journal of African History* (henceforth *JAH*) 5 (1964): 73-86.

<sup>2</sup> For these works and their discussion as a canon of nineteenth century African writing see Heinz Hauser Renner, "Examining Text Sediments-Commending a Pioneer Historian as an "African Herodotus": On the Making of the New Annotated Edition of C.C. Reindorf's *The Gold Coast and Asante*" *History in Africa* 35 (2008): 231-299.

*More than Three Centuries From About 1500-1860.*<sup>3</sup>

Blyden and Reindorf were scholar-activists who as part of an intellectual global struggle to vindicate African people's contribution to humanity were at the vanguard of critiquing the Eurocentric ideas of African inferiority generated by European Enlightenment thinkers. They were also part of what Robert July has called the indigenous African nationalist movement, and produced early historical writing on West Africa.<sup>4</sup> This indigenous African nationalist movement encompassed the late eighteenth century writings of personalities like Ottobah Cugoano (c. 1757- unknown) and Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797);<sup>5</sup> spanning the 1884 partitioning of Africa, and ending with the activities of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) in the 1920s. Historical writing of Africa's past and its relationship with the rest of the world undergirded the nationalist activities of the above periods. Blyden and Reindorf came to scholarly limelight during this era, and their writings offer significant social and historical glimpses into the philosophical underpinnings of West African intellectual and social life.

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<sup>3</sup> C.C. Reindorf, *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Tradition and Historical Facts Comprising A Period of More than Three Centuries From About 1500-1860* (Basel: Basel Mission Press, 1895); *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Tradition and Historical Facts Comprising A Period of More than Three Centuries From About 1500-1860 With a Biographical Sketch by C. E. Reindorf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basel, Switzerland: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1895); *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Tradition and Historical Facts Comprising A Period of More than Three Centuries From About 1500-1860 With a Biographical Sketch by C. E. Reindorf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2003); All subsequent references are to the second edition, to be cited as *G. C. A. Histories*. For other discussions on Reindorf see Paul Jenkins, ed., *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century*; C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson. *Papers from an International Seminar held in Basel Switzerland, 25-28<sup>th</sup> October 1995 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 196-207.

<sup>5</sup> Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London: Equiano, 1789); Ottoba Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London: Cuguano, 1787); *Narrative of the Enslavement of Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa* (London: Cuguano; Hatchard 1825).

Blyden and Reindorf's various writings on specific and general histories of African peoples, as well as their attempts at explaining African societies from an African perspective, for example, provide further evidence of the indigenous emergence of modern West African thought. Reindorf, in an early attempt at producing an African historiographical tradition and philosophy of history that "Africanized Knowledge,"<sup>6</sup> wrote:

In the place of written history, tradition, which from antiquity was a natural source of history, was kept and transmitted regularly by our ancestors to their children in their days. . . . This important custom of a nation—which our forefathers felt obliged to preserve and transmit from one generation to another, . . . has, since the dawn of education, been gradually neglected.<sup>7</sup>

In light of Reindorf's statement, how then does intellectual production in African Studies today compare with that of the nineteenth century? How does the historiography of Reindorf's century compare with knowledge production and African historiography that followed African independence movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? The intention in comparing these distinct eras is to show that while Reindorf and Blyden wrote in a different period of African intellectual history, they made important advances in African historiography prior to the advent of celebrated African historians, like Kenneth Onwuka Dike of Nigeria.

I also opine that Reindorf and his nineteenth century contemporaries who helped pioneer oral tradition and local histories share with succeeding generation of African historians like Dike the expert utility of oral traditions, and the historical demonstration of significant events of the African past in response to damning

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<sup>6</sup> For a contemporary discussion see E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo, "From African Historiographies to an African Philosophy of History" in *Africanizing Knowledge: African Studies Across the Disciplines* eds. Toyin Falola, and Christian Jennings, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2002), 13-63.

<sup>7</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, iv.

comments about Africa having no history.<sup>8</sup> Whilst Dike and others responded to the false claims of historians like Hugh Trevor-Roper of Britain who claimed Africa had no history before European presence on the continent, Reindorf and his contemporaries were correcting the Eurocentric interpretation of African life and customs by European explorers, administrators, and arm-chair writings on Africa by philosophers like Hegel.

As contributors to *Africa and the Disciplines* have suggested, research on Africa has immensely contributed to the growth of a variety of disciplines in European and African institutions of higher education. However within the corridors of power in these establishments, Africanist are still continually justifying the need to study Africa. Consequently through the inventiveness and distinctiveness of their methodologies and writing of African history, latter scholars following Reindorf's generation have succeeded in institutionalizing African Studies in African universities. They have however struggled to make African Studies a legitimate field of inquiry in the Western Academy.<sup>9</sup> In bringing Reindorf and Blyden into the discussion on the emergence of modern African historiography, this study acknowledges their hitherto

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<sup>8</sup> On oral traditions and local histories see for example J. F. Ajayi, and J.D.Y. Peel's discussion on Samuel Johnson in Jenkins, *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 57-81. K. O. Dike, *Trade and politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (London: Clarendon Press, 1956), 182-200. For examples of scholarship by other pioneering scholar's of Dike's generation, see Between Ogot, "Migration and Settlement" in *History of the of the Southern Luo Vol 1* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967); Lalage Brown and Michael Crowder (eds.), *Proceedings of the First International Congress of Africanists* (London: Longman, 1954); A. E. Afigbo "Colonial Historiography" in *Essays in Honor of Jacob Ade Ajayi* ed. Toyin Falola (London: Longman, 1993). For damning comments on African history see Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Rise of Christian Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 9; Ali A. Mazrui, "European Exploration and Africa's Self-Discovery," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 4 (1969): 661-676.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Robert Bates, V. Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O'Barr, eds., *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and the Humanities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

less known contribution to the field, and shows that they were not imitating European discourse- they were critiquing it from African perspectives.

The foundational and burgeoning nature of Blyden and Reindorf's emblematic African-centered contributions to African historiography and the indigenous African nationalist movement in West Africa, combined with their strong personalities, has resulted in conflicting interpretations of their lives and writings. In the biographical sections of this work I offer clarification on the various competing views about the meaning and central ideas of Blyden and Reindorf's writing. I focus on the various audiences they sought to influence with their texts highlighting their strengths and weaknesses as scholars and their original contributions to the growth of modern African history, and Pan-Africanism.

In 1967, for example, Hollis Lynch, a rigorous biographer and editor of Blyden's writing wrote: "Blyden was a failure as a leader and practical man of affairs: he possessed little organizing ability. He failed to command his admirers and make them do his bidding."<sup>10</sup> In stark contrast to this view was Rev. Dr. Mark C. Hayford's prefatory remark during a banquet held for Blyden at the Holburn Restaurant, London August 15, 1903, by Africans resident in the British capital. Hayford noted:

It has for some time been the desire of the Natives of West Africa to give expression, not only to their high appreciation of the long and able services which Dr. Blyden has rendered to the African race, but also to endorse certain phases of his teaching as to the work and destiny of his countrymen.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), vii-viii.

<sup>11</sup> Mark C. Hayford, prefatory remarks to [Edward Blyden] *Africa and Africans, Proceedings on the Occasion of a banquet given at the Holborn Restaurant to Edward W Blyden, by West Africans in London, August 15<sup>th</sup> 1903, by West Africans in London* (London: C. M Phillips, 1903), 1.

Such divergence in the assessment of Blyden may be attributed to his many personality clashes in Liberia, where he lived and worked, contrasted with his fame among other West Africans, and black Atlantic societies who only had access to the profundity of his writings.

The historiography on Reindorf, Blyden's contemporary, is replete with similar contradictory appraisals such as July's consideration of Reindorf as being ethnocentric in his writing of *G. C. A. Histories*, but then others like Olufemi Omosini celebrated him for his patriotism, and interweaving of the histories of various ethnic groups on the Gold Coast.<sup>12</sup> These divergent evaluations of Blyden and Reindorf have continued to the present time, and very little has been done to show their groundbreaking contributions to African historiography, as well as clarify the murky analyses on their intellectual careers. Relying on early work such as Lynch's study of Blyden's "Pan-Negro" ideas, and Reindorf's historical writings, I explore the ambiguities in scholarly assessments of Reindorf and Blyden. An in-depth examination of this kind explores the social and intellectual underpinnings of their writings, and neatly delineates the reasons for the contradictions in the analyses of previous scholarship. This way, their status as originators of their generation, and their contribution to the flowering of a distinctive history of ideas in West Africa becomes much more evident than it currently is in the historiography.

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<sup>12</sup> July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 257; Olufemi Omosini, "Carl Christian Reindorf: His Contribution to and Place in the Development of Modern West African Historiography," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 10, no. 2 (1980): 71-104; See also discussion on Reindorf in "Historiographical depictions of Blyden and Reindorf" in chapter two below.

“A History of Ideas,” will make a contribution to many disciplines and fields of study. One of these is the intellectual and social history of the Atlantic age: calling attention to West African participation and contestation of Atlantic bodies of knowledge such as the Enlightenment, Black Atlantic discourse, and Pan-Africanism. The Enlightenment was a set of ideas and values about humanity, and the progress of history that emerged in eighteenth century Europe. Its leading intellectuals shunned religious determinism and promoted rational thought, economic and political liberalism, as well as humanitarianism.<sup>13</sup> A social manifestation of this way of thinking is the 1789 French Revolution in France, from where European ideas of rights of man and citizen, representative government, nationalism, and free speech emerged. As it pertained to West Africa, the consequences of Enlightenment thinking was an attempt to “civilize” others, that is bring West Africans in tune with the progressive achievements of European society.<sup>14</sup> It is from this historical context of European expansionism that Hugh Trevor-Rooper delivered his infamous comments that Africa had no history, and that “there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness.”<sup>15</sup> West Africans are therefore perceived as recipients of Enlightenment, Humanitarianism, and other notions of freedom that emerged from the French, American, and Haitian Revolutions, as well as subsequent Abolitionist movements in the United States and Europe.<sup>16</sup> It is such notions of progress and modernity that Immanuel Geiss brought to bear on his interpretation of the Pan-African movement as constituting traditionalist and modernists. Geiss’ analysis was

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<sup>13</sup> Kwaku Larbi Korang, *Writing Ghana Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 55, 2-13.

<sup>14</sup> July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 22-50.

<sup>15</sup> Trevor-Rooper, *Rise of Christian Europe*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> See for example July’s various analyses in *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 15-480.

that the former were likely to give way to the African modernists perceived to have imbued European modernity and who were more in harmony with the progress of world history.<sup>17</sup>

An upshot of this external origin thesis of African intellectualism is the narrow conceptual and geographic emphasis of scholarly contributions to the field of Black Atlantic Studies. These previous efforts have mostly focused on cultural manifestations of African descendants resident in Europe and the Americas.<sup>18</sup> Where African intellectuals are discussed, their ideas are treated extrinsic to their organic development in Africa, and their critique of Western thought. A good example of this is Paul Gilroy's treatment of Blyden's work. Gilroy sees Blyden's writing as a critique of European Enlightenment thought, however, he excises Blyden's writings from the African contexts in which they emerged.<sup>19</sup> This silencing of African contributions to the cultural and intellectual exchanges of the Atlantic has been extremely troubling. In reviewing and re-envisioning the literature on the Black Atlantic, I interrogate this "import thesis" and correct its imbalance.<sup>20</sup>

My dissertation also makes a contribution to the field of political theory by tracing the way in which West Africans have participated in the history of Pan-Africanism, as an idea, and a social movement. It is my contention that Pan-Africanism developed distinctively and contemporaneously in different locations of the Atlantic

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<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa* (New York: African Publishing Co, 1974), 424-432.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993); Others texts dealing with the Black Atlantic include John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic world, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); J. Roland Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 112, 193-201.

<sup>20</sup> Pieter Boele van Hensbroek first used the term "import thesis" in "The "Import Thesis" about African Political Thought" *Journal of African Philosophy* 2, (2003).



world, including the Americas and Africa. Ruth Simms Hamilton has argued that since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, African descendants encountered comparable conditions of socio-economic inequity based on the international use of race as a societal organizing principle.<sup>21</sup> Confronted with these conditions, African descendants, therefore, envisioned themselves as part of a global, African community. One of the goals of this dissertation is to ascertain the particular ways in which West African scholars thought of themselves as part of a worldwide African kin group. This is particularly important because an erroneous perception has been created that because West Africans were comprised of different ethnicities, they were incapable or less motivated to aspire towards Pan-African ideas. However as I will argue from my reinterpretation of Reindorf's *Gold Coast and Ashante*, Reindorf was able to formulate pan-ethnic notions of kinship, by utilizing a variety of indigenous mechanisms such as ritual symbols, marriage, migration, cultural contact, and wars to suit his Pan-African agenda. West Africans had Pan-African aims, but their conceptual approach to it was much different. I plan to explore Reindorf's indigenous conception of Pan-Africanism extensively in the fourth chapter on Reindorf.

Further, an examination of Pan-Africanism is inadequate if the mutual exchange of ideas on both sides of the Atlantic is glossed over. Originally, the ideas and activities of Pan-Africanism occurred among and between people of African descent who lived in the four geographic locations that border the Atlantic Ocean—localities conceptually referred to as the “Black Atlantic”. The Black Atlantic, signifying the multiplicity of black actors and actions or activities in the Atlantic basin. However, given the preponderance of literature on North America and Caribbean spaces of the Black

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<sup>21</sup> Ruth Simms Hamilton, *Routes of Passage: Rethinking the African Diaspora* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 1-33.

Atlantic, and the noticeable absence of materials that consider West African participation, this study traverses the four geographic regions, but is mainly centered in West Africa.

My focus is on Anglophone West Africa in distinction to North American Pan-Africanism, Negritude among Francophone blacks, and Negrismo among Spanish speaking blacks or Afro-Crioulo's. Negritude emerged amongst francophone blacks that share the linguistic and intellectual traditions of Aime Cesaire, Leon Damas, Leopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon and the hitherto unacknowledged Nardal sisters who were in fact leading founders of the Negritude Movement.<sup>22</sup> Both the Harlem Renaissance movement in the U.S. and the Afro-Crioulo Negrismo/Negritud movement had influenced the cultural and literary based French Negritude movement. The Negrismo movement like the Negritude movement was a literary and artistic movement that began with the nineteenth century literary writings of Latin American writers of black subjects, and included the Afro-Cuban poet, Nicolas Guillen. Guillen is celebrated to have transformed Spanish texts on black and Creole subjects by moving black Latin American actors and their cultures to the center of Negrismo writings of the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> In the third chapter I review the concept of Negritude as it relates to the Nardal sisters. The sisters are the subjects of T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting's, *Negritude Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). Sharpley-Whiting distinguishes the writings of the Nardal sisters from Cesaire's black particularity and Senghor's black humanism, and argues that they preceded the more known men in the movement.

<sup>23</sup> Leon Damas, *Pigments* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1962); Daniel L. Racine, ed., *Leon-Gotran Damas 1912-1978: Founder of the Negritude Movement, A Memorial Casebook* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979); Aime Cesaire, *Return to my Native Land* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1968); Gregson Davis, *Aime Cesaire* (Cambridge, U.K. : New York, N.Y. : Cambridge University Press, 1997); Leopold S. Senghor, *The Foundations of "africanité" or "Négritude" and "arabité."* Translated by Mercer Cook (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1971); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin: White Masks* Translated by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967); T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) Leslie Feracho, "The Legacy of Negrismo/Negritud: Inter American Dialogues" *The Langston Hughes Review* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1999-Spring 2001): 1-5; Paul Breman, *You Better Believe it: Black Verse in English From Africa, the West Indies and the United States* (Baltimore: Penguin Press, 1973).

While I focus on West Africa, I acknowledge the similarities and differences in ideas, dialogues, and exchanges between these regional and linguistic manifestations of Pan-Africanism. This is important because, even as I focus on Anglophone West Africa, as a trans-Atlantic phenomenon, Pan-Africanism offers me the unique opportunity to treat the Atlantic as a single body of analysis. This approach in David Armitage's typology of Atlantic studies is a circum-Atlantic investigation. Further, my concentration on West African is not meant to privilege one geographic section of the Atlantic, but to cis-Atlantic, that is examine in West Africa, a particular manifestation of an Atlantic-wide phenomenon—Pan-Africanism. In essence, I combine two methods of Atlantic studies, circum-Atlantic, and cis-Atlantic. An entire chapter of the dissertation is devoted to an examination of Pan-Africanism, and throughout the entire study I will make connections between Pan-African intellectuals in West Africa and the African Diaspora.

It is with this methodological intent that my dissertation seeks to demonstrate that ideas about the Black Atlantic did not only circulate in Europe and the Americas, but that these thoughts were also distinctively developing in West Africa. Since historical knowledge of the distinctive brand of Pan-Africanism in West Africa is scant, my dissertation fills a void by suggesting that thinkers in West Africa proposed agendas that emphasized a return to and enhancement of indigenous continental socio-political and cultural practices. I further contend that the manipulation of symbols, and evocation of shared migratory histories, as elucidated by Reindorf, and Blyden's insistence that relevant European ideas be domesticated to the African Personality, were distinct Africa-derived ideas. These nativistic conceptions became the basis on which West African

intellectuals exchanged thoughts with their African kin in other locations of the world, particularly the Black Atlantic.<sup>24</sup>

Also important to this study is why 21<sup>st</sup> century African intellectuals continue to imagine and re-imagine Pan-Africanism as a liberatory tool for today's African people. In *Imagining Pan-Africanism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, contemporary Pan-Africanist scholar, Paul Zeleza, writes that:

recalling and reclaiming our histories is a pre-requisite to any serious project of emancipation and liberation whether today or tomorrow in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is especially so in our era of willful historical erasure and amnesia, of easy despair and the arrogant pessimisms of post-humanist scholarship.<sup>25</sup>

The implication of Zeleza's statement is that historical knowledge is an important aspect of Pan-Africanist thought. Over a century earlier, Blyden and Reindorf, like Zeleza, were keenly aware of the importance of historical reclamation, and their writings indicate the importance with which they regarded the task of recording Africa's history during a period when African history had been described as non-existent. An important part of any contemporary recovery of the African past is the parallel review of the writings of early African historians and Pan-Africanist like Blyden and Reindorf.

Several typological and definitional approaches bear responsibility for the neglect of these West African ideas from the literature. In a number of the writings, nineteenth century intellectuals are seldom written about as Black Atlanticists or Pan-Africanists. This represents a grave oversight because intellectual ideas in the Atlantic, such as Pan-Africanism, in fact preceded socio-political movements. Moreover, such ideological expressions emphasized cooperation and collaboration between

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<sup>24</sup> Kwaku Larbi Korang, *Writing Ghana Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Paul T. Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies* (Dakar: Codesria, 1997), 512.

international communities of African heritage. My dissertation, therefore, aims to tackle these omissions by engaging West Africa's less studied, but equally significant thinkers. This study centers the contributions of 19<sup>th</sup> century West African intellectuals to the Atlantic world at large and their purposeful role in the making of an African, and Black Atlantic intellectual tradition. My investigation of this intellectual history will also emphasize West African thinkers' shared involvement with African Diaspora scholars in the philosophical evolution, and organizational growth of ideas of Pan-Africanism.

A number of historical experiences of global proportions preceded the lifetimes of Blyden and Reindorf and which radically transformed social existence throughout the Atlantic World. The advent of the triangular trade in goods and enslaved Africans was the catalyst to the presence of Blyden's ancestors in the new and racially hierarchical social orders of the Americas. These happenings were enabled by events, which began from the fifteenth century onward to Blyden's era. In this period, major technological developments such as the building of the Portuguese Caravel boat around 1412—which coincided with Prince Henry the Navigator's commissioned exploration of the West African coast and the Canary Islands.<sup>26</sup> This encouraged European navigation of the Atlantic basin, thereby increasing contact between different geographic regions of the world.

The dynamic repercussions of these contacts led to the forced dispersion of peoples of African descent and their social stock of knowledge into various locations of the Atlantic world. These voluntary movements of Europeans, and forced

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<sup>26</sup> A great deal of controversy surrounds the Caravel boat, its exact discovery, etymology and archetype. For a discussion on the Caravel see B. W. Diffie, and George D Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415 -1580*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 28.

migrations of Africans also contributed to the ferment, exchange, and contestation of ideas and worldviews between the peoples of the various Atlantic landmasses. A result of this process for African descended people was the globalization of the African experience. A global Africa— “the geographically and socio-culturally diverse people of Africa and its Diaspora . . . linked through complex networks of social relationships and processes”<sup>27</sup>—thus, emerged. Afro-Diaspora born Blyden became an important part of these “complex networks” as he traversed several worlds of global Africa: Afro-Islamic and Mediterranean, Black Atlantic, West Africa, and the West Indies.<sup>28</sup>

These various sections of global Africa, as theorized by Hamilton, refers to the multiplicity of African Diasporas—an important conceptual framework that allows scholars to grapple with the complexities, similarities and differences of older, current, and newly emerging African Diasporas of recent black migrations. My concerns are more with the nineteenth century interactions between Africa and its Atlantic Diaspora. I emphasize the nineteenth century because during this time there was acceleration in the circulation of people and the dissemination of information due to major advances in technology. The numerous technological inventions of this epoch included the steamship, a more efficient printing press, as well as electrical and wireless telegraph.<sup>29</sup> These innovations affected the nineteenth century in the same

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<sup>27</sup> Ruth Simms Hamilton, *Routes of Passage: Rethinking the African Diaspora* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>28</sup> See discussion of these various worlds in chapter 6, dedicated to Blyden below, and n. 1 above for Blyden’s numerous publications.

<sup>29</sup> Robert H. Thurston, *A History of the Growth of the Steam-Engine*, (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1939) ; Elizabeth L. Einstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* New York : University Press, 1979); Marshall McLuhan, *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and History in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New York : Oxford University Press, 1989); Peter Stearns, ed., *Encyclopedia of World History: Ancient, Medieval, and*

way that the internet, computers, airplanes, and the cell phone have increased the exchange of information contemporarily.

Invariably, nineteenth century advances accentuated and enhanced the various webs of dynamic rapports between Africa and its Diaspora, and this I argue is exemplified in the careers and lives of Blyden and Reindorf. I have explained that the advent of the caravel boat aided the enslavement of Blyden's ancestors in the New World, but the steamboat and schooners that were later developed in Blyden's generation allowed him to travel from St. Thomas to the U.S. and from the U.S. to Liberia. From Liberia, Blyden also traveled to and from various global African locations like the U.S., Antigua, Lagos, Cairo and elsewhere.<sup>30</sup>

While the advances of the nineteenth century enabled Blyden travel various parts of the world, improvements in the printing press enhanced Reindorf's historical writing ambitions. Reindorf was born into an oral culture, and at the time that he published his manuscript, oral tradition was in a failing competition with written history. As Reindorf himself lamented in a letter to the educated community of the Gold Coast, "this important tradition [i.e. oral tradition] . . . has since the dawn of [western] education been gradually neglected and forgotten."<sup>31</sup> Reindorf's statement encapsulates the literacy that came with the evolution of print culture on the Gold Coast, as well as the bad fortune in the regression of oral tradition as a historical medium for Gold Coast peoples. K. A. B. Jones-Quartey has suggested that Gold

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*Modern, Chronologically Arranged* 6<sup>th</sup> edition (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Edith Holden, *Blyden of Liberia: An Account of the Life and Labors of Edward Wilmot Blyden LL.D. As Recorded in Letters and in Print* ( New York: Vantage Press, 1966), 1025-1029.

<sup>31</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, iv.

Coast nationalism through the press began as early as 1822, over a decade before Reindorf's birth.<sup>32</sup>

In 1903, another West African intellectual, J. E. Casely Hayford chronicled the evolution of Gold Coast journalism in his work, *Gold Coast Native Institutions*.<sup>33</sup> Hayford argued that the successes of the Gold Coast elite during the second half of the nineteenth century were attributable to the growth of print journalism in the Gold Coast. The newspapers of that period became a useful tool for nationalist organizations like the Aborigines Rights Protectorate Society (A.R.P.S.) that triumphantly prevented the British colonial government from alienating unused lands belonging to different ethnic societies on the Gold Coast.<sup>34</sup>

But it was the invention of the printing press (Gothenburg) in the 19th century that would greatly affect Reindorf's life, allowing him to publish his opus in 1889, the first of its kind by an African author. The printing press also opened up an avenue for the participation of other West African intellectuals in world discourse about a number of issues including West African nationalism, Black Atlantic debate, and Pan-Africanism. J. Lorand Matory in *Black Atlantic Religion* has discussed the trans-Atlantic dimensions of the Lagosian Cultural Renaissance in the West African city of Lagos.<sup>35</sup> Lagos' nineteenth century newspapers, the *Lagos Times* and the *Lagos Weekly Record* were the literary media for the discussion of Black Atlantic exchange

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<sup>32</sup> K. A. B. Jones-Quartey, *A Summary History of the Ghana Press, 1822-1960* (Accra: Ghana Information Services Department, 1974); *The Problems of the Press, in West African Affairs*, London: Bureau of Current Affairs, 1950); Clement E. Asante, *The Press in Ghana: Problems and Prospects* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> J. E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions: With Thoughts upon a Healthy Imperial Policy for the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (London: Frank Cass 1970). Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions*, 182-207; For more on the Gold Coast Press, see Sylvanus A. Ekwelie, "The Press in Gold Coast Nationalism, 1890-1957" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971).

<sup>35</sup> J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005).



and deliberation of issues like return migrations to Africa, religious and cultural dimensions of Pan-Africanist thinking.<sup>36</sup>

Another conduit of such discourse across the Atlantic was African-American journalist and historian John Edward Bruce (1856-1924) who in 1911 co-founded the *Negro Society for Historical Research* with Puerto Rican born bibliophile Arthur Schomburg (1874-1938). Like other literate African-Americans, Bruce subscribed to African newspapers like the *Lagos Weekly Record*, *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, *Gold Coast Aborigines*, *The African Times and Orient Review*. Bruce reprinted the newspapers or made references to them in his own weekly editorials in the United States.<sup>37</sup>

The literate Reindorf did not travel frequently outside the Gold Coast as Blyden had from St. Thomas and Liberia, probably because of his missionary work and its low remuneration. Nevertheless, print culture gave him an avenue to understand the world beyond his lived space.<sup>38</sup> Reindorf's opportunity for dialogue with the outside world became the *Basel Mission Press*, which published several writings by African catechists and pastors on the Gold Coast.<sup>39</sup> Reindorf therefore used the Basel Mission Press in the production of his *G. C. A. Histories*. Basel Mission Archives bear

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<sup>36</sup> Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 35-40, 60-67.

<sup>37</sup> See Thomas H. Henriksen, "African Intellectual Influences on Black Americans; The Role of Edward Blyden," *Phylon* 36 (1960) 279-290; Ralph L. Crowder, *John Edward Bruce: Politician, Journalist, and Self-Trained Historian of the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); John E. Bruce Papers Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>38</sup> For the relationship between Reindorf and the Bannermans see Basel Mission Archives henceforth (BMA), D-1 27/35 C. C. Reindorf, "Reindorf to Committee" February 10, 1876, and Carl D. Reindorf, *Remembering Carl Reindorf: 150th Birthday Anniversary*, Accra: Carl D. Reindorf 1984), 14.

<sup>39</sup> See for example BMA D-20.4, 5 N.V. Asare, "Asante Abasem (Twi Kasamu), 1915); David Asante, *Wiase Abasem or Stories from General History*, (Basel, 1874).

testimony to the correspondence between Reindorf, his editors, and printers in Basel.<sup>40</sup>

Reindorf used his literacy to challenge institutional racism in the Basel Mission, and to participate in world discourse about the status of African people in the colonial world.

Reindorf also inserted himself into colonial discourse as he sought to influence British colonial policy on the Gold Coast by sending a copy of his published work to the Secretary of the British colonies, through the sitting Governor of the Gold Coast, Governor Maxwell.<sup>41</sup>

This type of scholarship-activism demonstrated by Reindorf as well as his nineteenth century contemporaries is relevant to intellectual production in today's African and African American Studies, and African History for a variety reasons. One of such rationale, in the words of Reindorf, is "to enable us to compare our times with theirs" as the Gold Coast now has "educated men of powerful mind . . . qualified to collect the traditions of their forefathers" to correct the historical record of Africa's past.<sup>42</sup> What Reindorf meant was that literate Africans needed to start using their knowledge of oral tradition as a form and source of history, combined with written records to challenge the accounts of African history by European travelers, missionaries, and such.

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<sup>40</sup> See B.M.A. D-20. 27, 8 Reindorf, " [Correspondence] December 30, 1891"; D-20.27.7 "C.C. Reindorf to Rev. J.G. Christaller, 1894-5."

<sup>41</sup> National Archives (henceforth NA) Surrey, United Kingdom. NA C.O. 96/4790 No. 18 Governor Maxwell "Maxwell to Chamberlain" and "Chamberlain to Maxwell" January 27, March 21, 1896. Public Record Office is now National Archives (NA) will therefore use NA henceforth.

<sup>42</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, iv.

Blyden was born in the Danish island colony of St. Thomas, which now forms a part of the United States Virgin Islands.<sup>43</sup> In many ways, as a person born of free parents, Blyden's status differed from enslaved Africans in St. Thomas. His rights as Danish citizen were enshrined in a document promulgated by King Frederick V of Denmark in 1755. The document "Reglemene for Slaverne" states "the freed are to enjoy all rights on par with the free-born and are to be esteemed and respected in all regards equally with the free-born subjects of the crown."<sup>44</sup> Frederick V's successor, Christian VII also enacted an ordinance in 1776, which further enshrined Blyden's rights as a freeborn, particularly the emigrant standing of his parents. Under this law, "local and émigré" were required to have and were given freedom certificates authorized by the governor-general of the colony. These rights of free blacks in St. Thomas were however restricted with the imposition of night curfews, restricted use of "white" family names, and sanctioned dress codes.<sup>45</sup>

By 1830, two years before Blyden's birth, an increasing population of freed men in the Danish West Indies, who had earlier in 1816 petitioned the Danish crown about their rights as subjects, forced Governor Scholten into drafting a report that will grant free blacks full equality before the law.<sup>46</sup> In this context, Blyden at the time of his birth can be considered as an Afro-Danish. As a free black, he left St. Thomas for the

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<sup>43</sup> For the history of the Virgin Islands from its pre-Columbian era and as a Danish West Indian colony, to being a part of the United States of America see C. G. A. Oldendorp, *History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John* trans. Arnold R. Highfield and Vladimir Borac, ed., by Johan Jakob Bossard (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, INC, 1987); Issac Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands of the United States* (St. Thomas: Caribbean Universities Press, 1974); William W. Boyer, *Americas Virgin Islands: A History of Human Rights and Wrongs* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1983).

<sup>44</sup> Neville A. T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix* ed. by B.W. Higman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 146.

<sup>45</sup> Hall, *Slave Society*, 146-149.

<sup>46</sup> Hall, *Slave Society*, 174-177.

United States in 1850 with the hopes of attending Rutgers Theological College. He was however refused entry on account of his race.<sup>47</sup> Two other colleges rejected him for the same reasons. By 1851, Blyden, fearing the repercussions of the 1850 U.S. Fugitive Slave Law immigrated to Liberia, West Africa. There he began attending the Alexander High School in Monrovia.<sup>48</sup> Blyden thus became a citizen of Liberia, an English speaking West African country with a considerable black American immigrant population, cultural and political influence. Blyden had now become a West African in a country of Anglo-American persuasion. From his base in Monrovia, Liberia, he later became a popular feature of the intellectual and nationalist atmosphere of global black life.

In the fifth chapter of this dissertation, “Edward W. Blyden, Global African Iconoclast,” I argue that Blyden’s continual stay in West Africa, particularly Liberia and Sierra Leone, beginning from his formative years as a young adult of eighteen until his death in 1912 demonstrates his commitment to Africa and as an African person. More importantly, he metamorphosed his thinking from that of a civilizing missionary in Africa, to one who harnessed Africa’s distinct civilization for the benefit of humanity. In the process, Blyden distinguished himself as an African nationalist, an educator, a diplomat, and intellectual. I therefore argue that Blyden the person, as well as his writings, should be seen as emanating from his lived experience on African soil starting from the age of nineteen until the ripe old age of eighty.

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<sup>47</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 22; Edward W. Blyden, *Liberia’s Offering: Being Addresses, Sermons, etc* (New York: J.A. Gray, 1862), ii, 53.

<sup>48</sup> American Colonization Papers henceforth (A.C.S.) “Blyden to Copinger, Sept. 13, 1884” A.C.S. vol. 1, See also Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 4.

Among his African, and African-American contemporaries, Blyden was perhaps the most widely traveled, journeying to Venezuela, United Kingdom, Barbados, and as far as Palestine and Jerusalem.<sup>49</sup> The advent of the steamship enabled Blyden to travel to many places hitherto relatively inaccessible. On December 21, 1851, Blyden sailed across the Atlantic aboard Captain Howe's *Liberia Packet* from Baltimore, to begin his high school education in the independent African nation of Liberia.<sup>50</sup> On a return trip to the United States in 1895, Blyden sailed from Liberia to Liverpool aboard Captain Walsh's, steamship *Bakana*,<sup>51</sup> and then continued through London to the U.S. on June 29, 1895 aboard the steamship *Minnesota*.<sup>52</sup>

Except for a trip to Liberia to visit one of his daughters who was living there at the time, Reindorf is not known to have traveled outside the Gold Coast for education, trade, or diplomacy as Blyden had.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, Reindorf came from a multi-racial and multi-ethnic coastal enclave on the Gold Coast that allowed him to mediate different cultural worlds. He personified the contact between West African coastal societies and European traders and missionaries beginning in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and which resulted in the creation of diverse coastal communities in West Africa, and Reindorf's exposure to different cultural worlds. Coastal enclaves like Reindorf's Gold Coast were contact zones where people of differing backgrounds and heritages encountered one another. A result of these meetings was the unconscious exchange of cultures. Sometimes these exchanges involved trade partnerships and varying sexual unions—consensual and non-consensual—between

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<sup>49</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 136-648.

<sup>50</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 24.

<sup>51</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 650.

<sup>52</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 651.

<sup>53</sup> Adam Jones, "Reindorf the Historian" in *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 132.

individual European and African people on the coast. Reindorf was a product of such Afro-European partnership.<sup>54</sup>

Reindorf, like Blyden was born in a Danish sphere of influence (not colony) over 20 miles to the east of Accra, where his great-grandfather Johan Fredrick Reindorf, a Danish man, would later become Governor of the Christianborg castle in Osu. Reindorf was born to a mixed race father, Christian Hackenburg Reindorf (1806-1865), and a Ga woman from Osu, Anowa Amah (later, Hannah Reindorf, 1811-1902.)<sup>55</sup> Reindorf's free status was never in doubt, but like many "mulatto children" of Danish descent, his rights as a Danish citizen were contested.<sup>56</sup> A good case study of mixed race rights in the Danish settlements of the Gold Coast is Henrich Richter (1785-1849), the mixed race son of Danish trader Johan Emanuel Richter (c.1750-1817), who was also on different occasion's commandant of Danish forts Prisensteen at Keta and Fredensborg at Ada, Gold Coast respectively.<sup>57</sup>

J. E. Richter was appointed Governor of Danish establishments on the Gold Coast in 1817, but when he employed his Creole son as his aide, with an annual salary of 400 rdl., he drew the ire of the Danish Board of Customs in Copenhagen. The board objected to the younger Richter's appointment on the grounds that "it cannot be conceded that any coloured person or others other than natives of His Majesty's European Realm be employed in such posts."<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, when the Danish fathers

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<sup>54</sup> Roger Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 2-85.

<sup>55</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 2. I also offer further analysis of Reindorf's heritage in chapter four below.

<sup>56</sup> The use of Mullato or any variant of it is in reference to its use in the primary document and its use as a self-referent by mixed race people on the Gold Coast. I use less offensive synonyms outside of these contexts.

<sup>57</sup> Ole Justesen, "Henrich Richter 1785-1849: Trader and Politician in the Danish Settlements on the Gold Coast" *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* NS 7 (2003): 93-192.

<sup>58</sup> Justesen, "Henrich Richter," 98.

of dual-race children on the coast developed the habit of acknowledging their paternity in public documents, and invested the children with rights of inheritance as with any similar children in the future, the rights of such offspring reached as far as Denmark.<sup>59</sup>

This was true in the case of Henrich Richter, who when his father died in 1817, traveled to Copenhagen to declare his father's stewardship on the Gold Coast, and to claim his rights of inheritance. Richter was paid 14, 873 Rigsbank silver rdl. In 1828, six years before Reindorf's birth, the Danish Board of customs legitimated all the informal arrangements that invested Creole children with nominal citizenship and rights of inheritance.<sup>60</sup> So, even if limited or contested, Reindorf like Blyden was born an Afro-Danish citizen. By 1843, the Danish crown had transferred all of its forts and settlements to the British crown. This was followed by the official separation of the Gold Coast forts from Sierra Leone in 1850 and the formal declaration of the Gold Coast as a British Colony at the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference of European nations.<sup>61</sup> Thus, Reindorf who began his education in the Danish "Mulatto School" in the Christianborg castle found himself and his community transitioning into an Anglo-British sphere of control. He was Afro-Danish in heritage, but had come within the institutional control of British colonial activity on the Gold Coast.

In addition, as a result of European presence on the West African coast, missionary groups: like the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and the Bremen Mission led the way in the establishment of primary, to secondary education, as well as post-secondary-training on the Gold

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<sup>59</sup> Justesen, "Henrich Richter," 99.

<sup>60</sup> Justesen, "Henrich Richter," 110.

<sup>61</sup> David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 2-4.

Coast.<sup>62</sup> Initially, the recipients of western education and Christianizing activities were limited to ‘mulatto’ children, the offspring of European traders, and their African wives. It is from these contexts of western education, multi-racial heritage, and a multi-racial society that Reindorf was enabled to mediate African, European, and Afro-Creole communities on the Gold Coast. He later became a native catechist and pastor for the Basel Mission, an educator, trader, farmer, local historian, and author of *G. C. A. Histories*. As I will show later, this diverse background will also shape Reindorf’s Pan-African aims in his writing of *G. C. A. Histories*.

Blyden’s St. Thomas is some several nautical miles away from Reindorf’s birth city of Gbugbla, Prampram on the eastward coast of the Greater Accra region of modern day Ghana.<sup>63</sup> Evidently the demographic and social circumstances of Edward Blyden and Christian Reindorf are as distant as the geographic locations they were respectively born. At least that is what it would seem to for the biographical reviewer and casual reader.

I have chosen Blyden and Reindorf from an eminent list of equally significant nineteenth century West African intellectuals. This West African group includes Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1809-1891), the first African bishop of the Anglican Church;<sup>64</sup> James Africanus Beale Horton (1835-1883), who completed a treatise, *West African Countries and Peoples: A Vindication of the Negro Race*, Gold Coast, in 1868;<sup>65</sup> and Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford (1866-1930), who penned *Ethiopia*

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<sup>62</sup> A. Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Longmans, 1975), 85.

<sup>63</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 1-16.

<sup>64</sup> For further information see footnote on Robert July’s scholarship in which I identify literature on Crowther.

<sup>65</sup> James Africanus Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples: A Vindication of the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969).



*Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*, in 1911, among many others.<sup>66</sup> All of these writers made important contributions to the history of ideas generated in West Africa. However, I pair Blyden and Reindorf because of the similarities in the colonial umbrellas under which they were born, and their theological careers. While there are differences in their academic training, Blyden and Reindorf's similarities as ordained ministers, generational peers, revisionist historians, and Afro-Danish make them fit together more than any of their other equally talented West African contemporaries. Thus, despite not having known one another, Blyden and Reindorf's their lives significantly overlap.

Blyden and Reindorf are also important because they lived during an innovative period of world history. This is when the steamship, the printing press, and other technological advances of the era combined in various ways to allow black thinkers to challenge western thought. Blyden and Reindorf, both men of the cloak, did not have to plaster their critiques of enlightenment thought on the doors of the church like Martin Luther did for the Reformation in Europe.<sup>67</sup> Instead, they utilized newspapers, journals, and more efficient transportation systems, which carried their writings as media of contestations and exchange of knowledge with European intellectuals and Black Atlantic writers.

The fruits of studying Blyden and Reindorf together are plentiful. Succinctly, it allows for the intermeshing of the historiography in Black Atlantic studies, African/Ghanaian historiography, Western intellectual history, and Danish participation in the Atlantic as it relates to African descended peoples in Ghana, and

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<sup>66</sup> For a collective discussion, see July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 85-457.

<sup>67</sup> Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521* trans. by James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia; Fortress Press, 1985), 200-201.

the U.S. Virgin Islands. While a great deal of material has been generated about the Black Atlantic in the last decade, very little of that literature deals with Scandinavian involvement in the Atlantic, specifically Danish presence among Black populations in the Atlantic.<sup>68</sup> Pairing Blyden, born in the Danish West Indies, and the Danish descent Reindorf from Accra, Gold Coast helps me fulfill my goal of traversing Black localities in the Atlantic even as I focus on nineteenth century West Africa, bringing the less known Danish sphere of influence into Atlantic history.

While black Anglophone diasporic writers have received substantial treatment in the literature, others of Dutch and Danish language origins have received less commentary. Nonetheless, they also utilized autobiographical novels, historical novels, and other reflective approaches to challenge the history of ideas generated by social Darwinists, eugenicists, and scientific racists about African inferiority.<sup>69</sup> Intellectuals like Blyden and Reindorf, both born in Danish spheres of influence, respectively inherited the eighteenth century vindicationist tradition of correcting wrong claims about African life and history. Together Blyden and Reindorf offer significant historical glimpses into the philosophical underpinnings of West African and African Diaspora intellectual and social life, especially the Danish spheres of

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<sup>68</sup> For current texts see Hall, *Slave Society* as cited above and John Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); and for older texts see for example Francois de Paris, *Voyage of the Coast of Africa, Named Guinea, and to the Isles of America, Made in the Years 1682 and 1683* trans. and annotated by Aimery Caron (Madison; African Studies Program University of Wisconsin, 2001). See more in n. 72 below, I also offer extensive discussions of other texts in chapters four, five, and six below.

<sup>69</sup> For these eighteenth century African born vindicationists, see Wilhelm Anton Amo "Rights of Africans in Europe" for detailed discussion see W. Emmanuel Abraham, "Amo" *A Companion to the Philosophers* ed. by Robert L. Arrington (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001); Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*; Cugoana, *Thoughts and Sentiments*; see also John F. Sensbach's discussion on Christian Protten in *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Henry Louis Gates, ed., *Pioneers of the Black Atlantic: Five Slave Narratives from the Enlightenment 1772-1815* (Washington, D.C. : Civitas, 1998).

influence in Africa, and the Danish West Indies portion of the African Atlantic Diaspora.

The Danish West Indies Company's participation in the Atlantic slave trade from the Gold Coast to the Danish West Indies brings Blyden and Reindorf together in important ways. Born in the Danish sphere of influence on the Gold Coast, Reindorf's seminal study shows that the various ethnic populations of the Gold Coast, share interconnections that make them a common people.<sup>70</sup> A majority of the trade in human beings conducted from the Gold Coast to the Danish West Indies encouraged and exploited warfare between various ethnic populations—Ga-Adangbe, Akwamu, Akyem, Fante, and Asante—in the Gold Coast.<sup>71</sup> The base culture of the Danish West Indies may therefore be considered as a Gold Coast culture. These Gold Coast groups were in turn collectively responsible for the several rebellions in the Danish West Indies, like the St. John rebellion of 1733, the Antigua Slave rebellion of 1736, and St Croix in 1759.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Reindorf, G. C. *A Histories*, 17-335.

<sup>71</sup> See for example Per O. Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Society: The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth Century Gold Coast* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 1995); Ivor Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750: The Rise and Fall of a West African Empire* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 2001); Robert Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1943: From Ofori Panyin to Sir Ofori Atta* (Trondheim: Dept. of History, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1997); David Henderson-Quartey, *The Ga of Ghana: The History and Culture of a West African People* (London: Henderson-Quartey, 2001).

<sup>72</sup> For enslaved Gold Coast peoples rebellion in the Danish West Indies see examples in Pierre J. Pannet, *Report on the Execrable Conspiracy Carried out by the Amina Negroes on the Danish island of St. Jan in America, 1733*; trans. and ed. by Aimery P. Caron and Arnold R. Highfield (Christiansted: St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 1984); Waldemar Westergaard, "Account of the Negro Rebellion on St. Croix, Danish West Indies 1759" *JNH* 11, no. 1 (Jan., 1926), pp. 50-61; David Barry Gaspar, also writes about Gold Coast natives rebellion in Antigua influenced by their kin in St. Croix in "The Antigua Slave Conspiracy of 1736: A Case Study of the Origins of Collective Resistance" *William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 35, no. 2 (1978) 308-323; Ray A. Kea, "'When I Die I Shall Return to my Own Land' An 'Amina' Slave Rebellion in the Danish West Indies" in *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks: Papers on History and Society, Ghanaian and Islamic in Honor of Ivor Wilks* eds., John Hunwick and Nancy Lawler (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

As I further elaborate below, Reindorf's narratives of *G. C. A. Histories* are very important in conceptualizing Blyden's birth home, St. Thomas, in the Danish West Indies as an example of the dynamic historical connections that have existed between Africa and the African diaspora. Reindorf therefore prefigured the school of thought in African Diaspora studies who argue for a more nuanced broad cultural area understanding of the origins of enslaved Africans in the New World.<sup>73</sup>

Even though Blyden and Reindorf were "amateur" historians—i.e., not professionally trained historians—they both wrote historical pieces that challenged the Eurocentric and oftentimes racist scholarship of European thinkers, administrators, pseudo-scientists, and academics, like members of the *Anthropological Society of London*.<sup>74</sup> Blyden and Reindorf were therefore early historians of the African experience who wrote revisionist and narrative histories of African societies. Such revisionist histories showed epistemological differences between Blyden and Reindorf on one hand, and their European interlocutors. Except for their high school and theological education, Blyden and Reindorf were self-trained intellectuals, what in contemporary parlance is called, "an independent researcher or scholar." As critics of western scholarship on Africa, the self-made qualities that Blyden and Reindorf possessed are significant in analyzing and appreciating that, their thoughts and writings were not lodged within Western traditions. Their epistemological independence gave them a critical stance that buttresses my thesis about critical West Africans responses to claims about African inferiority in European discourse. Like their Diasporan colleagues, Blyden and Reindorf were autonomously producing

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<sup>73</sup> John K. Thornton, *African and Africans*, 206-279, debates this position with Sydney Mintz and Richard Price who argue for a change thesis given the diversity of ethnic groups that came to the Americas.

<sup>74</sup> See Reindorf, preface to *G. C. A. Histories*, v; Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 8-9.

knowledge, and creating an alternative canon of the African experience. It is also important to see how a self-trained West African-born Reindorf—who seldom traveled outside the Gold Coast region, and articulated a distinct indigenous West African perspective—compares with the equally autonomous West Indies-born, but West Africa-domiciled Blyden. Blyden who in many ways is a true Atlantic citizen, and traveled to places in the interior of West Africa and to Europe and other regions of the world; also articulated a West African perspective.

In demographic terms, Blyden (1832-1912) was born two years before Reindorf (1834-1917), and died five years before him. As peers, they both witnessed significant episodes of black life in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Critical to this era, were a variety of self-determination actions taken by black individuals and communities to assert their humanity. In the two decades before their birth, for example, Haiti, the first independent black republic had gained its independence from France;<sup>75</sup> and David Walker's (1785-1830) famous *1830 Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, a text considered to have preceded the idea of Pan-Africanism had been published.<sup>76</sup>

The Trans-Atlantic Trade in enslaved Africans had also been abolished by all of Europe and the United States (mostly by the 1830s) except, plantation slavery, which was abolished in the late 1800s in the United States (1865) and Brazil (1888).<sup>77</sup> As a result, Blyden and Reindorf became aware of some of the century's slave rebellions and legal struggles in the Americas. For Blyden, racial discrimination and the fear of

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<sup>75</sup> Cyril L. R. James, *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

<sup>76</sup> David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal, Together with Four Articles and a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World* (Baltimore: Black Classics Press, 1993).

<sup>77</sup> David Eltis, James Walvin, and Sven Green-Pederson, eds., *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade : Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas* (Madison Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).

false enslavement under the fugitive slave law in the U.S. convinced him to immigrate to Liberia in 1851.

Reindorf on his part, fled his local Osu when the British bombarded Accra's coastal towns in 1854. Accra residents in a demonstration of independence refused to pay poll taxes that had been imposed by the British colonial administration.<sup>78</sup> Blyden and Reindorf thus witnessed the scramble for African colonies by European imperialists supported by the 1884 Berlin conference that "legalized" European partitioning of African territories. At the time of the Berlin Conference, the two scholars were well into their intellectual advocacy. Both sought to influence which European power colonized their territories.<sup>79</sup> They both preferred British colonialism. At the time, the French were colonizing areas around Liberia and threatening its sovereignty. This, coupled with Blyden's frustration with the Americo-Liberian authorities, he preferred Liberia become a protectorate of Britain. However, he cautioned that like the Americo-Liberians, the British would have to do away with their ethnocentric attitudes towards native Africans. Reindorf also felt because of Britain's role in the abolition of slavery, they had the development of the Gold Coast at heart, and had protected the Gold Coast from the Danish and Dutch "tyrant slavers bent on profit alone."<sup>80</sup>

By the close of the nineteenth century, Blyden and Reindorf were socially and politically a part of a cohort of West African peoples who had experienced western forms of education. I argue that they had come to understand the origins of western

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<sup>78</sup> For Blyden see footnote 19 above that already explains his departure for Liberia, and Reindorf see S.K. Odamtten, *Missionary Factor in Ghana's Development up to the 1800's* (Accra: Waterville Publishing, 1978).

<sup>79</sup> Reindorf, *G.C.A. Histories*, 335; Lynch, *Pan-Negro-Patriot*, 191-209.

<sup>80</sup> See above citation.

education, its structures and strictures, knowledge systems, and its claims to universal modernity. Most importantly, they recognized how the founders and products of western modernity denigrated black people. These cadres of thinkers, who through their independent studies and/or European education intimately knew western epistemology, its pedagogy, and hermeneutics, collectively represent a uniquely sub-Saharan African perspective on the future direction of West Africa, black people, and humanity. Their collective standpoint was that African people possessed distinctive divinely ordained human qualities that had been nurtured on account of their centuries of existence on the African continent. For them, these qualities lodged in their social systems were not only legitimate, but also needed to be further developed for the benefit of Africans, and the human race in general.<sup>81</sup>

Blyden is an exemplar of this West African class of intellectuals, and his view about Africa circulated through his lecture circuits in the United States, as well as newspapers, and journals of the Black Atlantic world.<sup>82</sup> These have however yet to attain a place in contemporary academic conversations about the making of the Atlantic world, and the Black Atlantic World.<sup>83</sup> To this end, my dissertation examines relationships, for example, between Blyden and the Washington D.C. black reading group that included Anna Julia Cooper; and will demonstrate that West Africa had a central place in the formation of Atlantic bodies of knowledge and provided a greater

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<sup>81</sup> July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 110-129, 208-233.

<sup>82</sup> Edward Blyden, *The African Problem and Other Discourses Delivered in America in 1890* (London: W.B. Withingham & CO., 1890); J.E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (London: Frank Cass, 1969); Thomas H. Henriksen, "African Intellectual Influences on Black Americans: The Role of Edward W. Blyden" *Phylon* 36, no. 3 (1975): 279-290.

<sup>83</sup> Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* curiously excludes the whole of the African continent in the making of a "Black Atlantic."

understanding of the Atlantic dynamics responsible for black intellectual life in the nineteenth century.

At age eighteen, Blyden migrated and became a citizen of Liberia, one of the only two independent African nations in the nineteenth century.<sup>84</sup> While Blyden would become a diplomat and leading intellectual of Liberia, Reindorf, as I have explained earlier, became a colonial subject of the British overseas territory known as the Gold Coast. The two therefore were essentially Afro-Danish citizens who became Afro-English. Reindorf came under the ambit of British linguistic and cultural influence, through colonial domination. While by his emigration to Liberia, Blyden became of Anglo-American persuasion. These transformations in identity and socio-cultural spaces formed a substantial part of the writing of the two scholars, and shaped their various ideas on the future direction of Africa.

Blyden and Reindorf also shared the honor of being men of the cloak.<sup>85</sup> Until his resignation in 1886 to become a “minister of truth,” Blyden was an ordained Presbyterian Minister.<sup>86</sup> Reindorf, a catechist, also became an ordained pastor of the Swiss-German Basel Mission, which later transformed into the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.<sup>87</sup> In many ways, Blyden and Reindorf owed their association with western education to these Christian establishments. Blyden, whose parents were members of the Dutch-origin Moravian Christian denomination on the Island of St. Thomas, came

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<sup>84</sup> Ethiopia was the other independent African nation, whilst Black American Emigrants founded Liberia in 1847 with backing from the American Colonization Society. For African resistance to European Imperialism see Robert I. Rothberg, and Ali Mazrui, *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); and Albert A. Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987).

<sup>85</sup> Blyden was a trained minister of the Presbyterian Church and Reindorf a trained catechist and later pastor of the Basel Mission. See biography of Reindorf in Reindorf, *G.C.A. Histories*, 3-16; and Blyden see Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

<sup>86</sup> Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, xv.

<sup>87</sup> See explanatory footnote 74 above



under the “benevolent” influence of a Dutch Reformed Church minister, Rev. John P. Knox.<sup>88</sup> It was Knox who initially sent the young Blyden to the United States; unfortunately, as discussed earlier, he was rejected at three theological colleges on racial grounds.<sup>89</sup> In another way, Blyden’s arrival in Liberia was part of the U.S. African-American Church’s own civilizing project in Africa, which was achieved through the Christianizing of their African brethren. The underlying premise of such Christian proselytizing was that there was something wrong about African culture that Christianity would help correct. Blyden, however, after years of living in West Africa began to distance himself such civilizing discourse and rather raised questions about Christianity as practiced by Europeans. I seek to show that such a fundamental turnaround was important to the critiques that Blyden advanced about Eurocentric characterization of African peoples.

Reindorf also found it difficult to reconcile his received Christian training with his attempts to valorize African culture. He had established various mentor-mentee relationships with German missionaries/linguists on the Gold Coast. Some of these missionaries are Johannes A. Zimmerman (who published in 1858 *A Grammatical Sketch and Vocabulary of the Akra- or Ga-Language*), and J.G. Christaller (whose numerous publications about Akan language included *A Grammar of the Asante and Fante Language called Tsi (Chwee, Twi)*).<sup>90</sup> These works were produced with the same

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<sup>88</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 11, 20-23.

<sup>89</sup> Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 4; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 21.

<sup>90</sup> J. A. Zimmerman, *Grammatical Sketch and Vocabulary of the Akra or Ga-Language with an Appendix on the Adanme-Dialect*, 2 Vols., Stuggart, 1858); Thomas Bearth “J.G. Christaller. A holistic view of language and culture- and C.C. Reindorf’s History” in Paul Jenkins ed., *The recovery of the West African Past : African pastors and African history in the Nineteenth century*; C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson. *Papers from an international seminar held in Basel, Switzerland, 25-28th October 1995 to celebrate the centenary of the publication of C.C. Reindorf’s History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basel : Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998) Johann Gottlieb Christaller, *A Grammar of the Asante and Fante Language called Tsi*

proselytizing intent of the U.S. American churches. Reindorf's Basel Mission adopted the policy of learning the languages of the "natives" because it was the best way, which could provide them with Christian teachings, and to civilize them.<sup>91</sup>

Zimmerman was Reindorf's tutor at the Basel Evangelical Mission School in Osu, and became his mentor when he became catechist for the mission in 1855.<sup>92</sup> Christaller, a Swiss German missionary also worked with Reindorf in the Gold Coast and co-edited the English version of Reindorf's original manuscript to the Basel Mission. He also wrote the prefatory remarks to the 1895 edition.<sup>93</sup>

While the Basel Mission and its missionaries like Christaller enabled Reindorf's historical ambitions through their linguistic and literary policies, their influence came with a cultural baggage that caused tensions in Reindorf's historical work. Such instances are seen when Reindorf claims knowledge of native lore through his association with the Ga deity of the sea, Nai, who he seems to valorize, yet writing from a Christian perspective, he disparages Ga unyielding belief in Nai. He wrote:

It was God in heaven who mercifully defended our country. But our deluded people attributed the victory not only to their fetishes, but also to also to all the creatures that live in the sea, which they consider, even to the present day, as warriors of their fetish Nai and imagine to have taken part in combat, and to have been wounded in it.<sup>94</sup>

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(*Chwee, Twi*) (Basel 1875); his other works include *Twí Mmēbusem Mpen̄sa-Ahansia Mmoano: A Collection of Three Thousand and Six Hundred Tshi Proverbs* (Basel 1879); *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language*, Basel 1881.

<sup>91</sup> S. K. Odamtten, *The Missionary Factor in Ghana's Development (1820-1880)* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1978), 115-123.

<sup>92</sup> Reindorf, G. C. A. *Histories*, 5-6.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas Bearth "J.G. Christaller. A holistic view of language and culture- and C.C. Reindorf's History in Paul Jenkins ed., *The recovery of the West African Past : African pastors and African history in the Nineteenth century*; C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson. *Papers from an international seminar held in Basel, Switzerland, 25-28th October 1995 to celebrate the centenary of the publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basel : Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998); Reindorf Correspondence in B.M.A. D-20.27.2, 1-4; D-2027.7 C. C. Reindorf, "correspondence" December 30 1891; Reindorf, G. C. A. *Histories*, i-10.

<sup>94</sup> Reindorf, G. C. A. *Histories*, 210.

Blyden and Reindorf's ability to introspect and reflect on these aspects of their Christian training is evidence of their struggle with aspects of their Christian training that demeaned African culture. The dissertation explores Blyden and Reindorf's posture to Euro-Christian thought as they each dealt with the alienating role and ideological underpinnings of their missionary education.

Both Blyden and Reindorf were polyglots.<sup>95</sup> For nearly two decades of Blyden's early life in St. Thomas, he spoke Dutch, which was the lingua franca, even though Danish was the official language.<sup>96</sup> Blyden may also have been one of the last speakers of the now extinct "Negerhollands, also called Negro Dutch, or Dutch Creole", the language of enslaved blacks on St. John and St. Thomas.<sup>97</sup> Later, Blyden learned English, probably under the guidance of his mother and mentor Rev. John Knox.<sup>98</sup> During a two-year relocation (1842-1844) to Porto Bello, Venezuela, with his parents, Blyden learned to speak Spanish.<sup>99</sup>

In Liberia and Sierra Leone, Blyden may have spoken the West African based English Creole, and Fula.<sup>100</sup> In Liberia, Blyden also studied Latin and Greek at the

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<sup>95</sup> See discussion of Blyden's language skills in Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 11-16; Hollis Lynch, ed., *Black spokesman: selected published writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (London: Cass, 1971); *Selected letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden: edited and with introductions by Hollis R. Lynch and foreword by Léopold Sédar Senghor*. (Millwood, N.Y. : KTO Press, 1978); Thomas Bearth "J.G. Christaller. A holistic view of language and culture- and C.C. Reindorf's History in Paul Jenkins ed., *The recovery of the West African Past : African pastors and African history in the Nineteenth century*; C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson. *Papers from an international seminar held in Basel, Switzerland, 25-28th October 1995 to celebrate the centenary of the publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basel : Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998)

<sup>96</sup> Thorkild Hansen, *Island of Slaves* trans. Kari Dako (Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004), 11.

<sup>97</sup> A.V. Adams, introduction to Thorkild Hansen, *Island of Slaves* trans. Kari Dako (Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004), 11; Adams dates the extinction of Neger Hollands on St. Thomas to the 1970's; On Negerhollands see also C. G. A Oldendorp, *History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John*, (Ann Arbor; Mich.: Karoma Publishers, 1985), 251-265.

<sup>98</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 19-21.

<sup>99</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 19-20; Hollis R. Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 4.

<sup>100</sup> Lynch, *Pan-Negro*, 148, 151.

Alexander High School, and self-taught himself Hebrew, and Arabic.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, he was appointed Minister to the Interior by the Liberian government of President J. J. Roberts. In this capacity, Blyden dealt with many native societies on behalf of Liberia, and may likely have had some basic conversational skills of the languages spoken in the interior.<sup>102</sup> These literate and multilingual abilities gave Blyden access to various speech communities, which influenced his thinking and writing.

Reindorf also had similar knowledge into a variety of language groups. He was for example called to testify in a case in neighboring Akuapem, where he demonstrated knowledge of Akan language and Akan laws. He also preached among the Obutu, Ewe, and other Akan communities.<sup>103</sup> Reindorf's familiarity with these languages and his knowledge of the communities through his preaching was crucial in his collecting of various oral traditions and his interweaving of the various ethnic histories into a national history. In addition to probably learning Latin as part of his primary missionary education, Reindorf also spoke Adangbe, a language spoken in his birth town of Prampram.<sup>104</sup> As a trader in the Prampram and Krepi area, he more than likely spoke his native Ga, and possibly a dialect of Akan, as well as Ewe, having also earned a living as a trader in the Krepi area.<sup>105</sup> The teenage Reindorf attended the Danish School in the Christianborg Castle, but evidentially had a greater mastery of German, because Reindorf had all Danish sources translated into German when he was working on his *G.C.A. History*. Reindorf, who also utilized English primary sources,

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<sup>101</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 11-16.

<sup>102</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, xiv; Lynch ed., *Black Spokesman*, xii.

<sup>103</sup> See Jenkins ed., *The recovery of the West African Past* 19-29; Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 3-16.

<sup>104</sup> Public Records, Archives and Administrative Department henceforth (PRAAD), Accra Ghana. PRAAD EC 7/ 1-48, E.C. 17 Papers of Christianborg Presbyterian Middle Boarding School "Diary of Logbook for Boys School, Basel Mission School" 1867-1954; Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Reindorf, *G. C.A. Histories*, 3-16.

was therefore a pioneer in the use of archival documents in multiple languages as evidence for historical writing.<sup>106</sup>

### **Inadvertent Parallels**

There are some differences between Blyden and Reindorf, but ultimately these divergences seem to create additional parallels between the two. It is my contention that even though Blyden and Reindorf never met, in order to truly understand the connections between Blyden's Danish West Indies and Africa, and his wish to see a united West Africa, one must necessarily read Reindorf and his pioneering study of the Gold Coast and Asante. This is because in *G. C. A. Histories*, Reindorf constructs symbolic, real, and imagined relationships between ethnic communities of the Gold Coast and the entire West African region, sometimes as far as North Africa. By so doing, Reindorf links all of Africa through ethnic relations, migration, trade, and war—a construction that is particularly important because the cultural area of the Gold Coast was the base culture on which the enslaved peoples of the Danish West Indian colonies, fashioned out new lives in the Americas.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, as I explain extensively in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, the Gold Coast region was the place from where many enslaved peoples of St. Thomas began their gruesome New World journeys.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, in a certain sense, Reindorf's real and symbolic

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<sup>106</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vii-viii.

<sup>107</sup> For some evidence see Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Society*, 129-173; Thorkild Hansen, *Ships of Slaves (Slavernes Skibe)* trans. by Kari Dako (Accra: Subs-Saharan Publishers, 2003), 7-203; *Island of Slaves*, 9-26.

<sup>108</sup> On "Some Geographic and Political Information about the Africa Nations from which the Slaves were Principally Brought to the West Indies" see C.G.A. Oldendorp, *History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John* (Ann Arbor; Mich.: Karoma Publishers, 1985), 159-179, particularly on the Gold Coast see 162-164, For a specific text on Slavery, see Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes*, 129-393.

construction of a multi-ethnic Gold Coast became the homogeneous entity that Blyden spent his formative years in St. Thomas.

While he never met Blyden personally, the literate Reindorf is likely to have read the widely circulated publications of Blyden in newspapers, serialized in the very vibrant Gold Coast Press such as the *Accra Herald/West African Herald*, and the *West African Times* and *The Standard*.<sup>109</sup> The print culture of the era therefore ensured that Reindorf's mind, and/or his work traveled to many places in West Africa, Basel, Switzerland, and Britain.<sup>110</sup> This is evident in his writings to various editors and publishers at the end of the century.<sup>111</sup> When his *G. C. A. Histories* was completed in 1895, Hauser-Renner reports that a copy each was sent to the editors of the *Deutsche Kolo-nialzeitung*, *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, *Afrika Vereinsblatt* (Pastor Müller), *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift* and the *African Times* in London, a paper that Blyden read.<sup>112</sup> By January 1896, the *G. C. A. Histories* was on sale in Basel, London, Cape Coast and Osu.<sup>113</sup> Yet, neither Reindorf nor his work loomed large on the Black Atlantic world like Blyden, who is generally accepted as the progenitor of a Pan-

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<sup>109</sup> Magnus J. Sampson, *A Brief History of the Gold Coast Journalism*, (Accra, 1934), 10-30; *Gold Coast Men of Affairs*, (London: Stockwell 1937), 87; K.A.B. Jones-Quartey, *A Summary History of the Ghana Press*, (Accra: Ghana Information Service, 1974), 5.

<sup>110</sup> For Reindorf's understanding of world affairs as applied in his writing see Carl Christian Reindorf, *The history of the Gold Coast and Asante, based on traditions and historical facts comprising a period of more than three centuries from about 1500 to 1860. With a biographical sketch by C. E. Reindorf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basel: Basel Mission Book Depot 1951), 17-23; For the reach of his writing B.M.A. D-1 Incoming Correspondence, Public Record Office, Colonial Office Minutes C.O. 96 Gold Coast Original Correspondence.

<sup>111</sup> BMA D-20.27,8. "Reindorf to J.P. Werner, London, Osu, December 30, 1891," 2.

<sup>112</sup> See evidence of this in Blyden's letter to Coppinger in Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 380.

<sup>113</sup> Hauser-Renner, "Text Sediments," 248; and See also BMA D-20.27,7. "Binder to Christaller, Basel, November 6, 1895), 1-2. Hauser-Renner also indicates that the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* was the journal of the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* (German Colonial Society) and appeared from 1887 to 1929. The *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* was the official journal of the Reichs-Kolonialamt (ministry for the colonies) for reports and information relating to the German protectorates in Africa and elsewhere, and it appeared from 1890 to 1921. The *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* appeared from 1874 to 1923, and the *African Times* from 1862 to 1902; *G.C.A. Histories* (1895), title page.

African Intellectual tradition. This dissertation will attempt to offer answers to why Reindorf's pan-ethnic African scheme is not as widely known as Blyden's African Personality theory.

### **Eighteenth Century Forerunners: Iconoclasts**

As intellectuals, Blyden and Reindorf inherited from the African polemicist of the eighteenth century the need to correct the falsified standards or canon about African life and history that had been written by European writers. These Eurocentric *littérateurs* described Africans in uncharitable terms. In response, an eighteenth century counter-analyses canon was produced by Gold Coast's Dutch and German trained philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo (1703-Ca.1759); Moravian trained itinerant preachers from Reindorf's Osu, Frederick Pederson Svane (1710-1789); Christian Protten (1715-1769); and Elmina, Gold Coast born Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein (1717-1747).<sup>114</sup> These were the intellectual progenitors of Blyden and Reindorf's writing, and as I will show below, Reindorf's activism within the Basel Mission for example bears strong parallels with Christian Protten's critiques of the Moravian Mission, which took him to Europe.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Amo wrote on the "Rights of Africans in Europe" for detailed discussion see W. Emmanuel Abraham "Amo" (in Robert L. Arrington [ed.] *A Companion to the Philosophers* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001); and John H. McClendon III, "Introduction to Drs. Anton Wilhelm Amo and Charles Leander Hill with Select Bibliography," *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Spring 2003); In about 1764 first wrote, "Useful grammatical introduction to the hitherto completely unknown language of Fante and Ga" for review see H.M.J. Trutenau, ed., *Christian Protten's 1764 Introduction to the Fante and Accra (Ga) Languages* (London, 1971); Jacobus Elisha Capitein, trans. and ed. by Grant Parker, *The Agony of Asar: A Thesis on Slavery by a Former Slave* (Princeton: New Jersey, 2001).

<sup>115</sup> Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 169, 162-171.

Blyden and Reindorf are also significant in their own individual occupation with challenging the various European intellectual currents that disparaged Africa. In fact, one may describe them as iconoclasts—having a scholarly, social, and political, activist posture—that intellectually challenged the various western traditions they had each been schooled. Blyden’s friend and interlocutor, Alexander Crummell (1819-1898), established the American Negro Academy in 1897. One of the aims of the Academy was the vindication of the “Negro Race.”<sup>116</sup> St. Claire Drake describes the vindicationists as encompassing the “most educated black men and women” who two centuries prior, spoke and wrote against the institution of slavery and the characterization of people of African descent in inhuman terms.<sup>117</sup> The American Negro Academy had as its conceptual task “The Defense of the Negro Against Vicious Attacks.”<sup>118</sup> This school of thought had as its primary goal the deconstruction of the pseudo-scientific claims on which ideas of black inhumanity and cultural inferiority were based—a pseudo-science that in turn encouraged the justification of a racist U.S. society and its accompanying social institutions.<sup>119</sup> W. E. B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson belonged to this school of thought that encompassed what Manning Marable has characterized as the “corrective” dimension of the black intellectual tradition.<sup>120</sup>

Blyden is arguably the intellectual progenitor of the vindicationist canon as used by the American Negro Academy co-founder, Alexander Crummell. In 1857, Blyden penned an essay printed by G. Killian (Monrovia), which included an introduction by

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<sup>116</sup> Alfred A. Moss, *American Negro Academy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 1.

<sup>117</sup> St Claire Drake, *Black Folk Here and There: An Essay in History and Anthropology* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California 1987), xvii.

<sup>118</sup> St Claire Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, xvii.

<sup>119</sup> Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, xvii.

<sup>120</sup> Manning Marable, “Black Studies and the Black Intellectual Tradition” in *Race & Reason* 4 (1997-1998): 3-8.



Crummell. The original essay was entitled “A Brief Examination of the Arguments of African Inferiority: A Vindication of the African Race,” in which Blyden sought to negate pseudo-scientific claims about Africans as sub-standard humans because of their physiological make-up.<sup>121</sup> Blyden was also elected to be a corresponding member of the Academy in 1897.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, like the members of the Negro Academy, Blyden and Reindorf were vindicationists, who like most antecedent pioneers in contemporary African history and African American Studies saw their tasks as correcting the misrepresentations of African and Africans, as well as proscribing what was needed for Liberia, and the Gold Coast’s growth.

Blyden like his Sierra Leonean contemporary, Africanus Horton, challenged the racial theories of African inferiority espoused by the Anthropological Society of London, which was founded in 1863.<sup>123</sup> The society provided an ideological basis for British imperial and colonial expansion in Africa.<sup>124</sup> In his opposition, Blyden articulated the idea of a unique African personality that also belonged to Africans in the Americas and West Indies.<sup>125</sup> Blyden also challenged the ethnocentrism of Americo-Liberian “mullatoes” against the indigenous inhabitants of Liberia, which led to his being branded as anti-mullato.<sup>126</sup> He was also in the vanguard of protecting

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<sup>121</sup> Lynch, *Black Spokesman*, 131.

<sup>122</sup> Alfred A. Moss, Jr. *The American Negro Academy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 79.

<sup>123</sup> Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 59; *Journal of American Studies* 3 (Nov. 1969): 643-64.

<sup>124</sup> Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 59.

<sup>125</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, *African Life and Customs* (London, 1908). See also M Yu. Frenkel, “Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality” *African Affairs* 73 (1974): 277-289, July, Robert, W. “Nineteenth-Century Negritude: Edward Wilmot Blyden” *JAH* 5 (1964): 73-86, This will be further discussed in the historiographical section on Pan-Africanism in Chapter 2.

<sup>126</sup> Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 37-42. Lynch Blyden’s first biographer offered some scathing critique of Blyden’s disdain for Liberian “mullatoes.” Without disputing the fact that Blyden disliked mixed-races, I

Liberia's sovereignty against U.S., British, and French interests in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>127</sup>

Blyden is generally considered to be the father of intellectual Pan-Africanism as opposed to sentimental Pan-Africanism. Intellectual Pan-Africanism is defined as an attempt to analyze, and structure what constitutes an African personality for the purpose of showing the need for Pan-Africanism, while sentimental Pan-Africanism could be described as a feeling or a yearning for the coming together of peoples of African descent, but not articulated or systematized in writing.<sup>128</sup>

In 1889, when Reindorf authored, and self-financed, the publication of his *G. C. A. Histories*, no African writer in the modern era had attempted to reconstruct comprehensively the “origins” or “history” of any group of African peoples with primary archival and ethnographic records as well as secondary sources.<sup>129</sup> His social vision, to conglomerate the various entities of the Gold Coast—Ga-Adangbe, Akan, as well as Ewe—and link them with other West African, and African societies in real and symbolic ways, was pioneering. His aim was to inform his fellow educated Gold Coasters about the need for the “study and collection of our history, and to create a

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will argue from a more nuanced position for why he disliked them as a group, but not because of their phenotypic or genotypic qualities.

<sup>127</sup> NA F.O. 84/1487 Edward Blyden, Slave Trade, Liberia, Africa (West Coast) (Fernando Po) Muscat (Drafts and Despatches) January–December 1877 F.O. 84/1512; Edward Blyden, Slave Trade, Tripoli, Consuls at Benghazi, January–December 1878; F.O. 84/2270 Edward Blyden, “Africa (Slave Trade) Liberia, (Africa and Treaty) Sir W.O. Jones, Sir Fleming Mr. Crooke Domestic Mr. Blyden, Mr. Hayman. Various. Despatches to British Consulate of Liberia, 1892.”

<sup>128</sup> These are set out in his entire pamphlet *African Life and Customs*, 10-11.

<sup>129</sup> A. Jones “Reindorf the Historian” in Paul Jenkins ed., *The Recovery of the West African Past: African pastors and African history in the Nineteenth century*; C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson. *Papers from an international seminar held in Basel, Switzerland, 25-28th October 1995 to celebrate the centenary of the publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basel : Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998); Raymond G. Jenkins, “Gold Coast Historians and their Pursuits of Gold Coast Pasts: 1882-1917” (Ph.D thesis, University of Birmingham, 1985).

basis for a more complete history of the Gold Coast.”<sup>130</sup> Of particular note was Reindorf’s decision to publish his manuscript in his native Ga, as well as English. The Basel Mission Press published the English version.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, Reindorf established himself as a groundbreaking scholar in modern African historiography, hiring his own personal assistant—who later became King Tackie Tawiah of Ga, Accra (1862-1902)—to help him collect oral histories from more than two hundred men and women.<sup>132</sup>

Portrayed as proto-nationalist, that is one who possessed a vision of the nascent existence of a nation, Reindorf was in an intellectual sense, the founding father of modern Ghana, because he was the first to conceive of the various ethnic peoples that now comprise Ghana as a national entity. In Reindorf’s conception of a national history, a nation should have a “starting point,” that is a beginning of common origins and shared histories.<sup>133</sup> Such national beginning he believed already existed through contact, trade, inter-marriage, and conflicts that had ensued among the various ethnic groups of the Gold Coast.<sup>134</sup> He thought that this nation could come into existence through the writing of a national history, which is why he wrote *G. C. A. Histories*.<sup>135</sup>

As a native catechist and later ordained minister, Reindorf challenged the institutional racism of the Switzerland based German dominated Basel Missionary Society. He challenged established modes of promotion within the mission, salary

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<sup>130</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, iv.

<sup>131</sup> There is still debate about what language Reindorf first wrote his manuscript in, Professor Emeritus, S. K. Odamtten has argued in *The Missionary Factor in Ghana’s Development up to the 1800’s* (Accra: Waterville Publishers, 1978), 225, that Reindorf wrote the Ga version before translating into English, commentators like Thomas Bearth in the *Recovering the West African past* think otherwise. I will offer some further commentary in chapter 3.

<sup>132</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vi, BMA D-20.27, 7: Reindorf, “Reindorf to Christaller, April 15, 1895”

<sup>133</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vi-vii.

<sup>134</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vi.

<sup>135</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories* 1895 edition, iv.

scales for African missionaries, and wrote a thesis distinguishing indigenous African servitude from Caribbean or American plantation or chattel slavery.<sup>136</sup>

In the subsequent chapters that follow I attempt to clearly show the social milieu within which Blyden and Reindorf evolved to become iconoclastic scholars and how they inserted themselves into various discussions concerning Africa and people of African descent. I elaborate how on the evidence of Blyden and Reindorf's independent writing, its indigenous contexts, and nativistic tones do not suggest a European beginning for West African modern thought. Rather, Blyden and Reindorf used the literacy they had acquired from their western education to help in the creation of a corpus of history of ideas in West Africa.

### **Conclusion and Organization of Study**

In this introductory section of the dissertation, I have tried to show that Blyden and Reindorf have been overlooked in the literature on nineteenth century Pan-Africanist thinkers. This is because of their West African background and their articulation of indigenous and nativistic notions of Pan-Africanism. On the other hand I justify why the two are important because they belonged to the cohort of intellectuals who theorized Pan-Africanism prior to its evolution into a social movement, and also, the evidence of their writings helps us complicate our present understanding of Pan-Africanism as a North American creation. Further, while other Africans made contributions to Pan-Africanism, studying Blyden and Reindorf as part of the

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<sup>136</sup> BMA D-10. 4, 24 Reindorf "Annual Report of the Year, Mayera, 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1881"; BMA D-1, 14 Reindorf, "Slave Emancipation Commission 23 Minutes of 15 Jan. 1863"; BMA D-1 13 b Akropong 14 "Widamnn to Basel April 9, 1862, and May 9 1862"; BMA D-1 13b Akropong 6a "Reindorf and Colleagues to Basel March 5, 1862".

philosophical antecedents to global black intellectual and social movements helps showcase the less studied Afro-Danish and West African worlds as integral parts of Black Atlantic intellectual activity.

By centering Blyden and Reindorf, and the intellectual and social worlds they were socialized, we also see that West African intellectuals were at the forefront of critiquing and responding to Western scholarship claims about the inferiority of Africa, its peoples, and descendants. Blyden and Reindorf also produced knowledge about their past and their present, and collaborated with other African descent intellectuals in offering proscriptions on how to deal with their past, present, and future. West African Pan-Africanism as seen through Blyden and Reindorf is therefore not simply a counter-discourse, but a rigorous knowledge production activity.

This history of ideas in West African thought seen through dual intellectual biography of Blyden and Reindorf then contributes to a variety of disciplinary arenas, fields, and subject areas within History—African history, Atlantic Studies, Danish-Scandinavian presence in Africa and African-American worlds—and most importantly, African and African-American Studies, as separate entities, or a conceptualized unitary, Africana Studies.

### **Shijweremo Mlijlamo: Organization of Chapters**

Chapter 1 of this study “Shishifaa (Roots) Conceptual Foundations: In My Mother’s House: A Reflective Odyssey” is a reflective analysis of the data-gathering process, particularly the collection of oral interviews used for the dissertation.

Utilizing a cultural-biographical approach, the chapter engages in a literary critique of other cultural-biographical analysis of black life that adopts anti-essentialist approaches to Pan-Africanism. The chapter further engages the dialectical encounter between researcher (me) and research, including the research subjects Carl Reindorf and Edward Blyden. Finally, and most importantly, I explain how women, while not always the leading respondents of my research were my most able collaborators; they opened up the public and private spaces of men at my various research sites.

Chapter 2 is a historiographical and literature review that explores how scholars have written about Blyden and Reindorf. Chapter 3, “Pan-Africanism: Its Origins, Definitions, Historiography, Founders and Categories” is a chronological review of historical scholarship on Pan-Africanism. I examine what the leading theorists including Blyden and Reindorf have said about the subject, consider the differences in their conceptualizations and schools of thought, and I challenge some of the existing definitions and analyses.

Chapter 4 “Reindorf, Your Palaver is Too Sweet: The Danish West Indies and Trans-Atlantic Ethnicity” employs the West African conflict resolution institution, “palaver,” as a metaphor, to show how Reindorf utilized past conflicts, trade, and marriage within and without the Gold Coast and Bight of Benin societies as a means of forming a nation that he called the Gold Coast and Asante. I categorize Reindorf’s melding of various West African ethnic societies into a pan-ethnic entity into three indigenous historical understandings of social group formation or identity: real, symbolic, and imagined relationships. Relying on studies of West Africa as a cultural area, I suggest that societies from the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin where Danish

slave trading ships were engaged, became the base culture of St. Thomas where Edward Blyden was born and spent his formative years. I also dedicate some more time to exploring Reindorf the person and historian; paying particular attention to his Afro-European heritage, his early training in indigenous educational institutions, and his acquisition of western education through the Basel Mission. I also examine in more detail Reindorf's tenuous relationship with the Basel Mission. I suggest that Reindorf had a pan-ethnic African conception of Pan-Africanism.

The fifth chapter, "Blyden as Global Iconoclast: Nationalist, Diplomat, and Intellectual," building on the previous chapter, is dedicated to the personal life, diplomatic, nationalist-activist, and intellectual career of Edward Wilmot Blyden. Blyden is characterized as a progenitor of a global iconoclastic tradition—i.e. as one whose iconic intellectual, activist, and diplomatic activity impacted people of African descent globally, and whose intellectual analysis of the global African condition was timeless. As an African of Diasporan heritage, Blyden is distinguished from other intellectuals of similar heritage. This is because he did not only write about African repatriation, but also lived and died in Africa. Further, among all his contemporaries, he was the one who was most successful in shedding the idea of "civilizing our African brethren."

The sixth and concluding chapter attempts a comparison of the two intellectuals focusing on their transition from Afro-Danish to Afro-Anglo worlds, their similarities, and differences in intellectual outlook and personality. I provide a collective overview of Blyden and Reindorf's understanding of the Black Atlantic. I also present in a systematic fashion the collective contributions of West African scholars to the tide of

ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Atlantic world, the creation of a Black Atlantic scholarly community, and the emergence of Pan-Africanism.



## **Chapter 1**

### **Shishifaa (Roots) Conceptual Foundations: In Your Mother's House, A Reflective Odyssey**

This chapter deals with the methodological choices, as well as philosophical perspectives in which the dissertation is grounded. The first half of this preparatory exposition explains briefly the various methods by which I acquired information for writing the dissertation. The latter and greater portion of this section is an introspective analysis of the data-gathering process. This reflective exploration is framed around issues of philosophical and religious underpinnings of Ga concepts of person and kinship, particularly as they relate to my research subjects Carl Christian Reindorf, and myself. I share with Reindorf a common Ga ethnic heritage in Ghana, and we both trace ancestry to families in the Ga town, Osu, which was my primary research site during my field investigations. The intent then is to establish my location as researcher vis-à-vis my research site, Osu, and research subject, Reindorf.

I offer in my discussion of Ga kinship, a counter-critique of interpretations that treat Pan-Africanism as having racist beginnings and undertones.<sup>1</sup> My position on the issue is not to argue against the biological falsehood of race; I rather ask that those who claim race as illusory and ideological should expend equal intellectual energy in dealing with the social reality of race. Proofs against the scientific reality of race do not negate the social reality of race, or the fact that race was for centuries an accepted fundamental principle of European social domination and organization of the world. People like Edward Blyden, who began articulating Pan-African viewpoints, had experienced the global reach and debilitating effects of racial social formation in St.

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<sup>1</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1992), 3-72, 173-180.

Thomas, West Indies, the U.S., and in Liberia, West Africa. This explains why Blyden contested the use of race as a social organizing mechanism.<sup>2</sup> Pan-African discourse was then a reaction to racial categorization, but since its critics are at pains to show the so-called fictional foundations of Pan-Africanism, I suggest that non-blood forms of kinship based on bonds of marriage, religion, age groups, trade networks, shared history, migrations and such are not foreign ideas to Africans. It is therefore not so strange that Pan-Africanist intellectuals in Africa and the African Diaspora framed their ideas around common ancestry to the African continent, so called mythical constructions of shared cultures, and a history of common bondage and denigration.

In this dissertation, I utilize various qualitative methods, including archival research and ethnographic fieldwork. My archival investigations involved a close reading of minutes, diaries, correspondence, administrative records relating to the societies and individuals under consideration in this study. The ethnography employed in this research was mainly the solicitation of oral interviews from collaborators in various communities in Ghana.<sup>3</sup> This process involved collecting through open ended and focused interview questions-memorized oral traditions and histories, as well as life histories from 25 men and women occupying various roles in

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Blyden's "A Vindication of the African Race" in Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 131-133.

<sup>3</sup> Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005), 5-6, uses the term collaborators as opposed to informants and respondents in deference and acknowledgement of their active participation in her collection and generation of knowledge from their society. It is with such respect that I also use the term collaborator. I also use the less value-laden term "interviewee" as a synonym for collaborator. I explain the oral interview procedures below.

traditional Ghanaian societies. I will offer shortly below, an elaborate explanation of the oral interview procedures.<sup>4</sup>

In writing this thesis, I also employed approaches from different disciplinary arenas such as archeology and linguistics, and also triangulated primary, secondary, and oral historical sources. I also utilize tertiary sources such as cookbooks, and historical novels. In chapter four of this study for example, I use the recipe, preparation, and cooking of the West African dish “Palaver Sauce” to metaphorically describe Reindorf’s mixing and meshing of various ethnic societies on the Gold Coast into a national entity. An example of a historical novel thus employed is Thorkhild Hansen’s *Island of Slaves*.<sup>5</sup> This fictive historical narrative is the third in a trilogy of books aimed at the conscience of Danish society, and brings to fore, their then less acknowledged role in the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. Hansen utilizes various Danish primary sources such as judicial records in the Danish West Indies to capture the activities of enslaved Gold Coasters. I draw on Hansen’s imaginative connecting of the history of the Gold Coast to the Danish West Indies colonies to also historically link Reindorf’s *Gold Coast and Asante* with Blyden’s St. Thomas.<sup>6</sup>

The oral sources that I use in my dissertation were collected during ten months of fieldwork, during which I employed elements of ethnographic methods such as observing cultural aggregates and patterns, participant observation, and journaling. These were complimented by a variety of oral history techniques like non-scripted oral

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<sup>5</sup> Thorkhild Hansen, *Island of Slaves* trans. by Kari Dako (Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004), 7-26.

<sup>6</sup> Below I use in similar fashion the historically tinged poems of West Indian poet Kamau Brathwaite as well as textual analysis of hip-hop rap verses to show the social consciousness of black youth around the world.

interviews, focused group interviews, recording of life histories, and oral traditions. In the non-scripted interviews, I did not design an interview protocol with a fixed set of questions prior to an arranged interview; rather I let the interviewee's responses to my open-ended inquiries lead me into questions I had previously considered. This procedure was also adopted for my focused group interviews, which usually involved a family or a group of elders in a particular community. When some of the interviewee's appeared shy about a particular subject, I asked them personal questions about their birth, upbringing, professions, family and so forth. This life history approach of questioning prompted them to be more forthcoming, as they were able to relate their personal lives to the subject or events I asked them about. I attended various festivals like the Osu Homowo, and Cape Coast Fetu Afahye, all annual celebrations of the history and present state of the Ga and Fante peoples respectively. On these occasions official oral traditions or histories on certain subjects were narrated; at these times I sought permission to record such historical re-enactments.

These data were tested against evidence in archival holdings of the Public Records Archival and Administrative Department (hereafter PRAAD) offices in Accra, and Cape-Coast Ghana, National Archives, London (hereafter NA), and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London. I also looked at material in the Special Collections of the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom as well as the Basel Mission Archives (BMA) in Basel, Switzerland. The primary sources accessed from the PRAAD of Ghana, include various nineteenth century newspapers; minutes, dispatches, court cases, general reports, reports of enquiries into native social organization by the British colonial administration;

archived documents by or concerning Basel Mission's activities on the Gold Coast, as well as some personal papers and diaries of 19<sup>th</sup> century personalities like the President of the Fante Confederation, Nana Ghartey I.<sup>7</sup> These documents were complimented by other archival documents housed in the University of Ghana, Legon; including sections of the Furley Collection related to Danish presence on the Gold Coast, B. A. M. A. and Ph.D. dissertations from the University of Ghana History Department and Institute of African Studies (IAS).<sup>8</sup> The dissertations covered topics that ranged from music, religion, trade, to politics on the Gold Coast, as well as archeological studies of Danish presence on the Gold Coast.<sup>9</sup>

In the United Kingdom, the materials at the National Archives were mainly about Edward Wilmot Blyden. These included Blyden's travel records; as well as minutes, letters, and dispatches, which were exchanged while he served as Liberian ambassador to the United Kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Other records investigated in London were Ph.D. dissertations about various aspects of nineteenth to twentieth century Gold Coast society housed at SOAS.<sup>11</sup> I also scrutinized the Wesleyan Methodist Mission's

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<sup>7</sup> Materials included SC 2 Bannerman Papers, ADM 11/1 Native Affairs Papers, EC 6, and 7 Basel Mission Papers. The confederation was one of the early organizations in the nineteenth century that opposed colonial rule.

<sup>8</sup> These include FC N75-84 Dutch Diaries and Correspondence, N1-N8 West Indian Company (WIC) Letters

<sup>9</sup> Examples include Yaw Bredwa-Mensa, "Historical-Archeological Investigations at the Frederiksgave Plantation, Ghana: A case Study of Slavery and Plantation Life on a Nineteenth Century Danish Plantation on the Gold Coast" (Ph.D thesis University of Ghana, Legon, 2002); Samuel S. Quarcoopome "Political Activities in Accra, 1924-1945" (M.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1980); Irene Quaye "The Ga and their neighbors 1600-1742" (Ph.D thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1972); Ivor Wilks, "Akwamu (1650-1750): A study of the rise and fall of a West African Empire" (M.A. thesis University of Wales, 1958).

<sup>10</sup> See for example M.P. GG 102 On the Liberia Boundary Question, and Maps of Blyden's Route to the Interior in 1872; Foreign Office F.O. 84/2270 Africa (Slave Trade) Liberia, Africa and Treaty (Mr. Blyden) Domestic, Dispatches to the British Consulate of Liberia.

<sup>11</sup> These included: John Parker, "Ga State and Early Colonial Accra, 1860-1920s" (Ph.D diss., University of London, 1995); *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (London: Heinemann, 2000); Augustus L. Casely-Hayford Genealogical Study of Cape-Coast Stool Families" (Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992).

(WMMS) synod minutes, at SOAS, but these records feature only minimally in my dissertation.<sup>12</sup>

In Basel Switzerland, the BMA extensive collection on Ghana were mined for information on Carl Christian Reindorf's career as native missionary of the Basel Mission, and the publication of his opus on the Gold Coast. The materials examined were in English, Ga, and Twi, and on some occasions my German-speaking relatives in Germany and Switzerland assisted in my translating German phrases within the English and Ghanaian language archival texts.<sup>13</sup>

### **In Your Mother's House: Explicit Subjectivity**

The title of this section *In Your Mother's House*, is a pun on Appiah's previously cited *In my Father's House*, a book on African Philosophy he dedicated to his Asante father's Ghanaian nationalism, Pan-African ideals, and Christian-Methodist identity.<sup>14</sup> Appiah, in this work also offers analyses on Asante kinship, African literature, the ideological racial origins of Pan-Africanism. Appiah's discussion of Pan-Africanism, is the subject of evaluation by Ghanaian scholar Larbi Korang, who seeks to contextualize in historical terms the reasons why pioneering Pan-African intellectuals used racial categories in their various writings on Pan-Africanism. In response to Appiah, Korang offered the following viewpoint:

It may have been that those dispossessed by those who imposed [race]these categories in power took the selfsame categories up in a quest

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<sup>12</sup> WMMS- BX 26 "Gold Coast Minutes and Reports May 23, 1842-1843"

<sup>13</sup> On occasion when I have deemed it necessary, I have consulted in conversation my paternal grandparents relations, and friends in Germany and Switzerland. My grand-aunt Mrs. Susana Odamtten and her daughter Joana Odamtten, Mr. Hans Buser of Switzerland, and my cousins by way of my paternal grandmother, Rebecca and Rachel Djieagu of Frankfurt, Germany.

<sup>14</sup> Appiah, *In my Father's House*, viii-ix.

to re-empower themselves. But special pleading of this kind makes no difference to Appiah, whose transnationally articulated appeal is to a Kantian “ethical universal,” that enjoins us to “universalize our moral judgments”. In the name of this ethical universal the powerful and the dispossessed, the West and the Rest, are indifferently and equally culpable of the anti-humanist and unreasonable errors of racism, nationalism, and nativism. With one broad Kantian stroke, therefore, Appiah the “resister” consigns virtually all of Pan-African nationalist and racist thought to ethical worthlessness: all sound and fury, racist, nationalist, and nativist Africanism signifies nothing.<sup>15</sup>

In the tradition of Korang’s critical perspective, this section first serves as a critique of cultural studies and philosophical approaches that have sought to make less meaningful, African systems of social relations and Pan-African ideology. Post-modern and cultural studies critics like Appiah, who deconstruct African systems of kinship and Pan-African identity formation, make compelling arguments for universal human relations. However, these articulations are rooted in a western, ethnocentric understanding of what is universal. Studies of this kind negate the cultural and historical particularities of human groups in order to celebrate a false universalism.

In contrast, my approach is to acknowledge “cognitive and ethical universals” but also decolonize false universal canons through investigations of the “particularities” of African life, as presently engaged by Africanist philosophers.<sup>16</sup> This intent is therefore more likely to be recognized by Africanist philosophers who also see philosophy as a self-engaged exercise. Because, of all the disciplines, the one historically given to self-reflection is philosophy. From its supposed Greek beginnings,

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<sup>15</sup> Kwaku Larbi Korang, *Writing Ghana Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 278.

<sup>16</sup> For Philosophy as Self-Reflection see the works of Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1994); *Contested Memory: The Icons of the Occidental Tradition* (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2007); *Our Heritage: The Past in the Present of African-American and African Existence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); For the latter see Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); *Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy: Four Essays* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1995).

philosophy asks humanity to know itself. My introspection, however, lies less with the Greek tradition, and more with an African philosophical approach of reflective analysis. Others in socio-cultural Anthropology, with knowledge of its ethnographic growth, may also claim a reflective approach to research, particularly important, its recognition of the “emic and etic” also called “insiders and outsiders.” It is an approach to research, which acknowledges the relative worldview prevalent “inside” the research community, and the “outside” interpretative perspective of an investigator.<sup>17</sup> In twentieth century literature, such self-consideration is seen in the autobiographical and historically fictional works of W. E. B. Du Bois’ *Souls of Black Folk*, and J. E. Casely Hayford’s *Ethiopia Unbound*.<sup>18</sup>

A more contemporary approach to this modality is Appiah’s cultural biographical insights in *In My Father’s House: African in the Philosophy of Culture*.<sup>19</sup> Historians have not been left out of this thoughtful engagement of self in research by philosophers like Appiah. Nwando Achebe’s *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960* and J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* are examples of this approach in historical works.<sup>20</sup> Of the three the first is perhaps more philosophical, the second falls within the genre of oral

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<sup>17</sup> See J. W. Cresswell, *Enquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions* (London: Sage, 1998); Thomas Headland, Kenneth Pike, and Marvin Harris, eds., *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate* (Sage Publications, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: Lushena, 2000); J.E. Casely-Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (London: Frank Cass, 1969).

<sup>19</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father’s House: African in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>20</sup> The following may be considered as three different forms of cultural biography, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father’s House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1992); Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings : Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005); J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion : Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).



tradition in African History pioneered by Reindorf, and the last is more anthropological. For purposes of active self-engagement, and decolonizing historical literature, my method is more in tune with the latter two of these scholars, than with the former. In addition to these approaches, my methodology is influenced by the interpretive biographical approach proffered by N. K. Denzin, which points to the writer's integral role in the interpretation of documents and autobiographical accounts of individuals.<sup>21</sup> John Creswell's discussion of five qualitative traditions of enquiry, especially its biographical and ethnographic aspects, also informs this study.<sup>22</sup> But my research is more influenced by approaches in African and African-American Studies as named above.<sup>23</sup>

The second purpose of this section, while meant as a support for the former function, is an explication of my field methods. It is a cultural-biographical form, representing a reflective analytical posture taken to examine my own positionality in the research field. It explains my cognitive choices as I collected oral interviews from various officeholders and members of a variety of institutions and societies among the Ga-Adangbe people: Osu, La, Adenkeribi, and Gbugbla, as well as other communities in Ghana.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> N. K. Denzin *Interpretive Biography* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 82.

<sup>22</sup> Creswell, *Enquiry and Research Design* (London: Sage, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> For other influential texts in the field see Carolyn Keyes Adenaike and Jan Vansina, *In Pursuit of History* (London: Heinemann, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> These interviews were conducted in Ghana during an initial pre-dissertation study as Summer Research Enhancement Fellow, The Graduate School, MSU, 2007; Summer Research Grant, African American and African Studies, MSU 2007; Summer Research Grant, Department of History, MSU, 2007, and later from June-December 2008 as an Compton Africa Peace Fellowship Recipient, 2008 and Special College Research Abroad Money Fellow, College of Arts and Letters 2008.

In the process of research, I consciously tried to detach myself from my paternal community where I believed my rights of inheritance to social privilege and property surpass those of my matrilineal heritage. I felt at the time that in La I will be viewed more than as a researcher, but as a member of the community, and with obligations, which might hinder my research. However, throughout the said process I became increasingly aware of my privileges, social ties, and expectations from my mother's Ga and Akan heritage, which placed me in the same engaged position I had tried to avoid by not actively conducting research in my paternal hometown, La. In other instances, I found myself related to my collaborators by marriage, trade, and other social circumstances. I recall for example that I had interviewed a traditional officeholder in Osu, my maternal grandmother's hometown. I later learned that my mother's maternal great grandfather, who had also been an officeholder in nineteenth and early twentieth century Osu had been in dispute with the ancestor of this officeholder. He in turn was married to an aunty of a maternal first cousin. I suddenly found myself at the center, an active insider in an Osu situation that I had tried to avoid by engaging less with my father's community in La. This erased any sense of detachment (that I previously thought I had) from Reindorf who was an Osu native. My insider positionality affected the way in which I conducted my research. For example in Osu, when I felt claims of kinship through mother would yield more information, I spoke more about my matrilineal heritage, and at other times when I felt revelations about my matrilineage would limit my collaborators responses I spoke more about my patrilineal heritage.

## **Subjective Objectives: Kasantwi, An Exercise in Ga Stylistics and Oral Rhetoric**

Affirming objectivity and subjectivity as equally necessary to any compassionate rendering of our flawed and splendid human strivings, I have tried honestly to tell the story and to provide a rigorous analysis of the long black movement towards justice, equity, and truth. At the same time, identifying fully with the subjects of my study and the substance of my hope I have freely allowed myself to celebrate.<sup>25</sup>

As a student of history, I am often frustrated by what appears to be a de-centering of the researcher's fieldwork experience in the historical discipline. This avoidance is inexcusable since fieldwork is a major component of historical research. How does a researcher carry out ethical research? What is the process of information gathering? How does the researcher represent herself? What kind of power does the researcher exert during the research experience (in the actual interview and in defining the research relationship)? What is the relationship between the actual fieldwork experience and the interpretation and evaluation of research findings? How does the researcher use the information gathered? How does the researcher write and represent her collaborators' words? Who is the researcher's audience? Historians must begin to address the multitude of concerns that arise out of a problematic research environment.<sup>26</sup>

The epigraphs from Vincent Harding and Nwando Achebe collectively represent my creed, research posture, and positionality adopted for my dissertation research.

When I was first admitted to the department of history at the University of Ghana as an undergraduate student, one of the cardinal principles of historical methods taught to us by Ghanaian historian, Professor Addo-Fening, was that no historical work was factual or completely objective. Historians rather utilized evidence as the staple of historical writing; it was the historian's interpretation of evidence that became history. Such history encompassed the historian's personal, group, and cultural prejudices, among

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<sup>25</sup> Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), xi.

<sup>26</sup> Nwando Achebe, "Getting to the Source: Nwando Achebe—Daughter, Wife, and Guest—A Researcher at the Crossroads" *Journal of Women's History* 14, no.3 (2002): 9-31.

others. The responsible historian therefore must always account for subjectivity and demonstratively strive for objectivity. It is with this primary socialization in the discipline of history that I quote the above scholars, because they all epitomize and echo the personal dynamics of my own my research. Explaining my subjective viewpoints allows me to engage with the actual process of research, a sort of self-interrogation, or better, a dialectical relationship between the research and researcher, which leads to the production of knowledge. My aim is to explore my relationship to my research, and to see myself in the subjects of history I have chosen to study.

So while I draw on the pioneering works of Harding, Achebe, and Addo-Fening, my research is distinctively based on my own personal experiences in the field and my methodological aims. I therefore link my own cultural biography to the histories of the people I have chosen to write about, not forgetting that my introspection is a polemic against similarly well-prepared cultural biographies by other scholars in the field of African Studies, who veil their ideological intentions in the name of objectivity or ethical universality as explained by Korang above.

In my Ga language, masked rhetorical styles are referred to as *Kasantwi*. It is a Ga word that signifies a form of indirect speech.<sup>27</sup> It is also an oblique linguistic articulation, used in oral critique of the social behavior of an imaginary person or group of people with whom one is engaged in discourse. In the Akan context, Kwesi Yankah, describes indirect speech as “veiled rhetoric in the form of indirection, metaphor,

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<sup>27</sup> For universal, African, and Ghanaian forms of indirection see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Roger Abrahams, *Singing the Master*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992); Kwesi Yankah, *Free Speech in Traditional Society: The Cultural Foundations of Communication in Contemporary Ghana* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1998).

proverb, allegory, circumlocution, innuendo,” locally called *akutia*.<sup>28</sup> Kasantwi in its distinctive Ga signifying form is an allusive referential device that makes direct response extremely difficult. Accordingly, a direct rejoinder is an implicit admission to the veracity of the critique advanced. Your opponent may in fact respond, but can only respond using the same rhetorical means, making for interesting *mpowa* or oral challenge.<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that kasantwi is not engaged as a rhetorical device on the basis of fear—even though it may be used in an oppressor/oppressed relationship—rather it is used as a bait to draw one’s rival discussant into a direct debate.

Kasantwi is exemplified in the following story, I remember from childhood, about a tense relationship between a landlord and tenant. In disgust at the high rent and value a landlord places on his/her property, a tenant sings the following tale “*This house, akin to a cardboard.*” The landlord hearing this song instead of confronting the tenant, which will be an admission that the house does indeed look like a box, comes up with a sung-tale of his/her own: “*It’s my house and I will live in it even if everyone left.*” This is an implicit and indirect challenge to the tenant, to leave the rented property if he/she can afford another living arrangement.

I have chosen to use this oral rhetorical style in written form, in part to respond to what I perceive to be well-formulated and veiled polemics by some commentators on the origins, and theoretical legitimacy of Pan-Africanism. I have chosen the title “In

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<sup>28</sup> Kwesi Yankah, “The Sung-Tale Metaphor and Protest Discourse in Contemporary Ghana” in *Language and Rhythm, and Sound: Black Popular Cultures into the Twenty-First Century* eds., Joseph Adjaye and Adrianne Andrews (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press), 54-73.

<sup>29</sup> Similar or homologous forms of indirection exist among U.S. African-Americans and other cultures, for academic inquiries into these see William Piersen, “Putting Down Ole Massa: African Satire in the New World.” in *African Folklore in the New World* (Austin: University of Texas, 1977); Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, *Language Behavior in a Black Community* (Berkely: University of California, 1974).

Your Mother's House," a deliberately ambiguous title, given the fact that below I write in anthropological terms about my cognatic heritage—as exemplified by both my maternal and paternal lineages. Cognatic groups like my ethnic group Ga-Adangbé, use a kinship system that while emphasizing patrilineal heritage, allows one membership in the ancestral house of all four grandparents. Reindorf, my research subject tried to explain such cognatism when he wrote in his preface that his “ancestors on the father’s and mothers side belonged to the families of national officiating high priests in Akra[Gamashie] and Christianborg [Osu]” and had he not “become Christian,” he would have been eligible for these positions.<sup>30</sup> Later on, through matrilineal descent, Reindorf’s son Dr. C.E. Reindorf became Nii Teiko Abonua II, Senior Councilor to the Ga royal throne.<sup>31</sup> Reindorf’s granddaughter Mrs. Sam Nelson also became Naa Ashiokai Wonno II, queen mother, through descent to Reindorf’s paternal grandmother Naa Ahiokai Wonno I. The latter was the daughter of the first remembered Mankralo (Secretary of State) of Osu, and came from the Ashanti Blohum Clan of Osu.<sup>32</sup> Below I offer a conceptual explanation of why the Ga-Adangbé choose to use a cognatic system of social and political inheritance.<sup>33</sup> This clarification is necessary to free Reindorf and Blyden from any future allegations of essentialism by the universalist critics.

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<sup>30</sup> *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Tradition and Historical Facts Comprising A Period of More than Three Centuries From About 1500-1860 With a Biographical Sketch by C. E. Reindorf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basel, Switzerland: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1951), v.

<sup>31</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, Appendix bii.

<sup>32</sup> Reindorf, *Remembering Rev. Carl Reindorf*, 6; PRAAD, ADM 11/1/730 “Enquiry into the Election of Mankralo of Christianborg, n.d. [1918]”.

<sup>33</sup> For alternative discussions on Ga-Adangbe cognatism see Marion Kilson, *Kple Lala: Ga Religious Songs and Symbols* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 7; and *African Urban Kinsmen; The Ga of Central Accra*, (London: C. Hurst, 1974).

Like Reindorf, my status as a Ga-Adangbé person, starts with my relationship to all four of my grandparents. My paternal grandparents, Josiah Nicholas Koney Odamtten (1911-1978), and Christiana Fofu Odamtten, nee Quarshie (1927-1996), hailed from the Nmati Abonase and Abese Akutsei (pl.) quarters or Clans of La, Accra. La is one of many Ga nshonamajii (coastal towns) on the Atlantic seaboard of the Ghanaian coast as is Osu. In Osu my maternal grandmother Evelyn Odarley Odonkor (1927-2002), is a member of the Kinkawe, Amantra Akutso or Clan of Osu, while the Pan-Africanist thinker, Reindorf, was a member of the Ashante Blohum Clan. My maternal grandfather, Kwame Tawiah, (c. 1920-1990), was born to an Akyem father, and an Asante mother, from Fomesua, near Ejisu, home of the late Queen mother, Nana Yaa Asantewa of the Asante region of modern Ghana. As I elaborate further in this chapter, my re-reading of Reindorf's *G. C. A. Histories* as a careful demonstration of the shared past of various ethnic societies on the Gold Coast was influenced by my Ga, Asante, and Akyem ancestry.

My father's cultural community, the Ga-Adangbé, have a dictum that says "*Gbé djelo enaa eseé*" which translates into "one who creates a new path will have no knowledge of the nature of the path unless told by those who follow that new path." J. D. Y. Peel referencing T. S. Elliot, exemplifies this maxim: "the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we first started/ And know the place for the first time."<sup>34</sup> I have come to understand that even one's human body is a historical subject; the very coloring of one's hair is a reflection on one's physiological history. My Ga,

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<sup>34</sup>J. D. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1.

Asante and Akyem ancestries earned me entry into several spheres of influence and cultural clusters and esoteric associations during my field research. Even though I tried to explain to a descendant of Reindorf who was also a collaborator that I was not of mixed-race descent, he insisted that given the lightness of my skin color, there had to be some “mullato/s” somewhere in my bloodline. As proof he pointed out a house whose inhabitants I was distantly related to, and who are of mixed descent. This perception about the fairness of my hue is important because Reindorf came from mixed descent, what was locally referred to as mullatofoi.<sup>35</sup> Reindorf’s progeny after at least two generations were still conscious of their mulatto ancestry, and were willing to allow me entry to their family history on account of my supposed mixed heritage. This shows the vestiges of power and influence the closed knit creole community wielded on the Gold Coast in the nineteenth century. During this period they maintained group privilege: internal and external influence on traditional African societies and European colonial administrations.<sup>36</sup>

These fieldwork experiences were critical because when I conceived my dissertation project during my early years in graduate school, I had no idea, that the story I was trying to tell, may well be mine. My story, not in the sense that I am

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<sup>35</sup> The word is a plural form of the combination of the English word mullato and the Ga fonyo/person-Mullatonfonyo

<sup>36</sup> For more on Creole or Mullatofoi see Margaret Priestley, *West African trade and society: A Family Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*; and “Creole Society and the Revival of Traditional Culture in Cape Coast during the Colonial Period,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 17, (1984): 601-622; David Henige, “John Kabes of Komenda: An Early African Entrepreneur and State Builder,” *JAH* 18, no. 1 (1977): 1-19; Martin Lynn, “Technology, Trade and ‘A Race of Native Capitalists’: The Krio Diaspora of West Africa and the Steamship, 1852-95,” *JAH* 33, (1992): 421-440. T. F. Victor Buxton, “The Creole in West Africa” *Journal of the Royal African Society* 12, (1913): 385-394; K. L. Little, “The Significance of the West African Creole for Africanist and Afro-American Studies,” *African Affairs* 49 (1950): 309-319; P.E.H. Hair, “Africanism: The Freetown Contribution,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 5, (1967): 521-539. Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, “We Cast About for a Remedy”: Chinese Labor and African Opposition in the Gold Coast, 1874-1914,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 34 (2001): 365-384.



related to the two intellectuals—for I am in no way connected by blood to Reindorf, or Blyden—but, in the sense that I share many histories with them including the fact that we are all of West African heritage. With Reindorf, I share a Ga, and Osu heritage. As my mother tried to impress upon me the few times she talked to me about my research, my umbilical cord while buried elsewhere, began its journey in Osu, where I was “spontaneously delivered” and where my mother “was advised on the care of self and baby [me].”<sup>37</sup> With Blyden, I share a history of traveling the three continents that shaped the trans-Atlantic trade. My travels have also in a sense been in pursuit of materials related to Blyden and Reindorf. With both Blyden and Reindorf, I share a history of Danish presence, and a continual attempt of self-definition, and consciously reclaiming history.

In his rich multifaceted study of the *Ga* society during the colonial era, British historian, John Parker seems to agree with British Government Anthropologist; Margaret Field’s localized representation of Ga cosmology in her monographs on Ga Society.<sup>38</sup> I raise issue with Field’s monographs, not only because this reputable pioneer essentialized Ga customs and traditions, rather, I challenge her almost “paternalistic” accounts of encounters in the field, as well as her motivation for portraying an “authentic” Ga culture and religious forms.<sup>39</sup> There are of course no pure cultures, and there are no non-systematized religions, unless one contends that there are religions without ritual. What Field attempted was to systematize what appeared to her as the disparate religious perspectives and political institutions of

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<sup>37</sup> Regina Asante Nee Odamtten, *Welfare Center Card 5/79*, (Accra Ghana: Osu Government Clinic Osu, nd).

<sup>38</sup> Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Oxford University Press 1961); *The Social Organization of the Ga People* (London: Crown Agents, 1940).

<sup>39</sup> Parker, *Making the Town*, 20.

different Ga majii/towns. While Field's research has been a major stepping-stone for my own research, I tend to agree more with Marion Kilson's research on Ga kinship, in which she opines that Ga social relations were steeped in a cognatic ideology that also prevailed "at the level of social transaction."<sup>40</sup> Without the benefit of written documents, we are unsure of how the Ga, lacking the advantage of modern scientific knowledge on human genetics, systematically or speculatively arrived at their cognatic conceptions. In lieu of the scientific means and written records, I attempt to explain with the assistance of Ga cosmology, the conceptual, and the physiological understandings of why the Ga and their Akan neighbors use their respective kinship structures. For if we are to go by the prerogative of those who equate writing with science, then, philosophical speculations and reflections as well as conclusions reached by the Ga and their Akan neighbors will remain just that, speculation.

Among the Ga-Dangme peoples of the Gold Coast, God or the universe creator is conceptualized as a dual-gendered divinity, hence the name Atta-Naa (Elder Male-Elder Female) Nyonmo (God).<sup>41</sup> The Ga's also believe that while children received "the undying part of their spiritual nature" directly from God, they also receive indirectly from God their physical, and portions of their spiritual essence, through each human progenitor.<sup>42</sup> The Ga's believe that Atta-Naa Nyonmo (Supreme Being) expresses its male and female essence through a pantheon of masculine and feminine spirits. They may also exist gender-neutral gods, even though most Ga deities are

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<sup>40</sup> Kilson, *Kple Lala*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> For an extended discussion on God in Ga-Adangbe thought see Solomon Nii Mensah Adjei, "Nyonmo (God) in Ga Tradition and Christian Mission: An Exploration of the Historical Relationship between the Religious Tradition of the Ga of South Eastern Ghana and Bible Translation and its Implications for Ga Christian Theology" (M. A. diss., University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2006); Kwame Bediako, "African Theology" in *The Modern Theology* ed., David Ford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> S. K. Odamtten, *Indigenous Educational Ideas in Ghana* (Accra: Ghana National Association of Teachers, 1995), 1.

gendered male or female. For instance, the La Kpa deity in La and Klotey in Osu are both gendered male, while the Koole/Korle in Gamashi is gendered female. Nai, the principal deity of the Ga is for example metaphorically represented as a Whale, and also seen as “shitse” owner of Ga lands, as well as parent to the remaining Ga deities, but is not conceived of as male or female.<sup>43</sup> So when Reindorf explains that he was eligible for the priesthood of Nai and Klote deities, he is articulating his understanding of this systematic hierarchical ontology of Ga ideas about God and other categories of being and notions of causality.<sup>44</sup>

To further understand my interpretation of Reindorf from my subjective positionality as a person of Ga and Osu descent, I explain below Ga notions of person and physiology. Beyond physiology, that is the gbomotso (human body), a Ga person is also constituted of a Susuma (soul) and Kla (spirit), the latter two will also be minimally referenced.<sup>45</sup> In Ga-Adangbe society, a newborn child comes into his/her personhood after members of the family have out-doored, that is welcomed him/her at a public naming ceremony. The ceremony’s importance is made clear when the members of the family say to the child *oba ke nine kome, womihele bo ke nijii enyo* which means: *you came with one hand [individual] we welcome you with two hands [society]*. This saying evokes the fact that even though every human being is born as an individual/person, each will automatically join a human society. The other significance in terms of personhood in Ga society is that children are born into a set of

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<sup>43</sup>See S. A. Nunno, “The History of the Ga Wulomo Institution” (B. A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1981), 17-24

<sup>44</sup> See Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 92-99; Joyce Engmann, “Immortality and the Nature of Man in Ga Thought” in *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies I* eds., Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye (Washington D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), 153-190.

<sup>45</sup> For critical discussion See esp. Engman, “Immortality and Nature” 153-190; Field, *Religion and Medicine*, 92-99.

generational names belonging to their various families; however a child is only believed to have personhood if they manage to survive the “seven dangers” before the naming ceremony on the eighth day when they are named, and invested with their soul and spirit. Seven is an important spiritual number in Ga numerology. To give a phenomenological example, Ga say for example *mitii te mati kpawo*, literally meaning, I will not draw a stone (poverty/mishap), but will draw a seven, seven being victory and prosperity. As it relates to childbirth, in the seven days prior to the child becoming human, the child is in a liminal state between birth and life and risks being in that space forever or returning to a pre-birth condition.<sup>46</sup> It is in an effort to guarantee Reindorf’s safe passage to the world of the living that his mother dedicated him to Ligble, the principal deity of Gbugbla where he was born.<sup>47</sup>

Kilson has elucidated on three “physiological phenomena or processes” of Ga Kinship: these are blood, sex, and age.<sup>48</sup> For my purposes, I concentrate on blood as it relates to Ga cognatic descent. As Kilson notes, even though Ga people postulate that a greater portion of an individual’s blood comes from his/her patrilineage, in quantitative terms Ga also say that a person carries the blood of all four of his/her grandparents.<sup>49</sup> Thus all four grandparents provide a child with its genetic heritage, however, in physiognomic terms, a child is also said to look the most like the parent whose *la tsii* (blood is the thickest.)<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For other interpretations see Odamtten, *Indigenous Educational Ideas*, 5.

<sup>47</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Kilson, *Urban Kinsmen*, 16-20.

<sup>49</sup> Kilson, *Urban Kinsmen*, 17.

<sup>50</sup> Kilson, *Urban Kinsmen*, 17.

The Ga, as well as Akan ideological conception's emphasis on matrilineal descent respectively approximates current notions in genetics.<sup>51</sup> While Ga cognatism bears similarity to geneticists' descriptions of the four chromosomes that constitute an individual, the Akan emphasis on the matrilineal, favors the constant reproduction of the female X chromosome from female parent to offspring cell despite the sex of the child. To this end, as a male child, my X chromosome, from where my mitochondria DNA can be traced directly to my mother and maternal grandmother and so forth. Whereas in my father's case, the chromosome is subject to change and is uncertain—had I been female I would have inherited his X chromosome rather than the Y chromosome that I now possess.<sup>52</sup> In comparing Ga, and Akan on one hand, with genetic understandings on the other I am trying to show that the status of a mixed race person like Reindorf was not determined by his racial heritage, but the ethnic status of his parents. I do not claim that notions of race have been non-existent in Africa, but where they have been, they are imported. The presence of Reindorf's creole caste on the Gold Coast is an example of the global reach of racial ideology, however where these systems have existed in Africa they have not superseded the traditional functioning of Ga and Akan social organization, which are more complex than the usual matrilineal and patrilineal ways by which they are conceived. Reindorf's one European grandparent did not exclude him from the patrilineages of his three Ga grandparents. Ethnicity is therefore not conventionally fixed as the "one-drop rule" in some racial societies like the U.S. Transporting ideas of race into an ethnic African

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<sup>51</sup> For a discussion on Akan systems of heritage in spiritual, social and physiognomic terms see Kwame Gyekye, *African Philosophical Thought: Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>52</sup> H. Eldon Sutton, *An Introduction to Human Genetics* (Philadelphia: Saunders College, 1980), 1-9, 29-81; Curt Stern, *Principles of Human Genetics* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1973), 1-42, 187-220.

context would be an act of mischief, and while I am cognizant of the global impact of race, I choose to discuss my heritage within its Ga and Akan matrix. Furthermore ethnicity is always being reconstructed and Africans of Diasporan heritage like Blyden can be reintegrated into an African community through marriage and other rites of passage. This is exemplified in the case of Brazilian returnees like the Tabon who arrived in Ghana following a slave rebellion in Bahia, Brazil. They are now considered Ga following their attachment to and acceptance by the Otublohum quarter of Accra.<sup>53</sup> The Tabon like many stranger/guest traditions in Africa were welcomed as guests of the Otublohum section of Ga, and achieved their integration into Ga society by a land grant by the Gamashie people. Through their own ingenuity as craftsmen and inter-marriage they became a Clan of their own in the Ga traditional setup.<sup>54</sup> It was Blyden's recognition of such reintegration processes when he visited King Momoru Sou of Boporo that he sought similar integration for the Americo-Liberian immigrants with the indigenous groups of Liberia.<sup>55</sup> The King himself of Mandingo and Gullah descent informed Blyden that the Americo-Liberians can become one people with the Boporo through inter-marriage.<sup>56</sup> As I will explain in the fifth chapter of this dissertation, contrary to Blyden's advice, the Americo-Liberians rather adopted an antagonistic attitude towards the autochthonous Liberians.

To recap, while both Ga and Akan systems of inheritance may seem exclusivist, as I have shown in the case of Reindorf, in both genetic and social terms they are more

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<sup>53</sup> Yaw Boadi-Siaw, "Brazilian Returnees" in West Africa" in *The Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* ed., Joseph E. Harris, (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982), 291-308.

<sup>54</sup> Alcione Amos, and Ebenezer Ayesu "I am Brazilian": History of the Tabon, Afro-Brazilians in Accra, Ghana" *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* NS 6, (2002): 35-58.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, [1908] *African Life and Customs: Reprinted from the Sierra Leone Weekly News* (London: African Publication Society, 1969), 85-88.

<sup>56</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 89.

inclusive. In the Ga case all four genetic lineages claim a child, while the Akan claim a child despite who the father of the child is.<sup>57</sup> On this basis, it is not irrational or false for Americans of partial African heritage like Du Bois or of “pure” African heritage as Blyden claimed to be, to maintain a connection with Africa. What is irrational is that they were systematically denied kinship with Europeans, based on partial African heritage. The historical incorporation of children of partial European heritage like Reindorf into Ga and Akan society, and the ability of these children to inherit positions of power, show that these systems are more all-encompassing than the European racial ordering which excludes offspring on the basis of a single genetic heritage to Africa.

### **Cultural Biography: The Tsable War and other remembered stories of the Atlantic Trade**

In this section I show why my linking of the histories of the Gold Coast and the Danish West Indies is personal, and also why Africa as place of origin and the experience of enslavement are principal calling cards for Pan-African intellectuals. Given my personal ancestry I cannot help but feel a sense of belonging with the black population of Blyden’s Danish West Indies. This fraternal feeling is not mythical; it is lodged in the historical remembrances of my Ga community. My chance meeting with a St. Croix, West Indies born person of Ga heritage further legitimated my linking of

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<sup>57</sup> For an examples of Akan families of partial European heritage see Brew and Hayford families in --- and for examples of families of Akan, Ga, and European heritage see the Bannerman family in John Parker; *Making the Town: The Ga State in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000); see also Basel Mission Archives henceforth (BMA), D-1 27/35 C. C. Reindorf, “Reindorf to Committee” February 10, 1876, and Carl D. Reindorf, *Remembering Carl Reindorf: 150th Birthday Anniversary*, Accra: Carl D. Reindorf 1984), 14.

the Gold Coast with the West Indies. My St. Croix acquaintance educated me on how members of his family continued to use their last name Sackey. Sackey was the name of his great-great grandfather who hailed from Accra, and was enslaved on the island of St. Croix.<sup>58</sup>

What is in a name? In Ga-Adangbe society, when a new child is born, , members of the family welcome him eight days after he or she has survived the seven dangers of birth. Thus, after my birth, the Ga-Dangbe way of life demanded that I be circumcised and formally bestowed with my ancestral name at a naming (libation pouring) and out-dooring ceremony. This is done in the presence of extended family, including the living and the dead.<sup>59</sup> Reindorf captures this naming process in his *Gold Coast and Asante*:

A week after the birth of a child, a kind of baptism is celebrated, when the father chooses the man of best character among his friends to bring the child from the room to the yard, when he throws a few drops of water on the roof of the principal room in the family compound, which returns to him in small drops, and these he throws thrice on the child and names it. Children are named after their grandfathers, grandmothers, or fathers. The circumcision which all boys of 6 to 10 years of age undergo, admits them to the courts of the principal fetishes [sic] an uncircumcised person, even if a king, is never allowed to step into the yard of the fetish [sic].<sup>60</sup>

As it is with the traditions of my Ga cultural community, each child is born into a name. I was born into the name Nii Kone Jato Kwame II to the Wekushia (family house) of Nii Boye Osekre We. Nii Kone/y is my ancestral name (part of a set of generational names; Atswei, Ayorkor, Tetteh, etcetera,) and Jato is the inherited name

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<sup>58</sup> D. Sackey, personal conversation with author D. Sackey, July 7, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Reindorf has rightly suggested that circumcision could also be between age-grade groups of boys between six-ten in Ga society. On the basis of Ga circumcision, Reindorf made some comparisons between Ga and Jewish traditions. These were allusions and not concrete assertions by Reindorf as has been suggested by others.

<sup>60</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 35.



of my paternal grandfather Owula Kone Jato I, known in private life as Josiah Nicholas Kone Odamtten. Kwame means that I am a Saturday born denoting a day-naming pattern used by Ga-Adangbe's, the autochthonous Guan, and my mother's Asante/Akyem kinfolk. Nii Boye Osekere Kwashie Oblempong, the paterfamilias of my Wekushia is remembered as a famous tabilo (warrior) who fought in many wars, and most likely in the 1730 collective Ga-Adangbe, Akuapem, and Akyem defeat of Akwamu.<sup>61</sup> Nii Boye Osekere's life history puts him and by extension me squarely within Ga encounters with European groups on Ghana's coast during the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. This history that I narrate below influenced my objective to connect the Gold Coast with the Danish West Indies.

My family oral tradition renders Osekere as a Ga inflected pronunciation of the Akan words "Ose Kyere" (worthy to be known); that is, it has to be known he who was able to conquer an important Akwamu warrior. Nii Boye Osekere's relationship to this research is that he lived in a period when the Ga-Adangbe as recorded in their sung oral traditions Kple Lalai (Songs sing. Lala) moaned and mourned for family members sold into slavery to the Danes. This was when the Akwamu conquered the Ga states in the seventeenth century and ruled until 1730.<sup>62</sup> It was warriors like Nii Boye Osekere whose bravery helped curtail the enslavement of Ga peoples in the eighteenth century. Ironically, a result of the Ga asserting their independence was that the Akwamu like their Ga neighbors ended up in the Americas.<sup>63</sup> The Danes were the

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<sup>61</sup> This is a speculation, even though informants in the family refer to war with Akwamu, they are unclear as to which war, this was. For possible wars between La and Akwamu see Ivor Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750: A Study of the Rise and Fall of a West African Empire* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2001), 25, 75-83, 106-108.

<sup>62</sup> See Kilson, *Kple Lala*, 258-263.

<sup>63</sup> For encounters between the Ga-Adangbe and the Akwamu see Ivor Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750: The Rise and Fall of a West African Empire* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 2001), 1-35, 71-103, Ray Kea, "

major European actors during this period and were stationed in the Christianborg Castle, Osu, where Reindorf spent his formative years. The Danes thus sent enslaved Ga, Akwamu and other peoples from the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin during this period to the Danish Islands of St. Croix, St. Jan, and St. Thomas where Edward Blyden was born.<sup>64</sup>

Since the appearance of Sylvaine Diouf's *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* in 2003, there has been increased attention to a more nuanced discussion of African participation in the Atlantic Trade in enslaved Africans. Anne C. Bailey's *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and Shame*, which appeared in 2005, is included in this new historiography on the trade. Voices like Bailey's echo in my natal town of La where one family house tells a chilling oral story about La and Akwamu wars. The account now recorded in English also shows the vicious relationship between wars and the trans-Atlantic trade and how it affected Gold Coast ethnic societies. Below, I record unedited oral remembrances that have been passed down by a Wekushia (family) in La. The oral text itself is not without the many encumbrances of oral sources such as temporality, and anachronism.

The Lamei (pl.) after conquering the Nungua tribe] at Wor Doku, proceeded to Dokukoona (Labadi) and laid the foundation of La. Few Weeks after, the La Tribe were suddenly attacked by the Akwamu Tribe thinking that Lamei were tired because of the previous wars and might have run short of ammunitions i.e. Gun Powder etc. The Lamei took up the challenge and open[ed] attack on the Akwamu till the La Tribe ran short of Gun Powder. The Lamei scenting[sic] danger ahead retreated according to plan toward Osu Castle to the Chief of the Castle to solicit for

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'I Am Here to Plunder on the General Road' Bandits and Banditry in Pre-Nineteenth century Gold Coast" in *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* ed., Donald Crummey (London: James Currey, 1986). 109-132 as it relates to La see endnotes Labadi, Ladoku, and Lay.

<sup>64</sup> For a fuller account see Per O. Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society: The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth Century Gold Coast* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1998).

Gun Powder. Unfortunately—they were refused entry to the castle. To their surprise, the Chief of staff (White Man) in the Castle drove them away from the Castle and advised them (Lamei) to use the same War plan and the gun powder they used in defeating the Nungua Tribe on the Akwamus. On receipt of this sad news they marched to “Tsable” singing war songs asking the almighty God to have mercy on them. On reaching “Tsable” most of them had fallen. The dead were both young and old. Among the dead was Mantse Odoi Atsem’s nephew called Ado. The place he fell dead was named “Adobeto.” God heard the prayers of Lamei on their arrival at Tsable. Just on the following morning they suddenly saw a sailing ship looking for slaves. At a negotiation with the white Slave Traders, the La War Leaders appealed to the Slave Traders to offer them some gun powder with a view to giving them more Slaves within the shortest possible time. The La War Leaders readily released their children as ransom (“AWOBA”) in exchange of slaves after the war with the Akwamus before them. The Chief slave Trader on the sailing boat agreed and gave the Lamei a great deal of gunpowder. On receipt of the sufficient ammunitions, the Lamei with zeal, power and energy at their disposal open[ed] attack on the Akwamus. In a matter of three(3) days the La Tribe drove the AKWAMUS from Tsable through Nsawam over the mountains and the valleys. Many of the AKWAMUS were massacred when they were on the run. Apart from those killed, the Lamei brought a number of Captives (Slaves) [sic]<sup>65</sup> from that war-and sold quite a number of them as slaves to the White Slave Traders at Tsable in redeeming their children given out as ransom (“AWOBA”) at the first negotiation with the Chief Slave Traders.<sup>66</sup>

Notwithstanding the limitations of oral sources, there is some historical confirmation of several wars between Akwamu and La before and after the narrated La defeat of Nungua above.<sup>67</sup> As some well-researched secondary accounts have shown, until 1730 Lamei and other Gamei were not always successful against the marauding raids of the Akwamu, and some of them were enslaved as recorded in their

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<sup>65</sup> Above and below the writer of this tradition uses the Ga term Awoba, which he first translates as ransom, the term itself means Pawn, in contra-distinction to Slave, there has obviously been a mis-translation, since slaves cannot be ransomed, but sold. For Awoba see Toyin Falola and Paul Lovejoy, eds, *Pawnship in Africa: Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 16-17.

<sup>66</sup> Oral Story recorded in writing by one Wekushia (family house) of La. 2006. I have not edited the oral and now a written text and could not follow up on this after I was told the story. This particular Wekushia where the story is told and where I have more affine and less consanguine relations seems to be involved in intermittent struggle for power within La with my own immediate family house even though Lamei say they are like a set of beads around a woman’s waist, each bead related to two others. And as indicated I tried to avoid my paternal commune during research due to issues like this.

<sup>67</sup> Reindorf, G. C. A. *Histories*, 41-46.

sung oral stories.<sup>68</sup> It is therefore not surprising that some families in La remember the victory at Tsable, while others like my family regal successful warriors like my great ancestor Nii Boye Osekre. This historical account is not only significant for its revelation of some of the nuances of the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans and how it affected Gold Coast societies. It also shows the processes of memory and remembrances associated with the trade, and puts into better perspective why people of African descent in different locations of the Atlantic, such as those in La or the Sackey's in St. Croix seek relationships with each other.

The above story shows how the peopling and settling of the La people in their present location was tied to the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. The people of La also had to pledge their own people for gun and gunpowder in order to survive the Akwamu onslaught. While the La people were successful during this Tsable war, scores of their kinsmen were also enslaved. People of La, the Akwamu, or other African groups who see Diaspora blacks as their kinsfolk believe they share historical, sociological, and cultural heritage that transcend their physical separations. Such beliefs are not accidents of history or an illogical manifestation, but derived from the collective culmination of peoples individual and collective memories (mine as well) passed on from generation to generation.

### **My Family's Encounter with Reindorf's Christian Proselytizing**

In December of the year of my birth, I was baptized and christened Harry Nii Koney Odamtten at the La Presbyterian Church where my great-grandfather Laryea Mose/Pocket (Thomas Nii Laryea Odamtten) was one of the early Christian converts.

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<sup>68</sup> Marion Kilson, *Kple Lala*, 258.

Both he and my grandfather helped build the church, and their names are ensconced in the church building planning committee epitaph. I was conscious about this Christian background of my family. My need to avoid intrusive questioning from over zealous relations influenced my decision not to do research in my paternal community.

Incidentally, this Christian portion of my life history is tied to that of Reindorf. Reindorf, while serving as itinerant preacher over a hundred year before I was born, had helped in the controversial purchase of the piece of land on which the church was built.<sup>69</sup> The land acquisition was contentious because the people of La objected to the building of the church, and one traditional priest, Boye-Fio unsuccessfully sued the Chief of La, Marley Atsem for selling a piece of land that did not belong to him.<sup>70</sup>

My great-grandfather is named Laryea Mose (Moses), because of his association with Reindorf's Basel Mission. He and his junior brothers Owula Nii Boye Obajen Odamtten, and C. B. T. Odamtten were the only three of several children of their father, my great-great grandfather Nii Kone Odametey I, Kingmaker of La (1835-1922) to have had a western education.<sup>71</sup> My engagement with western education therefore goes back to these ancestors who gave my family the reputation of being Nileloi (pl.), knowledgeable people, because of their education (wolenkwemo) and wolon nilee) literacy.<sup>72</sup>

In cultural terms, I spent my early childhood in at least four of the Nshonaa Manjii, Seaside towns of Accra: Teshie, La, Osu, and Gamashi. In La, I spent time at

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<sup>69</sup> Programme for the Out-Dooring and Presentation of Nii Koney Odametey II La Shikitele (Known in Private Life as Samuel Okpoti Odamtten (Nmati Jarano, La: Nmati Abonase, 1997), Dorus Koney Odamtten, interview; La, September, 3 2009

<sup>70</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 13.

<sup>71</sup> Dorus Koney Odamtten, Interview by author, La, Accra, Ghana. September 3, 2008; Owula Koney Hohoe Odamtten, interview by author, Video Recording, July 2007.

<sup>72</sup> Parker, *Making the Town*, 160.

my great-grandfather's house Takoradi House, which was itself some four hundred meters away from my Adeboo shia or ancestral house Nmati Abonase. Interestingly, it is both of my grandmothers, as well as my mother, who socialized me into the traditions, customs, and stories of my patrilineage. My maternal grandmother, who hailed from both Osu and Gamashi, made sure that for most of my childhood and teenage years I witnessed the annual Gamashi Homowo celebrations. For her, this was an important way of educating her grandchildren on Ga history and socializing us to Ga customs and traditions, the same way Reindorf received his early lessons on Gold Coast histories from his grandmother. Combined with Afro-Christian values of hard work and good spiritedness, my grandparents training gave me a strong sense of self. My heritage as a descendant of Asante and Ga-Dangbe indigenes also prepared me to be receptive to people of different ethnic and racial groups, religious orientations, and cultural mannerisms. In hindsight, my understanding of culture at an early age was therefore dynamic.

The privilege of being a doctoral student in African American and African studies, and a department of history in the United States, observing Afro-Cubans in Havana and Santiago, and seeing the sociological conditions of blacks in London and Brixton, shape my Afro-Atlantic perspective in this dissertation.

### **In my Mother's House for Real: Mother's Love**

Half the story will never have been told if I did not include my mother's heritage in this cultural biography. Furthermore, it was she and her relations who gave me entre into Osu, as a field site. After all, while the Ga place primacy on patrilineal descent and right of inheritance, they are also cognatic as I have explained above. My mother born to a matrilineal Asante father is also a card bearing member of her maternal grandfather's family.<sup>73</sup> In other words, Ga and Akan ethnicity are not rigid. Like most human institutions Ga cognatism can be transformed in moments of crises, war, or even in peace. Below are vignettes of my research experience in Reindorf and my maternal grandmother's hometown, Osu. At the end of each short story I relate how encounters in the field shaped my research and relate to my interpretation of Reindorf's life.

### **Eyaa Na Mua Kai mu Nananom: You should remember your ancestors when you write**

My mother's Akan heritage was far from my mind when I arrived in Ghana from the United States for my field research. However, it was barely a week when I was thrown into the throes of negotiating my work with family responsibilities. My father's cousin, Sir K, had coincidentally married from the same town that my maternal grandfather hailed from. Sir K's mother in-law had recently passed and my parents were attending the memorial service after the burial. As they say in Akan-Twi, *Ebusua do funu* or *The Family loves its corpses*. Funerals are therefore important

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<sup>73</sup> Regina Konadu Odamtten, Personal conversation, North Kaneshie, Accra, Ghana, October 7, 2008; for membership card see Nii Ajaidoo We Kpee, Osu Amantra Records Card No. 0176.

occasions for building of social capital throughout Ghana. I was therefore not surprised that my parents had to go, but was not quite keen on going myself. I later got a lecture from them about the importance of my presence at the funeral, and cajoled into leaving my research to attend the funeral ceremony.

At the service it also became important that I be introduced to the important personalities present, including the widower who is from the same town as my maternal-grandfather and therefore Wofa or Uncle to my mother. Wofa is also the Krontihene or official elder statesman of Fomesua. Wofa on hearing snippets of why I was in Ghana bid me good tidings and stated that “Mu tsoro humaa eyaa na mua Kai mu nananom,” [I] should remember your ancestors when you write. With this injunction, I had suddenly become conscious of how I was being perceived by my relations. Here I am in Accra being reminded to include my Akan ancestors in my research—ancestors who I considered remotely related to my research. My great uncle’s charge forced me to consciously unravel who I was as a person and how that affected my research. This injunction led me to an interrogation of the archives and Library about Asante and Akyem pasts as they connected with other ethnic groups on the Gold Coast. In my interviews I also asked questions about external ethnic presence in Osu. These investigations in turn led me to a re-reading of Reindorf’s *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*. I was then able to appreciate that Reindorf did not simply write from his Ga background, but was actively showing their relationships with the Asante, Akyem, and other ethnic societies on the Gold Coast. This new understanding of Reindorf’s text is the bedrock of my subsequent archival research and arguments for Reindorf’s nationalistic intentions in the fourth chapter of this



dissertation. The chapter is entitled “Reindorf, Your Palaver is Too Sweet: The Danish West Indies and Trans-Atlantic Ethnicity.”

**Nii Te Onitsumo Yaa No Tee: How is your work going?**

I had only been in Ghana for about a month looking at some archival documents and taking care of administrative procedures, which were frankly frustratingly bureaucratic. I had also been visiting a number of identified research communities to declare my intentions of research with important stakeholders. I had also just recently completed my first interview with one of Reindorf’s great-grand children.<sup>74</sup> This I had done, without my parents’ help. I believe I unconsciously felt that if I worked through them not only will they interrupt my work, but will affect the nature of my engagement in the field. So when my mother having not seen me for a week called one day to ask, “Nii te onitsumo yaa no tee/Nii, How is your work going?” I treated it with the usual decorum “Miye ojogban maa nyehu ten ye yoo tee.” “I am well mum, and how are all of you?” This question so compassionately asked by my mother would turn out to be the catalyst to opening up Reindorf’s hometown Osu for further investigation. My conversation with my mother ended with her saying “Kefeeh ba shia mitao magba bo sane ko ni maa gba wo.” “Please come home sometime, I want to tell you a story that maa (my grandmother) told us.” I promised to visit home as soon as I could; I assumed my mother just wanted to see me, for she often remarked that when I am away from home in the U.S. she does not see me often, so my time in Ghana was a good time for her to see me more often.

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<sup>74</sup> Theodore Oto Dowuona-Hyde, grandson of Reindorf’s eldest child Elizabeth Fletcher nee Reindorf, Interview by author, Osu, Accra, July 31, 2008. Research collaborators recently informed me of his passing, may his soul rest in peace.

When I did go home my mother told me “if her mother were alive, I wouldn’t have to run around too much for the information I needed.” Of course my mother had not been trained like me to crosscheck and re-check information, so my late grandmother’s oral traditions would not have been enough. Not deterred, my mother went on to narrate snippets of her maternal and paternal family history, which she knew—particularly stories about her maternal great-grandfather who was an Asafoatse (Chief of military company) who had come from Kinkawe, in Osu.<sup>75</sup> After listening to my mother’s account, I realized that I had taken her knowledge for granted. For most of my young life, she had been working in the bank and we had only on a few occasions discussed traditions—for these had been the specialty of both of my grandmothers who raised me. But here we were having this important conversation, and when my session with mother ended, she promised to get me the number of my Aunt Mamaah—a friend and distant relative who as it later turned out knew almost everybody in Osu on a first name basis. Aunt Maamah personally put me in contact with four of the five focused interviews I had in Osu. Two of these interviews were with the Wulomei or Priests of the Gua, and Klote deities. Reindorf had claimed some sort of relationship to the latter deity, and part of the interviews was to establish the basis of the claim.<sup>76</sup> After my interaction with my mother and Aunt Mamaah, I realized that I did have something to learn and gain from my family, so I agreed to go interview my maternal grandmother’s sister who knew much more than my mum could ever tell me. There is a Ga proverb that says “Mokome foo shi jee mokome leo,” i.e., it is an individual who gives birth, but it is society that is responsible for the child

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<sup>75</sup> Regina Konadu Odamtten, Personal conversation with author, North Kaneshie, Accra, Ghana August 2, 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

that is born. I was well taken care of in the field by mother, and her relations. My success in collecting information from various people in Osu, was primarily because of my insider status afforded me through my relatives in Osu who knew who to talk to about the information that I was seeking for my dissertation. I am not sure if I would have been as successful in my research without the help of these relatives.

**Bo Nii ni otashi neeh mibi jii bo shi mi keen bo: You Nii sitting now, you are my child, but I won't tell you.<sup>77</sup>**

My grand aunty who her elders named Naa Baakeh, but who we all called Aunty Naa, was herself an exercise in field research. During our multiple sessions, Aunty Naa would ask to know whether my recorder was still on; ask to turn it off; or check to make sure I had heard what she said. Aunty Naa also made it a point to always call for me whenever she felt there was something important that I had to know. At these times she was unconcerned about where I had to be, she always expected me to be present when she asked for me.

During my sessions with her, Aunty Naa distinguished three different types of information she would relate. These were information that could be recorded on tape, information that would be spoken, but not recorded; and information that would be suggested, but neither told or recorded. Information that Aunty Naa allowed me to record covered general aspects of her own life, our immediate ancestors, and their relationship to different aspects of the Osu paramount stool's socio-political structure. This information included her recounting of Asafoatse Brenya's life history, her own

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<sup>77</sup> Mercy Naa Odarkor Odonkor (Naa Baakeh/ Aunty Naa) Kokomlemle, Accra, Ghana Interview and personal conversations, by author October 5, 20, 25 2008. Aunty Naa passed a month to my defense of this dissertation, may her soul rest in peace.

life growing up in Osu, and being socialized under the matriarch reign of her paternal aunty, Naa Lobi, at Osu's Amantra/Kinkawe. Aunty Naa's recounting of her relationship with Naa Lobi helped shape my interpretation of Reindorf's indigenous approaches to writing history, as well as Reindorf's relationship to his grandmother Okako Asase from whom Reindorf heard his first histories of the Gold Coast peoples.

Information that Aunty Naa related to me, but asked me not be recorded, was framed around issues of morality, value judgments, decorum, and human characteristics. Aunty Naa also suggested, but failed to relate, or disallowed to be recorded, some ideas concerning ritual knowledge and ritual power. She often came to this position during the interview process by saying: "*You Nii sitting now, you are my child but this information I will not tell you; stop your tape.*"<sup>78</sup> These aspects of our dialogue often failed to make it on tape because Naa Lobi had forbidden Aunty Naa from disclosing ritual knowledge. Unless, such revelations, was for the purposes of socializing someone within the family to take Aunty Naa's place. In the end, I felt as if I had gained the trust of my grand-aunty in a non-familial sense, to a point where she felt she could trust me to safeguard the information that she was relating. I knew when to turn the tape on and off, and sometimes asked whether she wanted to be recorded. Aunty Naa knew then that I was able to distinguish between the different types of information that she was providing.

The significance in comprehending Aunty Naa's didactic approach to information sharing rests on old socialization methods in traditional Ga education,

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<sup>78</sup> Mercy Odonkor, Interview, Kokomlemle, October 20, 2008.

which involved important axiological choices.<sup>79</sup> She wanted me to understand that there was a particular worldview with which she and the people she was speaking to me about viewed the world. She was inviting me to temporally depart from my researcher status to share in that worldview. If I did not understand the foundations of the knowledge system that Ga people operated in, I was not going to be capable of describing their ontological realities accurately.

The other issue is that as with a grandchild my grandparents and I had a teacher-student relationship where I am to be taught the principles of critical thinking. By this I mean for example that as a child my late paternal grandmother taught me to always hand her a kitchen knife by holding the sharp edge and pointing the blunt part to her; to do it the other way meant danger, or that I was attacking her as was taught in the Asafo (military companies) to age-groups who were joining for the first time. When she later sent me to get a serving spoon, I was expected to figure out on my own how to hand it over. It was this instructive approach in critical thinking that Auntie Naa was giving me a refresher course on with her three types of information.

### **Aawon Okpobi: Keemoh Ame Ake Jee Gbomei Gbohii Ji Wo: Tell Them We Aren't Evil Folk<sup>80</sup>**

Aawon Opobi is a retired senior priestess of the Opobi deity—a gbobilo or “hunting” deity associated with the “Gua” stool—one of the principal titular deities of

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<sup>79</sup> Some of these socialization methods I had experienced with both my paternal and maternal grandmothers who raised me, and had become taken for granted reality. I think Auntie Naa wanted to make sure that the system of morals and values thought me had not been lost. There is a Ga saying that translates as “a child that knows how to wash his/her hands is able to eat with the elders”. Reflectively, this process was like a refresher course, there were issues of cultural sensitivity that could be shared with me, but I wouldn't dare to write, and Auntie Naa wanted to make sure I understood this.

<sup>80</sup> Retired Priestess Aawon Okpobi, Interview by author, Osu, Accra, Ghana, September 2, 2008.

Osu. The spirit of the Opobi deity became a part of Aawon's life at age fifteen. Following years of consultation, Aawon began her training at age eighteen and served the spirit for twenty-two years before she was relieved of her responsibilities to the deity. I was taken to Aawon Opobi by another collaborator, a young trainee priestess of the autochthonous deity of Osu, named Klote. Evidently she commanded the respect of the priestess' fraternity, and this young priestess in training. While I was with her, she had visitors who consulted her on herbal remedies for certain ailments. During our interview another priestess from Gbugbla, where Reindorf was born, and where he was dedicated to the Ligble deity also consulted Aawon.

My conversation with Aawon centered on her expatiating on the differences between a priestess, and a family matriarch. Aawon opined that while the latter had learned by experience the lessons of life; a priestess's acquisition of knowledge was not only mystical, but was esoteric and not available to all persons. My admission to Aawon that I had relatives in her patrilineal home through my maternal grandmother seemed to encourage her to be more comfortable with our interview. Nevertheless, she was keen to impress upon me two things. First, priestesses and priests of Ga deities were not as evil as people made them out to be. I was therefore given the task to state and show in my research to the outside world, "Jee gbomei gbohii ji wo" "They are not evil people". Aawon Opobi was obviously referring to a long history of demonizing traditional African spirituality following the introduction of Christianity and Islam. This had been especially so with most of the missionary and European explorer accounts of African religious practices prior to the revisionist writing of

Reindorf and his peers.<sup>81</sup> As with Aunt Naa, Aawon's concerns were paradigmatic and epistemological ones related to the characterization of African belief systems as devil worship and irrational by Christian and Islamic religious adherents.<sup>82</sup> Aawon wanted to ensure that the information she was passing on to me was objectively assessed and written unlike the previous characterizations.

In this regard, Aawon reiterated that priests and priestesses were divine personages of the deities, who have been chosen because of their sacredness to mediate between the spirits and human beings. They were in essence servants of the material and spirit world. I had introduced myself to Aawon telling her about my investigations into the life of a famous Christian pastor of her community. I therefore reflected on Aawon's comments to mean that she perceived I would write from a Christian perspective. I assured her that I would write as objectively as I am able about her religious perspective. In this dissertation, I use my interview with Aawon as further evidence to establish the role of Ga women as socializing agents in Ga Society. I also use aspects of the interview to buttress evidence about the women who socialized Reindorf into Ga customs, traditions, and histories as well as Reindorf's treatment of women as subjects in his work.

This methods chapter foregrounds some of my data collection processes: elements of ethnography, documentary evidence, oral interviews, and participant observation. The subsequent chapters will not have extensive descriptions and details

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<sup>81</sup> See for example "Through the ages the African appears to have evolved no organised religious creed, and though some tribes appear to believe in a deity, the religious sense seldom rises above pantheistic animism and seems more often to take the form of a vague dread of the supernatural." Frederick J.D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 70.

<sup>82</sup> For similar experiences in the field relating to collaborators need to ensure objectivity see Nwando Achebe's encounter with lady Obayi in Achebe, "Getting to the Source," 9-31, 19-20.

like classical ethnographic works, but will extract responses to some of my oral history questions and observations from my collaborators and their communities. These responses will be assigned explanatory meanings and used in my narrative about Blyden and Reindorf, the major subjects of this work. This chapter also expresses some of the intellectual, historical, and personal underpinnings of my position as researcher, and my particular interests in Gold Coast, African, and global African life of the nineteenth century. While my dissertation explores case studies of two individuals' contributions to intellectual currents of their age, it also evaluates my self-awareness as investigator of the cultural backgrounds of the communities that Blyden and Reindorf emerged from. I do admit that these several heritages—scholarly and social—influence my methodological assumptions and writing. The import of the chapter then is not to be pretentious about being totally unbiased, but to suggest that as I struggle for objectivity, I also explore the underlying personal motivations that drive my pursuit of this historical work. This is particularly important, so that the people I write about have a say in the body of knowledge that has been created about them. I aspire and think with the words of Abu'L-Rayhan Muhammad Al-Biruni (973-1050) that:

It is our duty to proceed from what is near to what is distant, from what is known to that which is less known, to gather the traditions from those who have reported them, to correct them as much as possible and to leave the rest as it is, in order to make our work help anyone who seeks truth and loves wisdom.<sup>83</sup>

I could easily substitute Africa with the West Indies in Kamau Brathwaite's comments about his poetry:

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<sup>83</sup> Cited in Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), vii.



My Absence [from the West Indies] and travels . . . had given me a sense of movement, and restlessness-rootlessness. It was I recognized, particularly the condition of the Negro in the West Indies and the New World. . . . My verse until 1965 had no real center. The center is connected to my return to the West Indies after twelve years' absence . . . I had at the moment of return, completed the triangular trade of my historical origins.<sup>84</sup>

Although I identify more with Brathwaite's movement and less with his rootlessness, I write in the tradition of African and African American Studies, which is to solve, or at least offer recommendations, to the means by which the myriad of problems that black populations face locally and internationally can be ameliorated. It is therefore my hope that in linking West Africa with the West Indies, I will help many people contemplate what Kamau Bratwaite described of his West African experience, "West Africa gave me a sense of place, of belonging; and that place and belonging, I knew was the West Indies."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Maureen W. Lewis, *Notes to Masks* (Benin City, Nigeria: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1977), 2.

<sup>85</sup> Lewis, *Notes to Masks*, 2.

## Chapter 2

### **Historiographical Depictions of Edward W. Blyden and Carl C. Reindorf**

There have been some worthwhile studies of Edward W. Blyden and Carl C. Reindorf as West African thinkers and as individuals. Aside from full length individual treatments, Blyden and Reindorf are both included in analyses on modern African thought by Robert July, and nationalism and African intellectuals by Toyin Falola.<sup>1</sup> The existing studies are, however, not comparative or comprehensive, like I attempt to do in this dissertation; nor do they provide the specific benefits of combining Atlantic Studies, Scandinavian history, African and African American Studies as I explained earlier in the introduction. The following is a review of the available literature on the two intellectuals. I separate the reviews on each scholar and conclude each historiographical section with a discussion of how my study benefits and improves upon, as well as departs from, the limitations of the previous studies.

Available material describing the life and intellectual work of Edward Wilmot Blyden can be divided into four types of writing. Among these are evaluations of his published writings by newspaper editorials, periodicals, and journal blurbs; appraisals of his academic and social activist contributions to nineteenth century black life by his peers; tributes in honor of Blyden at the aftermath of his death; and evaluations of Blyden in academic journals and books.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 256-262; Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2001), xix, 57-92.

## Contemporaneous Newspaper Accounts and Academic Treatments of Edward Blyden

The profundity of West African contribution to Black Atlantic writings is evidenced in the copious writings of its leading intellectuals exemplified by Blyden's presence in nineteenth century newspaper accounts. Evaluations of Blyden's published writings may be found in newspapers including *Nineteenth Century*, *The Southern Recorder*, *Literary World*, *Athenaeum*, *Sierra Leone Weekly News* and *African World*, among many others.<sup>2</sup> Journals like the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Review*, *Journal of the Royal African Society*, the *African Repository*, and the *Methodist Review* also ran blurbs of Blyden's work in their pages.<sup>3</sup> A majority of the newspaper and journal blurbs were laudatory ones. The *South Western Christian Advocate* (New Orleans) in 1890 offered the following:

No Book on Africa that has come to our hands has been found so full of thoughtful description of the Negro in the native land . . . Dr.<sup>4</sup> Blyden is an able writer, and his book will take rank as an authority, no doubt, on the subjects of which it treats.<sup>5</sup>

While assessments of Blyden's writing, like that of the *South Western Christian Advocate*, were in large part commended, all were not favorable, while others were constructive criticisms. The *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, for instance, commented on Blyden's *African Life and Customs* by saying "there can be no manner of doubt that

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Edward Blyden, *The African Problem and Other Discourses Delivered in America in 1890* (London: W. B. Withingham & CO., 1890), 105. See also "The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America" in *Liberia's Offering*, (New York, 1862), 67-91; and many other writings published in Lynch, *Black Spokesman* (London: Frank Cass, 1971); and *Selected Letters* (New York: KTO Press, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Edith Holden, *Blyden of Liberia: An Account of the Life and Labors of Edward Wilmot Blyden LL.D. As Recorded in Letters and in Print* (New York: Vantage Press, 1966), 1019- 1023.

<sup>4</sup> Blyden was awarded two honorary doctorate degrees in divinity and law; I offer a more elaborate explanation of his academic accomplishments later on in the dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Blyden, *The African Problem and Other Discourses Delivered in America in 1890* (London: W. B. Withingham & CO., 1890), 105.

the European has much to learn—and to unlearn—before he will be wholly wise and just ruler in Africa, and Blyden is doing well to teach Europeans.” Nonetheless, the evaluation rather than “lay down any conclusions or maxims” preferred to “refer the reader who takes an interest in the subject to read Dr. Blyden’s work.”<sup>6</sup> *The Journal of the Royal African Society*, however, did not sit on the fence. The journal describes the subject matter of the book as controversial, but candidly and temperately argued. The review goes on to say:

Once more we have the opportunity of noticing a work from Dr. Blyden’s indefatigable pen. Though his subject is usually much the same, there is no sameness in his treatment, and he is always to be read with interest. . . . It is only due the author to listen to him as he speaks, without prejudice or passion, however startling his arguments may seem. This, supposing him to be mistaken in his view, is the only way of discovering the true root and the true remedy of the evils he deplors.<sup>7</sup>

The journal thus asserts that Blyden may be mistaken at the conclusions he has reached even though they acknowledge Blyden’s erudition and his good intentions.

Other information gleaned about Blyden, his contributions to the literary world, as well as his advocacy for the black world are seen in writings by his contemporaries and friends. In the *A. M. E. Church Review*’s 1890 estimation, “[t]he one Negro of standing in the English world of recognized scholarship is Dr. Blyden,” and in the same year an evaluation of the reprint of Blyden’s *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, by the *Interior* (Chicago) reads:

Dr. Blyden has spent his entire life on the West coast of Africa. In the use of terse, vigorous and pure English, he is scarcely second to Macaulay. Anything upon the subjects indicated and coming from the head and pen of such a man, who has been twice sent by the British Government upon

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<sup>6</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 841-842.

<sup>7</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 842.

diplomatic missions to the powerful chiefs in the interior of Africa, should at least be carefully read and pondered.<sup>8</sup>

More of Blyden's appraisals are found in the statements and writings of some of the leading public figures of the African, black, and literary worlds. British writer and explorer, Mary Kingsley, who corresponded with Blyden, and was a staunch advocate of traditional African social systems, described Blyden as "a great Arabic scholar and an educated man of the first class, perfectly typical Negro."<sup>9</sup>

Hon. Samuel Lewis, a Barrister and member of the legislative council of Liberia, wrote the introduction to Blyden's 1887 edition of *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*. In this piece, Lewis enumerated Blyden's many accomplishments as a retired Professor of the College of Liberia, Secretary of State of Liberia, traveler, diplomat, and member of different learned societies. Lewis extolled Blyden's acquaintances with "remarkable literary men of his day. Among them Lord Brougham, Mr. Gladstone, Dean Stanley, Charles Dickens, Charles Sumner."<sup>10</sup> He went on to describe Blyden as having "a central idea, [race]" which "are not only the sentiments of a careful observer and diligent student, but they are the exponent of a purpose-the patriotic purpose of a lover of his race."<sup>11</sup>

Joseph Ephraim Casely-Hayford, a late nineteenth to twentieth century West African lawyer and nationalist, was perhaps Blyden's most ardent advocate. He wrote about Blyden's status in the black world. Hayford, who became an acquaintance of Blyden, preferred the Pan-African ideas of Blyden to those of William E. B. Du Bois

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<sup>8</sup> Blyden, *African Problems*, 105.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Gwynn, *The Life of Mary Kingsley* (London, 1932), 254.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), ix.

<sup>11</sup> Blyden, *Christianity Islam*, vii-ix.

and Booker T. Washington. In his much acclaimed 1903 work, *Ethiopia Unbound*,<sup>12</sup> Hayford considered Washington and Du Bois' work for the race as "provincial" and Blyden's as "universal, covering the entire race and the entire race problem."<sup>13</sup> In Hayford's opinion "Afro-Americans must bring themselves into touch with some of the general traditions and institutions of their ancestors, and though sojourning in a strange land endeavor to conserve the characteristics of the race,"<sup>14</sup> a point Blyden sought to explicate in his lifetime. Hayford considered Blyden "a leader among leaders of African aboriginal thought."<sup>15</sup>

When Blyden went to rest with his ancestors on the morning of February 7, 1912 in Freetown, Sierra Leone,<sup>16</sup> his virtue as a statesman of the Africa and its Diasporan world was immediately evident. His death was announced the following day in the *New York Daily Tribune* and the *New York Times*<sup>17</sup> and in Liberia, where "seventeen gun shots were fired on the hill in respect of his official rank and service to country."<sup>18</sup> It was also later circulated in Lagos, Nigeria and obituaries were carried in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* and the *African World* as well as the *London Times*.

They also read:

On February 7 occurred the death of Dr. E. W. Blyden, an old and well-known resident of Sierra Leone, at the age of 80. Dr. Blyden was the author of several books on the negro question, he himself being a staunch respected member of that race.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> J. E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (London: Frank Cass, 1969).

<sup>13</sup> Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound*, 163.

<sup>14</sup> Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound*, 165.

<sup>15</sup> Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound*, 165.

<sup>16</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 862.

<sup>17</sup> *New York Daily Tribune* Friday February 9, 1912 Despatch from Sierra Leone, Feb 9 "Dr. Edward W. Blyden, the famous Negro Lecturer and author died today." *New York Times* February 9, 1912. See also Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 865.

<sup>18</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 862.

<sup>19</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 862-865; *Sierra Leone Weekly News* March 2, 1912; *London Times* May 24, 1912, 33.

As he was eulogized around the world, debates that ensued on the pages of the *Sierra Leone Weekly* and the *African World* gave insight into the varied feelings of people who came into contact with Blyden. One debate began in June 21, 1913 issue, of the *Sierra Leone Weekly*, which was a rival newspaper of the Blyden affiliated *African World*. The issue offered a scathing critique of Blyden, after it commented on the unveiling of a bust of Blyden in memoriam by the Governor of Sierra Leone, Sir Edward M Merewether.<sup>20</sup> The critique is best quoted in full:

The Doctor's gifts were splendid, but what of imperishable value he by means of these gifts did for the benefit of his own people has been proved to be but a small dust in the balance compared with what he set himself in late years to do for the white race. Some therefore among his own countrymen—men of large caliber, felt obliged to call him “opportunist”—others worse. His polygamy hobby shocked the sensibility of West Africans of the best type: and the ideal African whom, sometime before his death, he delighted to set forth as *veritas*<sup>21</sup> *interrita* was roundly regarded as impertinence.<sup>22</sup>

This account of Blyden is in apparent reference to Blyden's flight to Sierra Leone, where he worked for the British government, after he was nearly lynched for his critique of the Americo-Liberian oligarchy in Liberia and his alleged adulterous relationship with Anna Erskine after estrangement from his first wife Sarah Yates.<sup>23</sup>

Blyden's own *African World's* account of the commemoration and unveiling of his bust was much more celebratory of his life and writings. The newspaper concluded, “subsequent generations of dwellers in Freetown, and travelers [who] pass it, will be visually reminded of the life and work of Edward Wilmot Blyden.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News* June 19, 1913.

<sup>21</sup> Latin phrase, Veritas means truth.

<sup>22</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News* June 21, 1913; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 895.

<sup>23</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 15. I offer further analysis on this relationship in the fifth chapter.

<sup>24</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 895-896; *African World*, July 19, 1913.

Debates about Blyden continued in both newspapers as readers sent in their personal tributes and letters. One such reader, Chas W. Farquhar, for instance, sought to express his opinion on Blyden as a litterateur and conversationalist. Farquhar commended Blyden for his ability and the content of his writing, his contribution to the study of race, and his hypnotic conversational skills. He then chastised Blyden in the following way: “a passionate lover of his race, regarded by many as a prophet, his vision was perverted by Mohammedan obsession that he could not see that Christ gave the best wine to the black as to the white races.” He concluded by suggesting that Blyden was a brilliant, yet a pathetic figure who “founded no school of thought but since principles are immortal, those he spent his life emphasizing, will embody themselves.”<sup>25</sup>

Farquhar’s letter drew the ire of another reader of the *Sierra Leone Weekly*, N. B. Seton, who felt the need to contradict Rev. Chas Farquhar’s position about [Islamic] views “which burned within the breast during the greater portion of [Blyden’s] life.” Seton, who claimed to be a close friend, argued that Blyden never declared Islam for black people, but rather told his close confidantes that he:

discriminated between two forms of Christianity; the one, a spurious cult, professed to be copied from the teaching and example of the Master, but percolating through a stratum of European thought, and so imbued and tinted with the racial instincts indicated by such conditions; and the other, based upon the temperament of the Blessed Lamb—a Christianity that courses through the soul and finds expression in genuine noble thought and deed—in short the Christianity of the “Sermon on the Mount.” It was this latter type that the Doctor was convinced should be cultivated by the African, and a full consciousness of which the Negro would reach by ascending through Mohammedanism.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 873; *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, March 2, 1912.

<sup>26</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 874; *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, May 4, 1912.



Blyden in his lifetime wrote a number of essays on Islam based on his research with the Islamic peoples in the interior of Liberia, but he is never known to have worshiped in a mosque. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Seton felt a need to respond to Farquar's criticism of Blyden's Islamic views. My analysis on Blyden's views in the fifth chapter contextualizes Blyden's work and views on Islam.

Another critical assessment recorded in Holden's *Blyden of Liberia*, acknowledges Blyden's brilliance and eloquence, but questions what his "great actions" were. The critique describes Blyden as an "educator, but an unsafe educator, half Mohammedan, half Christian" who "taught polygamy to the young men of Liberia" and that "Liberians and all Africans should look to the native, interior Africans for the living models and those models should be followed." Blyden was therefore not to be regarded as a great man because "he taught many things repugnant to the good morals and peace of society and the happiness of homes."<sup>27</sup> The evidence shows that Blyden did advocate the virtues of in *African Life and Customs* but never lived with two wives at the same time.<sup>28</sup>

The above critique is heavily contrasted by a glowing tribute by E. D. Morel who considered Blyden a great figure. Although Morel admitted that Blyden at times cut a pitiable character, he explained this away by suggesting that Blyden was in fact a prophet before his time. In the following excerpt, Morel waxes lyrical about Blyden:

Negro Africa has suffered irreparable loss in the death of Dr. Blyden, and the world is poorer for the disappearance of we fear—the only pure blooded Negro who was capable of applying his knowledge of Europe and White civilization to the needs of Negro Africa and the African civilization. More fully versed in the literature and ethics of Europe than any other Negro, Blyden's studies only made him more of an African—

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<sup>27</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 875.

<sup>28</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 10-47, 25.

more passionately the upholder of an African soul, an African culture, an Africa of clearly demarcated and peculiar racial needs.<sup>29</sup>

Morel's critical consideration of Blyden is one of many, by people who either knew Blyden personally or "met" him through his voracious writings. As time went on, a dead Blyden continued to evoke discussions in many academic and literary circles. Blyden's views were debated in encyclopedias, journals, and books by intellectual minds interested in Africa and the black world. The next section of this review is dedicated to exploring these treatments.

### **Academic Treatments of Blyden**

One of the first academic treatments specifically focused on Blyden appeared in a 1914 publication authored by John W. Cromwell.<sup>30</sup> The general tone of Cromwell's four-page biography of Blyden was celebratory, and places Blyden among the literary greats of the black world. Cromwell also uses him as an example of the black world's struggle for success in spite of the difficulties and adversities faced by many in the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Other compendiums of African and black scholarly greats similarly commented on Blyden. Among these were *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquences*, *Sons of Africa*, *The Native Problem in Africa*, and *the Great sons of Africa*.<sup>32</sup> Most of these writings, as their titles suggest, thought highly of Blyden.

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<sup>29</sup> *African Mail*, February 16, 1912, 191.

<sup>30</sup> John W. Cromwell, *The Negro in American History* (Washington D.C. : American Negro Academy, 1914).

<sup>31</sup> Cromwell, *The Negro in American History*, 235-239.

<sup>32</sup> Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson, ed., *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence* (New York: The Bookery Publishing Company, 1914), 263-264; Raymond L. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa Vol. 2* 1918; Georgina A. Gollock, *Sons of Africa* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1928); Davidson Nichol, "Great Sons of Africa" *Africana* 1, no. 2 (1949): 19-20.

Alice Dunbar- Nelson's extract of Blyden, for example, described him as "one of the greatest scholars of the race."<sup>33</sup>

In addition to these short essays, a number of journal articles began to appear on the pages of some of the leading black journals of the day, including the *Journal of Negro History*. Specifically, the articles started appearing during the second half of the twentieth century. The earliest, in 1950, was in a study entitled *Edward Wilmot Blyden—A correspondent of William Ewart Gladstone*.<sup>34</sup> This article and a subsequent article authored by Wilbur Devereaux Jones were very specific in their treatment of Blyden's correspondence with Gladstone, the British Statesman.<sup>35</sup> They focus on Gladstone and Blyden's views on the American Civil War, Britain's position on the war, Blyden's trepidation about being mistaken for a slave, and his prejudiced treatment in the United States during his visit in 1861.<sup>36</sup>

After these early journal publications, lengthier and more detailed historical studies of Blyden's life emerged between 1964 and 1974 in the *Journal of African History*, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, *Sierra Leone Studies*, and *African Affairs*. It is significant that these writings appeared during the African Nationalist Movement's push for independence in the second half of the twentieth century. Consequently, the previous nationalist writings of the likes of Blyden were resurrected for intellectual scrutiny, and to aid the independence struggle. The scholars who penned these pieces include: Robert July, Hollis Lynch, P. O. Esedebe, and M.

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<sup>33</sup> Dunbar-Nelson, *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence*, 263.

<sup>34</sup> C. Collyer, "Edward W. Blyden, A Correspondent of William Ewart Gladstone" *Journal of Negro History* (henceforth *JNH*) 35, no. 1 (1950), 75-78.

<sup>35</sup> Wilbur Devereaux Jones "Blyden, Gladstone and the War" *JNH* 49, no. 1 (1964): 56-58.

<sup>36</sup> Jones "Blyden, Gladstone and the War," 56-58.

Yu. Frenkel.<sup>37</sup> July's main argument was that Blyden's explication of the concept of a distinct "African personality" made him an intellectual precursor to Negritude ideas, which saw ascendancy in the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> Lynch on the other hand, emphasized the role of Blyden as a pioneer of West African nationalism, and conceiving the idea of a West African Union, with Liberia as its initial base.<sup>39</sup> In his piece, Frenkel challenged the thesis of post World War I African Nationalism as African-American influenced.<sup>40</sup> Frenkel pointed to the pioneering role of Blyden and his contemporaries like Bishop Crowther and Joseph Casely Hayford. Like July, Frenkel also dissected Blyden's thesis on the African personality, and his views on education for West Africans. Frenkel ended his piece by pronouncing Blyden the father of African cultural nationalism.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1960s, studies on Blyden were published in *Phylon* and the *Jewish Social Studies* journal.<sup>42</sup> An essay in *Phylon* focused on Blyden's role in disseminating Africa-derived ideas to the black intellectuals of the Americas.<sup>43</sup> Blyden achieved this feat through his relationships with the likes of Alexander Crummell, Henry Turner, John Henry Smyth (a consul to Liberia), and William S. Scarborough, (a classics teacher who was replaced by Du Bois at Wilberforce University).<sup>44</sup> An article in *Jewish Social Studies* by Benjamin Neuberger also discusses Blyden's views on Jews

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<sup>37</sup> Robert July "Nineteenth century Negritude: Edward W. Blyden" *Journal of African History* (henceforth *JAH*) 5, no. 1 (1964): 73-86; Hollis Lynch, "Edward W. Blyden: Pioneer West African Nationalist" *JAH* 6, no. 3 (1965): 373-388; Frenkel, "Edward Blyden" 277-289.

<sup>38</sup> July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 471.

<sup>39</sup> Lynch, "Edward W. Blyden: Pioneer West African Nationalist," 373-388.

<sup>40</sup> M Yu. Frenkel, "Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality" *African Affairs* 73 (1974): 277-289.

<sup>41</sup> Frenkel, "Edward Blyden" 277-289.

<sup>42</sup> Benjamin Neuberger, "Early African Nationalism, Judaism and Zionism: Edward Wilmot Blyden" *Jewish Social Studies* 47, no. 2 (1985): 151-166.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Henriksen, "African Intellectual Influences on Black Americans: The Role of Edward W. Blyden" *Phylon* 36, no. 3 (1975), 277-290.

<sup>44</sup> Henriksen, "African Intellectual Influences on Black Americans," 279-290.

and Zionism, in an attempt to show relationships between Judaism, Zionism, and early African Nationalism. In Neuberger's opinion, Blyden was a "clergyman, educator, journalist, administrator, diplomat, politician, and philosopher of black nationalism."<sup>45</sup> He further compared Blyden to German intellectual, Johann G. Herder, and Jewish Zionist, Ahad Ha'am, and concludes that Blyden was a cultural nationalist who admired Jewish history, customs, and religion. He further argues that Blyden saw the African situation akin to the Jewish condition of exile, slavery, and persecution.<sup>46</sup>

Neuberger was not the only historian to have attributed Blyden's ideas as in some ways derived from Europe and elsewhere. Robert July continues this trend of foreign attribution in two publications. The first, a journal publication entitled "Nineteenth Century Negritude: Edward Blyden".<sup>47</sup> The second is an article in a book entitled *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*.<sup>48</sup> Both texts float the idea that African thought of the modern era was derived from Islamic and European presence in Africa, Europe's humanitarian ideals and liberalism. July curiously writes:

Yet the slave trade, for all its inhumanity, had little impact on traditional African societies, certainly far less than the thrust of later, nineteenth century penetration which argued, not physical bondage, but spiritual freedom; which combined humanitarian objectives with economic goals; which implied man's perfectibility and material progress in the temporal world; and which attempted to introduce into West Africa the ideas and institutions of Europe's own phenomenal revolution of modernization.<sup>49</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that while July acknowledges that Blyden was not consumed by his missionary training, he argues that in his thinking, Blyden "absorbed

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<sup>45</sup> Neuberger, "Early African Nationalism," 152.

<sup>46</sup> Neuberger, "Early African Nationalism," 151-166.

<sup>47</sup> July, "Nineteenth Century Negritude" 73-86.

<sup>48</sup> July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, 202-278.

<sup>49</sup> July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 16.

the best of European education” which enabled him to “think creatively, imaginatively, and independently.”<sup>50</sup>

As a work by trained intellectual, July’s publication differed significantly in its examination of Blyden’s writing. Particularly, Edith Holden’s *Blyden of Liberia* in 1966.<sup>51</sup> Holden, though not a trained intellectual or historian, was the granddaughter of Blyden’s American benefactors the Rev. John P. Knox and his wife Allela Van Doren Knox, who as missionaries in St. Thomas first brought Blyden to the United States.<sup>52</sup> Holden dedicated the book to her grandparents, but admitted that her work was not an explicit “interpretation of Dr. Blyden’s theories, or an evaluation of his work, but a simple record of his varied life and work.”<sup>53</sup> Holden’s book may therefore be classified as a book of sources that draws “extensively from [Blyden’s] own letters, and from contemporary printed records in order to emphasize the personality of the subject of this work, and to preserve the atmosphere of the times.”<sup>54</sup> Holden’s work is detailed with archival material from the American Colonization Society, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and Trustees of Donations for Education in Liberia, all in the United States. Her archival selections also came from the Church Missionary Society in Birmingham, and National Archives, in Surrey, Britain. Holden’s book, combined with Hollis Lynch’s two edited books, *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, and *Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, are immense sources for the reconstruction of Blyden’s social

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<sup>50</sup> July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 233.

<sup>51</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 9-16.

<sup>52</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 11-16.

<sup>53</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 14.

and intellectual life.<sup>55</sup> My dissertation on Blyden and Reindorf has expansively relied on these particular sources.

Hollis Lynch also published his first book length historical examination of Blyden in 1967.<sup>56</sup> The book, which was based on Lynch's doctoral dissertation, was an attempt to deal solely with Blyden's "Pan-Negro ideas."<sup>57</sup> This treatise on Blyden covered his role as a vindicator of the black race, his stewardship, role as an educator, politician, statesman, and as diplomat for Liberia, as well as his efforts to create a West African federation. Lynch characterized Blyden as controversial, and a failure as a leader, but considered him the ideological father of West African unity and the intellectual precursor to the concept of Negritude.<sup>58</sup>

It is important to note that Holden, Lynch, and July did not agree on how to interpret Blyden's complex personality. In 1968, they debated with each other in the *Journal of African History*.<sup>59</sup> Also, weighing in on the debate was Ronald Davis, who reviewed the last known book-length biographical study on Blyden by Thomas W. Livingston.<sup>60</sup> Davis writes:

Hollis Lynch criticized Edith Holden's biography as lacking interpretation, yet Lynch was not much successful at interpreting the Blyden personality. Robert W. July's review of Lynch's biography complained that Lynch was merely "content to describe" "reluctant to hypothesize" and left Blyden "bloodless and shadowy". In my own review

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<sup>55</sup> Hollis Lynch, ed., *Black spokesman: selected published writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (London: Cass, 1971); *Selected letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden: edited and with introductions by Hollis R. Lynch and foreword by Léopold Sédar Senghor*. (Millwood, N.Y. : KTO Press, 1978.)

<sup>56</sup> Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), i-252.

<sup>57</sup> Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, viii.

<sup>58</sup> Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, vii, 54, 140-173, 248-252.

<sup>59</sup> Hollis Lynch, review of *Blyden of Liberia: An Account of the Life and Labors of Edward Wilmot Blyden LL.D as Recorded in Letters and in Print* by Edith Holden, *JAH*, 9 (1968): 174-176; Robert July, review of by Hollis Lynch, *JAH* 9 (1968): 486-487.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas W. Livingston, *Education and Race: A Biography of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (San Francisco: The Glendessary Press, 1975).

of Lynch's collection of Blyden's published writing I suggested that it was possible to see more of Blyden's intellectual and emotional dilemmas simply by reading Blyden's own words than his cautious biographers were willing to infer.<sup>61</sup>

Thomas Livingston's biography of Blyden, as evidenced by its title, *Education and Race: A Biography of Edward Wilmot Blyden* focuses a great deal on Blyden's views on education, even as it provides known demographic details of Blyden's life.<sup>62</sup> The former encompassed Blyden's tenure as President of Liberia College, his views on Muslim education, his plan for the education of black people in general, and his influence on educational policy in West Africa.<sup>63</sup> Analyses of Blyden's personal life rested on Blyden's agony and unsuccessful marriage to Sarah Yates, and his later relationship with Anna Erskine.<sup>64</sup> Livingston's evaluation of Blyden cast him as dying poor—not receiving any meaningful financial remuneration for his numerous publications; having a superficial understanding of African life and customs; truncating the development of education in Liberia; and yet influencing the likes of Mojola Agbebi, Hayford, DuBois, Booker T. Washington, and Carter G. Woodson.<sup>65</sup>

Since Livingston's publication, very little was written on Blyden. Lately however, Blyden has been reengaged by contemporary scholarship in cultural studies and Black Atlantic Studies. Notable is Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*.<sup>66</sup> Appiah's book is largely based on a

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<sup>61</sup> Ronald W. Davis, review of *Education and Race: A Biography of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (San Francisco: The Glendessary Press, 1975) reviewed by Ronald W. Davis, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10, no. 1 (1977): 114-116.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Livingston, *Education and Race: A Biography of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (San Francisco: Glendessary Press, 1975).

<sup>63</sup> Livingston, *Education and Race*, 113-211.

<sup>64</sup> Livingston, *Education and Race*, 143-160.

<sup>65</sup> Livingston, *Education and Race*, 206-223.

<sup>66</sup> Appiah, *In my Father's House; Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Metheun, 1992).



number of essays he had earlier published.<sup>67</sup> His writings were in large measure a critical review of the concepts of race as expounded by Blyden's long time friend, Alexander Crummell. Crummell, also like Edward Blyden, was a member of the American Negro Academy. Appiah's critique focuses on Blyden, Du Bois, Henry Highland Garnett, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey all important nineteenth century Black nationalists. These people, Appiah argues, uncritically accepted false notions of race propounded by European theorists of the Enlightenment era.<sup>68</sup> Appiah therefore brands this group of intellectuals, including Blyden, as racialists, otherwise, reverse racists. Appiah, however, veils this accusation in his own construction of race and racism—what he calls racialism, intrinsic racism, and extrinsic racism.<sup>69</sup> He defines racialism as the belief that “there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, which allows us to divide them into small sets of race in such a way that all the races share certain traits with each other that they do not share with members of any other race.”<sup>70</sup> For Appiah, this notion was cognitively false, while it was true for Blyden and his peers. Extrinsic racists, in Appiah's view, “make moral distinctions between members of different races, because they believe that the racial essence certain morally relevant attributes.”<sup>71</sup> To paraphrase Appiah, scientifically implausible stereotypes of members of other races, serve as proof, which may change an extrinsic racist's views. However for an intrinsic racist:

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<sup>67</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument” DuBois and the Illusion of Race” in *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1, (1985): 21-37. “The Conservation of “Race”” *Black American Literature Forum* 23, no. 1 (1989): 37-60. “Alexander Crummell and the Invention of Africa” *The Massachusetts Review*, 31, no. 3 (1990): 385-406.

<sup>68</sup> Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 10-180.

<sup>69</sup> Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 12-72.

<sup>70</sup> Appiah, “The Conservation of “Race” ” 44.

<sup>71</sup> Appiah, “The Conservation of “Race” ” 44.

no amount of evidence that a member of another race is capable of great moral, intellectual, or cultural achievements, which in one's own race would make them admirable and attractive, offers any ground for treating that person as one would similarly endowed members of one's own race.<sup>72</sup>

With these definitions, Appiah brands Alexander Crummell as a racist who exhibited tendencies of both intrinsic and extrinsic racists, while Du Bois and Blyden are less critiqued because of their respective uncompleted arguments on socio-historical ideas of race and their sophisticated knowledge of Africa.

In another recent treatment of Blyden, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Paul Gilroy examines the cultural and intellectual production of descendants of enslaved Afro-Americans. He however, interestingly excludes the African pasts of the Afro-American. The primary premise of Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* is that the Black Atlantic is a transcultural formation, a critique of ethnic and national absolutism. He further argues that the cultural productions of the Black Atlantic, while originating with blacks, cease to be their exclusive property; and that the Black Atlantic is a counter-culture to modernity.<sup>73</sup> By transcultural formation, Gilroy means that the Black Atlantic is a product of the intercultural exchange between the black populations of the Caribbean, Europe, and North America. He further argues that as a result of these exchanges, a reworking, or a reconfiguration of these multivalent cultures into an organic whole, called the Black Atlantic, occurs. He also analyzes individuals in the Black Atlantic or Diaspora populations, including Blyden, whose writings and engagement with modernity, he describes as a product of

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<sup>72</sup> Appiah, "The Conservation of "Race" " 45.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3-19.

the west or influenced by European modernity.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the intellectual labor of the named Black Atlantic World, he argues, was aimed to variously critique Enlightenment scholarship and provide an alternative modernity for the West.<sup>75</sup> Gilroy claims this alternative modernity for the whole of the Atlantic “West” because of his aversion for ethnically absolute approaches; Eurocentric and Africentric. He further suggests that historians should take the Atlantic as one single unit of analysis when examining the modern world.<sup>76</sup>

Gilroy’s framework therefore, rests on the idea that the Black Atlantic is a hybrid configuration that has nevertheless been formed in the heart of Western modernity. It is with this background that Gilroy engages Blyden by disengaging him from his lived realities on the African continent since the age of eighteen. Blyden’s ideas are treated as extrinsic to the African present in which they were formulated. While Gilroy acknowledges Blyden’s influence on African nationalist thinking, he ascribes Blyden’s ideas to European romantic nationalism in the works of such thinkers as Herder, Fichte, Mazzini, and Dostoevsky, and Jewish Zionism.<sup>77</sup>

In his book *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity* Kwaku Larbi Korang seemingly questions Appiah and Gilroy’s theoretical characterizations of Blyden and his cohort of black intellectuals.<sup>78</sup> On Gilroy he notes: “‘Africa’ can never have more than a problematic status,” which may explain why he excludes Blyden from his African context. Korang raises questions about Gilroy’s

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<sup>74</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 19-40, 58, 112-208.

<sup>75</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 1-19.

<sup>76</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 15-19.

<sup>77</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 58, 112, 193, 208-211.

<sup>78</sup> Kwaku Larbi Korang, *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa: Nation and Modernity* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

exclusion of Africa from a so-called “Black Atlantic,” and its relegation to an unusable, unreasonable, and atavistic past.<sup>79</sup> Korang’s response to Appiah is poignant and serious, when he writes:

It does seem to Appiah that modern [Pan] African intellectual history has no inspirational human story to tell. Apparently, true humanistic consciousness dawns in African philosophico-cultural thought sometime late in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, when *In My Father’s House* was being worked on by its author. As facetious as this may seem, this is precisely the effect that Appiah produces. However, the ethical imperative that Appiah takes from a Western philosopher to judge a thought and practice whose concrete situation is [Pan] African should not be allowed to have the last word.<sup>80</sup>

Korang seems to be arguing that Appiah has written from his English mother’s house (i.e. Western Philosophy) rather than his African father’s (i.e. African Philosophy). Moreover, Korang evokes the last word when he rescues Blyden and his colleagues from Gilroy, and particularly Appiah’s posthumous assault. Korang, unlike Gilroy who reduces Blyden’s work only to the Western world and the African Diaspora, crowns Blyden as the founder of an African nationalist “Orphean/Sankofian” vision—who took European modernity in Africa’s present in order to make it answerable to Africa’s authentic cultural past for the creation of a more usable African modernity.<sup>81</sup>

One may surmise, from the contradictory assessments of Blyden, that he is not an easy individual to study as is true of many iconoclastic scholars—intellectuals who questioned the popular ideas of their age and who were innovative in their production of knowledge. Given his life’s work, I offer Blyden up, as, not only an iconoclastic thinker—whose scholarship transcended the geographic boundaries of black localities in West Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas—but also, a global African

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<sup>79</sup> Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 279-286.

<sup>80</sup> Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 278.

<sup>81</sup> Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 16, 74-220.

Iconoclast. It is not my intention in this dissertation to repeat most of what these scholars, peers, nineteenth century journalists, and other writers have said about Blyden. My intention is to build on the existing body of literature; while acknowledging important historiographical landmarks, questioning inconsistencies, and offering fresh interpretations of the life and work of Blyden. In the chapters that follow, I offer background on Blyden's heritage in the Danish West Indies colony of St. Thomas, and consider the possible influences that the African Diaspora might have had on his complex character.

I also seek to re-interpret Blyden's views on race, which has already been expounded upon by Lynch, Appiah, and Livingston. I argue that even though Blyden absorbed some of the ideas of race of his day, his analysis of race was significantly different from his European interlocutors. In short, I argue, that his ideas on race were in fact a significant departure and improvement on his era's body of knowledge on race. Moreover, Blyden's use of race was, in his words, to "vindicate the race"<sup>82</sup> against attacks of inferiority by pseudo-scientist's and ethnologists. Blyden, therefore, did not detest "mullatoes," as Lynch has characterized him; rather, he disliked the Americo-Liberian oppression and degradation of indigenous Liberians. It was Blyden's defense of the indigenous Liberians that made him a hater of "mullatoes" in the eyes of the Americo-Liberians, he opposed.

Further, I build on Korang's interpretation of Blyden, as an original thinker, to show that even though Blyden was aware of European ideas of nationalism, his own ideas were not limited to Mazzini or Herder. I further challenge Gilroy's casting of Blyden as a Diasporan scholar solely on the basis of his birth in St. Thomas and his

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<sup>82</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 131.

exposure to Jews there. My dissertation, shows that Blyden's ideas emerged from his lived existence in Africa. In order to firmly establish this fact, I explain how Blyden arrived in Liberia with notions of civilizing his native brethren, but experienced an epiphany that changed his understanding of native Africans. He therefore, more than most of his Diasporan contemporaries like Crummell and Turner, was able to overcome his feeling of superiority over native Africans.

Finally, I attempt to throw light on Blyden's alleged conversion to Islam and the controversy that it engendered among his Christian colleagues and friends. I argue that rather than converting to Islam; Blyden was articulating an original idea that would become the foundation for Kwame Nkrumah's idea of consciencism—a socialist analysis of the African situation that sought to bring the best of Islam and Euro-Christian thinking to the service of engineering African development. Blyden understood Africa in ways that his Diasporan colleagues like Crummell and Delany who visited Africa did not. Historian, Wilson Jeremiah Moses, also considered Blyden along with Crummell, Turner, David Walker, and Martin Delany as classical black nationalists who believed in a provident call to immigration to Africa, racial separatism, and claimed ancestral connection to the ancient civilization of Africa.<sup>83</sup> In this study, I also situate Blyden's vision as larger than a U.S. African-American or African-Diaspora nationalism, because he impacted black people internationally. This global reach of Blyden's work is the focus of my social and intellectual biography of him.

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<sup>83</sup> Wilson J. Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York: New York Universities Press, 1996), 1-42.

## Reviewing Carl Christian Reindorf's Scholarship

In the light of Reindorf's pioneering historical work on Gold Coast and Asante peoples, one would have thought that he would be a well known figure in both popular and academic literature on Africa's early intellectuals and their writing about Africa's historical past. It is therefore not surprising that twentieth century Gold Coast nationalist, J. B. Danquah, described as the doyen of Gold Coast politics in 1930, bemoans Reindorf's escape into obscurity: "Reindorf has been dead for many years now . . . not a single voice has been raised to recall our estimable debt to this most admirable prophet of Gold Coast nationality."<sup>84</sup> The debt payment to Reindorf would later come from his own progeny. The first real attempt at offering a biographical study of Carl Christian Reindorf was by his own son, Dr. C. E. Reindorf. The young Reindorf wrote a biographical sketch of his father, as part of a foreword to the second publication of *G. C. A. Histories* in 1951. But, as he himself describes, the short biography was "not intended to be a critical biography of the author; . . . In this light I may be pardoned, if I am uncritically eulogistic." Sympathetic eulogies aside, and acknowledging the need for a "critical biography," C. E. Reindorf, recounted the early life, education, and missionary work of his father, offering insights into *peré* Reindorf's roles as farmer, soldier, trader, and writer.<sup>85</sup>

Prior to Dr. Reindorf's eulogy of his father, the earliest assessment of Rev. Reindorf had appeared fortuitously in the writing of Margaret Field, a British ethnographer. Field was ungrateful in her commentary on Reindorf, because even

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<sup>84</sup> As quoted in Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 102.

<sup>85</sup> *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Tradition and Historical Facts Comprising A Period of More than Three Centuries From About 1500-1860 With a Biographical Sketch by C. E. Reindorf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basel, Switzerland: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1951), 3-4, 3-16.

though on occasion she crosschecked her data with the earlier work of Reindorf, she wondered whether Reindorf understood his own analysis of the Gold Coast population.<sup>86</sup> She wrote of Reindorf's *G. C. A. Histories*:

This ambitious work is to be praised for what it bravely attempts than for what it achieved. Reindorf was a mulatto pastor in a Christ Mission. He collected a wealth of unsifted material from an enormous area and flung it down in chaotic manner, often contradicting himself. He was an indefatigable collector but did not understand the laborious cross-checking nor the ruthless surgery that must be carried out before tradition can be confidently claimed as History. Mr. W. E. Ward who compiled a Gold Coast History for Schools, told me that he 'relied entirely on Reindorf for information about the Ga'. This is a pity. The account of Ga early history which I am now able to present here is, I believe, as accurate as any such history can be and represents years of work and of no little patience.<sup>87</sup>

Field's comments should be seen as unfair because Reindorf himself notes that he has not written an exhaustive study of the Gold Coast, but is hoping that his work would be a starting point for other scholars to build upon. He writes:

The title chosen for this publication, "History of the Gold Coast and Asante" may be deemed to promise more than I was actually able to give. . . . Still I venture to have the book so named in the hope that our brethren and friends on the Gold Coast, both Native and European, may possess better sources of information for a history of the Gold Coast, and may, laying aside all prejudice, be induced to unite to bring the history of the Gold Coast to perfection. I deem it impossible for one man unaided to carry out such an important work to perfection.<sup>88</sup>

In spite of this disclaimer by Reindorf which acknowledged his human limitations, Field continued her damning critique of Reindorf's work in a subsequent work on *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Margaret Field, *Social Organization of the Ga People* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1940), 82 n.2, 206 n. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Field, *Social Organization*, 145 n1.

<sup>88</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A Histories*, vi.

<sup>89</sup> Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961, 1937) 82 n. 2.



Later reviews of Reindorf are not as damning as Field's, but some are nonetheless poignant critiques. Irene Odotei, arguably the pre-eminent scholar on Ga history, gives one of such appraisals. Odotei commenting on Reindorf acknowledges his position as an authority in Ga history, but raises questions about Reindorf's uncritical use of oral sources and his dating techniques.<sup>90</sup> We encounter Reindorf again as one of "the African historian(s) in West African thought" as articulated by Robert July in *The Origins of Modern African Thought*.<sup>91</sup> In a section entitled "African History written for and about Africans," July offers a critical review of Reindorf, and his methods, his work, and his biases; concluding that Reindorf was a nationalist historian.<sup>92</sup>

After this 1967 work, the publication of literature on Reindorf seems to peter out until the appearance of a brochure celebrating Reindorf's life as a pastor at Ebenezer Osu Presbyterian Church. Entitled, *1834-1984, 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary: Remembering Rev. Carl Reindorf at the Ebenezer Osu Presbyterian Church*, the brochure contained several write-ups, including a reprint of Issac Ephson's one page biographical sketch of Reindorf in *Gold Coast Gallery of Celebrities*.<sup>93</sup> It also contained a summarized reproduction of Mercy A. Vanderpuije's 1982 B. A. dissertation, as well as several accounts by Reindorf's progeny including one from the pen of his grandson, Joseph Daniel Reindorf, the respected Ghanaian jurist.<sup>94</sup> The latter Reindorf's account attempted to trace his grandfather's European heritage in

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<sup>90</sup> Irene Quaye (henceforth Odotei), "The Ga and Their Neighbors 1600-1742" (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Ghana, Legon, 1972), viii.

<sup>91</sup> Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its development in West Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. (New York: Praeger, 1967).

<sup>92</sup> July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, 254-262, 271, 465.

<sup>93</sup> Issac Ephson, *Gallery of Gold Coast Celebrities 1632-1958* (Accra: Ilen Publications, 1969).

<sup>94</sup> Mercy A. Vanderpuije, "A Study of the Reindorf Family of Accra" (Department of History, University of Ghana, Legon, 1982). Attempts to locate this dissertation at the University of Ghana have been futile (missing)

Denmark to the Rhine Valley between Bonn and Koblenz.<sup>95</sup>

A year later, Raymond G. Jenkins completed an unpublished doctoral dissertation at the University of Birmingham, entitled *Gold Coast Historians and their Pursuits of Gold Coast Pasts: 1882-1917*.<sup>96</sup> Jenkins dedicates a chapter to Reindorf, mostly discussing Reindorf's historicity and credentials as a historian. The chapter was entitled "C. C. Reindorf, Traditions and Historical Facts: From Geschichte Des Volkes der Goldkuste to a Provisional National History of the Gold Coast 1889-1895." Jenkins had earlier in 1977 and 1978 published two articles about Reindorf's *G. C. A. Histories*, questioning whether the second edition of Reindorf's work was an impeachable source, or a useful source for the writing of Ghanaian history.<sup>97</sup> For Jenkins, Reindorf's work is to date, the most comprehensive work on the Gold Coast, and he praises Reindorf's use of local tradition and primary sources in Danish and German, which made it an invaluable source book and manual for future historians of the area.<sup>98</sup>

A shorter version of Raymond Jenkins' work appeared together with a number of essays on Reindorf, in an edited compilation by Paul Jenkins.<sup>99</sup> The authors' highlight various aspects of Reindorf's life as historian, pastor, and trader. Peter Haenger, for example, explores Reindorf's contestation of the racial hierarchy of the Basel Mission

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<sup>95</sup> Joe Reindorf, "The Origin of the Reindorfs" in *Remembering Rev. Carl Reindorf* (1984).

<sup>96</sup> Raymond G. Jenkins, "Gold Coast Historians and their Pursuits of Gold Coast Pasts: 1882-1917" (Ph.D thesis, University of Birmingham, 1985).

<sup>97</sup> Raymond G. Jenkins, "Impeachable Source? On the Use of the Second Edition of Reindorf's as a Primary Source for the Study of Ghanaian History I" *History in Africa* 4 (1978): 123-147; "Impeachable Source? On the Use of the Second Edition of Reindorf's as a Primary Source for the Study of Ghanaian History II" *History in Africa* 5 (1978): 81-99.

<sup>98</sup> Raymond G. Jenkins, "Gold Coast Historians," 356.

<sup>99</sup> Jenkins, "Raymond Jenkins on Reindorf and his History," in *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century; C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson. Papers from an International Seminar held in Basel Switzerland, 25-28<sup>th</sup> October 1995 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante* ed. Paul Jenkins (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998), 165-196.

in Ghana, his understanding of the inner workings of traditional institutions, and the German missionaries misunderstanding of traditional practices.<sup>100</sup> Haenger concludes that even though Reindorf was grateful for his mission education, he was independent, and was able to demonstrate this independence by tendering a letter of resignation from the mission.<sup>101</sup>

J. D. Y. Peel in his contribution offers some comparisons between Reindorf and Samuel Johnson, Reindorf's contemporary from the Church Missionary Society. He concluded that it was their lives as missionaries that nurtured their historical ambitions.<sup>102</sup> While T. C. McCaskie examines Reindorf's sources, and his dexterity in linking the histories of the Ga and Asante.<sup>103</sup> Thomas Bearth looks at the originality of Reindorf's work, relative to the editorial supervision of J. G. Christaller, who was interested in language and culture.<sup>104</sup> Another noteworthy contribution was Emmanuel Akyeampong's article "C. C. Reindorf on the Cultural Articulation of Power in Precolonial Ghana—Observations of a Social Historian." In his chapter, Akyeampong offers an alternative reading of Ray Jenkins' earlier contention that Reindorf was influenced by Herder through his Danish-German Basel Mission training. Akyeampong instead suggests that African Cosmology influenced Reindorf's construction of the Gold Coast past, particularly his understanding of power, as much as it was mediated by his involvement with Euro-African, and

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<sup>100</sup> Peter Haenger, "Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860's," *Recovery of the West African Past*, 19-29.

<sup>101</sup> Haenger, "Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860's," 19-29.

<sup>102</sup> Peel, "Two Pastors and their Histories," *The Recovery of the West African Past*, 57-68.

<sup>103</sup> T. C. McCaskie, "Asante and Ga. The History of a Relationship" *Recovery of the West African Pasts*, 135-153.

<sup>104</sup> <sup>104</sup> Thomas Bearth, "J.G. Christaller. A Holistic View of Language and Culture-and C. C. Reindorf's History," *Recovery of the West African Pasts*, 135-153.

European spheres.<sup>105</sup> Together, these essays represent the most comprehensive treatment of the life and work of Reindorf.

John Parker, who also contributed to the edited compilation on Reindorf, further comments on Reindorf's work in his dissertation, which was later published as *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*.<sup>106</sup> Parker reviews Reindorf's background as a Euro-African and his participation in traditional politics of Accra. Reindorf's initial work also informs much of Parker's own analyses of Ga origins and identity, state formation, warfare, and marriage.<sup>107</sup>

Reindorf also made it, as one of the case studies of Kwaku Larbi Korang's more recent study, which "writes Ghana, and imagines African nation and modernity."<sup>108</sup> Korang considered Reindorf as being part of a group of Gold Coast intellectuals who even though they operated under colonial rule were also conscious of their connections with other West African intellectuals. Korang further examines Reindorf's historiographical undertaking to create a national history of the Gold Coast, even as he acknowledges past conflicts between the Gold Coast peoples. Korang concludes that Reindorf's vision to unite the various ethnicities of the Gold Coast into a nation demonstrated an example of West African intellectuals engaging and creating their own African modernity.<sup>109</sup>

Most recently, Seth Quartey examines Reindorf, as a missionary of Euro-African descent alongside German missionary man Andreas Riss and a German missionary

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<sup>105</sup> Akyeampong, "C.C. Reindorf on the Cultural Articulation of Power in Pre-Colonial Ghana," *Recovery of the West African Past*, 103-113.

<sup>106</sup> John Parker, "Ga State and Early Colonial Accra, 1860-1920s" (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1995); *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (London: Heinemann, 2000).

<sup>107</sup> John Parker, *Making the Town*, 29- 98, 157-161.

<sup>108</sup> The phrase is a pun on the title cited earlier. Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 24.

<sup>109</sup> Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 24, 94-113.

woman Rosine Widman.<sup>110</sup> As a Professor of German, Quartey's analysis of Reindorf relies extensively on German based sources. He interprets these sources as they relate to gender, race, and the Basel Mission hierarchy in the Gold Coast. He therefore, examines Reindorf's status as colonial subject, and native pastor within the Basel Mission.<sup>111</sup> After investigating Reindorf's vision in writing *G. C. A. Histories*, his career as a pastor, and his views of Europeans, Quartey stops short of calling him an assimilationist because of Reindorf's propensity to speak out angrily against Basel Mission racism and unequal practices.<sup>112</sup>

Swiss historian, Heinz Hauser-Renner, has also published two articles on Reindorf in recent times. One, published in the *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, examines both the English and Ga versions of Reindorf's *G. C. A. Histories*, pointing out "aspects of modernity and innovativeness" in Reindorf's writing.<sup>113</sup> Hauser Renner's other article is published in the *History in Africa*.<sup>114</sup> In this work Hauser-Renner classifies Reindorf's work as belonging to the corpus of historical texts written by western trained Africans.<sup>115</sup> Hauser-Renner's piece is a very detailed chronology and analysis of the writing, editing, financing, and sale of *G. C. A. Histories*. He also provides commentary on the Ga version of *The Histories*, which Hauser-Renner argues begun sometime around 1874 after Reindorf would have

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<sup>110</sup> Seth Quartey, *Missionary Practices on the Gold Coast 1832-1895: Discourse, Gaze, and Gender in the Basel Mission in Pre-Colonial West Africa* (Youngstown, New York: Cambria Press, 2007).

<sup>111</sup> Quartey, *Missionary Practices on the Gold Coast*, 119-148

<sup>112</sup> Quartey, *Missionary Practices on the Gold Coast*, 129-148.

<sup>113</sup> Heinz Hauser, "Tradition Meets Modernity, C. C. Reindorf and his History of the Gold Coast and Asante: A Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Voice from Urban Accra" *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana New Series*, 8 (2002): 227-255.

<sup>114</sup> Heinz Hauser-Renner, "Examining Text Sediments-Commending a Pioneer Historian as an "African Herodotus": On the Making of the New Annotated Edition of C.C. Reindorf's *The Gold Coast and Asante*" *History in Africa* 35 (2008): 231-299.

<sup>115</sup> Hauser-Renner, "Examining Text Sediments," 231-235.

completed the English version. Reindorf, of course, completed it in 1891.<sup>116</sup> Hauser-Renner also analyzes the processes by which Reindorf annotates the 1895 English edition, and translated the Ga version of *G. C. A. Histories*.<sup>117</sup> I have not, as yet been able to locate this text, but based on Hauser-Renner's well researched and written articles on it, his manuscript should contribute to the re-examination of Reindorf as scholar and his *G. C. A. Histories* as historical source.

In the same issue of Hauser-Renner's article in *History in Africa*, Joseph Adjaye reviews Ghanaian historiography over the last half a century or so. He argues that while historical writing in Ghana has been in existence for centuries, Ghanaian historiography is only about fifty years old. Writing specifically on Reindorf, he concluded:

By the late nineteenth century, however, a new generation of writers—this time, locals with European training—was emerging. Prominent in this group was C. C. Reindorf. His *History of the Gold Coast* (1895) was the first attempt at writing a history of the whole country. It was a pioneering work in other respects as well: the first history of the Gold Coast written by a native, albeit a mulatto, and the first to utilize local oral sources extensively—the author claims to have interviewed over 200 persons. Yet Reindorf's history was constrained by his missionary background, he himself having been a Basel minister.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, Adjaye, while acknowledging Reindorf's text as a one of a pioneer, raises questions about his methods on account of his Basel Mission training.

In her assessment of Reindorf, Field raises questions and doubts about Reindorf's data collection methods and his writing. While one may fault Field for her attempt to promote her own work at the expense of Reindorf, one may also forgive her for not understanding Reindorf's indigenous approach to history. British trained Augustus

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<sup>116</sup> Hauser-Renner, "Examining Text Sediments" 252.

<sup>117</sup> Hauser-Renner, "Examining Text Sediments" 282-299.

<sup>118</sup> J. K. Adjaye, "Perspectives on Fifty Years of Ghanaian History" *History in Africa* 35 (2008): 1-24, 3.

Casely-Hayford has recently explained the indigenous method of writing history adopted by Gold Coast historians of the nineteenth century. This historical methodology involved narrating history through the use of Gold Coast stool/throne, lineages or genealogical charts. Hayford called this form of writing a “prosopographical” approach to explaining socio-historical events.<sup>119</sup> In this dissertation, I attempt to further throw light on this indigenous perspective of historical writing. This should explain, or put to rest, Field’s confusion over Reindorf’s work.

In addition to showing that Reindorf had a sense of history, I argue that Reindorf was in fact ahead of his time. He was not only well connected in the Gold Coast, he used a research assistant, and interviewed both men and women as informants—a methodology that was rare during his time.<sup>120</sup> I use Akyeampong’s analyses of Reindorf’s conceptualization of power—its origins, organization, abuse, reacquisition, and reconstructing by Gold Coast peoples—to further explain Reindorf’s indigenous and creative approach to history of the Gold Coast.

Much has been said about Reindorf’s vision of the Gold Coast and Asante as a single entity. But, how does Reindorf articulate this? I show in my analyses that Reindorf’s *G. C. A. Histories* contains symbolic, real, and imagined, constructions of Gold Coast societies that link them to a greater West Africa and Africa—a fact that controverts Ray Jenkins’ assertion that there was no particular Pan-African vision to Reindorf’s advocacy.<sup>121</sup> Reindorf’s work, while privileging the Gold Coast and Asante transcends the geographic bounds of the Gold Coast and Asante to include ethnic

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<sup>119</sup> Augustus Casely-Hayford, “Prosopographical Approaches to Fante History” *History in Africa* 18 (1991): 49-66; Augustus L. Casely-Hayford “Genealogical Study of Cape-Coast Stool Families” (Ph.D dis., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992).

<sup>120</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A Histories*, vi.

<sup>121</sup> Jenkins, *Recovery of the West African Past*, Appendix.

populations in modern day Benin, Togo, as well as far away ancient Carthage and Phoenecia. Reindorf's linking of the Gold Coast and Asante to these near and far-flung regions shows that he not only had a "pan" vision, but his vision was not expressed in the familiar Pan-African rhetoric associated with classical black nationalists. In short, I argue, Reindorf's vision was a pan-ethnic-Pan-Africanism that linked Gold Coast peoples with other ethnic Africans through trade, war, and marriage.

Few historians who have written about a distinct ethnic population of modern day Ghana, or Ghana as a multiethnic homogenous body, have completed their work without either citing or using Reindorf's pioneering work as a starting place. Nonetheless, contemporary formally trained historians of Ghana's history, have seldom acknowledged Reindorf as the founding father of Ghanaian history. And even though he has earned notable mentions in July, Falola, and more recently, Korang's work, Reindorf's authoring of the first history of an African people by an African writer has not earned him the accolade as a founding father of African history. He even enjoys less popularity than his Yoruba Nigerian contemporary Samuel Johnson, who authored *The History of the Yoruba: From the Earliest Times to the Beginnings of the British Protectorate*.<sup>122</sup> His brother Obadiah Johnson posthumously completed Johnson's book some years after Reindorf had completed his work. In 1998, Reindorf still had to share the stage with Johnson during the centenary celebration of his first publication.<sup>123</sup> In the next chapter, I show how the foresight of Reindorf's early work on, and beyond the Gold Coast and Asante, has yet to be appreciated in its fullest

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<sup>122</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba: From the Earliest Times to the Beginnings of the British Protectorate* ed., by Obadiah Johnson (Lagos, 1921).

<sup>123</sup> Jenkins, *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 13-194.



extent by modern historians of Ghana and Africa's past.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Pan-African History and Historiography: Periodization and the Founding Fathers of Pan-Africanism**

This chapter's principal argument is that in order to critically understand Pan-Africanism in its entirety, it is important to engage the views of less studied Pan-African thinkers like Blyden and Reindorf who emerged in West African localities such as Liberia, and the Gold Coast respectively. A corollary argument is that African-American Pan-Africanists were not the sole originators of Pan-African thought; rather, Pan-African ideas were developed distinctively in different global locations including West Africa—the Gold Coast in particular—the Caribbean, and the United States. The historiography on Pan-Africanism and its founding theoreticians, activists, and various personalities therefore needs to be reviewed to include the cohort of West African Pan-Africanist represented by Blyden and Reindorf in this dissertation.

The chapter is divided into three distinct sections. The first part reviews and offers a definition of the concept of Pan-Africanism, its foundational ideas, and ends with a chronological timeline that distinguishes various phases of Pan-Africanism. The second part is a review of the historiography on Pan-Africanism; that is how scholars have theorized and written about Pan-Africanism as a subject of academic enquiry. The last section includes a review of the various regional manifestations of Pan-Africanism, as well as with some historiographical notes on West African Pan-Africanism. The section closes with an examination of women's participation in the evolution of Pan-Africanism as an idea and movement.

## **Pan-Africanism and its Contested Origins**

The 1900 Pan-African conference organized by Sylvester Williams was a watershed moment in Pan-African history. This was because it was the first organized meeting of people of African descent on a trans-Atlantic scale. The conference marked the beginning of the transformation of previously held ideas on Pan-African unity into a social movement.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the conference's leading participants, Sylvester Williams and W. E. B. Du Bois have been viewed as progenitors of the Pan-African tradition.<sup>2</sup> The former for his organization of the first conference, and the latter for his role in convening of subsequent congresses, particularly, the epochal 1945 congress in which continental Africans were the majority participants.

Hollis Lynch speculates without much evidence that the absence of Blyden, “undoubtedly the most important historical progenitor of Pan-Africanism,” at the 1900 conference could be attributed to Blyden's objection to the arrangement of the conference outside Africa, as well as its domination by mixed-race Afro-Americans.<sup>3</sup> It could also be that Blyden who passed in 1912, may have declined to attend the conference on account of his suffering many ailments in his last days. Also there is no evidence of his being invited at all.

In any case, there were other West African representatives at the conference, and their absence in the literature is disturbing. Apart from the exclusion of West Africans intellectuals in the traditional canon of Pan-African intellectuals, there are other gaps

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<sup>1</sup> George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 95-101.

<sup>2</sup> Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 97-150.

<sup>3</sup> Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 250-251.

and erroneous conclusions on the theorizing, periodization, and writing of the history of Pan-Africanism. There are for example more studies of the founding men of the idea, as opposed to their women counterparts like Anna Julia Cooper, who attended the 1900 Pan-African Conference.<sup>4</sup> Some of these errors can be attributed to two trends of Pan-African historiography—the unequal emphasis on the Pan-African movement in lieu of Pan-African Thought; and the extensive treatment of Afro-West Indian and Afro-American Pan-Africanists as opposed to Africa-based Pan-Africanists. While Sylvester Williams’ pioneering role must be appreciated and celebrated, Williams was not the only brain behind the 1900 conference, and Africans had been thinking on nascent Pan-African ideas since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, Williams, the secretary of the *African Association* in London, called the meeting on behalf of the association whose patrons and membership were both West African and West Indian.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter I also emphasize the distinction between Pan-African Thought as an intellectual enterprise and Pan-African socio-political movement or organization. The intellectual tradition of Pan-African Thought, involves thinking about attaining racial equality, advocating unity, and enhancing the social conditions of African descended communities globally. This is distinct from Pan-Africanism, which is the institutionalized international social movement. While it is clear that a social movement has to have an ideological dimension, the synthesis of the two has often led

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Walters, *Story of My Life* (New York, 1917), 253-261.

<sup>5</sup> J. R. Hooker, “The Pan-African Conference” *Transition* 46 (1974): 24-48; *The Lagos Standard* (July 27, 1898), 2; *The Pan-African* 1 (1901): 4; Henry S. Williams to Booker T. Washington, June 8, 1899, Container no. 164 “Booker T Washington Papers Principals Office Correspondence” Library of Congress.

to the exclusion of West African thinkers who through their ideas also influenced the global Pan-African social movement.

Such ideas from West Africa are evidenced in the pan-ethnic sentiments of Reindorf who links his native Gold Coast with various regions of Africa in his landmark text *G. C. A. Histories*, and as I will show later in this dissertation, is an important precursor to ideas about the cultural unity of African societies- an integral element of Pan-Africanism.

The distinction between Pan-African thinking and the Pan-African social movement is also critical because the two phenomena are often conflated as evinced in Joseph Adjaye's definition. He defined Pan-Africanism as "an idea, a movement, and an ideology . . . A set of ideas, emotions, and ideologies that espouses unity among Africans living on the continent and those of African descent in the diaspora."<sup>6</sup> Adjaye in this definition has conflated the several distinct phases of Pan-Africanism as an idea, a movement, and an ideology. The complexity associated with defining Pan-Africanism rests on the unexplored distinction between Pan-African Thought and the Pan-African social movement. A better understanding of Pan-African Thought as an intellectual enterprise would not only provide new ways of understanding and interpreting its successor, the Pan-African social movement, it would also offer insights into contemporary Pan-African organizations or social movements with similar goals. Peter Esedebe, for example, argues that Pan-African thinking originally began in the Americas,<sup>7</sup> but the writings of Reindorf and Blyden suggest otherwise.

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph K. Adjaye. "Pan-Africanism," in *Survey of Social Science: Government and Politics* ed. Frank N. Magill (Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Salem Press, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Peter O. Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963* (Washington D.C. : Howard University Press, 1982), 7.

## **Definitions, Founders, and Periodization of Pan-Africanism**

The most provocative definition in Pan-African historiography is contained in Kwame Nantambu's Afrocentric, yet ahistorical periodization of Pan-Africanism. Ironically, Nantambu insists that all definitions of Pan-Africanism prior to his had been "Eurocentric, dysfunctional, ahistorical and divisive."<sup>8</sup> He therefore argues that researchers must adopt the term Pan-African Nationalism, instead of the more Eurocentric, Pan-Africanism. For Nantambu, Pan-African Nationalism begins with the Egyptian Pharaoh Aha's unification of upper and lower Kemet circa 3200 BC.<sup>9</sup>

At the risk of being branded Eurocentric, I disagree with Nantambu and define Pan-Africanism, as the idea that people of African descent, no matter their geographic location share historical, cultural, and kinship ties. I further contend that the advocates of Pan-Africanism propose attaining racial equality, unity, and enhancing the social conditions of African descended communities globally. While I acknowledge the existence of older African Diasporas, I situate the idea of Pan-Africanism within the trans-Atlantic epoch, and identify the dispersal of African peoples to Europe and the Americas during this period, as creating the basis for the expression Pan-Africanism since the Atlantic age.

The global span, articulation of Pan-African identity, and exchange of Pan-African ideas during the Atlantic age far exceeds any period of human history Nantambu will like us to believe; whether it is the unification of the upper and lower Niles or Kemet's successive quells of foreign invasion. It is in the trans-Atlantic era of world history that we can begin to write about a Global Africa, what Hamilton

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<sup>8</sup> Kwame Nantambu, "Pan-Africanism Versus Pan-African Nationalism: An Afrocentric Analysis" *Journal of Black Studies*, 28 (1998): 561-564.

<sup>9</sup> Nantambu, "Pan-Africanism Versus Pan-African Nationalism: An Afrocentric Analysis" 561-574.

describes as “the geographically and socio-culturally diverse people of Africa and its Diaspora . . . linked through complex networks of social relationships and processes.”<sup>10</sup> Without demeaning the rich African civilizations of the ancient or medieval period, the global connections and complex set of contacts that occurred during the trans-Atlantic period were not in existence during the era of the Egyptian Pharaohs.

Three decades ago J. Ayodele Langley argued that numerous studies about Pan-Africansim were “repetitions of ancient orthodoxies.”<sup>11</sup> However, studies investigating the beginnings, growth, and multifarious ideological underpinnings of Pan-Africanism are still plagued by “these ancient orthodoxies.” In my definition earlier, I emphasized a distinction between Pan-African thought as an intellectual enterprise, and the Pan-African socio-political movement or organization. The intellectual tradition of Pan-African thought being distinct from Pan-Africanism—the institutionalized international social movement whose beginnings can be traced to the 1900 Pan-African Conference in London. The 1900 gathering (and subsequent congresses) served as an umbrella organization for coordinating various strands of Pan-African intellectual traditions articulated by social thinkers advocating Pan-African agendas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Pan-Africanism subsequently became an active international social movement whose practical goals and actions have received extensive treatment by scholars engaging united social, cultural, economic, and political allegiances among African

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<sup>10</sup> Ruth Simms Hamilton, *Routes of Passage: Rethinking the African Diaspora* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>11</sup> J. Ayodeley Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 1.

descended populations. It is important to note that my definition of Pan-African thinking, and delineation of Pan-African thinking from Pan-African organization rest on an older body of scholarship that dates as far back as the eighteenth century and earlier. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, very few people of African descent were literate. However, by the close of the eighteenth century a considerable number of blacks had acquired western literacy and were beginning to ask questions of the education and literacy they had received.<sup>12</sup>

As I have argued in the introduction of this dissertation, those asking questions of Western civilization, its education and claims to a universal modernity included the Gold Coast and West African born intellectuals Ottobah Cugoano(1757-unknown); Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797); Anton Wilhelm Amo (1703-Ca.1759); Frederick Pederson Svane (1710-1789); Christian Protten (1715-1769); and Elmina, Gold Coast born Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein (1717-1747).<sup>13</sup> It is therefore erroneous for Peter Esedebe to argue that “Pan-African thinking originally began in the so called New World becoming articulate during the century starting from the declaration of independence in (1776).”<sup>14</sup> This is especially poignant, because Cugano, Equiano, Protten, and Amo, apart from their training in Christianity and Western educational

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<sup>12</sup> Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Praegar, 1967), 110-149; Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001), xvii-55.

<sup>13</sup> Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano; Cugoano, Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (London: Equiano, 1789); W. Emmanuel Abraham, "Amo" *A Companion to the Philosophers* ed. by Robert L. Arrington (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001), *Christian Protten* In about 1764 first wrote, "Useful grammatical introduction to the hitherto completely unknown language of Fante and Ga" for review see H.M.J. Trutenau, ed., *Christian Protten's 1764 Introduction to the Fante and Accra (Ga) Languages* (London, 1971); Jacobus Elisha Capitein, trans. and ed. by Grant Parker, *The Agony of Asar: A Thesis on Slavery by a Former Slave* (Princeton: New Jersey, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 7.



institutions based their arguments against Western modernity on their lived African experience.

Some of the earliest expressions of Pan-African thinking also include, but are not limited to, the writings of David Walker (1785-1830), *Appeal . . . to the Colored Citizen's of the World But in Particular and Expressly to those of the United States*;<sup>15</sup> Martin Robinson Delany (1812-1885), *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*;<sup>16</sup> James Africanus Beale Horton, (1835-1883), *West African Countries and Peoples*<sup>17</sup>; Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* Liberia, 1887,<sup>18</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963), *The Conservation of Races*<sup>19</sup>; and J. E. Casely Hayford (1866-1930) *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* London, 1911.<sup>20</sup>

Walker's thesis, published a year before his unfortunate demise, did not expressly offer a concise definition of Pan-Africanism, nor was it purposely written for a global African audience. However, his appeal, which was nurtured in the black Bostonian community that included seminal African-American intellectual Maria Stewart, called for a broadened understanding of the relationship between people of African descent in the United States, Africa, and other parts of the world.<sup>21</sup> His explicit reference to a world community of colored (African descent) citizens helped

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<sup>15</sup> David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal in four articles: Together with a preamble to the Colored Citizen's of the World But in Particular and Expressly to those of the United States* with an introduction by James Turner (Baltimore: Maryland: Black Classics Press, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Martin Robinson Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (New York: Arno Press, 1968).

<sup>17</sup> James Africanus Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969).

<sup>18</sup> Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967).

<sup>19</sup> W. E. B. Dubois, "The Conservation of the Races" *Occasional Papers American Negro Academy* no. 2 1897.

<sup>20</sup> Others include Robert Alexander Young, *Ethiopian Manifestoe* (New York, 1829) in *The Ideological origins of Black Nationalism* ed. Sterling Stuckey (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 30-38.

<sup>21</sup> Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 20-99.

set the stage for a globalized investigation of the global black condition, by black intellectuals.<sup>22</sup>

Delany was a black physician, who was allegedly expelled from Harvard University, because of his race.<sup>23</sup> Delany's *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, his novel *Blake*,<sup>24</sup> his work with the Niger exploration party and his meeting with African chieftains, all showed a concern for the plight of Africans at home and abroad.<sup>25</sup> These concerns were expressed in his emigration plans for blacks to occupy some part of South or Central America, or to return to Africa.<sup>26</sup> Delany was also a critic of the white abolitionist movement, and called for an independent black movement. He underpinned his writings with explanations of the bond between blacks in the north and south of the United States, and added that emigration was an act of independence.<sup>27</sup>

Africanus Horton's treatise originally penned as *Political Economy of British Western Africa* in 1865<sup>28</sup> was written in part as its subtitle suggests in vindication of the African race and as a social-historical context for a West African federal government.<sup>29</sup> Horton, a trained surgeon, challenged the pseudo-scientific

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<sup>22</sup> Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 20-99.

<sup>23</sup> Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Delany, *Blake; Or, The Huts of America, a Novel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

<sup>25</sup> Martin Delany, *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploration Party* (New York: T. Hamilton, 1861).

<sup>26</sup> Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London: Routledge, 2003), 34-39.

<sup>27</sup> Vincent Harding, *There is a River: Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1981), 129-173.

<sup>28</sup> James Africanus Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969).

<sup>29</sup> Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples*, vii-xxiv.

justifications for racism that he had encountered as a student in Scotland, and a surgeon-general in the British army.<sup>30</sup>

The development of Horton's Pan-Africanism can be directly linked with the development of pseudo-scientific racism in Europe and America. Dr. Robert Knox, one of the leading proponents of scientific racism in Europe, had been an anatomy professor at Edinburgh two years prior to Horton's arrival in 1858. Despite Knox's absence, Horton was irritated enough to respond to Knox and his student Dr. Hunt who published a manuscript entitled *The Negro's Place in Nature*.<sup>31</sup> Horton's publication, *The African View of the Negro's Place in Nature* was published in London, 1865. In his response, Horton argued against Knox and Hunt and other members of the Anthropological society of London, who he said had the unfortunate propensity to attribute the ghastly conditions of African societies to the natural inferiority of the African race.<sup>32</sup>

After completing his education in England, Horton was commissioned as a staff-assistant surgeon to serve the British Army in West Africa. Horton first served in his home country Sierra Leone in 1859, during which the colony was experiencing epidemics of yellow fever, measles, and smallpox, which killed some 500 people in Freetown.<sup>33</sup> When the epidemic subsided, the British government sent him to serve in the Gold Coast where the British West Indian Regiment was stationed.

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<sup>30</sup> Christopher Fyfe, *Africanus Horton 1835-1883: West African Scientist and Patriot* (Gregg Revivals: England), 34.

<sup>31</sup> James Hunt, *The Negro's Place in Nature: A Paper read before the London Anthropological Society* (New York: Van Evrie; Horton & co., 1864).

<sup>32</sup> James Africanus Beale Horton, *The Dawn of Nationalism in Modern Africa: Extracts from the Political, Educational, Scientific and Medical Writings of J. A. B. Horton* edited and introduced by Davidson Nicol, (Harlow: Longmans, 1969), 24-30.

<sup>33</sup> Fyfe, *West African Scientist and Patriot*, 36-39.

In the Gold Coast, Horton's Pan-Africanism came to the fore in the form of proto-modern nationalism and West Africanism. In all of his writing, Horton argued that Africans were capable of self-government, and advocated for the creation of independent nation states in the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, and Yoruba peoples.<sup>34</sup> Horton envisaged an English speaking West African federation and a "political economy of Western Africa."

Most scholars of Pan-Africanism agree that Blyden was the first intellectual to offer some extended intellectual exposition of the idea of Pan-Africanism.<sup>35</sup> Speculated to be of Igbo descent, Blyden was, as already established, born in the Danish island of St. Thomas, and was denied education in the United States because he was black. He eventually immigrated to Liberia in 1851.

Blyden also challenged the Darwinian underpinnings of the Anthropological Society of London founded in 1863. The society pioneered social anthropology and ethnographic studies, which included descriptions of peoples, and races—many of these descriptions were in fact influenced by evolutionary theorist, Charles Darwin, and the writings of Count de Gobineau. This line of thinking resulted in the conclusion that African people were at the lower rungs of the human race. Blyden opposed these theories, and in his opposition he articulated the idea of a unique African personality founded on communitarian systems of social organizations, mutual aid communities, polygamy, secret societies, and ritual activity.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Fyfe, *West African Scientist and Patriot*, 39-40; Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples*.

<sup>35</sup> Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 30-53; Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 29-40.

<sup>36</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, [1908] *African Life and Customs: Reprinted from the Sierra Leone Weekly News* (London: African Publication Society, 1969), 7-12.

Blyden contrasted these communitarian systems with western individualism, egoism, materialism, and what he called the cult of science.<sup>37</sup> Proceeding from the idea that all races were equal but distinct, Blyden called for the cultivation of a distinct African personality. A personality that celebrates Africa's past achievements, a personality to be cultivated in Africa and that also belonged to Africans in the Americas and West Indies.<sup>38</sup> That the first systematic articulation of Pan-Africanism was propounded by Blyden, a West African of Diasporan origin speaks volumes to West Africa's place in the origination and evolution of Pan-Africanism.

Following Blyden, many scholars recall Du Bois' Pan-Africanism beginning with his presence at the first Pan-African conference. His earliest attempts at intellectual exploration of the idea of Pan-Africanism is however seen in his "Conservation of the Races" address to the American Negro Academy, founded by black emigrationist and Anglican Cleric, Rev. Alexander Crummell (1819-1898) in 1896. Du Bois argued that while race was a non-scientific idea it was a socio-historical reality, and on this basis he postulated:

The full complete Negro Message of the whole Negro race has not as yet been given to the world. . . . The question is then: how shall this message be delivered; how shall these various ideals be realized? The answer is plain: by the development of these race groups, not as individuals, but as races. . . . For the development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit, only Negroes bound and welded together, Negroes inspired by one vast ideal, can work out in its fullness the great message we have for humanity. . . . For this reason, the advanced guard of the Negro people—the eight million people of Negro blood in the United States of America—must soon come to realize that if they are to take their

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<sup>37</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 8-90; Frenkel, "Edward Blyden," 277-289; July, "Nineteenth-Century Negritude," 73-86.

place in the van of Pan-Negroism, then their destiny is not absorption by the white Americans.<sup>39</sup>

Following this initial statement, the venerated scholar re-echoed the idea in his seminal autobiographical work *Souls of Black Folk*, in which he utilized a literary, autobiographical style, to document some of the distinctive fundamental attributes of U.S. African American religious music, sermon, liturgy, mode of worship, as well as the roles the clergy and congregants played within the invisible and visible church. He connected them to an African and Caribbean origin. He writes:

The Music of Negro Religion is that plaintive rhythmic melody, with its touching minor cadences, which, despite caricature and defilement, still remains the most original and beautiful expression of human life and longing yet born on American Soil. *Sprung from the African forests, where its counterpart can still be heard, it was adapted, changed, and intensified by the tragic soul life of the slave* [emphasis mine].<sup>40</sup>

Du Bois stature in the annals of Pan-Africanism, is perhaps only rivaled by his critic and adversary, the St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica born Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). Together with Amy Ashwood Garvey (1897-1969), his first wife, and Amy Jacques Garvey (1895-1973),<sup>41</sup> his second wife, they organized what was reputed to be the largest Pan-African social and political movement in the world.<sup>42</sup> This organization, the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was estimated to have had between 40,000 to 4 million members across the globe.<sup>43</sup> Garvey instituted a number of self-help programs, and organized schools, vocational organizations, and businesses including the famous shipping company the *Black Star*

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<sup>39</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Conservation of the Races American Negro Academy Occasional Papers*, no.2, 1897, cited also by Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 29.

<sup>40</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: Lushena Books Inc, 2000), 134.

<sup>41</sup> Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London: Routledge, 2003), 69-75; Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jaques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 77.

<sup>43</sup> Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 77.

*Line.* He is famously remembered for his “Back to Africa” movement and his words: “Africa for the Africans, those at home and those abroad.”<sup>44</sup>

Since Garvey, return migrations to Africa have become an integral part of many Pan-African schemes including the Pan-African activities of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the modern nation of Ghana, which became the first black African country to gain independence in 1957. In twentieth century Pan-Africanism, Du Bois and Garvey are both eclipsed by their mentee, Nkrumah wrote of Garvey’s influence on his thinking, “I think that of all the literature that I studied, the book that did more than any to fire my enthusiasm was *Philosophy and Opinion of Marcus Garvey* published in 1923.”<sup>45</sup>

Nkrumah also worked with Du Bois in the organization of the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester and later invited him to edit an *Encyclopedia Africana*, in Ghana where Du Bois became citizen after the United States refused him a passport.<sup>46</sup> While the above relationships have contributed to perceptions of Nkrumah as a Pan-African great, it is his famous statement on the eve of Ghana’s independence on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, that: “the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent,”<sup>47</sup> which enshrined Nkrumah and Ghana’s place in the high echelons of Pan-African stalwarts and nations. With this statement, Nkrumah devoted Ghana’s resources to the support of African liberation throughout the African continent. A founding member of the Organization of African Unity

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<sup>44</sup> Amy Jaques Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey: Or Africa for the Africans* (Dover, Mass: The Majority Press, 1986), 1- 412.

<sup>45</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1957), 45.

<sup>46</sup> Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>47</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Independence Day Speech* (Accra, 1957)

(OAU) in 1963, now the Africa Union (AU), Nkrumah was the strongest advocate of a united Africa, and organized a series of conferences to bring this to fruition.

Nkrumah's own notions of Pan-Africanism evolved to become what he called philosophical consciencism. For Nkrumah, Africa's external Islamic and Euro-Christian influences needed to be brought in tune with "the original humanist principles" of traditional Africa.<sup>48</sup> Nkrumah's ideas were steeped in concepts of the traditional African understanding of matter and socialism. He argued that consciencism was needed in order to build a harmonious; that is an egalitarian African society.<sup>49</sup> There are interesting parallels to be explored later in chapter five of this dissertation between Nkrumah's consciencism and Blyden's preliminary attempt to synthesize his ideas on traditional Africa, Islam, and Christianity.

### **A Timeline for Pan-Africanism**

Nkrumah and those preceding him are some of the titans of Pan-Africanism. Together with others not discussed here,<sup>50</sup> their contributions to Pan-Africanism are enshrined in the works of scholars who have devoted their careers to investigating the expression, significance, and global impact of the phenomena.

In light of the above, Pan-Africanism may be periodized as follows. *Intellectual Pan-Africanism to Congresses* as the first epoch; the series of intellectual postulations, "Back to Africa" movements, and Pan-African activities beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>48</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization* (London: Panaf 1978), 70, 56-78.

<sup>49</sup> Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 78-106.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Alexander Young, *Ethiopian Manifestoe* (New York, 1829) in *The Ideological origins of Black Nationalism* ed. Sterling Stuckey (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 30-38. Other include Henry Highland Garnett, Henry Mcneil Turner, and Paul Cuffe with others treated in Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London; Routledge, 2003).



(but particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) until the series of congresses organized at the tail end of the century (especially the 1900 Pan-African conference in London).

The second phase, *Pan-Africanism as a Social Movement* is when it becomes a social movement with the series of congresses beginning from 1900 until 1945. The 1945 Congress in Manchester marked the beginning of increased African involvement in the organization of Pan-African congresses, and the movement's focus on liberating the African peoples from colonial rule.

The third stage Continental African/The Nkrumah Years begins from after the 1945 congress when Nkrumah became the movements leading advocate, and continued through the African movements for Independence until the establishment of the OAU in 1963. Nkrumah continued to write and champion Pan-Africanism until his military overthrow in 1966. Prior to that, Nkrumah, had been the most vocal and material resource promoter of African unity and Global Pan-Africanism.

The fourth period, which I describe as *the Nadir of Pan-Africanism* begins from Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966 until the Sirte Declaration, in Libya in 1999. The Sirte declaration renamed the Organization of African Unity, the African Union (AU), and drew up a plan for the creation of an African Economic Community, and African Central Bank, An African Monetary Union, an African Court of Justice, and a Pan-African Parliament.<sup>51</sup> The period prior to this renaissance may however be considered as the nadir of Pan-Africanism, because after Nkrumah lost power in Ghana, nobody emerged to champion the idea of Pan-Africanism.

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<sup>51</sup> The Sirte Declaration, Fourth Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State Sirte, Libya September 8-9, 1999.

The current period, *the Pan-African Renaissance*, begins with the Sirte Declaration to transform the OAU into the African Union (AU), which happened in 2002, and will be the basis for attempts by the African Union to make the African Diaspora a fifth region of Africa. Whether in this period the global inequity of black people's social conditions are ameliorated through the renaissance; that is a regeneration of Pan-African ideals and goals remains to be seen.

### **Historiography: Regional Manifestations of Pan-Africanism: A Case for West Africa**

Below I offer a thematic review of some of the scholarly works on Pan-Africanism and their contributions to our current understanding of Pan-Africanism. In Samuel Allen's introduction to *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered*, an edited collection of the proceedings of the Third Annual Conference of the American Society of African Culture (ASAC) in 1960, he opined that Pan-Africanism:

... has been the rallying slogan, the springboard, the ideological vehicle for the common efforts of exiled Africans, West Indians, and American Negroes to advance the cause of Africa and of Africans. But Pan-Africanism, like Joseph's coat, is described in many colors; at no time have these variegated hues been more significant now. These are the years—1960 is in large the year—of African liberation.<sup>52</sup>

Allen's statement is a good starting point for any discussion of Pan-Africanism for a number of reasons. First, it is clear that Allen chose to define Pan-Africanism within a particular historical context, which is the period of heightened African demand for freedom from colonial rule. The historical context is important because

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<sup>52</sup> American Society of African Culture, *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1962), 1.

the era of African liberation also marked the beginnings of systematic academic inquiry into the phenomena of Pan-Africanism.

Indeed the (ASAC) to which Allen and others belonged is reputed in some circles to have been formed with the aid of United States of America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).<sup>53</sup> In this sense, the study of Pan-Africanism, very much like anthropological studies of Africa during the colonial period, began as an attempt to undermine the efforts of Africans for self-assertion. Another aspect to be gleaned from Allen's statement is that Pan-Africanism was an ideological meeting point for continental Africans, Caribbean, and North and South Americans peoples of African descent. As a result, one may say that the material expression of Pan-Africanism has differed from one geographic region to the other and divergent in different historical periods.

There is also a trans-Atlantic exchange dimension that Allen alludes to which unifies the variety of Pan-African thinking emanating from the various regions. Nonetheless, if as Allen suggests, that in 1960 there were different hues of Pan-Africanism; contemporary discourse on the subject of Pan-Africanism seems to have acquired a taken for granted meaning.

In many recent publications, including the edited collection *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*, which makes constant reference to Pan-Africanism and its relationship to intellectual activity, little attention is given to a general or precise definition of Pan-Africanism.<sup>54</sup> In this edited

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<sup>53</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 175.

<sup>54</sup> Thandika Mkandawire, ed., *African Intellectuals: Politics, Language, Gender and Development* (London (New York: Zed Books in association with CODESRIA, 2005).

volume many of Africa's seasoned intellectuals, including popular Pan-African intellectual Ali Mazrui, wrote extensively on Pan-Africanism without offering specific definitions. It is not exactly clear why this is so today; perhaps writers, ideologues, activists, politicians, and researchers alike perceive the term and its connotations as immediately clear to their audience and interlocutors. If Pan-Africanism has acquired a taken for granted meaning, it may also be that after decades of writing, scholars have come to some agreement on what Pan-Africanism is.

By the second half of the twentieth century, western scholars somewhat in an attempt to make sense of the 20<sup>th</sup> century African fight against colonial rule and its successes began to write about the precursors of 20<sup>th</sup> century Pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah. The leading light in this enterprise was George Shepperson. Shepperson authored three seminal articles between 1953 and 1962. In his very first article, Shepperson makes a distinction between Ethiopianism, as an African revolutionary movement influenced by the Independent African Churches of America as well as Protestantism, and African Nationalism, a distinctive African ideological movement with no foreign persuasion.<sup>55</sup> The article also clarifies some propositions, such as that of the religious underpinnings of continental African political expressions of independence and freedom.<sup>56</sup>

Following this publication, Shepperson sought to show how people of African heritage in the Caribbean and the U.S. influenced nationalist activity on the African continent. Shepperson notes that this was made possible through the Atlantic triangle—the triangle involving Africa the homeland, the places of dispersal in Europe

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<sup>55</sup> George A. Shepperson. "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism," *Phylon* 14, (1953): 9-18.

<sup>56</sup> Shepperson. "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism," 9-18.

and the Americas, then became a nexus for the exchange of ideas in the fields of education, religion, commerce, and politics between Africans in North America, the West Indies and Africa.<sup>57</sup>

He concluded his trilogy by presenting a dichotomy between 'P'an-Africanism, the series of Pan-African Congresses between 1919-1945 organized by W. E. B. Du Bois and 'p'an-Africanism, a cluster of transient and informal movements before the 20<sup>th</sup> century congresses, including Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa Movement" under the aegis of the UNIA.<sup>58</sup> Besides Shepperson, a number of works emerged between 1955 and 1993. The following is a select discussion of the significant publications of this group of scholarly work including the works of George Padmore, Immanuel Geiss, J. Ayodeley Langley, Peter Olanwuche Esedebe, and Ronald Walters.

George Padmore (1902-1959), previously known as Malcolm Ivan Nurse, was born on the island of Trinidad. He was not only an academic, but also a social activist, and together with Du Bois and Nkrumah, was a pillar in the organization of the 1945 Pan-African Congress in London. It is therefore not surprising that the first book length work dedicated to the idea of Pan-Africanism was in Immanuel Geiss' words, authored by its shrewdest ideologue.<sup>59</sup> As eminent African-American St. Claire Drake notes, Padmore's original work *Pan-Africanism or Communism?*<sup>60</sup> "constituted an ideological base for Nkrumah and Padmore in developing the philosophy underlying

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<sup>57</sup> George Shepperson, "Notes on Negro American Influences on African Nationalism" *JAH* 1 no. 2 (1960): 299-312.

<sup>58</sup> George Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism and 'pan-Africanism': Some Historical Notes." *Phylon* 23, no.4 (1962): 346-358.

<sup>59</sup> Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, trans. Ann Keep (London: Methuen, 1974), 393-417.

<sup>60</sup> St. Claire Drake meant that the original work had the question mark, which was taken out in later editions.

two conferences that met in Ghana in 1958.”<sup>61</sup> Drake is correct in linking Padmore’s book to the political agenda of Padmore, but the professor failed to discuss the long time Marxist’s disenchantment with communism. The book was written as a political alternative to the worldwide African enamor with communism. However, to keep with the conventions of historiography, Padmore’s book, which examines the “Back to Africa movements,” Garveyism, colonialism, the origins, growth, and coming of age of Pan-Africanism is seminal in for a number of reasons.

First, it is a surface analysis of Pan-African leaders, conferences, disputes, and political activism. Second, while Padmore is not a trained historian, and his work, may not match up to current standards of historical scholarship, he foreshadowed the openly nationalist stance of 1980s black historians like Vincent Harding who wrote *There is a River, Black Struggle for Freedom in America*.<sup>62</sup> Padmore’s work epitomized the Pan-African struggle for freedom in the world, and because of that it constitutes one of the first integrated elucidations of the worldwide struggle of African peoples, since the 15<sup>th</sup> century; and is sufficient, in my view, as an introductory text to Pan-African history.

After Padmore’s work, Ayodeley Langley authored *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900- 1945* in 1973.<sup>63</sup> He defined Pan-Africanism as “a protest, and a demand. It is a utopia born of centuries of contact with Europe.”<sup>64</sup> Langley chose to concentrate on West Africa, pointing out that Pan-Africanism has

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<sup>61</sup> St. Claire Drake, “Diaspora Studies and Pan-Africanism” in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington D.C. : Howard University Press, 1993), 460.

<sup>62</sup> Vincent Harding, *There is a River: Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1981).

<sup>63</sup> J. Ayodeley Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

<sup>64</sup> Langley, *West African Nationalism*, 12.

been expressed differently in various geographic locations and historical periods. In using the sociological approach of Karl Mannheim, Langley was wary of abstract conceptualizations and rigid periodization of Pan-Africanism. He chose an “intermediate” method, which while chronological, situates Pan-African thinking in its social context.<sup>65</sup>

Langley’s contribution was his focus on West Africa’s contribution to Pan-Africanism, and the National Congress on British West Africa (NCBWA). Langley was the first scholar, at least in the Anglophone world, to touch on Pan-Africanism as expressed by people of African descent in France’s colonies in Africa and the Americas, as well as in Paris.<sup>66</sup> In many ways Langley’s work foreshadowed the scholarly works that would later be authored about Negritude. Negritude was the form of Pan-Africanism articulated by people of African descent in the Francophone world. This French-lingua-based Pan-Africanism was derived from the social context of French slavery in the Americas and colonialism on the African continent. I will shed further light on this form of Pan-Africanism, when I explore women’s roles in Pan-Africanism.<sup>67</sup> Langley, therefore, was a great contributor to the advanced studies of Pan-Africanism in a regional fashion.

On the footsteps of Langley’s piece on West Africa, is Immanuel Geiss’ *The Pan-African Movement*<sup>68</sup> first published in German in 1968 and translated to English in 1974. It was the first “published book” on Pan-Africanism by a trained historian. While Shepperson identified the Atlantic as a vortex of Pan-African ideas, Geiss

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<sup>65</sup> Langley, *West African Nationalism*, 6-7.

<sup>66</sup> Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, 134-325.

<sup>67</sup> See *Women and Pan-Africanism*, 26-34.

<sup>68</sup> Immanuel Geiss *The Pan-African Movement: A History of pan-Africanism in America Europe and Africa* trans. by Ann Keep (New York: African Publishing Co., 1974).

emphasized the place of Britain within the trans-Atlantic exchange of ideas between people of African descent. Geiss' work was an analysis of the social and intellectual background of Pan-Africanism; and more than anyone before him, he provides some chronological and biographical descriptors for the time period beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century up until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Geiss' assessment of Pan-Africanism is a chip off the old block of modernity and its social Darwinism. He chose to use the rubric of "rational and irrational" to describe the activities of the Pan-African personalities and events he chose to analyze. He saw their ideas as rational, if they were modern; and irrational and emotional, if they sought to create a Pan-African world based on African traditions. Geiss writes:

Only a few leaders, either in the period of proto-Pan-Africanism or in that of Pan-Africanism proper, arrived at the sensible insight that the supposedly typical African forms and customs which they wanted to preserve were simply the specific African forms and version of the semi-nomadic and semi-agrarian tribal society, and that these social forms inevitably had to disappear, just as they had disappeared in Europe. So far we know only Horton and Firmin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Padmore and Yatu (who has been completely forgotten) in the twentieth century appreciated the logic of the historical process and endorsed it. But their ideas were not taken up and developed into a rational theoretical base for the Pan-African movement.<sup>69</sup>

It will be easy to inform Geiss that the typical African forms he loathes, are still surviving in the modern and urban cities of Accra, Havana, Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, New York, Nairobi, and Windhoek; but in his day, he had his own critic in Ian Duffield.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, Geiss' portrayal of Britain as a site of Pan-African activity presaged Hakim Adi's numerous works on Pan-Africanism, especially *Pan-Africanism*

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<sup>69</sup> Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, 426-427.

<sup>70</sup> Ian Duffield, "Pan-Africanism Rational and Irrational" *JAH* 18, no. 4 (1977): 570-620.



*and West African Nationalism in Britain* published in 1998.<sup>71</sup> Thus, together with Langley's chapter on "Francophone Negroism," Geiss helped set the stage for scholarly study of regional and sub-regional manifestations of Pan-Africanism.

Peter O. Esedebe work, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963*<sup>72</sup> is the preferred book among scholars of Pan-Africanism. Esedebe's text is favored because in his comprehensive review of Pan-Africanism from 1776-1963, he reinterpreted the temporal understanding of Pan-Africanism, particularly during its organizational phase.

First, Esedebe extended the origins of Pan-Africanism to as far back as the declaration of American independence in 1776 and argued that the failure of America to grant equal status to blacks in the United States prompted Prince Hall, the Grand Master of the African lodge to petition the Massachusetts Legislature to return to Africa.<sup>73</sup> He defined Pan-Africanism as:

... [a] political and cultural phenomenon which regards Africa, Africans and African descendants abroad as a unit. It seeks to regenerate and unify Africa and promote feelings of one among the people of the African world. It glorifies the African past and inculcates pride in African values. Any adequate definition of the phenomenon must include the political and cultural aspects.<sup>74</sup>

We also owe to Esedebe, the knowledge that Pan-Africanism as a social movement did not begin with the 1900 Pan-African congress in London, but with the Chicago Congress on Africa, and the Steward Missionary foundation for Africa of Gammon University in Atlanta, Georgia, all organized in 1893.<sup>75</sup> Esedebe also

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<sup>71</sup> Hakim Adi, "Pan-Africanism and Pan-African Nationalism" *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1, (2000): 69-82

<sup>72</sup> Peter O. Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982).

<sup>73</sup> P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 39-40.



presented the first detailed discussion of the epochal 1945 Manchester Pan-African Conference as well as the establishment of the OAU, its contemporaneous nature, and function as a Pan-African organization. My principal disagreement with Esedebe is that on the evidence of West African advertisement, writing, and presence of all the named organizational meetings before and after the 1900 conference,<sup>76</sup> he limits the origins of Pan-African thinking to the U.S.

In 1980, Elisa Larkin Nascimento published *Pan-Africanism and South America: Emergence of a Black Rebellion*.<sup>77</sup> She discusses concepts of race and racism in Latin America, and chronicles the acts of freedom, nationalism, and Pan-African actions of African descendent peoples in South and Central America, as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Nascimento's book is significant because it was a poignant critique of the exclusion of South and Central America from discussions of the African Diaspora. She also questioned the trans-Atlantic thesis on Pan-Africanism, arguing that even though they were a part of the Americas, "the notion of the Pan-African triangle has not included South and Central America, except in sparse and sporadic references."<sup>78</sup>

In fact, Nascimento questioned the propensity of U.S. blacks to assume exclusive rights to the term Afro-American, in the same imperialist fashion the U.S. ascribes America to itself.<sup>79</sup> Nascimento further questioned the assumption by many scholars that Black Consciousness in Latin America was an imitation of the Black

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<sup>76</sup> Edward Blyden and James "Holy" sent papers to the 1894 Chicago Congress on Africa for advertisements see for example *The Gold Coast Chronicle* (Accra) August 12, 1898), 3; *Lagos Standard* (July 27, 1898), 2.

<sup>77</sup> Elisa L. Nascimento, *Pan-Africanism and South America: Emergence of a Black Rebellion* (Buffalo; NY: Afrodiaspora, 1980).

<sup>78</sup> Nascimento, *Pan-Africanism and South America*, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Nascimento, *Pan-Africanism and South America*, 1-4.

Power Movement in the United States.<sup>80</sup> If Nascimento focused on South and Central America, Ronald Walters brought the refreshing perspective of *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Movements*.<sup>81</sup>

Walter's study includes a range of Pan-African movements in the African Diaspora: "United States, Caribbean, Latin America," and their dynamic interactions with Africa on a global scale, as well as comparative analyses of some modern cultural movements in Britain, South Africa, the U.S., and Brazil which aspire to Pan-African ideas. Walters analyses, rooted in political theory, was a study of the function of black communities in the African Diaspora and their relationship with their individual diaspora nation-states. Although Walters' study of Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora is not the first of its kind,<sup>82</sup> his, is the most comprehensive, by virtue of its comparative scope, its regional focus on the African Diaspora and its relationship to Africa, and the global system.<sup>83</sup>

From the foregoing, one can surmise that even as there is a shared sense of solidarity and the need and want to share experiences and strategies between peoples of African heritage globally, the development of Pan-Africanism has differed in various regions of the Global African world. In Langley's work on West Africa during the years of 1900-1945, he shows that British and French colonial policies as well as indigenous West African political systems, determined the nature of West African Pan-Africanism. Geiss, on the other hand, demonstrated that Great Britain became a

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<sup>80</sup> Elisa L. Nascimento, *Pan-Africanism and South America: Emergence of a Black Rebellion* (Buffalo; NY: Afrodiaspora, 1980), 3, 1-4.

<sup>81</sup> Ronald W. Walters, *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Movements* (Detroit: Wayne State, 1993).

<sup>82</sup> See Drake, "Diaspora Studies and Pan-Africanism," 2-14.

<sup>83</sup> Ronald W. Walters, *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Movements* (Detroit: Wayne State, 1993).

primary site for the flourishing of Pan-African ideas. This was seen in either in the numerous conferences that were organized in Manchester and London, or in the activities of black Britons or West African nationals domiciled in Britain during the colonial era. Nascimento's investigation of Pan-African consciousness in Latin America, mainly in Brazil, shows that Pan-Africanism in that region emerged out of the peculiarities of South and Central American notions of race and forms of racism, which encouraged the suppression of an African heritage identity.

As the historiography suggests, many authors on Pan-Africanism wrongly assumed that Pan-Africanism was the creation of the African Diaspora. This is because Caribbean and U.S. intellectuals of African heritage organized the first known Pan-African congresses. But, West African thinkers had long before then been also considering issues concerning people of African descent worldwide. They were present at Pan-African type conferences as early as 1893, and helped organize the 1900 Conference with their West Indian friends in London.<sup>84</sup>

Also, most scholars on Pan-Africanism agree that Diaspora born West African, Edward Blyden was the seminal theorist of Pan-Africanism as an idea. Others may suggest that Blyden's ideas may have been derived from his diasporan experience. While I recognize Blyden's diasporan birth as critical to his ideas, I will show in the fifth chapter of this dissertation that his ideas on Pan-Africanism were directly linked to his stay in West Africa and his gradual acculturation to African ways of life.

While Blyden is the recognized leading ideologue of Pan-Africanism in the nineteenth century, his generational peer, Carl Christian Reindorf understood African

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<sup>84</sup> Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 39-43; Even though Esedebe documents the presence of Africans at these conferences he still credits the idea of Pan-Africanism solely to Diasporan Blacks.

societies better, and articulated a sense of Pan-Africanism at a deeper cultural, and social level, than Blyden was capable of. While Blyden's ideas on Pan-Africanism were mostly rooted in race, Reindorf's Pan-Africanism was expressed culturally and was pan-ethnic.

Reindorf's pan-ethnicity is critical to understanding West African Pan-Africanism because very often many scholars argue that because of the erosion of ethnic identities and the assumption of a racial identity in the African Diaspora, African Diasporans, particularly U.S. African-Americans, who experienced the worst forms of slavery, were quick to adopt the idea of Pan-Africanism. On the contrary, Vincent Harding has for example pointed out that Pan-African-based resistance began with the "multiformity" of African captives in the castles and forts on the shores of Africa.<sup>85</sup>

I also submit that Pan-Africanism developed distinctively and contemporaneously in different locations of the Atlantic world. While ethnic identity in the U.S. may have assumed a racial character, which encouraged a Pan-African identity, it is clear that in other parts of the Americas ethnic identity has persisted, alongside a black racial identity.<sup>86</sup> The Aponte Rebellion of 1812 in Cuba reveals that ethnic identities did not easily dissipate, nor did they prevent the assumption of a racial identity for collective Pan-African action.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Harding, *There is a River*, 3-4, 20-23.

<sup>86</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy and David V. Trotman, eds., *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2003); Linda M. Heywood, *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (Cambridge U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>87</sup> Matt Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

The lesson here is that in most cases, ethnic and Pan-ethnic identities are necessary steps to the development of African Nationalism and Pan-Africanism. Besides, even in the U.S. where there is a heightened racial identity, other identities such as Gechee, Salt water Africans, Creole amongst others have existed alongside a black identity, at least until the migrations from the south into the Midwest and the Northern United States.

West Africa based Pan-Africanism in the nineteenth century manifested itself in various forms in the writings of its leading intellectuals and in its categories of social organization such as religion, political systems and economics. In the area of religion for example, African intellectuals like James Holy Johnson were at the forefront of trying to Africanize Christianity; that is practice Christianity in a way that valorized African social and cultural practices. Johnson a supporter of an independent African Church movement was convinced that the “African must be raised upon his own idiosyncrasies.”<sup>88</sup>

On African polity, Africanus Horton, as previously cited advocated self-government for a federation of West African states based on ethnic lines in his landmark study *West African Countries and Peoples*.<sup>89</sup> Horton lived the dream of a West African citizen; he advocated the establishment of a West African University at Fourah Bay, and founded the Commercial Bank of West Africa. In his last will and

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<sup>88</sup> E. A. Ayandele, *Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836-1917* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), 45.

<sup>89</sup> James Africanus Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969).

testament, Horton bequeathed part of his financial resources to Fourah Bay College and the Sierra Leone Grammar School.<sup>90</sup>

In the following chapter, I historically ground my discussion on a distinct West African based Pan-Africanism in the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century Gold Coast writer Rev. Carl Christian Reindorf (1834-1917) who authored *G. C. A. Histories*, the first historical work of its kind by an African in the modern period. This nativistic conception of Pan-Africanism is based less on race and more on a pan-ethnic African identity, articulated through shared cosmology, histories, cultures, and conflicts, among African peoples. I use the personal life of Reindorf as well as his text, as a case study of an indigenous expression of West African Pan-Africanism.

In his work, Reindorf, himself a Ga-Adangbé, drew on the oral histories of his ethnic group to show their relationship to a larger community of Gold Coast and West African peoples with whom the Ga-Adangbé peoples share a common heritage, history, and social identity. He did this by exploring West African trading networks, inter-ethnic marriages, war, symbolic traditions, and imagined kinship. Examining the linkages between ethnicity, lineage, religion, class, and gender also helps us understand the *local* particularities of ethnic identity in West Africa, and expands our knowledge of West Africa as a cultural and multi-ethnic *locale*.

Reindorf's pan-ethnic conception of social harmony among multiple ethnic groups was based on his assumption that they shared a common culture and religion that binds them into a collective. In the following chapter I explore how Reindorf explicates religious or cultural commonalities through ritual symbols, cultural

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<sup>90</sup> Horton, *The Dawn of Nationalism*, 97-98, 109, 178-182.



exchange, dispute and negotiation between and among the several ethnic groups in G.C. A. Histories.

Reindorf's work on *G.C. A. Histories* may also be seen as an important contribution to a West Africa based Pan-Africanism because it gives us a starting place to conceive how Ga, Akan, Mina, and other Lower Guinea cultural communities crystallized themselves into old and new ethnic identities in the African Diaspora; what Gwendolyn Midlo Hall and Paul Lovejoy have called trans-Atlantic ethnicities. Hall and Lovejoy have examined some of the linkages between African based ethnicities and how such ethnicities were perpetuated, created anew, or adapted to the constraints of enslavement and domination in the Americas. For this dissertation, I concentrate on the importance of Reindorf's work in understanding trans-Atlantic ethnicities in the Danish West Indies.

Reindorf's construction of Gold Coast society shows ethnicity does not necessarily mean a common racial, genealogical heritage, or same land of origin. I therefore hope to use Victor Turner's multivocality of symbols to underscore West African notions of ethnic identity as multivocal, and how symbols of kinship embodied in marriage, gift giving, spiritual, and secret societies are collectively used to affirm social ties or pan-ethnic identities.

### **Women and Pan-Africanism**

The ways in which individuals or groups choose to define Pan-Africanism, does not negate the fact that compared to their male counterparts, there is a dearth of literature about women who coalesced their political and social activities around the

idea that people of African descent throughout the globe shared a common racial, cultural, and historic heritage. Indeed, these female thinkers proposed that African descendants globally, were affected by the same unequal social conditions.<sup>91</sup> Below, I address the following concerns: what accounts for the absence of Pan-Africanist women in Pan-Africanist literature? I attempt to answer this question by first scrutinizing the historiographies on Pan-African women; I then engage some of the methodological orientations that have contributed to the production of androcentric Pan-African texts.

Numerous texts abound with how African women of different time periods, like Amina (1533-1610) of Zaria, Nana Asma' U (1793-1864) of the Sokoto Caliphate, Yaa Asantewaa (1830-1921) of the Asante Kingdom, Nanny of Jamaica, Nzinga Mbande (1538-1663) of the Mbundu peoples, Kimpa Vita/Dona Beatriz (1684-1706) of Kongo, played significant roles in their respective societies. John Thornton has argued that Kimpa Vita's vision to reunite the Kongo people and to eradicate evil had a profound impact on slave rebellions in the United States.<sup>92</sup>

It could also be argued that Queen Nanny's Winward Maroon community was Pan-African in nature, given that it incorporated maroons of different ethnic-African backgrounds. Unfortunately, in the biographical works about these women, scholars predominantly cast them as heroines of wars against European domination, liberators of their peoples, and able rulers, but seldom as intellectuals or belonging to a

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<sup>91</sup> Michael Williams, *Pan-Africanism: An Annotated Bibliography* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 1992), 2.

<sup>92</sup> John K. Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706* (Edinburgh; Cambridge University Press, 1998), 199-217.

particular Pan-African tradition.<sup>93</sup> Regrettably this style still permeates African intellectual history. Robert July's, *The Origins of Modern African Thought* does not ascribe African thought to any women precursors. Although he writes about the influence of returnee Jamaican maroons and Nova Scotians in Sierra Leone, no mention is made of Queen Nanny.<sup>94</sup> Esteemed African historian, Toyin Falola is also no exception to this male-oriented style. In his three part review of African intellectuals of the modern period, "Nationalism and Culture, Nationalism and Pan-Africanism, Nationalist and the Academy" he seldom includes women intellectuals until the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>95</sup>

Beyond the African continent, William Banks' U.S. centered study on black intellectuals although androcentric in its focus has some select bibliographical documentation on intellectual traditions of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. black women like Phyllis Wheatley (1753-1784), Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964), Zora Neale Hurston (1871-1960), and Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) amongst others.<sup>96</sup> However, except for Cooper who participated in the 1900 Pan-African Conference in London, all the women are portrayed as having made important intellectual and social contributions to the black struggle for freedom inside the United States, but not outside of it. In his analyses Banks also shows how Africa derived intellectual

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<sup>93</sup> Bolanle Awe, ed., *Nigerian women in historical perspective* (Lagos: Sankore Publishers; Ibadan: Bookcraft, 1992), 167; Beverly B. Mack and Jean Boyd, *One woman's Jihad : Nana Asma'u, Scholar and Scribe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); A. Adu Boahen, *Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante British War of 1900-1* ed., by Emmanuel Akyeampong (Accra, Ghana: Sub Saharan Publishers ; Oxford : J. Currey, 2003); Karia Gottlieb, *The Mother of us all : A History of Queen Nanny, leader of the Windward Jamaican Maroons* (Trenton, NJ : Africa World Press, 2000).

<sup>94</sup> July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, 110-149.

<sup>95</sup> Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, 1-293.

<sup>96</sup> William Banks, *Black Intellectuals: Race and Responsibility in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998).

tradition were fostered by healers and religious personnel, and later slave preachers and leaders like Nat Turner for the benefit of their communities.<sup>97</sup>

Black women have also fallen victim to their ability “to specialize in the wholly impossible,” that is their capacity to multi-task and achieve in spite of any deprived or discriminatory circumstances.<sup>98</sup> Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan for example write in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Including A Voice from the South and Other Important Essays, Papers, and Letters*<sup>99</sup>, that “Cooper did, in fact sustain all at once, many different ideas, values, and commitments—not all of which settle into clarifying focus.”<sup>100</sup> Similarly, Adelaide Casely Hayford (1868-1960) second wife of West African Pan-Africanist Joseph Casely Hayford, has also been described in the past as an African Victorian Feminist.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the Pan-African activities of Cooper and Hayford, which included lectures on the vocations of the black women in the community, formation of schools, as well as those of their confreres have been subsumed under other “wholly impossible” conceptual categories. A gendered incorporation of these classifications would have helped highlight the women’s goals of worldwide African co-operation, upward mobility, and social inclusion for African in different geographic spaces.

Another example of such “wholly impossible” feats that has been glossed over in the literature are the activities of U.S. African American women who traveled to various parts of Africa as missionaries from African-American Churches and

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<sup>97</sup> Banks, *Black Intellectual*, 1-32, 247-300.

<sup>98</sup> Phrase taken from title of Darlene Clarke-Hine, Wilma King, & Linda Reed eds., *"We specialize in the wholly impossible" : A Reader in Black Women's history* (Brooklyn, N.Y. : Carlson Pub., 1995).

<sup>99</sup> Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan, eds. , *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper Including A Voice from the South and Other Important Essays, Papers, and Letters* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc Lanham, 1998).

<sup>100</sup> Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 3.

<sup>101</sup> Adelaide Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist: Adelaide Casely Hayford 1868-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 1986).

denominations. Numerous studies exist about these activities but none have looked at these women as Pan-Africanists.<sup>102</sup> As Michael Williams notes, “although motivated by the Eurocentric notion of bringing civilization to Africa, these women made considerable contributions to women and children in Africa.”<sup>103</sup>

Often, if scholars’ definitions of Pan-Africanism are scrutinized, missionary activities fall under the rubric of the “Back to Africa Movement” and various emigration schemes fashioned in the African Atlantic Diaspora since the eighteenth century. For example, in three seminal essays on Pan-Africanism, George Shepperson illustrated the influence of the emigration schemes of the nineteenth century, “Back to Africa” movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as impact of West Indian and U.S. African American denominations on the development of a separatist African Church tradition in east and southern Africa.<sup>104</sup>

Immanuel Geiss reiterates Shepperson’s sentiments in his own analyses of the social and intellectual background of Pan-Africanism.<sup>105</sup> Esedebe has also captured these sentiments in his chapters on “Origins of Pan-African ideas” and “From Idea to Movement.”<sup>106</sup> If researchers have created these categories as part of the general Pan-African tradition, it is unclear why they have excluded U.S. African women and

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<sup>102</sup> Sylvia M. Jacobs, ed., *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); “‘Say Africa When You Pray’: The Activities of Early Black Baptist Women Missionaries Among Liberian Women and Children” *SAGE* 3 (1986): 16-21; Edward A. Freeman, *The Epoch of Negro Baptists and the Foreign Mission Board* (New York: Arno Press, 1980, [c1953]); Eddie Step, *Interpreting a Forgotten mission: African-American Missionaries of the Southern Baptist Convention in Liberia, West Africa 1846-1860* (diss., Baylor University, 1999); Wilba C. Harr, *The Negro as an American Protestant missionary in Africa* (Thesis--University of Chicago divinity School, 1945); David W. Wills and Richard Newman, eds., *Black apostles at home and abroad: Afro-Americans and the Christian Mission from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1982)

<sup>103</sup> Williams, *Pan-Africanism*, 103.

<sup>104</sup> Shepperson, “Ethiopianism and African Nationalism,” 9-18; “Notes on Negro American Influences,” 299-312; Pan-Africanism and “Pan-Africanism,” 346-358.

<sup>105</sup> Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, xi-162.

<sup>106</sup> Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism* 1-110.

included men like Henry McNeal Turner and others of his ilk as Pan-African intellectuals.

Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood's recent work *Pan-African History: Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* documents a total of forty Pan-African personalities, among them only three women: Amy Ashwood Garvey (1897-1969), Claudia Jones (1915-1964), Constance Cummings-John (1918-2000.)<sup>107</sup> Ashwood Garvey, the first wife of Marcus Garvey, was co-founder of the U.N.I.A., "the International African Friends of Abyssinia," formed in 1935 to protest against Italy's invasion of Abyssinia,"<sup>108</sup> and the Association for the Advancement of Colored People. She also traveled widely in Europe, the Americas, and Africa promoting a Pan-African agenda.<sup>109</sup>

Cummings-John was of Krio, Sierra Leonean heritage; she traveled and lived for extensive periods of time in Sierra Leone, the United States, and the United Kingdom. She became a member of radical political associations like the *West African Youth League* and the International African Service Bureau, as well as others in all of these geographic locations.<sup>110</sup> Jones, a friend and contemporary of Ashwood Garvey was of Trinidadian birth; she lived in the United Kingdom, critiqued British communism, and helped organize Pan-African and Afro-Asian associations.<sup>111</sup>

T. Denean Sharpley Whiting has also produced a fascinating study on *Negritude Women*.<sup>112</sup> In this work, she has shown that Negritude the type of inter-African unity

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<sup>107</sup> Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 29-33, 69-75, 100-104.

<sup>108</sup> Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 71.

<sup>109</sup> Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 69-75.

<sup>110</sup> Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 29-33.

<sup>111</sup> Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 100-104.

<sup>112</sup> T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

expressed in the poems, writings, cultural, and intellectual movements of the Afro-francophone world in the early twentieth century has women pioneers.<sup>113</sup> The movement is popularly believed to have originated with the Senegalese Leopold Sedar Senghor (1906-2001), Guyana's Leon Damas (1912-1978), and the Martinique Aime Cesaire (1913-2008). Sharpley-Whiting's study shows that the intellectual genealogy of Negritude can be traced besides its masculine genealogy to the French speaking black women Jane Nardal, Suzan Cesaire (1913), and Paulette Nardal.<sup>114</sup>

Approximately, a page and a half of Michael Williams' comprehensive annotated bibliography on Pan-Africanism is dedicated to "Women Pan-Africanists."<sup>115</sup> Williams' annotations in this section are about four Pan-African women of the twentieth century and the activities of nineteenth century U.S. African American missionaries in Africa.<sup>116</sup> The nineteenth century women include Constance-Cummings-John,<sup>117</sup> Andre Blouin (1921-)<sup>118</sup> Adelaide Casely Hayford (1868-1960), and Eslander Goode Robeson (1896-1965). The collective literature on them comprises three journal articles,<sup>119</sup> and two chapters in an edited volume of nine Pan-African biographies.<sup>120</sup> In his introduction to the edited collection, George Shepperson wrote:

In commending this book to students of the history of Africa and the African Diaspora, I have only one criticism to make: while Pan-African

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<sup>113</sup> Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women*, 1.

<sup>114</sup> Whiting has not provided extensive biographical details of these women except for Suzanne Cesaïres day of birth.

<sup>115</sup> Williams, *Pan-Africanism*, 102-104.

<sup>116</sup> See my discussion above on these missionaries.

<sup>117</sup> See my discussion on her above.

<sup>118</sup> Andre Blouin, was alive when her autobiography published in 1983, I have not been able to confirm whether she is still alive.

<sup>119</sup> Rina Okonkwo, "Adelaide Casely Hayford: Cultural Nationalist and Feminist" *Phylon* 42 (1981): 41-51; Sylvia M. Jacobs, "'Say Africa When You Pray,'" 16-21.

<sup>120</sup> Robert Hill, ed., *Pan-African Biography* (Los Angeles: African Studies Center, UCLA, 1987).

Biography does not neglect the part played by women in the complex story of Pan-Africanism, inside and outside of Africa, its emphasis is too much on the male contribution to what Africanus Horton called the “Vindication of the African Race.” The value and diversity of women’s contributions to the Pan-African cause deserves greater study than it has been given.<sup>121</sup>

Even though Shepperson went on to cite “three examples [of Pan-African women] chosen from many,”<sup>122</sup> unfortunately Pan-African male-emphasis has continued to the present. This historiography section is aimed at demonstrating that there is an intellectual tradition that women of African descent have contributed to, but these female thinkers are not reflected in Pan-African literature. It is clear that women have been largely ignored in research about this social phenomenon of the African world.

The marginalization of women in the transmission of western education and international travel may help explain the non-participation of West African women in the Pan-African intellectual tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This however does not explain the scant literature on U.S. African-American women like Anna Julia Cooper,<sup>123</sup> who had the benefit of western education and international travel.

Although there is scant material on twentieth century women, their participation in the Pan-African movement is well documented in available primary sources. More recent works on women such as *For Women and the Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria* and *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey*<sup>124</sup> are based in the twentieth century. Primary or secondary source materials relating to 19<sup>th</sup> century Pan-African thought among women of African heritage in the Americas or

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<sup>121</sup> George Shepperson, introduction to Hill, ed., *Pan-African Biography* xiv.

<sup>122</sup> Shepperson, in Hill *Pan-African Biography*, xiv.

<sup>123</sup> When I use African-American women, I refer to people of African descent throughout the American continent; U.S. designates those African women who originate from the United States of America.

<sup>124</sup> Cheryl Johnson-Odim & Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.); Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*



Africa is very scarce, below is a brief review of twentieth century African descended women and their nonexistence in Pan-African studies is appropriate.

“Miss Anna Jones of Kansas City and Mrs. Annie Cooper of Washington, D.C.,”<sup>125</sup> and two other ladies, Miss Barrier (Washington D.C.), Mrs. J.F. Loudin (London), and Miss Ada Harris (Indiana),<sup>126</sup> were at the 1900 Pan-African Congress in London, United Kingdom. This allows me to speculate that at the close of the nineteenth century, women of African descent had already begun to engage worldwide African institutional formations, and thus had some preoccupation with the earlier Pan-African intellectual thought. They thought about Pan-Africanism and would have expressed their sentiments on the topic had they had the opportunity like Anna Jones and Anna Julia Cooper did at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Jones delivered a paper on “A Plea for Race Individuality” in which she argued that the “religious and artistic” personality of African peoples should not be diluted with the material essence of western civilization.<sup>127</sup> Cooper delivered a paper on “The Negro Problem in America” and was subsequently named to the Pan-African Executive Committee.<sup>128</sup> It is therefore perplexing that no comprehensive study of the Pan-African activities of these women pioneers has been completed.

In fact, it appears that from its very inception the movement was male dominated, if not sexist. The movement was therefore tailored toward the expression of men’s voices. Cooper wrote to William Edward Burghardt DuBois in 1929 complaining:

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<sup>125</sup> J. R. Hooker, “*The Pan-African Conference*” 21.

<sup>126</sup> Walters, *My life and Work*, 253-254; Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism* 50, n18.

<sup>127</sup> Walters, *My Life and Works*, 256; Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 52.

<sup>128</sup> Banks, *Black Intellectuals*, 258.

But why oh why don't you have your congresses in summer time when working people might go out without having their heads thrown to the Crows.<sup>129</sup>

Amy Jacques Garvey was one of three people to have mooted the idea for the organizing of the 1945 Pan-African Congress in London.<sup>130</sup> She complained that her letters to W. E. B. Du Bois often went unacknowledged. She was also unable to attend the congress because of a lack of funds. As a result, her initial role as co-convenor was for a long time unacknowledged by the men in the movement. Ula Yvette Taylor has corrected this anomaly in *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jaques Garvey*.<sup>131</sup> In the same work Taylor shows that Garvey's first wife Amy Ashwood Garvey attacked "the last session of the Pan-American Congress" for being sexist. Garvey argued, "Very much has been written and spoken of the Negro, but for some reason very little has been said about the black woman."<sup>132</sup>

Sharpley-Whiting's has also shown in *Negritude Women*, the angst of Milles Jane and Paullette Nardal's for not receiving credit for founding the Negritude Movement. Paullete Nardal who "kept a literary salon, where African Negroes, West Indians, and American Negroes used to get together," wrote that Cesaire, Damas, and Senghor "took up the ideas tossed up by us and expressed them with flash and brio." The Nardal's considered themselves the "real pioneers—let's say that we blazed the trail for them."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Walters, *My Life and Works* 260; Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, xli.

<sup>130</sup> Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, 737.

<sup>131</sup> Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*, 165-174.

<sup>132</sup> Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*, 173.

<sup>133</sup> Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women*, 12-17.

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on Pan-Africanism by some of the leading scholars, and pointed out some gaps, the most obvious being the exclusion of West African intellectuals and Women Pan-Africanist from the list of leading exponents of Pan-Africanism. I conclude that Pan-Africanism has been defined in a variety of ways, and in these diverse definitions there is consensus that as an idea Pan-Africanism entails thinking about attaining racial equality, advocating unity, and enhancing the social conditions of African descended communities globally. Contemporary writings such as *Pan Africanism and African liberation in the 21st century*<sup>134</sup> and “*Pan-Africanism and integration in Africa*”<sup>135</sup> have reinterpreted Pan-Africanism in light of current developments in communities of African heritage. Mammo Muchie, for example, has written about the need for educating civic societies in African descended populations.

If intellectual travel, and learning about other peoples, were important elements in the development of all of the Pan-African personalities discussed above.<sup>136</sup> Marcus Garvey traveled and worked throughout South, North, and Central America before the formation of the UNIA. Du Bois studied in Germany, his travel from the comforts of his Northern home in Barrington into the deep South and his transformation is well documented. Nkrumah studied in the United States, and Britain, he worked on ships sailing to South and Central America before he became the President of Ghana.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Horace Campbell, B.F. Bankie and S. Sibanda (eds.) *Pan Africanism and African liberation in the 21st century* (Namibia: The Pan African Centre of Namibia (PACON), 2000).

<sup>135</sup> Ibbo Mandaza and Dani Wadada Nabudere eds., *Pan-Africanism and integration in Africa* (Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe : SAPES Books, 2002).

<sup>136</sup> Mammo Muchie, ed., *The Making of the African-Nation: Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance* (London: Adonis& Abbey, 2003).

<sup>137</sup> Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 40.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, intellectuals of African heritage rode on steamboats to journey from one geographic region to the other; they read serialized versions of foreign newspapers and magazines to learn about the conditions of other peoples of African descent. Travel and literacy were therefore very important means by which Pan-African leaders or intellectuals came to notions of Pan-Africanism. The faster means of transportation, communication, and increased literacy among people of African descent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will determine the fortunes of Pan-Africanism. In the future scholars may no longer refer to these ideas as Pan-Africanist. They may instead use the term Global Africa, because ideas often mutate and adapt to their historical conditions. A significant part of what Pan-Africanism will become or not will be determined by how the AU works out African Diaspora representation at the supra-body's meetings and deliberations.

## Chapter 4

### **Reindorf, Your Palaver is Too Sweet: The Danish West Indies and Trans-Atlantic Ethnicity**

The poem below, “The White River,” was written by Kamau Bratwaite. It is the last of four interconnected long poems collectively entitled *Limits*, which also includes: “The Forest”, “Adowa”, and “Techiman”. Each poem captures the peopling, migrations, and human contacts on the Gold Coast before European presence; White River is for example a poetic representation of the geographical landscape and final settlements of the Akan, Ga-Adangbe, and the Ewe in present day Ghana. *Limits* is preceded by “Pathfinders,” six interconnected poems: “Mmenson,” “Axum,” “Ougadougou,” “Chad,” “Timbuctu,” and “Volta.” These poems in “*Limits*” and “*Pathfinders*” are named after places, and each represents primordial human communities or early beginnings, as well as places of departure or migrations for different ethnic societies in Africa. These ethnic groups include the Songhai, Soninke, Kanem-Bornu, Mossi, Akan, Dagomba, Benin, Sokoto, Zulu, and Ga.<sup>1</sup> The importance of these locations to the collective memory of their societies is based upon their positions as centers of beginning and migration. The poems reflect the societies’ attempt to valorize such cities as expressions of historical greatness and known spaces of effective human habitation. The poem “White River” therefore nicely foregrounds the objective of this chapter on Reindorf’s writing of *G. C. A. Histories*. My aim to demonstrate how Reindorf, drew on oral histories of Gold Coast societies to highlight

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<sup>1</sup> For further interpretations of Bratwaite’s poems, see Maureen Lewis, *Notes to Masks* (Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1977), 34-76.

their shared common heritage, history, social identity and interconnections to a larger community of West African, and African peoples.

### **The White River**

1

From the Akuapim ridge un-  
rolled a new land.

Hands on hoe  
knew new grasses:

nkyekyere and lemon;  
and the bold knocking demon  
of darkness was tamed on the Akropong rocks.  
Light rounded flesh

at Aburi; and the hills  
of the Ga lands: Akuse  
and Shai: were like islands  
burning to green in the water of pastures

plains drowned in the shallow  
drifting of cloud. Crowds  
flocked to the Volta, darker  
at Ada; and over we ferried

to the hard, sandy gold of Keta.  
Here at last was the rager,  
the growler, wet breather,  
life giver, white curly smoker,

time's river, rushing for-  
ever: round pebbles, carved musical  
shells; wet ropes in the tide,  
tugging moon's motion;  
wet sails in the salt; winds drying  
the sand into powder; drying  
fish, glittered silver;  
guinea cock's eyes of their scales in the dark

wood of boats: forest trees fallen and scooped  
with tongue's fire; canoes reaping danger;  
sharp shark's teeth's death-whiteness ready;  
at the slow sloping ledge of our village; time's water's

edge; the white river.

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This was at last the last;  
this was the limit of motion;  
voyages ended;  
time stopped where its movement began;

horizons returned inaccessible.  
Here at last was the limit;  
the minutes of pebbles drop-  
ping into the hourless pool.

Hands reached into water;  
gods nudged us like fish;  
black bottomless whales that we worshipped.  
O new world of want, who will build the new ways,

the new ships?<sup>2</sup>

### **Reindorf's Gold Coast as a Contact Zone: Conceptual Groundings, Palaver**

#### **Sauce as Dish and Institution**

Like Braithwaite's lyrical expression, Reindorf, writes about the migration of a Gold Coast people called the Abora or Borbor-Fante from Takiman<sup>3</sup> to their present location at Mankesim where they created a new settlement, and a ceremonial center known as the Nananompow.<sup>4</sup> The Nananompow is a sacred grove on the outskirts of Mankesim, which is in the central region of modern Ghana. This is where all the Fante

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Masks*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 33-34.

<sup>3</sup> C. C. Reindorf, in *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Tradition and Historical Facts Comprising A Period of More than Three Centuries From About 1500-1860 With a Biographical Sketch by C. E. Reindorf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basel, Switzerland: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1951); uses the spelling Takiman, but Brathwaite uses the contemporary spelling Techiman.

<sup>4</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 22

royals who died on the reported journey of the Borbor-Fante to Mankesim were finally interred. The Fantes' kept the bones of their royals until the final settlement. These Fante migration traditions that Reindorf reported have been verified by contemporary research.<sup>5</sup> The meaning that people like the Akan-Fante give to lands of first known human habitation like Techiman, is what Reindorf also writes about in his oral narratives. It is precisely what John S. Mbiti conceptualizes when he points out that for Africans:

Space and time are closely linked, and often the same word is used for both. As with time it is the content which defines space. What matters most to the people is what is geographically near, just as Sasa [the now] that people experience. For this reason, Africans are particularly tied to the land, because it is the concrete expression of both their Zamani [past] and their Sasa [now.] The land provides them with their roots of existence, as well as binding them mystically to their departed. People walk on the graves of their forefathers, and it is feared that anything separating them from these ties will bring disaster to family and community life.<sup>6</sup>

These lands then are the sort of African centers of origin and dwelling that Kamau Brathwaite describes in the above poem, which encapsulate the history of trade, religious exchange, and other contacts on the entire African continent in the pre-Atlantic period. Reindorf uses a variety of Gold Coast traditions—"which [were] kept and transmitted regularly by [their] ancestors to their children in their days"—to tie the

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<sup>5</sup> Confirmations of the migrations as recorded by Reindorf are confirmed in contemporary historical work. See for example David Henige, and T.C. McCaskie eds., *West Africa Economic and Social History: Studies in Memory of Marion Johnson* (Center of West African Studies: Birmingham University, 1990), 134. Ivor Wilks, "The Forest and the Twis" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* NS 8 (2004): 17-21. I myself visited the Nananompow grove in 2007, when I conducted pre-dissertation research at Mankesim. In that period, I also collected oral interviews with Elder Kofi Quansah, also known as John Branford Kraner, a retired teacher and local historian at Mankesim, interview by author, July 5, 2007. Obusuapanyin Kwame Ababio, Nana Adu Royal House, and Nana Kobano of Odomna-Kwesimintsin, Ekumfi, interview by author, July 15, 2007. According to the oral traditions, when leaving a temporal settlement, the Fante exhumed the bones of the three leaders Oboramankamo, Oson, Adapagyan who successively led the Fante migrations.

<sup>6</sup> John S. Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford, Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann, 1990), 26.



various peoples who inhabited the area to their past and present.<sup>7</sup> In addition to knowledge of African centers and their reproduction through migration, Reindorf appreciated West Africa as a cultural area, i.e., exhibiting some commonalities through centuries of human contact. This was long before scholarly conceptualizations of West Africa as a cultural area of diverse languages, religious and social forms emerged alongside notions of contact zones, and transculturation in academic literature.<sup>8</sup>

Fernando Ortiz, used transculturation to describe the shared language, music, art, religion, and culinary habits that developed in the island nation of Cuba since the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> Mary Louise Pratt has also theorized transculturation in her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* as social and cultural formations resulting from contact between western and other cultures.<sup>10</sup> Charles H. Long employs the concept to describe temporality—time and space in contact zones, geographical locations where two or more cultural groups meet, exchange, and produce new cultural realities.<sup>11</sup>

If we view the modern West African nation of Ghana, the former Gold Coast and its peoples in the same way that Ortiz, Pratt, and Long have viewed populations in the Americas, we may have reason to call Ghana a “contact zone.” A place where

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<sup>7</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, iv.

<sup>8</sup> Daryll Forde, “The Cultural Map of West Africa: Successive Adaptations to Tropical Forests and Grassland,” in *Cultures and Societies of Africa*, ed. Simon Ottenberg and Phoebe Ottenberg (New York: Random House, 1960); Greenberg, *Studies in African Linguistic Classification*; Forde, ed., *African Worlds*; Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Cuban Counterpoint; Tobacco and Sugar* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1947), Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture*; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Charles H. Long, “Transculturation: An Overview” (Unpublished manuscript, 2006), 1-19.

<sup>9</sup> Ortiz, *Cuban Cuban Counterpoint*, 4, 97-99.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes Travel and Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Long, “Transculturation: An Overview,” 1-19.

over centuries, peoples of diverse cultures have come into contact with each other and cognitively and unconsciously exchanged their particular modes of living, leading and creating a shared whole. John K. Fynn for example, explains this process of exchange by showing how the aboriginal populations who occupied Ghanaian land space prior to inward and outward migrations of other ethnic populations, mixed with the migrant communities. For instance, the migrant Ga-Adangbé are believed to have merged with Efutu/Awutu populations.<sup>12</sup> John Nketsia further elaborates on the effects of this cultural mixture. Commenting on Ga traditional music, he argues that Ga worship songs comprised Ga, Guan, as well as Akan elements, a feature owed to contact between the three ethnic groups.<sup>13</sup> Nketsia's study of Ga ritual liturgy demonstrates that the Ga actually sing in contemporary Ga, Obutu (Guan), and Adangbé. The Ga had migrant people within their stock; this explains why some of their ritual language belonged to the indigenous Guans.<sup>14</sup> Without this understanding Margaret Field disagrees with Reindorf's argument that:

the only way we suppose of finding out the different tribes which compose the whole Gold Coast is by knowing those people who perform the following different custom for their marriageable girls. In the whole there are three principal tribes, viz. the Guan Bron tribe, the Ga Adangme tribe, and the Fante-Twi tribe.<sup>15</sup>

Field found it prudent not to agree with Reindorf's indigenous knowledge because of traditions she had collected in other Ga cities like Tema.<sup>16</sup> Other scholars, as we noted

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<sup>12</sup> John K. Fynn, *Asante and its Neighbors 1700-1807* (Evanston; Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 8.

<sup>13</sup> J. H. Nketsia, *Ethnomusicology and African Music Modes of Inquiry and Interpretation v. I* (Accra: Afram Publications, 2005), 170-175, 203.

<sup>14</sup> Nketsia, *Ethnomusicology and African Music*, 280-301.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Field, *The Social Organization of the Ga People* (London: The Crown agents for the colonies, 1940), 82 n.2.

<sup>16</sup> Field, *Social Organization*, 82 n.2.

in the historiographical section on Reindorf, ascribes Reindorf's historical knowledge to his Basel mission-inspired western education.

In light of these views of Reindorf's construction of Gold Coast history, I incorporate the theoretical insights of contact zones, transculturation, and cultural areas, to reconstruct an indigenous term "palaver sauce." Palaver sauce is a dish widely served in West Africa, and I use it to metaphorically characterize Reindorf's didactic aims in the writing of the multifarious histories of Gold Coast peoples. A conceptualization of Reindorf's writing in this way reframes the ways in which we understand his contributions to Ghanaian and African historiography as well as his nationalistic intentions. Reindorf shows the various points of contacts: religion, trade, war, marriages, and migration stories that have ensued among the various indigenous and migrant societies of the Gold Coast and beyond. He perceived modern Ghana and its West African neighbors as inhabiting an active cultural contact zone. His success in showing the interconnections of the history(ies) of Gold Coast peoples not only indicates a nationalistic project, but historiographically moved the colonial writing of micro-histories of different ethnic groups to the realm of a more general history of the Gold Coast and West Africa.

It is the objective of this chapter to show how Reindorf works human engagements, and ethnic fusions on the Gold Coast into his mixed palaver sauce—a process akin to the mixing of different vegetables and ingredients. It is also important to note that Reindorf's examination of various ethnicities is not limited to the confines of modern Ghana. Reindorf as will be shown below begins his first chapter of *G. C. A. Histories* by firmly rooting the Gold Coast within a continental context. However,

before I provide examples of how Reindorf cooks his palaver sauce, I will explore how he became a “chef” in the first place. I ground Reindorf’s formative beginnings in the literature on Danish and missionary presence on the Gold Coast, as well as Ga and Gold Coast history. I begin my analysis with an explication of what I mean by palaver sauce and then I continue by considering the concerns of a twentieth century commentator.

Palaver Sauce is a mixed vegetable dish widely consumed in West Africa and is primarily composed of kontomire or spinach leaves. Preparation of its Ghanaian variety includes a meat or fish, peppers, tomatoes, onion, palm oil, salt, agushie (grinded melon seeds), and sometimes bitter leaf. The cooking of this recipe is an elaborate process, which involves washing the vegetables and leaves, and placing the leaves together with the meat in a cooking pot:

Wash the efan and spinach. Wash the bitter leaves three or four times. Put the efan, spinach and bitter leaves into the saucepan and meat. When the leaves are cooked cut up very finely. Pound and grind the akatewa [melon seeds]. Fry the onions, peppers, tomatoes; add stock or water. Add the meat and akatewa mixed with a little water. Add the leaves and salt. Allow to simmer for about 30 minutes. Serve with kenkey or plantain [boiled or fried].<sup>17</sup>

Palaver also has alternative meaning in Ghanaian and West African communities that is unrelated to sauce. Derived from the Portuguese word *palabra*, meaning, “word(s)”, palaver is a term that was used by Europeans and Africans to denote a problem or conflict that was to be resolved through a meeting of contending

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<sup>17</sup> Alice Dede, *Ghanaian Favorite Dishes: Recipes that are Loved Best in Ghanaian Homes* (Accra: Anowuo Educational Publications, 1969), 36; See also Fran Osseo-Asare, *Food Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005).

parties, , civic society, and the general public.<sup>18</sup> It is this vocal and detailed process of careful negotiating, conferring, and compromising that is similar to the intricate preparation and stewing of a palaver sauce in a cooking pot. The palaver is then not only a sauce, but also a conflict resolution institution which one could argue was used in inter-African and Afro-European relations during the Atlantic trade.<sup>19</sup> Per Hernaes shows the utility of the palaver in the Gold Coast variously as an institution, medium of legal proceedings, political, and diplomatic medium. He suggests that palavers often took days, sometimes weeks and months to resolve.<sup>20</sup> Reindorf's grandson also echoes the importance of the palaver in the Gold Coast in his summation of Danish activities on the Gold Coast:

In addition to the civil, military, slave establishment, the Danes employed also a handful of free Africans as "Maegler" (broker), "Bud" (messenger), and less often, "Tolk" (interpreter for Portugese, which was the [Atlantic trade] lingua franca of West Africa until well on into the 18<sup>th</sup> century). The duties of the broker and the messenger ranged from those of trading assistants, to those of diplomatic envoys to the West African chiefs. The persons who occupied these positions were often persons of some position and importance in the African community, and they had ample opportunities for acquiring wealth and increased importance by reason of their connection with the fort.<sup>21</sup>

Reindorf's father was a trading assistant or tolk, and Reindorf was being primed for a similar position, had he not become a pastor of the Basel Mission.

I describe Carl Christian Reindorf's writing of *G. C. A. Histories* as a sweet palaver sauce because of the author's careful documentation of the various conflicts that had existed on the Gold Coast. Reindorf's elaborate resolution of these conflicts is

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<sup>18</sup> See also, Per O. Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Society: The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth Century Gold Coast* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 1995), 99-127.

<sup>19</sup> Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and West African Society*, 100-104.

<sup>20</sup> Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and West African Society*, 105, 103-127.

<sup>21</sup> Joe Reindorf, *Scandinavians in Africa: Guide to materials relating to Ghana in the Danish National Archives with additional material by P. E. Olsen*, ed. by J. Simensen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), 4.

similar to a palaver negotiation; achieved through compromise, appeal to kin relationships and religion. Reindorf was able to negotiate and compromise the various histories of different ethnic societies into a united Gold Coast and Asante. Where there had been conflicts he narrated them and showed how its participants resolved such conflicts. In his writing Reindorf also used various trade networks and traditions of common migration and spirituality to link various ethnic groups on the Gold Coast. Of his *G. C. A. Histories*, the people of the nineteenth century Gold Coast may have said to Reindorf, “Your Palaver is too Sweet!” Who is Carl Reindorf and what led him to the writing of *G. C. A. Histories* and its connection to the Danish West Indies? This is the subject of the next session in this chapter.

### **An Introduction to Carl Christian Reindorf (1834-1917): The Person, and his relationship to the Gold Coast Ga, and the Danes**

This chapter, in part, attempts to fill some of the historiographical gaps on the history of connections between West Africa, the West Indies, and Danish Atlantic history. This is accomplished by centering the life of Gold Coast born Carl Christian Reindorf who was of Ga and Danish heritage. I concentrate on Reindorf’s life as a mixed race individual, Ga, pastor, trader, farmer, and historian of Gold Coast. Reindorf’s Gold Coast and his text will be used as a steppingstone for the analysis of the background of Danish West Indies born Edward Blyden.

In a 1965 introduction to a translation of Georg Norregard's *Danish Settlements in West Africa 1658-1850*,<sup>22</sup> Daniel F. McCall laments about the lack of literature on the connections between Denmark and West Africa:

General histories of Denmark briefly mention its tropical colonies only in passing when the pertinent reigns and ministries are discussed. Histories of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) refer to the Danes in a very sketchy fashion, noting their appearance, points of conflict or cooperation with the English, their departure, and usually little else. Studies which concentrate on the Danes in West Africa have been few in number and until the publication of this translation none were available in English.<sup>23</sup>

He then adds that:

In the twentieth century, we in the English-speaking world, historians included, have tended to forget the former greatness of Denmark and the role she played in helping to create the conditions of the modern world in which we live. We must not only take a fresh look at Denmark to understand these two centuries of Danish-African relations, but we must also reconsider the social conditions of both Europe and Africa during the period.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately time does not seem to have filled the gaps in the literature on Danish-African relations.<sup>25</sup> More recent scholarship by African authors has also been necessarily Gold Coast centered. The following is a rendition of Danish presence on the Gold Coast, particularly as it relates to Reindorf.

Even though the Gold Coast was one of the first points of disembarkation for European explorers and traders in the fifteenth century, European presence among

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<sup>22</sup> Georg Norregard, *Danish Settlements in West Africa 1658-1850*, trans. Sigurd Mammen (Boston: Boston University Press, 1966).

<sup>23</sup> Norregard, *Danish Settlements*, xi.

<sup>24</sup> Norregard, *Danish Settlements*, xiv.

<sup>25</sup> Notables include Selena Axelrod Winsnes, ed., *Letters of West Africa and the Slave Trade: Paul Erdman Isert's Journey to Guinea and the Caribbean Islands in Columbia* (1788) trans. from German (Oxford University Press, 1992); Ivor Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750: The Rise and Fall of a West African Empire* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 2001; Ray Kea, "'I Am Here to Plunder on the General Road' Bandits and Banditry in Pre-Nineteenth century Gold Coast"; Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society*; Thorkild Hansen, *Island of Slaves* trans. Kari Dako (Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004); On the West Indies and West Africa see John Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Oldendorp, *Caribbean Mission*; Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*; Boyer, *Americas Virgin Islands*.

coastal societies was not always cordial. In fact it could be at best considered tenuous. Kwamina Ansah, the King of Edina who first welcomed the Portuguese to Gold Coast shores, is reported to have shown some trepidation in granting the Portuguese land to build the first European edifice in Africa during the Atlantic trade.<sup>26</sup> Later, there were many skirmishes between the coastal states and European actors, and this was certainly true of Reindorf's Ga people. As early as 1576, the Ga destroyed a Portuguese trading post on their land, on which account the Portuguese later visited the Ga with a punitive expedition.<sup>27</sup> Some also believe that it was Ga King Mampong Okai's agreement with the Dutch that led to his murder by a "great master" in 1642.<sup>28</sup> Whatever the case, it would take several botched negotiations between the Europeans and Ga on the Ga coast, before the establishment of forts and castles on the latter's section of the Atlantic sea materialized.

In regards to the Danes, available evidence from Danish records suggests that Danish beginnings in West Africa began in 1624. This was when ships beginning their journey in Copenhagen, or Gluckstadt on the Elbe in modern day Germany (west), arrived on the Gold Coast.<sup>29</sup> The first Danish possessions on the coast were acquired around 1652 when Henrik Carlof a Swedish agent for the Swedish and Danish Africa companies led a number of disgruntled Dutch merchants to take over Swedish

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<sup>26</sup> Ivor Wilks, "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. 1. The Matter of Bitu" *The Journal of African History*, 23, 3 (1982): 333-349; See also Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* trans. and annotated by R. Mauny (Bissau, 1956), 123; A.W. Lawrence, *Trade Castles and Forts of West Africa* (London, 1965), 25.

<sup>27</sup> F.C. N 8, 1658-59 "Resolutions of the State General" September 20, 1659 Remonstrance or deduction drawn up for the States General by J. Valkenburgh Director General of the Dutch West Indies Company on the Guinea Coast; Pieter de Maars, *Description and historical account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602)* translated from the Dutch and edited by Albert van Dantzig and Adam Jones (Oxford: Published for the British Academy, by Oxford University Press, 1987), 304.

<sup>28</sup> F.C. N 3, 1639-1645 J. Ruyschaver to Count Maurits and Council, Brazil February 1, 1643.

<sup>29</sup> Reindorf, *Scandinavians*, 1.



possessions.<sup>30</sup> Carlof defected to the Danish side during the Swedish/Danish wars (1657-1660), and from that point on manned Swedish forts in Takoradi, Anamabo, Cape Coast, Accra, and Moure for Denmark.<sup>31</sup> He subsequently led an uprising that seized the Swedish forts for the Danes in 1655.<sup>32</sup> Later in 1657, Governor Jost Cramer, of the Gluckstadt African Company, acquired land from Fetu (Amanfro) and built Fredrickberg/Fredicksborg.<sup>33</sup>

The Danes lost their Accra possessions to the Dutch in 1659, but later found a more permanent foothold in 1661 after paying Mantse Okai Koi 50 benda (400 pounds), as well as other gifts to his fellow Ga rulers. The Ga royals then granted the Danes land at Osu for the building of the Christianborg castle where Reindorf grew up and attended school.<sup>34</sup> The Danes continued to maintain a checkered control over their possessions, and by the end of the century, they controlled the European trade on the eastern portions of the Gold Coast. They succeeded in building the following forts along the coast: Fredensborg at Ningo 1737, Konegesteen at Ada 1783-4, Prisensten/ Prindsensten at Keta 1784, Augastaborg at Teshie and Issaegrae at Kong 1787.<sup>35</sup> The Danes benefited from the American war of Independence and the British/Dutch wars of 1780 (that saw the British attack and destroy the Dutch fort Crevecouer in Accra).<sup>36</sup> The Danes increased their trade on the coast and made alliances with Accra's coastal towns, Dutch

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<sup>30</sup> I have seen different spellings for Henrik Carlof these include Hendrick Carlof, or Caarlof. I will use Henrik Carlof throughout unless otherwise stated.

<sup>31</sup> Reindorf, *Scandinavians*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Irene Odotei, *Ga and their Neighbors*, 51.

<sup>33</sup> F.C. D.2 Translation of the Pamphlets "Tegen Bericht" October 18, 1664, 17.

<sup>34</sup> V.G.K. 77, Breve og Ugaede 1624, 1659-80. Agreement between Okai Kwei, King of Accra and Jost Cramer, Commandant of Fredricksburgh in Guinea August 18, 1661; Reindorf, *Scandinavians*, 1, Nooregard, *Danish Settlements*, 42-43.

<sup>35</sup> Hansen, *Islands*, 19; Winsnes, *Letters*, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Winsnes, *Letters*, 1; Reindorf, *Scandinavians*, 1-3.

Accra, Tema, Kpone, Teshi, and the inland Krobo.<sup>37</sup> Their trade and influences went as far as the Ga settlement named Little Popo by Europeans in the modern nation of Togo, but known to the Ewe and the Ga as Anehor, and Glidzi.<sup>38</sup>

The Danes established a system of administration called the “det secrete raad” secret council in their forts. At various times the administration comprised of a commandent “opperhoved,” vice gouverneur, bogholder/bookkeeper, a number of assistants, that is overassisten and underassisten, reserve ven pennen (probation rank), a surgeon and priest, ‘skoleholder og degen,” i.e. a school master and clerk of the parish, sergeant, 1-2 corporals, 20-70 privates, and a constable.<sup>39</sup> In 1722, they established the Christianborg Fort School, where after baptism, mixed-race offspring of the Danish officers were enrolled in the military.<sup>40</sup>

Reindorf’s Danish forbearers served as Governors in the eighteenth century. However, exactly who Reindorf’s first Danish ancestor was, remains a curious subject. Reindorf’s father, Christian Reindorf Hackenburg (1805-1865) had at some point reversed his middle and last names to Hackenburg Reindorf.<sup>41</sup> Written records are unclear on whether Hackenburg Reindorf had learned that his real father was Johan Reindorf rather than Augustus Frederick Hackenburg, who arrived on the Gold Coast on a probationary rank in 1739. Hackenburg rose through the ranks to become Governor of Christianborg (1745-46), and Governor of Fredensborg until 1748, when

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<sup>37</sup> For a map of Danish possessions in West Africa see J. Reindorf, *Scandinavians in Africa: Guide Relating to Ghana in the Danish National Archives*. Supplemented by P.E. Olsen and Edited by J. Simensen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1980.)

<sup>38</sup> Robin Law, “Ethnicities of Enslaved Africans in the Diaspora: On the Meaning of “Mina” (Again)” *History of Africa* 32 (2005): 247-267.

<sup>39</sup> Reindorf, *Scandinavians*, 1-2.

<sup>40</sup> Reindorf, *Scandinavians*, 3-6.

<sup>41</sup> John Parker, *Making the Town*, 38.

he departed the Gold Coast aboard the *Jaegesborg*.<sup>42</sup> Oral testimonies recorded in 1918, resolve the doubts, and show that Augustus Hackenburg,<sup>43</sup> and his cousin Johan Reindorf, (who arrived on the Gold Coast in 1750), and their Swedish business partner, Carl Gustav Engmann (who arrived in the Gold Coast as a surgeon in 1749, then became Governor between 1752 -57), had at different times married the same woman, a daughter of Osu's second known *mankralo* (state caretaker).<sup>44</sup> They each fathered children by the *mankralo*'s daughter.<sup>45</sup> Thus the Engmann's, Reindorf's, and Hackenburg's who formed a part of the mixed race class in Osu, were descendants of siblings of different patrilineage.

Such activities by Danish men on the Gold Coast are crucial to understanding the rise of Gold Coast intellectuals like Reindorf in the nineteenth century who was a descendant of the Danes. Nonetheless, to construct Reindorf's social and intellectual beginnings, with an emphasis on his twice-removed Danish ancestry would be to privilege this external origin of his life and to omit an important local cultural and genealogical aspect of his life.

Conversely, Reindorf's genealogical and cultural heritage and connection with Adowi Nortei, the *Mankralo* (caretaker/secretary of state, who reigned 1700-1710), whose daughter Ashiokai Wondo bore Reindorf's Gold Coast ancestors, the Engmanns,

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<sup>42</sup> Reindorf, *Scandinavians*, 137.

<sup>43</sup> While Joe Reindorf suggests that three sisters of Adowi Nortei had married the three Danes, Joe Reindorf, in Carl D. Reindorf, *Remembering Carl Reindorf*, 5, evidence from the register of the Danish Church cited by John Parker shows that Reindorf was the great-grandson of Augustus Frederick Hackenburg and Ashiokai Wondo, whose son Carl Hackenburg was Reindorf's grandfather. See Parker, "Mullatofoi", 37-38; NAG ADM 11/1/730 Enquiry into the Election of *Mankralo* of Christianborg (Osu) 1918.

<sup>44</sup> Reindorf, *Scandinavians*, 137.

<sup>45</sup> NAG ADM 11/1/730 Enquiry into the Election of *Mankralo* of Christianborg (Osu) 1918 (Subsequent references Enquiry into Election); For more on the reasons for the enquiry and subsequent conflict see NAG ADM 37/41 District Record, Accra, Civil Record Book, Ako Notei III, *Mankralo*, v Dr. C.E. Reindorf and others, 1920 367-80.

and Hackenburgs, is of paramount interest.<sup>46</sup> Mankralo Nortei who succeeded Mankralo Yeboah Nortey Afriyie I (1672-1682) married the daughter of the Wulomo (priest) of Kole, a lagoon west of Osu in Gamashie or Accra.<sup>47</sup> So when Reindorf claimed that he “should have become a priest either of Nai at Akra or Klote at Christianborg if [he] had not been born a mulatto and become Christian,”<sup>48</sup> he was referencing family histories passed down to him. This, his descendants put into writing late in the twentieth century. Reindorf’s descendants inform us that after Adowi Nortei’s marriage to Korkoi Bonte, daughter of the Kole Wulomo:

[a] stool was consecrated by the Kole Wulomo to his kinsman and son-in-law and named the lagoon east of the castle as Kolete, son of Kole, as an act of solidarity with the Gbese tribe of Accra. The Baake priest who led his people to the new home was barely (merely) the spiritual leader of his people and did not bring any Stool from his homeland.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the above account, traditions collected recently with contemporary caretakers of the Klote, suggest Dangbe origins for the office of the Klote Wulomo or priest.<sup>50</sup> Members of the migrant families from Osudoku, in the inland Dangbe area, claim to have historically held the position of Klote priest.<sup>51</sup> These families, the Sikaseseo and Agbeti families, make up the Okanshan Kodiamuah Osu Klottey Piem. They point out that, the original caretakers of the Klote were people of the Ga coastal city of Nunguwa, reputed to be the first Ga speaking settlers on the coast, and who left

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<sup>46</sup> NAG ADM 11/1/730 Enquiry into Election.

<sup>47</sup> Joe Reindorf, in Carl D. Reindorf, *Remembering Carl Reindorf*, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Reindorf, *G.C.A. Histories*, V.

<sup>49</sup> Reindorf, *Remembering Carl Reindorf*, 7, 19. This account is rendered by the Reindorf’s at Osu who are associated with the ruling Mankralo families or wekui in Asante Blohum quarter of Osu, second only to the King of Osu from the Kinkawe quarter of Osu. The Reindorf family account establishes precedence of the Mankralo stool before the Mantse stool, and political seniority to the non-secular positions of the Wulomei, priests of Osu. Another account cited immediately below, which I collected on the origin of the Klote Deity for example offer parallel accounts of the origins of its caretakers.

<sup>50</sup> Nuumo Narku Agbeiti II, Osu Klote Wulomo, Interview by author, Osu, Accra, Ghana, September 2, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Odotei, *Ga and its Neighbors*, 24; dates the migration from Osu Doku to modern day Osu around 1629.

suddenly for present day Nunguwa, after the Dangbe migrants arrived. They left the ritual rites of the Klote deity in the hands of the Adangbé migrants from Osudoku, in the Accra plains.<sup>52</sup>

To ignore these latter local histories would be to exclude Reindorf's participation in two critical spheres of his Gold Coast ancestry, Mullato/Creole and African. I earlier in the introduction offered a conceptual analysis of Reindorf's Ga and African heritage under the section *Ga-Adangbé, Concept of Person and Social Relations: Human Genetics and Race*. It is worth providing some background here: the Ga-Adangbé who reside on the eastern portion of the Gold Coast, speak Ga and Adangbé, two mutually intelligible languages; the latter being the proto-language spoken by the ethnic group before migrations to the coast led to the evolution of the more recent Ga.<sup>53</sup> Early contact with European concerns on the coast and the transfer of the capital to Accra in 1887 resulted in substantial numbers of Ga becoming western-educated and Christian. This helped accentuate their evolution from traders and brokers in pre-colonial Gold Coast trade into negotiators and intellectuals during the Atlantic trade between Africans and Europeans on the coast—a role they shared with the central coastal Fante.<sup>54</sup> Creole or “Mullato” as used in this context refers to both native Africans and racially mixed Gold Coasters who were literate, related by marriage, and formed part of an economic and political network on the Gold Coast, sometimes

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<sup>52</sup> Nuumo Narku Agbeiti II, Osu Klote Wulomo, Interview by author, Osu, Accra, Ghana, September 2, 2008. This particular account bears similarity to other migrant families in the Ga area, who claim ownership of land, because the first Ga settlers, the Nunguwa, entrusted them the custody of indigenous deities.

<sup>53</sup> M.E. Kropp Dakubu, *One Voice: The Linguistic Culture of an Accra Lineage* (Leiden: African Studies Center, 1981); *Korle Meets the Sea: A Socio-Linguistic View of Accra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>54</sup> Parker, *Making The Town*, xvii, 72.

linked with other Afro-European communities elsewhere in West Africa.<sup>55</sup>

Reindorf was himself a product of these active cultural mixtures, or if you will palaver sauce on the Gold Coast. He belonged to the Afro-European community; and gained his western education, and theological training with the Basel Mission as a result of this background. The process involved in his acquisition of literacy and Christian training is the subject of the next session.

### **Reindorf: African/Ga, Creole, Native Pastor of the Basel Mission**

This section is a biographical exposition and a review of the major intellectual work of Carl Christian Reindorf, who was a native catechist and pastor of the Basel Mission. He was also an educator, trader, farmer, local historian, and author of *G. C. A. Histories*. The socio-cultural milieu in which Reindorf grew is important in order to see how his text on history of the Gold Coast evolved. By the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was in existence a bi-culturally savvy group of literate African and Afro-European elites who constituted themselves into a homogeneous social and political entity throughout the Gold Coast by intermarrying, forming trading partnerships, and also participating in the political structures of the colonial administrations and the traditional structures of their African kin.<sup>56</sup> In Osu, they served as cultural and trading brokers between the indigenes and European traders. At

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<sup>55</sup> For comprehensive treatments of the subject, see for the Gold Coast, Margaret Priestley, *West African Trade and Coastal Society* (London, 1969); Roger Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities under European Rule* (Boston: University Press of America, 1999), 8-9, 1-21; Rebecca Shunway, "Bewteen the Castle and the Golden Stool: Transformations in Fante Society in the Eighteenth Century" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2004). On Western Africa see George E. Brooks, *Eur-africans in Western Africa: Commerce Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observances from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens; Ohio University Press, 2003).

<sup>56</sup> Parker, *Making the Town*, 33, Nii Kwabena Bonne III, *Milestones in the History of the Gold Coast: Autobiography of Nii Kwabena Bone III Osu Alata Mantse, also Nana Owusu Akenten III Oyokohene of Techiman, Ashanti* (London: Diplomatist Publications, 1953).

the time of Reindorf's birth, his Afro-European father was acting in this capacity. Hackenburg Reindorf left his post as a soldier in the Danish Garrison at Osu, and became a trading agent for an English merchant named Joshua Ridley, who later became the husband of C. C. Reindorf's aunt, Anna Reindorf.<sup>57</sup>

Reindorf was born on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1834 at Gbugbla (Prampram), an English coastal enclave near Great Ningo. This palm oil trading port is located over 20 miles to the east of Accra, the soon to be capital of the Gold Coast Colony. His father was Christian Hackenburg Reindorf (1806-1865), and his mother a Ga woman, Anowa Amah (Hannah Reindorf, 1811-1902.), who resided at Osu.<sup>58</sup> As explained earlier, Osu is one of many city-states in the Ga polity that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the south to the Akuapem hills in the north; it's bordered in the west by the Awutu and in the east by their historical and cultural relatives, the La, Teshie, Tema and Dangbe peoples inland (hence Ga-Dangbe). Osu is believed to have been founded in the seventeenth century when "King Okaikoi (c.1646-1677)" allowed the Danes to build the fort Christianborg, east of Ga/Accra. By the close of the century, Osu had become a coastal trading city with various social actors like native African traders, Danish traders, Ga political refugees, Akan migrants and descendants of ex-slaves from Allada who now form the 'Alata' quarter of Osu.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Reindorf, G. C. A. *Histories*; Paul Jenkins, ed., *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century*; C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson. *Papers from an International Seminar held in Basel Switzerland, 25-28<sup>th</sup> October 1995 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Publication of C.C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> Parker, "Mankraloi, Merchants and Mulatto's," in *Recovery of West African Past*, 33-35.

<sup>59</sup> Parker, *Making the Town*, 1-10

The Danish who worked at Christianborg found it prudent and business savvy to marry Ga women.<sup>60</sup> Their connection with the families of these women, particularly royal women gave them extensive contacts and advantage in their competition with other European traders. C. C. Reindorf's father was a product of such a union between the Danish Governor at Christianborg Castle, Augustus Frederick Hackenburg, and a Ga woman Ashiokai Wondo.

Afro-Europeans like the Reindorf's also served the Ga state in other capacities, including joining the ranks of Ga war squadrons "Asafoi." On separate occasions, Reindorf replicated this duty by forming a Christian Asafo to fight for the Ga state against the Krobo, and Anlo.<sup>61</sup> The confluence of Reindorf's identity as mixed-race, African, literate, Ga, merchant, and Christian, had a profound influence on his life. Reindorf's multi-dimensional identity a result of the "palaver sauce" mixtures on the Gold Coast explains how he attempts to prove Ga-Dangbe connections to the empire of Benin, Egyptian civilization, and to compare their customs with Hebrews of the Bible. It is also seen in his expression of traditional Ga nationalism, proto-modern nationalism, and modern nationalism.<sup>62</sup>

So what then are these various nationalisms that I have referenced? K. Afari-Gyan defines traditional or ethnic nationalism as that expressed by a member of a particular ethnic group for example, an Asante, Yoruba, or Tswana. Proto-modern nationalism is the coming together of distinct ethnic or political configurations to

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<sup>60</sup> Parker, *Making the Town*, 33.

<sup>61</sup> John Kwadwo Osei-Tutu, *The Asafoi (socio-military groups) in the History and Politics of Accra (Ghana) from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Trondheim: Dept. of History, Norwegian University of Science and Technology NTNU, 2000) 90-99.

<sup>62</sup> K. Afari-Gyan, in "Nationalist Ideology in the Gold Coast: Some Influences on its Evolution From the Beginnings of the Proto-Modern Nationalist Movement to 1950, as revealed in the indigenous newspaper press of the period." ( M.A. dissertation, Institute of African Studies University of Ghana, Legon 1969), 1-13.



oppose colonial rule in its early stages. Diverse members of a colony who not only unify to oppose colonial rule, but also envisage turning the colonial state into an independent nation are also said to articulate modern nationalism. The difference between Afari-Gyan's definitions and Reindorf's conceptualization of the Gold Coast is that for Afari-Gyan, the Gold Coast was an artificial conglomeration created by an external power, Britain. For Reindorf, the Gold Coast's southern protectorates and their northern neighbors, the Asante, who became a part of the British protectorate later on, constituted a real nation through centuries of mutual interaction and even antagonistic human contacts.

As a child, Reindorf was conscious of the responsibilities that were associated with his privileged mixed identity. Unlike many Ga boys in 1842, Reindorf attended school at the age of eight and was baptized "with several other mulatto boys"<sup>63</sup> at age ten. As explained earlier Reindorf's mother also dedicated him to Ligble, a spiritual force at Gbugbla, where he was born and spent some of his formative years. It is believed that this principal deity preserved the life of the infant Reindorf, and he would perhaps have gone on to become a priest for the spiritual force, had a female medium not failed to recognize him as a devotee or child of the deity during a divination ceremony some years later.<sup>64</sup>

Reindorf's education was also two-dimensional; he experienced both indigenous education and western-modeled education. Reindorf recalled that western-education intermittently interrupted his "lessons in native traditions" when he writes:

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<sup>63</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 5.

<sup>64</sup> Parker "Mankraloi, Merchants and Mulatto's," 39; BMA D- 1.24, 50 Elias Schrenk, "Carl Reindorf Catechist, January 21, 1872."

My worthy grandmother [maternal] Okako Asase, as in duty bound to her children and grandchildren, used to relate the traditions of the country to her people when they sat around her in the evenings. My education and calling separated me from home, and prevented me from completing the series of lessons in native tradition.<sup>65</sup>

Reindorf's western education started when his part-Danish father sent him to the Danish castle at Osu to attend the castle school for Afro-European children. Reindorf had little attachment to Danish as a language of instruction for unknown reasons. After four years at the castle school, he transferred to the English based Basel Mission School. Reindorf would also quit the Basel school after Rev. Johannes Zimmerman, a German missionary who later became his close confidant, attempted to instruct his pupils in Ga. The young Reindorf must have been irritated by what seemed to be an experiment for Zimmerman, who was only beginning to learn the language and would later publish *A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra or Gá-language*, 1858.<sup>66</sup> Reindorf was forced by his father to re-enroll under the direct purview of Zimmerman. Under Zimmerman's supervision, Reindorf began his lifelong career as a native catechist and later a pastor of the Basel Mission.

Reindorf's dual education, that is his exposure to Ga and Christian religious practices shows that he was well primed to play the brokerage role that his father had once served. Reindorf's skills enabled him to trade for a couple of years after he had quit the Basel Mission School because of Zimmerman's experiments with Ga. Even when he became a "teacher-catechist" for the Basel mission, Reindorf independently owned a coffee farm, and had retired temporally from the Mission to farm.<sup>67</sup> Thus,

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<sup>65</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

<sup>66</sup> J. A. Zimmerman, *Grammatical Sketch and Vocabulary of the Akra or Ga-Language with an Appendix on the Adanme-Dialect*, 2 Vols., Stuggart, 1858).

<sup>67</sup> Jenkins, *Recovery of West African Past*, 168.

even though he had become a pastor, who was fully conscious of his Afro-European heritage, Reindorf still held onto the vocation of his social class. In *G. C. A. Histories*, he alludes to several incidents that occurred which point to the fact that the social circumstances of his birth may have influenced the formative stages of his African intellectual identity. Reindorf writes that:

A history of the Gold Coast written by a foreigner would most probably not be correct in its statements, he not having the means of acquiring the different traditions in the country . . . Unless a foreigner writes what he witnesses personally, his statements will be comparatively worthless, as it is the case with several accounts of the Gold Coast already published.<sup>68</sup>

In contrast to the Eurocentric writers of his time, Reindorf described himself as having been socialized into the different traditions of the Gold Coast on account of his traditional socialization through his paternal and maternal African heritage.<sup>69</sup> As someone “who [had] not only studied but, [had] had the privilege of initiation into the history of its former inhabitants [Gold Coast]”<sup>70</sup> Reindorf was well equipped to collect and reinterpret the traditions. In this instance, and several others in Reindorf’s adult life—his engagement with his African heritage, through Ga religious practices and the Ga patrilineal system of inheritance—show that he critically engaged with the community in which he lived.

Families like Reindorf’s were still connected to Ga families and polities, but they were also a self-conscious group that inter-married, and referred to themselves as

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<sup>68</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

<sup>69</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

<sup>70</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

Africans.<sup>71</sup> It is these people—the literate African and Afro-Europeans—that

Reindorf addresses in his preface:

The attention of all you my friends and countrymen, to the study and collection of our history, and to create a basis for a future more complete history of the Gold Coast. . . If in conjunction with all the educated community of the country and those foreigners who take a special interest in us, we could collect materials of those dark days to complete this pioneer work.<sup>72</sup>

In appealing to this African, Afro-European literate class Reindorf was calling for a united Gold Coast state. In this sense Reindorf could be seen as exhibiting proto-modern nationalism, which, desires the unification of the Ga-Dangbes, Fantes, Asantes, and Ewés who existed as separate entities. Nevertheless, this was also a modern nationalist thought, for even though the Gold Coast and later Ghana, was not yet in existence, Reindorf mixed and meshed them as one would in preparing a dish of palaver sauce. As such, he could be likened to the intellectual founder of the modern Ghanaian state. In Afari-Gyan's typology, Reindorf was expressing a "modern African nationalism, that nationalism which unites for example the Asante, Dagomba, Ewe, Fanti and Ga peoples of Ghana."<sup>73</sup> For Reindorf, his modern African nationalism was not unnatural, but derived from a shared past.

The constituents of Reindorf's palaver sauce, that is, his modern African nationalist interests also stretched beyond the Gold Coast. Reindorf articulated a Pan-African identity in geography, as well as indigenous conceptions of kinship, rather than one in the racial terms that characterized the views of his contemporaries like

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<sup>71</sup> David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana; The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 65.

<sup>72</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v-vii.

<sup>73</sup> Afari Gyan, *Nationalist Ideology in the Gold Coast*, 5.

Blyden. Reindorf conceived of the Gold Coast as being part of Upper Guinea, which was also a part of the African continent.<sup>74</sup>

Engaging this conception of the African continent, Reindorf used his knowledge of European literature on Africa and Christian literature to link Gold Coast polities to the Benin Empire and ancient Egypt.<sup>75</sup> Reindorf's expression of his African identity by combining indigenous knowledge with western knowledge may perhaps explain why the indigenous Ga conception of God as exhibiting a dual gender, is used by Ga Christians. Reindorf's who served on the Basel Mission committee at the turn of the century may have had a hand in committee's adoption of Ga God, Atta-Naa Nyonmo, as the Christian God.

Reindorf's intellectual and cultural history shows that his expression of a Pan-African identity or modern nationalist stance did not prevent him from expressing traditional Ga-nationalism. As expected of all physically fit Ga citizens, Reindorf was supposed to join an Asafo (military group or warrior class) in times of war. Through his maternal and paternal grandmothers, Reindorf was a member of the Ga Asere, and Osu Asante Blohum Asafoi (military groups). Against the Basel Mission's policy of non-alignment, Reindorf showed his loyalty to the Ga state by forming and leading a band of Christians that is a Christian Asafo to fight alongside the Ga in 1858 and 1866. Therefore, even as Reindorf asserted his Ga ethnic affiliation, he also acted on Christian principle; he formed a Christian Asafo because the ritual propitiation of gods in his native Asafoi (pl.) were in contravention of his Christian obligations.<sup>76</sup> This is

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<sup>74</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 35.

<sup>76</sup> Osei-Tutu, *The Asafoi*, 95.

an instance of how Reindorf struggled to merge his Christian/western training with his African training and identity.

Reindorf's affirmation of his Ga heritage was a matter of pride, but Reindorf was also a very independent and pragmatic thinker within the Basel mission. Based on his Ga heritage, Reindorf defended the indigenous system of servitude, which was in operation on the Gold Coast. The Basel Mission mandated that Reindorf release three servants in his service, and Reindorf responded with a letter of disagreement signed by all indigenous catechists serving the Basel Mission.<sup>77</sup> Reindorf however, expresses a different attitude towards the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans; he blamed European traders for the depopulation and general political instability of the coastal states. Reindorf as you will learn viewed the Atlantic trade as a malaise that plagued the growth of the Gold Coast peoples. In this context Reindorf may be viewed as a critic of the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans, but also as a nativist, for his defense of traditional customs and practices of servitude as distinct from chattel slavery.

The Basel Missionaries on the Gold Coast were quite sensitive to its native catechists keeping servants of any kind. In 1860, the missionaries stationed at Akwapim, in southeastern Gold Coast, decided that their catechists needed to release their slaves within six years.<sup>78</sup> The reaction of the mission directorate in Basel, Switzerland to the reports from Akwapim, was more radical than both the native catechists and the European missionaries on the Gold Coast expected. The mission committee did not uphold the decisions made by their European representatives at

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<sup>77</sup> Peter Haenger, "Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860's: A Young man stands up to mission Pressure," *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 23-24.

<sup>78</sup> Haenger, "Reindorf and the Basel Mission," 19.

Akwapim. Rather, under the threat of dismissal, they prohibited the purchase or holding of slaves and pawns by catechists and employees of the mission; or in the case of converts or baptismal candidates, threatened to deny them church membership.<sup>79</sup>

This decision caused some tumult amongst the foreign missionaries and native catechists serving in the Gold Coast. As a result, the European foot soldiers of the mission in southeastern Gold Coast, led by Wilhelm Locher at a Missionaries General Conference of 1862 tried to explain to their superiors in Basel that servitude on the Gold Coast was distinct from those in the Caribbean, and the Americas. The Missionaries General Conference noted “fundamental differences” in the way slaves were held on the Gold Coast as compared to the:

. . . American or Japhetic system. African slavery is pristine. American slavery is secondary. In America the races are held apart by slavery. Slavery is therefore a system of subordination of the Negro, as if he were not a member of the human race. Here on the Gold Coast there are two major factors which stop the slave-holder from treating people cruelly. Firstly he fears they will run away, fall ill, or die. Secondly he does not see them as resource which he should use to make maximum profit . . . They are his “house-children”. He works with them and eats with them. They look after his plantations, carry the produce to the coast to sell, and bring him what sales earned.<sup>80</sup>

This explanation however did not convince the Mission inspector Josenhans and his colleagues on the Basel Mission Committee in Basel to change their ruling on slavery. For them, the difference between slavery and pawnship was still murky.

On this account, Reindorf, then a catechist of the mission accepted the dismissal on the grounds that a pawn named in a Basel Mission survey was his. He had tried to explain that his rights over the pawn were limited, explaining that the pawn “was the

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<sup>79</sup> BMA D-2, 1, 80. “Letter from the Basel Mission Committee to the Missionaries in the Gold Coast” February 14, 1861.

<sup>80</sup> BMA D-1.13a Allg. 1,3 “Minutes of the Missionaries General Conference” January 28-31, 1862; Haenger, “Reindorf and the Basel Mission” 20.

property of his mother.”<sup>81</sup> Reindorf’s position was consistent with the collective catechist stance; they had limited authority in respect of pawns, or slaves owned by their families or individual relations.<sup>82</sup> The Basel Missions Field Secretary, J. G. Widman, was however of the opinion that Reindorf, “bought and sold [the pawn]. So the conclusion is simple: he trades in slaves.”<sup>83</sup> The finality of Widman’s conclusions contrasted with the rigidity of Reindorf’s position on indigenous servitude.

For Reindorf, Widman’s position was a reflection of his misunderstanding about the subtle differences between slave ownership and pawnship on the Gold Coast. Reindorf standing up to the mission sought to educate them about practices on the Gold Coast. His views are archived in a document entitled “Reindorf and Colleagues to Basel”<sup>84</sup> that would lead to an investigation of Reindorf’s dismissal by the Slave Emancipation Commission of the Mission.<sup>85</sup> Reindorf’s view, that Christian slaveholders were “a desirable part of African church life. . . . [who] protect[ed] their slaves against evils of heathenism” was however inconsistent with his expressed views about slavery on the Gold Coast in *G. C. A. Histories*. In the latter work, Reindorf suggests that the main aim of Europeans in settling on the coast was to engage in a “slave traffic, which greatly reduced the population of the country.”<sup>86</sup> He went on to mention how the trade was conducted by various European nations with local participation, which for Reindorf was a disease that had retarded the growth of the Gold Coast. He writes succinctly that:

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<sup>81</sup> BMA D-1, 13b, Akropong 14, 19 “Widman to Basel” April 9, and May 9, 1862.

<sup>82</sup> Haenger, “Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860’s. 19.

<sup>83</sup> BMA D-1, 13b, Akropong 19 “Widman to Basel” May 9, 1862.

<sup>84</sup> BMA D-1, 13b, Akropong 6a “Reindorf and Colleagues to Basel” March 5 1862

<sup>85</sup> BMA D-1, 13a Minutes of Slave Emancipation 1 May 19 1862.

<sup>86</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 144.



The slave trade was begun in 1517, and the general abolition and emancipation took place in 1874. It was a disease imported by Europeans, and which had disastrously affected the country for 357 years. Providentially the curse was removed by the English Governor, but the country was left without a substitute.<sup>87</sup>

Reindorf's position on slavery may be said to be closer to Yoruba Church Missionary Society (CMS) colleague Samuel Johnson who asked for indigenous servitude to be distinguished from slavery.<sup>88</sup> A close reading of the Basel Mission's investigation of Reindorf's conduct, as well as contemporary literature on debt bondage in Africa, shows that Reindorf acted from an indigenous understanding of slavery. An adoption of such a perspective may show that Reindorf had not purchased or sold a slave as Widman proclaimed. I explain below that Reindorf's views may have been in anticipation of contemporary historical work on pawnship in Africa.<sup>89</sup>

In a report to Basel, Elias Schrenk, a missionary serving on the Gold Coast, wrote that a headstrong "slave" named Awoye, belonging to Reindorf's parents, had been entrusted to Reindorf's care.<sup>90</sup> Awoye, true to her alleged truant character, ran away to Aburi, where she had been engaged in an amorous relationship with a local royal. She subsequently left the said lover for neighboring Akropong, and accused the people of Aburi of attempting to ritually sacrifice her. Awoye swore an oath at Aburi, which necessitated a local hearing or palaver. Reindorf as legal guardian of Awoye was called to attend the hearing and to bear the cost of her legal expense.<sup>91</sup> Initially, Reindorf told the hearing that he was unwilling to bear the cost for sheep and

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<sup>87</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 152.

<sup>88</sup> Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, 126-30.

<sup>89</sup> See for example, Toyin Falola and Paul E. Lovejoy, *Pawnship in Africa: Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

<sup>90</sup> BMA D-1, 24 "Schrenk to Basel" Jan 31 1872" Christianborg, 50.

<sup>91</sup> BMA D-1, 24 "Schrenk to Basel" Jan 31 1872" Christianborg, 50.

rum amounting to \$12.5.<sup>92</sup> He rescinded his decision after he sought the advice of his colleague, Nicholas Clerk, who cautioned Reindorf that he was a native, and that “Akwapim slaves run away to Accra, too, and if [he] as an Accra man [did] not pay anything to the Akwapims, the latter [would] treat the former in similar cases the same way, so, [he] advise[ed] [him] to pay according to country law.”<sup>93</sup> Reindorf therefore, paid for the customary rites of Awoye’s court proceedings at Aburi, not because he was unchristian or sold slaves, but, because he was a Ga man from Accra.

Reindorf argued his case to the Emancipation Committee; by insisting that having been entrusted by his parents to offer some discipline to Awoye, his patience had waned because he felt Awoye was bent on not staying with him. He also considered that “the chief of Aburi declared he would take her, so I sold her, not least because I had so much to pay in Aburi. I cannot see that I did anything wrong.”<sup>94</sup> The status of Awoye as slave or pawn is murky, but her ability to independently engage intimate liaisons, sue for court proceedings, and her truancy in Reindorf’s eyes indicates a certain degree of freedom.

From these proceedings Reindorf appears to have participated in an “awowa awadie (pawn or pledge marriage).”<sup>95</sup> Awowa awadie within the cultural matrix of Akan pawnship was the marriage between a man and woman of free birth, which ascribed pawn status on the latter, as a result of a debt she or her family may owe to

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<sup>92</sup> BMA D-1, 13a “Minutes of Slave Emancipation 1 May 19 1862.”

<sup>93</sup> BMA D-1, 13a “Minutes of Slave Emancipation 1 May 19 1862,”; Haenger “Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860’s. A Young man stands up to Mission pressure” in Jenkins, *Recovery of West African Past*, 19.

<sup>94</sup> BMA D-1, 13a Minutes of Slave Emancipation 1 May 19 1862; Haenger “Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860’s. A Young man stands up to Mission pressure” in Jenkins, *Recovery of West African Past*, 26.

<sup>95</sup> Beverly Grier “Pawns, Porters, Petty Traders: Women in the Transition to Cash Crop Agriculture in Colonial Ghana” in *Pawnship in Africa*, 167.

the man. Toyin Falola and Paul Lovejoy offer a clear definition of pawning as a system that “regulated the circulation of females, controlled their labor, provided sexual access, and determined the rights over children. And hence the destiny of many female pawns was a subservient form of marriage.”<sup>96</sup>

To further contextualize, in Peter Haenger’s contribution to the International Seminar on Reindorf, he interprets Reindorf’s conduct in this situation as acting according to “country law” to offset the debt he incurred at the proceedings. Haenger also offers critical explanations about the motives of both Awoye and Reindorf. The former’s actions are difficult to infer, but Reindorf’s hand was forced, being a Ga knowledgeable about Akan or Aburi forms of voluntary and involuntary servitude.<sup>97</sup> In this case, Reindorf had also demonstrated that he was willing to live independent of the Basel Mission, retiring to farm at a land he had bought near Aburi.<sup>98</sup>

This issue of slave emancipation was however not the sole cause of Reindorf’s voluntary retirement from the Basel Mission in 1867. Although he does not offer details, Haenger notes that Reindorf retired because of dissatisfaction about the racial and unequal promotion and salary practices of the Basel Mission.<sup>99</sup> The emancipation reports and Schrenk’s letters to Basel also signify Reindorf’s dissatisfaction with being subordinated to inexperienced and less competent foreign missionaries, while he took on a majority of the workload.<sup>100</sup> The issue of slavery was therefore the culmination of long standing tensions between the native catechists and the foreign missionaries. An 1870 report shows that while the highest paid African catechist earned an annual

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<sup>96</sup> Falola and Lovejoy, *Pawnship in Africa*, 11.

<sup>97</sup> Haenger, “Reindorf and the Basel Mission” 25-29.

<sup>98</sup> Haenger, “Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860’s,” 25-29.

<sup>99</sup> Haenger, “Reindorf and the Basel Mission in the 1860’s,” 27-29.

<sup>100</sup> BMA D-1, 24 “Schrenk to Basel” Jan 31 1872” Christianborg 50.

income of 38 pounds, J. G. Widman earned 150. Thus, Reindorf in his yearly annual reports, called on the mission to review its monetary practices.<sup>101</sup>

These examples and illustrations of Reindorf's socio-cultural background and dual education, his various identities as Christian, Mulatto, Ga, demonstrate his articulation of an inter-ethnic African modern state, and also, a predisposition to be an independent person. Reindorf's participation at the palaver of Awoye also shows that he had direct experience of how negotiations are handled in the traditional setting. This is also demonstrated by his ability to show compromise in paying the legal fees of Awoye even though the ritual sacrifices may have been against his Christian upbringing. Reindorf was therefore well equipped to sit over a palaver of his own; *The Gold Coast and Asante*.

### **Reindorf as Native and Western trained Historian: His Methods and Reasons for Uniting the Gold Coast and Asante**

To comprehend Reindorf's devices for his nationalistic endeavors we must understand Reindorf's place as native intellectual. This is particularly important because as indicated in my historiographical section Reindorf's mode for collecting materials, and his scheme for uniting Gold Coast peoples, has been described as "chaotic."<sup>102</sup> My interpretation of Reindorf's data collection methods and his writing is informed by Reindorf's home-grown historical method. He was using an indigenous Gold Coast approach to history identified by Augustus Casely Hayford as an oral

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<sup>101</sup> BMA D-10.4, 24 Reindorf. Annual Report, Mayera December 28, 1881; BMA D-9. 1c.3 Voranschläge für Verwilligungs-Tabelle 1870 für die afrikanischen Stationen

<sup>102</sup> Field, *Social Organization*, 145 n1.

prosopographical approach.<sup>103</sup> Hayford argues that by utilizing prosopography-individual and collective biographical information, family genealogy and stool histories, Reindorf worked *G. C. A. Histories* into the “chronological and critical framework” of western historiography.<sup>104</sup> And if there is any doubt that he had a sense of history, Reindorf himself defines the discipline, noting the distinction between written and oral history, and the importance of both to his nationalist project:

A history is the methodological narration of events in the order in which they successively occurred, exhibiting the origin and progress, the causes and effects, and the auxiliaries and tendencies of that which has occurred in connection with a nation. It is as it were, the speculum and measure-tape of that nation, showing its true shape and stature. Hence a nation not possessing a history has no true representation of all the stages of its development, whether it is in a state of progress or in a state of retrogression. In the place of written history, tradition, which from antiquity was a natural source of history, was kept and transmitted regularly by our ancestors to their children in their day. It was not of course in uniform theory but existed and exercised its influence in the physical and mental powers of our people.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to this understanding of history, Reindorf also had experience with collecting and recording oral histories. Reindorf whose Western education begins with the German-Swiss Basel Mission School also got his first exposure in data collection through the Basel Mission. As part of its effort to understand the cultures of the peoples they proselytized to, the Mission mandated its literate employees like Reindorf to collect oral histories from their communities.<sup>106</sup> Reindorf is however not necessarily an uncritical acculturated historian of the western tradition. True, there is evidence to suggest that Reindorf was exposed to European history and intellectuals

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<sup>103</sup> Augustus L. Casely Hayford, e-mail messages to author, August 20-September 9, 2008; “A Genealogical Study of Cape Coast Stool Families” Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992), 26.

<sup>104</sup> Hayford, *A Genealogical Study*, 26.

<sup>105</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, iv.

<sup>106</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

when he studied in the Danish school in the Christianborg castle (1842-1847), and the Basel Mission School at Christianborg and Abokobi (1852-1855).<sup>107</sup> R. G. Jenkins in fact suggests correctly that Reindorf learned to write local, national, and universal histories from this training, and he was reputed to be a well-versed history teacher by his colleagues and students at the Basel Mission.<sup>108</sup> Jenkins and others, therefore see Reindorf as having inherited his method from the Danish-German pietistic tradition, and the German historical preoccupation with interpreting universal history.<sup>109</sup>

The logbook of the Christianborg Middle School in the 1870's confirms the universal approach to history by the Basel Mission schools, in a period when Reindorf may have started teaching. The curriculum shows teaching in Bible textual analysis, arithmetic, religious doctrine, Social history, English history, Oceania, and America physical geography, Persian wars, and Ga composition.<sup>110</sup> While W. Rademacher's *Allgemeine Geichichte* (General History) and Ernst Kappe's *Kleine Weltegechichte oder Gechichten aus der Gechichte* (Short World History of Stories from History),<sup>111</sup> may very well have shaped Reindorf's writing, as we have seen from his socialization in traditional history, such influences should not be overestimated.

Reindorf straddled African, Creole, and European cultural worlds as an innovator rather than an imitator, presaging the evolution of oral traditions as history, and as historical sources for written history. While uncertain of Reindorf's process or

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<sup>107</sup> The school relocated from Christianborg to Abokobi, because Christianborg had been bombed by the British in 1854 due to a local resistance to Poll Tax. See also Harry Odamtten, *The History of the Introduction of Christianity to Abokobi* (B.A. diss., University of Ghana, Legon 2001).

<sup>108</sup> Jenkins, *Gold Coast Historians*, 305-306.

<sup>109</sup> Jenkins, *Gold Coast Historians*, 171-174; PRAAD E.C. 7/17 "Christianborg Presbyterian Boarding Middle School Papers Diary of logbook Boys School August, 1887-June 1895."

<sup>110</sup> PRAAD E.C. 7/17 "Christianborg Presbyterian Boarding Middle School Papers Diary of logbook Boys School August, 1887-June 1895."

<sup>111</sup> Jenkins, *Gold Coast Historians*, 170-171.

how many women he included in his respondents, what we are sure of is that Reindorf reiterates the importance of women like his grandmother who was duty bound to impart the traditions.<sup>112</sup> Women may have therefore constituted a substantial number of the “more than two hundred persons of both sexes [Reindorf] obtained what knowledge of the subject [he] now possess[ed]. These traditions [he] . . . carefully compared in order to arrive at the truth.”<sup>113</sup> In addition to combining these oral traditions with written sources in English, German, and Danish sources,<sup>114</sup> Reindorf hired his kinsman, and future Ga King, Tackie Tawiah, as a research assistant in 1864. This was when he hit the brick wall with elders who for unknown reasons were “refraining from imparting” their traditions.<sup>115</sup> Reindorf gained entry into the world of the elders when Tackie “then not on the throne assisted [him] greatly by telling the old men to tell [them].”<sup>116</sup>

In light of Reindorf’s highly innovative ethnographic and pseudo-gendered approaches, as well as his multiple intellectual heritages, it is unfair to ascribe the history of ideas shaping Reindorf’s writing of *G. C. A. Histories* to German Enlightenment scholar Johan Gottfried von Herder who produced an outline of a *Philosophical History of Humanity*.<sup>117</sup> Granted, Reindorf may have encountered Herder indirectly through the pedagogy of his German Basel Mission teachers, Zimmerman and Christaller. These German missionaries had imbued Herder’s biblical

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<sup>112</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

<sup>113</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vi.

<sup>114</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vii-viii.

<sup>115</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

<sup>116</sup> BMA D-20 27, 7 C.C. Reindorf, “Reindorf to Christaller, April 15 1895.”

<sup>117</sup> See Frederick M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: from Enlightenment to Nationalism*. Oxford, (Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1965); Johan Gottfried Herder, *Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity* (1784-91).

scholarship and writings on the philosophy of language, and as a result had interests in Ghanaian language and history.

Yet, a more nuanced approach to Reindorf's writing leads Emmanuel Akyeampong to conclude that in addition to Jenkins' assumption that Herder influenced Reindorf, it is possible that Ga and African cosmology also influenced Reindorf.<sup>118</sup> Akyeampong goes on to demonstrate that when Reindorf wrote about "the ability to effect change" among the Akan, Ga and Ewé peoples of modern Ghana, he was indeed offering interpretations of power derived from indigenously Ghanaian notions of power, authority, religion, and spirituality.<sup>119</sup> Akyeampong's analyses, and Hayford's definition of the temporal and social aspects of indigenous Ghanaian oral prosopography portends that there is much more originality to be gleaned from Reindorf's *G. C. A. Histories*.

I think it is prudent to argue from this evidence that Reindorf employed an approach to research that was more 'grounded' in the histories and social knowledge of the people he wrote about. Reindorf is what contemporary sociologist would call a "grounded theorist."<sup>120</sup> That is, Reindorf's conclusions for seeing the Gold Coast peoples and their neighbors as having a shared past was generated from the multiple historical contexts he saw from various oral traditions he collected. Reindorf thus, put

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<sup>118</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, "C.C. Reindorf on the Cultural Articulation of Power in Precolonial Ghana: Observations of a Social Historian" in *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 103-104.

<sup>119</sup> Akyeampong, "C.C. Reindorf on the Cultural Articulation of Power," 103-104.

<sup>120</sup> B. Glaser, and A. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Chicago, Aldine, 1967); A. Strauss, and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990).



the Gold Coast people's comprehension of themselves at the center of his palaver analysis, rather than privilege the colonial creation of a Gold Coast entity.<sup>121</sup>

It is in this context of Reindorf's groundings in Gold Coast society that I offer commentary on the debate about the language in which Reindorf's *G. C. A. Histories* was first written. The debate began with S. K. Odamtten and R. G. Jenkins on one hand, and subsequent commentary by Thomas Bearth and Adam Jones who both seem to straddle the middle ground.<sup>122</sup> Molefi Kete Asante has argued about the importance of language as a tool of social control, and also as "the essential element of social cohesion" and stresses the need for the oppressed to utilize language as a function of their liberation.<sup>123</sup> In this same vein, Maxwell Owusu suggests that:

A prior ability to speak and understand several relevant vernaculars is essential if the ethnographer is to avoid serious factual errors and misleading theoretical conclusions . . . It is my firm belief that the continued professionalism in the field of African studies, the field's contribution to science and society, and the extent to which ethnographic knowledge could be of real service to the host community and government all depend on data quality control as it relates particularly to linguistic competence is successfully tackled.<sup>124</sup>

Reindorf understood the importance of language as a function of social cohesion and ethnographic research articulated by Asante and Owusu.<sup>125</sup> This is why he was quick to admit in his correspondence with his editor and colleague in the Basel Mission that as an Accra man, he had initially used the Ga inflected spelling Ashante,

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<sup>121</sup> For theories arguing for the centering of the African experience see works of Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea; Afrocentricity*, 6.

<sup>122</sup> The late Emeritus Professor S. K. Odamtten, and my paternal grandfather are first cousins, and I knew him personally. This relationship should not color my views. Odamtten, *Missionary Factor*, 225; Jenkins, *Pursuits of Gold Coast Pasts*, Thomas Bearth, "J.G. Christaller. A Holistic View of language and culture- and C.C. Reindorf's History" in *Recovery of West African Past*, 83-101; Adam Jones, "Reindorf the Historian" in *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 115-133.

<sup>123</sup> Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 31-43.

<sup>124</sup> Maxwell Owusu, "Ethnography of Africa: The Usefulness of the Useless," in *American Anthropologist* 80 (1978): 326.

<sup>125</sup> Owusu Brempong, "Language as a Factor in Ethnographic Research" in *Institute of African Studies Research Review*, NS 8 (1992): 55-63.

but later preferred the Akan-twi, Asante, as was used for the publication.<sup>126</sup> This should give us an inclination as to whether Reindorf first wrote the histories in Ga as Odamtten argued, and R. G. Jenkins disagreed.<sup>127</sup> None of the opposing sides in this argument have advanced enough evidence to show that Reindorf first wrote *G. C. A. Histories* in Ga or English.<sup>128</sup> Thomas Bearth however recognizes that a perusal of “the Ga version of the *History* [shows it] was not a by-product of his work in English, but a project in its own right . . . that the English version might have been, in a sense, the by-product of the work in Ga.”<sup>129</sup>

Having read both language versions of the text, I offer the following amendments to Bearth’s conclusions. It is clear that Reindorf could not have recorded the traditions in English from his over two hundred elderly Gold Coast interviewees. The work was rather more likely a “by-product” of the collected traditions in Ga, as well as Ewé, Akan twi or Akuapem. These collected oral histories were later fully written in both Ga and English. Thus, the traditions were certainly recorded in local languages, and native speakers of Ga, Akan, and English like myself would notice that Reindorf kept the traditions as he had collected them from the local language even in translation to English. This is why Irene Odotei posthumously critiqued Reindorf for “accepting most of the oral traditions . . . and not cross-checking them against contemporary evidence.”<sup>130</sup> Others, who contend that Reindorf’s work was primarily an invaluable sourcebook and guide to the past, have defended Reindorf’s use of the

<sup>126</sup> BMA D-20.27.2, 1-4 C.C. Reindorf, “Reindorf to Christaller, August 26, 1893”.

<sup>127</sup> C.C. Reindorf, *Shika Nshonaa le ke Ashante. Blemasane ni anyie blemasaji ni agba ke nabu titri ke saji ni anma hu no anma le. Ni ji saji ni eba jen miinshe afii ohai ete mli: keje afi 1500 le no ke yashi afi 1856 le* (Gold Coast, 1891) BMA D20.26 (D.I. g.3); Odamtten, *Missionary Factor*, 225-228; Jenkins, *Gold Coast Historians*, 297; Bearth “J.G. Christaller. A Holistic View of language” 83-101.

<sup>128</sup> Ga version is in BMA D.20.27; Reindorf, G.C.A. *Histories*, 1895 edition.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Bearth, “J.G. Christaller. A Holistic View of language,” *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 92.

<sup>130</sup> Odotei, *Ga and their Neighbors*, viii.

traditions.<sup>131</sup> Reindorf himself considered his work pioneering, and “deemed it impossible for one man unaided to carry out such an important work to perfection.”<sup>132</sup> The sum total of the evidence gathered leads me to conclude that the intellectual investigations for *G. C. A. Histories*, excepting the written sources consulted, were conducted in Ghanaian languages; and the English and Ga versions were both by-products of this initial investigation.

Aside the pioneering qualities of Reindorf’s work, there was a larger goal, a historiographic-nationalistic goal in sight for Reindorf. His aim was to connect the southern parts of the Gold Coast with its northern terminus in Asante, thus “creating a starting point in writing a history of a nation.”<sup>133</sup> Of particular importance to this scheme was Reindorf’s use of local pan-ethnic ideas and practices to create an indigenous Pan-African identity among the Gold Coast peoples and their West African neighbors. A Ga-Adangbé himself, Carl Reindorf drew upon the oral histories of his ethnic group to show their relationship to a larger community of West African peoples with whom Ga-Adangbé peoples shared a common heritage, history, and social identity. This is evident in Reindorf’s very first chapter in *G. C. A. Histories*. He begins:

The name of Africa is derived from a Punic word, signifying according to Bochart, ‘ears of corn’. Our subject is the Gold Coast, situated in the western part of this great continent, which is called the Guinea, and divided into two parts, Upper and Lower Guinea. The Gold Coast is the portion of the Upper Guinea Coast, which is bounded on the East by the River Volta. The Western border extends from point 20 miles to the eastward of the mouth of the river Assini on a meridian of W. long. 3<sup>0</sup>10’ (G) and farther inland 2<sup>0</sup>50’ or in the Tanno Valley, to a parallel of N. Lat. 6<sup>0</sup>20’. From thence the line of demarcation between Asante and the Gold

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<sup>131</sup> Jones, “Reindorf the Historian,” *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 116.

<sup>132</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vi.

<sup>133</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vii.

Coast Protectorate bends east and south-east to the River ofe near the town of terebuom, follows that river down to its confluence with the Pra, and then ascends this river to the parallel to the River Volta. The boundary on the south is the Sea with a shoreline of about 250 miles.<sup>134</sup>

It is clear from the above that almost a century before Robert July's ideas made it into print; Reindorf understood that "to understand the great movements of African history . . . it [was] necessary to grasp the essentials of Africa's geography."<sup>135</sup>

Reindorf purposely defined the contours of his subject, the Gold Coast, within a West African and African context, because the Gold Coast peoples had not lived in isolation, and centuries of mutual engagement elide their differences. From this distinctly African, and West African framework, Reindorf begins the process of investigating the ingredients for his palaver sauce, i.e., particularities and origins of each of the groups within his perspective and how they had engaged each other through ritual symbols, cultural exchange, and negotiation.

### **Reindorf's Palaver Sauce: Real, Symbolic, and Imagined Relationships**

Reindorf used three tools to create his pan-ethnic identity. These were: real, imagined, and symbolically constructed social identities, which blurred the perceived ethnic differences that existed between different groups of people in Gold Coast, West Africa. Also at work was what Victor Turner terms multivocal symbols. It is an idea particularly resonant with West African notions of ethnic identity and symbols of kinship that embody marriage, gift giving, as well as ideas of spiritual and secret societies that are used collectively to affirm social ties. These multivocal symbols are

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<sup>134</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 17.

<sup>135</sup> Robert July, *A History of the African People* (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1970), 3.

what Reindorf uses in linking the various peoples in his *G. C. A. Histories*, what I have termed *Imagined, Real and Symbolic*.

### **Imagined Linkages**

In *G. C. A. Histories*, Reindorf engaged in some imaginative thinking grounded in unconfirmed classical sources. This sort of speculative writing is subject to a lot of critique by modern historical standards. One wonders for example if Reindorf use of written history was naive. Of particular interest to our discussion, was his linking of the Gold Coast to the civilizations of Egypt, Carthage, and Phoenicia.<sup>136</sup> While the classical literature Reindorf relies on for his “imagined” relationship between the Gold Coast, North Africa and the eastern civilizations has been debated considerably, a review of the literature will reveal that his speculative thinking may have some merit.<sup>137</sup> The alleged funding of Phoenician mariners, by Pharaoh Necho, to circumnavigate Africa; and the later exploration by Hanno the Carthaginian, has for example enjoyed some intellectual ink in studies on Carthage and Phoenicia. These are particularly evident in the pages of the *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*.<sup>138</sup> These studies suggest that there was in fact a possibility in Reindorf’s imaginative historical interpretation of classical literature even though one may still surmise that Reindorf’s linking of Gold Coast peoples to these African and Mediterranean civilizations was within the tradition of valorizing Africa’s past.

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<sup>136</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 17-18.

<sup>137</sup> For scholarship after Reindorf on the Classical civilizations and the Gold Coast see Ghanaian Classical Scholar, A.A. Kwapong, *Africa Antiqua* in *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 2 (1956): 1-12.

<sup>138</sup> For treatments on Phoenician and Carthaginian presence on the Gold Coast, West Africa since Reindorf, in addition to Kwapong, *Africa Antiqua* in *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 2 (1956) see book length treatments that also discuss the circumnavigations in Donald Harden, *The Phoenicians*, (New York: Praeger, 1962) Brian H. Warmington, *Carthage* (London: Hale, 1969)

Reindorf then moves from this African-Mediterranean paradigm of analysis in *G. C. A History* to a West African perspective. After defining the Gold Coast, he writes of Guinea or West Africa:

Ancient authorities have asserted that Guinea was a mighty kingdom, whose princes had subdued numerous countries, uniting them into a powerful realm. This account is contradicted by authorities who assert that no traces of such a Kingdom had survived; and it appears that if a great united realm had ever existed, it had been divided into several independent states shortly before the arrival of the Portuguese.<sup>139</sup>

One is tempted to dismiss Reindorf's statement as an intellectual dead end, as no such West African kingdom has been found to exist. Modern scholarship may however offer some clues to Reindorf's restrained speculation. Ivor Wilks in a series of lectures entitled "One Nation Many Histories: Ghana Past and Present" delivered at the University of Ghana, notes:

Ghana and now I refer to the modern Ghana, was never part of the Malian Empire in a political sense. It did, however, have a place in the old cosmological system that was to the Mande what the Old testament was to the Jews. When Mande, or Malian, was created in the region of the interior delta of the Niger, a rainbow swung in an arc to define the limits of the world. It came to rest in Accra's Sakumo Lagoon in the southeast . . . People of the modern Ghana were given a place within the "forty-four tribes" that made up the Malian world. The Fanti for example, featured as part of the four castes of blacksmiths, and the Ga as part of the sixteen families of noble captives.<sup>140</sup>

Wilks' Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorial Lectures were delivered orally, so it is unclear exactly from who, what, or where Wilks derived this information he describes as *recondite*.<sup>141</sup> His statement however does support Reindorf's thesis of a West African federation even if only cosmological. Since Wilks' lecture however,

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<sup>139</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 17.

<sup>140</sup> Ivor Wilks, *One Nation Many Histories: Ghana Past and Present* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1996), 23-24.

<sup>141</sup> It appears that Wilks' oral presentation was orally recorded and then documented without asking him for citations.

scholarship about the Gold Coast has shown that when the Portuguese first arrived in the Gold Coast in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, there was already in existence a coastal trade between the Gold Coast and its neighbors to the west (Grain Coast) and the Kingdom of Benin to the east. The Portuguese, with their big vessels, subsequently became middlemen in this existing trade.<sup>142</sup> Wilks' own less abstruse research on Ghana also shows the existence of trade between the Gold Coast and their Sahelian neighbors; this was the Ghanaian half of the overland trans-Saharan trade routes.<sup>143</sup> His more recent scholarship also dates the existence of migrant Malian, specifically Mande or Dyula traders on the Gold Coast prior to Portuguese arrival in the fifteenth century.<sup>144</sup> Thus, this well-documented existence of these West African trades—both coastal and overland—confirms that West African peoples, prior to the fifteenth century, were well aware of their neighbors in far flung places of the continent. While it does not confirm the existence of a West African empire called Guinea as Reindorf intimates, the evidence suggests a possibility of a mutual exchange of religion, items of religion, migrations through trade, marriage and other products of human contact in West Africa.

In this sense, the cultural and political unity Reindorf was claiming for the coastal regions of West Africa, "which extended from Benin up to the river Gambia"<sup>145</sup> is no different from the socio-cultural linkages modern African historian, Boubacar Barry has recently claimed for the Greater Senegambia region of West Africa in the Senegal

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<sup>142</sup> Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*.

<sup>143</sup> Ivor Wilks, "Medieval Trade Route from the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea" in *JAH* 3, 2 (1962): 337-341. Third Conference on African History and Archeology: School of Oriental and African Studies July 3-7 1961

<sup>144</sup> Ivor Wilks, "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. 1. The Matter of Bitu" *JAH*, 3 (1982), 333-349; "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. II: The Struggle for Trade" *JAH* 23, 4 (1982), 463-472. See also Duarte Pacheco Pereira and R. Mauny, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* (Bissau, 1956).

<sup>145</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 18.

and Gambian river valleys. Reindorf, and Barry both attempt “to achieve a regional historiography within the framework of a coherent vision” for their respective regions.<sup>146</sup>

### Real Shared Identities

Several examples of real shared identities among West African peoples may be extracted from Reindorf’s text. Drawing on the oral traditions of the Ga for instance, Reindorf explains that notwithstanding the several wars, mutual antagonism, conquest and subjugation that has ensued among the Ga, Awutu, and Akyem, the three groups have a shared a beginning dating to their dispersal on the Accra plains. Reindorf writes:

The ancestors of the tribes of Akra[Accra], Late[Larteh], Obutu, and Mowure are said to have migrated from the sea, arriving on the coast tribe after tribe . . . Prince Ayite who at his father’s request marched with all the Akras, Obutus, and the Twi Prince to Ayawaso and established his capital on the hill known as *Okaikoi* or *Kplagon*. The Aseres settled at Amonmole, the Obutus on the West of that hill, and the Akyem prince went to the interior to be ruler over the people there.<sup>147</sup>

We are not privy to the means by which Reindorf arrived at the common migration of the Ga, Obutu, Akyem, and others; however the Ga and the Obutu to this day, collectively celebrate some annual ritual and political activities like the Homowo and Odwira festivals.<sup>148</sup> To confirm his thesis, Reindorf suggested further linkages, writing

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<sup>146</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Senegal and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1998), xv. For Reindorf, there is no clear geographic definition of the places and peoples that constitute “from Benin to the River Gambia,” but it seems that Barry’s Senegambia, begins where Reindorf’s end, that is between the river Gambia and the Senegal River.

<sup>147</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 19-20.

<sup>148</sup> King/Mantse Tackie Tawiah III, the sitting Ga Mantse, was recently quoted by the *Ghana Commission on Culture*’s mouthpiece, the *Cultural News*, as saying “those who claimed that Ga’s cannot inherit matrilinearly [sic] must take cue from the historical antecedent of Naa Dode Akai 1 of Obutu whose reign was subsequently transferred to his son to continue.” The news story also records “a massive delegation led by *Naakye Dode Akoubi VX* from Obutu . . . who (allegedly) paid homage to the Ga Mantse” at the 2007



“the tradition of immigration from the sea exists also among the Twis, the Adanses and the Tafos in Akyem; and the Asante say to this day, that certain people among them have ancestors who came from the sea.”<sup>149</sup> The relationship between the Ga and Obutu has been confirmed by Field’s anthropological thesis on the Ga, Kropp-Dakubu’s socio-linguistic work on Ga language, and Bredwa-Mensah’s archeological work on the Accra plains.<sup>150</sup>

It must be noted at this point that Reindorf did not use these traditions because they were always true in and of themselves; he rather utilized them because the traditions existed and they were useful for his pan-ethnic aims. This is why before he introduces another tradition he sometimes characterizes the inconclusiveness of the preceding tradition: “having pursued this subject so far, we arrive at another tradition.”<sup>151</sup> The tradition Reindorf refers to here is the fairly well documented and researched historical relationship between the Ga and their Adangbe kin with whom the former share mutually intelligible languages, socio-political institutions, and common migratory stories.<sup>152</sup> Reindorf’s collected tradition states that the “Akras and the Adangbes emigrated together from Tetetutu; or as some say from Same, in the East, between two large rivers. After crossing the Volta,<sup>153</sup> they dispersed over the country; the Krobos stayed on the Krobo Mountain, the Shais on another but the Akras reached

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Annual Homowo Festival Celebration in Accra, Ghana. See Lawrence Markwei, *Ga Mantse Launches Attack on Times*, <http://www.Ghanaculture.gov.gh/>

<sup>149</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 20-21.

<sup>150</sup> For all citations see, Kropp-Dakubu, *One Voice: The Linguistic Culture of an Accra Lineage; Korle Meets the Sea: A Socio-Linguistic View*, 105.

<sup>151</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 21.

<sup>152</sup> Irene Odotei has documented for example the migrations of the Ladoku and Osudoku, to the coast in Odotei, *Ga and its Neighbors*, for archeological evidence See Yaw Bredwa Mensah, “An Archaeological Investigation Conducted at Okai Koi Hill (Ayawaso) and its Significance for Iron Age Archaeology in Ghana” (MPhil Thesis, Dept. of Archaeology, University of Ghana), 2; and for linguistic evidence see Kropp-Dakubu, *One Voice: The Linguistic Culture of an Accra Lineage; Korle Meets the Sea: A Socio-Linguistic View*, 105.

<sup>153</sup> See Kamau Brathwaite’s poem above reference’s to the Volta River

the coast.”<sup>154</sup> This is how Reindorf goes about establishing the initial contacts, dispersals between the different ethnicities of and beyond the confines of modern Ghana. For Reindorf then, Pa-African ties precede the Atlantic trade; pan-African ties are steeped in the remembered common migrations, dispersals, and places of origin for different African peoples.

A close reading of Reindorf's *G. C. A. Histories* also shows relationships between Ga and Elmina Fante, Ewe, Asante, Akwamu, and the Fon. Reindorf notes, for example, the relationship between the La-Gamei, Akwamu, and Krobo:

[T]he Akwamus were defeated, and driven beyond the Volta; the Labades[sic] pursuing them had to stay several years at Krobo, intermarried amongst themselves and then removed to Adshimanti on the Akuapem Hills. . . . By their connection with the Akwamus the Labades acquired much of the Twi character, hence it was said the Labades are Twis(Akan).<sup>155</sup>

All of these relationships that Reindorf established for the Ga and their neighbors have been confirmed by current research, each showing the presence of Ga's among other ethnicities, or other ethnic peoples incorporated into Ga society.<sup>156</sup> Sandra Greene, has for example, documented the presence of Ga among the Anlo-Ewe in the eighteenth century and their contributions to the development of fishing and salt industries in Ewe land.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, Reindorf's recounting of what Korang-Larbi describes as “transethnic mutualities and interdependencies” and “ethno-cultural cross-

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<sup>154</sup> Some considerable debate exists about the traditions, Odotei argues internal migration within the Volta Basin for the Ga whilst others argue for external migration, see arguments by Kropp-Dakubu in *One Voice: The Linguistic Culture of an Accra Lineage; Korle Meets the Sea: A Socio-Linguistic View*.

<sup>155</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 42.

<sup>156</sup> On Ewe among Ga for example see Irene Odotei “What is in a name? The Social and Historical Significance of Ga Names” *Institute of African Studies Research Review* NS 5, 2 (1989): 35-52. For relationship between Ga, Elmina, Efutu, Ewe, Akwamu see Wilks, Akwamu 164-1750, xliii-xliv, lv-lvii, 9-14, 21-22.

<sup>157</sup> Sandra E. Greene, “Social Change in Eighteenth Century Anlo: The Role of Technology Markets and Military Conflicts” in *Journal of International African Institute* 58, 1 (1988): 70-86.

insemination”<sup>158</sup> was not only deliberate, but real. And who better to tell it than the Ga, Akan, Guan, and Ewe speaking native pastor; who was also a former trader, farmer and pioneering historian, and whose lived experiences and heritage were as trans-ethnic, ethno-cultural, and real as the peoples he wrote about.

### **Symbolic Relationships**

Various critical assessments of the inter-connected cultural practices and forms of kinship have illuminated our current understandings of identity formation in West Africa.<sup>159</sup> I draw on one to frame this section of Reindorf’s trans-ethnic scheme. This is Victor Turner’s description of ritual symbols as multivocal. In Turner’s conception, symbols necessitate social action, and because of their dynamic characteristics as multivocal, they incipiently represent multiple connotations.<sup>160</sup> It is my contention that Turner’s multivocality of symbols underscores Reindorf’s manipulation of West African notions of ethnic identity. This is seen by how Reindorf shows symbols of kinship embodied in marriage, gift giving, spiritual, and secret societies were collectively used to affirm social ties and thereby avoid conflict. Evidence of a manipulation of symbols is unmistakable in Reindorf’s first chapter when he links the Ga peoples to the Benin Kingdom on account of their shared symbols of state and common rituals. Reindorf postulated:

... the insignia of the kings of Akra were like those used in Benin, and most of their religious ceremonies, e.g. killing the sacrificial animals with sharp stone instead of knives, in order to avoid defiling them, were also

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<sup>158</sup> Kwaku Larbi Korang, *Writing Ghana Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 94, 100.

<sup>159</sup> Forde, ed., *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas*

<sup>160</sup> V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967).

used in Akra . . . the kings of Lagos were [also] formerly appointed in Benin.<sup>161</sup>

While, it may appear as though Reindorf has made some unsubstantiated historical claims about Ga relations with Benin in the east; there is some indirect evidence offered by J. D. Fage about the circulation of beads and trade between Benin and Accra.<sup>162</sup> Kwamenah Poh has also indicated that it was not only the Ga who claimed a relationship with Benin. The Late Kubease, a section of the Late or Larteh who are the Ga's neighbors to the north claim origin from the Kingdom of Benin.<sup>163</sup>

Nonetheless, viewing Reindorf's plot from a purely historical evidence basis might lead us to misunderstand his intentions. The focus should rather be on what the shared symbols and religious ideas that existed in both Akra and the Benin Kingdom were, and what common meanings they evoked. Reindorf does not tell us the particular emblems of state he refers to, and I will not speculate, but he does tell us quite clearly that the objects of ritual between the Benin and Akra are the same. He also tells us the epistemic and cosmological grounds on which "sharp stones are used instead of knives," to circumvent "defiling" a sacrifice. Reindorf was therefore adept at not only manipulating common traditions of origin, but also using the shared cosmological meanings of symbols to reaffirm and legitimize a common pan-ethnic or pan-African identity. Reindorf was thus not limited to ethnic societies in either the Gold Coast or present day modern Ghana, but included the peoples of present day Togo, Benin, and Nigeria; all Ghana's eastern neighbors.

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<sup>161</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 18-19.

<sup>162</sup> J. D. Fage, "Some Remarks on Beads and Trade in Lower Guinea in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" *JAH* 3, 2 (1962): 343-347.

<sup>163</sup> Kwamena Poh, "Government and Politics in the Akuapem State 1730-1850" (M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1968), 274.

Various types of ritual ties bind many people of different ethnicities, and this was certainly the case with Reindorf's Ga and the Asante before the two warred at the battle of Katamanso in 1826. This was when the Ga aligned with others from southeastern Gold Coast against their former associates. Reindorf wrote that his purpose in "connecting the history of Asante with that of the Gold Coast" was to find "a starting point in writing a history of a nation."<sup>164</sup> Reindorf's goals were therefore, in short, nationalistic. But, they were also personal. Reindorf's daughter married one of the Ga grandchildren of Asantehene Osei Yaw, whose daughter Yaa Hom was captured by the Ga in the battle of Katamanso.<sup>165</sup> Reindorf's niece, Martha Randolph, also married Edward Asafu Adjaye whose "father was among the Juaben royals who were taken to the home of Rev. C. C. Reindorf during the Juaben revolt against the Asantehene at the latter part of the century."<sup>166</sup> In Reindorf's own example we see that the bonds of marriage tied his family to another ethnic group, his own Clan in Osu was called the Ashanti Blohum,<sup>167</sup> the Clan was the temporal home of Akan traders who came to the coast to the trade with Europeans.<sup>168</sup> In this case ties of trade and marriage binded the Ga and Asante, but as I explain below there were spiritual bonds as well.

T. C. McCaskie has also comprehensively considered the relationship between the Asante and the Ga. McCaskie writes particularly about how the relationship between the two ethnic groups was derives from their common pursuits of advantage in the Atlantic trade with European traders on the coast.<sup>169</sup> Aside from trade and marriage

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<sup>164</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vii.

<sup>165</sup> McCaskie, "Asante and Ga. The History of a Relationship," *Recovery of West African Pasts*, 142-143.

<sup>166</sup> Reindorf, *Remembering Reindorf*, 11.

<sup>167</sup> Spelling is in Ga as the Osu people spell it.

<sup>168</sup> Gyase Asafoatse Akapeh II of the Osu Mankralo Stool, interview by author, Osu-Accra, Ghana, October 7, 2008.

<sup>169</sup> McCaskie, "Asante and Ga. The History of a Relationship," *Recovery of West African Past*, 135-153.

connections to Asante, there are other symbolic processes at work in the relationship between the Ga and Asante as told by Reindorf. This affiliation was a spiritual relationship. McCaskie notes that the Asante were the stronger partners in the relationship, having defeated Akyem, the Ga people's previous overlord. However, like Akyeampong, I suggest a possible rebalancing of the equilibrium holding the Ga-Asante relationship to the advantage of Asante. In both Ga and Asante, physical power or military strength was predicated on spiritual power, and in the eyes of Asante the Ga's were adept at "cooking or boiling" war.<sup>170</sup> And Reindorf writes that before the Ga took to the field against Asante in 1826, the Asante:

Used to apprise the Kings of Akra and their fetishes of any projected expedition, and received in return fetish leaves and war-medicines. On return from such expeditions large presents of prisoners and spoils were sent to the Akras. Further there were annual presents sent by the former kings of Asante to the chiefs of Akra.<sup>171</sup>

If the Asante held military strength and numbers, then the Ga also held the more or equally potent spiritual power in the relationship. An indication of such spiritual power is evident in Asante's preparations before they were vanquished in 1826. Asante first consulted the Tano deity who indicated "he had been defeated on the coast by Akra Fetishes." Then they consulted the Dente oracle who also predicted defeat for Asante. The King, Osei Yaw, therefore used alternative means to boil the war before encountering the Ga, which was to consult Muslim diviners.<sup>172</sup>

Meanwhile, the principal jemawojii or deities of Accra, Sakumo, Lakpa were busy cooking the war, in order to draw the Asante into a hasty war.<sup>173</sup> Nai, the sea deity

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<sup>170</sup> Akyeampong, "C.C. Reindorf on the Cultural Articulation of Power," 106-108.

<sup>171</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 168.

<sup>172</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 193-194.

<sup>173</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 170.

and senior most of all Ga deities, and who Reindorf claimed a relationship with, promised: "I have already raised my sword" while the female Lagoon deity Kole assured, "I have my sacred basin already in my left hand, and I will sprinkle the refreshing water on my husbands."<sup>174</sup> The foregoing shows that between the Asante and Ga, the latter were weary of the former's military prowess, while the Asante acknowledged Ga spiritual strength. This view or common spiritual belief of the two groups was strengthened by the Asante defeat. Prior to the Katamanso war however, the mutual exchange of spiritual protection by the Ga and military non-intervention by the Asante, symbolical united the Asante and the Ga, to the point that the latter almost went to war on behalf of Asante against its enemies.<sup>175</sup> The said adversaries—the European interests, the Akuapem, Akyem Abuakwa, and Fante—eventually vacillated in 1811, and war was avoided.<sup>176</sup> Therefore, the basis of the relationship of gift exchange between the Asante and Ga, and the mutual respect they gave each other, was ensconced in a shared cognition of the world. In other words, in the minds of both ethnic groups there existed spiritual power in their world through spiritual forces, and the Ga were more proficient at harnessing such powers for war. This belief in Ga dexterity in spiritual matters created a bond between the two groups.

Reindorf's pan-ethnic scheme was therefore not limited to real blood or common migrations of distinct ethnic groups, but also involved showing and manipulating shared histories of trade, common worldviews or shared understanding of the cosmos. An important dimension of this togetherness that Reindorf creates is that he does not shy from writing about the numerous conflicts that have ensued

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<sup>174</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 174.

<sup>175</sup> McCaskie, "Asante and Ga. The History of a Relationship," 135-138.

<sup>176</sup> McCaskie, "Asante and Ga. The History of a Relationship," 135-138.

among the ethnic societies that he includes in the *G. C. A. Histories*. He recorded almost every war that had been fought until 1856, but like a good judge of an African palaver, where “jaw jawing” or negotiations are held until consensus is reached, Reindorf was successful at reworking the conflicts into a shared national history of primarily, the Gold Coast and Asante, and expansively the peoples of the Lower Guinea Coast. Reindorf your Palaver is indeed Sweet.

### **Will the Real Father of Ghanaian/African History Please Stand Up?**

It is clear that Reindorf’s multiple identities—Ga, mulatto, Basel Mission pastor, trader in the Ewe area of the Gold Coast, farmer in Aburi, Akuapem—shaped his writing of *G. C. A. Histories*. Reindorf grew up in Osu and Gamashi, which both had Alata sections of their city-states. The Alata were combination of Allada pawns and refugees, Akan migrants, traders, and pawns. In Osu, there was also Osu-Ashante, a combination of migrant Dangbe, Ga, and Asante traders and representatives of the Asante stool.<sup>177</sup> Osu, as I have shown with Reindorf’s family, was also known for its success in incorporating children of mixed racial heritage, who had access to state offices, albeit not always uncontested, into its society.<sup>178</sup> Reindorf was therefore predisposed to adopting a pan-ethnic approach to history that has, until now, been glossed over by scholars.

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<sup>177</sup> Gyase Asafoatse Akapeh II of the Osu Mankralo Stool, interview by author, Osu-Accra, Ghana, October 7, 2008.

<sup>178</sup> Parker has interpreted the opposition to Reindorf’s meddling in Osu state affairs as based on race, however a closer reading will show that when reference was made to mullatofoi by other aspirants to Ga stools, their claims were not racial but reference to the fact that the Reindorf’s were seen as Yei abii, children of women in the patrician, in a system where first preference went to hiin abii or male descendants of the patrician.



For someone of European heritage, his schema was not racial, but based on the traditions and movements of African peoples. And while his non-racial Pan-African scheme may have led others to exclude him from being considered a Pan-African intellectual, his success in creating a pan-ethnic people can be attributed to his knowledge of, ability to speak, read, and/or write in Ga-Adangbe, Guan, Ewe, Akan, Danish, German, and English. These abilities in turn, gave him access to a variety of Lower Guinea Coast worlds.

Reindorf was not a trained historian in the modern sense of the word, however if there is any putative stage for the development of history as a discipline, Reindorf possessed all attributes of a historian in the making. He was in his lifetime, a well reputed history teacher of the Basel Mission School, and possessed some theological training on account of his being vice-principal of the Akropong Theological Seminary and his ordination as pastor in 1872. Reindorf's straddling of indigenous African modalities of history, primary, and secondary documents, was impeccable, and qualified him as a pioneer historian. This is why Heinz-Hauser-Renner hastened to call him an "African Herodotus."<sup>179</sup> This is complimentary and even flattering—the association of a father of modern African history with the father of classical western history. I opine though, that Reindorf's data gathering methods, his oral techniques, linguistic skills and evaluation of primary and secondary documents, and his writing were far less in the tradition of Herodotus, and more the father of the multi-disciplinary arena of modern African Studies.

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<sup>179</sup> Heinz Hauser-Renner, "Examining Text Sediments: Commending the Pioneer Historian as an African Herodotus: On the Making of the New Annotated Edition of Reindorf's "Gold Coast and Asante" " *History in Africa* 35 (2008): 231-299.

Reindorf also exhibits attributes of an iconoclastic scholar. Early on, he refused to be instructed in Ga by an instructor who was only beginning to learn the language, and later challenged the racial institutional hierarchy of the Basel Mission. He held strong views about the distinction between indigenous servitude and Atlantic slavery, and he believed in agriculture as the bedrock of social development.<sup>180</sup> Reindorf self-sponsored the publication of his manuscript, daring his literate peers to replicate his effort. In the process, Reindorf left behind a valuable source book of history that has been drawn on by successive generations of Ghanaian, and foreign historians writing about the peoples that Reindorf initially covered in his work. Like many iconoclastic scholars, he sought to influence public policy by sending his manuscript to the office of the Secretary of State for the British Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain.<sup>181</sup> As one of the first Africans to author a book about the histories of African peoples, Reindorf therefore can safely be placed within the school of founding fathers of African history, if not the father of modern African history.

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<sup>180</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 256-275

<sup>181</sup> NA C.O. 96/4790, 18 "Correspondence between Gold Coast Governor, Maxwell and Secretary of State for the British Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain; Maxwell to Chamberlain January 27, 1896 and Chamberlain to Maxwell March 21, 1896" No. 18; See also Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1975), 656-657; Jenkins, *Gold Coast Historians*, 299.

## Postscript

### **Speculative Discourse: Reindorf's Gold Coast and Asante, Gwendolyn Hall and Robin Law's Mina<sup>182</sup>**

Reindorf's scholarship is important because the Ga-Adangbé, Akuapem, Akwamu, Akyem, Fante, Asante, Fon, and Ewé who he conceptualized as a single group through migrations, war, marriage, and trade formed a substantial part of the early African populations of the Danish West Indies. I postulate in descriptive terms that the people of Reindorf's Gold Coast formed the initial base culture of the cultural communities of Africans on the Danish Island of St. Thomas where Blyden was born. Reindorf may also provide us some material with which to analyze the ongoing debate about the Atlantic ethnic category Mina. Mina became a term of intellectual discourse following discussions in African Diaspora studies on concepts and definitions of ethnicity as it relates to ethnonyms, enslaved people's ethnic designations, and scholarship on African and trans-Atlantic ethnic terminology.<sup>183</sup>

Reindorf's linking of the peoples, of what A. A. Boahen has called, the lower Guinea Basin—stretching expansively to include on occasion peoples in the bights of Benin and the Niger Delta area to the east, and up to the river Gambia in the west<sup>184</sup>—is relevant to potential studies of trans-Atlantic ethnicities and African cultural clusters

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<sup>182</sup> Mina is a common ethnic designation used during the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans, however the particular category of people it refers to has been a subject of debate.

<sup>183</sup> For current scholarship see Paul E. Lovejoy and David E. Trotman, eds., *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2003); Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>184</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 18. For maps depicting West African migrations in West Africa see A. A. Boahen, "States and Cultures of the Lower Guinea Coast"; E. J. Alagoa, "Fon and Yoruba: The Niger Delta and the Cameroon" in *UNESCO General History of Africa, vol 5 Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* ed. B. A. Ogot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

in the African Diaspora, particularly the Danish West Indies where a majority of the enslaved populations of Reindorf's lower Guinea coast were sent.

Migration, cultural symbols, trade, marriage, cosmic orientation must have meant something to the lower Guinea coast peoples who found themselves in the Danish West Indies, and suggests the need for a re-examination of the term Mina or Amina as already begun in Lovejoy and Trotman's edited work.<sup>185</sup> This postscript does not dismiss the change thesis proffered in the works of Sydney Mintz and Richard Price about African diaspora cultural practices, nonetheless, in light of Reindorf's work, I call for a particularly Africa centered or "Afro-centric"<sup>186</sup> approach that advocates an examination of African ethnicities in the Americas from an Africa based perspective. It has, for example, been difficult for scholars to appropriately designate the term Mina, because of the disaggregation of the people who became Mina in the first place, that is the Mina-Ga-Adangbe, Mina-Fante, Mina-Akwamu, Mina-Popo and their relationships to the peoples of the Lower Guinea Coast. I therefore agree with Mintz and Price when they write that the heterogeneous context of West Africa predisposed its diverse peoples to the acceptance and tolerance of cultural variation, which "combined with a stress on personal style to produce in early African-American cultures, a fundamental dynamism, and expectation of cultural change as an integral feature of these systems."<sup>187</sup>

In the eighteenth century, Moravian missionary, C. G. A. Oldendorp wrote about "some of the geographic and political information about the African nations from

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<sup>185</sup> Lovejoy and Trotman, *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions*, 1.

<sup>186</sup> Lovejoy and Trotman, *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions*, 5.

<sup>187</sup> Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African American Culture*, 51

which the slaves were principally brought to the [Danish] West Indies.”<sup>188</sup> Oldendorp records the account of one enslaved woman who describes African ethnicities in her homeland. She reported that “the Kanga were their neighbors and they were not far from the Mandinga and the Amina. Her people often made war against both of the latter.” Oldendorp further writes “ [t]he most powerful nation on the coast is the Amina, about which [he] tried to get information from five intelligent Negroes of that nation.” One of the five, according to Oldendorp, was a well-traveled rich trader and slave hunter, a brother of a King; another, an army general of three thousand troops; and the last two, were common people who lived fourteen days apart from the English fort.<sup>189</sup> Oldendorp went on to describe the Amina system of provincial government, their items of trade, currency and engagement with the neighboring “Fante, Akkim, Akran, Beremang, Assein, Kisseru, Arti, Okan, and Adansi”<sup>190</sup> effectively the various peoples of the then Gold Coast and Asante. Oldendorp noted from his respondents that the Akripon or Akropong Akuapem spoke the language of the Amina as did the Akran or Akra/Ga and belonged to the Amina group.<sup>191</sup> Oldendorp’s detailed but hazy writing need not detain us here, but a note on Popo home of the Mina “which extends to the sea on one side and are known by the Danish forts, the Amina(Mina) and Akkran(Ga) peoples” is appropriate.<sup>192</sup> According to Oldendorp, the Popo included the “Appassu, or Apeschi, the Nagoo, Arrada, Atolli, and Affong [Fon]. The latter has made the others submit to them.” Oldendorp’s descriptions distinguish the Amina

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<sup>188</sup> C. G. A. Oldendorp, *History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John*, (Ann Arbor; Mich.: Karoma Publishers, 1985), 159-170

<sup>189</sup> Oldendorp, *Caribbean Mission*, 162-163.

<sup>190</sup> Oldendorp, *Caribbean Mission*, 162-163.

<sup>191</sup> Oldendorp, *Caribbean Mission*, 162-163.

<sup>192</sup> Oldendorp, *Caribbean Mission*, 163.

from their neighbors but also note the relationships they shared, particularly Amina's raids against them. From all indications, the Amina Oldendorp describes here, are the seventeenth century Gold Coast state, Akwamu. In this period the Akwamu did not only expand their sovereignty throughout the southern Gold Coast, but also as far as Dahomey to the east. There also emerged from their ranks mercenaries and raiders who plundered the trade routes.<sup>193</sup> Oldendorp however notes that an Akyem person he interviewed spoke Amina, *Kommu*, Assie (Assin), Fante, Agumma (Agona) Tjuru (Twi), Wamwi, Dentjela(Denkyera), Akkran (Accra), and Watje." I am unsure as to whether Kommu here refers to Akwamu, which will conflate the thesis on Oldendorp's Akwamu as Amina.

Since Oldendorp's eighteenth century observations, the name Mina has become quite hard to comprehend given its usage in different locations of the Black Atlantic. These places include are Elmina, what used to be an Atlantic trading port in modern Ghana and the Mina people in modern day Togo and Benin. Others are Mina Gerais in Brazil where slaves from Mina, West Africa were brought, Mina Gagui, a Cabildo or ethnic association in Cuba, and Mina in Oldendorp's Danish West Indies cluster of peoples. It is on this account that Ray Kea, writing about Gold Coast people's insurrection on the Danish Island of St. Jan, first noted of Mina:

The essentialist, and essentializing term "Amina(s) generally signified Akan speaking people from the Gold Coast. The St. John rebels were principally Akwamu men and women, most of whom had been sold to the trading agents of the Danish West Indies . . . following the military collapse of the Akwamu state in 1730. ...The term was also used to

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<sup>193</sup> See Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750*; For Akwamu raids see Ray Kea, *I am Here to Plunder on the General Roads: Bandits and Banditry in Pre-Nineteenth Century Gold Coasts* in Donald Crummey, ed., *Banditry Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1986)

include the Adanme; that is, the people of La(doku) Kingdom. Adanme men and women were actively involved in the insurrection.<sup>194</sup>

After Kea's pronouncement, the discourse on Mina was firmly established by Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, who identified the Mina as not being from the trading post of Elmina, Gold Coast, but came from the Gbe speaking: Ewe, Aja, and Fon;<sup>195</sup> and therein lies the confusion. If the discourse is read against Reindorf's narrative of economic, religious, trade, and migratory interactions of the coastal West Africans, it would show that the Gbe speaking Mina came, not only from among the Ga and the Elmina Fante as Hall citing Robin Law acknowledges, but also from Akwamu mercenaries who migrated to the area in the last quarter of the seventeenth century when Akwamu reigned supreme in the area.<sup>196</sup>

Collaborators of Togolese origin inform me that the Mina people are to this day referred to by other Togolese as the Gento or Gen, a Fon and Ewe pronunciation of Ga, and have both Akan and Ga styled monarchs.<sup>197</sup> This information is confirmed in the historical record—the Ga, their ethnic cousins the Adangbe, and Fante, all at different times settled in Anlo, Glidzi and Anehor, respectively.<sup>198</sup> The latter two are those known in archival literature as Little Popo.<sup>199</sup> Robin Law has therefore rightly amended Hall's thesis about the Mina being Gbe rather than Gold Coast. It is far more likely that between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries the Mina as presently

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<sup>194</sup> Ray A. Kea, "When I Die I Shall Return to My Own Land" in *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks: Papers in History and Society Ghanaian and Islamic in Honor of Ivor Wilks* eds., John Hunwick, and Nancy Lawler (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 160.

<sup>195</sup> Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities*, 101-125.

<sup>196</sup> Hall, "African Ethnicities and the Meanings of Mina" in Lovejoy and Trotman, *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions*, 68; See also Ivor Wilks, *Akwamu-1640-1750*, 13, 14, 19, 26-35; Reindorf, *G.C.A. Histories*,

<sup>197</sup> Dr. Francis Akakpo, Personal Conversation, August, 2009; Komi Amaefia, Personal Conversation, September, 2009.

<sup>198</sup> Kea's Adanme

<sup>199</sup> Robin Law, "Ethnicities of Enslaved Africans in the African Diaspora: On the Meanings of "Mina" (Again)" in *History in Africa* 32 (2005): 247-267.

constituted in Little Popo in modern Togo and Benin were multilingual, speaking the Gbe languages of their host societies—the Ewe, and Fon—and their own heritage languages Ga, Adangbe, Akan-Fante and Akwamu.

A socio-historical contextualization of the debate in Reindorf's *G. C. A.*

*Histories* as well as Wilks' study on Akwamu is appropriate. Reindorf recorded a tradition about the relationship between Asante, Elmina, and the Ga or Accra:

Tradition tells us that two daughters of one of the Chiefs of Elmina were married, one to a Prince of Kumase, the other to a Prince of Akra. Their descendants obtained respectively the royal stools of Asante and Akra. Their descendants obtained respectively the royal stools of Asante and Akra, hence they kept up that relationship. An ancient league may have existed between the two nations prior to the destruction and expulsion of Akwamus, and that league was faithfully observed by them.<sup>200</sup>

Reindorf's traditions about marriage involving the three states have not been confirmed, but Wilks offers the following interpretation from the records on Akwamu. He notes that Ga traditions show a relationship between their monarchs and the "ruling dynasty in *Afutu* or *Fetu*, a state that lay east of, and included part of Elmina." Further, the Portuguese "maintained in power, groups of Elmina at such places as . . . Accra. As late as 1659, for example, the king of Agona, a state bordering Accra to the West, still acknowledged the Elmina origin of his family."<sup>201</sup> Following the beheading of Ga King Okai Koi and his eldest son during the Akwamu defeat of old Accra in 1677, his younger son, Ofori went into exile with his kin in Efutu and later retired to Little Popo with his retinue.<sup>202</sup> And Reindorf provides us with an explanation for why Ofori preferred to go to Little Popo or Glidji:

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<sup>200</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 168.

<sup>201</sup> Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750*, 9-10.

<sup>202</sup> Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750*, 10-15.



The Old Kingdom of Akra extended on the coast used to Aharamata, north of Aneho, Togoland. The chiefs there, being tributary subjects to King Mampong Okai, sent him annually tributes and presents; and in addition, they often asked the Akras to unite with them against their enemies; and when, in the future, the Akra power was broken, they sought an asylum there.<sup>203</sup>

This assertion may perhaps also help clarify Law's questioning of why oral tradition privileges the Glidji settlement over the 1650 Elmina presence.<sup>204</sup> Reindorf's accounts of the Elmina, Ga, and Little Popo triangle, shows that Mina in its very beginnings was transcultural and multilingual, forged on trade and family relationships that was threatened with the rise of Akwamu at the end of the seventeenth century. The upheavals on the Lower Guinea coast did not end with Ofori's exile in Little Popo or Mina. Both the Ga, and Akwamu would become big players at home on the Gold Coast and the Allada, Dahome and Ewe areas further east.

For the Ga, Reindorf's account is buttressed by the seventeenth century Dutch traveler William Bossman that is Ofoli Bebe, his brother Ofoli Hemazro and Ofoli Bebe's son Ashangmo(Ga) or Ashampo(Mina) Assiongbon(Ewe) became military powers in Dahomey and Whydah/Ouidah areas.<sup>205</sup> According to Reindorf, and oral traditions narrated by Fio Agbano III of Popo, the Ofoli brothers fought for Allada against Whydah.<sup>206</sup> Ashangbo according to I. A. Akinjogbin's work on Dahomey, fought for Dahomey against its enemies the Bei, Allada, and Whydah.<sup>207</sup> Reindorf

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<sup>203</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 28.

<sup>204</sup> Law, *Ethnicities of Enslaved Africans*, 253, n.24.

<sup>205</sup> I. A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbors 1708-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 105.

<sup>206</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 36-38; William Bossman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London, 1705), 306-330.

<sup>207</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 37, Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750*, 24-30; Bosman, *Accurate Description*, 332-333; Fio Agbano II, *Memoire Sur L'histoire de Petit Popo et Du Peuple "Ge" (Mina) et Etude Rapide Sur les mœurs et coutumes de peuple Ge ou Mina* (Lome, 1934) as cited in Irene Quaye (Odotei) *Ga and its Neighbors*, and published later as Fio Agbano II, *Histoire de Petit Popo et Royaume Guin* (1934), ed

also writes that Ashangmo's relationship with Dahomey was formed when he defeated the Beis, a tributary of Dahomey and took possession of Popo, making Glidzi his capital. Ashangmo subsequently became a general in the Dahomey army, while his sister became wife of King Akpo of Dahomey. This was after Ashangbo showed valor in war against Dahomey.<sup>208</sup> Reindorf, narrating the incident writes that King Akpo fearful of Ashangmo's success at Glidzi:

. . . sent an overwhelming army to attack Ashangmo in his capital. Ashangmo hearing of this, concealed his small force in the bush, behind the River Momo and allowed the enemy to pass toward the Volta in pursuit of him. Then he proceeded to cut a deep trench between the two rivers Ggbaga and Momo and the sea, and shut Dahomean army in. He then boldly attacked them on their returning from the Volta and gained complete victory.<sup>209</sup>

Of Akwamu involvement with Popo, Dahomey and their neighbors, he writes:

During the period when two Kings were ruling the kingdom of Akwamu, the Akras in Popo asked the help of the old king, and the Angulas(Anlo-Ewe) that of the young one. The Akwamu's cunningly assisted the weaker that neither should be destroyed. Sometimes both sides were supported by Akwamu warriors. In the year 1700 the King of Popo surprised the Angulas, and drove them from their country. But as Akonno took greater interest in the Angulas, he reinstated them in their country.<sup>210</sup>

Thus, the ascendant Akwamu initially adopted a policy of helping the weaker side in the perpetual strife between Popo, Dahomey and Whydah, but later fought and overran Little Ardra, and Dahomey, on behalf of Whydah who paid the Akwamu according to Wilks forty-six ounces of Gold among other gifts.<sup>211</sup> A song was composed for the Akwamu King, "woadi Dahome adee amee wo "you have eaten Dahomey but it has

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N.L. Gayibor (Lome, 1991) cited by Robin Law, *Ethnicities of Enslaved Africans in the African Diaspora*, 254 n33.

<sup>208</sup> Reindorf, G.C. A. *Histories*, 37.

<sup>209</sup> Reindorf, G. C. A. *Histories*, 37.

<sup>210</sup> Reindorf, G. C. A. *Histories*, 37.

<sup>211</sup> Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750*, 29.

not satisfied you.”<sup>212</sup> Wilks has compiled a comprehensive, well contextualized account of Akwamu expansion throughout the Gold Coast, and from the Gold Coast to the Slave Coast between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>213</sup>

## Conclusion

In light of these histories between the Gold Coast Ga, and Akwamu, and the Gbe speaking groups to the east, I lean not in total disagreement with Hall, but more against Law’s interpretation of the ethnic designation Mina. My intervention is informed by a reading of Reindorf’s *G. C. A. Histories*, and Wilks’ work on the Akwamu,<sup>214</sup> which reveals that Mina was a much more inclusive term for the Ga-Adangbe speakers, Akan-Fante and Akan-Akwamu, as well as speakers of Hall’s Gbe languages, Ewe, Fon, and Yoruba. The bifurcation of the Gold Coast Mina and the Ewe or Fon-speaking Mina is therefore rather arbitrary, and belies the intense contact within the regions of the Lower Guinea and the Bights of Benin. As the social history shows, even though they fall under different rubrics of the Niger-Congo language classifications, social interaction by means of trade, marriage, and war clustered at least the Ga, Elmina, Akwamu, Ewe, Fon, and Aja over three centuries.<sup>215</sup> It began with the rise of the Ga as a coastal power in the fifteenth century until the nineteenth century, when the partitioning of Africa began to take place.

More importantly for my purposes, it is evident that the rise and fall of kingdoms within the region aided the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans

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<sup>212</sup> Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750*, 28.

<sup>213</sup> Ivor Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750: A Study of the Rise and Fall of a West African Empire* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2001).

<sup>214</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 20-50; Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750*, 9-40.

<sup>215</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 20-50; Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750*, 9-40.

conducted by the Danish West India Guinea Company, whose sphere of influence including their forts and castles stretched from the Ga coast, and eastward as far as Little Popo. They were therefore beneficiaries of the wars between the transculturated Mina peoples. Per O. Hernaes, revising the estimates of Phillip Curtin, S. E. Green-Pederson, and Paul Lovejoy arrives at an upward estimate of Danish slave exports from Africa on Danish and non-Danish ships totaling 183,400.<sup>216</sup> The Danish West Indies islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, were the major recipients of these enslaved peoples majority of whom were from the Mina nomenclature in the west, Ga, Adangbe, Akwamu, Fante, Akyem, Akuapem and to the east Ewe, Fon, and Aja.<sup>217</sup> It comes as no shock that the Amina or Mina were responsible for a majority of the slave rebellions that occurred in the Danish West Indies. Furthermore, one may speculate that they formed the base culture of the black communities of the Danish West Indies. While they may have fought each other in West Africa, they also demonstrated an ability to come together in times of crisis or for purposes of mutual interest in trade. They were able to unite against a common enemy who not only enslaved them, but whom they had less in common with. Differences on the Gold Coast and West Africa are likely to be relegated to the background.

The Danish West Indies, today's U.S. Virgin Islands is a less studied area in African Diaspora studies, and despite current works such as John Sensbach's *Rebecca's Revival Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*,<sup>218</sup> a lot more remains to be done. Particularly pressing, are the demonstrated connections between

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<sup>216</sup> Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes and African Coast Society*, 225, 232, 129-233.

<sup>217</sup> For a review of the ethnicities of the enslaved population see Oldendorp, *Caribbean Mission*, 159-170.

<sup>218</sup> John Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

West Africa and its sons and daughters whose descendants now populate the Virgin Islands. Selena Axelrod Wisnes' several translations of Danish and German documents<sup>219</sup> combined with others like Oldendorps' *Caribbean Mission* should provide Anglo-American researchers with less excuse and considerable source material for detailed research of the Danish islands.

In this chapter, I have shown how Reindorf historically, symbolical, and imaginatively melted the various ethnic identities of Gold Coast peoples into his pot of palaver sauce. To further demonstrate this assertion and its implications for the Americas, I have attempted to portray Mina or the Amina of West Africa as constituting separate ethnicities, language groups, and diverse cultures. I have shown that they were collectively a transculturated group with a shared history. The ethnicities under consideration in this chapter do not include the Ba-Kongo, Yoruba or the Igbo of modern day Nigeria. It must be pointed out nonetheless, that the various people of the Kongo, Yoruba, and Igbo, the alleged ancestral home of St. Thomas born Edward Wilmot Blyden, are included in the list of ethnic peoples listed by Oldendorp in his section on African origins of enslaved West Indians.<sup>220</sup> Others include the Mandinka, Fula, Kalabari, and Tembu. In the next chapter, I consider the life of Edward Blyden. What was Blyden's ethnic heritage to Africa and how did he

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<sup>219</sup> Selena Axelrod Winsnes, ed., *Letters of West Africa and the Slave Trade. Paul Erdman Isert's Journey to Guinea and the Caribbean Islands in Columbia* (1788) trans. from German (Oxford University Press, 1992); Erick Tilleman, *En Kort Og Enfoldig Beretning Om Det Landskab Guinea Og Dets Beskaffenhed* (1697) *A Short and Simple Account of the Country Guinea and its Nature* trans. From Danish (Madison, Wisconsin: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994); Ludwig Ferdinand Romer, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea* (1760) trans. from Danish (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Leif Svalesen, *The Slave Ship Fredensborg* trans. by Pat Shaw and Winsnes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); *A Danish Jew in West Africa: Wulff Joseph Wulff Biography and Letters 1836-1842* (Trondheim: Faculty of Arts, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2004); Johannes Rask, *Two Views from Christianborg* trans. from Danish (Legon, Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2009).

<sup>220</sup> Oldendorp, *Caribbean Mission*, 162-163.

become the leading black intellectual of the nineteenth century? These questions and more are discussed in chapter 6.



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**A HISTORY OF IDEAS: WEST AFRICA, “THE BLACK ATLANTIC”, AND PAN-  
AFRICANISM**

**Volume II**

**By**

**Harry Nii Koney Odamtten**

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## Chapter 5

### Edward Wilmot Blyden and the Global African Iconoclastic Tradition

For someone of African Diaspora heritage, Blyden's ethnicity has been a subject of debate among scholars.<sup>1</sup> Hollis Lynch wrote that Blyden was "'of ebony hue,' and claimed to be of 'pure Negro' parentage from the Ibo tribe in eastern Nigeria."<sup>2</sup> How Lynch and Blyden himself arrived at this conclusion is unclear. Edith Holden, quoting the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* of February 10, 1912 says Blyden was "from the Eboe tribe." M. Y. Frenkel also comes to a similar conclusion without much evidence.<sup>3</sup> Esedebe weighs in when he writes "several important works still contain erroneous information as to the nationality of Blyden's parents," and, agrees with claims of Blyden's Igbo heritage.<sup>4</sup> Esedebe therefore disagrees with George Padmore who claimed that Blyden's ancestors were Ewe. Esedebe also questions Colin Legum and Claude Wauthier who professed Togoland and Sierra Leone origins for Blyden.<sup>5</sup>

If Blyden considered himself an Igbo, what may have led him to such a deduction? A well traveled man in West Africa, Blyden may have encountered many Igbo as well as other African ethnicities. Blyden may have assumed that he was of Igbo descent based on certain personal or cultural traits he learned from his parents, stories

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<sup>1</sup> The various authors who have debated Blyden's Igbo ethnic heritage have spelled it as Ibo and Eboe. Where I am quoting these authors, I have left their spellings intact. However, in my own writing I use the contemporary spelling Igbo as used by celebrated Igbo writer Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Lynch, *Pan Negro Patriot*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> M Yu. Frenkel, "Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality" *African Affairs* 73 (1974)277, n2. ; Edith Holden, *Blyden of Liberia: An Account of the Life and Labors of Edward Wilmot Blyden LL.D. As Recorded in Letters and in Print* (New York: Vantage Press, 1966), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Peter O. Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963* (Washington D.C. : Howard University Press, 1982), 30, n68.

<sup>6</sup> George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 32; Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (New York: Praeger, 1962), 20; Claude Wauthier, *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa* (London; Pall Mall Press, 1966), 307.

passed down by them, as well as phenotypic similarity members of his family may have shared with ethnic Igbos. Based on Blyden's phenotypic looks one may speculate that he was of Igbo heritage. Fortunately, a number of Blyden's pictures have survived and readers can form their own conclusions by comparing these pictures placed against contemporaneous Africans of different ethnicities. Below are pictures of Blyden with Nigerians of Igbo and Yoruba heritage.

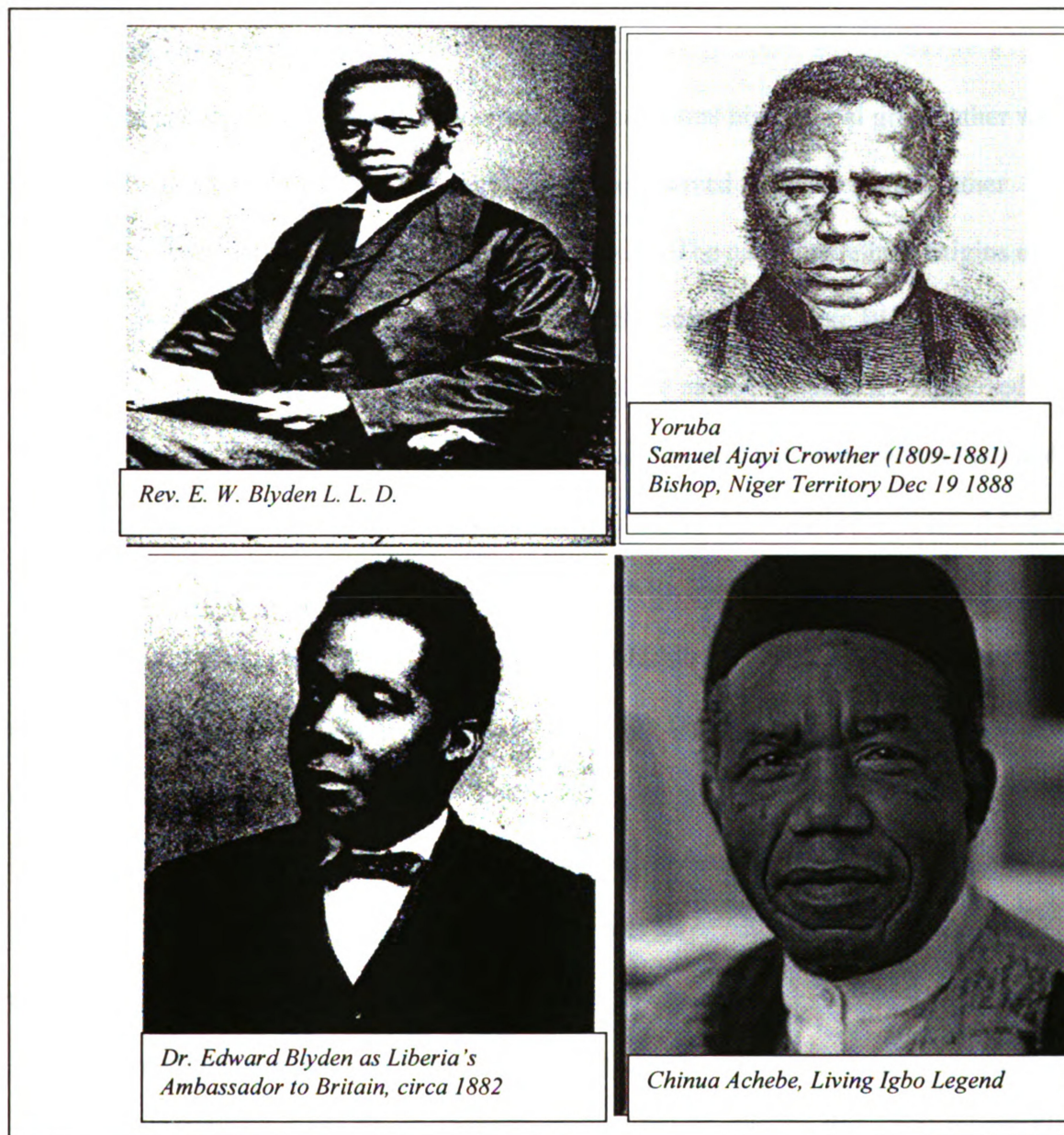


Figure 1

Blyden compared with Africans of Igbo and Yoruba ethnicity

Whatever conclusions you may have reached, it is my goal to demonstrate that Blyden's life stretched beyond the peculiarities and limitations of a particular ethnic or national heritage; Blyden was a global African iconoclast.

## **Origins of a Global African Iconoclastic Scholar: Afro-American Beginnings,**

### **Family and Upbringing**

Past scholars on Blyden generally believe that it was his paternal grandfather who was initially displaced by the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. Grandfather Blyden ended up on the Dutch island of St. Eustacius.<sup>6</sup> The name and ethnic origins of the Grandpa Blyden, as well as when he arrived in St. Eustacius, where Blyden's father, Romeo was born are murky. Holden speculates that the name Blyden is an anglicized form of the Dutch named Blieden.<sup>7</sup> The identities of Blyden's paternal grandmother and maternal grandparents are however unknown. Meanwhile, Romeo Blyden married Judith Blyden (nee Nicholson), and as a couple moved from St. Eustacius to St. Thomas.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear exactly when and why Romeo, a tailor, and Judith Blyden, a schoolteacher, migrated from St. Eustacius to the Danish island of St. Thomas by 1828. It is also vague as to whether the migration was forced or voluntary. A possible reason why they might have chosen St. Thomas over other locations in the Caribbean could be that the lingua franca of the island was Dutch, and Dutch Creole was spoken by blacks in St. Thomas and St. John.<sup>9</sup>

Blyden was born to immigrant, skilled, and free parents at St. Thomas, on August 3, 1832.<sup>10</sup> At the age of ten, Blyden's family—his parents, and six siblings, Robert, William, Romeo, John, Jane, and Lavina—moved to Porto Cabello, Venezuela, where

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<sup>6</sup> See Lynch, *Pan Negro Patriot*, Frenkel, "Edward Blyden," 277, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 19, 923.

<sup>8</sup> Holden notes that Blyden took his middle name Wilmot from his mother, Judith's brother Wilmot Nicholson. See Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 926, n17.

<sup>9</sup> C. G. A. Oldendorp, *History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John* trans. Arnold R. Highfield and Vladimir Borac, ed., Johan Jakob Bossard (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, INC, 1987), 251-260.

<sup>10</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 19.

Blyden acquired Spanish as a language.<sup>11</sup> They returned to St. Thomas in 1844, and resided at No. 2 Ananas Street, Charlotte Amalie, in a house belonging to a Rosa Mathias.<sup>12</sup> When Blyden was almost sixteenth, an enslaved person from the Gold Coast, West Africa; one General Buddo, on July 2, 1848, led a number of “Mina” blacks in revolt on the island of St. Croix against the Danish colonial government.<sup>13</sup> The events of the revolt by the enslaved blacks forced the hand of Peter Von Scholten, the Governor-general of the Danish Islands, in proclaiming freedom for the enslaved populations of the Danish West Indies on July 3, 1848. This declaration was confirmed by a Danish royal proclamation on September 22, 1848.<sup>14</sup> Blyden was a freeborn black, who lived in the predominantly Jewish society and English speaking community of Charlotte Amalie. But even though he was born free, Blyden must have had an inkling of what the enslaved population experienced in the wake of the upheavals following the revolt led by General Buddo.

Despite the uprising, Blyden enjoyed a relatively peaceful upbringing. During his schooling years, he had three major influences: his mother, father, and mentor J. P. Knox. Earlier, in 1844 when the Blydens returned to St. Thomas, Eddie, as people in Charlotte Amalie knew Blyden, was attending school in the morning, while also working as an apprentice in a tailoring shop during the day. It was likely that his father, Romeo either owned or worked in the shop.<sup>15</sup> Blyden did this for four years, during which time he also studied privately with his mother, Judith, of whom he writes: “the influence of my

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<sup>11</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Issac Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands of the United States* (St. Thomas: Caribbean Universities Press, 1974), 175-178; Hansen, *Island of Slaves*, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*, 175-178; Thorkild Hansen, *Island of Slaves* trans. Kari Dako (Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004), 21.

<sup>15</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 20.



excellent and devoted mother . . . more than to any other earthly cause, can I trace whatever literary tastes and religious aspirations I possessed”.<sup>16</sup> Blyden dedicated his book *From West Africa to Palestine* to his mother “whose careful and prayerful teachings, in my early years, produced impressions and awakened aspirations which, God’s blessing, have determined thus far, the course of my life.”<sup>17</sup> He also came under the purview of an American preacher of the Reform Dutch Church of St. Thomas, Rev. Knox who would influence him to travel to the U.S. in an attempt to attend theological college.<sup>18</sup>

However, when Blyden arrived aboard Captain Davis’ ship, the *Oxholm*, he would be confronted by the U.S. system of social inequality and oppression based on race, which subsequently ensured that he could not pursue his goal of getting educated. Therefore, for a short period, Blyden whiled away his time in the U.S. working as a servant in a New York home while he attended night school.<sup>19</sup> In the furor of the nineteenth century “Back to Africa” movements—a period between reconstruction and the nadir of black life in the United States—Blyden immigrated to Liberia in order to acquire an education that he could not get from the U.S. Later on in this chapter, I will show how from Liberia, Blyden would literally travel the world, articulating and confronting various concerns of black life in his day. He subsequently became a voice of consciousness and an agent of resistance for global Africa.

From this brief genealogy of Blyden’s family, it is clear that Blyden’s family life was shaped by the circulatoriness phenomenon. Ruth Simms Hamilton defines this as

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<sup>16</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Blyden *West Africa to Palestine* (London; T. J. Sawyer, 1873), iii.

<sup>18</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 11, 20.

<sup>19</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 11.

“the actual movement of people in the African Diaspora across time and space—and they were exposed to “new socio-racial categories, to new languages, to competing notions of nationalism and citizenship.”<sup>20</sup> She explains this in an essay entitled “Rethinking the African Diaspora: Global Dynamics.” Contemplating Africa and its diverse Diaspora within a global context, Hamilton identifies four overlapping attributes of global Africa. These include geo-social mobility and displacement—the circulatoriness phenomenon as explained above. Also, Africa diaspora-homeland connections: myths and realities, which examines the dynamic relationship between Africa and its diverse Diaspora. Furthermore, she writes of social inequality and oppression-relations of domination and subordination, in reference to the unequal economic order engendered by the Atlantic age. Lastly she identifies communities of consciousness and agency-cultural production and endurance, which elaborates on the responses of subordinated groups to their domination by other human actors.<sup>21</sup>

As a member of the historical global African community, i.e., Africa and its Diasporas, Edward Wilmot Blyden’s life was shaped by the mutually inclusive categories that Hamilton identifies. Still, the component which affected the formative stages of Blyden’s early life the most was geo-social mobility and displacement. The latter encapsulates the continuous voluntary, semi-voluntary, and involuntary movements of black people in historical time across the globe. Blyden’s grandfather’s forced migration from Africa to St. Eustacius, his parent’s movements to St. Thomas and then to Venezuela, as well as Blyden’s own return migration to Liberia, are all evidence of geo-social mobility in just one black family.

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<sup>20</sup> Ruth Simms Hamilton, *Routes of Passage: Rethinking the African Diaspora* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), *Routes of Passage*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Hamilton, *Routes of Passage*, xi-33.

## **Blyden and the Global African Iconoclastic Tradition in African-American, and African Studies**

The global African iconoclastic tradition describes *scholars of African descent whose iconic intellectual activism, political, and/or social development activities, defy easy categorization into a particular school of thought and impacts people of African descent globally*. Almost always, such an intellectual's analysis of the global African condition is also timeless. By timelessness, I am alluding to Bazel E. Allen and Ernest T. Wilson's description of Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* as an "intellectual landmark in Afro-American thought."<sup>22</sup> Building on Allen and Wilson's definition, and its particularity to the U.S. African-American condition, I offer the scholarship, social activism, and political activities of nineteenth and early twentieth century scholar Edward Blyden, as an example of a global African iconoclast. Thus, Blyden's status as an iconoclast was on a global scale compared to Cruse's status as an iconoclast of the U.S. African-American society.

As previously discussed, Blyden in 1851, fled the U.S. and immigrated to Liberia, West Africa because of the U.S. 1850 fugitive slave law. In Liberia, he attended the Alexander High School, where he would later serve as principal.<sup>23</sup> From his base in Monrovia, Liberia, Blyden loomed large in the intellectual and nationalist atmosphere of global black life in the nineteenth century. If W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) is seen as shaping the Pan-African struggle in the twentieth century, Blyden is

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<sup>22</sup> Bazel E. Allen and Ernest T. Wilson III, foreword to Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (New York: Quill, 1984), iv.

<sup>23</sup> Blyden to Copinger, September 2, 1884 "American Colonization Papers (A.C.S.) vol. 1", Library of Congress Washington D.C. ; See also Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 4.

the doyen of the Pan-African intellectual, political, economic, and social milieu of the nineteenth century. Nineteenth century Gold Coast, West African nationalist, and scholar, J. E. Casely Hayford, who was also a member of the American Negro Academy (ANA), pays tribute to Blyden's race work, when he writes about the global influence of Blyden's writings:

The Claim of Edward Wilmot Blyden to the esteem and regard of all thinking Africans rests *not so much upon the special work he has done for any particular people of the African race, as upon the general work he has done for the race as a whole.* (emphasis mine)

And to distinguish Blyden's global recognition in contrast to his peers, Hayford, who in his book *Ethiopia Unbound*, critiques Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, describes Blyden's intellectual influence on the black world in the following manner:

The work of men like Booker T. Washington and W. E. Burghardt Du Bois is *exclusive and provincial*. *The work of Edward Blyden is universal, covering the entire race and the entire race problem.* "What do I mean? I mean this: that while Booker T. Washington seeks to promote the material advancement of the black man in the United States, and W. E. Burghardt Du Bois his social enfranchisement amid surroundings and in atmosphere uncongenial to racial development, Edward Wilmot Blyden has sought for more than a quarter of a century to reveal everywhere the African unto himself; to fix his attention upon original ideas and conceptions as to his place in the economy of the world; to point out to him his work as a race among the races of men; lastly, and most important of all, to lead him to self respect. He has been the voice of one crying in the wilderness all these years."<sup>24</sup> (emphasis mine)

Hayford may have been biased in his analysis, given his little to no experiential knowledge of black life in the United States, as well as his close association with Blyden in the last decade of the nineteenth century. But Hayford was no intellectual lightweight, and must have been aware of the ideas in circulation among black folk in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century. The founder of the National

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<sup>24</sup> J.E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*, (London: Frank Cass, 1969), 163.

Congress of British West Africa, (N.C.B.W.A.) Hayford's almost unbridled regard for Blyden is a testament to Blyden's influence on that era.

Nonetheless, it is important that Blyden's work not only be seen as important to his African contemporaries or mentees like Hayford, but to his Diaspora colleagues, as well as European intellectuals of the post enlightenment age, who he came into contact with.

This classification of Blyden as a global African iconoclast is on the continuum of investigations that discuss global Africa, that is Africa and its diverse Diaspora as an integrated whole.<sup>25</sup> Research of this kind, focusing on the relationship between Africa and its Diaspora, goes as far back, if not beyond, the now famous Herskovits-Frazier debates; and in the present is found in the works of scholars like Joseph Harris and Michael Gomez.<sup>26</sup>

This discussion of Blyden, therefore, sits at the confluence of two mutually inclusive interdisciplinary arenas of study, African-American Studies, and African Studies. The two fields are sometimes conceptualized as one, for example as Africana Studies, Africology, Black Studies, African-American & African Studies and so forth. Otherwise African-American Studies and African Studies often traverse, depending on whom the researcher is, or what subject the researcher chooses. The two fields have also had homologous growth, intersecting at some points, depending on the institution, program, scholar, political, or social context.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hamilton, *Routes of Passage*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> See for example, Joseph Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982); Michael Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.)

<sup>27</sup> See essays by John Henrik Clarke "African Studies in the United States, An Afro-American View" *Africa Today* 16, no.2 (1969): 10-12; "African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA): Some Notes on the Conflict with the African Studies Association (ASA) and the Fight to Reclaim African History" *A Journal*

## Historiography on Iconoclasm

There have been a number of studies that have identified various intellectual traditions in black history and Black Studies. These include St. Claire Drake's description of pre-Black Studies scholars as vindicationist. Vindicationists were the "most educated black men and women" who two centuries prior to the formation of the American Negro Academy in 1897, spoke and wrote against the institution of slavery and the characterization of people of African descent in inhuman terms.<sup>28</sup> The academy on the other hand, had as its conceptual task "the defense of the negro against vicious attacks."<sup>29</sup> This involved the deconstruction of pseudo-scientific claims on which ideas of black inhumanity and cultural inferiority were based.

V. P. Franklin and Betty Collier-Thomas, in their writing on the vindicationist school, also identified the "tradition of defending black womanhood" as part of the activities of vindicationists.<sup>30</sup> Franklin and Collier-Thomas identify Ida B Wells, Frances E. W. Harper, and Mary Church Terrell as belonging to this tradition.<sup>31</sup> Robin Kelley also shows the existence of a global vision to writing black history. According to Kelley, this approach involves an analytical method that interpreted African American and U.S. history in global terms.<sup>32</sup> Manning Marable also offeres "corrective, descriptive, and proscriptive" scholarship, as a framework for Black

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*of Opinion* 6, no. 2 (1976): 5-11. Herchelle Sullivan Challenor, "No Longer at Ease: Confrontation at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual African Studies Association Meeting in Montreal" *African Today* 16, no.5 (1969): 4-7.

<sup>28</sup> St. Claire Drake, *Black Folk Here and There: An Essay in History and Anthropology* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro American Studies, 1987), xvii.

<sup>29</sup> Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, xvii.

<sup>30</sup> V.P. Franklin and Betty Collier-Thomas, Biography, "Race Vindication, and African-American Intellectuals" *JNH* 81, no. 1 (1996): 7.

<sup>31</sup> Franklin and Collier-Thomas, "Biography, "Race Vindication, and African-American Intellectuals," 1-16.

<sup>32</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem': Black History's Global Vision, 1883-1950" *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3, (1999): 1045-1077.

Studies.<sup>33</sup> In addition, William Jeremiah Moses identifies an “African-American Popular history” tradition.<sup>34</sup> Moses describes the roots of certain intellectual traditions in Black Studies as emanating from the popular traditions that have existed in Black America.<sup>35</sup> Vincent Harding’s *Vocation of the Black Scholar*, while not a description of a tradition, is prescriptive, as it offers an ideal black scholarly tradition through its exhortation to “speak truth to power” and to adopt cross-disciplinary approaches to research.<sup>36</sup> Harding’s analysis is prescriptive in the sense that it spells out what an African-American intellectual tradition should be through commentary on exemplar black scholars, and modes of interpretation.<sup>37</sup>

On the African side, there is modern African historiography, what A. E. Afigbo defines as “the technique, which historians use to write history which consciously focuses on Africa and Africans.”<sup>38</sup> This is distinguished from proto-nationalist writing of nineteenth century African ethno-historians like Carl Reindorf, and Samuel Johnson who together were the first Africans to write and publish histories of African peoples in the modern era.<sup>39</sup> Their aim was to offer historical accounts that corrected the false or erroneous versions of European travelers, explorers, and writers. Toyin Falola’s publication *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* elaborated on three writing themes in African Studies since its inception in the academy during the second half of the

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<sup>33</sup> Manning Marable, *Dispatches From the Ebony Tower: Black Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)

<sup>34</sup> Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 15-25.

<sup>35</sup> Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Vincent Harding, “Vocation of the Black Scholar” *Harvard Educational Review* (1974): 3-29.

<sup>37</sup> Harding, “Vocation of the Black Scholar,” 3-29.

<sup>38</sup> A. E. Afigbo “Colonial Historiography” in *Essays in Honor of Jacob Ade Ajayi* ed. Toyin Falola (London: Longman, 1993), 41.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion on the writings of these nineteenth century “historians” see Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Praeger, 1967).

twentieth century.<sup>40</sup> These paradigms are African cultural nationalism, pan-Africanist historiography, and African intellectuals in global perspective.<sup>41</sup> Each of the phases and paradigms collectively articulate an attempt to place Africans at the center of their histories, correct European misinterpretation of African history, and advance the belief in a United Africa as the way forward for African regeneration.

Following Allen and Wilson's use of the term iconoclastic, it appeared again in a study by June O. Patton entitled "And the Truth Shall Make You Free: Richard Robert Wright Sr., Black Intellectual and Iconoclast, 1877-1897."<sup>42</sup> Patton portrays Wright Sr. as a scholar-activist, who was a "school founder, educator, newspaper publisher, entrepreneur, political organizer, banker, and scholar."<sup>43</sup> In Patton's estimation, Wright Sr., sought to empower the black community in the face of ideological, political, and economic assault on black existence during the "nadir."<sup>44</sup>

Pero G. Dagbovie, also critically referencing Allen and Wilson's foreword to Cruse's *Crisis*, has recently described Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950) as the "progenitor" of an African American "iconoclastic tradition." He includes in this tradition, Harold Cruse (1916-2005) and E. Franklin Frazier (1894-1962).<sup>45</sup> Frazier unfortunately passed away before the dawn of Black Studies; and while Cruse played a critical role in the debates that led to the institutionalization of African-American

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<sup>40</sup> Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, 181-261.

<sup>42</sup> June O. Patton, "And the Truth Shall Make You Free": Richard Robert Wright, Sr., *Black Intellectual and Iconoclast, 1877-1897* *JNH*, 81, no. 1 (1996): 17-30.

<sup>43</sup> Patton, "And the Truth Shall Make You Free", 19.

<sup>44</sup> Patton, "And the Truth Shall Make You Free", 17.

<sup>45</sup> Pero G. Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 65.



and African Studies into today's academy, Woodson's scholarship predates this watershed period.<sup>46</sup>

My analysis builds on Dagbovie's use of iconoclasm, and Kevin Gaines' description of a global culture of black modernity in *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era*.<sup>47</sup> Gaines' global culture of black modernity with a particular emphasis on Ghana, West Africa, portrays the relationships different U.S. African-American social actors had with people of African descent beyond - U.S. borders. It focuses on the social networks U.S. African-Americans became involved with as a result of their travels abroad. I extend the term "iconoclasm" from its U.S. context to a global culture of black modernity. My study further explores the genesis of iconoclastic scholarship in Black Studies that spans a broader historical period and geographic span, and will attempt to offer in a systematic manner, what constitutes global African iconoclastic scholarship.

Dagbovie, after situating the iconoclastic tradition with Woodson, and Frazier, argues that these two were fundamentally radical compared to the conservative scholars they had been compared with in Allen and Wilson's earlier description.<sup>48</sup> Dagbovie, therefore, redefines iconoclastic scholarship to mean intellectual activity of black academics that engaged concerns of their particular age, but also critiqued the elitist and hawkish attitudes of their contemporaries.<sup>49</sup> If this is the standard, Blyden certainly dealt with the multiple and varied dimensions of the nineteenth century. The many concerns he wrestled with included pseudo-scientific denigration of people of

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<sup>46</sup> Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement*, 2-11, 15-82.

<sup>47</sup> Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement*; Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement*, 64-65.

<sup>49</sup> Gaines, *American Africans*, 29.

African descent, theorizing the African personality, emigration back to Africa from the diaspora, African nationhood, black education, and the black intellectual middle class. For my purposes, the primary basis for a scholar to be classified as a global African iconoclast is that he or she would have to possess all four key qualities of a global iconoclast. These are intellectual rigor or thoroughness, social activism, theoretician of the global African condition, and a global enabler. I explain and further elaborate on these attributes as they relate to Blyden later on in this dissertation.

### **Blyden's Civilization Mission: Moments of Epiphany, the Makings of a Global African Iconoclast**

On Saturday, December 21, 1850, the *Liberia Packet* sailed from Baltimore, Maryland, from the Capes of the Chesapeake Bay en-route to Grand Bassa, Liberia.<sup>50</sup> On board the ship was an eighteen-year-old boy who had left the comforts of his parents and siblings home in his natal St. Thomas. He had also left a host of benefactors and well wishers in the U.S.<sup>51</sup> When the *Liberia Packet* landed at Grand Bassa county on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, 1851 the young boy aboard the vessel, Edward Blyden was wont to versify:

About twelve o'clock we were riding safely at anchor, opposite the "beautiful bluff" that screens the town of Monrovia. You can easily imagine the delight with which I gazed upon the land of Cyprian and Tertullian, ancient fathers of the Christian Church; of Hannibal and Henry Diaz; yes and the land of my forefathers. On top of the elevation that intercepted the town from our view, was seen, "waving gloriously" the "lone star".<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 26-28.

<sup>51</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 26-28.

<sup>52</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 226-27.

In this short sentence Blyden praises the supposed African fathers of Christendom, valorized the land of his ancestors, and declares his patriotism for the second independent country in Africa, Liberia. It was at once Ethiopianism, Back to Africa, and the dawn of African nationalism rolled into one. As Shepperson explains, the idea of Ethiopianism in African and African American nationalist struggles signaled the creation of independent African and African American churches.<sup>53</sup> Expressions of Ethiopianism comprise the creation of the breakaway African Methodist Episcopal Church from the White Methodist Church. This happened in Philadelphia Pennsylvania, 1816, under the leadership of Richard Allen. In Africa, examples include the independent Tembu Church, which broke away from the Wesleyan Church under the guidance of Nehemiah Tile in 1884.<sup>54</sup> In the particular case of Africa, Shepperson opines that Ethiopianism was found in African churches which asserted their independence, but “which often [found] their origins in the missionary efforts of similar American groups white and Negro.”<sup>55</sup> And among these external groups, both white and black, was the intention to civilize their African brethren, or kin, who were in need of the Christian gospel.

Closely associated with Ethiopianism was the Back to Africa movements of the eighteenth century, which involved all kinds of emigration schemes. These as I have noted in chapter three have been comprehensively dealt with in Shepperson’s seminal works.<sup>56</sup> When white abolitionists and missionaries began recruiting northern blacks

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<sup>53</sup> Shepperson, George A. Shepperson. “Ethiopianism and African Nationalism,” *Phylon* 14, (1953), 9.

<sup>54</sup> Shepperson, “Ethiopianism,” 9.

<sup>55</sup> Shepperson, “Ethiopianism,” 10.

<sup>56</sup> Shepperson, “Ethiopianism,” 9-18; “Notes on Negro American Influences on African Nationalism” *JAH* 1 no. 2 (1960), 299-312; “Pan-Africanism and “pan –Africanism”: Some Historical Notes.” *Phylon* 23, no.4 (1962), 346-358.

for emigration to Africa, Black American leaders and intellectuals like Martin Delany pursued alternative colonization and emigration schemes. They did this in distinction and opposition to the white dominated American Colonization Society.<sup>57</sup> In the process, two traditions which rarely, but occasionally worked together, were created: one predominantly white and the other black.<sup>58</sup>

Blyden was influenced by these emigrationist currents in the U.S., but in institutional terms he came under the influence of the white dominated American Colonization Society (ACS) and the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.<sup>59</sup> And even at the age of eighteen, he was aware of the perception of ACS among some American blacks as the ““twin-sister of slavery,”” but was confident that the civilizing mission would succeed because it was “human and Christian.”<sup>60</sup> Before he arrived in Liberia, Blyden had unfortunately bought into the civilizing missionary ideas floating in the U.S. among whites, and blacks who “believe[d] that God in his large providence [had] been preparing the American Negro to assume a hand in the evangelization of Africa.”<sup>61</sup> Blyden’s missionary zeal was balanced by a sense of nationalism. He captured his nationalistic and Back to Africa sentiments in a poem published in the New York Colonization Journal:

Liberia Happy land! to thee  
The oppressed colored man may flee;  
Thy pleasant, thy delightful shore  
To him true freedom will restore!  
Ye Colored men who freedom want,

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<sup>57</sup> Bruce Dorsey, “A Gendered History of African Colonization in the Antebellum United States” *Journal of Social History* 34, no.1 (2003): 77-103.

<sup>58</sup> For a history of these emigration movements see with accompanying citations Richard Blackett “Martin R. Delany, and Robert Campbell: Black Americans in Search of an African Colony” in *JNH* 62, no. 1 (1977): 1-25.

<sup>59</sup> See Blyden correspondence with these organizations in Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 3-28.

<sup>60</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 28-29.

<sup>61</sup> Charles S. Morris, *Ecuemenical Missionary Conference* (New York, 1900), 469-71.

Why stay in other lands and pant,  
When in Liberia's pleasant land  
You may as men, as freedmen stand?  
You who for genuine freedom crave,  
Who will not be the white man's slave,  
Come to Liberia's pleasant land;  
Here is the freedom you demand  
Why be reduced to poverty  
For want of genuine liberty,  
When on Liberia's pleasant ground  
Alone your liberty may be found<sup>62</sup>

Thus, at a young age and early period of his life in Liberia, Blyden was given to expressing passion and pathos in a prosaic nationalism to inspire the Back to Africa Movement.

However, accompanying these notions of Ethiopianism, Back to Africa, and nationalism among diaspora blacks was aloofness and condescension about native African ways of life. Such condescension is immediately evident in Blyden's narration of his arrival in Africa. He writes while on board *The Packet* that "in a few minutes the deck was thronged by natives—large, robust, intelligent—looking men, with no other clothing than a rag tied around their waist. Many of them had a tolerable smattering of the English language."<sup>63</sup> Blyden would therefore quickly join in the American immigrants' fight and disdain for the natives of Liberia. In a letter written to his mentor J. P. Knox, Blyden records that:

... three hundred citizens who some time ago started from here under the command of President Roberts to fight a tribe of Kroomen who sometime previously murdered several citizens of Bassa Cove, and attacked the settlements with the intention of taking it, have returned with the loss of but 4 men, having conquered and subdued more than two thousand of the enemy. Surely God is on our side. His name be praised. Ye sir there has been war here, and is yet, as the chiefs of those insubordinate tribes have

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<sup>62</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 29.

<sup>63</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 26.

not been apprehended, but we hope soon to have them. Though I was unable to accompany the men to war, I kept guard in turns at night which was necessary to prevent the tribes in our vicinity from taking advantage.<sup>64</sup>

Blyden's expression of this cavalier and manifest destiny attitude that had been adopted by the American settlers (Americo-Liberians) against the native peoples of Liberia, epitomized the times struggle between the Americo-Liberians and the different ethnic groups already living in Liberian territory. If Blyden was ready to go to war on behalf of the immigrants, he got his chance in 1853. This was when the Liberian government embarked on an expedition to Little Cape Mount to affect the arrest of a Chief Boombo of the Vai ethnic group.<sup>65</sup> Blyden remembers having "suffered considerably from fatigue &c [sic]. still feel[ing] [him]self amply repaid—by the scenes which [he] witnessed—and the experience [he] gained in the wearisome route."<sup>66</sup> Blyden did not stop on the military field. In an 1852 letter, he opines that:

The influence of Liberia upon the surrounding tribes is very happily manifesting itself. Even the krooman who, some years ago, proud of the customs and habits of his ancestors, disdained all imitation of civilized life, and rigorously persecuted his neighbor...The native mind is undergoing a complete revolution. There exists among many of them the belief that some great day is approaching for Africa—some year of golden harvests.<sup>67</sup>

However, at some point in his stay in Liberia, Blyden would abandon the civilizing mission for the habits and customs of the Krooman's ancestors. This change in Blyden's attitude began around the presidency of Stephen Allen Benson (1856-1864.) In 1856, Blyden was once again part of a military expedition and a captain, in

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<sup>64</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 33-34.

<sup>65</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 41-44.

<sup>66</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 41-44.

<sup>67</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 58.

the militia, as aide-de camp to the general. Blyden records his experience of the expedition:

Mr. Benson succeeding to Robert's disastrous aboriginal policy... to enter upon an expensive war-carrying two thousand men into the field-with the kroo tribes . . . We traversed nearly the whole of Sinou country and destroyed scores of town-but though merely a boy then I regretted the waste of men and material to subdue and humble a people who only claimed to live as men in their own country. But this was Benson's inheritance from Roberts' rule.<sup>68</sup>

This change in his way of thinking would eventually result in Blyden authoring his landmark book *African Life and Customs*, and his several writings on Islam among the ethnic groups in the interior of Liberia. These were the consequence of Blyden's several missions to cities like Boporo, Musardu, and other places.<sup>69</sup> This would also lead to, as I will show below, Blyden's constant critique of the Americo-Liberian oligarchy in Liberia.

The fundamental modification in Blyden's perspective, i.e., from a civilizing mission to an indigenous African viewpoint, would characterize Blyden's writings from then on. And although there still remained strands of the superior attitude to native African ways in Blyden's writing, more than any of his Diaspora counterparts, Blyden successfully deculturalized some of his western imbued ways. Together with Alexander Crummell and John Henry Smyth, the second Black American to be appointed U.S. representative to Liberia, Blyden challenged the Liberian leadership's discriminatory policies towards indigenous Liberians.<sup>70</sup> It appears that Blyden's

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<sup>68</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 926, n.16.

<sup>69</sup> Lynch, *Selected letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden: edited and with introductions by Hollis R. Lynch and foreword by Léopold Sédar Senghor*. (Millwood, N.Y. : KTO Press, 1978), 85, 273-307.

<sup>70</sup> Walter L. Williams, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Africanist: John Henry Smyth, United States Minister to Liberia, 1878-1885" *JNH* 63, no.1 (1978): 18-25.

“anti-mullato” stance as some have portrayed him was more because of his disdain for Americo-Liberian color complex establishment. It is on this account that I call Blyden an iconoclast, because he was willing to challenge his Americo-Liberian friends contempt and separation from native Africans. Moreover, Blyden did not only constantly evolve his thinking, but continually spoke truth to power, and damned the consequences. He did this often to no avail.

From the foregoing, one can clearly see that although Blyden was born in St. Thomas, and imbued the writings of western scholarship, he also acquired his tertiary education in Liberia, West Africa. Africa where he lived, primarily, and global Africa in general, was at the center of his thinking. The change in Blyden’s thinking about Africa and Africans, his writings on Global African subjects and places were determined by his lived experience on the African continent. Surely Blyden’s thoughts were cultivated in West Africa. His Black Atlantic writings, even if limited to his native St. Thomas, and his adopted Liberia, did not exclude the rest of Africa. Gilroy’s exclusion of Africa from the Black Atlantic while characterizing Blyden as a Black Atlantic scholar appears anachronistic, and diminishes the global African dimensions of Blyden’s thinking and writing.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 112-212.



## Blyden's Iconoclasm

Like Woodson, Frazier, and Cruse in the U.S. context, Blyden is hard to label. This is because he agreed and disagreed with his contemporaries whenever he deemed fit. He for instance disagreed with his acquaintance, English philosopher Herbert Spencer, as he did with non-associates like Black Nationalist Martin Delany on the issue of emigration. Blyden's nonconformity can be gleaned from an inaugural address he gave on January 5<sup>th</sup> 1881. As President of Liberia College, Blyden eruditely engaged with "The aims and methods of a liberal education for Africans," and took a position analogous to Du Bois' liberal position and concerns in his famous debate with Booker T. Washington. In his disagreement with Washington, Du Bois asserted the primacy of liberal over industrial training for blacks.<sup>72</sup> Blyden on the other hand, in an open letter to B. T. Washington published in the *New York Age* on January 24<sup>th</sup> 1895, commended Washington for his industrial schemes and wishing him God's speed in his work "on God's line for the race."<sup>73</sup> However, later on in 1911, Blyden in a confidential letter to the editor of the Charleston, South Carolina *News and Courier* characterized Washington as not possessing a "gleam of real racial knowledge—anything that showed appreciation of racial conditions and adaptations."<sup>74</sup> Blyden questioned Washington's purpose to "train the Negro to believe that the difference between him and the white man is that between tweedledee and tweedledum—that black man only needs money, a balance at his bankers, to make

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<sup>72</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), 71-93.

<sup>73</sup> Hollis Lynch, ed., *Black Spokesman: Selected published writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (London: Cass, 1971), 205-208.

<sup>74</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 489.

him the social equal of the white.”<sup>75</sup> Blyden the consummate iconoclast defies easy classification, and qualifies in all four key components of global African iconoclasm: intellectual rigor, social activism, being a theoretician of the global African condition, as well as a global enabler.

I use intellectual to mean a scholar with some academic training, who could be an independent intellectual or public researcher. The work of such an intellectual, should be rigorous, and offer objective accounts on black affairs, as in the case of scholars in the vindicationist school. In addition, an iconoclastic intellectual should also seek to *descriptively* study African peoples on the basis of their own culturally formulated understandings of who they are as well as the varied dimensions of their psyche and distinctiveness.<sup>76</sup> Edward Blyden, who I argue is the originator of a global African iconoclastic tradition, is an example of a scholar who engaged in such rigorous intellectual activity.

Blyden was a trained theologian, and later earned two honorary M. A. degrees from Hamilton College, New York; and Lafayette College, Pennsylvania; and received LL.D and D.D degrees from Lincoln University, Pennsylvania.<sup>77</sup> At Alexander High School, in Monrovia Liberia, Blyden was an “A” student scoring excellent marks in “Scripture, Latin, Greek, Arithmetic, Behavior, and Industry” and recording no absences in his first term which ended June 12, 1852.<sup>78</sup> By 1858, Blyden was teaching Latin, Greek, Math, and vocal music, and later became principal of his

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<sup>75</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 489.

<sup>76</sup> Descriptive as used here draws on Marable’s definition of Descriptive in *Dispatches from the Ebony*, 1-2; Marable, *Dispatches From the Ebony Tower*, 1-2.

<sup>77</sup> *Crisis*, 3, no.5 (1912): 187; American Colonization Society, *African Repository* 45 (1869):298; Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, xxxii; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 165, 284; Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, ix.

<sup>78</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 36-37.

alma mater.<sup>79</sup> In the same year, he became a candidate for licensure in the Presbyterian Church. For three days, October 25-27, 1858, the presbytery examined Blyden for ordination. He passed and was to be ordained on January 3, 1860.<sup>80</sup> By 1861, while still in charge of Alexander High School, Blyden had put out a number of inquiries to determine whether his treatise on “Missions in Liberia” and other writings for literary periodicals, could earn him “a B.A. or M.A.”<sup>81</sup> It is not clear what became of these ambitions, but Blyden was mostly a self-taught and independent scholar. According to Blyden’s high school teacher, Rev. Wilson, Blyden who was his pupil, became a better Greek scholar than he the teacher. He explained that Blyden also studied Hebrew, Fula and reading the scriptures in the ancient originals.<sup>82</sup>

When the Liberia College was first built in 1861, Blyden was appointed Professor of Greek, Latin Languages, and Literature.<sup>83</sup> This was after Blyden had been interviewed by the Trustees of Donations for Education in Liberia, based in Boston. The secretary of the trustees, one Rev. Dr. Joseph Tracy, in appointing Blyden as professor, indicated that he had “no academical degree” yet, was “worthy of the degree of Master of Arts.” He then forwarded Blyden’s writings and sermons for an award of an M.A. degree from Middlebury College.<sup>84</sup> It is uncertain whether this graduate degree was granted to Blyden, but eventually, Blyden became James Fulton (endowed) Professor, and later, President, of Liberia College in 1881.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 50.

<sup>80</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 52.

<sup>81</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 52-63.

<sup>82</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 54.

<sup>83</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 82-87.

<sup>84</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 87.

<sup>85</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 127-128, 130, 488.

Many years earlier, Blyden had turned down an opportunity to study in England, but he would later become a member of the London Athenaeum club and a corresponding member of the “American Negro Academy” in 1898. He was also an honorary President of the “Negro Society for Historical Research” in 1911, an organization co-founded by his friend, African-American journalist and historian, John Edward Bruce (1856-1924), who also co-founded the “Society” with Puerto Rican born bibliophile Arthur (Arturo) Schomburg (1874-1938).<sup>86</sup> Blyden also co-founded the Athenaeum Club of Monrovia, Liberia, with colleague Alexander Crummel; and became a member of the St. George’s club.

Since he spoke and read several languages, including Greek, Latin, Arabic, Spanish, and Hebrew, Blyden would become a fellow of the American Philological Association, principal, of Alexander High School, and Professor of Languages and Classics at Liberia College.<sup>87</sup> He wrote and edited several newspapers and mission journals in Africa, and the United States like *Fraser’s Magazine* in London and the *North American Review*.<sup>88</sup>

Considered to be the first intellectual exponent on Pan-Africanism, Blyden published several acclaimed essays, and published in 1889, what Lynch described as his magnum opus on *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*.<sup>89</sup> This book is in many ways a theoretical antecedent to Kwame Nkrumah’s *Philosophical Consciencism*. In *Philosophical Consciencism*, Nkrumah argues that Africa’s external Islamic and Euro-Christian influences needs to be brought in tune with “the original humanist

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<sup>86</sup> Ralph L. Crowder, *John Edward Bruce: Politician, Journalist, and Self-Trained Historian of the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

<sup>87</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, xi-ix.

<sup>88</sup> Edward Blyden, “The African Problem” *North American Review*, CLXI (1895):327-329.

<sup>89</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, xxviii.

principles” of traditional Africa.<sup>90</sup> Blyden, on the other hand, viewed Islam as less racial and discriminatory than Christianity, and saw Islam as a better option for the regeneration of the African nativity he envisioned.<sup>91</sup> For Blyden, Islam is an important stage to a true Christianity because it helped preserve essential African traits. He also makes a distinction between Christianity practiced by the contemporaneous European Christian missions in preference for a Christianity in Africa that was more in tune with already existing African practices.<sup>92</sup> Thus, Blyden had prefigured Nkrumah’s attempted synthesis of the best aspects of Euro-Christian and Islamic civilization with a supposed “African humanism.” This is one of the reasons Blyden is considered to have authored the first sophisticated explanation of Pan-Africanism.

Blyden’s iconoclasm could also be retrospectively included in various paradigms of Black Studies. Black Studies seeks to merge theory with praxis for the empowerment of its research community—global Africa. A global African iconoclast’s social analysis, should therefore, also actively engage, and aim at solving, or at least offering clarifications, for the means by which the myriad of the problems that black populations face locally and internationally could be solved. Such a scholar should be involved in a meaningful organizational or institutional activity, the fruits of which would be visible landmarks for everyone to notice. An example of such organizational work is Du Bois’ role in the Pan-African conference and congresses organized from 1900 until the epochal 1945 congress where both African and African Diasporans met. Another example is C. L. R. James and Walter Rodney’s work with

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<sup>90</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization* (London: Panaf, 1978).

<sup>91</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, 4-24.

<sup>92</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, 1-24, 46-70, 173-188.

the Institute of the Black World (IBW). The latter's influence on the Rastafarian social movement is documented in his work *Groundings with my Brothers*.<sup>93</sup> James and Rodney's multiple influences on social movements in the whole of the Caribbean also qualify them as proponents of such amalgamation between intellectual and social activity but not necessarily as global African iconoclasts like Blyden.

In addition to possessing a broad social vision and commitment to institutional and social activist movements a global African iconoclast, should also have offered a historically significant analysis of the black condition in the same way that Allen and Wilson characterized Cruse's *Crisis* as being as germane to U.S. African-Americans today as it was when it first appeared in 1964. W. E. B. Du Bois' famous analysis of the twentieth century captured in *Souls of Black Folk*, condensed in the succinct statement, "for the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" qualifies as an example of the enduring landmark analysis of the global African condition.<sup>94</sup>

Finally, a global African iconoclast should be seen as a global enabler who is cognizant of the multitude of connections—intellectually and socially—that have existed between Africa and its diverse diasporia. Kwame Nkrumah, a U.S. trained intellectual and Pan-African, better than most, represents this characteristic. A founder of the Organization of African Unity, Nkrumah's famous March 6<sup>th</sup> address on the eve of Ghana's independence: "the independence of Ghana is meaningless

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<sup>93</sup> For some of James' and Rodney's intellectual influence and work with I.B.W., see Harding, "Vocation of the Black" in *Harvard Educational Review*(1974): 3-29; Walter Rodney, *Groundings with my Brothers*, (London: Bogle L'Ouverture, 1969).

<sup>94</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 10, 29.

unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent,” placed him in the inner courts of Pan-African intellectuals and activists.<sup>95</sup>

Beyond the African continent, Nkrumah’s leadership in Ghana offered African descended peoples throughout the world an opportunity to imagine what it felt like to enjoy freedom and be treated with human dignity. He demonstrated his commitment by inviting Martin Luther King Jr. to Ghana’s independence struggle where the latter would be introduced to the Vice-President of the United States Richard Nixon—a meeting that would have been impossible in the U.S. Kevin Gaines recounts that Nixon who was unable to ignore King in Accra, invited him for a meeting in Washington D.C.<sup>96</sup> Nkrumah also offered King insight into how Gandhian non-violence had been effective in the then Gold Coast.<sup>97</sup> In addition to meeting with Nkrumah, King also met with Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Trinidadian scholar C. L. R. James, and Barbadian poet, George Lamming. These meetings allowed him to fully appreciate the global nature of black peoples struggle for liberty.<sup>98</sup> That African nationalism became intertwined with the Civil Rights struggle was because of Nkrumah. One can therefore argue that Nkrumah through King influenced the Civil Rights struggle in the U.S. Nkrumah was an enabler of global African discourse and fraternity. Nkrumah’s status as a global African iconoclast is however up for debate.

Besides King, Nkrumah’s government actually employed Diaspora Africans like Du Bois, who he invited to edit an *Encyclopedia Africana*, George Padmore who became head of the Bureau of African Affairs, and anthropologist St. Claire Drake

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<sup>95</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Independence Day Speech*, See also Kevin Gaines, *American Africans*, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Gaines, *American Africans*, 5, 81.

<sup>97</sup> Gaines, *American Africans*, 79-86.

<sup>98</sup> Gaines, *American Africans*, 83.

who helped in policy making. Nkrumah also invited Diaspora Africans to become a part of the nation-building efforts in Ghana. Gaines has eloquently documented and described the variety of radical and leftist personalities from the Diaspora who made Ghana a sanctuary from “Cold war liberalism and American hegemony.”<sup>99</sup> They were able to do this because of Nkrumah’s welcome.

Reading back from these contemporary examples, it is clear that Blyden possessed all four characteristic of a global African iconoclast. He was one whose scholarship, activism, and diplomacy, and socio-political pursuits stretched from the particularity of his birth home of St. Thomas, and later his adopted country of Liberia, to involve an international community of African descended peoples. Blyden, as progenitor of this global iconoclastic tradition in his lifetime, impacted people of African descent globally, and his intellectual analysis of the global African condition was timeless.

As a person of Diasporan birth and heritage, Blyden, like Nkrumah, was deeply conscious of the relationship between Africa and its vast Diaspora. This awareness was reflected in the several essays and addresses he gave in Africa and on twelve separate lecture tours in the United States, including his tour of the states when he urged blacks to emigrate to Liberia. This was during his tenure as commissioner of colonization for Liberia.<sup>100</sup> For Blyden, connections between Africa and blacks abroad required emigration back to Africa. Although others like Delany and Crummel may have wavered, recanted, or amended their positions on emigration, Blyden like his friend, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, was steadfast.

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<sup>99</sup> Gaines, *American Africans*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 275-296, 626-668.



Delany for example pursued emigration plans in both Africa and the Americas. In contrast to Blyden, he was initially opposed to emigration to Africa, particularly Liberia, where the white led American Colonization Society (ACS) held sway. Delany disliked the ACS because he considered them “the most arrant enemies of the colored man, ever seeking to discomfit him, and envying him of every privilege that he may enjoy.”<sup>101</sup> In the midst of this mistrust, Delany on different platforms looked to the east African coast, Central America and the West Indies as possible destinations.<sup>102</sup> Unlike Blyden, Delany therefore pursued multiple plans as alternatives to emigration to Africa. Delany later formally pursued emigration plans to Africa as a member of the two-man Niger Valley Exploration Party in 1859, but again abandoned such plans during the American civil war when blacks were freed, and he enlisted into the Northern army.<sup>103</sup>

In contrast to Delany, Blyden never reneged on the issue; he embarked on many journeys to the U.S., St. Thomas, and other parts of the Caribbean, urging repatriation to Africa. Blyden considered the question of emigration inevitable, because he believed that in the United States “there can never occur . . . equality, social or political, between whites and blacks.” This was the main thrust of the speeches he gave as Liberian Emigration Commissioner when he visited the U.S. east coast in 1862. Blyden’s extended association with the ACS may be called into question, given that Black Nationalist like Delany viewed it with scorn. However, Blyden who was

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<sup>101</sup> Martin R. Delany, [1852] *The Condition and Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States Politically Considered* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 31.

<sup>102</sup> Delany, *The Condition*, 171-189 See also Delany, *Blake; or the Huts of America, a Novel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970 ); *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention of the Colored People: Held at Cleveland, Ohio August 24, 26 1854* (Pittsburgh: A.A. Anderson, 1854).

<sup>103</sup> Martin R. Delany, *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploration Party* (New York: Niger Valley Exploration Party, 1861); For Delany’s enlistment see Vincent Harding’s interpretation in *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in the United States* ( New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

on occasion also critical of the ACS also believed that “an African nationality is [their] great need and God tells [them] by his providence that he has set the land before [them], and bids [them] go and possess it.”<sup>104</sup> Thus, even after the gains of the American Civil war, Blyden like Turner, continued to champion emigration to Africa as late as 1887. This is when he comments on the prospects of Liberia in the worldwide community of peoples. Blyden writes:

The nation now being reared in Africa by the returning exiles from this country [Africa] will not be a reproduction of the American. The restoration of the Negro to the land of his father’s will be the restoration of a race to its original integrity, to itself; and working by itself, for itself and from itself, it will discover the methods of its own development and the will not be the same as the Anglo-Saxon methods.<sup>105</sup>

Blyden was also a conduit for the exchange of ideas between African scholars and their U.S. black counterparts. A friend of John Bruce, Blyden reprinted, or commented on, several articles and columns in African-American newspapers when he wrote for *Frasers Magazine*, the *Liberian herald*, and the *Negro*, which he edited while living in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Blyden’s essays appeared in journals like the *North American Review*, *Royal Geographical Society of London*, and the *Journal of the Royal African Society* for the benefit of his global interlocutors.<sup>106</sup>

A member of the ANA himself, Blyden was personal friends and corresponded with several founding members of the ANA including Bruce, Alexander Crummell, Francis Grimke, and John Cromwell. During its early years, Blyden and Sierra Leonean, Sir Samuel Lewis (1843-1903), were the only African members of the

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<sup>104</sup> Edward Blyden *The call for Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America* in Lynch, *Black Spokesman*, 25-26, 29.

<sup>105</sup> Blyden, *The Origin and Purpose of African Colonization* in Lynch *Black Spokesman*, 43.

<sup>106</sup> See for example Edward Blyden, “Islam in the Western Soudan” *Journal of the African Society* 5, (1902): 11-37.

Academy.<sup>107</sup> Later, Egyptian author and editor of the *African Times and Orient Review*, Duse Mohammed; Gold Coaster's James Kwegir Aggrey (1875-1927); and Hayford were elected corresponding members. But before this, Blyden took it upon himself to recommend other African thinkers to be inducted into the Academy.<sup>108</sup> Even though Blyden's recommendations were not always taken, as in the case of J. J. Dosen, Vice President of Liberia, Blyden is arguably the intellectual progenitor of the term "vindicationsit" as it was used by the ANA. Blyden wrote in 1857, an essay entitled "A Vindication of the Negro Race."<sup>109</sup> The original essay published by G. Killian (Monrovia), included an introductory essay by academy co-founder Alexander Crummell.<sup>110</sup> Blyden may, therefore, be said to have influenced the formative stages of the Academy through his close relationship with some of its founding members.

In his capacity as bridge between African Scholars and African American thinkers, Blyden joined several black collectives while he traveled in the United States. One of these collectives was the "Washington Saturday Circle," a reading group that included Anna Julia Cooper, Francis Grimke, Fannie Smythe, and Ella Sommerville.<sup>111</sup> Blyden fondly commented, in his African serialized newspaper columns and editorials, about the discussions that ensued within the group. He corresponded with several newspapers in the United States and embarked on several lecture tours and sermons during his travels to the United States from Liberia in 1874, 1889-1890, and 1895.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *The American Negro Academy: Voice of the Talented Tenth*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 79.

<sup>108</sup> Moss, *The American Negro Academy*, 127-129.

<sup>109</sup> Edward Blyden, *A Vindication of the African Race* (Monrovia: G. Killian, 1857).

<sup>110</sup> Edward Blyden, *A Vindication of the African Race* (Monrovia: G. Killian, 1857).

<sup>111</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 486.

<sup>112</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 275-296, 615-624, 648-668.

In addition to these global enabling activities and his vast intellectual credentials, Blyden, undoubtedly, was the first systematic theoretician of Pan-Africanism, or what his first biographer Hollis Lynch called, “Pan- Negro Ideas.”<sup>113</sup> Blyden argued that there was uniqueness to the African personality that needed to be cultivated for the benefit of all people of African descent and the world at large. Some of his pioneering ideas are set out in his groundbreaking study *African Life and Customs*. In this work, Blyden advocated the benefits of African forms of human social organization, explaining the reasons behind polygamy, and its benefits; African communal systems; African industry; and the spiritual sanctity of certain traditional African practices.<sup>114</sup> These distinctive African practices were to be further cultivated to enhance the African personality, which was “cooperative, not egotistic or individualistic” and would help provide Africa’s unique contribution to humanity.<sup>115</sup> Blyden was then a nativistic cultural nationalist, —he advocated a return to indigenous African practices, which were untainted by European modernity, as the salvation for Africa’s regeneration. However, his was not a naïve nativity, because as a pragmatic person who was himself aware of the growing influence of western modernity in Africa, he sought to bring these external influences under homegrown ideas and ways of living to nurture the African Personality.

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<sup>113</sup> Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 1-10.

<sup>114</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, [1908] *African Life and Customs: Reprinted from the Sierra Leone Weekly News* (London: African Publication Society, 1969), 7-30.

<sup>115</sup> Mukhtar Abd-al-kerim is the name Blyden claims to have been given by his Muslim friends from the interior. See Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 30, 30-60.

## **Mukhtar Abd- al- Kerim Blyden and the Systematic Study of Islam and the Study of Egypt as an African Civilization<sup>116</sup>**

John Hunwick, a longtime specialist on the history of Islam in Africa, recently commenting on the Afro-Arab relations in the twentieth century, credited Blyden as one of the pioneers in the fostering of relationships between Africans south of the Sahara, and Arab Africans to the north.<sup>117</sup> This acknowledgement makes sense because Blyden was one of the early scholars to begin the systematic study of the origins, nature, and practice of Islam among Africans. Long before modern African historians studied the Africanization of Islam in West Africa; Blyden had begun an examination of the African cultural underpinnings of Islam in the region. Between 1871-1905, Blyden wrote at least five articles on Islam in West Africa. These include “Mohammedanism in Western Africa”, “Mohammedanism and the Negro Race”, and “The Mohammedans of Nigritia”.<sup>118</sup> He also wrote “Islam in the Western Soudan, and the Koran in Africa”.<sup>119</sup> In these essays Blyden showed that Islam did not have a harmful effect on Africans as Christianity had, and in many cases Islam helped maintain some African practices particularly kinship systems.

He also wrote about Islamic manuscripts written by Africans in order to show their intellectual abilities, and commented on the Jihadic figures of the nineteenth like Al Hajj Umar of Futa Toro. Blyden provides a brief biography on Al Hajj Umar, as

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<sup>116</sup> The Muslims Blyden encountered named him Mukhtar- the chosen one, and Abd- al Kerim, see Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 189.

<sup>117</sup> John Hunwick, *Africa, Islam, and the Arab World: Studies in Honor of Basil Davidson* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2003), 92-93.

<sup>118</sup> *Methodist Quarterly Review* January, 1871; *Fraser's Magazine*, (1875): 598-615; Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, 306-336.

<sup>119</sup> Blyden, “Islam in the Western Soudan” *Journal of the African Society* 5, (1902): 11-37; Lynch, *Black Spokesman*, 271-311.

well as other black pioneers of Islam as religion. He also provides evidence and commentary on writing of Islamic texts by black Africans.<sup>120</sup> Ever the consummate scholar and linguist, Blyden first studied Arabic at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, Syria in 1866, the same year he traveled through Egypt and Jerusalem.<sup>121</sup> Blyden who was already minimally familiar with Arabic purposefully went to Syria because:

The other day, while on a visit to a native town, I met a couple itinerant Mohammedan priests, with their books and papers. They could not speak a word of English. I wrote an Arabic passage from the Koran from memory. They read it and raised their hands in astonishment that I should know anything of the language. They then showed me their papers, but I was not sufficiently acquainted with the language to read them. But I hope by perseverance to be able to learn that and several other native languages.<sup>122</sup>

Blyden already spoke Spanish and Dutch, later acquired “French and German,” but was also interested in teaching Arabic at Liberia College. He therefore set aboard Capt. Thomas Milbourne’s screw steamer *Pioneer* on May 11, 1861 en-route to Syria to study Arabic.<sup>123</sup>

When Blyden returned to Liberia from his travels to the Middle East, he began to champion girls’ education, as well as an Arabic curriculum at Liberia College. He did this by befriending several Muslim traders and priests from the interior of Liberia. Blyden was also reputed to have received several visitors from Futa Jallon, and Kankan, and made several trips to the interior himself, going to places like Vonsua, Boporo, and Musardu.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Blyden, “Islam in the Western Soudan,” 11-37; “The Koran in Africa” *Journal of the African Society*, (1905): 157-171; Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 296-301.

<sup>121</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 141; See also Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine*, 9-201.

<sup>122</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 141.

<sup>123</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 141.

<sup>124</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 161-164.

By 1869, Arabic was being offered at Liberia College, and students were examined in Arabic, and called upon to read an “elegant manuscript Koran, written at Boporo, seventy-five miles interior from Monrovia, by learned Mandigoes.”<sup>125</sup>

External examiners from the Muslim learning city of Kankan were also employed to offer senior examinations on the “Seventh Makamat, and portions of the Koran.”<sup>126</sup>

Blyden’s ability to bring scholars from Kankan, an important black African Islamic learning city, perhaps second only to Timbuktu, shows his important contribution to the pedagogy, and study of Arabic and Islam.<sup>127</sup>

Blyden did not only write about Islam, he visited and lived with Muslims. He traveled to West African Islamic centers of learning, held conference with its leading scholars and collected manuscripts for translation. From these experiences Blyden concluded that Islam, more than Christianity, was suitable to African dignity—the African restoration project, and disliked the fact that European missionaries tried to create discord between African Christians and Muslims.<sup>128</sup> Some of Blyden’s ideas about Islam may also be equated with the teachings of the Nation of Islam (NOI), which characterize Islam as a true black or African religion.<sup>129</sup>

In sum, more than any of his Diaspora contemporaries, including Crummel and Delany, Blyden was able to shed a good part of his “civilizing” attitude toward native African societies. Blyden recognized that there was a distinct particularity with which

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<sup>125</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 166.

<sup>126</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 167.

<sup>127</sup> For further commentary on Kankan as an African city of Islamic learning, see Nehemiah Levtzion, and Randall Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

<sup>128</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, 46-70.

<sup>129</sup> See Edward Curtis IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam 1960-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 91; “Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) and the Paradox of Islam,” in *Islam in Black America: Identity Liberation and in African-American Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 21-43.

traditional African societies experienced the world, and this needed to be cultivated and nurtured for the benefit of the world.

There were few black intellectuals in the nineteenth century, and even today, who can lay claim to having crossed the Nile on boat, and attempted to enter the Pyramids.<sup>130</sup> Blyden, who made his way to the central chambers of the Cheops Pyramid, claimed a “peculiar heritage in the Great Pyramids.”<sup>131</sup> He offers, in *West Africa to Palestine*,<sup>132</sup> graphic descriptions of the pyramids of Chephren, Cheops, Ghizeh, Abusir, and Sakarah.<sup>133</sup> Blyden, the polyglot, with his knowledge of Arabic and Hebrew, offered linguistic analyses for evidence of the existence of the Pyramids in biblical accounts and also argues that they were built by black Africans. He does this, by taking on the leading writers of the day like J. S. Wilkinson. Blyden, using Hebrew, Arabic, and Coptic versions of the bible pointed out that the Pyramids predated biblical personalities like Job, who Blyden claims referred to the Pyramids as “desolate places.”<sup>134</sup> Blyden also takes on one Rev. Barham Zincke, who dismissed black African origins for the Pyramids.<sup>135</sup> He then attacked the Hamitic hypotheses reference to African inferiority based on a curse from God.<sup>136</sup>

Blyden must be counted in the intellectual genealogy of scholars that studied Egypt. In fact, many ideological, intellectual, and disciplinary arenas can lay claim to Blyden as an intellectual precursor. He preceded Cheikh Anta Diop, Chancellor Williams, Josef Ben Jochanan, Theophile Obenga, Jacob H. Carruthers, Martin

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<sup>130</sup> Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine*, 94-96.

<sup>131</sup> Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine*, 105.

<sup>132</sup> Edward Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine* (London: T.J. Sawyerr, 1873).

<sup>133</sup> Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine*, 96-99.

<sup>134</sup> Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine*, 102.

<sup>135</sup> Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine*, 102.

<sup>136</sup> Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine*, 114-129.



Bernal, the Afrocentric School, and other Egyptologists of different ilk and schools of thought in the assertion of the black “African progenitors” contribution to ancient Egyptian and Mediterranean civilization.<sup>137</sup>

### **Blyden, Race, and the Vindicationist Tradition**

In 1856, Blyden got married to a Richmond, Virginia-born Liberian emigrant, Sarah Yates, who arrived in Liberia, from Toronto at the age of seventeen or eighteen in 1852. Young Yates was the niece of a merchant, and then Vice-President of Liberia, Col. Beverly Page Yates.<sup>138</sup> The marriage however was unsuccessful, and Blyden often struggled to meet the needs of his family.<sup>139</sup> Blyden complained of his wife:

being of the mind and temperament of the people around her [mixed-race] . . . My restlessness and fickleness is largely due to this I am persecuted outside, but more inside. Uncongenial, incompatible, unsympathetic, my wife makes the burden of my life sore, very sore and heavy. And if anyone outside—(I have no relatives here) shows any kindness or sympathy, she stimulates a scandal which she knows will readily be believed and circulated in this community.<sup>140</sup>

Friends of Blyden record how Sarah Yates scuttled Blyden’s chance at the Liberian Presidency, by her behavior and threat to leave Liberia.<sup>141</sup> Blyden wrote private letters to explain Yates’ abusive nature, her intransigence, temper, and tongue; as well as her not understanding his African work.<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, Yates’ account of the tempestuous marriage has not survived to make for a more balanced account of the

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<sup>137</sup>Blyden, *From West Africa to Palestine*, 104-105. For a more comprehensive discussion of African and African-American intellectual genealogy on the study of Egypt see Mario Beatty, forthcoming, based on Association of African-American Life and History presentation 2009

<sup>138</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 52, 901; Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriots*, 38.

<sup>139</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 64, 146, 188, 360, 463.

<sup>140</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 902.

<sup>141</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 902.

<sup>142</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 902-905.

marriage. Nonetheless, the records show that without consulting Blyden, she eventually left Liberia in 1886, with their two children for the U.S., and later Canada, where she stayed with a cousin.<sup>143</sup> Yates is reported to have later returned to Liberia with Blyden's invalid child and a granddaughter, but the two eventually separated when Yates left to go back to the U.S. Some reports claim that she never did return to Liberia in the first place.<sup>144</sup>

Blyden and Yates had three children together—one boy Edward Jr., and two girls, Uria, and Fry. Blyden would begin an adulterous affair with the “black” Anna Erskine. Blyden described Erskine to his American friends in the following way: “The Day School here is being taught by Miss Anna Erskine and numbers about 25 scholars. I am careful to see that she is regular in her attendance, and consider it a very fine school.”<sup>145</sup> Blyden further described Erskine as having no peers, as she was knowledgeable in Latin, and French and familiar with Arabic.<sup>146</sup> Blyden was convinced that had Erskine been mixed-race, rather than black, she would have had more opportunities to excel. Needless to say, Blyden admired or was fond of the daughter of Rev. Hopkins Erskine and Mrs. Eliza Payne Erskine, which may have clouded his judgment.<sup>147</sup> The relationship however, became a scandal of sorts for Blyden who was accused of being polygamous, and contributed to his resignation from the Presbyterian Church. Blyden later bore five children with Anna Erskine, of which only one, Isa Cleopatra survived.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 903-904.

<sup>144</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 906-907.

<sup>145</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 157.

<sup>146</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 912-913.

<sup>147</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 912.

<sup>148</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 914-915.

Lynch has interpreted this episode in Blyden's life as being symptomatic of the color struggle in Liberia, and Blyden's "anti-mulatto" positions. Race, therefore, played an integral part in Blyden's life in Liberia. But, the class and color struggle in Liberia, were not the only concerns that shaped Blyden's racial ideology. High on his agenda was a conversation with the leading racial and nationalist thinkers in Europe. Blyden thus, became for Africa during this period, the most consistent and articulate critique of western modernity's pretensions of universality and African inferiority. As Korang building on Abiola Irele's work, has argued, Blyden was in tune with the circulation of ideas throughout the Atlantic: "the romantic racism of Herder, the internationalist nationalism and liberal humanism of Giuseppe Mazzini, and the historical imperialism of George Hegel."<sup>149</sup> I, like Korang, do not see Blyden as uncritically taking the ideas of these European thinkers; as is evident in his feelings about European civilization:

It has been said that the fringe of European civilization is violence. All the agencies . . . are tending to fashion us after the one pattern Europe holds out. Society is calling upon us to be like the rest of its worshipers. All the books we read—all the pictures we see beguile us.<sup>150</sup>

Rather than acquiesce to Europe's philanthropic and political agencies call for Africans to "efface yourselves" Blyden clearly, in his various essays, such as "The African Problem and the Method for its Solution," and his book *African Life and Customs* developed alternative theories of race.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 23-24.

<sup>150</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 203.

<sup>151</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 203; Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 45-52.

Blyden believed the various races were “distinct but equal” and not “identical but unequal” as others opined.<sup>152</sup> Thus, while Blyden accepted the unscientific assertion about the existence of races, he objected to the irrational arrangement of the races into a hierarchy of supreme and inferior races. Blyden’s biographers have rightly argued that he accepted some of the premises of the leading racial theorist of his day. There however appears to be a fundamental distinction between Blyden and the racist writers of the nineteenth century. Blyden recognized the existence of a “human race” emerging from common “formless protoplasm,” and in fact, wrote that “there [was] no question as to the human unity.”<sup>153</sup> His acceptance and distinction of the races, therefore, was based more on environmental and cultural attitudes, and less on supposed biological differences. For Blyden, the heritable characteristics of each race arose because “each section has developed for itself such a system of code of life as its environments have suggested arrangements under which . . . he has lived and thriven generation after generation.”<sup>154</sup>

Blyden, subsequently, in a rather simplistic way attempts to describe these environmental and culturally developed African social organizations: family, property, social life, law, polygamy, gender, and education.<sup>155</sup> From a contemporary perspective, Blyden’s generalization of African life may be shortsighted, in part attributable to the state of knowledge about race during the nineteenth century. However mistaken Blyden was in his descriptive generalization of African life and customs, he was not a racialist in the sense that Appiah and others have described him,

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<sup>152</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, 277.

<sup>153</sup> Blyden, “Race and African Personality” in Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 201; Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 10.

<sup>154</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 10.

<sup>155</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 9-73.

or racist in the sense that the Comte de Gobineau and Winwood Reade were and have written.<sup>156</sup> Rather, Blyden's thesis in *African Life and Customs* was about the "unity of humanity" and yet the existence of environmental distinctions have emerged as each race fashioned out utilitarian measures for their particular geographic contexts. Thus, for Blyden, "[T]he African has developed a system useful to him . . . social, industrial, and economic."<sup>157</sup> To demonstrate his rejection of the European racial categories Blyden:

rejected the theories of the noisy and blustering anthropologists of forty or fifty years ago—the Notts and Gliddons, Burtons, Winwood Reade, Hunt, et id omne genus—who invented all sorts of arguments based upon estimates of physical phenomena as conceived by phrenology or physiognomy, using signs and symbols taken from every art of the man—from the heel to the skull—to prove the mental and moral inferiority of the Negro.<sup>158</sup>

Thus, in the nineteenth century when pseudo-scientific racism was at its height, Edward Blyden was at the forefront of vindicating the race. Blyden's social activism manifested in his challenge of the Darwinian underpinnings of the Anthropological Society of London founded in 1863. The society pioneered social anthropology and ethnographic study, which included supposedly essential descriptions of peoples, and races. Blyden opposed these descriptions, arguing that all races were equal, but distinct. In his essay "A Vindication of the Negro Race" Blyden questioned pseudo-scientific studies that claimed Africa's inherent love of slavery, as well as writers who used physiognomy as the basis of African inferiority.<sup>159</sup> In his opposition, Blyden

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<sup>156</sup> For the racist theories of Blyden's interlocutors see Arthur Comte de Gobineau, (1853) *Inequality of the Races* (London: Heinemann, 1915); W. Winwood Reade, *Savage Africa* (London, 1964); Robert Knox, *The Races of Men* (London, 1850).

<sup>157</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 10.

<sup>158</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 8.

<sup>159</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 131-134.

again articulated the idea of a unique African personality that also belonged to Africans in the Americas and the West Indies.<sup>160</sup>

Blyden's thoughts, writings, and actions were as varied as the geographical and conceptual unit now referred to as the Black Atlantic by Paul Gilroy and others.<sup>161</sup> These earlier contributions on Black Atlantic Studies have mostly focused on cultural manifestations of African descendants resident in Europe and the Americas. They include the 18<sup>th</sup> century predecessors of Blyden, most of whom were of West African origin. Blyden made it abundantly clear that these individuals were his intellectual predecessors and named some of them in his very first pamphlet "Voice from Bleeding Africa," which contained a list of accomplished black intellectuals.<sup>162</sup>

These intellectual forerunners included Dutch and German trained philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo (Gold Coast, 1703-ca.1759); Moravian trained itinerant preacher, Frederick Pederson Svane (Gold Coast, 1710-1789; Christian Protten (Gold Coast, 1715-1769), and Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein (Gold Coast, 1717-1747).<sup>163</sup> Others were "pioneering black Anglophone" Atlantic writers in English—James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Ottobah Cuguano, John Marrant, Olaudah Equiano, and John Jea."<sup>164</sup> Blyden became heir to these 18<sup>th</sup> century scholars, four of whom were African-born intellectuals, and who also saw the need to refute the wrong assertions about African life and history borne out of the European enlightenment of their era.

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<sup>160</sup> Edward W. Blyden, *African Life and Customs* (London: African Publication Society, 1969).

<sup>161</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*; J. Roland Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>162</sup> Edward Blyden, *A Voice from Bleeding Africa on Behalf of Her Exiled Children* (Monrovia: G. Killian, 1856), 21; Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 18.

<sup>163</sup> Abraham, "Amo"; Protten, "Useful Grammatical Introduction" and Parker, *A Thesis on Slavery by a Former Slave*.

<sup>164</sup> Henry Louis Gates Jr. and William L. Andrews, eds., *Pioneers of the Black Atlantic: Five Slave Narratives from the Enlightenment* (Washington D.C.: Civitas Counterpointe, 1998), viii.

Unfortunately, Blyden's thoughts have been treated and portrayed by others as emerging solely from the wellsprings of European thought.<sup>165</sup> On the contrary, Blyden and his cohort of nineteenth century West African scholars like Hayford, James Africanus Horton (1835-1883), ably took the mantle from the previous century. It is therefore perplexing why these individuals are solely seen as recipients of Enlightenment, Humanitarianism, and European/American notions of freedom, race, and thought. Blyden's intellectual work in England, France, and the United States challenges this curious exclusion of African involvement in the cultural and intellectual exchanges of the Atlantic.

Blyden did enjoy the privilege of being in the company of the British monarchy, its government, statesmen, and leading intellectuals. In 1878 for example, a committee including Herbert Spencer, and Lord Carnarvon, elected Blyden "honorable member" of the Atheneum Club of London with "full privileges of the club."<sup>166</sup> But, Blyden's unique contribution to the Black Atlantic can be seen in his critique of the anthropologist and social Darwinist proponents such as James Hunt, Richard Burton, Count Arthur de Gobineau, and Herbert Spencer, some of whose company he shared. In an article "African and Africans" published in *Fraser's Magazine*, Blyden questioned Herbert Spencer's attempt at producing an:

African Sociology, in the shape of a classified compilation of materials taken from the works of writers on Africa. But as his facts have been drawn from second-hand sources and from the writings of travellers whose observations were confined to very small localities, and made under the disturbing influence of disease, we cannot expect the work, when completed, though it will be one of considerable merit and a monument of

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<sup>165</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.

<sup>166</sup> "Edward Blyden to William Coppinger," August 9, 1878, in Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 274-276.

industry, will be a trustworthy guide. The author will have relied, to a very large extent, upon isolated cases and *ex-parte* statements.<sup>167</sup>

Korang has identified Blyden's close reading, influences, adaptations, modification, and rejection of the writings of Mazzini, Hegel, and other western intellectuals in his formulation of African racial nationalism.<sup>168</sup> However, I must emphasize again that Blyden's great desire for "African nationality" was not totally Mazzini's world citizenship; an idealistic harmonization of individual, nation, and humanity, or Hegel's universality, for both excluded Blyden's Africa and Africans in their human scheme.<sup>169</sup> Blyden agreed with Mazzini on the moral equality of all nations and races, but claimed it for his African nation and race. He however emphasized race individuality, which is an African particularity conceived in a human universal.

Philosophically, Blyden's theory of race was not an exclusivist theory, but a duplexive discourse that meant that his African life and customs were particularistic instantiations of the human universal.<sup>170</sup> For him, the creation of a distinct African nation and modernity, "Africa's service to humanity" that was not undergirded by the existential realities of centuries of African existence was a false African modernity.<sup>171</sup> In effect, Blyden with intimate knowledge of the intellectual currents within the Atlantic world, led the charge in raising questions about the claims of the humanitarians, European political theorists, anthropologists, and race polemicists.

Even though Blyden was unquestionably the Black Atlantic's most consummate

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<sup>167</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, 265.

<sup>168</sup> Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 70-89.

<sup>169</sup> Korang, *Writing Ghana*, 74-80.

<sup>170</sup> For a discussion of duplexive discourse in African Philosophy, ad which in many ways shows why Blyden was a philosophical antecedent to Nkrumah, see John H. McClendon, "Nkrumah's Conciencism as Philosophical Text: Matters of Confusion" *Journal of Africa Philosophy* 3 (2003)

<sup>171</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 200-204.



intellectual, its most ardent defender of his day, his work was centered on Africa; and his scholarship defies the “English speaking . . . transnational” unit of Africa, England, and the Americas. What was more, Blyden’s work also encompassed Islamic West Africa, Arabic and Hebraic Mediterranean, and the multilingual Caribbean.

### **Blyden the Diplomat**

Blyden was exemplary as Minister Plenipotentiary of the Liberian government to the United Kingdom and later to France. This was evident in the correspondence between the Liberian envoy and the British Foreign office.<sup>172</sup> When Blyden first presented his credentials to the British government in 1892, there were attempts to undermine his status by “her majesty’s government,” and he faced an uphill task to be successful at his work. The foreign office report read, “He is a Liberian citizen and not engaged in commerce. Ridiculous though it seems to receive a full envoy from such a state.” The Queen eventually received Blyden after the foreign office had satisfied itself on the premise of having already accepted envoys from South American states such as Honduras, Ecuador, and Siam who were also considered small nations.<sup>173</sup>

As a diplomat, Blyden’s task was to defend the interests of the second independent nation in Africa against the marauding interest of England and France. He became embroiled in a number of diplomatic disputes, most of which centered on the protection of Liberian sovereignty, during an era in which the scramble and partition of Africa was in full swing. In fact, dispatches from the British governor in

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<sup>172</sup> NA, F.O. 84/2270, “Despatches to British Consulate of Liberia, 1892,” 230-234

<sup>173</sup> NA, F.O. 84/2270, “Despatches to British Consulate of Liberia, 1892,” 230-234.

Sierra Leone, and Liberian dispatches to the British Consulate of Liberia, show Britain forcing the hand of Liberia without its American protection, to adhere to the “Acts of Berlin and Brussels” and pointed to the “advantages [Liberia] will gain by doing so.”<sup>174</sup>

Blyden, the race vindicator turned diplomat, did not have to shed his vindicationist garb in this diplomatic situation. In a border dispute between the British ruled Sierra Leone and Liberia, Liberian President J. J. Cheeseman had been forced to expel British traders from the disputed area “Half Cavally” or Cavalla. The British government then threatened the Liberian government that if it attempted to “compel traders to leave Cavally district, [British] naval officers will protect them.”<sup>175</sup>

Blyden’s social-activism weighed in, and he asserted Liberia’s sovereignty to the British. However, in an attempt to undermine Blyden, the British sought clarification directly from Liberia. Y. W. Gibson, the Liberian Secretary of State, came to Blyden’s defense and wrote to the Sierra Leone Governor Fleming: “I have to say that Dr. Blyden was correct in saying that no military measures will be taken against the British traders. The object of the expulsion is to put down a rebellion against the authority of the state.”<sup>176</sup> Given his several diplomatic representations of his country abroad, defending its territorial borders against the imperial ambitions of Britain, we may say that he had relative success as a diplomat for Liberia.

As successful as Blyden was as a diplomat, and as fiery as he was in defending Liberian sovereignty, Liberia would lose a number of its border disputes with England

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<sup>174</sup> NA, F.O. 84/2270, “Despatches to British Consulate of Liberia, January 12, 1892,” 48-49, 271-278.

<sup>175</sup> NA F.O. 84/2270, “Despatches to British Consulate of Liberia, December 3, 1892,” 14.

<sup>176</sup> NA F.O 84/2270, 18 Y.W. Gibson, Secretary of State of Liberia to Governor Fleming December 29 1892.

and France. Nevertheless, Blyden acquitted himself creditably in other aspects of his diplomatic career. He was involved in raising capital for commercial coffee plantations in Liberia, as well as efforts to stop the slave trade in different parts of Africa. He marketed Liberia's trade interests and advertised Liberia and Africa to the different European he engaged as envoy for Liberia.<sup>177</sup> In addition to his intellectual work of vindicating the race, Linguistic and Islamic studies Blyden found time to serve his nation, and although he faced some bottlenecks in his diplomatic career his tenure as diplomat for Liberia was noteworthy.

Blyden's biographers and commentators have called him many names and bestowed numerous accolades on him. Leopold Senghor referred to him as "precursor both of Negritude and of the African Personality."<sup>178</sup> Hollis Lynch called him "Pan-Negro Patriot" and black spokesman. Benjamin Neuberger named him a black Zionist and founder of modern African nationalism;<sup>179</sup> and the venerable Du Bois wrote that he was a "prophet of the renaissance of the Negro race." Blyden was all of these and more. Like many iconoclasts, he was controversial, and showed a strident disdain for the class and color system that prevailed in Liberia. This class system put mixed race, and often times wealthy, Americo-Liberians at the top, and native African, and Black American or West Indian Liberians at the bottom of the social structures of Liberia. Because of Blyden's outspokenness on the color issue, some of his biographers as I noted above called him anti-mullato and ethnocentric. In a letter fortuitously published in the "Smithsonian Institute Annual Report," Blyden penned his views on the class system and racial project of the non-inclusive Liberia government. The essay "The

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<sup>177</sup> NA, F.O.84/1512 Slave Trade; F.O.84/1487.

<sup>178</sup> Leopold Sedar Senghor, foreword, in Lynch, *Selected Letters*, xxi.

<sup>179</sup> Neuberger, "Early African Nationalism," 151-166.

Mixed Races of Liberia” resulted in a “‘mullato-incited’ mob of ‘forty poverty-stricken and ignorant blacks’” hauling Blyden through the streets of Monrovia, tying a rope around his neck, and nearly lynching him.<sup>180</sup> However, Blyden, the race vindicator, may have felt uncannily vindicated if he were alive, and every bit the prophet Du Bois called him when the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia” released its 2008 report to the country’s national legislature and the country’s first female President, Sirleaf Johnson. The commission, cited the cause of the civil strife that had engulfed Liberia between 1944-1980, as well as from 1980 to the present, as stemming from the history of Liberia’s founding. One paragraph of the report elaborates:

President Tubman’s authoritarian reign-though progressive in some instances-laid down the continuation of Americo-Liberian hegemony through oligarchy, for national chaos, state break down and violent conflict between 1979-2003.<sup>181</sup>

The commission did not only fault the Americo-Liberian “settlers’ ‘hegemony” and clashes over land with indigenes, but also their suppression of indigenous Liberian participation in government.<sup>182</sup> In the opinion of the commission: “The political contest between Tubman (Americo-Liberian) and [Didho]Twe(indigene) symbolized the continuation of the age-old divide between settlers and natives to their children and was in a sense, a defining moment for Liberia.”<sup>183</sup> Ironically, these supposedly defining moments had long been defined by Blyden in his voluminous writings penned over a century ago. From the grave, Blyden, the global African iconoclast still speaks.

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<sup>180</sup> Lynch, *Edward Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot*, 52-53.

<sup>181</sup> Consolidated Final Report: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (Monrovia: Republic of Monrovia, 2009) 68.

<sup>182</sup> Consolidated Final Report: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (Monrovia: Republic of Monrovia, 2009) 68-70.

<sup>183</sup> See Consolidated Final Report: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (Monrovia: Republic of Monrovia, 2009) 68, entire report

## Chapter 6

### Comparing Blyden and Reindorf Afro-Danish to Anglo-African Actors

In June 1894, Reindorf is reported to have visited his daughter L. G.

Bannerman, on the Kru coast, now Monrovia, Liberia.<sup>1</sup> During Reindorf's visit, Blyden had just left his residence at Free Street, Freetown for Lagos, in present day Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> By July 7, Blyden is noted to have "spent three months of the summer of 1894 . . . able to be present, however at the opening of the magnificent mosque built by Mohammed Shita Bey" in Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> Any possible meeting between the two was therefore forestalled by Blyden's absence from Liberia. Still, it is likely that they encountered each other in their writing.

Reindorf like most of his Gold Coast contemporaries is likely to have read Blyden's several serialized writings in the West African press of the nineteenth century, in such papers as the *Sierra Leone Weekly* and the *Lagos Weekly Record*. While there is no direct evidence of this, Blyden the avid reader, may have also read the 1895 edition of Reindorf's *G. C. A Histories*, and if not, he certainly knew about Reindorf's Basel Mission. In an essay entitled "Christian Missions in West Africa" first published in *Fraser's Magazine* of October 1876, Blyden writes:

The Basle Missionary Society—one of the most successful on the coast—had their attention directed to Western Africa as early 1826; but it was not

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<sup>1</sup> BMA D-20.27, 7 (3) "Reindorf to Christaller, Sierra Leone, 27 June 1894," 1; Adam Jones, "The Makings of a History," 132; Hauser-Renner, "Examining Text Sediments," 245.

<sup>2</sup> Edith Holden, *Blyden of Liberia: An Account of the Life and Labors of Edward Wilmot Blyden LL.D. As Recorded in Letters and in Print* (New York: Vantage Press, 1966), 1003, 1015 n73. While Adam Jones speculates L.G. Bannerman is a daughter of Reindorf, Hauser-Renner is unsure of her identity. Based on my oral interview with Theodore Otto Dowuona-Hyde (recently deceased) the grandson of Reindorf's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Reindorf-Fletcher, L.G. Bannerman is Reindorf's second daughter, Leticia, who Dowuona-Hyde also called Mah (Mama) Leticia. In the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication on Reindorf, Dr. Harry Bannerman, Reindorf's great-grandson is also described as the grandson of "Mah Merya, one of the daughters of Rev. C.C. Reindorf" in Reindorf, *Remembering Rev. Carl Reindorf*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 646.

until 1828 that their first company of missionaries reached Christianborg, near Akra, the place which the Moravians had attempted to occupy more than thirty years previously.<sup>4</sup>

Blyden with his knowledge of Reindorf's hometown in Accra, and the history of the Basel Mission, may have looked favorably on the mission's successful recruitment of black West Indians for its missionary endeavors on the Gold Coast.<sup>5</sup> This recruitment would have in a sense been a fulfillment of Blyden's emigration plans for the West Indies. It was an objective he had pursued as commissioner for colonization, with Alexander Crummell's help, and as Secretary of State of Liberia.<sup>6</sup> Although Blyden and Reindorf were born in different regions of the world, grew up under different circumstances, and lived in different West African locales; the fact that they did not meet does not preclude a shared generational experience of black life in the nineteenth century. In fact, had the two met, they probably based on several shared characteristics, would have enjoyed each other's company. Both were self-made men, ordained ministers, revisionist historians, "mama's boys," iconoclasts, and Afro-Danish citizens turned Anglo-African.

### **Self-Made Men**

At the age of seventeen, Blyden, then an apprentice to a tailor, left the known world of his parents and siblings to pursue an education in the U.S., where he suffered the indignity of being refused entry to a University because of his race. He even admitted to having a "great fear of being seized for a slave under the operations of the

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<sup>4</sup> Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), 48.

<sup>5</sup> Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 96-114; Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 33.

Fugitive Slave law which was at the time causing great excitement in the country.”<sup>7</sup>

Because of that atmosphere, Blyden once again left the familiar environs of the Americas—St. Thomas, Venezuela, and the U.S. —and immigrated to Liberia, West Africa to attend high school. On arrival in Liberia, he became ill, “and was initiated in the solemn mysteries of African fever.”<sup>8</sup> Still, while adapting to his new home, Blyden went to war on behalf of the nation, and excelled at his schoolwork.

Blyden was able to achieve several accolades despite the fact that he did not really acquire a formal university education. He pursued a policy of self-professionalization, educating himself on the available literature and discourse of his era. An instance of this attempt at intellectual proficiency on Blyden’s part is seen in a letter he wrote in 1860, when he was still Principal of Alexander High School. The letter was addressed to W. E. Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer for Britain, and a well-known classicist and later Prime Minister of Gt. Britain. Blyden’s letter was received in Britain as coming from someone in the “honorable office of teaching, and his quotations from Latin and Greek showed that he had, as he represented, devoted himself to the study of the ancient as well as the modern languages.”<sup>9</sup> In Blyden’s communication he told Gladstone:

I am a youth endeavoring to obtain an education my taste and predilections—strange as it may seem for one in my circumstances—are for classical literature. The love of languages is my predominating passion . . . . I have acquired some knowledge of the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew languages. Of modern languages I read write and speak the French somewhat, the Spanish I read a little. I have read some of the principal Latin, and portions of two of the Greek authors—the Anabasis of Xenophon and a part of Homers Illiad.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 65.

<sup>10</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 66.

Blyden went on to describe the limited resources available for pursuing his interests, and pointed out that he knew he belonged “to a race which for centuries had been despoiled by other races” and felt his race had “been made to subserve the commercial and agricultural interests of the American continent, for no other reward, than physical deterioration and mental brutalization.”<sup>11</sup> Blyden then asked Gladstone to give him the curriculum of how he had pursued his own classical studies, and also requested that the Londoner “forward to [him], if convenient, a small library composed” of Oxford and Cambridge University examination papers, and works by classical, Victorian, and contemporary English writers such as Herodotus, Shakespeare, Milton, Coleridge, and J. C. Hare.<sup>12</sup> In response to Blyden’s request, Gladstone was magnanimous enough to offer Blyden a full ride to a British university. But Blyden turned it down on the grounds that his work for the race prevented him from being able to “hold converse with the muses in England. [He should not now be in this country, were it not that [He had] been sent by [his] fellow citizens to endeavor to interest, if possible the friends of Africa in the literary advancement of Liberia.”<sup>13</sup>

Blyden, however, continued his independent scholarship, studying briefly at Cambridge University in 1862, and then in the summer of 1866, at the Syrian Protestant College in Lebanon.<sup>14</sup> The fact that Blyden eventually served various positions—as principal of his high school, Professor of Classics and Languages, as well as President of Liberia College—is a testament to his self-made qualities. He

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<sup>11</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 67.

<sup>12</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 67-68.

<sup>13</sup> Hollis Lynch, *Selected letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden: edited and with introductions by Hollis R. Lynch and foreword by Léopold Sédar Senghor*. (Millwood, N.Y. : KTO Press, ), 18-19, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 54.



was also Secretary of State of Liberia, Minister plenipotentiary of Liberia to Gt. Britain and France, and ran for the Presidency of Liberia.

While Blyden became a sort of publicly acclaimed scholar throughout the literate black world, he also came under considerable opposition from the ruling elite of Liberia, and had a near death experience because he championed the cause of the native African groups. He also defended the African race in its entirety against claims of inferiority and intellectual incapability. Blyden the son of a tailor, and a schoolteacher had in his lifetime achieved what many could not have in the circumstances that he attained his. He studied and spoke African languages such as Fula, and in 1866, he traveled to the Middle East in order to perfect his Arabic, which helped him to later open up Liberia to the intellectual and social world of its Muslim neighbors to the North.<sup>15</sup> It is to the credit of his self-made status that when he died in Sierra Leone on February 7, 1912, the Liberian government gave him a “seventeen gun salute.”<sup>16</sup> Further, in testament to Blyden’s accomplishments, it was said that at his funeral the next day:

[t]he leading citizens of Freetown attended, as well as all the Alfa’s and Almamis of Fourah Bay and Foulah Town, with the Chiefs and Headmen of the Mandigoes, Foulas, Seracolis, Mendes etc. The children of the Mohammedan schools formed in twos headed the procession.<sup>17</sup>

The words on his tombstone read: “A truly great African Born at St. Thomas Island, West Indies, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1832 Died at Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, 1912 Aged 80 years.”<sup>18</sup> Even though Blyden was Presbyterian,

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<sup>15</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 140-141.

<sup>16</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 862.

<sup>17</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 863

<sup>18</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 862.

his funeral was presided over by his close friend, an Antigua, West Indies-born Wesleyan minister, Rev. J. R. Frederick.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, Reindorf's fellow African brethren, Rev. Engmann, Quartey, Richter, Ofei, and Wentum—Basel Missionary pastors who would also be buried at the mission's cemetery, Osu, Christianborg in 1917—officiated his burial with German missionary Rev. Zurcher.<sup>20</sup> In a foreword to the second edition of Reindorf's *G. C. A. Histories*, C. E. Reindorf, the second son of Reindorf, who was also a trained medical doctor, and later became an active member of the National Congress of British West Africa (N.C.B.W.A.), as well as Djasetse/Gyasetse or Senior Councilor of the Ga paramount stool, described his father in glowing terms. The younger Reindorf thought his father:

. . . was eminently a self-made man and, considering that he never had a University education . . . and was never sent to Europe or any seat of learning for his training, it may be said of him what was said of another great man that "he was Janus of literature and Bolingbroke in the senate," and as far as his life was concerned with its Kaleidoscopic incidents, we may compare him with Perrault of whom Andrew Lang says: "He was born irregular; an architect without professional training; a man of letters by inclination, and a mortal by some kind of accident."<sup>21</sup>

Obviously, C. E. Reindorf regaled his father, but he also conceded that his description was not a "critical biography," and that "all men had their failings and weak points as human beings."<sup>22</sup> More apparent though was the fact that Reindorf's birth and mortality were not as irregular as the young Reindorf had claimed.

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<sup>19</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 863.

<sup>20</sup> C. E. Reindorf, foreword to *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Tradition and Historical Facts Comprising A Period of More than Three Centuries From About 1500-1860 With a Biographical Sketch* by C. E. Reindorf, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basel, Switzerland: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1951), 16.

<sup>21</sup> Reindorf, foreword to Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Reindorf, foreword to Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 3.

What is true is that Reindorf was a self-made man who from an early age demonstrated his independence of thought when he left school to go and trade in the Adangbe and Ewe areas of Ghana because he did not like Rev. Zimmerman's "school in Ga."<sup>23</sup> He continued to stress his independence and singularity of thought by forming a Christian Asafo wing (military grouping) to engage in war on behalf of his Ga kin in the "Osu Ashante Blohum Jarsi (family)."<sup>24</sup>

Reindorf also showed he could exist without the Basel Mission, writing a thesis on indigenous servitude, and retiring to his farm, before being recalled after the mission re-evaluated its decision to expel him.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, it was not so self-serving when C. E. Reindorf pronounced his father as:

one of the most remarkable men produced by the African race. His many-sided activities, his religious zeal and evangelizing . . . his military exploits, and quasi-medical skill, his political acumen, and genuine patriotism, and above all his patient industry as the Author [sic] of the "History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti"<sup>26</sup>

C. E. Reindorf was not totally off mark, for Reindorf was truly a self-made man, a man of considerable brilliance; a "genius" maybe not, but certainly "one of the most intellectual sons of the Gold Coast" and Africa in the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

### **Amateur or Revisionist Historians?**

Blyden and Reindorf were only two years apart in age, so they grew up experiencing, the vicissitudes and joys of what it meant to be black in the nineteenth

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<sup>23</sup> Reindorf, foreword to Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Reindorf, foreword to Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> BMA D-1. 13a Allg.II, Elias Schrenk "General Conference Executive Committee Minutes Gold Coast, September 3, 1862," 18.

<sup>26</sup> Reindorf, foreword to Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Reindorf, foreword to Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 3.

and early twentieth century. They were part of a literate West African class, and pursued the policy of correcting the historical record offered by pre-colonial European travelogues and explorer tales and colonial anthropological and historical literature. Blyden and Reindorf were successors to previous African writers educated in the Arabic Muslim or western tradition like Leo Africanus whose literary pursuits in the sixteenth century provided some of the first written narratives of Africa's history. Such works included the "*Ta'rikh al Fattash, Ta'rikh al-Sudan, the Kano and Gonja chronicles*"; some of which were written in Ajami, a system of writing in African languages that utilized Arabic characters.<sup>28</sup>

Compared to these early scholars, Blyden and Reindorf were writing at a time when the colonial enterprise in Africa was dominated by an anthropological perspective.<sup>29</sup> European historians legitimated these writings, particularly the German historical/philosophical school led by Hegel, who equated civilization with the existence of written sources, and evaluated as acceptable the anthropological characterization of African societies as barbaric.<sup>30</sup> As part of the nineteenth century West African "talented tenth" or educated elite, Blyden and Reindorf were confronted with the task of countering the racist scholarship, and in the process they produced revisionist histories, even though they were not themselves professionally trained historians.

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<sup>28</sup> I Hrbek, "Written Sources from the Fifteenth Century Onwards" in *UNESCO General History of Africa Vol. I. Methodology and African Prehistory*, ed. J. Ki-Zerbo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 114, 129-136.

<sup>29</sup> A.E. Afigbo, "Colonial Historiography" in *African Historiography: Essays in Honor of Jacob Ade Ajayi*, ed. Toyin Falola (Harlow: Longman, 1993), 40-41.

<sup>30</sup> J. Ki-Zerbo, ed., "The Development of African Historiography" in *UNESCO General History of Africa Vol. I. Methodology and African Prehistory (abridged)*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 12, 104-108.

Both Blyden and Reindorf had a conception of history, and used it to serve their vindicationist and revisionist writings respectively. Reindorf was however not a trained historian—he did not acquire a degree in history at the University. However, as I have pointed out, he was able, through his association with the Basel Mission to acquire some biblical theological training, and later on, taught history in the mission's seminary. He also benefited from the Basel Mission's need to record the histories of the peoples they were proselytizing. This provided him with the impetus to record oral sources for his *G. C. A Histories*.

Reindorf, perhaps more than Blyden, also understood African society enough to appreciate the value and function of history in non-literate societies, like his Gold Coast and Asante. He brought his literacy and historical knowledge to bear on myths and local traditions of African peoples, which he argued were not just localized or archaic understandings of the world, but part of a cosmology that embraced fundamental truths about African experiences of the world translated in their histories, music, dance, drama, and art.

Blyden on the other hand, while trained in biblical and Islamic theology, became more of a linguist than a historian. However, as a widely read person, he used his knowledge of history to serve his purpose of vindicating the race, particularly African contributions in the ancient world. Blyden also became an important person in the dissemination of the corpus of knowledge on Africa and Islam gathered by Arab and black African writers. He used his histories to demonstrate the equality of the “races.” In many ways, he preceded twentieth century scholar, Frans Boas, who, like Blyden in the nineteenth century, wrote about historical particularity in the development of

civilization in different societies. Blyden did this, in disagreement with other social and cultural evolutionary theorists like Herbert Spencer.<sup>31</sup>

Blyden combined his historical awareness with his linguistic competence and became one of the earliest African writers to dismiss the Hamitic hypotheses and its claims of African inferiority. He also owned Egyptian civilization for black Africa.<sup>32</sup>

Blyden was the earliest African scholar to begin a systematic exploration of Islam as religion in West Africa, and Arabic as a vehicle of thought. He also read translations of the Koran, histories of the Islamic African societies, and its major players like Samori Toure.<sup>33</sup> In pursuit of their vindicationist and revisionist aims, Blyden and Reindorf were therefore, pioneers in the development, techniques, and modes of writing—the emergence and nature of modern African historiography at least in its nascent stage.

### **“Mama’s Boys”**

I have shown in the two chapters on Blyden and Reindorf that women played an important part in shaping their character and leaning them towards an intellectual life. Blyden was early in life influenced by his mother. He took private lessons with her from an early age. Aside from his mother’s influence, Blyden had also come under the influence of the wife of his Christian mentor, J. P. Knox. Blyden made his first trip to the U.S. with Mrs. Knox, on May 17, 1850, when she “was returning with her young children

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<sup>31</sup> See Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

<sup>32</sup> See Blyden, *West Africa to Palestine* (London: T. J. Sawyerr, 1873).

<sup>33</sup> Hollis Lynch, ed., *Black Spokesman: Selected published writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (London: Cass, 1971), 273-311.

to spend the summer with her relatives in New Jersey.”<sup>34</sup> Having been refused entry into Rutgers College, and hearing a white preacher justify the fugitive slave law on the pulpit, Blyden wavered and planned to return to St. Thomas. However, when he “received from Mrs. Knox, a letter so full of interest in my welfare, and so urgent that I should strive to become fitted for usefulness in the Christian ministry and render my life useful to Africa, that I relinquished my purpose of returning to my parents.”<sup>35</sup> Blyden subsequently left for Liberia.

For Reindorf, his mother, Anoa and the ubiquity of the matrifocal compounds of his paternal and maternal grandmother’s Okaiko Asase and Amarkai respectively influenced Reindorf’s historical method, and desire to collect oral traditions.<sup>36</sup> Reindorf was also believed to have allegedly converted his mother from traditional religion to Christianity, an event described by Reindorf as one of his most fulfilling lifetime achievements.<sup>37</sup> While the matriarchal influences in the lives of Blyden and Reindorf may have influenced the writings and perceptions of the two scholars, there is little evidence to suggest a conscious female centered or gendered approach. There are however indirect sources that seem to imply that women and gender occupied a part of their writing.

They are however also guilty of exhibiting some androcentric bias in their writing. For example if Blyden’s relationship with his first wife, Sarah, then later with Anna Erskine, was anything to go by, Blyden seemed more amenable to the company of women who enjoyed his love of languages, and “sympathized with [his] work . . . aims

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<sup>34</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*,

<sup>37</sup> BMA D-1.24, Elias Schrenk, “Carl Reindorf Catechist, January 21, 1872,” 50.

desires and methods” and “understood her position and work—or rather the work of the African.”<sup>38</sup> Erskine fit Blyden’s prototype, but he complained about the general lack of education for black women, citing the strained marital relationships of Fredrick Douglass, Crummell, and Henry Highland Garnett as examples of how “the education of the woman has not kept pace with that of the men.”<sup>39</sup> In the case of Erskine, Blyden noted that her being dark in complexion also prevented her from climbing the social and intellectual ladder in Liberia.<sup>40</sup> Blyden also received a letter from one of his long time correspondents, William Coppinger, inquiring about Blyden’s resignation from the Presbyterian Church. Blyden responded by cataloguing the various limitations to education for darker black women in Liberia as opposed to their light-skinned counterparts and decried the status of women of African descent under Christianity when compared to their status in Islam:

Pure Negro women are nowhere educated up to educated Negro men. In Christian communities the Black woman is unpopular. She is at the foot of the ladder. Colored women of all classes of shade lighter are preferred before her. Her mental and moral training are not attended to.<sup>41</sup>

Blyden also thought highly of women’s abilities; and in a lecture addressed to the A. M. E. church in New York, he opined that, “females see instinctively a great deal further than men with all their logic.”<sup>42</sup> However, many of these statements on black women were a reflection of Blyden’s experiences with Americo-Liberians of lighter hue, in general, and his wife Sarah Yates in particular. In these remarks there was also a certain sense of male privilege, because Blyden was interested in a black woman who was

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<sup>38</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 903-905.

<sup>39</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 905.

<sup>40</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 912.

<sup>41</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 576.

<sup>42</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 100.



educated to his standard. He felt that this was a problem for many educated blacks: “you will find [no]one Negro[man] of superior culture who is properly and congenially married.”<sup>43</sup>

While Blyden has gained a reputation of being “anti-mullato”, outside the context of Liberia, Blyden enjoyed the company of known mixed race women and men. This included the likes of Anna Julia Cooper, who he fondly remembered as part of a Saturday circle he had joined when he spent time in Washington.<sup>44</sup> In a letter to Francis J. Grimke, a mixed race Presbyterian clergyman, member of the Niagara movement, and founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the ANA, Blyden described the women of the circle in respectful and endearing terms:

I remember Ella Sommerville who was full of energy, mental alertness and information and a charming companion, in spite of her eccentricities . . . I can never forget Anna J. Cooper, brilliant, thoughtful, entertaining. Ella Barrier, modest, gentle, winning, tantalizing but with all sound judgment; and towering above all, with her brilliant genius, Mrs. Grimke, scholar, teacher, adviser.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from his observation of these U.S. African-American women, Blyden also wrote about the importance of women in Africa. He wrote about the role they played in African families, explaining that “plural marriage” could only be engaged with the willing consent of women.<sup>46</sup> He also wrote about female societies such as the Bundo society, and the Suna among the northern Jollof (Wollof).<sup>47</sup> He offered extended

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<sup>43</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 576.

<sup>44</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 486.

<sup>45</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 486.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, [1908] *African Life and Customs: Reprinted from the Sierra Leone Weekly News* (London: African Publication Society, 1969), 11.

<sup>47</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 11, 13.

descriptions of women's function as mothers, socializing agents, priestesses, and farmers in these African societies.<sup>48</sup>

Blyden was also noted to have doted on his daughters, spending the last embers of his life with Isa Cleopatra Blyden, who was his only surviving child with Anna Erskine. Erskine and Blyden's:

. . . youngest daughter was said to have been Dr. Blyden's favorite child, resembling her father in intellectual ability, and she was his companion on many of his sea voyages along the coast. When she died in 1909, at the age of 19, it was said that he was completely crushed and never quite regained his former spirit.<sup>49</sup>

Except for the slight traces of male sexism, Blyden's thesis on black women in many ways prefigured contemporary articulations on the "metalanguage of race," by scholars like Evelyn Higginbotham. Higginbotham has argued that the all encompassing nature of racial categorization, combined with class, gender, and sexuality of black women in socially negative ways.<sup>50</sup>

Reindorf, on the other hand, was the first to offer the only known written account about Dode Akabi, a female ruler of the Ga people in the seventeenth century, whom he described as "an intelligent and masculine woman" and whose rule was "cruel and wicked." His *G. C. A. Histories* is also replete with the reigns and actions of several royal women such as a princess Nyakura of Kong, queen Dokuwa of Akyem, and princess Akyiawa of Asante.<sup>51</sup> There are also micro accounts of women as traders, farmers, and catalysts in disputes. Thus, although we are unsure of exactly

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<sup>48</sup> Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 14, 16, 24, 71.

<sup>49</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 914.

<sup>50</sup> Evelyn Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race" *Signs* 17, 2 (1992): 251-274.

<sup>51</sup> Reindorf, *G.C.A. Histories*, 164-165, 175-176, 250-255.

how many women Reindorf interviewed, it is certain that Reindorf was not totally dismissive of females as actors or historical figures in his historical imagination.

We also know very little about the relationship Reindorf had with his wife, other than the fact that “he married on the 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1856, Miss Ayikai Mansah Djebi, a member of the Jarsi of the Ga Manche’s (King’s) stool on her mother’s side and on her father’s side, a member of Owule Mona, also a sub-division of Asere quarter.”<sup>52</sup> Reindorf’s descendants however describe Mansah Djebi as “his beloved consort with whom he had eleven children, eight girls and three boys.”<sup>53</sup>

C. E. Reindorf also recalls that his mother, Mansah Djebi, nearly caused quite a stir at Krobo, when his father, Reindorf was stationed there. A known baker and maker of Ga kenkey (corn staple), she had been preparing Abolo or baked leavened bread for her husband, but this was prohibited in Krobo, where the deity Nadu disliked leavened bread.<sup>54</sup> Trouble was avoided only because of the threat the colonial police posed to the Krobo people who had gotten wind of Mansah Djebi’s dish, and wanted to cause her harm.<sup>55</sup> It is therefore certain that Mansah Djebi accompanied Reindorf on his several missionary activities and may, given the strict delineation of gendered space in the Basel Mission, have taken up duties of “Mami Osofo,” or Pastor’s wife—the leader of the females in Reindorf’s various congregations.

As Seth Quartey has explained, women did not occupy equal space with men in the Basel mission of the nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Thus women like Mansah Djebi, most

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<sup>52</sup> Reindorf, foreword to *G. C. A. Histories*, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Reindorf, *Remembering Rev. Carl Reindorf*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Reindorf, foreword to Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Reindorf, foreword to Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Seth Quartey, *Missionary practices on the Gold Coast, 1832-1895: Discourse, Gaze, and Gender in the Basel Mission in pre-colonial West Africa*, (Youngstown: Cambria Press, 2007), 75-79.

likely occupied the lower strata of the Basel Mission institutional hierarchy, second to black men like her husband, Reindorf. While, Mansah Djebi remained Reindorf's only wife throughout his lifetime, her place in the life of Reindorf and his Basel Mission is strikingly and frustratingly invisible.

None of the existing sources offer any substantial account of her life and relationship with Reindorf other than the fact that she bore eleven children with him.<sup>57</sup> The sources however reveal few, but useful remarks about his relationship with his daughters. Abraham Morton-Bruce, a great-grandson of Reindorf, contributing to the remembrance writings published by Reindorf's descendants, describes the dexterity of Reindorf's son-in-law, Rev. William Augustus Quartey in wooing one of Reindorf's daughters, Anna Angelina Reindorf. Morton-Bruce wrote that his great-grandfather was described as:

. . . a stern disciplinarian and a firm family man. Consequently not many eligible bachelors had the nerve to enter the family house at Trom, Osu where the 'old man' was surrounded by a bevy of beautiful daughters whose mischievous giggles were quite embarrassing to young men venturing into the house on one pretext or the other.<sup>58</sup>

However, Rev. Quartey, then an understudy of Reindorf, was successful in several visits to the Reindorf home in getting the approval of both "the enthusiastic and vivacious young Anna" and her father, Rev. Reindorf for marriage in grand style.<sup>59</sup> Other than the circumstances of the above marriage, and the reported visit of his daughter in Liberia, there is no evidence of the relationship Reindorf had with his eight

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<sup>57</sup> Theodore Otto Dowuona-Hyde, the great-grandson of Reindorf who was interviewed for this dissertation had little recollection of his great-grandmother compared to Reindorf.

<sup>58</sup> Abraham Morton-Bruce, "A Notable Branch of the Reindorf Family Tree," *Remembering Rev. Carl Reindorf*, 19.

<sup>59</sup> Morton-Bruce, "A Notable Branch of the Reindorf Family Tree," 19.

female children. It is the same with his three sons except for the biographical account he narrated on his deathbed to C. E. Reindorf.

This account of Reindorf's life reports that, in 1869, as assistant to the Rev. Zeweck at the Christianborg church, Reindorf held "class meetings for both male and female Christians."<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, there is still little to discern about Reindorf's attitudes to women in his classes—how he mentored, instructed, or behaved towards the women under his purview. Yet, the gender conventions of the mission would have meant that a great deal of the work Reindorf did with women might have been mediated through his wife Mansah Djebi Reindorf—the preachers wife."

Despite the difficulty in distilling Reindorf's mind-set about women through his relationship to his wife and daughters, it still remains true that he valued the mentorship provided by the older female women in his life; his mother and grandmothers. It is also undeniable that Reindorf exercised good judgment in adding women to his interviewees for his *G. C. A. Histories*. Moreover, he included the accounts and activities of women on the Gold Coast, where they had been provided. There is no explicit women's centered approach in his work, and Reindorf's historical work may be described as male-centered. It may also be said that Reindorf's writing implicitly had the beginnings of a gendered approach to his writing.

### **Ministers of the Christian Gospel and Iconoclastic Scholars**

Blyden became an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Liberia, West Africa, in 1858, while Reindorf was ordained as a minister of the Basel Mission in

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<sup>60</sup> Reindorf, foreword to *G. C. A. Histories*, 11.

1872.<sup>61</sup> Blyden was also a staunch supporter of the development of an indigenous African church, run by Africans. On January 2, 1891, he delivered a lecture in Lagos, in present day Nigeria entitled “The Return of the Exiles and the West African Church.”<sup>62</sup> In his lecture Blyden exhorted Bishop Crowther and James Johnson to form a Native African church.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, even though Blyden commended the Basel Mission for its industrial work on the Gold Coast, he was more likely to have urged Reindorf and other Catechists to form an independent African church following their disagreement with the mission over pawnship and slavery.

Blyden supported the Rev. James Johnson, Bishop Crowther, and the African pastors of the Church Missionary Society, who sought ecclesiastical independence from their parent body in U.K.<sup>64</sup> The indigenous movement in the colonial Christian church was influenced by Blyden’s ideas on domesticated Christianity, which resulted in the formation of the United Native African Church.<sup>65</sup> In this articulation of African cultural nationalism, the two, shared an independent streak in their personalities and intellectual work. While Blyden called out the racist tinged representations of Africans by European writers, some of who were his acquaintances, Reindorf questioned histories “written by foreigners” and called on his educated colleagues “both native and European” to write a more accurate history of the Gold Coast.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 52; Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 13.

<sup>62</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 191-194.

<sup>63</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 630; Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 191-194.

<sup>64</sup> Lynch, *Pan-Negro Patriot*, 98, 221-226.

<sup>65</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 630; July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 231; Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, 61.

<sup>66</sup> Herbert Spencer was for example a member of the committee that selected Blyden as an honorary member of the Athenaeum Club of London. See Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 397-401; Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, vi.

Their iconoclasm was however not limited to the intellectual sphere. Blyden challenged the color bar put in place by the Americo-Liberian oligarchy in Liberia, and ended up being ostracized from some of the elite circles in Liberia. He also resigned his membership in the Presbyterian Church to become a Minister of Truth, partly on account of his alleged polygamous relationship with Anna Erskine.<sup>67</sup>

Reindorf, on the other hand, resigned his position as catechist from the Basel Mission in order to demonstrate his point about the distinctions between indigenous servitude and slavery in the Americas.<sup>68</sup> He also challenged the Basel mission hierarchy for its racial policies in promotion and salaries for its missionaries.<sup>69</sup> Blyden and Reindorf were therefore independent thinkers who challenged the status quo, and were willing to sacrifice themselves for what they believed in, and were both vindicated. In Reindorf's case he was recalled to the ministry, while Blyden's vindication would come posthumously, when the battle guns erupted leading to the Liberian civil war of the 1990's. The difference between the two men is that Blyden's Iconoclasm was more global while Reindorf's was limited to the Gold Coast, and West Africa.

The iconoclasm of the two men should also not be seen as blind conviction. Both were practical men of affairs, and were ingeniously making their western training answerable to their African past and present. Of the two, Reindorf was perhaps the more practical, because he owned his own farm and tilled the soil, and dedicated an entire chapter of his *G. C. A. Histories* to agriculture as an integral component of a

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<sup>67</sup> Blyden argued about the legitimacy of polygamy in Africa, and did not find a need for divorce, for extended commentary on this episode, see Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 1015 n.76. For Blyden's thesis on polygamy see, Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, 21-29. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 574-579.

<sup>68</sup> BMA D-1, 13b, Akropong "Reindorf and Colleagues to Basel" March 5, 1862," 6a.

<sup>69</sup> BMA D-1 10.4, 24 "Reindorf: Annual Report Mayera, Gold Coast December 28, 1881"; Quartey, *Missionary Practices*, 131-135.

great civilization.<sup>70</sup> In this chapter on Agriculture in *G. C. A. Histories*, Reindorf also traced the evolution of certain crops, and staples and the methods used for their cultivation and preparation.<sup>71</sup>

During his day, Reindorf had also been a trader, and a native warrior. Blyden did not however become a trader like Reindorf. He was trained, as a tailor in St. Thomas, and was also a servant in New York, a soldier and a merchant clerk in Liberia. Blyden was also very successful in establishing several schools for youth in the interior of Sierra Leone and Liberia.<sup>72</sup> In the U.S., Reindorf would have stood the middle ground in the DuBois-Washington debates, closer to Washington's ideas of skilled black labor and self-sufficiency. And while Blyden supported Washington's industrial schemes; based on his letter to the *News and Courier* of Charleston, South Carolina critiquing Washington's attitude to higher education, he would have stood directly in the middle of the debate perhaps closer to DuBois' advocate for leadership from the educated black elite in *Souls of Black Folk*.<sup>73</sup>

In both of his lectures on the "Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans" in 1881, and his 1862 "Inaugural address at the Inauguration of Liberia," Blyden advocated the development of the mind through studies in mathematics, the physical sciences, the classics, classical and native languages, jurisprudence and international law, intellectual and moral philosophy, as well as religion.<sup>74</sup> But, Blyden did not dismiss the importance of industrial education. In 1896, for instance, when he worked for the Department of Native Affairs of the British Colonial government, he

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<sup>70</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 256-275.

<sup>71</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 256-275.

<sup>72</sup> Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 752-764.

<sup>73</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: Lushena Books Inc, 2000), 30-76.

<sup>74</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 219-222; 231-246.



provided Governor, Gilbert Carter with a blueprint— including historical examples, curriculum, and faculty—for the establishment of a Lagos Training College and Industrial Institute.<sup>75</sup>

One may say that of the two, Blyden was more the man of ideas, always in pursuit of some esoteric academic knowledge, but consistently in want to influence government policy, whether it was in Liberia, Sierra Leone, or Lagos. Meanwhile, Reindorf who was also of some learning adopted a more hands on approach to his concerns about the development of Gold Coast society. In addition to owning his own farm, he also urged the colonial government to adopt “agriculture, fishery, and mechanical pursuits,” and construct roads as a means of “advancing the prosperity of the colony.”<sup>76</sup>

### **Blyden, Reindorf, and Race**

Of the two scholars, Reindorf is the one with some European heritage, while Blyden always referred to himself as a “pure Negro.” As much as Blyden was proud of his “purity,” Reindorf was also conscious of the implications of his “mulatto” status. As he himself put it, “I should have become a priest either of Nai at Akra or Klote at Christianborg. If I had not been born a mulatto and become Christian.”<sup>77</sup> But, Reindorf also knew that his mixed race origins did not preclude him from participating in native African society. He pointed out the contributions of:

... those who had European blood in their veins, although they fell into the native habits and were without education, in time became protectors and deliverers of their country from the power of their enemies. We may

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<sup>75</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 253-264.

<sup>76</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, xii, 274-276, 256-276.

<sup>77</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, v.

cite such men as Tete Tshuru, Ayikai Tshuru, Akotia Owoshika, Kodsho Saul and others.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to the native African, and creole communities, Reindorf also had marginal access to the European society on the Gold Coast, through his relationship to the Basel Mission where he gained the confidence of German missionaries like Schrenk and Zimmerman.<sup>79</sup> Reindorf's dual heritage therefore allowed him privileges in three worlds—African, Creole, and European.

In contrast, Blyden was able to form a relationship with native African communities and Afro-Islamic communities, and enjoyed the company of many white European and American friends, as well as U.S. mixed race acquaintances. However, he could not quite fit in with, or seem to like, the “mulattoes” that is the Americo-Liberians in Liberia. He had a lot of clashes with them, including his unsuccessful marriage with Sarah Yates, his various political appointments for the state of Liberia, and his time at Liberia College, where he and Alexander Crummell clashed with “J. J. Roberts, President of the College, and members of the Liberian Board of Trustees, all of whom were “mulattoes.”<sup>80</sup>

In a letter to Crummell, Blyden, quoting the Liberian Secretary of Treasury, decried the “terrible conflict . . . ahead between the black and confounded bastards.”<sup>81</sup> In another private letter to a board member of the New York colonization Society, accidentally published by the Smithsonian Institute, Blyden catalogued his views on

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<sup>78</sup> Reindorf, *G. C. A. Histories*, 91.

<sup>79</sup> BMA D-1, 13b “Akropong Widman to Basel May 9, 1862,” 19.

<sup>80</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 54.

<sup>81</sup> Lynch, *Selected Letters*, 72.

the mixed races of Liberia.<sup>82</sup> Blyden described them as having a high death rate in Liberia owing to their fragility and inability to acclimate to Liberia.<sup>83</sup> Placed in the positions of power, he argued, they retarded the progress of the country's education, because their constant illness and death led to inactivity.<sup>84</sup> Blyden also questioned the assumption that people with partial European heritage had "greater aptitude for learning." Blyden curiously accepted that his assumptions were a "vexed question" for many, but opined that miscegenation was not a favorable idea for "inter-tropical Africa."<sup>85</sup>

The different social manifestations of the idea of race experienced by Blyden and Reindorf respectively shaped their Pan-African agendas. Even though Reindorf was of partial European heritage, race figured very little in his indigenous conception of the relationships between the various peoples of West Africa. This is perhaps an indication of Reindorf's socialization to participate in different racial conglomerations, and also his limited exposure to events and experiences outside the Gold Coast. Reindorf's Pan-Africanism was therefore not expressed in the racial terminologies and discourses of the nineteenth century, but in the migrations, cultural exchange, marriages, and wars of the African past. The more traveled and more widely read Blyden, who was exposed to the racial situations in St. Thomas, the U.S., and Liberia, as well as to the leading racial theorists of his day, couched his notion of an "African personality" in racial language. His racial conceptualization manifested in three ways: cultural nationalism, racial spirituality, and opposition to miscegenation.

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<sup>82</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 187-189.

<sup>83</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 187-189.

<sup>84</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 187-189.

<sup>85</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 188-189.

Blyden's antagonism to miscegenation was however distinctive to his experience in Liberia and the general perception during his day that one-drop of European blood made one more intelligent than "pure" blooded Africans. His objection to a hierarchy of race among Africans, based on European heritage, should not be confused with his other ideas. Blyden's disagreement with miscegenation was limited to Liberia, and outside the confines of Liberia, his opposition was about self-respect for the African race. He observed that "respect for the Negro is becoming more and more, in progress of events in America, the happy distinction of our age. The Negro being taught to respect himself, and soon he will think it no honour to mingle his blood with that of the Caucasian, Indian or Mongolian."<sup>86</sup> Blyden's aim in his resistance to racial mixture was therefore to show that possessing European or any other foreign heritage does not make one inherently superior in intellect.

Blyden's race-based cultural nationalism, on the other hand, was derived from his want to see an Africanization of European imported facets of West African life, such as the West African church which he opined "should be an African, not an English production . . . The great incubus upon our development has been unreasoning imitation. This we must to avoid."<sup>87</sup> Blyden was therefore worried that Africans being at the "fringe of European civilization," would lose their African personality in adherence to those who "reveled in the prospect of hearing some fine morning the 'last of the Negroes.'"<sup>88</sup> Blyden also cautioned that Africans should not

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<sup>86</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 189.

<sup>87</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 194.

<sup>88</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 203.

simply avoid external influences because they were foreign, but strive to bring the “many good things in foreign customs” to the bidding of the African personality.<sup>89</sup>

For Blyden this African personality was divinely ordained, which is why he considered “racial peculiarities” God given. Blyden articulated this spiritual notion of his African personality to mean that Africans had been assigned a special and distinct place in the universe, just as other races had their own God given special attributes. Blyden’s divinely inspired race “individuality” meant that spiritually, Africans were in advance of the “white man,” and that the “African spirit is the spirit of service.”<sup>90</sup>

Blyden explained:

The spirit of service in the black man is born of his spiritual genius. It is his essential characteristic; and to show you that I connect no servile or unworthy idea with this remark, I hasten to add that I believe that the spirit must lead in civilization before it can become distinctively Christian . . . that is not full of offensive resistance how- how sadly the white man needs it.<sup>91</sup>

Blyden elucidated further that in spite of the past atrocities meted out to the African race, other races need not be afraid of the African personality, because the development of such a personality was free from bitterness as Africans “were made for the highest glory, which is service to humanity.”<sup>92</sup>

Given the different understandings and observed knowledge of the social implications of race that Blyden and Reindorf had, it is likely that they may have disagreed on the question of “race.” Reindorf’s “one drop” of European blood did not remove him from enjoying privileges as an African, as it did in reverse for others in Europe and the Americas. Blyden, who considered the races equal and distinct, but

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<sup>89</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 194.

<sup>90</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 205-207.

<sup>91</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 207.

<sup>92</sup> Lynch, *Blackspokesman*, 202.

not separate—sharing a common humanity—therefore possessed a “relativist” notion of race, and would have come to agree in relative terms with Reindorf. In other words, in the case of the Gold Coast, being of mixed race status was not a hindering factor, but rather an enabling category for the participation in different spheres of Gold Coast life. But, in the case of Liberia, Blyden would argue to the contrary, and Reindorf may have acquiesced given his little knowledge of the current affairs in Liberia.

## **Conclusion The Black Atlantic; Matter's Arising from Blyden and Reindorf**

The aim of this dissertation has been to show the various contributions of nineteenth century West African intellectuals to ideas of Pan-Africanism, and their dialogues with contemporaneous European intellectuals. While I have offered extensive discussion on the existing body of work on Blyden and Reindorf, I have also used them as windows of analysis to challenge the existing historiography on ideas of Pan-Africanism and the Black Atlantic. In highlighting the social lives and intellectual activities of Blyden and Reindorf, I have also sought to show that as problematic as notions of racial identity such as Pan-Africanism may be, they are the result of real historical and sociological manifestations of the use of race as a social organizing mechanism. Such ideas, real or imagined, are maintained through the movement of ideas, and formation of social networks, which are in turn reinforced through the constant physical movement of people of African descent globally.

I also noted that Blyden was born in St. Thomas, West Indies, which was at the time of his birth a Danish colony. Blyden subsequently traveled the world particularly the U.S., England, and the Middle East; but his life's work and travels were either on behalf of, or situated in Liberia and Sierra Leone, West Africa. Liberia, being the second independent African nation formed and populated by black English-speaking American returnees. Blyden, has received more academic attention than Reindorf mainly because his intellectual iconoclastic impact was more global compared to Reindorf, whose iconoclasm impacted the Gold Coast, West Africa.

While they differed in many respects: origins, socialization, and intellectual training they also had a lot in common. Of Reindorf, I pointed out that in addition to

being of Danish heritage; he was born in a Danish sphere of influence that was turned over to the British in 1844 when he was barely a teenager. Blyden, as shown, became an important personality in Anglo-American Liberia, while Reindorf became a colonial subject of England even as he worked with the German-Danish Basel Mission. Blyden and Reindorf were essentially Afro-Danish citizens turned Anglo-African, and their lifetime works raises a lot of questions about the static conceptualization of Atlantic histories, like the exclusion of Africans and African intellectuals from a so called Black Atlantic. I believe I have shown that these two individuals clearly demonstrate awareness and articulation of alternative conceptualizations about Atlantic ideas emanating from the West, as well as their relationships with their kin, and neighbors within the Atlantic basin. Also poignant, through the neglect of Scandinavian participation in the Atlantic trades, is the limitations of the Atlantic Ocean as a unit of analysis. The unit does not account for the ships, peoples and cultures that did not come from the Atlantic port cities of Western Europe, but came from the crannies of the Scandinavian-Baltic sea before joining the North Atlantic ocean, as was the case with Denmark, where Reindorf's European ancestors came from.

Like the Scandinavian absence, the experiences of African Diasporan's like Blyden's generation who returned to Atlantic Africa as individuals, and/or communities, have not been adequately reflected in the theoretical considerations of the African Diaspora. Michael A. Gomez and Nemata Emelia Blyden capture this state of affairs in two recent books that capture the *African Diaspora in Reverse*, and



*Reversing Sail*.<sup>93</sup> The two studies question the monolithic conceptualization of the African Diaspora as simply an out of Africa phenomenon. Nemata Blyden's piece captures the presence of West Indian blacks in the British colony of Sierra Leone during the nineteenth century, noting that from its inception Sierra Leone had a diverse population of native Africans, West Indian black returnees, and black settlers from England and North America like the Nova Scotians.<sup>94</sup> Blyden, seeking to address the paucity of written works about West Indian migration to Africa as compared with African migrations to the West Indies during the Atlantic period, almost a century earlier described the former as "a diaspora in reverse."<sup>95</sup> The migration of Blyden and the host of U.S. blacks who came to be known as Americo-Liberians is a prime example of a diaspora in reverse that has seen very little research ink.

Gomez, on the other hand, frames his study around the notion of "reversing sail" in order to capture both people of African descent living outside the African continent, and those residing "in parts of Africa that were territorially quite different from their lands of birth."<sup>96</sup> This latter conceptualization references the notion of Diaspora communities within Africa itself, as I noted above, in the case of the Ga and Fante diasporas who became the Mina in modern Togo and Benin, and who were transported to the Danish West Indies during the eighteenth century. Gomez later edited a collection of essays entitled *Diasporic Africa*.<sup>97</sup> In this collection, Gomez argued

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<sup>93</sup> Nemata A. Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, N.Y: University of Rochester Press, 2000); Michael A. Gomez, *A History of the African Diaspora* (Edinburgh: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>94</sup> Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa*, 1-4.

<sup>95</sup> Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Gomez, *Reversing Sail*, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Gomez, ed., *Diasporic Africa: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

against the idea that Africa is of little meaning to the communities and cultures of the New World. Gomez asserted that connecting the African Diaspora with the peoples of Africa, like I have tried to show in connecting the “Guinea coast” with the Danish West Indies, is a legitimate intellectual exercise. Citing the activities of Olaudah Equiano, Denmark Vessey, and David Walker, and later Blyden, Gomez shows that the connections between Africa and its Diaspora had always been an integral part of the Black struggle for freedom and self actualization.<sup>98</sup>

It is perhaps in anticipation of these publications that Robin Kelley wrote about “the uses and limitations of the diaspora.”<sup>99</sup> Kelley noted the uses of the African diaspora for “constructing global narratives of the past” and “the development of the “Atlantic” as a unit of analysis.”<sup>100</sup> He was however of the opinion that the notion of Diaspora is an inadequate way of understanding the multiplicity, distinctions, and similarities of black identities that inhabit the global sphere of international black politics and social movements.<sup>101</sup>

Following this publication, Kelley reiterated his arguments in an article co-authored with Tiffany Ruby Patterson for the *African Studies Review*.<sup>102</sup> A densely documented review of the concept of Diasporas, they further enunciated the multifaceted, variegated, and innumerable meanings and types of Diasporas within the “larger international black community.”<sup>103</sup> As Kelley had previously argued, they

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<sup>98</sup> Gomez, *Diasporic Africa*, 1-23.

<sup>99</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, “How the west was one: On the uses and limitations of the diaspora” *Black Scholar* 30, 3 (2000): 31-37.

<sup>100</sup> Kelley, “How the West was one,” 32.

<sup>101</sup> Kelley, “How the West was one,” 32.

<sup>102</sup> Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the New World” *African Studies Review* 43, 1 (2000): 11-45.

<sup>103</sup> Patterson and Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations,” 13.

were of the opinion that the concept of African diaspora did not capture the entirety of

Black internationalism and that:

[T]he Making of a “black Atlantic” culture and identity in general, and pan-Africanism, in particular was as much the product of the “West” as it was of internal developments in Africa. Racial capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism—the processes that created the current African diaspora—shaped by African culture(s) while transforming Western culture itself.<sup>104</sup>

Consequently Patterson and Kelley call for a more nuanced historical grounding and explication of the assumed linkages of the diaspora, by which they meant that the African diaspora was itself shaped by global forces of race, gender, and class, trans-nationally.

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<sup>104</sup> Patterson and Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations,” 13.

## Epilogue: Setting and Reversing Sails

Ultimately, Patterson and Kelley, like Gomez and Nemata Blyden, call for a more inclusive and global approach to understanding the African diaspora and the Black Atlantic than has previously being argued in previous works in the field.<sup>105</sup> From this study's perspective, the career of Blyden, whose works pervaded several worlds—Pan-Africanism, Afro-Islamic, Black Mediterranean, and the Black Atlantic—legitimizes such an approach. This is why - I have attempted to place him within the analytical insights of Hamilton's global Africa, and by thus doing, removing him from the strictures of Black Atlantic, a simple engagement with European modernity, West African nationalism, or Pan-Africanism.

The dialogue I have generated between Reindorf and Blyden in comparing them is relevant to people of African descent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Especially as it relates to the debate engendered by Henry Louis Gates' travelogue, "Wonders of the African World" which aired in the United States as a six-part PBS series between October 25–27, 1999 and was rebroadcast as "Into Africa" on BBC-2 in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Following these broadcasts, many scholars including prominent African and African-American intellectuals—Biodun Jeyifo, Ali Mazrui, Martin Kilson, and Molefi Kete Asante—expressed outrage about Gates' interpretation of issues like African culpability in the Atlantic Slave trade and various aspects of the travelogue.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Scholars, Brent Hayes Edwards, Cheryl Johnson-Odim, Augustin Lao-Montes, and Michael O. West all offered commentaries on Patterson and Kelley's work, of which the latter responded in another article entitled "'Unfinished Migrations': Commentary and Response" *African Studies Review* 43 1 (2000) 47-68.

<sup>106</sup> *West African Review* (African Resource Center 2000) See for example Ali A. Mazrui, "Preliminary Critique of Wonders of the African World" *West African Review* 2000; Henry Louis Gates, "A Preliminary Response to Ali Mazrui's Preliminary Critique of Wonders of the African World" *West African Review* 2000; Lansine Kaba, "The Atlantic Slave Trade was not a 'Black-on-Black Holocaust'" *African Studies Review*, 44, (2001), 1-20; Michael C. Mbabuike, "Wonders Shall Never Cease: Decoding Henry Louis Gates's Ambiguous Adventure" *Journal of Black Studies*, 31, (2000), 232-246.

Their accusations included a denunciation of Gates' perceived sarcasm, pseudo-intellectualism, impolitic of the way he spoke with ordinary and elite Africans, as well as the impoliteness of his narration and analyses.<sup>107</sup> Of particular concern was Gates' remark about Black American's throwing their passports into the Atlantic Ocean on their way to an independent Africa.<sup>108</sup> Gates' critics felt that he was driving a wedge between Africans and African-Americans and had taken the story of black power era activists who relocated to Africa throwing their American passports into the sea too literally.

The appearance of Kevin Gaines' *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates during the Civil Rights Era* in 2006 may have assuaged the sentiments of those people infuriated by the brevity or perceived shallowness associated with travelogues in general.<sup>109</sup> For these critics, Gaines' work may have signaled an important corrective, or at least a more nuanced and critical contextualization, and interpretation of the actions of black expatriates in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>110</sup> As a phenomenon, however, these twentieth century black expatriates were not the first Diaspora Africans to return, attempt to, and/or settle in Africa. Others preceded them in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, including the survivors of the 1835 Bahian Revolution in Brazil, who returned to various parts of West

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<sup>107</sup> *West African Review* (African Resource Center 1(2) 2000)

<sup>108</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, "A Millenium Letter to Henry Louis Gates Jr.: Concluding a Dialogue?" *West African Review* 2000; "Black Orientalism Further Reflections on "Wonders of the African World" by Henry Louis Gates Jr." November 11, 1999 *Global Cultural Studies*, Binghamton

<sup>109</sup> Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates during the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006)

<sup>110</sup> Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates during the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006)

Africa.<sup>111</sup> In the Gold Coast, these Afro-Brazilian returnees, who came to be known as the Tabon, melded into Reindorf's nineteenth century Ga-Adangbe society.<sup>112</sup> Tabon was derived from the Portuguese phrase "esta bon" meaning "it is okay". It was a term the returnees used regularly and the Ga subsequently called them the Tabon people.<sup>113</sup> There were others who also returned and helped found Liberia, one of two African countries that remained independent during the colonial period. Edward Wilmot Blyden was among those American-Africans, who returned to influence the life of the nascent African nation, and the people who lived within and beyond its borders. The life histories of the Tabon and Americo-Liberians are every bit as important as those who returned in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and others still to return.

In the context of those who reversed sail, do the Pan-African beliefs held by Blyden and Reindorf, have any contemporary resonances or relevance for the continually expanding and mutating dimensions of African and African Diaspora life? The world is a much closer place than it was centuries ago, and African diasporans wishing to return to Africa are no longer hindered by oceans and deserts, which were before, barriers to be circumvented for travel, religious pilgrimages, and trade. The benefits of modern technology—planes, computers, the worldwide web, mobile phones—ensure a constant movement of peoples and things throughout the globe. People of African descent, like the rest of the world, are encountering themselves more intensely in major cities as well as less known locations of the world more than

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<sup>111</sup> Joao Reiss *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising in Bahia, 1835* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1993).

<sup>112</sup> Yaw Boadi-Siaw "Brazilian Returnees in West Africa" in Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982); Joao Reiss *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising in Bahia, 1835* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1993).

<sup>113</sup> Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayesu, " 'I am Brazilian' History of the Tabon Afro-Brazilians in Accra, Ghana" *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* NS 6, (2006): 35-58.

they did in previous generations. Pan-Africanism as an idea, and social movement is still relevant for the present generation of African descended peoples, but this is contingent on the state of racial discrimination, cultural and economic imperialism, as well as the unequal world ordering that stirred the minds of the Blyden's, Dubois', and Garvey's into Pan-African thinking and organizing. Sadly, these global forces of domination are still in place and disproportionately affect Africans and people of African descent. Scholars will in the future, grapple with reasons why the current generation of blacks abandoned Pan-Africanism as a vehicle for tackling current systems of inequity, or how they infused and regenerated the movement with new ideas. A great deal of the impetus for what direction is to be taken will partly depend on the critical engagements that provide the present generations with an array of evidence, and collective consciousness about the imbalances in the world economy of people.

It has been over five decades since the fields of African, and African American Studies made their entry into the academy. And while their institutionalization in European and American institutions have been of a shorter period and gradual. During this period many milestones have surfaced that seem to suggest that the image of Africans and people of African descent has been exonerated. There is the perception that the discipline may have succeeded in its attempt to rehabilitate people's negative perceptions of Africa, Africans, and peoples of African descent.

Two Africans have successively served as United Nations Secretary-Generals; the first was Boutros-Boutros Ghali of Egypt (1991-1996). When the U.S. vetoed and succeeded in scuttling a second term nomination led by African countries Egypt,

Guinea Bissau, and Botswana, for Boutros-Ghali, his Ghanaian under-secretary Kofi Annan succeeded him, serving as United Nations Secretary-General from 1997-2006.<sup>114</sup> Thus, the sixth and seventh Secretary-General's of the United Nations for close to two decades were Africans and the representative of the world community of nations—the face of the world for nine years was a black African. This state of affairs was quite different during the anti-colonial struggle in Africa, when African nationalists labored to show the world's leading nations that the Atlantic charter's call for all peoples' right to “self-determination” applied to them.<sup>115</sup>

On November 5, 2008, the United States elected a black president of Kenyan heritage, Barack Obama, as its forty-fourth President. While Obama was not an activist in the tradition of a W. E. B. DuBois, or Marcus Garvey, his election was a far cry from the social milieu of the 1960s, when the leading black activists, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X were both assassinated in cold blood for their various articulations against racial discrimination in the U.S.

While Africa and African Diaspora communities have historically had women as leaders, the election of President Sirleaf-Johnson in Liberia, West Africa also portends a greater global political participation by black women in world politics—a situation, which black women's groups, have long been struggling to bring to fruition.

At the twelfth International Athletic Federation (IAAF) in Berlin, Germany from August 15-23, 2009, black Jamaican athlete, Usain Bolt, ran world record times in the hundred and two hundred meters events and also won in the hundred meters relay with

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<sup>114</sup> Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 201. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: A U.S.-U.N. Saga* (New York: Random House, 1999).

<sup>115</sup> Michael Crowder, "The Second World War: Prelude to Decolonization in Africa," in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 8, from c. 1940 to c. 1975, 8-51.



the Jamaican team.<sup>116</sup> On the last day of the Berlin Championships, the Mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit handed Usain Bolt a 12-foot high section of the Berlin wall, which for many decades had divided East and West Germany. According to the Mayor, Bolt, in breaking world records, had shown that “one can tear down walls that had been considered insurmountable.”<sup>117</sup>

The pomp and pageantry with which Bolt recorded his feats in Germany were much different to that experienced by U.S. black athlete, Jesse Owens, who won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics in Germany under Adolf Hitler. As history recalls, the Nazi leader only shook the hands of German athletes—the crème-de la crème of his supposedly superior Aryan race. Owens did what nineteenth century intellectuals did with their writing—he vindicated the African race. He turned the racial thesis on its head by winning four gold medals for the U.S. He also earned plaudits for World War II allies, yet, Owens’ U.S. welcome was lukewarm. In his own words: “Hitler didn't snub me—it was FDR who snubbed me. The president didn't even send me a telegram.”<sup>118</sup>

When historians sit to write about the last century’s greatest and accomplished blacks, the aforementioned people are likely to be commemorated, just as Blyden and Reindorf celebrated Carthage, Egypt and compiled eminent lists of accomplished peoples of African descent who preceded them. In the academy, a lot more African and African-American intellectuals are contributing to the production of knowledge about Africans and people of African descent, raising important epistemological

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<sup>116</sup> <http://berlin.iaaf.org/news/kind=100/newsid=53047.html> March 20, 2010;

<http://sports.espn.go.com/oly/trackandfield/news/story?id=4412231> March 20, 2010.

<sup>117</sup> ESPN “Grateful Usain Bolt given 3-ton piece of Berlin Wall”, *ESPN*, August 23, 2009.

<sup>118</sup> Jeremy Schaap, *Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens and Hitler’s Olympics* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

questions about mainstream academia. Nonetheless, we should not be deluded into thinking there is less to be done in the writing of African history and the vindication of the African race, particularly in light of recent conceptualizations, as well as “essentialists” critiques of the nature and function of the history of ideas such as Pan-Africanism that have circled the Black Atlantic and African Diaspora.

In spite of these critiques, black youth are increasingly becoming aware of themselves as inhabiting a global African space of global citizens. This was the essence of an interview Somali, East African-born rapper K’naan, who grew up in the U.S. and Canada gave to Q TV about his status as a worldwide artist.<sup>119</sup> K’naan recorded parts of his album “Troubadour,” with Stephen and Damian Marley, sons of the legendary Jamaican artist, Bob Marley.<sup>120</sup> U.S. African American Rapper Nasir “Nas” Jones and Damian “Junior Gong” Marley have also recorded a soon-to-be released album, entitled “Distant Relatives,” articulating of kinship for people of African descent. The album itself includes tracks, “Tribal War,” and “Africa Must Wake Up,” which feature K’naan. In another track, “As We Enter,” the duo, in back to back rhymes, captures the movements and aesthetic styles that demonstrate at the popular level, global African youth expression of their understanding of global Africa:

Junior Gong: Street intellectuals

Nas: And I am shrew about decimals, and my man will speak patois and I can speak rap star [U.S. Black English] y’all feel me even if I speak Swahili [East African language] Abari Gani,

Junior Gong: Mzuri Sana switch up the language and move to Ghana,

Nas: salute in honor real revolution rhymers,

Junior Gong: rythm pirihanas,

Nas: Like two Obama’s.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Q tv, “[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCTjdLUZLos&feature=PlayList&p=25997947C948BBDA&index=20&playnext=19&playnext\\_from=PL](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCTjdLUZLos&feature=PlayList&p=25997947C948BBDA&index=20&playnext=19&playnext_from=PL)”

<sup>120</sup> Keinan Abdi Warsame *Troubadour*, Knaan, A&M/Octone B0012478-02

<sup>121</sup> Nasir Jones, and Damien Marley, *Distant Relatives*, Nas, Junior Gong, Island Def Jam/Tuff Gong B0014136-02

Romanian born, Ghanaian Hip-Life and Afro-Pop artiste, Wanluv the Kubolor, also reminds listeners in London in a freestyle interview on Hot digital F. M. London, not only about the oppressive nature and circumstances of black geo-social mobility as control and resistance, but shows how global African youth as communities of consciousness resist their dominant others through perseverance and ingenuity.<sup>122</sup> He rhymes:

So I apply for the visa (from Ghana)  
 They tell me say if I come I no go come back (They told me if I get to the U.K. I won't return back).  
 So dey no give me some (so I wasn't given a visa)  
 But dey never know say dem born me for Romania (But they don't know I was born in Romania)  
 So I fit come anyway (So I can go to Britain anyway)  
 Cos we dey E.U. oh shame on u (Because we are part of the European Union, oh shame on you).  
 Kubolor, I see you like I don't see you  
 You are just a Baboon, a toton fool  
 Over there bouncing my visa, who are you, April fool  
 "Mmtchew",  
 Ah look your face, Kubolor know say I dey from outer space (Kubolor, I from outer space)  
 The way I dey rap self, u no dey understand (you don't even understand how I rap)  
 Kubolor in control, in command<sup>123</sup>

As these young musicians show, within the realm of popular culture and cultural production, Africans may speak about Pan-Africanism in different ways than it has been in the past, but the constant movements, linkages, and contradictions that define Africa and its diaspora are not lost on contemporary people of African descent.

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<sup>122</sup> Hamilton, *Routes of Passage*, xi.

<sup>123</sup> Teddy Abrokwa, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbdS0OIhLcc&feature=related>

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