

Atlantic Intermediaries:

Empire and Black Internationalism between the Caribbean and Africa, 1880-1940

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation analyzes the lives and ideas of Caribbean people who joined the British and French administrations in West and Central Africa between 1880 and 1940. Only two or three generations removed from slavery, “Caribbean administrators” typically identified as British and French and looked down on Africans, even as they were attracted by a symbolic “Africa.” Once in Africa, however, few Europeans considered them to be “British” or “French,” and they were unwelcome among the Africans they were subjugating.

My work uncovers the profound intellectual impacts of this middle position. Dislocation, racism, and alienation led most Caribbean administrators to rethink their positions in the British and French empires. Many simply returned home. Others, however, mobilized colonial thinking about race and nation for their own ends. Through exchanges with Africans—interpreters, chiefs, students, farmers, railway workers, and journalists, among others—Caribbean administrators engaged with African cultures and histories and began to recognize the similarities of colonial occupations around the Atlantic world. They articulated new ideas about black racial unity and imagined futures that lay beyond the political geographies of empire. In doing so, they established important foundations for subsequent generations.

Ultimately, I argue that Caribbean administrators created an intellectual nexus between the Caribbean and Africa that both drew on and transcended imperial boundaries. I examine this dynamic through a series of thematic lenses: home, race, language, education, and geography. The dissertation also reframes scholarship on the history of black internationalism by shifting the

focus toward Africa and away from North America and Western Europe. I argue that this shift in geography also requires shifts in methodology.

My arguments are based on more than two years of research in the Caribbean, West Africa, and Europe. During this time, I traced the transatlantic circuits that Caribbean administrators followed themselves and accumulated a range of sources, including newspapers, letters, poetry, novels, dictionaries, unpublished manuscripts, personal papers, and government documents. This multi-sited approach allowed me to eschew conventional research trajectories and destabilize the optic of empire. Throughout the dissertation, I focus on individual experiences to illuminate how empires acted as seedbeds for the rise of black internationalism.

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INTRODUCTION

In June 1926, the *R.M.S. Adda* slowly crawled away from the port of Lagos, bound for Liverpool. One of the passengers on board was a young Nigerian student, Nnamdi Azikiwe, who was heading to the United States to study at Storer College. From the deck, Azikiwe looked back at the coastline as it receded across the horizon. When the ship reached open water, Azikiwe turned in and settled into his third-class cabin. Most of the passengers on the *Adda* were Europeans, but Azikiwe's cabin mate was a West Indian man, recently retired from the colonial civil service in Nigeria. It is unclear who this man was, but he evidently made an impact—more than 40 years later, Azikiwe described the encounter in his autobiography.¹

The presence of a West Indian in the colonial government of Nigeria may have struck Azikiwe as unique, but between 1880 and 1940, more than 500 other Caribbean people joined the British and French administrations in West and Central Africa. They worked as customs agents, judges, postmasters, police officers, prison guards, tax collectors, teachers, railway workers, agriculture instructors, and sanitary inspectors. Others occupied more senior positions as regional administrators and governors. This study illuminates the intellectual trajectories of these “Caribbean administrators” as they moved around the Atlantic world.

Typically two or three generations removed from slavery, most Caribbean administrators identified as British and French and looked down on Africans as their inferiors. Once in Africa, however, they were excluded by their white European colleagues and unwelcome among the Africans they were subjugating. The effects of this middle position were profound. As Caribbean administrators reckoned with racism, dislocation, and alienation, they thought deeply about their positions in the British and French empires, about their relationships with Africans, and about the

¹ Nnamdi Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 75. Azikiwe was the first leader of independent Nigeria.

nature of colonialism. Their experiences in African colonies, especially their exchanges with Africans, led many to develop new ideas about identity and belonging.

My gateway into this project was a graduate seminar paper on the two best-known Caribbean administrators: Félix Eboué and René Maran. In September 2011, Florence Bernault mentioned their names to me, wrote down a few bibliographic references, and casually suggested that I write a paper on their experiences in Central Africa. The paper was not very good, and the main insight I took away from the research was an acute lesson about procrastination and interlibrary loans. Nevertheless, the topic fascinated me and I kept pulling the thread long after the seminar ended. Seven years later, I am amazed at where these stories have taken me.

Between July 2014 and July 2016, I conducted research in the Caribbean, West Africa, and Europe—following the paths that Caribbean administrators followed themselves. As I attempted to make sense of this complex circulation of people and ideas, I accumulated a wide array of sources and an entirely unique transatlantic archive. Between Arouca, Ibadan, and Aix-en-Provence, I read through personnel files, government correspondence, annual reports, newspapers, political pamphlets and speeches, private letters, manuscripts, novels, ethnographies, handwritten dictionaries, and even a suitcase full of poems. In many cases, I was uncovering stories and people that had been entirely forgotten. As vain as it sounds, I was thrilled to find the following declaration in *The Gold Coast Nation* regarding Joseph Britton, a teacher from British Guiana: “The future historian of the Gold Coast would lay himself open to the charge of partiality if he omitted to chronicle in all its rich detail the noble and enduring work of the man.”² Despite this pronouncement, Britton has remained largely absent from accounts of Ghanaian history.

² “A Unique Send Off: Mr. Jos. A. Britton Honoured,” *The Gold Coast Nation*, 1 August 1912, 110. Britton worked in the Gold Coast from 1885 until 1912. I attempt to provide some of this “rich detail” on Britton in Chapter 6.

In this light, the anonymity of Azikiwe’s West Indian cabin mate is entirely appropriate, representative of the broader anonymity of Caribbean administrators in Africa. Scholars of the French Empire and African literature frequently mention Eboué and Maran,³ but the lives and ideas of most other Caribbean administrators have remained obscure.⁴ Moreover, the scattered references to these individuals contain little analysis of their experiences in Africa.⁵ For example, Véronique Hélénon’s remarkably detailed research on “French Caribbeans in Africa” reveals far more about recruitment and the French Ministry of Colonies than it does about the specific involvements of Caribbean people in Africa, their exchanges with Africans, or the “diasporic connections”—and disconnections—that they found there.⁶ The other main historiographical reference point is Nemata Blyden’s book on West Indians who worked for the Sierra Leone government between the 1830s and 1860s.⁷ I extend some of Blyden’s analysis geographically and temporally, but the number of West Indians in her study was very low, and most worked in senior positions. In other cases where scholars mention Caribbean administrators, the tendency is

³ There are dozens of books about Eboué, whose remains lie in the Panthéon in Paris. The most comprehensive biography remains Brian Weinstein, *Eboué* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). On Maran, see John A. Dennis, “The René Maran Story: The Life and Times of a Black Frenchman, Colonial Administrator, Novelist, and Social Critic, 1887-1960” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1987) and Femi Ojo-Ade, *René Maran, the Black Frenchman: A Bio-Critical Study* (Washington D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1984).

⁴ The few other well-known Caribbean administrators include Jules Ninine, Guy Tirolien, and Albert Béville (Paul Niger) of Guadeloupe, John Barbour-James of British Guiana, and Amos Shackelford of Jamaica.

⁵ One exception is Margaret Rouse-Jones and Estelle M. Appiah, *Returned Exile: George James Christian of Dominica and the Gold Coast, 1869-1940* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2016). See also Carina E. Ray, *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), Chapter 2.

⁶ Véronique Hélénon, *French Caribbeans in Africa: Diasporic Connections and Colonial Administration, 1880-1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). I rely extensively on Hélénon’s empirical research in Chapter 1 and build on her work in subsequent chapters.

⁷ Nemata Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2000).

simply to highlight their “contradictory” positions⁸ or, as in the case of Walter Rodney, confuse them for Africans.⁹ For all this obscurity, however, the history of Caribbean administrators in Africa is not significant solely because it remains largely unknown. This history is also significant because it challenges the boundaries of analytical categories and fields of study. In particular, these stories create a productive disturbance in recent scholarship on empire and black internationalism, revealing limitations, porous boundaries, and interconnections.

In recent years, the study of empires has become pervasive. There appears to be no end of conference panels, journal special issues, and edited volumes on “rethinking” empire, “unthinking” empire, “visions” of empire, “gendering” empire, “translating” empire, “situating” empire, “resituating” empire, and so on. In 1997, the call to study colonies and metropole in a “single analytic field” was a necessary intervention.¹⁰ Twenty years later, the resulting scholarship has created a pattern in which the only histories of twentieth-century Africa that seem worth telling are those that remain within the field of the “empire-state” or “imperial nation-state.”¹¹ To be sure, the imperial lens has resulted in much significant work highlighting

⁸ Philippe Dewitte describes Caribbean administrators as “caught in a complex network of personal contradictions.” Dewitte, *Les mouvements nègres en France, 1919-1939* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1985), 41. See also Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), Chapter 2; Ramon Grosfoguel, *Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 200.

⁹ Rodney, perhaps intentionally, labelled Félix Eboué an “African.” Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982), 267. Gareth Austin, meanwhile, has described Mark Alexis of Trinidad as an “African,” and John Pobee has described the aforementioned Britton as a “Sierra Leonean.” Austin, *Labour, Land, and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807-1956* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 306; John S. Pobee, *The Anglican Story in Ghana: From Mission Beginnings to Province of Ghana* (Accra: Amanza, 2009), 132.

¹⁰ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). See also Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History,” *American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1516-1545.

¹¹ These terms come from Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

how colonial histories shaped Europe, how colonialism and racism were not violations of nationalist and republican ideals but were in fact commensurate with these ideals, and how Africans “negotiated” the language of imperial ideologies for their own ends. Nevertheless, empire frameworks subsume diverse groups of people and places under European-based periodizations and categories of analysis. These approaches reinscribe older models of “centres” and “peripheries” and impose a staging of history that forecloses any opportunity to consider people and their ideas from beyond a colony-metropole nexus.¹² At the root of the problem are the methodological conventions of this work, entrenched in the government archives of former imperial capitals.¹³ In this brand of scholarship, the cultures, lives, and ideas of people from Africa, the Caribbean, and “elsewhere,” are fragmented and made coherent only in relation to European metropolises. Bound by the empire-state framework, scholars reproduce older patterns of European national histories, though this time with sprinklings of “local colour.”¹⁴

On one hand, an imperial approach seems fitting for a history of Caribbean administrators in Africa. They grew up in colonial societies, worked for colonial administrations, and many expressed a desire to serve the British and French empires. Yet to rely solely on the lens of empire would overlook many significant aspects of this history. Indeed, the lives and ideas of

¹² On the “staging” of African history in the twentieth century, see Sean Hanretta’s Kenneth Burke/Walter Benjamin-inspired theoretical interventions in his *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa: History of an Emancipatory Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1-25.

¹³ Recent critiques of this trend include Meredith Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State-Building in Cameroon* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Jeffrey Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017). See also Gregory Mann, “Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa,” *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (2005): 409-434.

¹⁴ Steven Feierman, “Colonizers, Scholars, and the Creation of Invisible Histories,” in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 206. Gary Wilder also criticizes such approaches to colonial history, but retains faith in the “optic” of empire so long as scholars do not reduce it to colonial “topics” that reaffirm the conventions of national historiographies. Wilder, “From Optic to Topic: The Foreclosure Effect of Historiographic Turns,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (2012): 723-745.

these individuals starkly reveal the limits of such an approach. Caribbean administrators moved along imperial itineraries, both physically and intellectually, but they also created connections and imagined worlds that lay beyond the boundaries of empire. Such experiences highlight the importance of paying attention to the migrations and ideas of millions of others who rarely saw their worlds solely from the standpoint of “colonized subject.”

In order to capture these extra-imperial perspectives, I eschewed a conventional research trajectory and, building on recent critiques, moved toward a truly multi-sited methodology.¹⁵ Historians have long travelled to different “sites,” but in most cases, this approach is simply a response to the peculiar dispersions of archival holdings. Rarely do they articulate this practice as part of an argument or methodological stance. Anthropologists, meanwhile, have taken the lead in theorizing “multi-sited” research. George E. Marcus, for example, describes this approach as “designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact *defines the argument* of the ethnography.”¹⁶ In adopting this approach and travelling to different archives, I arrived at many dead ends. Yet I also uncovered circulations and intellectual cross-fertilizations that would otherwise have remained concealed. My varied and unique collection of sources enabled me to

¹⁵ Jean Allman advocates similar research trajectories for scholars working on postcolonial African history. Allman, “Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing,” *American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (2013): 104-129. See also the forum on “Writing the History of Africa after 1960” in *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 265-318, featuring essays by Luise White, Florence Bernault, Gregory Mann, Moses Ochonu, and John Straussberger.

¹⁶ My emphasis. Marcus also suggests several techniques, such as “following” the people, the thing, the metaphor, or the life. Marcus, “Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95-117. See also Marcus, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Simon Coleman and Pauline von Hellermann, eds., *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Problems and Possibilities in the Translocation of Research Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Mark-Anthony Falzon, *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis, and Locality in Contemporary Research* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016). For a critique, see Ghassan Hage, “A Not so Multi-sited Ethnography of a not so Imagined Community,” *Anthropological Theory* 5, no. 4 (2005): 463-475.

break down the colony-metropole binary and decentre the optic of empire. By creatively arranging seemingly disparate sources in productive dialogue, I discovered relationships and exchanges that both moved within and transcended imperial boundaries. In other words, my methodology allowed me to uncover and analyze processes and flows rendered incommensurable by conventional archival research itineraries and to make arguments that standard fieldwork patterns have disallowed.

The history of Caribbean administrators in Africa also challenges trends in scholarship on black internationalism. This vibrant and emergent field of study has documented the circulation of peoples, institutions, and ideologies around the world. Nevertheless, mirroring the tendencies of “Black Atlantic” and “Atlantic world” research, scholars of black internationalism have frequently elided Africa and Africans.¹⁷ For a field that is explicitly “transnational,” scholars have remained remarkably “domesticated” to Europe and the US, focusing especially on the cities of London, Paris, and New York.¹⁸ When scholars do include Africa, it is usually as a symbol rather than as part of the same temporal field.¹⁹ The only Africans that appear as coeval

¹⁷ As Mamadou Diouf and Jinny Prais point out, “the dominant conceptualizations of the Atlantic world, including studies of the black Atlantic, have largely ignored and/or dismissed the role of Africa and Africans.” Diouf and Prais, “Casting the Badge of Inferiority Beneath Black Peoples’ Feet’: Archiving and Reading the African Past, Present, and Future in World History,” in *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 206.

¹⁸ Most recently, see Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*; Susan Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins eds., *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Jennifer Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

¹⁹ For a similar critique, see J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). See also James H.

catalysts, meanwhile, are those that understood European languages and had the means to travel to Europe or North America. In other words, Africans appear only as migrants, unmoored from their own contexts, studied within the confines of The West. By following such patterns, scholars sever the linkages of a wide range of people and ideas. Even scholars with an explicitly “nonmetropolitan” focus²⁰ tend not to consider Africa and Africans.²¹ There is a more general body of work on the “reverse diaspora,” but such works focus mostly on eighteenth and nineteenth century resettlement in West Africa²² or on Pan-Africanism in 1960s Ghana and Tanzania.²³ There has also been considerable work on African American and Caribbean missionaries in Africa.²⁴ With several exceptions, however, the common trend among these related topics is a lack of engagement with African history and Africanist historiography.

Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

²⁰ See, for example, Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Micol Siegel *Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

²¹ For an exception, see Robert Trent Vinson, *The Americans are Coming!: Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012). See also Adam Ewing, *The Age of Garvey; How a Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Black Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

²² David Jenkins, *Black Zion: The Return of Afro-Americans and West Indians to Africa* (London: Wildwood House, 1975); Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Claude A. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Alexander Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

²³ Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Monique Bedasse, *Jah Kingdom: Rastafarians, Tanzania, and Pan-Africanism in the Age of Decolonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Seth Markle, *A Motorcycle on Hell Run: Tanzania, Black Power, and the Uncertain Future of Pan-Africanism, 1964-1974* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017).

²⁴ For an overview of this literature, see David Killingray, “The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s-1920s,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 1 (2003): 3-31. More recently, see Waibinte Wariboko, *Ruined by “Race”: Afro-Caribbean Missionaries and the Evangelization of Southern Nigeria, 1895-1925* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007).

Including Africa and Africans in the history of black internationalism thus requires not just a shift in geography, but also shifts in methodology and ideology.²⁵ Caribbean administrators may seem like peculiar subjects for the study of black internationalism in Africa, given their commitment to colonial work, yet their stories reveal important and overlooked intellectual lineages. Indeed, one finds important precedents in this history for more commonly known movements such as Garveyism and Negritude. The experiences of Caribbean administrators in African colonies challenged their commitments to the British and French empires, and as these bonds weakened, many Caribbean administrators formed relationships with Africans. Some began to align their struggles with those of Africans and even imagine alternatives to empire. By no means does this imply that Caribbean administrators suddenly became virulent anticolonialists. They rarely formed associations or political parties or published manifestoes or called for independence. In fact, Caribbean administrators often remained loyal to imperial ideas about race, civilization, and “progress.” Nevertheless, their exchanges with Africans created an openness, a willingness to consider the global implications of anti-black racism. Indeed, their ideas highlight the overlap of imperial ideologies and early Pan-Africanist thinking. The fact that this lineage does not fit neatly into nationalist interpretations is likely one of the reasons that scholars have overlooked this history. In short, the lives and ideas of Caribbean administrators reveal the limitations of scholarship on both empire and black internationalism, troubling their geographic and methodological boundaries.

This study also brings together the histories of Africa and the Caribbean and the histories of the British and French empires. In many ways, the experiences of Caribbean administrators

²⁵ As Michael Gomez wrote twenty years ago, there is an “absence of a satisfactory dialogue between historians of Africa and North America.” Gomez also called for scholars to make use of “evidence...from both sides of the Atlantic.” Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 60-61.

lend themselves well to comparative history. However, I have chosen not to make heavy-handed pronouncements on the differences between imperial strategies and practices, mainly because such approaches reinforce the empire-centric framework that I seek to transcend. Comparisons of empires often emphasize the ideas of senior colonial bureaucrats—and old debates of assimilation versus association—rather than the experiences of Africans, Caribbeans, and other subjects of European colonial occupations. More generally, comparative histories tend to imply an external, stable vantage point on the part of the researcher and prevent the historicization of analytical categories. They accentuate synchrony over contingencies and often produce abstract separations that are inadequate for capturing the criss-crossing and multidirectional configurations of people and ideas. As a result, instead of writing a comparative history, I have sought to weave together the transatlantic experiences of Caribbean administrators as an “*histoire croisée*.”²⁶

In following with this approach, the temporal and spatial scales of this study reflect the trajectories of Caribbean administrators themselves. Most were born in the 1870s and 1880s and worked in Africa during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The bulk of them left Africa by 1930, particularly those who worked in British colonies. This periodization overlaps with the late-nineteenth century consolidation of European occupations in West and Central Africa and with the weakening of European empires at the onset of World War II. It also overlaps with the “rise of black internationalism”²⁷ in London and Paris. Spatially, the narrative follows the many paths of Caribbean administrators between the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. There are many pitfalls to a project that spans so many times and places. Perhaps most

²⁶ Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006): 30-50.

²⁷ This phrase comes from the subtitle of Edwards’ *The Practice of Diaspora*.

troublesome is the effect of generalizing the varied experiences of colonization around the world. I have tried to emphasize the unique aspects of each specific historical context, but by focusing on the lives and ideas of individuals, such issues are much less significant.²⁸

The chapters follow a loosely chronological order, though I have also organized them around themes of race, home, language, education, and geography, among others. In Part I, I consider the ideological and economic factors that prompted Caribbean people to join the British and French colonial administrations in Africa. I also examine the general outlines of their experiences in Africa, particularly their fraught relationships with Africans and Europeans. Part II explores the intellectual impacts of various colonial contexts. Many factors affected the thinking of Caribbean administrators in Africa, such as racism, dislocation, nostalgia, and colonial ideologies. Most powerful, however, were interactions with Africans and exposures to African languages, cultures, and histories. These factors led many Caribbean administrators to formulate new ideas about empire and black racial unity. Finally, in Part III, I consider how experiences and exchanges in Africa inspired Caribbean administrators to imagine and work toward alternative political geographies of the world. I also suggest a reframing of black internationalism by examining how the intellectual currents that Caribbean administrators forged in Africa also circulated to Europe.

While necessarily incomplete, what follows is a history of Caribbean administrators and their trajectories—their upbringings, their experiences in Africa, their seemingly endless migrations, and above all, their ideas. Using snapshots from different times and places, I have attempted to create a representative collage. This collage begins in the late-nineteenth century

²⁸ On the analytical power of biographies and life stories in Atlantic world history, see Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, eds., *Biography and the Black Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

Caribbean, where the descendants of slaves reckoned with the economic and racial legacies of slavery.

PART I
CARIBBEAN COLONIZERS

1

FROM THE CARIBBEAN TO AFRICA

In the Antilles, the black schoolboy who is constantly asked to recite ‘Our ancestors the Gauls’ identifies himself with the explorer, the civilizing colonizer, the white man who brings truth to the savages.

FRANTZ FANON, 1952¹

In March 1902, a young civil servant in British Guiana named John Barbour-James sent a letter to the governor of the colony to convey his support for the British Boer War effort in South Africa. Writing on behalf of an “Association of loyal Negro subjects,” Barbour-James expressed his hope that victory would bring “far-reaching and beneficial results...for the native Races,” whom he also referred to as his “kinsmen.” The governor forwarded the letter to Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, and to Alfred Milner, the High Commissioner of Southern Africa. Chamberlain later responded and thanked Barbour-James and the association for their support.²

Barbour-James’ commitment to the British Empire and to the welfare of Africans ran deeper than letters and associations. Several months earlier, he had applied for a transfer to, in his words, “some part of His Imperial Majesty’s African possessions.” He also wanted a promotion from district postmaster to district commissioner. The governor of British Guiana passed the application on to London but made sure to note that Barbour-James was “a native of British Guiana, of coloured parentage.” According to the governor, Barbour-James was thus “scarcely of the class to be made a District Commissioner” but “might fill a minor office with

¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 2007 [1952]), 126.

² Victoria Institute Villagers Association to Government Secretary, 14 March 1902, National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK), CO 111/531.

advantage...should Native District Commissioners be required.”³ The Colonial Office also had concerns about Barbour-James’ “coloured” background, including one official who stated plainly: “I do not like importing coloured men into West Africa.” Others, however, thought Barbour-James might be of some value, even if they did not support a promotion. And so, in June 1902, the Colonial Office appointed Barbour-James as district postmaster to the Gold Coast.⁴ He worked in the West African colony until 1917. After resigning due to ill health, he settled in London.⁵ There he helped establish several black internationalist groups, all the while maintaining close ties with the Colonial Office. In 1938 he returned to British Guiana, and he died in Georgetown in 1954.⁶

The story of Barbour-James is a useful starting point for this study because it illuminates many of the tensions and complexities that permeated the lives and ideas of Caribbean administrators in Africa. Barbour-James was devoted to the causes of Africans and African-descended peoples around the world, but he was also devoted to the British Empire, even in the face of overt racism. His desire for a transfer to “some part of His Imperial Majesty’s African possessions” may have been geographically vague, but in ideological terms, it could not have been more specific. For Barbour-James there was no distinction between Africa as a space of

³ Governor of British Guiana to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 December 1901, NAUK, CO 111/529.

⁴ Gold Coast Blue Book 1902, NAUK, CO 100/52.

⁵ In 1902, Barbour-James’ wife, Caroline, moved with her husband to London and then remained there with their five children while John worked in West Africa. Caroline died in 1917 but three years later John married again. His second wife was Edith Goring of Barbados, who worked as a teacher in the Gold Coast from 1906 until 1920. For general background information on Barbour-James and his family, see Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain, 1901-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), especially 70-78, and also Jeffrey Green, “John Alexander Barbour-James (1867-1954),” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 13, No. 2 (2010): 250-256.

⁶ When Barbour-James returned to British Guiana he frequently appeared in local newspapers and he is still remembered in Guyanese Pan-Africanist circles. Personal communication with Vikram Tamboli and Eusi Kwayana, September 2016.

empire and as an imagined black diasporic homeland. His vision of racial uplift lay firmly within the framework of the British Empire.

Barbour-James' mix of black internationalist and imperialist attitudes reflects his experiences in—and migrations between—the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. Indeed, for Caribbean administrators in Africa, such experiences and migrations had profound intellectual effects. Over time, many began to rethink their ideas about empire, Africa, and Africans. Before delving more deeply into the lives and ideas of these individuals, however, it is necessary to understand how and why Caribbean people joined the British and French colonial administrations in Africa.

ECONOMICS, EDUCATION, AND IMPERIAL CULTURE

The British and French abolished slavery in their Caribbean colonies in the 1830s and 1840s, but the legacies of three centuries of slavery persisted.⁷ Most economic activity remained tied to plantations, while white landowners ensured that virtually all aspects of life continued stringently along race and class lines. Former slaveholders preserved their profits and power by maintaining control of the political administrations and main economic resources. Former slaves,

⁷ The legacies of slavery affected life after emancipation differently in each colony. These differences depended on demographics, geography, economic structures, and the imperial power, among other factors. There were also differences between larger settler colonies and smaller exploitation colonies, as this often dictated the amount of available land for freed slaves. Nevertheless, there were also an overwhelming number of similarities between British and French Caribbean colonies after emancipation. The purpose of this brief outline of post-emancipation Caribbean history is to present a summary of these similarities. For overviews of the nineteenth century Caribbean, see Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer, eds., *The Modern Caribbean* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Stephan Palmié and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Jorge Ibarra and K. O. Laurence, eds., *General History of the Caribbean, Volume IV, The Long Nineteenth Century: Nineteenth Century Transformations* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2011); Bridget Brereton, ed., *General History of the Caribbean, Volume V, The Caribbean in the Twentieth Century* (London: UNESCO Publishing, 2008); Silyane Larcher, *L'Autre Citoyen: l'Idéal Républicain et les Antilles après l'Esclavage* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014); Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

meanwhile, often had little choice but to continue working on plantations as poorly paid—and sometimes unpaid—labourers in conditions not unlike slavery.⁸ Small groups of white elites controlled the wealth, owned the main businesses and banks, and occupied the high positions in government and other professions. Above all, they owned the vast majority of land and went to great lengths to prevent freed slaves from buying their own land.⁹ Moreover, white landowners relied on their considerable political and economic power to control labour. They imposed low wages, high rents, tenancy and vagrancy laws, head taxes, pass systems, sharecropping, and high poll taxes. These, among other measures, kept freed slaves working on plantations and severely restricted their physical and social mobility.

White planters also ensured continued profits by importing indentured labourers from India. This was especially important during the second half of the nineteenth century, when sugar prices went into steady decline due to increased global competition and new processing technologies. Between 1838 and 1917, nearly half a million indentured labourers from India arrived in the British Caribbean—mainly in British Guiana, Trinidad, and Jamaica. 45,000, meanwhile, arrived in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The British and French also brought indentured labourers to the Caribbean from China and West Africa.¹⁰ This influx of indentured

⁸ Under slavery in Jamaica, for example, women who gave birth to six or more children were exempt from field labour. During the “apprenticeship” years, (1834-1838), the government removed this exemption. See Gad Heuman, “Peasants, Immigrants, and Workers: The British and French Caribbean after Emancipation,” in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples*, eds. Stephan Palmié and Francisco Scarano (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 350.

⁹ Planter-controlled colonial governments often imposed minimum acreage requirements and barred group purchases of land. This prevented former slaves from buying smaller portions of land and pooling their resources. See Francisco Scarano, “Labour and Society in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Modern Caribbean*, eds. Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 59.

¹⁰ At least 238,000 Indians came to British Guiana, 145,000 to Trinidad, 39,000 to Guadeloupe, 30,000 to Jamaica, 6,748 to Martinique, 2,570 to Grenada, 1,820 to St. Vincent, and 1,550 to St. Lucia. Between 1853 and 1879, almost 19,000 Chinese indentured labourers came to the Caribbean. Most ended up in British Guiana, but 500 also arrived in Guadeloupe, and in 1859 alone, another 500 arrived in Martinique. Finally, between 1841 and 1865, roughly 36,000 African indentured labourers, (mostly freed slaves who the British brought to Sierra Leone and St. Helena),

labour allowed plantation-owners to keep wages low and to strip former slaves of their bargaining power. These arrivals also dramatically altered the social and racial landscapes of Caribbean colonies.¹¹ Ultimately, in the post-emancipation Caribbean, power remained with the former slave-holding white elites, while most freed slaves remained trapped in systems that “subordinated people to profits.”¹²

To be sure, some former slaves found ways to leave plantations behind and buy property. This was especially true in larger colonies where there was more available land. Many resorted to squatting on abandoned or uncultivated land, and some even grouped together to establish small farms and villages. In other cases, missionary societies bought land and redistributed to former slaves. Generally speaking, however, white landowners controlled the labour structures, and with this power, they preserved the economic patterns of slave societies, along with the attendant race and class hierarchies.¹³ In 1848 Barbados, for example, African-descended peoples owned less than 1% of agricultural land, even though 90% of the island’s workers worked in agriculture.¹⁴ Those who sought refuge in towns were no better off. Poverty, malnutrition, and crowded, squalid living conditions bred illness, disease epidemics, and high

arrived in the British and French Caribbean. See Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean*, 132, Gad Heuman, “Peasants, Immigrants, and Workers,” 356-358, and Monica Schuler, *Alas, Alas, Kongo: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration to Jamaica, 1841-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

¹¹ A handful of East Indian-descended people from the Caribbean joined the British and French administrations in Africa. Foremost among these were Albert Edward Donawa of Trinidad and Louis Vingarassamy of Guadeloupe. For more on Donawa, see Chapter 4. On Vingarassamy, see Jeremy Rich, “Gabonese Men for French Decency: The Rise and Fall of the Gabonese Chapter of the Ligue des Droits de l’Homme, 1916-1939,” *French Colonial History* 13 (2012): 40.

¹² Knight, *The Caribbean*, 133.

¹³ For a recent study of these dynamics in Antigua, see Natasha J. Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom: Antigua and the Aftermath of British Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹⁴ Hilary McD. Beckles, *A History of Barbados: From Amerindian Settlement to Caribbean Single Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 158.

infant mortality.¹⁵ As Hilary Beckles writes, “black workers... were free to work on the estates or starve in the streets of towns.”¹⁶

Economic circumstances for freed slaves and their descendants remained grim for the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Coupled with persistent racial discrimination, this made life increasingly strained. As a result, uprisings erupted across the Caribbean: Paul Bogle’s Morant Bay Rebellion in St. Thomas, Jamaica, in October 1865, the Insurrection du Sud in southern Martinique in September 1870, the War of General Green in Barbados in April 1876, and the Water Riots in Trinidad in March 1903.¹⁷ These uprisings revealed deep discontent and desire for change, though they also revealed the willingness of the British and French colonial states, in alliance with local planters, to repress any form of dissent with brutal violence.

In short, emancipation did little to change the basic economic and social realities of Caribbean society. Chattel slavery no longer dictated race and class hierarchies, but these divisions remained as clear as ever. White elites used legislation, economic power, and harsh labour regimes to ensure the continued stratification and social control of Caribbean colonies. Black workers may have been free, but they were “distinctly not equal.”¹⁸ In light of these

¹⁵ For example, in 1890s Grenada, almost half of all children born to poor mothers died before age one. Between 1896 and 1897 in Jamaica, meanwhile, 17.5% of all children died before age one and 26.8% died before age five. And in rural Martinique, the infant mortality rate was 23% as late as 1952. Bridget Brereton, “Society and Culture in the Caribbean: The British and French West Indies, 1870-1900,” in *The Modern Caribbean*, 103.

¹⁶ Beckles, *A History of Modern Barbados*, 158.

¹⁷ For more on these uprisings, see Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, Chapter 8; Gad Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994); Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande, *Les origines du mouvement ouvrier en Martinique: 1870-1900* (Paris: Karthala, 2000); Hilary Beckles, *Great House Rules: Landless Emancipation and Workers’ Protest in Barbados, 1838-1938* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2004), Chapter 4; Jerome Teelucksingh, *Labour and the Decolonization Struggle in Trinidad and Tobago* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), Chapter 1.

¹⁸ Knight, *The Caribbean*, 113.

circumstances, people turned increasingly to migration around and away from the Caribbean to find work and support their families.¹⁹ Migration rose steadily during this period as workers travelled to different British and French colonies in the Caribbean, as well as to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Panama, Costa Rica, and the United States. Another option, and one taken up by those under consideration in this study, was migrating to West and Central Africa.²⁰

In addition to economic struggles and political exclusion, another major feature of life in the Caribbean at this time was the persistent influence of British and French imperial culture. European ideas and practices informed language, religion, social customs and manners, architecture, and even landscapes.²¹ Most important for reinforcing imperial culture, however, was education. In 1870, the British government made primary school free and compulsory in England, while the French did the same over the ensuing decade with the establishment of the Third Republic. The British and French colonies in the Caribbean slowly followed suit. Missionaries and churches spearheaded education systems in the British colonies, but government schools gradually took over. In the French Caribbean, meanwhile, the Third Republic government established free and mandatory government primary schools.

Education held the potential for social mobility, but schooling was often inadequate or inaccessible as the governments of Caribbean colonies typically allocated far more money for prisons and police. Schools were thus chronically underfunded and teachers were poorly paid.²²

¹⁹ See, for example, Lara Putnam, *The Company they Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

²⁰ Like those who migrated around the Caribbean, many of the Caribbean administrators who worked in Africa sent remittances back to their families.

²¹ See, for example, Benjamin D. Siegel, "The Impact of Empire: The Effects of British Imperial Culture on the Colonial Maritime Landscape of Bluefields Bay, Jamaica" (MA thesis, East Carolina University, 2011).

²² Knight, *The Caribbean*, 133.

Moreover, working class children and those in rural areas had fewer opportunities to attend schools. In the French Caribbean there was better access,²³ but in British colonies attendance was highly variable. In Trinidad, for instance, in 1900, one third of children were not receiving any formal education.²⁴ Furthermore, most students in the British and French Caribbean only completed primary education. Secondary schools came with costly school fees and scholarships were rare. The tiny minority that continued on to secondary schooling was mostly white or “coloured.” Some secondary schools in Jamaica simply denied admissions to black students.²⁵

Formal education was nonetheless a significant social influence. In many ways, colonial schools centred the circulation and celebration of imperial culture. For one thing, the curriculums followed European models that paid little attention to Caribbean contexts.²⁶ Students thus learned the languages, literature, history, and geography of England and France, not of Jamaica, Martinique, Barbados, Guadeloupe, or Guyana, let alone Africa. The schools used British and French textbooks, and students wrote British and French tests. Teachers were often born in the Caribbean, but trained within similar contours, often by European teachers. Schools also reinforced racial hierarchies. Drenched in the pseudoscientific racial thinking of the late-nineteenth century, curriculums emphasized the idea that white was good and that black was inferior.²⁷

²³ Bridget Brereton, “Society and Culture in the Caribbean,” 107-108.

²⁴ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 69.

²⁵ Colin A. Palmer, *Inward Yearnings: Jamaica’s Journey to Nationhood* (Kingston, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 2016), 13.

²⁶ Knight, *The Caribbean*, 211.

²⁷ As Michel-Rolph Trouillot explains, “When one talked of the biological product of black and white intercourse, one spoke of ‘man of colour’ as if the two terms do not necessarily go together: unmarked humanity is white.” Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 81.

Schools also presented the British and French empires as benevolent communities to which young students were fortunate to belong. In British colonies, children sang “Rule Britannia” on Empire Day, while French children learned to recite “Our ancestors, the Gauls...” Indeed, as historian Winston James writes, young people in the British Caribbean were “taught that they were British and came to think of themselves as such...with genuine pride.”²⁸ In the French colonies, meanwhile, education was the main tool used to promote republicanism. Teachers in French Guiana told students that “when [and if] you go to France, you will behave like Frenchmen, you will speak with them, like them. You will work; you will do everything like them at their sides.”²⁹ Education systems were thus powerful tools for assimilation and instilled a sense of Britishness and Frenchness in young students.

In addition to spreading imperial culture, schools also contributed to the emergence of a Caribbean middle class. Of key importance for the members of this social group was literacy, the command of British and French culture, and the ability to speak and write “proper” English and French. These were people with some education, land, and money, and they usually worked as teachers, journalists, printers, pharmacists, postmasters, doctors, solicitors, barristers, clerks, and minor civil servants. The influence of education on the growth of this middle strata is difficult to overemphasize. As Guyanese historian Walter Rodney later wrote: “The rise of the middle class can only be effectively chronicled and analyzed in relationship to the schools...The position of

²⁸ Winston James, “Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain,” in *Black Experience and the Empire*, eds. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 377-79.

²⁹ These are the words of a teacher as remembered by a contemporary of Félix Eboué, A. E. Whily-Tell. See Whily-Tell, *Je Suis Un Civilisé* (Paris: Lancry, 1953), 208, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 14-15.

headmaster of a primary school must be viewed as constituting the cornerstone of the black and brown middle class.”³⁰

Rodney’s reference to colour is significant, because one corollary of the emerging Caribbean middle class was the development of an even more stratified colour hierarchy. Class lines often corresponded with racial lines, resulting in a tripartite division of society. The white minority remained in the elite upper class, most of the middle class were lighter-skinned, and the majority of working class people were black. Colonial education systems thus created an intermediary class between former slave owners and former slaves.³¹

A number of Caribbean intellectuals have written about their educational upbringings and their reflections demonstrate the powerful effects of colonial schooling. C. L. R. James, for example, born in Trinidad in 1903, described the totalizing (and debilitating) effects of British colonial education:

It was only long years after that I understood the limitation on spirit, vision, and self-respect which was imposed on us by the fact that our masters, our curriculum, our code of morals, *everything* began from the basis that Britain was the source of all light and leading, and our business was to admire, wonder, imitate, learn; our criterion of success was to have succeeded in approaching that distant ideal – to attain it was, of course impossible...it was the beacon that beckoned me on.³²

Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of independent Trinidad, also understood the links between his childhood education and the politics of the British Empire. Williams was born in Port of Spain in 1911, and when he reflected on his time as a student, he declared: “The intellectual equipment with which I was endowed by the Trinidad School system had two

³⁰ Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 115; quoted in Knight, *The Caribbean*, 218.

³¹ Hélénon, *French Caribbeans in Africa*, 26-7.

³² C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 2005 [1963]), 39. Emphasis in original.

principal characteristics—quantitatively it was rich; qualitatively it was British. ‘Be British’ was the slogan not only of the Legislature but also of the school.”³³

René Ménéil, a writer born in Martinique in 1907, wrote comparably about education in the French Caribbean: “The very capability of the Antillean of color is automatically denied in schools...Undoubtedly, books used in Antillean schools were written in other countries, for other readers.”³⁴ Léon-Gontran Damas of French Guiana made a similar observation: “The textbooks, one must remember, were destined solely for use by the metropolitans. I can distinctly remember that in my class in French Guyana we were more familiar with the names of plants growing in France than with those growing at home.”³⁵ Finally, Édouard Glissant, also born in Martinique, noted that colonial education encouraged Antilleans to “deny themselves as a collectivity in order to achieve an illusory individual equality.”³⁶

The assimilative nature of colonial educations led many African-descended people living in the Caribbean to think of themselves as “British” and “French,” not as “West Indian,” “Antillais,” “Martiniquais,” or “Trinidadian,” and certainly not as “black” or “African.”³⁷ Colonial schools in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Caribbean bred assimilation

³³ Colin A. Palmer, *Eric Williams and the Making of the Modern Caribbean* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 16.

³⁴ René Ménéil, *Légitime Défense*, I, 7; quoted in Shireen K. Lewis, *Race, Culture, and Identity: Francophone West African and Caribbean Literature and Theory from Négritude to Créolité* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 13.

³⁵ Interview with Léon-Gontran Damas by *Jeune Afrique* in Keith Q. Warner, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Léon-Gontran Damas* (Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1988), 18.

³⁶ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 7.

³⁷ Indeed, as Stuart Hall later wrote: “The word ‘black’ had never been uttered in my household or anywhere in Jamaica in my hearing, in my entire youth and adolescence—though there were all kinds of other ways of naming... When one talks about assimilation in the Caribbean, one always feels Caribbean people constantly leaning forward, almost about to tip over, striving to reach somewhere else.” Stuart Hall, “Negotiating Caribbean Identities,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 209 (1995): 8.

and spread imperial culture. They also engendered a new grouping of people who defined themselves by their acquisition of European customs and values and by distinguishing themselves from the masses of mostly black workers. Combined with dire economic circumstances, this devotion to the British and French empires and this yearning for “respectability” led many who were able to seek appointments with the colonial civil service—either in the Caribbean, Europe, or in Africa. Such a career path responded to economic needs by offering a degree of employment stability and financial security, but it also fulfilled the desire to articulate a clear middle class “British” or “French” identity.

The employment application of Lionel Bertram Clarke, a young man from Bridgetown, Barbados, makes clear how economics, education, and imperial culture intersected and made civil service appointments appealing. In June 1914, Clarke applied to be a station master on the Nigerian railway. In addition to a formal letter, Clarke included two “testimonials” that emphasized his proper upbringing. One, from, the vicar of St. Mary’s Church in Bridgetown, described Clarke as a “steady well behaved young fellow,” while the other, from a family friend, stated that Clarke was “of a respectable family” and was “a bright young man and honest.”³⁸ At the bottom of his application letter, Clarke included a brief and poignant “curriculum vitae”:

Educated Trinidad Tranquility
Boys’ Practicing School, VI Standard

Age 19

Father & mother dead.³⁹

³⁸ Testimonial for L. B. W. Clarke from W. G. Murray, Vicar of St. Mary’s Church; Testimonial for L. B. W. Clarke from J. G. Williams, NAUK, CO 583/27.

³⁹ Lionel Clarke to Francis Hastings Waller, June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27.

Clarke's letter and his testimonials keenly expressed his adherence to the "standards" of the colonial education system and to the British Empire more generally. Yet the documents also reveal Clarke's desperation to find employment—presumably he had no one to depend on.

A similar example comes from French Guiana. In 1908, shortly before heading to Central Africa, Félix Eboué briefly returned from France to his former school in the capital of French Guiana, the *Collège de Cayenne*. Gaston Monnerville was then a student at the *Collège*, years before he became involved in politics and rose to the position of President of the French Senate.⁴⁰ In a later reflection on this "unforgettable" day, Monnerville articulated the ideals of his generation:

Thirsty for culture and political instruction, fully attentive to the lessons of our mentors, we aspired to serve Guyane one day, the regional collectivity where we were born, as well as the national collectivity, France, homeland of Victor Schoelcher, who had made our fathers—therefore ourselves—free men. To have before one's eyes, at a time when it was so rare and so meritorious, a compatriot who was still young and who, through his own efforts, had reached this cultural level, was for us an event and a thrilling reason for emulation. This day remains for me, unforgettable. The eleven-year-old child was forever marked by the indelible seal of a role model to follow, of an example to emulate.⁴¹

For Monnerville, the example of Eboué as a black man working for the French colonial civil service represented what he and many others hoped for themselves: the opportunity to reach a higher "cultural level" and to "serve" France. Historian Véronique Hélénon writes that for many in the French Caribbean, serving in the colonial administration "came to represent a certain way of life and professional ideal."⁴² Indeed, as Aimé Césaire later declared: "All of the students in

⁴⁰ Among other positions in politics, Monnerville was a deputy for Guyane from 1932 until 1942, a senator for Guyane from 1946 until 1948, senator for Lot in southwestern France from 1948 until 1974, and President of the Senate from 1958 until 1968. See Monnerville's biography on the French Senate website: https://www.senat.fr/histoire/associations/11_conseil_republique.html

⁴¹ Elie Castor and Raymond Tarcy, *Félix Eboué* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1984), x; also quoted in Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 32. In 1908, Eboué had just graduated from the *École Coloniale* in Paris and the Minister of Colonies had appointed him to a position in Oubangui-Chari. Brian Weinstein suggests that Eboué's visit to the *Collège* actually occurred in 1912, when he was back in Cayenne on leave. Weinstein, *Eboué*, 41.

⁴² Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 33.

my class had but one idea: pass the exam...go to France and obtain a position in Africa, in Sénégal or elsewhere.”⁴³ By 1911, approximately 10 percent of the 1,394 officials in the French Ministry of Colonies were from Guadeloupe, Martinique, or French Guiana.⁴⁴

The effects of economic insecurity, colonial education, and the ubiquitous spread of imperialist cultures in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Caribbean led many to seek appointments with the British and French empires. Some simply sought financial stability, while others were also eager to leave behind the world of plantation labour and articulate their “Britishness” and “Frenchness.” Most remained in the Caribbean, but others worked in Europe, South Asia, the South Pacific, and of course, West and Central Africa.⁴⁵

PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICA AND PROVIDENTIAL DESIGN

There were a range of ideas and attitudes about Africa in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Caribbean. Many people, however, had romantic and exotic ideas about the continent. This kind of thinking was in part a consequence of colonial education, but it was also informed by the continued presence of Africans in the Caribbean and by the legacies of African cultures. The case of Vivian Renwick of Trinidad, who worked in Nigeria, demonstrates how these various influences combined and motivated Caribbean people to join the British and French colonial administrations in Africa.

⁴³ Patrice Louis, *Conversation avec Aimé Césaire* (Paris: Arléa, 2007), 22.

⁴⁴ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 22.

⁴⁵ The French Ministry of colonies generally encouraged Caribbean administrator to go to sub-Saharan Africa, but also sent them to Asia, especially before World War I. Weinstein, *Eboué*, 22, Hélénon, 38-40, 95. I have not found evidence of the British sending West Indians to British colonies outside of Africa and the Caribbean, although this appears to have been a possibility. When Hubert Nurse of Trinidad applied for a position in West Africa in February 1912, he noted on his application form: “West Coast of Africa or N. or S. Nigeria. East Indies not desired.” Hubert Nurse Application Form, 15 February 1912, NAUK, CO 295/473.

In May 1915, Renwick's supervisor in the Trinidad agriculture department summoned Renwick to his office and suggested that he take an appointment in West Africa. Reflecting on this moment years later, Renwick wrote: "About Africa, at the time, I had two ideas. First that the place was very unhealthy and second that it was covered with dense forests from which lions and tigers occasionally emerged to take their toll of unwary human beings."⁴⁶ Renwick also "wondered" whether West Africa was "inhabited by savage and hostile tribes."⁴⁷ Inspired by these exotic ideas and a "spirit of adventure," Renwick accepted the job offer and soon after boarded a ship for Nigeria, where he spent three years working for the Nigerian agriculture department.

Renwick's ideas about Africa and Africans were hardly uncommon, and they make clear how imperial knowledge production affected the thinking of Caribbean people. Renwick himself even reflected on this issue:

It is difficult now to know how these ideas got into my head. In cosmopolitan Trinidad, first-hand information can easily be obtained about conditions in Europe, India, China, the United States, or any of the Latin American Republics; but although more than half of the people of the island are of African descent, no one I knew had any knowledge of conditions existing in Africa.⁴⁸

Ignorance about Africa and derogatory views about Africans were in large part due to colonial education. Indeed, the very concept of "Africa" as a singular entity and the essentialist notion that "Africans" shared a common bond were ideas that originated in Europe.⁴⁹ In the Caribbean, Europeanized school curriculums reinforced these monolithic and typically negative views—alongside efforts to entrench a sense of duty and gratitude to European empires. As a result, even

⁴⁶ Vivian Renwick, "Forty Years On..." *Nigeria: A Quarterly Magazine of General Interest* 43-44, (1954): 192-194.

⁴⁷ Renwick, "Forty Years On..." 202.

⁴⁸ Renwick, "Forty Years On..." 194.

⁴⁹ Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 6.

though Renwick's ancestors came to the Caribbean from Africa, he and many other African-descended people in the Caribbean held views about Africa and Africans similar to those of the British and French.

In such colonial renderings, "Africa" was primitive and unhealthy, a "white man's grave," and a place of wild animals, "dense forests," and mystery.⁵⁰ Africans, meanwhile, were "savages," "backwards," superstitious, and lazy. European thinking placed Africans firmly at the bottom of the pseudo-scientific evolutionary ladder, while "civilized" Caribbeans considered Africans as outside of Western "modernity" and "progress."⁵¹ In Jamaica, for example, terms like "African," "Negro," "Congolese," and "black" were pejorative, even though 90% of the population was of African-descent.⁵² Édouard Glissant similarly noted that in Martinique "the word African or Negro represented an insult."⁵³ And John Barbour-James of British Guiana, mentioned above, later wrote that when he first arrived in the Gold Coast in 1902, he was "agreeably surprised to find such progress," pleased to see that "the men were splendid and the women modest and charming."⁵⁴ Barbour-James' "surprise" indicates that he had been expecting

⁵⁰ For more on "the image of Africa," see Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*; Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (Port-of-Spain: P. N. M. Publishing. Co., 1964).

⁵¹ Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 6. C. L. R. James, for example, wrote in 1932 that "the coloured people" of the Caribbean were "not savages" and that their "whole outlook [was] that of Western civilization modified and adapted to their particular circumstances." There were "traces of heathenism" in "very remote districts," but "no native peoples in the sense that there are natives in Africa or in India." As a result, James argued, there was "no conflict between freshly assimilated ideas of modern democracy and age-old habits based on tribal organization or a caste system." James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014 [1932]), 49-50. My thanks to Minkah Makalani for bringing this reference to my attention.

⁵² Colin A. Palmer, *Inward Yearnings*, 10.

⁵³ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 6.

⁵⁴ John Barbour-James, "A Tribute to the Gold Coast," *The Gold Coast Nation*, 6-13 July 1918, 4.

the opposite. Colonial education and the broader contours of colonial knowledge regimes thus played a significant role in forming ignorant and negative views about Africa and Africans.

Two other factors shaped how Caribbeans perceived Africa and Africans: the continued presence of Africans in the Caribbean and the legacies of African cultures. For example, even though Vivian Renwick indicated that “no one [he] knew had any knowledge of conditions existing in Africa,” he also indicated his awareness of the Africans who still lived in Trinidad. According to Renwick, there was an old man who worked in the Trinidad agriculture department “who, rumour said, had come from the Congo.” This man, known as “John Congo,” was apparently “a reticent fellow who kept his history and his knowledge to himself.” Renwick noted that this man “had been domiciled in Trinidad such a long time that he had probably forgotten all about his native land.” Renwick likely mentioned John Congo in part to distinguish himself, yet his polite dismissal of Congo—and his presumption of lost memories—is nonetheless revealing of the presence of Africans in the late-nineteenth century Caribbean. Indeed, the case of John Congo was hardly unique: at the time of Renwick’s birth in Port of Spain in 1892, there were approximately 2,000 Africans living in Trinidad, along with many more people raised by Africans.⁵⁵

The presence of Africans in other parts of the Caribbean was no less significant. Africans continued arriving in the British Caribbean colonies well into the 1860s as liberated slaves and indentured labourers, while in the French colonies, where the slavery was abolished in 1848, Africans continued arriving as slaves into the 1830s and as indentured servants until the 1860s.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Brereton states that in 1891 there were still 2,055 Africans living in Trinidad. This was approximately 1% of the total population. Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad*, 153. Renwick was born in Port of Spain on 17 June 1892. See Renwick’s “Application for promotion in the Colonial Service,” NAUK, CO 295/492.

⁵⁶ For statistics and other data on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, see <<http://slavevoyages.org>>. On African indentured labour, see Monica Schuler, *Alas, Alas, Kongo*. For the French Caribbean, Véronique Hélénon notes that between 1857 and 1862, the French brought 15,000 African indentured labourers to Guadeloupe, 10,500 to

The presence of Africans in the late-nineteenth century Caribbean—of “Aradas,” “Mandingoes,” “Houssas,” “Karamenties,” “Eboes,” “Congoes,” “Yorubas,” and others—was thus not insignificant and had an indelible effect on late-nineteenth century Caribbean society and culture.⁵⁷ For example, even as Christianity generally abounded, Africans often grafted Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and other religions into African religions and rituals.⁵⁸ In rural areas, healers such as obeahmen and *quimboiseurs* were common, and they often relied on African-based healing practices.⁵⁹ In Martinique and Guadeloupe, meanwhile, one of the popular dances of the time was the *calenda*, likely a diluted version of *calundu* or *kilundu*, a healing ritual and form of ancestor worship from Central Africa.⁶⁰ In the late 1860s in Trinidad, a group of Radas from Dahomey established a *vodun* healing community in Belmont, a neighbourhood of Port of Spain. They named their settlement Dangbwe, in honour of the serpent deity of Ouidah, and newspapers reported that members of the community cured small pox “on African principles.”⁶¹ And in Guadeloupe, several African communities still existed in the early-twentieth century,

Martinique, and 1,828 to French Guiana. See also Serge Mam Lam Fouck, *La Guyane au temps de l’esclavage, l’or, et la francisation, 1802-1946* (Matoury: Ibis Rouge, 1999), 223; quoted in Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 20.

⁵⁷ Brereton, *Race Relations*, 134.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Dianne Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁹ Brereton, “Society and Culture in the Caribbean,” 105.

⁶⁰ Brereton, “Society and Culture in the Caribbean,” 106. See also James H. Sweet, “The Evolution of Ritual in the African Diaspora: Central African Kilundu in Brazil, St. Domingue, and the United States, Seventeenth—Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Diasporic Africa: A Reader*, ed. Michael Gomez (New York: New York University Press, 2006): 64-80, and Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), especially chapter seven.

⁶¹ *Trinidad Chronicle*, 16 January 1872, quoted in Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad*, 154. For more on the Radas of Belmont, see Emmanuel Kwaku Senah, “Rada,” in *The Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions: Volume 2: M – Z*, eds. Patrick Taylor, Frederick I. Case (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 742-748.

including groups that sang songs in Kikongo.⁶² These and other cases helped shape Caribbean understandings of Africa and Africans, in both negative and positive ways.⁶³ Moreover, unlike colonial education, these influences were mediated more by personal connections and family memories than by cultural imperialism.

Such exposure to Africans and the legacies of African cultures motivated people in the Caribbean to join the British and French administrations in Africa. The family of Félix Eboué, for instance, who was the grandson of freed slaves, could trace their lineage to West Africa, and this family history remained an important influence. Eboué's parents, Yves Urbain Eboué and Aurélie Léveillé, were both the grandchildren of Africans brought to French Guiana in the early nineteenth-century. According to Eboué's biographer, Brian Weinstein, the family "kept cowrie shells as a souvenir of Africa [and] believed that their ancestors came from a royal African lineage and that traders with whom they had been dealing kidnapped them from the river village where they lived."⁶⁴ Félix's mother spoke to her children in Creole, told them Guianese riddles, and raised them immersed in Guianese Creole culture. Félix's grandmother, a freed slave, told him and his siblings about slavery. Emancipated slaves passed on stories and cultural ideas in similar ways around the Caribbean, and a rich literature has detailed the legacies of African cultures in the Americas in the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ By the late nineteenth-century, many

⁶² Hélénon, *French Caribbeans in Africa*, 65-66, and Jean-Claude Blanche, "6000 'engagés volontaires' en Afrique et en Guadeloupe, 1858-1861" (PhD diss., Université Paris 1, 1994). One of these groups had still preserved Kikongo traditions such as recipes, folktales, and songs into the 1990s.

⁶³ Colonial laws typically condemned "African" practices and rituals, and middle classes looked down on Africans. The 1898 "Obeah law" in Jamaica, for instance, forbade the practice of Obeah and Myalism, while journalists regularly caricatured and mocked "obeahmen."

⁶⁴ Weinstein interview with Yves Gratien, 2 December 1967, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 10.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Culture* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003); Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*; Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*; Joseph E. Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington:

languages, ideas, and customs had undergone significant changes, but their endurance reveals how many sought to hold on to African ideas in the Caribbean. For Eboué, these stories and shells evidently had an impact. He later declared: “Africa, cradle of my ancestors, had always exercised a profound attraction over me.”⁶⁶

Cunliffe Malcolm Hoyte of Trinidad, who left for the Gold Coast in 1910, came from a family that traced similar traditions. According to Hoyte’s nephew, Ralph Hoyte Jr., their ancestors came as slaves from West Africa to Barbados. Later generations moved to British Guiana and then to Trinidad, where they settled in Belmont. Hoyte Jr. also notes that the family referred to his uncle as “Dhani” because “the African families who lived in Belmont had a custom. They gave their first born boy an African name.”⁶⁷ It is unclear how Hoyte’s parents chose this name, or what language it comes from, though perhaps Hoyte Jr. was referring to the Radas described above.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the fact that such an “African” custom existed highlights the extent to which African ideas and ideas about Africa proliferated in the Caribbean outside the realm of imperial culture. This intellectual context undoubtedly inspired interest and curiosity about Africa in Hoyte and others.⁶⁹

Indiana University Press, 2005); Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

⁶⁶ George Renauld, *Félix Eboué & Eugénie Tell: Défenseurs des peuples Noirs* (Paris: Editions Detrad aVs, 2007), 31.

⁶⁷ Dr. Ralph Hoyte Jr., “Interview with Dr. Ralph Hoyte,” interview by Dr. Margaret Rouse-Jones and Mrs. Estelle M. Appiah, 28 June 2005, Oral and Pictorial Records Programme for the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, File No. OP117.

⁶⁸ In Kiswahili, -dhani is the root of the verb “to think” or “to believe,” though this seems an unlikely connection.

⁶⁹ Belmont is also the neighbourhood where George Padmore’s grandfather, Alphonso Nurse, settled after relocating from Barbados and British Guiana. “Mr. Alphonso Nurse,” *Port of Spain Gazette*, 1929. George Padmore Collection, UWI-St. Augustine, (GPC) Box 1, Folder 2.

Henri Jean-Louis of Guadeloupe, meanwhile, who later worked as a judge in Brazzaville, believed that he belonged to a lineage of royalty from Timbuktu. More specifically, he claimed to be the direct descendant of a man named Mohammed Baghio'o, who was the "Pasha Cheikh" of Timbuktu in the fifteenth century. According to Jean-Louis, slave traders kidnapped descendants of this Baghio'o and sold them away to the Caribbean.⁷⁰ In a later memoir, Jean-Louis recalled his appointment to Brazzaville in 1923 as "one of my most cherished dreams" and "a good opportunity to return to the *pays* of the ancestors."⁷¹ Noting that the "emotion was still strong," he vividly described his feelings about travelling to Africa for the first time:

The blood coursing through my veins push[ed] me in search of a distant fatherland...beyond the great blue spaces, a continent call[ed] me... I had desired it since childhood, and there I was approaching it, cautiously, with the obscure premonition of mysterious depths... That trip uncovered an echo that rose inside of me, it resounded throughout my body and called all my being to exaltation...My heart beat as strongly as it had at age 20.⁷²

Jean-Louis thus felt a deep connection with Africa, both in his lineage and in his "blood," an "echo" that was quieted but never silenced by the Middle Passage and centuries of slavery. Yet to Jean-Louis, as for others in the Caribbean, Africa was also the "mysterious" land of ancestors, as powerful a symbol or idea as a reality. Above all, Jean-Louis' attraction to applying for a position in his "distant fatherland" was informed both by family history and by colonial ideas about the "dark continent."

⁷⁰ On Jean-Louis, see his novelized memoir, compiled and written by his son Victor Jean-Louis and based on Henri Jean-Louis' earlier drafts: Jean-Louis Baghio'o, *Le Colibri Blanc: Mémoires à deux voix* (Paris: Éditions Caribéennes, 1980), 24. For more on Jean-Louis and his poetry, see Chapters 7 and 8.

⁷¹ Jean-Louis Baghio'o, *Le Colibri Blanc*, 13-14. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

⁷² Jean-Louis Baghio'o, *Le Colibri Blanc*, 23, 40, 14. "*Le sang qui court nuit et jour à travers mes veines, me pousse à me lancer à la recherche d'une lointaine patrie... par-delà les grands espaces bleus, un continent m'appelle... je le désirais depuis l'enfance, et voilà que j'en approche, à pas comptés, avec l'obscur pressentiment de profondeurs mystérieuses... Ce voyage découvre comme un écho qui se lève en moi, il retentit dans ma chair et appelle tout mon être à l'exaltation... Voici que mon cœur battait aussi fort qu'à vingt ans.*"

As the preceding examples demonstrate, colonial ideologies, the presence of Africans, and the legacies of African cultures shaped perceptions of Africa in the Caribbean. These intellectual influences led many to conceptualize “Africa” as both a mysterious, primitive place in need of redemption and as a “land of ancestors.” In a 1981 essay, Édouard Glissant aptly summarized this mixture of diasporic and colonialist ideas: “While the Caribbean masses danced the *laghia*, so obviously inherited from the Africans, Caribbean judges sentenced in Africa those whom they were helping to colonize.”⁷³ Brought together, these romantic, exotic, and negative ideas ultimately attracted many Caribbean people to join the British and French administrations in Africa. Much like John Barbour-James, they sought both to “return” to the ancestral homeland and to “redeem” the continent through colonialism.

This combination of diasporic and colonialist ideas about Africa and Africans corresponded with theories about the providential design of the transatlantic slave trade. In the early-nineteenth century, a number of anti-slavery advocates in the northern United States began suggesting that God had pre-ordained the slave trade so that African slaves and their descendants could learn under a superior race and then one day “redeem” Africa by returning to the continent to “civilize” and Christianize Africans. Such thinking drove emigration initiatives such as the American Colonization Society and other efforts to resettle freed slaves in Africa. Notions of providential design also took hold among some freed slaves and their descendants. In the United States, members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church embraced this idea, as did a number of prominent nineteenth-century thinkers, including Alexander Crummell and Martin Delany.

⁷³ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 6.

The influence of providential design is also apparent in the writings of earlier thinkers such as Phillis Wheatley.⁷⁴

In the Caribbean, the most vocal exponent of providential design was Edward Wilmot Blyden of St. Thomas. One of the foremost intellectuals of the late-nineteenth century, Blyden advocated for the mass emigration of African-descended peoples in the Americas to Africa, specifically to Liberia. In an 1862 essay titled, “The Call of Providence to Descendants of Africa in America,” he declared: “We call it, then, a providential interposition, that while the owners of the soil have been abroad, passing through the fearful ordeal of a most grinding oppression, the land, through entirely unprotected, has lain uninvaded. We regard it as a providential call to Africans every where to ‘go up and possess the land.’”⁷⁵ Blyden himself migrated to West Africa, where he resided mainly in Liberia, though he also worked for the British administration in Freetown as the “Director of Mohammedan Education” from 1901 until 1906.⁷⁶

There is only scant evidence of Blyden directly influencing Caribbean administrators who worked in Africa,⁷⁷ but notions of providential design were unquestionably part of the

⁷⁴ For more on providential design, see Vinson, *The Americans Are Coming!*, especially Chapter 1; Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*; West, Martin, and Wilkins, eds., *From Toussaint to Tupac*; Yekutiel Gershoni, *Africans on African-Americans: The Creation and Uses of an African-American Myth* (London: Macmillan, 1997), Chapter 3; Theophus H. Smith, *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and St. Clair Drake, *The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion* (Atlanta: Third World Press, 1970).

⁷⁵ Edward Wilmot Blyden, “The Call of Providence to Descendants of Africa in America,” (1862), quoted in John Cullen Gruesser, *Black on Black: Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 8-9. The phrase “Go up and possess the land” comes from the Bible, Numbers 13 and Deuteronomy 1.

⁷⁶ Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 May 1901, NAUK, CO 267/458 and Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 June 1906, NAUK, CO 267/485.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 4 for the example of Ivanhoe Fitzherbert Maye of Jamaica, who worked in Nigeria and used language much like that of Blyden, J. J. Froude, and Booker T. Washington. Similarly, Henri Jean-Louis of Guadeloupe, who worked in Congo, mentioned Blyden in some of his poetry. One undated fragment (likely from the late 1950s), mentions Blyden alongside Booker T. Washington and the West Indian section of the UNIA. Archives Départementales de la Martinique (ADM), Fonds Henri Jean-Louis (FJL), Box 3, Folder E.

intellectual climate in the Caribbean. Indeed, this influence is even apparent in the applications of Caribbean administrators, such as in John Barbour-James' letter, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Lebert Josiah Veitch of Jamaica expressed a similar combination of romantic and colonialist ideas about Africa and Africans. When the British Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed Veitch to a teaching position in Nigeria in December 1904, Veitch wrote back to formally express his gratitude: "Permit me most respectfully to approach you, humbly thanking you for the great privilege you have bestowed upon us whereby we proceed to Nigeria to assist in the development of that distant portion of His Gracious Majesty's Empire. We go Sir, God helping us, fully determined to make good accounts of ourselves."⁷⁸ Veitch's language, especially his commitment to service and "development," his glowing descriptions of the British Empire, and his characterization of Nigeria as a "distant portion" of the empire, seemed to exemplify the ideals of a Rudyard Kipling poem, while also reflecting Veitch's personal desire to civilize Africans with divine assistance.

People in the British and French Caribbean were motivated to take up civil service appointments in Africa for a range of economic and ideological factors. They sought financial security and upward mobility; they were eager to express their devotion to the British and French empires; and they sought to "return" to the ancestral homeland to civilize "backwards" Africans. Yet British and French colonial officials also played a significant role in bringing people from the Caribbean to work in West and Central Africa.

⁷⁸ L. J. Veitch to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8 December 1904, NAUK, CO 137/642.

EUROPEAN IMPERATIVES

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Britain and France were violently consolidating their occupations of territory in Africa and were in need of administrators to run their new colonies. Hiring more Europeans was not always a viable option, however, because they required high salaries, regular vacation leave, pensions, and other benefits. They also often struggled with adjusting to tropical climates and were hesitant to work in sub-Saharan Africa, especially prior to World War I. European officials thus increasingly turned to Africans to fill positions as low-level clerks, interpreters, and labourers.⁷⁹ In some cases, they even transported Africans around the continent from one colony to another.⁸⁰ The British and French were reluctant to promote Africans to more senior positions, because they considered Africans either incapable or too unfamiliar with administrative infrastructure. As a result, Europeans remained in all senior and supervisory roles. Then, in the late-nineteenth century, some colonial officials proposed bringing Caribbean administrators to Africa.⁸¹ Their reasoning derived from a number of economic and ideological factors.

To begin with, many Europeans believed that because of their African ancestry and Europeanized education, Caribbeans were uniquely qualified to engage with “natives” and help “civilize” Africans. Some officials even subscribed to notions of providential design—as

⁷⁹ There is now a substantial literature on Africans who worked for European colonial administrations. See, for example, Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily L. Osborn, Richard L. Roberts, eds., *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); and Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon: Of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁸⁰ Bruce Whitehouse has written about the experiences of *laptots* and other West Africans working in Central Africa on behalf of the French. See Whitehouse, *Migrants and Strangers in an African City: Exile, Dignity, Belonging* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), especially Chapter 1.

⁸¹ There was a precedent for this in Sierra Leone, where the administration sporadically hired West Indians as civil servants between the 1830s and 1860s. See Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa*. See also Abioseh Nicol, “West Indians in Africa,” *Sierra Leone Studies*, no. 13 (June 1960): 14-23.

described earlier—and believed that the descendants of African slaves were destined to one day “redeem” Africa. In late 1894, for instance, Ernest Ingham, the Anglican Bishop of Sierra Leone, proposed a recruitment trip to the Caribbean. Ingham, who was born in Bermuda to a white, aristocratic family, believed that Caribbeans were particularly well suited for the colonization of Africa. The governor of Sierra Leone, Frederic Cardew, heartily endorsed Ingham’s proposal:

The object for which the Bishop proposes to visit the West Indies has much to commend it as apart from its religious aspect I believe the repatriation of West Indian Africans in the Protectorate even in the small numbers which may be expected under the Bishop’s scheme will have a beneficial and civilizing effect on the aboriginal natives and that better results may be expected from their efforts than from those of a like number of Sierra Leone natives, the mass of whom it appears to me, if I may judge from the tone of the public press, have not that sympathy for their fellows in the interior which is required for civilizing as well as christianizing work and, I am inclined to think, regard them rather with contempt.⁸²

Cardew—and other colonial officials—evidently believed that African-descended Caribbean people would be more effective colonizers than both Africans and Europeans.⁸³

The following June, Ingham arrived in the Caribbean and travelled to Barbados, Antigua, Jamaica, and Bermuda. When he returned to Sierra Leone later that year, he published a brief pamphlet summarizing his experiences.⁸⁴ Declaring the journey a success, Ingham claimed to have found many people eager to migrate to West Africa and noted that with their “unique educational advantages,” West Indians could turn Africa into “a nursery and seed-plot.” Above all, however, the pamphlet revealed Ingham’s earnest belief in providential design:

If there is anything whatever in the workings of the Divine Providence that once permitted the children of Israel to increase and learn many arts in the bondage of Egypt for use in their own Promised Land, surely we may read a very clear Providence also in the manner in which, after generations of bondage in the West Indies, these Africans are now in a position of comfort, knowledge, and independence that, but for this bondage, never could have been theirs. The

⁸² Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 December 1894, NAUK, CO 267/413.

⁸³ This positive view of West Indians and their unique qualifications to civilize Africans was not unlike the “experiment” of importing “Mahommedan East Indians” to work in Northern Nigeria. According to Archibald Cooper, the General Manager of the Nigerian Railway, Africans from southern Nigeria “had difficulty” with the “Mahommedan Haussa population” in Northern Nigeria, but “there would not be the same antagonism to Mahommedan East Indians.” Cooper to Director of Railways and Works, 2 December 1913, NAUK, CO 583/10.

⁸⁴ “Bishop Ingham’s Mission to the West Indies,” *The Lagos Weekly Record*, 2 November 1895, 4-5.

opening up of their own land as the coming continent very nearly coincides with the period of their emancipation. Can this be accidental? Is God's hand not in it? We verily believe that it is, and that He will be with every effort to draw the attention of the best of these people to their own fatherland; that He will in His own time and way draw many over there to share in its uplifting, and that by these and other means some will actually be led to repatriate themselves.

Ingham also urged the British to begin recruiting “Negro evangelists and teachers” and claimed that “these are the people who will understand Equitorial [sic] Africa and Africans better than the Anglo Saxon.” For Ingham, Cardew, and others in the British administration, West Indians were uniquely qualified—if not destined—to help “civilize” and “redeem” Africans.⁸⁵ Ingham’s tour of the Caribbean did not lead to widespread “repatriation,” but his brand of thinking became increasingly common.

There is comparatively less on providential design in the Francophone context, though the ideas were nonetheless prevalent. Some nineteenth-century French intellectuals, for instance, such as Jacques-François Roger, argued that the slave trade had exposed Africans to “Western” skills and knowledge and that they should return to Africa to apply what they had learned and support the “regeneration” of the continent.⁸⁶ Among colonial officials in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries such attitudes were no less apparent. During this time, French officials turned increasingly to the Caribbean to fill recruitment gaps.⁸⁷ They saw Caribbean people as more “French” than Africans because of their longer history with France, and thus considered

⁸⁵ One official in London, for example, declared that “if a regular supply of skilled labour could be obtained from the West Indies for the West Africa railways, the difficulties and the expense of railway administration in West Africa would be greatly reduced... West Indians would be useful principally in training natives. The European subordinates cannot, apparently, be got to take sufficient interest in this.” Note in file on West Indian Railway staff in the Gold Coast, 6 February 1907, NAUK, CO 96/455.

⁸⁶ François Manchuelle calls Roger’s novel *Kéléodor* “one of the best examples in a Francophone text of...the theory of ‘providential design.’” Manchuelle, “The ‘Regeneration of Africa’” An Important and Ambiguous Concept in the 18th and 19th Century French Thinking about Africa,” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 36, 144 (1996): 583. Manchuelle also argues that the notion of “regeneration” was crucial in galvanizing support for the creation of French colonies in Africa.

⁸⁷ Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 94-95.

them as more desirable candidates to work as administrators. French officials also considered black Caribbeans well suited to working in Africa because of their ancestry. Much like their British counterparts, French officials expressed regard for the affinity between Caribbeans and Africans. In reports and annual evaluations, they made frequent allusions to the unique capabilities of Caribbean administrators for “understanding the native.”⁸⁸

Ideas about climate and illness also played a significant role in motivating Europeans to bring Caribbean administrators to Africa. British and French officials generally considered African colonies to be unhealthy places, but believed that Caribbean people, familiar with tropical climates, would be more resistant than Europeans to illnesses in Africa. In 1912, for example, the British secretary of state for the colonies declared the “absence of any reason for believing that the climate of West Africa is seriously prejudicial to persons of negro descent from other tropical climates.”⁸⁹ A September 1912 Colonial Office file is particularly representative of this kind of thinking: one official declared: “I don’t remember any case of a West Indian invalided from West Africa as a result of tropical disease.” Another agreed, stating: “There is no reason to suppose that a negro from the West Indies will not enjoy the same health in West Africa as a native of the Coast, so far as records go.” Yet he also warned that “mulattoes and others with a lesser admixture of black blood have suffered like Europeans.”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ In 1932, for example, the Governor General of Senegal praised Louis Placide Blacher of Martinique for his “knowledge of the native.” Several years later, the Governor General of French Equatorial Africa praised Clément Antoine Edwige of Guadeloupe for his “deep knowledge of natives.” Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer, (ANOM), Blacher Personnel File, EE/ii/3020; Edwige Personnel File, EE/ii/4675; Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 108-109. Another example from Hélénon’s book comes from 1912 in Madagascar, when French officials praised Marie Jean Fernand Paul Monroux for his “keen comprehension of the mentality of the population.” Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 108-109; ANOM, Monroux Personnel File, EE/ii/1145.

⁸⁹ Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of the Gold Coast, 12 November 1912, Public Records and Archives Administration, Accra, Ghana, (PRAAD), ADM 1/1/102. Unless otherwise indicated, PRAAD refers to the Accra Branch.

⁹⁰ Note in file on West Indian Railway staff in the Gold Coast, 23 September 1912, NAUK, CO 96/521. British officials become so preoccupied with this question that the secretary of state for the colonies launched an enquiry on

Similar attitudes prevailed among French officials. To cite just one example, in 1899, shortly after William Beaudu of Martinique began working as a judge in Dakar, he caught yellow fever and travelled to France to recuperate. Later that year, the governor of Senegal criticized Beaudu for leaving West Africa, declaring that Beaudu was immune to yellow fever because of “his origin” and thus should have stayed in the colony to serve the French government.⁹¹ This thinking was, of course, completely wrong-headed, as evidenced by the high numbers of British and French Caribbean administrators who became ill in Africa and had to return to Europe or the Caribbean.⁹² Nonetheless, these examples reveal how racist nineteenth-century ideas about bloodlines, climate, and illness informed the decision to recruit Caribbean people to work in Africa.

The third reason the British and French turned to recruitment in the Caribbean was cost. European officials believed that unlike Africans, Caribbean administrators could provide the same quality of work as Europeans, but could be paid much lower salaries than Europeans. In May 1900, for example, the governor of Sierra Leone complained to the Colonial Office in London that the European staff of the Sierra Leone railway were “most expensive not only on account of the frequent loss of their services through sickness and sometimes death, but also the

“the extent to which... West Indian subordinates of African extraction... [were] liable to suffer from tropical diseases as compared with Europeans.” Several months later, Dr. C. B. Hunter, the Senior Medical Officer in Accra, conducted a “statistical comparison between the health of European and that of West Indian Officials during the years 1903 to 1912.” Hunter warned about the “impossibility” of making a “true health comparison of the white and the black races living in the tropics,” but also indicated that “West Indians of African extraction do not enjoy better health in the Gold Coast than European Officials.” Hunter’s conclusion, however, does not appear to have influenced any changes in British policy. Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of the Gold Coast, 20 May 1913, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/206; Acting Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 November 1913, NAUK, CO 96/538; Dr. C. B. Hunter to Principal Medical Officer, 18 November 1913, NAUK, CO 96/538.

⁹¹ Notes of the Governor of Senegal, 11 November 1900, ANOM, William Beaudu Personnel File, EE/ii/2294/5. See also Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 79-84.

⁹² Hélénon points out that some Caribbean administrators actually used this stereotype to their advantage to obtain appointments. Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 84.

cost of their passages to and from England and the high rate of salaries which have to be paid to them.”⁹³ The governor, Frederic Cardew rejected the idea of replacing Europeans with Africans because in his opinion, it would take far too long to train “natives.”⁹⁴ Instead, Cardew proposed hiring people from the Caribbean. “I understand,” Cardew wrote, “that on the railways in the West Indies, such as in Trinidad and Jamaica, all the driving and platelaying is done by West Indian Negroes, and if such is the case I strongly recommend as an experimental measure that a West Indian driver and platelayer be engaged for service in the Sierra Leone Government Railway as soon as practicable.”⁹⁵

The Gold Coast government followed a similar logic when they began hiring West Indian police superintendents and prison guards. The first West Indian police superintendent, Walter Sandiford, arrived in 1897. The following year, Governor Frederick Hodgson wrote to the Colonial Office explaining that it would be advantageous “if other men *of the same stamp* [could] be found ready to come to the Gold Coast on similar terms.”⁹⁶ Hodgson also pointed out that this would reduce the number of European employees, and with that, reduce the number of European salaries. Several years later, Matthew Nathan, the new governor of the Gold Coast,

⁹³ Governor Cardew to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 May 1900, NAUK, CO 267/453.

⁹⁴ The next governor of Sierra Leone, Charles King-Harman, had a similar attitude. In October 1901, he explained to the Colonial Office that “a native would require from 10 to 15 years training before he could be trusted with an engine.” King-Harman also wrote that he would “continue to give attention to the training of Sierra Leone natives in the Railway Department; but [was] bound to recognize that such training must be gradual and slow and that it should not under any considerations be hurried.” King-Harman to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 October 1901, NAUK, CO 267/459.

⁹⁵ Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 May 1900, NAUK, CO 267/453. In October 1902, Reginald Best and Joseph Daly of British Guiana became the first two West Indian railway workers in Sierra Leone. See *Sierra Leone Blue Book 1903*, NAUK, CO 272/80. For a more detailed analysis of the West Indian presence on the railways of Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria, see Chapter 4.

⁹⁶ Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 April 1898, NAUK, CO 96/314. My emphasis.

advocated further and wider recruitment of West Indian police officers.⁹⁷ By 1910, the Gold Coast was also recruiting West Indians to work as agricultural instructors and sanitary inspectors. According to the governor, John Rodger, it was “impossible” to find or train adequate sanitary inspectors in West Africa.⁹⁸ A year later, when David McNeil-Stewart and Cunliffe Hoyte arrived in the Gold Coast, the administration paid them a little over half the rate of European sanitary inspectors.⁹⁹ As one British official put it, rather succinctly: “These West Indian people do good work for small pay.”¹⁰⁰

Administrators from the French Caribbean were paid more equitably than their counterparts in British colonies, in large part due to the “universalist” logic of the French Third Republic. Yet French colonial officials nonetheless found ways to cut costs with Caribbean administrators. For example, the French regularly withheld promotions for Caribbean administrators, and so their career advancements typically lagged behind less qualified Europeans. In this way, the French were able to keep experienced Caribbean officials in low-salary positions. Unlike the British, the French did not institutionalize lower salaries for Caribbean administrators, but the pattern of thinking was no different. Much like ideas about Caribbean people being uniquely suited to “civilize” Africans and being resistant to tropical illnesses, this thinking was informed by pseudo-scientific ideologies about race and civilization.

⁹⁷ “Scheme for the Reorganization of the Gold Coast Police,” in the Gold Coast Annual Report, 1917-1918, NAUK, CO 98/29. This document provides an overview of the Gold Coast Police Force, including the involvement of West Indians.

⁹⁸ Rodger claimed that the proper training took too long and so he asked that the Colonial Office “obtain...Sanitary Inspectors from the West Indies.” Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 October 1909, National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago (NATT), CSO 7505/1909.

⁹⁹ The Gold Coast government paid McNeil-Stewart and Hoyte £160 per annum, while paying European sanitary inspectors between £250 and £310 per annum. Gold Coast Blue Book 1911, NAUK, CO 100/61. Similar thinking informed the Gold Coast Agriculture Department’s 1908 recruitment of Elias Buckmire of Grenada and Mark Alexis of Trinidad.

¹⁰⁰ Note in Colonial Office File on a gratuity for Mark Alexis of Trinidad, NAUK, CO 96/573.

European colonial officials turned to the Caribbean to fill the ranks of colonial administrators in Africa for three main reasons. They believed that Caribbean administrators were uniquely qualified—if not destined—to work in Africa because of their African ancestry and colonial educations; they believed that Caribbean administrators were more resistant than Europeans to tropical illnesses; and finally, they believed that Caribbean administrators could provide a “European” level of work without the burden of a “European” level salary.

CONCLUSION

People from the Caribbean joined the British and French administrations in Africa for a number of economic and ideological reasons. Dire economic circumstances in the Caribbean motivated people to migrate in search of employment and financial security, while colonial education and imperial culture led people to seek ways of articulating middle class British and French identities. Caribbean administrators were also attracted by the idea of working in Africa—they had romantic, exotic, and colonial notions of Africa and Africans. Europeans, meanwhile, believed Caribbean administrators were destined, or at least uniquely qualified, to participate in the “civilizing” mission. British and French officials also thought that Caribbean administrators would be more resistant to tropical diseases in Africa than Europeans and could provide “European”-level services at a lower cost.

Between 1880 and 1940, more than 500 people from the Caribbean migrated to Africa to join the British and French administrations. Yet their expectations for life in African colonies were often misguided. Firmly stuck between their African pasts and colonial aspirations, how would Caribbean administrators respond to the realities of life in African colonies? How would they reckon with the inconsistencies and contradictions of their positions as colonized

colonizers? And how would they make sense of their fraught relationships with Africans and Europeans as they navigated the incongruencies of race, nation, and empire?

2

BETWEEN RACE, NATION, AND EMPIRE

The native of the West Indies occupie[s] an intermediate position between the European and the native of West Africa.

LEWIS HARCOURT, 1914¹

In late January 1910, a young man from Martinique named René Maran arrived in Oubangui-Chari, a colony in the new French Equatorial Africa Federation.² Maran had been travelling for several weeks—first south from France to Congo, and then slowly up the Congo and Oubangui rivers to Bangui, the small capital of Oubangui-Chari.³ After spending several days settling into his new surroundings, Maran wrote a letter to a friend back in France and reflected on his arrival in Central Africa: “With a French heart, I feel that I am in the land of my ancestors, ancestors that I disapprove of because I do not share their primitive mentality or their tastes, but they are nonetheless my ancestors.”⁴

Maran, with his “French heart,” was uncertain about his relationships with Africans. The racialized animosity he experienced at the hands of white Europeans, however, only fomented his feelings of ambiguity. For instance, after the administration appointed Maran Police

¹ Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to Governor of the Gold Coast, 20 January 1914, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/211.

² Maran was born in Martinique but lived in France from the age of six. As for his exact birthplace, Léon-Gontran Damas contends that Maran was actually born on a boat between Cayenne and Fort-de-France. French maritime law ruled his official birthplace as Fort-de-France. Chidi Ikonné, *Links and Bridges: A Comparative Study of the Writings of the New Negro and Negritude Movements* (Ibadan: University Press PLC, 2005), 258. Maran, for his part, claimed: “I was born in Fort-de-France...but that I was born in one place or another, for me, has only a relative importance, the essential is to live and try to leave a work after oneself.” Maran to Albert Maurice, quoted in *Hommage à René Maran* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1965), 210.

³ Maran actually missed the boat that was supposed to take him from Brazzaville to Bangui, so he had to wait in Brazzaville for two weeks until the next boat left. While waiting, he stayed with a friend from Bordeaux, Philibert, and they “talked about women all day.” Maran to Paul Culine, 13 January 1910, quoted in *Hommage*, 96-7.

⁴ Maran to Léon Bocquet, 1 February 1910, quoted in Bocquet’s “Préface” to Maran’s *Le Petit Roi de Chimérie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1924), 15.

Commissioner of Bangui in September 1910, he had to settle a dispute between a Portuguese merchant named Sampayo and one of his “boys” who claimed that he had not been paid. When Maran called Sampayo to the police station and demanded that he pay what was due, the merchant became indignant and claimed that Maran was taking the African man’s side because of “atavism” and that it was “hardly a surprise” that Maran was “protecting the natives” because he himself was “only half-civilized.”⁵ Maran submitted a report complaining about Sampayo’s insults, but nothing came of it.⁶

The reality of life in Africa was very different from what Maran had expected. As a “civilized” black man from the Caribbean, he felt uneasy with Africans, while most Africans wanted little to do with him because he was entrenched in the French administration. At the same time, white Europeans such as Sampayo typically looked down on Maran and considered him “half-civilized.” Thus, in addition to adjusting to a new job, a new place, and new languages and cultures, Maran had to adjust to the complex dynamics of being a Caribbean administrator in Africa. Maran’s friend Paul Tuffrau later described the difficulties of this predicament: “Despite his completely European culture and his loyalty to the service, he was, in the eyes of most colonialists, nothing but a *sale nègre*, and in the eyes of the natives, a turncoat. The two sides rejected him.”⁷

⁵ Report sent by Maran to Chef de la Circonscription, 22 December 1910, and Report sent by Chef de la Circonscription to Lieutenant-Gouverneur, 22 December 1910, ANOM, FP/8APOM/4. Maran’s friend André Fraisse also related this incident in *Hommage à René Maran*, 272-3.

⁶ The head of Maran’s *circonscription* forwarded Maran’s complaints to the Lieutenant-Governor of Oubangui-Chari but cautioned against redressing Sampayo, explaining that their “authority with regard to foreigners would be too greatly reduced.” Report of Chef de la Circonscription to the Lieutenant-Governor, 22 December 1910, ANOM, FP/8APOM/4. “*Notre autorité auprès des étrangers en serait trop diminuée autrement.*”

⁷ Paul Tuffrau, “Hommage,” *Hommage à René Maran*, 256.

Maran's experience was hardly unique. Most Caribbean administrators who worked in West and Central Africa faced similar circumstances. Like Maran, they grew up in colonial societies, saw themselves as "British" and "French," and felt that they were part of the British and French empires. They also tended to look down on Africans, even as they were attracted by the notion of an African "homeland." Once in Africa, however, these ideas collided with the racial, cultural, and hierarchical dynamics of African colonies. Africans typically viewed Caribbean administrators as "corrupted," "Europeanized," or as descendants of slaves, and derided their "mixed blood." European officials, meanwhile, did not consider Caribbean administrators as "British" or "French" equals, and instead particularized them as "West Indians" and "*Antillais*," or lumped them together with Africans as "Negros," "Blacks," "*Nègres*," "natives," and "*indigènes*."⁸ Isolated on two fronts, Caribbean administrators moved unevenly between supposedly fixed designations of race, nation, and empire with feelings of ambiguity and alienation.

In this chapter, I outline the general experiences of Caribbean administrators in Africa, paying particular attention to their fraught relationships with Africans and Europeans and emphasizing the differences between expectations and the reality of life in African colonies. The chapter covers wide spans of time and space, from Freetown in the 1890s, to Brazzaville in the 1910s, to Bamako in the 1930s. Nevertheless, it hews to a central question throughout: In their interactions with Africans and Europeans, how did Caribbean administrators grapple with the

⁸ In British colonies, officials sometimes made distinctions between "West Indian" and "African" employees based on administrative regulations. When the British hired Caribbean people locally—that is, in Africa—they designated them as "Native" or "African" staff. If the British hired them directly from the Caribbean, they were "West Indians." Officials did not follow this rule with any regularity, however. In fact, they sometimes classified West Indians as "European" officers. This created major tensions because white administrators did not want to be on the same pay grade as West Indians. For more on these regulations, see Ray, *Crossing the Color Line*, Chapter 2.

incongruencies of race, nation, and empire?⁹ The narrative coheres around this question in two main sections and reveals the similarities in the diverse experiences of Caribbean administrators in Africa. The first half of the chapter examines the roles of Caribbean administrators in the violent consolidations of colonial power and then looks more generally at their contentious relationships with Africans. The second half of the chapter analyzes their interactions with the British and French colonial administrations. Subsequent chapters will analyze certain aspects of these relationships in greater detail, particularly how these factors influenced the intellectual trajectories of Caribbean administrators. The purpose of this chapter, however, is to describe and explain the middle positions of Caribbean administrators in African colonies as they began navigating where they did and did not belong.

OCCUPATIONS AND AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN TENSIONS

Caribbean administrators started arriving in West and Central Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, a time when British and French military forces were violently establishing their colonial occupations. In the French colonies of Central Africa, for instance, troops were aggressively “pacifying” rebellions while concessionary companies recruited labour for the extraction of rubber and other natural resources. In Nigeria, British armies moved north in 1902 to conquer the Sokoto Caliphate and established the Northern Nigeria Protectorate. Further west, in the Gold Coast, the brutal Anglo-Asante Wars of the nineteenth century came to an end, leaving the region divided and unsettled. In Sierra Leone, thousands were dead after the 1898

⁹ There is much recent work on these topics in Africanist historiography. See, for example, Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) and James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012). For an example from the Caribbean context, see Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

Hut Tax War. And in the 1890s in today's Guinée and Mali, the French military defeated the armies and empires of Samory Touré and Ahmadou Sekou Tall. The French also asserted their power by creating the Dakar-based French West Africa Federation in 1895. In short, wherever Caribbean administrators arrived in West and Central Africa, they were arriving in places suffused in violence. This context formed the backdrop for their initial impressions, and the grim realities highlight the discrepancies between the idyllic diasporic "homeland" many Caribbean administrators expected and the brutalities that they encountered. In fact, some Caribbean administrators even participated in these violent occupations.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, hundreds of soldiers from the British Caribbean came to West Africa and participated in the suppression of resistance movements.¹⁰ The French military also recruited soldiers from the Caribbean to participate in colonial campaigns, though the practice was more common among the British. For example, Camille Mortenol and Norbert Célestin Joseph Rallion, both of Guadeloupe, served in French military expeditions in West and Central Africa.¹¹ When the British and French began recruiting Caribbean administrators to work in African colonies, they drew on this precedent.

¹⁰ When the British disbanded the West India regiments, some of the soldiers remained in West Africa and joined the colonial administrations. Based on the many examples in the press, these West Indian soldiers were highly unpopular. For an overview of the West India regiments in West Africa, see Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The Story of the West India Regiments of the British Army* (Hertfordshire: Hansib Publications, Ltd., 1997). See also Philip Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For a first-hand account, see Major A. B. Ellis, *The History of the First West India Regiment* (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1885). A particularly noteworthy example of a West Indian soldier is that of W. E. Inniss of Barbados, who fought in Sierra Leone and later worked as a blacksmith and jailer in the colony. Inniss was involved in a number of "punitive expeditions to the Hinterland" of Sierra Leone. In 1880, he helped make roads and bridges during a raid at Forodugu. In 1887, he was wounded by a gunshot during the capture of Rohan while "making a bridge for the military column to pass." And in 1888, he helped defend the stations at Salija, Lavanah, Sulymah and Manoh against attacks led by Mackiah. Inniss later wrote proudly that he and "a small force of fifty Policemen" successfully defended themselves against the "notorious warrior" and his "warboys." "Death of Mr. W. E. Inniss," *The Sierra Leone Guardian*, 12 February 1915, 6; W. E. Inniss to Governor of Sierra Leone, 1 November 1892, NAUK, CO 267/415; Inniss to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies 20 June 1894, NAUK, CO 267/415; Inniss to Governor of Sierra Leone, 1 November 1892, NAUK, CO 267/415.

¹¹ Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 3-4. See also Oruno Lara's biography of Mortenol, *Le commandant Mortenol: Un officier guadeloupéen dans la Royale* (Epinay: Centre de Recherches Caraïbes-Amériques, 1985).

In the Gold Coast, for example, the British administration explicitly tried to take advantage of African-Caribbean acrimony by bringing West Indians into the Gold Coast police force. In 1901, the governor of the colony explained that “the intelligent native” considered it a “greater disgrace” for a family member to join the police force than to be in jail. The governor thus suggested a “reorganization of the force” that would include hiring “Sergeants from the West Indies.”¹² The Gold Coast Prisons Department took a similar approach. In 1910, Governor John Rodger claimed that West Indian gaolers were “preferable” to Africans who “did not exercise proper control over their prisoners.”¹³ The head of the Prisons Department agreed, contending that West Indians would “maintain more effective discipline” than “native” guards.¹⁴ And so, the following year, the Gold Coast administration began seconding prison guards from the Caribbean. This did not always result, however, in the “proper control” of prisoners. For example, not long after Theophilus Smith of Demerara began working at the Cape Coast prison in April 1911, he was “attacked by twelve prisoners.” According to Smith, the prisoners “trampled, kicked, and beat him.” The prisoners, meanwhile, claimed that they had been “egged on” to assault Smith by several of the African warders who worked under Smith and who considered him to be “too strict a disciplinarian.” After this beating, Smith had “severe pains in the chest, back, and head.” In April 1912, the government invalided him back to British Guiana.¹⁵ The British administration hired West Indians as police officers and prison guards precisely because they were *not* African. In other words, European officials believed that

¹² Matthew Nathan to the Secretary of State, 1901, quoted in “History Sketch of the Gold Coast Civil Police,” Gold Coast Annual Report, 1917-1918, NAUK, CO 98/29.

¹³ Governor Rodger quoted in Colonial Office correspondence, 8 July 1912, NAUK, CO 96/519. This correspondence cites a 1910 Rodger despatch (no. 18470 1910) that was destroyed.

¹⁴ Gold Coast Annual Report 1911, NAUK, CO 98/20.

¹⁵ *The Demerara Daily Chronicle*, 26 April 1912, quoted in *The Gold Coast Leader*, 15 June 1912, 7.

Caribbean people were not only uniquely qualified to “civilize” Africans, but also more likely to make arrests and more effectively impose punishments and discipline. In the case of Smith, this strategy proved to be correct, but it also further entrenched the discord between Africans and West Indians.

In French colonies, Caribbean administrators were no less involved in violence. In 1909, when Félix Eboué first arrived in Oubangui-Chari, his instructions were to “pacify” conflicts, maintain peace and order, and collect taxes.¹⁶ His approach to accomplishing these tasks was often brutal, and in 1914, his *circonscription*, or district, ranked second in Oubangui-Chari in the number of prison sentences given to Africans.¹⁷ In 1915, Eboué led a series of military campaigns against a Langbassi man named Amba.¹⁸ René Maran, meanwhile, who also worked in Oubangui-Chari, had responsibilities similar to Eboué. In a 1912 letter to his friend Manoel Gahisto, Maran wrote: “Soon I will be leaving on a tour. I will have 20 militia men with me and will be out for 15 days. The tour is directed against a Langouassi named Zagba, a resistant chief that I want to submit to reason.”¹⁹ In the same letter, Maran casually reported the collection of rubber in Grimari: “Yesterday five or six merchants came...and took the 8 tonnes of rubber brought here by the 66 chiefs in the subdivision.”²⁰ Maran’s offhand accounting of rubber production masked the coercion and violence exacted against those who extracted it. Similarly, in an August 1913 letter to his friend Léon Bocquet, Maran described his plan to “force the

¹⁶ Renauld, *Félix Eboué & Eugénie Tell*, 33.

¹⁷ “Rapport d’Ensemble sur la situation générale de l’Oubangui-Chari en 1914,” 48, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 44.

¹⁸ Weinstein, “Eboué and the Chiefs: Perceptions of Power in Early Oubangui-Chari,” *Journal of African History* 11, no. 1 (1970): 113-117.

¹⁹ Maran to Manoel Gahisto, 11 October 1912, quoted in *Hommage*, 113.

²⁰ Maran to Gahisto, 11 October 1912, quoted in *Hommage*, 111-112.

inhabitants [of a nearby village] to plant manioc, peanuts, and potatoes.”²¹ When things did not go according to Maran’s plans, he, like Eboué, relied on the *indigénat* to imprison Africans.²²

Maran’s most violent clashes with Africans occurred in 1917-1918. During this time, Maran accompanied the French doctor Eugène Jamot on an inoculation campaign against sleeping sickness in Kémo-Gribingui, a district in central Oubangui-Chari. At the end of November 1917, Maran, Jamot, and a group of African porters arrived in Kandjian, a Banda Ngao village. According to Doungouyolo, the chief of the village, Maran called everyone together and when two village headmen, Mayo and Gripendé, did not do obey these orders in the way Maran wanted, he began beating them. Gripendé fell to the ground and Maran then started kicking him. Another headman, Bandingouanzé, tried to explain himself, but Maran punched him and then continued hitting him “until he was tired.”²³ The inoculation campaign then proceeded north toward Fort-Crampel (present day Kaga-Bandoro). Doungouyolo appointed his brother Mongo to help supervise the porters accompanying Maran and Jamot. They passed through Dékoa and arrived in Fort-Crampel in March 1918. Upon arrival, a number of the men, including Mongo, complained that they were thirsty and headed to the Gribingui River to rest and recuperate. Maran, however, wanted to make an account of supplies. When the porters did not assemble as quickly as Maran wanted, he began beating a man named Oroumbia. Oroumbia later stated that Maran kicked him in the kidneys and left him with swollen eyes and a bloody

²¹ Maran to Léon Bocquet, August 1913, quoted in Bocquet, “Préface,” 53.

²² Dennis, “The René Maran Story,” 77; Bocquet, 53.

²³ Doungouyolo gave a declaration of these events to Jean Bonneveau, the head of the district, in Bangui on 9 June 1918. Jean Bonneveau, Chef de la Circonscription du Gribingui, to Lieutenant-Governor of Oubangui-Chari, 10 June 1918, ANOM, René Maran Personnel File, GGAEF/C//74/Maran.

nose.²⁴ Maran then started beating Mongo, leaving him with broken ribs and a swollen chest. According to Doungouyolo, when Mongo arrived back home he “slept for one month” and then died. In June 1918, Doungouyolo reported Mongo’s death to Jean Bonneveau, the head of the Gribingui district, and a series of witnesses including Mayo, Gripendé, Bandingouanzé, Oroumbia and others who were part of the expedition, corroborated the story.²⁵

A year later, in June 1919, the Tribunal in Bangui condemned Maran to a fine of 50 francs “*avec sursis*” for “committing violent and unlawful acts against the person named Mongo.”²⁶ Two months later, a *Commission d’enquête* confirmed the ruling. Maran then sent a letter to the head of the commission giving his version of events.²⁷ He admitted to resorting to violence and stated: “It is possible that I hit a native who responded to the name of Mongo.”²⁸ Yet he also claimed that the demands of the administration had created an “impossible” situation. The porters did not have adequate food or opportunities to rest and so many began to resent the work. Maran knew that if he did not keep the convoy running, his superiors would accuse him of “negligence.” He had asked for other men to help manage the nearly 600 porters, but French

²⁴ Testimony of Oroumbia to Jean Bonneveau and Michel Sodji (interpreter from Dahomey) in Fort-Crampel, 20 July 1918, ANOM, René Maran Personnel File, GGAEF/C//74/Maran.

²⁵ The other details about these incidents come from the testimonies of Mayo, Onandago, Yamengue, Yabanza, Oroumbia, Gripendé, Dalenguere, Gaouranga, Dori, Bissinzali, Yarissi, Badingouanzé, Coupé, Idja, Mendina, Gouvinda, Tingui, Yapende, and Niama. They gave their testimonies to Jean Bonneveau, head of the Gribingui *circonscription* and Michel Sodji, an interpreter, in Fort-Crampel between 20 and 29 July 1918. ANOM, Maran Personnel File, GGAEF/C//74/Maran.

²⁶ Extract of the minutes of the *Tribunal de 1ère Instance de Bangui, Oubangui-Chari, Afrique Equatoriale Française*, 26 June 1919. ANOM, René Maran Personnel File, GGAEF/C//74/Maran. “*commis des violences et des voies de fait sur la personne du nomme Mongo.*”

²⁷ Maran to the *Rapporteur de la Commission d’enquête*, 6 August 1919, ANOM, Maran Personnel File, GGAEF/C//74/Maran.

²⁸ “*Il est possible que j’ai frappé un indigène répondant au nom de Mongo.*” When Maran won the Prix Goncourt literary prize for his 1921 novel, *Batouala*, angry French observers unearthed the Mongo case and used it against him. More recently, scholars have had remarkably varied responses to this incident. For more, see Philip Janzen, “René Maran and the Mongo Case: Contested Meanings of Race, Nation, and Empire in Central Africa,” forthcoming.

officials did not give him any further support. According to Maran, he had “no other means available” and so resorted to “showing [his] strength.”²⁹ For Maran, the death of Mongo and the abuse of other porters were passing thoughts as he defended himself to his superiors. Among Caribbean administrators, violence was simply a banal reality necessary for colonial work.

Maran was hardly alone in committing individual acts of violence. In March 1936, a Martinique-born administrator in Mossendjo, Congo, named Raoul Saint-Yves raped and killed a 14-year-old girl named Youlou-Mantsie. After her death, Saint-Yves denied responsibility but offered the girl’s family 2,000 francs to keep quiet. The family refused to take the money and instead reported the incident to Saint-Yves’ superiors.³⁰ The French administration sentenced Saint-Yves to three months in prison and fined him 25 francs, despite the Minister of Colonies demanding that actions like those of Saint-Yves be “severely punished.” Eventually, the French also removed Saint-Yves from his position.³¹ In a similar case years earlier, a West Indian police officer in Sierra Leone named Alexander Dalewood was convicted to fifteen years imprisonment with hard labour for “having carnal knowledge” of a 4-year-old child in Waterloo, Sierra Leone.³²

Though Caribbean administrators participated in such episodes of outright violence, they most frequently perpetuated tensions with Africans because of their paternalistic attitudes about the supposed benefits of colonialism. John Barbour-James of British Guiana, for instance, who

²⁹ “*Je résolu de me montrer énergique.*”

³⁰ Governor General of AEF to Minister of Colonies, 2 May 1936, ANOM, 1AFFPOL/664. 2,000 francs was a considerable sum—at the time dowries in the region were valued around 300 francs.

³¹ Governor General of AEF to Minister of Colonies, 31 December 1936, ANOM, 1AFFPOL/664; letter from Minister of Colonies to Governor General of AEF, 3 June 1936, ANOM, 1AFFPOL/664. This story is also cited in Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 109-110.

³² “Law Report,” *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 3 December 1892, 2.

worked in the Gold Coast, saw the connection with European colonialism as vital for the future of Africans and African-descended peoples around the world. In January 1915, he outlined his motivation for writing an essay titled *The Burden of Empire and its Obligations*. He stated that he wanted to

place in the hands of the present and future generations of coloured people of African origin a concise record of the expressions of loyal and dutiful sentiments and appreciation which their forefathers cherished towards the British Nation, in order that they may realize and appreciate the privilege of their connection with the British Nation and thus treasure this possession at its correct value, ultimately being led to pursue in the footsteps of their ancestors.³³

Instead of looking back to idyllic “Africa” as a source of lineage, Barbour-James re-tooled the notion of ancestry by establishing a new baseline for “coloured people of African origin.” In his mind, “their ancestors” were no longer to be the Africans of ancient civilizations, “uncorrupted” by European colonization. Rather, the new baseline was to be those “people of African origin” who had been “loyal and dutiful” to the “British Nation” and who appreciated the “privilege” of this connection. In other words, Barbour-James saw no better path for Africans than embracing and assimilating British culture and serving the British Empire.

Jules Ninine of Guadeloupe, who worked in Cameroon, was also passionate about the essential role of colonialism in the lives of Africans. He earned a doctorate in law in Paris before entering the colonial service, and his dissertation detailed the significance of “work” for Africans. Near the end of the dissertation, Ninine underscored this point by favourably citing King Leopold II’s views on colonialism: “[Colonization] responds to an ideal of justice and humanity by bringing to the native populations, according to their degree of development,

³³ John Barbour-James, “An Essay on ‘The Burden of Empire and its Obligations,’” *The Gold Coast Nation*, 21 January 1915, 807.

personal safety and security, hygiene, well-being, and the moral and intellectual clarity destined to guide them towards a better future.”³⁴

René Maran, meanwhile, in a February 1915 letter, expressed his enthusiastic belief in the importance of French incursions in Central Africa: “This populace (*peuplades*), still mostly cannibalistic, would forget quickly. Without the cats, the mice would quickly return to their old erring ways. It would be miserable to have to restart what has already been done, and done well.”³⁵ Félix Eboué shared Maran’s views. In a notebook from 1927, he summarized what he believed was the purpose of colonialism: “Love, love in itself, leave it to Tolstoy. Man must live and life means blows. But, if we have the iodine to dress the wounds, we agree with our existence which is to live and to fight—all the rest is nonsense. That is all Colonization is—more Nietzsche than Tolstoy. It is necessary to know how to suffer. Only suffering permits organization.”³⁶ In a later letter to Maran, Eboué also wrote about the benefits of forced labour and the “amelioration” of those who were able to survive: “As many people may die as before in the work camps,” Eboué wrote in 1928, “but the survivors who return...are in better condition.”³⁷

Like Barbour-James and Ninine, Maran and Eboué both ardently believed in European colonialism and in the supposed benefits it would bring to Africans. They did not appear to consider how Africans interpreted or understood colonialism. Their views also indicate that

³⁴ Jules Ninine, *La Main-d’oeuvre indigène dans les colonies Africaines* (Paris: Jouve & Cie, 1932), 236. “*Elle répond à un idéal de justice et d’humanité en apportant aux populations, suivant les degrés de leur développement, la sécurité des personnes, l’hygiène, le bien être, les clartés intellectuelles et morales destinées à les guider vers un avenir meilleur.*”

³⁵ Letter from René Maran to Manoel Gahisto, 11 February 1915, quoted in *Hommage*, 134.

³⁶ Eboué notebook entry, December 1927, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 56.

³⁷ Félix Eboué to René Maran, 21 March 1928, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 116.

Caribbean administrators saw themselves as superior to Africans. Indeed, coupled with these positive views of colonialism was a fairly consistent effort among Caribbean administrators to distinguish themselves as *not* African, to mark themselves as distinct. Caribbean administrators espoused notions of superiority over Africans because of their Europeanized educations and their positions within the British and French empires. These attitudes were slow to change.

The letters of Caribbean administrators contain frequent derogatory descriptions of Africans as “the natives,” “the savages,” and “native colleagues.”³⁸ For example, in a 1920 letter to the governor of the Gold Coast, Mark Alexis, a Trinidad-born employee of the Gold Coast Agriculture Department, declared bluntly: “I am not a native.”³⁹ C. C. Brown of the Gold Coast Treasury made a similar distinction in a letter to the treasurer of the Gold Coast: “I am not a native of the West Coast of Africa, being a native of the island of Jamaica in the West Indies.”⁴⁰ Ulysse Laurent, meanwhile, who worked in Madagascar, declared himself to be “French” because his father and grandfather were born in Gosier, Guadeloupe. Laurent made no reference to the fact that his ancestors were Africans brought to the Caribbean as slaves, noting only that “there are no strangers among my ancestors” and that this could be “easily confirmed” by verifying documents at the archives in Gosier.⁴¹ Even in the opening anecdote of this chapter, René Maran only made reference to his African ancestry to emphasize how different he was

³⁸ These examples come from: Mark Alexis to Governor of Gold Coast, 9 April 1920, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File, PF 3/3/29; David McNeil-Stewart to Governor of Gold Coast, December 1919, PRAAD, McNeil-Stewart Personnel File, PF 3/32/922-923; Louis Achard to Director of Personnel, Ministry of Colonies, 4 May 1922, ANOM, Achard Personnel File, EE/ii/717/1.

³⁹ Mark Alexis to Governor of the Gold Coast, 9 April 1920, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File, PF 3/3/29.

⁴⁰ C. C. Brown to Acting Treasurer of the Gold Coast, 24 March 1899, enclosure no. 5 in correspondence from 7 April 1899, NAUK, CO 96/339.

⁴¹ Ulysse Laurent, “Declaration,” 20 September 1940, ANOM, Laurent Personnel File, MAD/GGM/C/2/3/219. Given the date, this “declaration” was likely meant to prove to the new Vichy government that he had no Jewish ancestry, but the way Laurent talks about his Frenchness is nonetheless revealing.

from his “primitive” ancestors. In the minds of Caribbean administrators, social and cultural links with Europe and “British” and “French” imperial identities took precedence over any sense of shared racial identity with Africans.

Louis Placide Blacher of Martinique was particularly emphatic about severing himself from any perceived connections with Africans. Like Laurent and others, Blacher pointed to his distinctly “Caribbean” ancestry to confirm that he was not an African: “I was born in Saint-Pierre, Martinique; my father and mother were *gens de couleur*... They themselves were born of *gens de couleur*, mixed with indigenous Caribbeans (“*autochtones caraïbes*”).⁴² A decade earlier, Blacher made an even more direct pronouncement of his desire to distinguish himself from Africans. In December 1930, the Minister of Colonies appointed Blacher as lieutenant governor of Niger. The following year, a famine hit the western part of the colony, particularly affecting the regions around Niamey, Dosso, and Tillabéri. After the deaths and displacement of tens of thousands of people, the French administration launched an inquiry. The lead investigator, Bernard Sol, concluded that the initial famine was caused by drought and an untimely invasion of locusts, but that the decisions made by Blacher and others exacerbated and extended the effects of the famine. Sol accused Blacher of neglecting early reports of the famine and of poor decision-making when the famine became impossible to ignore.⁴³ Blacher defended

⁴² Blacher to Chef du Service Colonial, 1 December 1940, ANOM, Blacher Personnel File, EE/ii/3020. As with Ulysse Laurent, this was almost certainly an attempt to show that he did not have any Jewish ancestry.

⁴³ “Rapport fait par M. Bernard Sol, Inspecteur des Colonies, concernant la Situations alimentaire de la Colonie du Niger en 1931-1932,” ANOM, AFFPOL/592. Cormac Ó Gráda notes that the famine led to the deaths of tens of thousands of people. Ó Gráda, “Famines Past, Famines Future,” University College Dublin Working Paper Series, June 2010, 25. Ó Gráda cites the work of Finn Fuglestad, “La grande famine de 1931 dans l’Ouest: réflexions autour d’une catastrophe naturelle,” *Revue française d’histoire d’Outre-Mer*, 61, 222 (1974): 18-33, and Johny Egg, François Lerin, and M. Venin, *Analyse descriptive de la famine des années 1931 au Niger, et implications méthodologiques* (Paris, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique: 1975) My thanks to Yan Slobodkin for bringing this case to my attention. Hélénon also describes Blacher’s involvement in the famine, though not his response. Hélénon, *French Caribbeans*, 109.

himself against Sol's charges by blaming the actions of previous colonial officials, and he also condemned what he saw as racially charged slander. Sol, Blacher stated, "tried to discredit me, to present me as having failed in my duties toward the black populations." Blacher also criticized Sol for insinuating that he "[felt] connected to them by the most profound solidarity."⁴⁴ Even in the context of a mass tragedy, it was important for Blacher to emphasize his distance from Africans. He may have made some mistakes, but in his mind he was "French" and there had been no violation of any "profound" racial bond. For Blacher and other Caribbean administrators, Africans were their inferiors.⁴⁵

In March 1933, the Ministry of Colonies formed a "Special Commission" in order to weigh all the details of the famine. Jules Marcel de Coppet, a senior official, prepared a detailed report of the commission proceedings and in it, he took note of Blacher's comments about race:

This is the only allusion, in this voluminous file, to this singularly important fact... that M. Blacher is an *homme de couleur*.... Many whites in the colonies have colour prejudice; the natives do as well, and the *créoles*, numerous among administrators in West Africa, have it even more so. The whites generally believe that the prestige of the conquering race is detracted by giving important positions to *hommes de couleur* in the colonies; for as strange as it seems, the natives do not tolerate being placed under their authority.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ "Réponse de M. Blacher," 27 October 1932, ANOM, AFFPOL/592. "*Je manquerais à moi-même, si je laissais passer sans les souligner, tous les moyens employés par Mr. Sol pour tenter de me discréditer, de me présenter comme ayant failli à mes devoirs envers les populations noires que je suis appelé à diriger, et auxquelles je me sens attaché par la plus profonde solidarité.*"

⁴⁵ Blacher also accompanied Blaise Diagne on his 1918 military recruitment tour of French West Africa, which resulted in the recruitment of over 63,000 troops. In 1924, Blacher was again involved in the recruitment of soldiers in West Africa. At that time, one of Blacher's supervisors questioned the selection of Blacher and, revealing his own racial attitudes, noted sarcastically: "I do not think I can personally explain the motivation." Blaise Diagne to Minister of Colonies, 2 November 1918, ANOM, Blacher Personnel File, EE/ii/3688; "Extrait du Journal Officiel de la République Française," 10 May 1924 and Notes of the Lieutenant-Governor of Senegal, 3 October 1924, ANOM, Blacher Personnel File, EE/ii/3020. See also Hélénon, *French Caribbeans in Africa*, 102.

⁴⁶ "Exposé de Monsieur le Gouverneur de Coppet, Rapporteur de la Commission d'enquête et d'information sur la famine qui a sévi au Niger en 1931," ANOM, AFFPOL/592. "*Cette phrase est la seule allusion, qu'on trouve dans le volumineux dossier, à ce fait singulièrement important selon nous, que M. Blacher est un homme de couleur...Le préjugé de la couleur, bien des blanc l'ont aux colonies; les indigènes l'ont aussi et les créoles, nombreux parmi les fonctionnaires de l'Ouest Africain, bien davantage encore. Les blancs estiment d'ordinaire qu'on porte atteinte au prestige de la race conquérante en confiant, aux colonies, un commandement important à des hommes de couleur; pour aussi étrange que cela paraisse, les indigènes n'admettent point d'être places sous leur autorité.*"

De Coppet's comments reveal a remarkably lucid understanding of the complex social dynamics of African colonies. Caribbean administrators brought their own ideas about race and nation to Africa, but once there, they had to reckon with both European *and* African ideas about difference and hierarchy. No colonial administrators were especially popular among Africans, but the criticisms Africans made of those from the Caribbean had a different tone. In fact, De Coppet's suggestion that Africans did "not tolerate being placed under their authority" was in many cases an understatement. Caribbean administrators were not white men from Berkshire or Lyon, after all, but descendants of African slaves. As a result, when Caribbean administrators tried to distinguish themselves from Africans, the attitude was reciprocal. The difference, of course, was that Africans did not see Caribbean administrators as superior. Instead, Africans criticized them by referencing racial purity, assimilation, and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In Sierra Leone, for example, in February 1889, a writer in *The Sierra Leone Weekly News* noted that "European civilization" had weakened West Indians: "Now that they are 'Barbadians,' 'Antiguans,' and 'Jamaicans,' *bona fide* British subjects, reading British literature...they have not the cause of inspiration such as influenced their fathers. Having lost the aboriginal vigour and fibre of Aku, Eboe, Congo, and Hausa, they have gained nothing by being 'Barbadian,' 'Antiguan,' or 'Jamaican.'"⁴⁷ Several years later, an editor at *The Sierra Leone Times* expressed his dismay that the administration was recruiting men from the Caribbean: "It is rather regrettable that all efforts to obtain candidates had not been exhausted before arriving at the decision to introduce the West Indian element here."⁴⁸ The general belief among many Africans was that they were just as qualified to do work that the British hired Caribbean people

⁴⁷ "The Negro as a Soldier," *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 2 February 1889, 4.

⁴⁸ "Shall We Go Forward?," *The Sierra Leone Times*, 13 July 1895, 3.

to do. Underlying this more “practical” argument, however, was the idea that Caribbean administrators were not “African” enough to live and work in Africa. This was a point of pride for Caribbean administrators, but a direct challenge to their authority among Africans, as well as a cause for exclusion.

In Nigeria, a writer in *The Lagos Weekly Record* expanded on this pattern of thinking by condemning the idea of “Afro-Americans” coming to Africa. He used “Afro-American” to describe “people of mixed blood in America,” but his criticisms also applied to West Indians. “We do not call Afro-Americans exiles,” he wrote. “Exiles are those who are away from their original home. The Afro-American is at home in America... Africa does not know him and therefore has nothing to say about his future.” He suggested that some from the Americas would be welcomed, but not those of “mixed blood”: “Let the Afro-American go to Europe; that is the land of his fathers...So far as Africa is concerned, she can bide her time. Her genuine children will return. Others would be a burden, a drawback, and an opprobrium.” In closing, the writer reiterated his stance and then stated: “We have suffered enough from the horrors of the slave trade.”⁴⁹ In referring to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, he denounced not only the arrival of Europeanized “Afro-Americans,” but the whole history of European influence in West Africa.

There were some cases when Africans welcomed the *idea* of West Indians coming to Africa, articulating variations on providential design theory. For example, a man named Hampden in Sierra Leone suggested that West Indian “friends” could “infuse right principles within us, better than the European can” and could “temper, leaven, and permeate the large mass of heathens and Mohammedans among us.”⁵⁰ Others were more hesitant, however. Sandie,

⁴⁹ “The Afro-American in the United States,” *The Lagos Weekly Record*, 21 August 1897, 4-5.

⁵⁰ Hampden, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Sierra Leone Weekly Times*, 12 January 1895, 3.

another African in Sierra Leone, argued that there should not be a large-scale importation of West Indians because they would “become the owners of the land and our own youths [would be] pushed out to other parts.” Sandie instead advocated bringing a few West Indians to Sierra Leone to work as teachers who could “instruct our youths...in every branch of tropical agriculture.” Afterwards, the “youths” could be “sent up to the interior and portions of land allowed them for cultivating.”⁵¹ In most cases, however, Africans were entirely unsympathetic to even the notion of Caribbean administrators in Africa. This antipathy only increased when people from the Caribbean began arriving and working in West and Central Africa.

In the Gold Coast, for example, one newspaper writer described a West Indian in the Public Works department as “a menace” and accused him of being a “West Indian wearing false skin.”⁵² In 1917, a writer in *The Lagos Standard* echoed this reference to racial purity and assimilation, noting derisively that “the African out of Africa was forced to sit on two stools. Consequently is nowhere.”⁵³ In French Soudan, meanwhile, where Félix Eboué was acting governor between 1934 and 1936, some of his white European colleagues claimed that “the Muslims had no respect for a descendant of slaves.”⁵⁴ One official even claimed that he had to “reassure” the Touareg that “Eboué was not really the governor but that he merely advised the head of the colony in the way that low-caste ironmongers advised Touareg leaders.”⁵⁵ The stigma of slave ancestry that Africans applied to Eboué and other Caribbean administrators

⁵¹ Sandie, “News from the Second Eastern District,” *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 30 April 1898, 3.

⁵² “Onitsha,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 6 July 1912, 3.

⁵³ “The New Polygamy,” *The Lagos Standard*, 18 July 1917, 4.

⁵⁴ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 163-4.

⁵⁵ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 163-4. Weinstein cites a March 1968 interview with Robert Barges, a former colonial governor, who heard this story during a tour of French Soudan during Eboué’s time as acting governor.

remained strong in many parts of West Africa. Indeed, this language pre-dated the trans-Atlantic slave trade and endured despite French efforts to abolish slavery.⁵⁶ Eboué's colour marked him as the descendant of slaves traded not only across the Atlantic, but also north across the Sahara.

Africans in Senegal reacted similarly to the recruitment of Caribbean administrators. In September 1926, two Senegalese journalists known as "Magard" and "Oxoby" wrote articles in *Volonté* and *L'Ouest Africain* condemning the recruitment of *fonctionnaires* from Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Réunion to work in Senegal.⁵⁷ In Oubangui-Chari, René Maran noted that Africans sometimes referred to him as the "*boy du commandant*," implying that he was little more than a lackey of the French administration. Maran also wrote that Africans referred to him as a "*bounjouvouko*." In Sango, the main trade language along the Oubangui River, the word *vuko* means the colour black, while Africans used *bounjou* to describe the French, or Europeans more generally. Maran, who knew Sango, explained that Africans used *bounjouvouko* to describe Africans who worked as clerks for the administration. Turned on Maran, however, the term was an even more potent slur. It designated him as not quite French, nor African, but a mix of both and inferior to both.⁵⁸ Henri Jean-Louis of Guadeloupe, who worked in Congo, described similar circumstances. In a later memoir, he explained that in Central Africa, people from the Caribbean were treated "as slaves by the natives."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ For more on the legacies of the language of slavery, see Sandra Greene, *Slave Owners of West Africa: Decision-Making in the Age of Abolition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017); Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press 2006).

⁵⁷ I have not been able to track down these articles. I found them referenced in correspondence in ANOM, 17G/58.

⁵⁸ René Maran to the Governor General of AEF, 3 June 1918, ANOM, Maran Personnel File, GGAEF/C//74/Maran.

⁵⁹ Henri Jean-Louis, *Visions of Africa: Ten Years of Voyages of a West Indian Lawyer, Poet through the Western and Equatorial Black Continent* (Port-of-Spain, Guardian Commercial Printery, 1938), 15.

In other cases, Africans ascribed negative characteristics to Caribbean administrators simply because they were from the Caribbean. “What are the use of the West Indian sanitary inspectors,” asked one African in the Gold Coast. “They are as a class devoid of certain manners which make one a gentleman, as they are bent only on filling their pockets with high wages and do not seem to care about the work they were sent out for.”⁶⁰ The specific reference to “West Indian” sanitary inspectors implied that this was not only a criticism of sanitation work, which was generally unpopular, but a criticism of “West Indian” sanitary inspectors, who were, in the eyes of the writer, particularly greedy, unqualified, and uncouth.

On another occasion, in Freetown in March 1918, Africans protested when West Indians sought a segregated hospital ward and “better treatment” at the Colonial Hospital. A man named Barvi wrote a column in *The Colonial and Provincial Reporter* claiming that this was “quite unfair.” He asked, rhetorically, “And thou too West Indian art seeking segregation from the Sierra Leonean of your own colour and race in the blackman’s country?” Barvi also questioned why West Indians in the hospital objected to eating *agidi*: “Do West Indians object to corn flour, corn-starch, oatmeal &c. If not why then object to *agidi*?”⁶¹ Barvi, like many other Africans, objected not only to the presence of Caribbean administrators, but also to their pretensions. As the Governor of Sierra Leone noted in September of the same year: “The high rate of pay given to West Indians...is already the subject of much criticism by natives of this Colony.”⁶²

A particularly striking example of African resentment toward Caribbean administrators comes from Sekondi in July 1907. By this time, West Indian railway workers had begun

⁶⁰ “Accra,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 14 October 1916, 3.

⁶¹ Barvi, “One Thing and Another,” *The Colonial and Provincial Reporter*, 2 March 1918, 16.

⁶² Governor of Sierra Leone to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 September 1918, NAUK, CO 267/578.

replacing Africans on the Gold Coast railway and so a man from Sekondi wrote a letter of complaint to *The Gold Coast Leader*. Writing under the pseudonym “Railway,” he argued that West Indians knew “next to nothing,” were no more skilled than Africans, and that their higher salaries were a “burden to the revenue of the colony.” Railway expressed his hope that the government would “put a stop to this wholesale importation of West Indians to this Colony.” In closing, he stated emphatically: “As Asia is for the Asiatics so is Africa for Africans.”⁶³

Evidently, many Africans did not consider their encounters with Caribbean administrators as opportunities to reconnect with exiled kin. Normally, people used the phrase “Africa for Africans” as a rallying cry for international black unity against European imperialism in Africa. Martin Delany first used the phrase in the 1850s, Edward Blyden, among others, helped to popularize it, and Marcus Garvey made it most famous in the 1910s and 1920s.⁶⁴ Yet in Railway’s 1907 letter, he used the phrase for very different ends. Instead of rejecting the presence of Europeans in Africa, he called for the expulsion of *all* foreigners, including—perhaps especially—West Indians. By invoking the phrase in this context, Railway subverted a call for international black solidarity with an appeal to nativism and unity within—instead of beyond—circumscribed geographical boundaries.

Before coming to Africa, many Caribbean administrators had expected to realize imagined links with an ancestral homeland. Upon arrival in African colonies, however, these expectations were shocked back to reality. Caribbean administrators arrived amidst violent colonial occupations, and some even participated in military expeditions. This created tension

⁶³ Letter to the Editor from “Railway,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 27 July 1907, 4.

⁶⁴ Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), viii; George Shepperson, “Notes on Negro American Influences on the Emergence of African Nationalism,” *Journal of African History* 1, No. 2 (1960): 301; Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama, eds., *Encyclopedia of Black Studies* (London, UK: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005), 131.

with Africans, as did their roles as tax collectors, agricultural instructors, judges, police officers, prison guards, sanitary inspectors, and so on. Added to this were individual acts of violence, including rape and murder. Even those who did not participate in overt violence went to great lengths to distinguish themselves as “British” and “French,” as distinct from and superior to Africans. They held paternalistic attitudes about colonialism, and this entrenched African-Caribbean tensions. Africans, meanwhile, were understandably resentful of Caribbean administrators. This resentment was not just a result of competition over employment, Caribbean notions of superiority, or the treatment meted out to Africans by Caribbean administrators. Their resentment was also grounded in ideas about African-descended people in the Caribbean—ideas about assimilation, slave ancestry, and “corrupted” racial purity. Such tensions reveal how Caribbean administrators had to grapple with the incongruencies of race and nation as they navigated their fraught relationships with Africans. On top of these already complex dynamics, however, was the exclusion and particularization that Caribbean administrators experienced at the hands of white Europeans.

RACISM, EXCLUSION, AND PARTICULARIZATION

Mr. Callender was not, strictly speaking, an African officer.

R. E. BURNS, 1928⁶⁵

Noir je suis, boy on voulait que je devinsse.

RENÉ MARAN, 1918⁶⁶

⁶⁵ R. E. Burns, Gold Coast Treasurer, note in Walter Callender’s Personnel File, 5 July 1928, PRAAD, PF 3/37/49.

⁶⁶ “A black man I am, but a ‘boy’ they want me to become.” In a June 1918 letter, referring to his supervisors, Maran wrote: “*Je n’ignorais pas ce qu’ils disaient, ce qu’ils pensaient de moi. Noir je suis, boy on voulait que je devinsse.*” Maran to Governor of Oubangui-Chari, 9 June 1918, ANOM, Maran Personnel File, EE/ii/6175/35.

The most common experiences of Caribbean administrators in Africa were racial discrimination and alienation. Caribbean administrators grew up considering themselves to be “British” and “French.” They imagined themselves as superior to Africans and in alignment with Europeans socially, culturally, and by education. Once in Africa, however, they frequently encountered unambiguous exclusion. On some occasions, French and British officials evaluated certain “skills” as “European” or listed Caribbean administrators under lists of “European Staff.” Far more often, however, Europeans particularized Caribbean people as “West Indians” and “*Antillais*,” or considered them as no different from Africans, referring to them as “native,” “*indigène*,” “Black,” “*Noir*,” “Negro,” and “*Nègre*.” Such inconsistent categorizations reveal how the incongruencies of race, nation, and empire directly affected the realities of daily life. Designations moved off the pages of colonial ledgers and dictated not just salaries and promotions, but also where Caribbean administrators lived, how they travelled, and where they worked. For the remainder of this chapter, I will analyze how these forms of exclusion and particularization left Caribbean administrators with feelings of alienation and betrayal.

One of the most common examples of exclusion was the segregation of space. In early 1914, for instance, when the government of Nigeria was considering large-scale recruitment of West Indian railway workers, a major question was the place of West Indians in Nigeria. The governor, Frederick Lugard, made this clear in February 1914: “One essential element of success is that the aliens [West Indians] should come in considerable numbers if they come at all, so as to form a community of their own.”⁶⁷ Segregation policies were clearly on Lugard’s mind, as several months later, in June 1914, he wrote disparagingly about the “inter-mixture” of “Europeans” and “Natives” living in “mutual proximity” in Nigeria and proposed new measures

⁶⁷ Governor of Nigeria to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 February 1914, NAUK, CO 583/10.

to recover greater separation.⁶⁸ In September 1914, when large groups of West Indian railway workers began arriving in Nigeria, the General Manager of the Railway declared it “necessary to provide permanent quarters for [West Indians] as soon as possible.”⁶⁹ The British thus hastily erected “West Indian Quarters” near railway stations in Ibadan, Offa, Jebba, Minna, Kaduna, Zaria, and Kano that were separate from quarters for “European Staff” and “Native Staff.”⁷⁰

Colonial governments also segregated Caribbean administrators during their travels to and from African colonies. Those from the British Caribbean almost always travelled through London, where the Crown Agents typically put them up in one of two hotels: the Shakespeare Hotel on York Road near Waterloo Station or the Liverpool & Birmingham Hotel on Drummond Street near Euston Square, run by a Mr. Samuel Adams. The Crown Agents chose these hotels not just because they were close to important travel hubs. Instead, as one official wrote in February 1905: “the Crown Agents generally sends such men to a hotel kept by a Mr. Adams who is used to black men.”⁷¹ In June 1909, an official in the Gold Coast made a similar reference, explaining that the Crown Agents were “in the habit of sending West Indians to Adams’ Hotel.”⁷² Even years later, in May 1922, an official at the Crown Agents wrote that these were “the usual Hotels at which the West Indian Natives stay during their journey to and from

⁶⁸ Governor of Nigeria to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/15. Specifically, Lugard proposed to divide towns according to a policy of “segregating Europeans and of locating their residences at a distance of at least 400 yards (when possible) from those of natives.” Lugard’s plan was to grant leases to “Europeans” only for the “European reservation” and to “Natives” only for the “native reservation.” Lugard did not mention where West Indians fit into this scheme.

⁶⁹ General Manger of the Nigerian Railway to Central Secretary Lagos, 25 September 1914, National Archives of Nigeria—Ibadan (NAI), N 3697/1914.

⁷⁰ Annual Report of the Nigerian Railway, 1914, NAUK, CO 657/1.

⁷¹ Note by Colonial Office official in file on the engagement of West Indians for West Africa, NAUK, CO 96/427.

⁷² Note by “A. W. K.” in C. T. Webb’s personnel file, 18 June 1909, PRAAD, PF 1/45/971.

the West Coast.”⁷³ To Caribbean administrators, this pattern and its implication were clear. Not all West Indians, however, were privy to this information. In December 1918, Harry Cleghorn, a railway worker in Nigeria, was travelling through London on his way back to Trinidad. He tried to find a room at the Grove Hotel at Euston, but the hotel staff turned him away. After “calling at over a dozen hotels” in the area with the same result, Cleghorn finally found a room at the Liverpool & Birmingham Hotel on Drummond Street.⁷⁴ Cleghorn did not give an explicit reason for the refusals at the other hotels, but it is more than a coincidence that the only person who gave him a room was the hotelier who was “used to black men.”

There were no fewer difficulties finding accommodations in African colonies. In September 1917, for example, when Félix Eboué was on his way from Oubangui-Chari to France on leave, he travelled through Matadi in the Belgian Congo where a hotel refused to give him a room.⁷⁵ René Maran’s similar experience is particularly revealing. In June 1915, Maran was heading to France on leave. When he arrived in Thysville (present day Mbanza-Ngungu) in the Belgian Congo, the *propriétaire* at the A. B. C. Hotel refused to give him a room on the grounds that “*nègres*” were not accepted.⁷⁶ In a letter of complaint to the lieutenant governor of Moyen-

⁷³ Crown Agents to Chief Secretary, Lagos, 23 May 1922, NAI, CSO 26 Agriculture, 02971. References to the Shakespeare Hotel and the Liverpool & Birmingham Hotel also appear in correspondence related to David McNeil-Stewart (PRAAD ADM 1/1/233), C. A. Petrie (PRAAD, ADM 1/1/250), J. J. Phillips and J. Dey (NAUK, CO 111/528), Samuel Moseley (NAUK, CO 267/608), Mark Alexis (PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File, PF 3/3/29), Harold Cleghorn (NAI, N 2728/1918), C. T. Webb and A. W. Downer (PRAAD, Webb Personnel File, PF 1/45/971), C. M. G. Hoyte (PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File, PF 3/32/473), and Walter Callender, E. D. Godding, Percy Roberts and Theophilus Smith (PRAAD, Callender Personnel File, PF 3/37/49).

⁷⁴ Harry Cleghorn to Crown Agents, 12 December 1918, NAI, N 2728/1918.

⁷⁵ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 57.

⁷⁶ Maran to the Lieutenant Governor of Moyen-Congo, 25 June 1915, ANOM, Fonds Fraisse, “Documents sur René Maran,” FP/8APOM/4. (The month on this letter page is missing due to termites. Maran’s personnel file, ANOM, GGAEF/C//74/Maran, shows that his leave in 1915 began on June 24. The space where the month appears on this page is too short to be juillet, septembre, octobre, novembre, or décembre, so it is either “juin” or “août.” From the traces on the edges it appears to be “juin.”) André Fraisse related a condensed version of this event in *Hommage à René Maran*, 273.

Congo, Maran described the “comic” events that ensued: Maran produced his passport and other forms of identification to prove that he was “not a native” and then pointed out that his name was already in the hotel registers because he had stayed at the A. B. C. hotel in Thysville in 1909, 1911 and 1912. All the more “vexing,” Maran added, was that the previous night he had stayed at an A. B. C. hotel in Kinshasa. Maran even explained that this had “happened twice during previous journeys.” He also expressed his concern that this pattern could “become more common” and could result in “regrettable incidents” for other “*fonctionnaires de couleur*.” Finally, Maran noted sardonically: “When I return to the colony...I may be forced to go outside the urban perimeter to sleep in a ‘*case indigène*’—if they are willing to offer me one, that is.”

Instead of submitting a standard complaint, Maran used the situation to highlight how the racist shadows of colonial categories guaranteed his exclusion. He could “prove” with his passport—a colonial document—that he was “French” and thus “not a native,” but Europeans still treated him like “a native” because of his appearance. Maran also revealed his understanding of the tensions between Africans and Caribbeans when he facetiously suggested that in the future he might be “forced to go outside the urban perimeter to sleep in a ‘*case indigene*,’” but would likely not be accepted there either. Maran was a “French” administrator and he saw himself as part of the French Empire, but as a “*fonctionnaire de couleur*,” his capacity to belong to that Empire, to be a part of the French nation, was highly contingent, always dependent on context. Among the Africans “outside the urban perimeter,” he was a “*bounjouvouko*,” an inferior member of the French administration. At the A. B. C. Hotel in Thysville, and among many of his colleagues and superiors, he was an *indigène* and a *nègre*. It was situations like this one that left Maran and other Caribbean administrators with a keen awareness of where they did not belong, but with little understanding of where they did.

John Barbour-James of British Guiana had an equally bewildering experience in Sekondi. In May 1917, he was preparing to head to England on leave. When he boarded his ship, however, there were no accommodations available and so he returned to shore. While he waited for the next boat, he took a room in the Government Rest House. A few days later, the manager of the Rest House, Charles Watt, consulted his supervisor, John Maxwell, about this “irregularity.”⁷⁷ Maxwell, the commissioner for the Western Province of the Gold Coast, informed Watt that Barbour-James could stay at the Rest House until his departure.⁷⁸ The next day, however, a medical officer in Sekondi named Malcolm Hay alerted Watt that there was a “native” in the Rest House. “The Rest House,” Hay pointed out, was “reserved for Europeans” and was “situated in the Segregation Area.”⁷⁹ Watt immediately wrote back to Hay and explained that this particular “native,” John Barbour-James, was a government official from British Guiana and that “the matter” had already been settled with Maxwell.⁸⁰

Hay was unconvinced, and so a few days later he wrote to Maxwell himself to find out if the commissioner had indeed “sanction[ed]” Barbour-James’ stay at the Rest House.⁸¹ Hay also expressed general concern with segregation policy in the Gold Coast: “I can hardly believe that the Government go to such enormous expense in acquiring land for a European Segregation area and then deliberately house people of the Negro Race thereon.” Further revealing his essentialized racial thinking, Hay declared: “It appears that I was wrong in supposing Mr. James

⁷⁷ Charles Watt to Malcolm Bell Hay, 15 May 1917, PRAAD, Barbour-James Personnel File, PF 3/36/354. Watt described the situation and his actions in his letter to Hay.

⁷⁸ Telegram from John Maxwell to Watt, 14 May 1917, quoted in letter from Watt to Hay, 15 May 1917, PRAAD, Barbour-James Personnel File, PF 3/36/354.

⁷⁹ Hay to Watt, 15 May 1917, PRAAD, Barbour-James Personnel File, PF 3/36/354.

⁸⁰ Watt to Hay, 15 May 1917, PRAAD, Barbour-James Personnel File, PF 3/36/354.

⁸¹ Hay to Maxwell, 18 May 1917, PRAAD, Barbour-James Personnel File, PF 3/36/354.

was a ‘native’ and I now find he was born in the West Indies but I think you will agree that I may be excused in having judged him a West African entirely on naked eye appearances.”

Hay had initially objected to Barbour-James’ presence in the Rest House on the grounds that he was a “West African.” When Hay found out that Barbour-James was actually a colonial official from the Caribbean, however, he recalibrated his reasoning and made his objection on the grounds that Barbour-James was “of the Negro Race.” The underlying issue was thus not about where Barbour-James was from, but rather with racial difference, the fact that to the “naked eye,” Barbour-James was not white. For Hay and others, Barbour-James’ presence in the Rest House was a violation not only of segregation policy, but of colonial ideas about race, difference, hierarchy, and place.⁸²

European empires governed on the pretension that the divisions between “European” and “African” were airtight. As the examples of Maran, Barbour-James, and others show, this was hardly the case. Caribbean administrators moved in the spaces between these categories. They considered themselves to be “British” and “French,” but colonial officials regularly particularized them as “West Indian” and “*Antillais*.” In other cases, white Europeans simply folded them in with Africans as “Negro” or “*Nègre*.” Ultimately, the rigid lines of racial thinking superseded categories based on geography or nation such as “European,” “French,” “West Indian,” or “African”: a person of African descent from the Caribbean could aspire to “Europeanness,” but could never be a “European.”

⁸² Maxwell later forwarded the case to the colonial secretary in Accra. He asked if Barbour-James, a “coloured native of the West Indies,” or “any other officer in a similar position,” was “entitled to accommodation in the Segregation Areas.” The colonial secretary approved of Maxwell’s approach and stated that for future cases, “the occasional stay of a West Indian in a rest house would not add materially to the danger of Europeans becoming infected with disease since, owing to the necessity of allowing native servants to live in the compounds of bungalows in Segregation Areas, the total segregation of Europeans is never possible.” Maxwell to Colonial Secretary, Accra, 11 July 1917; Colonial Secretary, Accra, to Maxwell, 23 August 1917, PRAAD, Barbour-James Personnel File, PF 3/36/354.

More informal acts of exclusion in day-to-day interactions complemented these cases of institutionalized segregation. For example, when René Maran was working in Oubangui-Chari, some of his European colleagues deliberately undermined his authority with derogatory slurs. On one occasion, in June 1918, one of Maran's colleagues "publicly reprimanded" him as a "boy" in the presence of "a thousand natives" during a meeting of village chiefs.⁸³ Years later, Maran described a similar incident. While giving instructions to a group of African porters, Maran's superior, Jean Bonneveau, told the porters that they did not need to "obey" Maran because he was a "*sale nègre*" like them.⁸⁴ Maran also described the event in a letter to his friend André Fraise:

What would you have done in my place, if you had heard the natives under your control saying amongst each other, in their language: 'You know, it's not worth obeying what he just told us...because the main commander just told me that this *nègre* does not have authority over a *nègre* like me.'⁸⁵

By ignoring Maran's complaints, the French administration endorsed the characterization of Maran as a "*nègre*," no different from Africans, even though he remained a "French" administrator. Africans, meanwhile, hardly accepted Maran as an equal because he *was* a "French" administrator. Marginalized from multiple angles, Maran and other Caribbean administrations had to reckon with feelings of exclusion and isolation.

Such incidents of racism and feelings of alienation were also prevalent in Nigeria. In January 1914, Josiah Ward of Trinidad, a station master in Kaduna, sent a letter to the district

⁸³ Maran to Governor of Oubangui-Chari, 6 June 1918, ANOM, GGAEF/C//74/Maran.

⁸⁴ René Maran, "René Maran s'explique..." *Le Libertaire*, 1959, p. 2, quoted in Dennis, "The René Maran Story," 82. Charles Bareilley, a friend of Maran's, related a version of this story in "Souvenirs," *Hommage à René Maran*, 243. Chidi Ikonné likewise mentions this incident in Ikonné, "René Maran, 1887-1960: A Black Francophone Writer between Two Worlds," *Research in African Literatures*, 5, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 15.

⁸⁵ "Lettre inédite de René Maran à André Fraise," 21 December 1952, *Francofonía* 14 (2005): 11-13, quoted from ANOM/26 PA, 4. "*Qu'auriez-vous fait à ma place, si vous aviez entendu vos administrés indigènes se dire entre eux, dans leur langue : 'tu sais, c'est pas la peine d'obéir à ce qu'il vient de te dire...parce que le grand commandant vient de me dire que ce nègre n'a pas à commander au nègre que je suis.'*"

traffic superintendent explaining that “a European told me I must not make use of [the] W.C.”⁸⁶ Elsewhere in the letter, Ward told the story of an African railway worker named McCaulay. Earlier that month, McCaulay had been sitting in front of the telegraph office in Kaduna when “a European, in civilian clothing” walked by and then “in a raged and vexatious tone ordered him to ‘stand up’ which he (Mr. McCaulay) immediately did.” The man then called McCaulay a “bloody baboon” and walked away. Five minutes later, he returned with a colleague, and “in the same raged tone,” called McCaulay a “Lagos Monkey.” He also declared that McCaulay should “stand up whenever he sees a whiteman passing.”

After witnessing this mistreatment, Ward claimed that he began “suffering from inward fever and nervousness” and noted: “Had I not been making up my yard report I would certainly have shared the same fate, if not worse.” Ward feared that if he failed to “comply with the required forms of homage... [he] might be kicked to death or be tried criminally.” Ward also stated: “I have a wife and four children who I would not like to be orphans prematurely.” In closing, Ward begged for a transfer to a different part of the railway “to avoid impending tragedy.” Ward did not consider himself an “African,” and on paper he was a “West Indian,” but many European officials did not make any distinction between him and McCaulay. Ward knew that in the eyes of many Europeans he too was a “bloody baboon,” and thus he had good reason to fear for his well-being. The British and French brought people like Ward and Maran to Africa in large part because they were *not* Africans—they spoke European languages and were familiar with colonial bureaucracies. Yet once in Africa, colonial officials typically treated them as no different from Africans. Such double binds left Caribbean administrators without a sense of place or belonging.

⁸⁶ Josiah F. Ward to District Traffic Superintendent, 5 January 1914, NAI, N 856/1914.

The racial undergirding of African colonies also affected the promotions and postings of Caribbean administrators. For example, in May 1912, Georges Sully of Martinique wrote a letter to the Minister of Colonies explicitly requesting a posting in the Caribbean and not to “*les colonies Africaines*.”⁸⁷ Sully had just completed his program in law (“*section magistrature*”) at the *École Coloniale* in Paris. Several months later, however, the Minister appointed Sully to work as a judge in Ouésso, Congo. Most administrators saw appointments to French Equatorial Africa as demotions,⁸⁸ and Sully spent the next ten years working as a judge in Ouésso, Bangui, Brazzaville, and Libreville. He did finally return to the Caribbean in November 1922 and worked in Martinique for several years. Then, after several years with no promotions, he sent a letter to the Director of Personnel in Martinique complaining about “prejudice” and lack of advancement. Sully described the “difficult circumstances” of watching less qualified colleagues be promoted ahead of him.⁸⁹ The Ministry of Colonies finally promoted Sully in January 1927, but not to a position in Martinique. Instead, Sully went back to Africa, this time to Dakar.⁹⁰

The career of René Maran’s father, Herménégilde Maran, was similarly constrained. He worked in French Guiana and Martinique before heading to Africa in 1895, where he worked in Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, and Oubangui-Chari. Over the course of his career, French officials promoted him fairly regularly along the lower administrative grades and even

⁸⁷ Georges Sully to the Minister of Colonies, 15 May 1912. ANOM, Sully Personnel File, EE/ii/2317/3.

⁸⁸ Florence Bernault writes that those who worked in French Equatorial Africa considered their postings “at best an inglorious stage at the beginning of a career, at worst a repressive measure (*sanction*).” Bernault, *Démocraties ambiguës en Afrique Centrale: Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon: 1940-1965* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1996), 45. Phyllis Martin similarly notes that “compared to France’s other colonies, from Indochina to the Antilles and Algeria to Madagascar, Central Africa ranked at the bottom of French colonial priorities.” Martin also refers to Brazzaville as “the impoverished capital of an imperial backwater.” Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8, 12.

⁸⁹ Georges Sully to the Director of Personnel of Martinique, 1926. (undated letter, but determinable as within the first four months of 1926 by circumstances mentioned in letter.). ANOM, Sully Personnel File, EE/ii/2317/3.

⁹⁰ ANOM, Sully Personnel File, EE/ii/2317/3.

nominated him three times for the prestigious *Légion d'Honneur*. Yet the French government never gave him this distinction. Years later, René Maran noted that his father “died abruptly of sorrow for having not received it at the end of 1910, following his retirement and after thirty years of service.” René claimed that his father deserved the honour, “without contest,” but that before World War I, “pretexts upon pretexts were used to refuse the *Légion d'Honneur* to a *nègre*.”⁹¹

In some instances, European administrations treated Caribbean people reasonably well with regard to promotions, but even in these cases their advancement was limited by racial thinking. For example, when Leonard Muss of British Guiana came to the Gold Coast in March 1902, the government appointed him to the Customs Department as a 2nd class supervisor. In 1905 the department passed him over for a promotion, but then in 1907, promoted him to 1st class supervisor. The following year, Muss applied again for a promotion to district commissioner of customs. When the governor, John Rodger, reviewed Muss’ application, he wrote that Muss had “no claim to further promotion” because he was not going to reach the “maximum salary” of his appointment for another four years. Yet Rodger also pointed to Muss’ racial background: “Mr. Muss is a West Indian mulatto and does not, in my opinion, possess the qualifications required for a District Commissioner in this Colony.”⁹²

The fact that Muss had not yet reached the “maximum salary” of his appointment was cause enough to deny the promotion, and so Rodger’s racialized reference suggests that this factor also informed his decision. Indeed, the phrasing “Mr. Muss is a West Indian mulatto *and*

⁹¹ Maran to Albert Darnal, October 1938, quoted in Darnal, “René Maran: Cet Homme Pareil aux Autres,” *Hommage à René Maran*, 79. “*Mon père a été proposé trois fois pour la Légion d'Honneur entre 1900 et 1910. Il mourut brusquement de chagrin de ne l'avoir pas reçue en fin 1910, au lendemain de sa mise à la retraite, après trente ans de service.*”

⁹² L. J. Muss Application for Promotion, Enclosure no. 1 in letter from Governor of Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 December 1908, NAUK, CO 96/473.

does not...possess the qualifications required” opens up at least two interpretations. First, that Rodger believed Muss lacked the necessary qualifications simply *because* he was a “West Indian mulatto.” Or second, that even if Muss had already reached his maximum salary, had the proper qualifications, and had not been recently promoted, Rodger still would have denied the promotion because Muss was a “West Indian mulatto.” Muss’ supposed lack of qualifications and recent advancement did not help his case, but his racial background was more than enough justification to bar Muss from promotion. In African colonies, Caribbean administrators like Muss learned quickly that their white European colleagues did not recognize their claims to being part of the “British” and “French” nations. Racial backgrounds prevented any such sense of belonging.

In addition to segregating space and dictating postings and promotions, the double binds of African colonies also affected rates of pay. This was particularly evident during World War I, when the costs of imported food and goods increased rapidly but salaries did not keep pace. In August 1917, for example, David McNeil-Stewart of Trinidad sent a petition to the medical officer of Kumasi claiming his right to the Ashanti Consolidated Allowance.⁹³ McNeil-Stewart, a sanitary inspector working in Kumasi, explained that he was “classed as an officer of the Native Subordinate Service” and was thus entitled to the allowance because it was meant for “Native Clerks of the Subordinate Service.” The Gold Coast government refused McNeil-Stewart’s request.⁹⁴ Two years later, in December 1919, McNeil-Stewart wrote a second petition and

⁹³ McNeil-Stewart to Medical Officer, Kumasi, 31 August 1917, PRAAD, McNeil-Stewart Personnel File, PF 3/32/922-923.

⁹⁴ Senior Sanitary Officer, Accra, to Principal Medical Officer, Accra, 2 February 1920, PRAAD, McNeil-Stewart Personnel File, PF 3/32/922-923. The letter details the exchanges between McNeil-Stewart and various officials.

reiterated his claim to the allowance. This time he wrote directly to the governor.⁹⁵ McNeil-Stewart explained that the grounds for the refusal of his August 1917 petition—that “West Indians...were serving under special agreements [and] did not come within the category of Natives”—was not “just or equitable” because both “Native” and “West Indian” sanitary inspectors were classified as “members of the Native Subordinate Service.” He declared: “It will be distinctly obvious to your Excellency that any privileges which any member of the Native Subordinate Service is entitled to, a West Indian serving under the same classification of service is most surely entitled to the same.”

Later in the petition, McNeil-Stewart emphasized the dilemma of European colleagues treating him as both distinct from and no different from Africans. Europeans, he explained, expected a “better class of work” from West Indians than from “Native Officers” even though their salaries were the same. He also claimed that the cost of living for West Indians was much higher than for “the Natives.” “In most cases,” he wrote, Africans were “polygamists” and so the work of “their wives and other relations who traded or made money by the baking of bread” augmented their salaries. In closing, McNeil Stewart made a direct challenge to the inconsistent treatment of West Indians in the Gold Coast: “Your Excellency’s humble petitioner prays that your Excellency may evolve a new scheme in the light of present day experiences for the classification and salaries of West Indian Officials, as at present grouped as they are, they labour under serious disadvantages in the service compared to the Native Official on one side, and the Subordinate European Official on the other side.”

McNeil-Stewart never received the allowance, but his exchanges with the Gold Coast government are nonetheless revealing of how Caribbean administrators challenged the racism

⁹⁵ Petition from McNeil-Stewart to Governor of Gold Coast, December 1919, PRAAD, McNeil-Stewart Personnel File, PF 3/32/922-923.

inherent in colonial categories. The British and French colonial governments tacked between registers of race, nation and empire, rendering Caribbean administrators as “Natives” or “West Indians” whenever it suited their needs, financial or otherwise. The Gold Coast administration denied McNeil-Stewart not only the privileges of his white European colleagues, but also the privileges, however meagre, of his “Native” colleagues. He understood precisely what was happening, but his complaints and petitions led nowhere. Government officials shaped divisions and boundaries to meet the demands of any situation and McNeil-Stewart, along with many others, was caught in the middle, marginalized from two sides.

Caribbean administrators in Nigeria and Sierra Leone raised similar concerns about racial discrimination and war bonuses. In 1918, when the Colonial Office began offering war bonuses to alleviate the increased costs of food and other imported goods, there were different rates for “Europeans,” “Africans,” and “West Indians.”⁹⁶ The rates for West Indians were significantly lower than those for Europeans, and the rates for Africans were even lower. A number of West Indians in Nigeria and Sierra Leone responded with petitions that challenged these discrepancies.

In Nigeria, a group of West Indian railway workers formed a “War Bonus Committee,” and their October 1918 petition is particularly revealing. They first declared that their salaries and war bonuses were not high enough to cover the soaring costs of imported food.⁹⁷ They then differentiated themselves as distinct from Africans and aligned their hardships with those of

⁹⁶ In February 1918, the Colonial Office granted bonuses at varying rates. For Europeans earning less than £400 per annum, the Colonial Office gave bonuses of £60 per annum. Those earning over £400 per annum received £40 per annum. “Natives,” meanwhile, “including West Indians,” received bonuses at the rate of 5% of their annual salaries. Note in File on “War Bonus to European Officers and Native Officers,” 25 February 1918, NAUK, CO 96/588. Most West Indians were earning less than £150 per annum, so their bonuses worked out to £7-10s per annum or less. Sierra Leone later increased this rate to £18 per annum for all West Indians, but when West Indians in Sierra Leone petitioned for a further increase, the government refused. Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 September 1918, NAUK, CO 267/578; Petitions from West Indians in Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25 June 1918 and 15 July 1918, NAUK CO 267/578.

⁹⁷ Petition from West Indians to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 October 1918, NAUK, CO 583/72.

Europeans, explaining that they had to “live on provisions imported from England” because they “could not...live on the ordinary dietary of the people.” Along with their demand for an increased war bonus, they attached a list of imported food items comparing prices from before the war and prices in October 1918. Edward Bland, the general manager of the Railway, forwarded the petition on to the central secretary in Lagos, and in an accompanying letter, expressed little sympathy: “The West Indian has not proved to be so much superior to the West African and I do not think any distinction should be made.”⁹⁸ The central secretary agreed with Bland and declared that West Indians “ought to be treated, as regards the War Bonus, in the same way as the rest of the native staff.”⁹⁹

War bonus rates did increase slightly in early 1919, but the colonial government still gave West Indians only a quarter of the “European” rate.¹⁰⁰ In Sierra Leone, a West Indian mechanic named Percival Sherwood sent a petition to the Secretary of State for the Colonies protesting the continued discrimination.¹⁰¹ He pointed out, for example, that even though his bonus was one quarter of that granted to his European colleagues, he still had to pay the same rates as Europeans when he went to the hospital. He also noted that E. T. Nash, a sanitary inspector in Sierra Leone and a fellow Jamaican, was receiving a war bonus along European lines—£120 per annum, compared to Sherwood’s £30 per annum. Sherwood had already taken up this discrepancy with the governor, who had simply informed Sherwood that Nash was “essentially a European.” Sherwood asked the Colonial Office to intervene and laid bare the racial prejudice: “If Mr. Nash

⁹⁸ Bland also noted that West Indians in Nigeria had been “very liberally treated.” Bland to Central Secretary Lagos, 30 December 1918, NAUK, CO 583/72.

⁹⁹ Acting Governor of Nigeria to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 January 1919, NAUK, CO 583/72.

¹⁰⁰ West Indian war bonuses eventually went up to 20% of annual salaries—typically making for a £20-£30 bonus. For Europeans with annual salaries under £400, the increase went to £120 per annum.

¹⁰¹ Percival Sherwood to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 May 1919, NAUK, CO 267/584.

and myself were getting the same salary in Jamaica our home, we would both receive the same War Bonus, yet when we are in Africa he gets four times as much as I do because his skin is fairer than mine.”

Several days later, a group of West Indian railway workers followed Sherwood’s example and sent a similar petition to London.¹⁰² Like Sherwood, they compared themselves with E. T. Nash, “a West Indian, born and bred in Jamaica” and questioned why Nash received a higher war bonus even though he had the same contract as other West Indians. “We are forced to realise,” they wrote, “that the granting of War Bonus in this Colony is based on colour prejudice.” Later in the petition, they broadened their scope to make a wide-ranging critique of the empire: “We...are very much surprised and disgusted in finding this system of colour prejudice indulged in by representatives of His Majesty the foundation of whose throne, we are told, are Truth and Justice.” In closing, the petitioners invoked the war efforts made by other West Indians: “West Indian negroes have paid the supreme sacrifice in the Great War. They have died for the Empire in its struggle against tyranny, and we their brothers are now debarred from certain benefits with the Empire only because we are not white?”

The governor of Sierra Leone forwarded the two petitions on to the Colonial Office. He also attached his own letter, explaining that the discrepancy between Nash and the other West Indians in Sierra Leone was due to the fact that Nash was “of European parentage.”¹⁰³ The reactions of colonial officials in London revealed a similar pattern of racial thinking. One explained why Nash’s contract was the same as that of other West Indians: “The conditions of service were meant for a black man and Mr. Nash was thought to be one at first until we got the

¹⁰² Petition from the West Indian Mechanics of the Sierra Leone Government Railway to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 May 1919. NAUK, CO 267/582.

¹⁰³ Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 August 1919, NAUK, CO 267/582.

Medical Officer's report... But he is a 'European' under the pensions ordinance as both his parents were of European descent." Another justified the differentiation between Nash and the other West Indians by explaining that "the cost of living in a tropical climate was greater for persons born and brought up in a temperate one." A third official cautioned that this explanation was "not very strong" and that it would be "used to influence racial feeling already at a dangerous pitch." Yet he also conceded that he could not think of "anything better" and so they settled on this response.¹⁰⁴ In September 1919, the Colonial Office wrote back to the Sierra Leone governor and denied the request for higher war bonuses for West Indians. The Colonial Office also explained that Nash would continue to receive the "European" rate: "The cost of living in a tropical climate is greater for persons born and brought up in a temperate climate, than for those who are not so circumstanced."¹⁰⁵

In the payment of war bonuses, the British administration made clear distinctions between "Europeans," "West Indians," and "Africans." Yet when Caribbean administrators pointed out inconsistencies in these geographically-based categories and made claims based on national and imperial identity, the British quickly resorted to racialized rationales: in African colonies, white or "fairer skin" implied higher bonuses, while black implied lower ones. According to the Sierra Leone governor, E. T. Nash received a higher war bonus because he was "essentially a European." The inverse, it seems, was also true. In African colonies, black Caribbean administrators were "essentially African." The British government ignored the larger critiques of racism raised by West Indians and continued to defend their decisions and

¹⁰⁴ A fourth official also noted dismissively: "The whole case is based on the fact that Mr. Nash, who is white, gets European War Bonus. Hence a discourse on colour prejudice." See the comments in Colonial Office File on West Indian Petition, 8-15 September 1919, NAUK, CO 267/582.

¹⁰⁵ Draft reply from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of Sierra Leone, 17 September 1919, NAUK, CO 267/582.

categories. They were unwilling to admit that “Truth and Justice” were not the foundations of the Empire, and that in fact they were consciously enforcing a “system of colour prejudice.”

Furthermore, the British Empire’s “struggle against tyranny” in the war, as West Indians were beginning to understand, was also a concerted effort to preserve its own power and tyranny.¹⁰⁶

European colonial officials considered Caribbean administrators as “West Indian” or “*Antillais*” on occasions when they provided “European” services, but rarely made the same distinctions from Africans when it came to remuneration. In such cases, colonial officials turned away from national or imperial notions of belonging and fell back on the rigid lines of racial thinking. These shifting, often contradictory designations affected everyday life relentlessly: restricting and changing where Caribbean administrators lived and worked, what hotels they could stay in, how they travelled, whether or not they were promoted, how much they were paid, and so on. For Caribbean administrators, such particularization, exclusion, and racism shocked assumptions of “Britishness” and “Frenchness,” as well as ideas about the British and French empires. Instead of imperial or national belonging, they felt alienation and betrayal. To close this chapter, I will focus on Cunliffe Malcolm Hoyte, specifically a series of petitions he wrote between 1915 and 1917. Hoyte’s story powerfully captures the acute effects of these double binds.

Hoyte was born in Belmont, Trinidad, in 1884. He left for the Gold Coast in 1910 to work as a sanitary inspector. Over the next few years, he worked in Accra and the surrounding area, as well as in Kumasi. He conducted house inspections, examined animals at the Government Slaughter House, worked to limit the spread of yellow fever, collected parasitic worms and mosquito larvae for laboratory observations, and trained other sanitary inspectors. He

¹⁰⁶ For a study on war veterans using the rhetoric of empire as a claims-making device in the Francophone African context—alongside West African “political language” about debt and reciprocity—see Mann, *Native Sons*.

also organized a Mosquito Brigade, a culvert-clearing gang, and a refuse-collecting gang. According to Hoyte, much of this work was “very unpopular,” and so he often found himself at odds with Africans.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Hoyte experienced a great deal of discrimination at the hands of his supervisors. In response to this predicament, Hoyte wrote three lengthy petitions in which he described his experiences and summarized his complaints.

In the first two petitions, sent in March and July 1915, Hoyte raised concerns about racism, low pay, unpaid extra work, and a lack of advancement—concerns similar to those raised by other Caribbean administrators.¹⁰⁸ Hoyte claimed that after returning to the Gold Coast from leave in December 1913, he received “treatment” from “certain senior officers” that was “distinctly aggressive and offensive” and “highly tinctured with racial prejudice.” He wrote that it made him feel “humiliated and degraded,” that this “ill-treatment” seemed “pre-meditated.” When he submitted appeals, he was “threatened.” Hoyte also raised objections about working extra hours “during my leisure” but “without any remuneration whatever.” Disheartened, he declared that “this mode of distribution of labour in which I do all the work and others draw all the pay is far from encouraging.” Hoyte was equally frustrated about a lack of promotions: “The very books and measures I introduced for junior officers are now thrust into my hands. I am...now instructed with my own instructions.” The department was also “obstructing and then blocking” his opportunities for promotion. To Hoyte, this was “discouraging in the extreme.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ In his March 1915 petition, Hoyte noted that the unpopularity of sanitary work was “borne out by the Senior Sanitary Officer in every Sanitary and Medical Report of this Colony.” For example, from the 1911 report: “In our present state of development there is an undoubted tendency on the part of the natives to regard a Sanitary Inspector as a malignant type of Police officer.” Gold Coast Medical and Sanitary Report 1911, NAUK, CO 98/20, p. 64.

¹⁰⁸ Petition from Hoyte to the Medical Officer of Health, Accra, 10 March 1915; Petition from Hoyte to Governor of the Gold Coast, 26 July 1915, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File, PF 3/32/473.

¹⁰⁹ Accompanying Hoyte’s July petition were ten pages of hand-written “self-explanatory” tables detailing his lack of upward mobility and static salary grade, as well as a comprehensive list of the 30 documents and letters he referred to in the petition.

In addition to listing these grievances, Hoyte explained his motivations for coming to Africa. In doing so, he revealed the reach of imperial culture in the Caribbean:

In the first place I wanted to please; I wanted to get on; I wanted to demonstrate my capacity for work – good, solid, lasting work; I wanted to help; for Kipling had said ‘Take up the White man’s burden – Ye dare not stoop to less.’

Hoyte did genuinely believe in the “civilizing” mission, and he was eager to spread what he had learned about health and sanitation. In fact, he claimed that his devotion to the empire had not wavered: “In spite of all that happened (and still continues to happen) I never abated my zeal one jot.” Yet Hoyte was also under no illusion that he was a “White man,” and he was not simply trying to present himself as a loyal and dutiful British subject. He was also expressing the betrayal he felt as a West Indian working for the British administration in the Gold Coast. Indeed, after arriving in West Africa, Hoyte’s feelings about the British Empire shifted dramatically. In Trinidad, Hoyte had firmly considered himself to be “British,” but in the Gold Coast, his “British” colleagues excluded and mistreated him because of his skin colour. Africans, meanwhile, were often hostile, or at best indifferent. In light of these liminal circumstances, Hoyte likened himself to Odysseus. In a formal third-person tense, he explained that he felt caught “between the Charybdis of bitter public feeling on one side and the Scylla of studied ill-treatment from the Department he served so faithfully in the past, and to which he is still giving his best services under the circumstances on the other.” The power to determine who was and was not “British” left Hoyte with feelings of alienation about what he was doing, where he belonged, and who he was.

Hoyte’s superiors gave little credence to his complaints about racism, stagnancy, and unpaid work, and they derided his feelings of isolation.¹¹⁰ A year later, in August 1916, Hoyte

¹¹⁰ In fact, they mocked his petitions as “idiotic and childish” and “insubordinate.” David Alexander, the Senior Sanitary Officer in Accra, even suggested that it was “time [Hoyte] realized that his services are not indispensable.”

had still not received any responses to his petitions, so he sent letters to the governor, the colonial secretary, and the medical officer of health in Kumasi inquiring about his concerns.¹¹¹ This time Hoyte did receive a response. Alexander Slater, the colonial secretary in Accra, instructed Hoyte's supervisors to inform Hoyte that his petitions had been given "the fullest consideration" but that there was "no higher appointment for which he [was] eligible" and that "the general tone of his correspondence and his attitude towards the Government of which he is a servant does not encourage the hope that his claims to any such higher appointment will be very strong." Slater also instructed Hoyte's supervisors to "suitably rebuke Mr. Hoyte for firing off letters direct to the Governor and Colonial Secretary" and that "repetition of such irregular and insubordinate behaviour" would "not be tolerated."¹¹² Absent in the response was any concern for Hoyte's complaints about racism, but he was undeterred.

While on leave in Edinburgh the following year, Hoyte wrote a third petition, this time addressed to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies in London.¹¹³ Referring to himself in the third person, Hoyte declared that "the treatment he has received is so foreign to all those recognized principles of Right, Justice and Liberty, which are the hall-mark of British rule and upon which our Empire is founded and preserved." Hoyte also noted, however, that he felt "encouraged" that his concerns would eventually be redressed because "the present war is being

Alexander had previously met with Hoyte, in April 1915, and after listening to his concerns, had told him to "put aside" all his "ideas of persecution" because these "imaginary grievances" were "bad for his health." Medical Officer of Health, Accra, to Senior Sanitary Officer, Accra, 17 March 1915; Senior Sanitary Officer to Principal Medical Officer, 31 August 1915; Senior Sanitary Officer to Principal Medical Officer, 12 February 1918. In his letter, Alexander referred to an interview with Hoyte on 30 April 1915. PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File.

¹¹¹ Hoyte to Medical Officer of Health, Kumasi, 21 August 1916; Hoyte to Governor of the Gold Coast, 21 August 1916; Hoyte to Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast, 21 August 1916. PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File.

¹¹² Letters and minutes from Colonial Secretary to Principal Medical Officer to be communicated to C. M. G. Hoyte, 5 and 12 September 1916, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File, PF 3/32/473.

¹¹³ Hoyte to Under Secretary of the State for the Colonies, 26 September 1917, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/239.

waged for the identical purpose of securing and preserving Right, Justice and Liberty for an ill-treated people whom our Empire had contracted to protect.”¹¹⁴ Elsewhere in the petition, Hoyte reiterated his grievances about racism and promotions and then took direct aim at the inconsistent classification and treatment of Caribbean administrators. He noted that the Gold Coast government recognized “two classes of officers, viz., European and Native.” He then explained that he was often asked to “perform the duties” of a “European Sanitary Inspector” but was always “denied the privilege of acting for a European.” Instead, he was “classed with the Native Staff” and treated and paid like “a Native.”¹¹⁵ Yet here too he encountered discrimination, because he was “not allowed the privilege of a native to draw the Ashanti Consolidated Allowance.” Hoyte, who now referred to himself as “a native of Trinidad,” was caught between the two polarized categories of the British Empire in West Africa. Yet Hoyte was also acutely aware of the limits and contradictions of such dichotomized categories. Referring to the General Orders of the Gold Coast and the West African Pensions Law, he claimed that he was “a European” because “neither of his parents were born in West Africa.”¹¹⁶

Hoyte was well aware that he was not “a European,” just as he was well aware that he was not a “White man.” Yet his detailed understanding of British colonial laws allowed him to

¹¹⁴ Hoyte also alluded to the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, specifically to the executions of three Irish journalists and activists on 26 April 1916: Frances Sheehy Skeffington, Patrick James McIntyre, and Thomas Dickson. The executions were unwarranted, and so in Dublin on 7 June 1916, the British court-martialled Captain Bowen-Colthurst, who had ordered the executions. The court found him guilty of murdering the three men, but also found him to be insane, so he spent the remainder of his life in Canada. Hoyte made direct reference to the Report of the “Royal Commission on the Arrest and Subsequent Treatment of Mr. Francis Sheehy Skeffington, Mr. Thomas Dickson, and Mr. Patrick James McIntyre,” and stated that he was aware of “the recent manifestations on the part of this Empire in righting wrong and removing abuses.”

¹¹⁵ In fact, according to Hoyte’s calculations, he had “saved to the Treasury a sum exceeding £250.”

¹¹⁶ Hoyte was referring to Gold Coast General Order 52(1) and General Order 76 and West African Pensions Laws No. 748, paragraph 1.

claim status as a “European.” The Gold Coast government quickly rejected this claim¹¹⁷—as Hoyte surely expected—but his intellectual move was still novel and significant. By claiming to be a “European” and invoking the “recognized principles” of “Right, Justice and Liberty,” Hoyte defied a pattern of inconsistent categorization and made a direct challenge to the racist thinking that governed the deployment of these categories and principles. Hoyte had grown up in a stratified colonial society in Trinidad, travelled to England and Scotland where he encountered similar forms of racial discrimination, and by 1917, had spent seven years living and working in the Gold Coast, where he found himself isolated between Africans and Europeans. During this time, Hoyte had also become aware of the incongruencies between race, nation, and empire, and was beginning to understand how the British relied on rigid racial categories to impose their power—whether in Belmont, Edinburgh, or Accra. Had Hoyte remained in Trinidad, he may not have realized this broader trend, but by travelling to different parts of the British Empire, he learned to recognize the falsity of its categories and “principles.” Hoyte’s petitions were outward expressions of this growing awareness: he pointed out the contradictions of monolithic categories such as “African,” “West Indian,” and “European,” and he questioned the hypocrisy of a racist empire that claimed to be built on—and to be spreading—the principles of “Right,” “Justice,” and “Liberty.”

¹¹⁷ Upon reading Hoyte’s petition, the Secretary of State for the Colonies asked Hugh Clifford, the Gold Coast governor, for his “observations.” Clifford wrote back describing Hoyte as an “able but ill-balanced West Indian official” and stated that Hoyte’s grievances were “ill-founded,” “of a petty character,” and “imaginary if not disingenuous.” As a whole, Clifford derided the petition as “a farrago of insinuations” and an “exhibition of insubordination.” Regarding Hoyte’s claim to being “European,” Clifford wrote: “I do not propose to follow Mr. Hoyte’s ingenious but unconvincing attempt to show that officially he is a European.” Clifford did concede to the delay in responding to Hoyte’s March and July 1915 petitions, noting that the “regrettable” delay was “attributable to inefficient office work on the part of the Acting Senior Sanitary Officer and not...to any deliberate suppression of papers.” To conclude, Clifford stated: “Mr. Hoyte has no valid cause for considering himself unfairly treated and unless he once and for all ceases to air imaginary grievances, I shall feel compelled to ask that he may be retired, since his efficiency is necessarily gravely impaired by these continual and inordinate complaints.” Secretary of the State for the Colonies to Governor of the Gold Coast, 5 October 1917, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/239; Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 March 1918, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File, PF 3/32/473.

Near the end of Hoyte's July 1915 petition to the Gold Coast governor, he quoted a passage from Thomas Babington Macaulay's 1827 critical review of Niccolò Machiavelli's writings:

He alone reads history aright, who, observing how powerfully circumstances influence the feelings and opinions of men, how often vices pass into virtues, and paradoxes into axioms, learns to distinguish what is accidental and transitory in human nature, from what is essential and immutable.¹¹⁸

Hoyte claimed that he was citing the passage in order to inspire the governor to treat his case with “the sober judgement of an unprejudiced mind.”¹¹⁹ Yet for Hoyte there were deeper resonances in the passage. His experiences with assimilation, migration, and racism allowed him to recognize that what was “transitory” about the British Empire were the shifting boundaries around who belonged to the British nation—whether in the Caribbean, Europe, or West Africa. Hoyte had also realized that what was “essential and immutable” were the racial demarcations that undergirded the empire and dictated the contours of these shifting boundaries. Hoyte never completely repudiated the British Empire—in fact, he remained part of the Gold Coast administration until his retirement in 1939. Nonetheless, with his petitions, he exposed the arbitrary nature of imperial categories. He articulated the tensions felt by many other Caribbean administrators in Africa as they responded to racism, particularization and exclusion.

CONCLUSION

Caribbean administrators grew up in colonial societies thick with ideas about race,

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Hoyte's petition to Governor of the Gold Coast, 26 July 1915, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File, PF 3/32/473. Hoyte was quoting from Macaulay's essay, “Machiavelli,” which appears in *English Essays: From Sir Philip Sidney to Macaulay* (New York, NY: Collier & Son, 1909), 398. Macaulay's father, Zachary Macaulay, was a famous abolitionist who worked as a governor in Jamaica and in Sierra Leone where Jamaicans were settling. A different Thomas Babington Macaulay was a receptive slave from Nigeria who grew up in Sierra Leone and was the father of Nigerian nationalist Herbert Macaulay.

¹¹⁹ Petition from Hoyte to Governor of the Gold Coast, 26 July 1915, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File.

difference, and hierarchy and had to navigate the legacies—and enduring presents—of slavery, indentured labour, and European colonial occupations. The influence of imperial culture led many to consider themselves “British” and “French” and as part of the British and French empires. Some also developed romantic ideas about Africa as a “homeland,” though they typically accompanied such beliefs with the notion that Africans were their inferiors. When Caribbean administrators left for Africa, they carried these ideas with them and saw themselves as both taking up the “White man’s burden” and making a symbolic diasporic return.

The daily realities of life in African colonies radically interrupted these conceptions, and Caribbean administrators found themselves caught between Africans and Europeans. Africans typically resented the presence of Caribbean administrators, who were entrenched in European administrations, participated in military expeditions and other forms of colonial violence, espoused paternalistic attitudes, and made every attempt to distinguish themselves as distinct. Africans also emphasized the social and cultural differences of Caribbean administrators by identifying them as the descendants of slaves, as “corrupted” Africans, and as Europeanized black men who were half-assimilated. In addition to these African-Caribbean tensions was the racism of Europeans. British and French colonial officials discriminated against Caribbean administrators in a range of contexts. The malleable lines of “British” and “French” identities, coupled with the rigid boundaries of racial categories, created double binds that determined where Caribbean administrators lived, where they were posted, whether or not they were promoted, how much they were paid, and so on. Depending on what suited colonial imperatives, European officials variously treated Caribbean administrators as “natives” and “*indigènes*,” or as “West Indian” and “*Antillais*.” Caribbean administrators, for their part, imagined themselves as superior to Africans and aligned themselves with “British” and “French” identities, but colonial

racism upended these assumptions. Such experiences made Caribbean administrators keenly aware of the hollowness of national and imperial belonging, the importance of racial difference, and the profound effects of living in between.

Caribbean administrators were intrusive shadows in the supposed divide between black and white, African and European, and they blurred the lines between “colonizer” and “colonized.” A number of scholars have written about similar inconsistencies in colonial situations to highlight the “incoherence” of colonialism.¹²⁰ Such work focuses on the “contradictions” of European colonial policies and centres the “negotiations” of colonized subjects.¹²¹ Too often, however, this tendency has become an end in itself rather than a means to explain the deeper implications of the “tensions of empire.” As Gary Wilder suggests, this work produces “important but by now unsurprising conclusions.”¹²² For this study of Caribbean administrators in Africa, “contradictions” and “incoherence” are merely a starting point.

In Part II of this dissertation, I analyze the profound intellectual impacts of exclusion and alienation and examine how Caribbean administrators responded to their predicaments. As they grappled with their middle positions and the incongruencies of race, nation, and empire, they became aware of the hypocrisy of rigid racial categories and began to understand how the

¹²⁰ See, for example, Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and Connection”; Cooper and Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire*; Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹²¹ In the early 2000s, Cooper’s *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), influenced many historians of West Africa to describe colonialism as “uneven,” “episodic,” and as a “space of negotiation.” They detailed the “interplay” between Africans and Europeans and explained that Africans “shaped and were shaped by colonialism.” See, for example, Judith Byfield, *The Bluest Hands: A Social and Economic History of Women Dyers in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1890-1940* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002); Carolyn Brown, *“We Were All Slaves”: African Miners, Culture, and Resistance at the Enugu Government Colliery* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003); Lisa A. Lindsay, *Working with Gender: Wage Labour and Social Change in Southwestern Nigeria* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003).

¹²² Wilder suggests that this scholarship is “preoccupied” with an “analytic of failure.” Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 78-79. See Gregory Mann’s similar critique in Mann, “Locating Colonial Histories,” 411-412.

boundaries of “national” belonging could be adapted to different social, political, and cultural contexts.¹²³ With this gradual realization, Caribbean administrators also recognized the possibility of deploying their own ideas about race and nation, ideas that they could shape and mobilize for their own ends. As they navigated where they did and did not belong in African colonies, many Caribbean administrators articulated new ideas about empire, “home,” Africa and Africans, language, racial identities, and geography. In the following chapters, I consider a number of specific cases to illuminate how migration, racism, and exchanges with Africans affected the intellectual trajectories of Caribbean administrators.

¹²³ Putnam, *Radical Moves*.

PART II
AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN EXCHANGES

3

LE PAYS NATAL

Defend us from having to decide what is the permanent domicile of anyone—and in particular of the wandering West Indian.

COLONIAL OFFICE OFFICIAL, 1919¹

In June 1914, Samuel Moseley and his wife left Barbados and headed for Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone government had just appointed Moseley as the new head of the Freetown Experimental Farm, and the young couple were eager to begin a new phase of their lives in West Africa.² Just over a year later, however, Moseley sent a letter to the director of the Sierra Leone Agriculture Department claiming that his salary was “wholly insufficient” to support himself and his wife “in so uncongenial a climate.” He added that he soon expected to find himself “with an impaired constitution, a wife whose health is passed repair, without clothing, and with an empty purse.”³ In closing, Moseley stated plainly, “I have the honour to request to be sent back to my native home as soon as possible.”⁴ The director passed the letter on to the acting governor, Arthur Hollis, along with a glowing recommendation. Yet Hollis was unwilling to increase the “dark-coloured” Moseley’s salary or send him back to his “native home” in the Caribbean.⁵

¹ Note in file on “War Bonus of West Indians,” 19 December 1919, NAUK, CO 583/79.

² One of Moseley’s motivating factors was salary. At his previous post in St. Vincent he was earning £60 per annum, while in Sierra Leone his starting salary was £120 per annum. Francis Watts, Commissioner of Agriculture for the West Indies, to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 March 1914, NAUK, CO 318/332/4; Watts to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 January 1914, NAUK, CO 318/332/1.

³ Moseley earned £120 in 1914 and £130 in 1915. Moseley to Acting Director of Sierra Leone Agriculture Department, 23 September 1915, NAUK, CO 267/567.

⁴ Moseley to Acting Director of Sierra Leone Agriculture Department, 23 September 1915, NAUK, CO 267/567.

⁵ Acting Governor Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 October 1915, NAUK, CO 267/567. Douglas Scotland, Director of the Agriculture Department, wrote that Moseley had “proved himself to be a very capable and efficient officer.” Scotland to Colonial Secretary, 27 September 1915, NAUK, CO 267/567. Francis Watts described Moseley as “dark coloured” in a letter to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 January 1914, NAUK, CO 318/332/1.

In 1917, the Sierra Leone government denied Moseley his scheduled leave because of the war. Three years later, Moseley made a second request for a transfer back to the Caribbean and described how his low salary prevented him from obtaining the “necessaries of life.” Once again, the Sierra Leone government refused.⁶ Then, in November 1921, angry and annoyed at the lack of concern for his appeals, Moseley sent a detailed letter of grievances to the Colonial Office in London. He explained that he and his wife and children were frequently ill with malaria and blackwater fever. He reiterated that he did not have enough money to care for his family. And he described how he and his wife had eagerly anticipated the births of their children, believing that new life would bring them “a measure of comfort,” but that sorrow overcame any sense of hope as their children “died in babyhood one after another.” In closing, Moseley described his time in Sierra Leone as “seven years of irksome living” and as “one long spell of want and sacrifice.” He also noted that in Sierra Leone he felt like “a stranger.” Yet Moseley could not afford to resign his post and return to Barbados with his family, so he inquired for a third time about a transfer back to the Caribbean.⁷

This time, Moseley’s efforts met with some success. In November 1922, the administration granted him a significant salary increase.⁸ Yet they did not consider the more critical part of Moseley’s appeal—his request to return to the Caribbean. Moreover, the extra money did little to improve his or his family’s health: three years later, the Medical Board of Sierra Leone found Moseley to be suffering from “neurasthenia and general debility.” The Board

⁶ Moseley Application for Promotion in the Colonial Service, 11 September 1920, NAUK, CO 267/588.

⁷ Moseley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 November 1921, NAUK, CO 267/594.

⁸ The Sierra Leone government raised Moseley’s annual salary from £204 to £300. This happened in large part because of support from Moseley’s supervisor, Douglas Scotland, who claimed that “it would be exceedingly difficult and practically impossible to replace an officer like Mr. Moseley.” Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 June 1922, NAUK, CO 267/596; Douglas Scotland to Colonial Secretary of Sierra Leone, 5 October 1921, NAUK, CO 267/592.

recommended that Moseley and his family “proceed at once on leave home and not return to Sierra Leone.”⁹ Moseley was thus finally able to return to Barbados, but only after being “permanently invalidated” from the colonial civil service at age 41.¹⁰

Certain details of Moseley’s story are unique, but his longing for his “native home” and his description of feeling like “a stranger” were common sentiments among Caribbean administrators in Africa. Some, like Moseley, brought their families with them, while others left loved ones behind in the Caribbean. Still others were single men and women. In each case, however, networks of family and friends were fragmented. As a result, descriptions of isolation and dislocation were pervasive in the letters of Caribbean administrators, as were requests for transfers back home.

In May 1934, for instance, Marius Larcher asked for a posting to Martinique because his wife was ill. They were on leave in France at the time, but had spent much of the previous decade in West and Central Africa—Larcher had worked as a judge in Dakar, Douala, Bangui, Libreville, and Port-Gentil. Larcher believed that his wife would recover her health best back home in Martinique.¹¹ He explained that she was suffering from “neurasthenic nostalgia” and referred to his request as a “question of humanity.”¹² The Ministry of Colonies eventually gave Larcher a position in nearby Guadeloupe, but others were less fortunate. Some, such as Elias Buckmire of Grenada, simply lost patience, resigned their posts, and returned to the Caribbean

⁹ Moseley Health Report, 12 May 1925, NAUK, CO 267/608.

¹⁰ Unlike many other Caribbean administrators, Moseley was fortunate to receive a lump sum gratuity of £352 and a pension of £49.10 per annum. Moseley Pension Form, 8 October 1925, NAUK, CO 267/611.

¹¹ Marius Larcher to Minister of Colonies, 21 May 1934, ANOM, Larcher Personnel File, EE/ii/4086.

¹² Larcher wrote that his wife was “*menacé d’une neuresthénie à caractère nostalgique*.” Larcher to Minister of Colonies, 14 July 1934, ANOM, Larcher Personnel File, EE/ii/4086. On the disease of nostalgia, see Suzanne Nash ed., *Home and its Dislocations in Nineteenth-Century France* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), especially Michael S. Roth, “Returning to Nostalgia,” 25-44.

on their own.¹³ In other cases, Caribbean administrators were unable to return to their homes. In August 1909, H. E. Raymond of Jamaica sent a desperate letter to the governor of Sierra Leone. He explained that he had previously worked for the Sierra Leone Railway but was now “a poor man” and wanted “to go back to the West Indies” because life was much harder for him in Sierra Leone than “for the natives.” He declared, starkly, “I am [a] perfect stranger in the Colony.”¹⁴ It is unclear whether or not Raymond was able to return to Jamaica.

One significant aspect of these stories is the language used by Caribbean administrators. As described in Chapter 1, most were eager to serve the British and French Empires, to *be* “British” and “French,” and to return to the “land of ancestors.” After arriving in Africa, however, and as they reckoned with ambiguity, racism, and alienation, much of this language evaporated. Instead, their letters from Africa contain frequent descriptions of loneliness and homesickness and very few traces of the earlier zeal, either for empire or for the “return” to Africa. Particularly striking is the sense of nostalgia for the “native country” or “*pays natal*,” for specific places around the Caribbean Sea. Indeed, in almost every case, Caribbean administrators invoked “home” warmly as a place of family, health, and community. They also invoked the *pays natal* as a concrete place, one distinct from the abstract “home” of the British and French empires and the imagined “homeland” of Africa. In other words, the language of “home” and “country” marked an important shift in the thinking of Caribbean administrators. Feelings of

¹³ Buckmire started working as an agriculture instructor in the Gold Coast in 1909. Two years later, he asked for a transfer back to Grenada. Salary increases persuaded Buckmire to renew his three-year contract in 1912 and again in 1915, but in August 1916 he resigned and returned home. “Report on the Agricultural Department,” Gold Coast Annual Report 1916, NAUK, CO 98/26; Elias Buckmire to W. D. Tudhope, 30 September 1911, quoted in letter from Tudhope to Colonial Secretary, Accra, 7 November 1911, NAUK, CO 96/511.

¹⁴ H. E. Raymond to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 August 1909, NAUK, CO 267/516. Raymond was likely a member of the disbanded West India Regiment, some of whom remained in Sierra Leone and joined the railway department. For more on this, see Chapter 4.

strangerhood and dislocation led Caribbean administrators to rethink their positions in the British and French empires and to re-imagine their notions of belonging.

STRANGERHOOD, DISCLOCATION, AND RETHINKING EMPIRE

In July 1909, Mark Alexis signed an agreement to work as a travelling agricultural instructor in the Gold Coast.¹⁵ For the next three years, he worked at the Assuantsi agricultural station, just north of Cape Coast.¹⁶ In January 1912, a few months before his contract was set to expire, Alexis wrote to W. D. Tudhope, the director of the Agriculture Department, and offered to renew his contract on the condition of a salary increase.¹⁷ Alexis claimed that the combination of his meagre salary and the high cost of living in the Gold Coast—an “uncertain and unhealthy country”—had forced him and his family into “great hardship.” As proof of his merit, Alexis declared: “I have worked with heart and hand, not merely for my poor salary, but to give satisfaction to you and to my country.” In this case, “country” referred to Britain and its Empire. By referring to Britain affectionately as *his* “country,” Alexis asserted both a belief in the British Empire and a belief that he *belonged* within the Empire. Moreover, by contrasting his “country,” Britain, with that “uncertain and unhealthy country,” the Gold Coast, Alexis affirmed his colonial ideas about Africans and African colonies and their place in the Empire.

Several months later, in May 1912, Alexis received his salary increase, in large part because Tudhope and the Gold Coast government did not believe that any of the African staff

¹⁵ Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of the Gold Coast, 30 July 1909, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/177.

¹⁶ Gold Coast Annual Reports for 1910, 1911, and 1912, NAUK, CO 98/18, 98/20, and 98/21.

¹⁷ Mark Alexis to Director of Agriculture, 22 January 1912, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File, PF 3/3/29. His annual salary in 1912 was £120, see letter from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of the Gold Coast, 30 July 1909, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/177.

were yet “capable” of replacing him.¹⁸ Over the next few years, however, Alexis became more and more dissatisfied with the conditions of his contract and with life in the Gold Coast.¹⁹ While on leave in London in August 1917, Alexis sent a detailed list of his grievances to the Colonial Office.²⁰ At the core of the appeal was Alexis’ claim that the Gold Coast government had miscalculated his housing and travelling allowances. Referring to a neatly calculated chart on the final page of the letter, Alexis stated that the administration owed him exactly £115.11.3. He explained that without this money he was “placed to a great disadvantage” while living in “that country,” the Gold Coast.²¹

The Colonial Office did not immediately reply. When Alexis inquired about his petition three months later, they informed him with a nearly impenetrable bureaucratic letter that a decision would eventually “be communicated” but that his petition was still being “duly considered.”²² The very next day, Alexis wrote a curt letter back to the Colonial Office: “I should

¹⁸ Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 May 1912, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File; Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 July 1912, NAUK, CO 96/519.

¹⁹ Alexis refers to his 1912 contract renewal in his letter to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 August 1917, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File.

²⁰ Alexis to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 August 1917, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File, PF 3/3/29. Like Moseley, Alexis and his family were unable to return to the Caribbean for leave because of the war.

²¹ Alexis’ official position as a “Travelling Agricultural Instructor” made him eligible for a travelling allowance. At various times between 1913 and 1917, however, the Gold Coast administration simultaneously appointed him as the Officer-in-Charge of the Kumasi agricultural station. While in Kumasi, the government paid Alexis a housing allowance, but not a travelling allowance. Citing various Executive Council orders, Alexis claimed that he was still eligible for his travelling allowance during his time in Kumasi. He also claimed that he had not received the correct amount of housing allowance. Alexis to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 August 1917, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File.

²² G. Grindle to Alexis, 14 November 1917, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/240. Alexis to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8 November 1917, NAUK, CO 96/586. In fact, Tudhope and Hugh Clifford, the Governor of the Gold Coast, had already sent the Colonial Office their opinions on the matter. Tudhope carefully addressed each of Alexis’ claims and stated that while he had “no complaint with Mr. Alexis’ general work,” the petition was “not quite in accordance with facts” and Alexis thus had “no special ground for complaint.” Clifford, in agreement with Tudhope, stated that Alexis’ grievances were “of a most unsubstantial character,” and that while Alexis was “a good officer,” the Colonial Office should “administer to him a rebuke.” W. S. Tudhope to Hugh Clifford, 23 October 1917, Enclosure in Gold Coast No. 708, 9 November 1917; Hugh Clifford to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 November 1917, NAUK, CO 96/582.

like to feel that in resuming my duties on the Gold Coast, I shall not be subjected to treatment which has been meted out to me on previous occasions.” In the same envelope, Alexis included a letter of application for a transfer back to Trinidad.²³

After nearly eight years in the Gold Coast, this was the first time Alexis had requested a transfer to the Caribbean. Alexis opened the letter by stating simply that he was applying “for transfer to the Trinidad Government for service in the Agricultural Dept. of that Colony.” In this unaffected phrasing, Trinidad was “that Colony,” an island attached to and part of the British Empire. But later in the letter Alexis’ tone changed. He expressed the difficulty of “having to support more than one home” and described Trinidad as “my native country” and as a place where “my position would be more satisfactory.” When Alexis had first come to the Gold Coast in 1909, his wife and children had come with him, but since 1913 he had also been making payments on a house in Trinidad.²⁴ His task of “having to support more than one home” suggests that he struggled to meet both the financial costs of maintaining two homes as well as the emotional costs of sustaining multiple networks of relatives and friends. The effort required to buttress the financial and emotional structures of two homes on two continents took a toll. Spread thin across the Atlantic ocean, Alexis wanted to return to Trinidad, his “native country.”

By December 1917, Alexis had still not received a response regarding his transfer request, so he returned to the Gold Coast and to his appointment in Kumasi. A couple of months later, in February 1918, Alexis wrote to the Gold Coast government to inquire once again about his application. In his letter, he pointedly restated his desire to return to Trinidad: “I should be glad to be transferred to my country where conditions should be more suitable and favourable to

²³ Alexis to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 November 1917, NAUK, CO 96/586.

²⁴ Alexis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 December 1921, NAUK, CO 295/539.

me and shall endeavour to serve my country as I am serving the Gold Coast Colony.”²⁵ Alexis’ language had changed significantly over the six previous years. In 1912, when Alexis had petitioned for a salary increase, he had expressed his commitment to the British Empire by stating that was working “with heart and hand” for “my country,” referring to the British Empire. Six years later, Alexis now thought of Trinidad as his “country.” Moreover, Alexis was now eager to “serve” his country, Trinidad, instead of the Gold Coast, which he referred to as a “Colony,” a piece of imperial property.

In August 1918, the Colonial Office informed Alexis that they would not be giving him an appointment in Trinidad.²⁶ In the months and years that followed, Alexis made further requests for transfers back to the Caribbean, but these too were unsuccessful.²⁷ He also continued to submit petitions concerning financial and other injustices, but his superiors chided him for troubling them with “imaginary grievances.”²⁸ Then, in September 1926, Alexis suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and his right side began to paralyze periodically. The Gold Coast Medical Board diagnosed him with hemiplegia and recommended that he be “invalided out of the service” because he was “unlikely to be capable of rendering further efficient service to the

²⁵ Alexis to Governor of the Gold Coast, 20 February 1918, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File.

²⁶ Governor of Trinidad to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 August 1918, NAUK, CO 295/517. Apparently there were no vacancies in the Trinidad Agriculture Department.

²⁷ Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 February 1921; W. D. Tudhope to Gold Coast Colonial Secretary, 8 September 1921, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File. Both these letters reference different Alexis transfer requests. As does Alexis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 November 1921, NAUK, CO 295/539. A later request comes from Alexis to Gold Coast Colonial Secretary, 3 April 1925, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File. Alexis was able to return to Trinidad on leave in September 1921 and in July 1925. Alexis African Service Sheet, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File.

²⁸ Quoted in Gold Coast Director of Agriculture to Gold Coast Colonial Secretary, 24 April 1920, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File. Six years later, the Director of Agriculture referenced this earlier warning about “imaginary grievances” and wrote that “Mr. Alexis has clearly shown since that he is not disposed to act on instructions.” Gold Coast Director of Agriculture to Gold Coast Colonial Secretary, 5 June 1926, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File.

Government.”²⁹ A little over a month later, Alexis and his family were on a boat heading to Trinidad. The Gold Coast government had thus finally accommodated Alexis’ request, but only, as in the case of Samuel Moseley, when Alexis was expendable. When Alexis died in August 1933 at age 57, he died in Trinidad, at his home on Charlotte Street in Port of Spain.³⁰

Over the course of his time in West Africa, Alexis’ articulations of “home” and “country” shifted dramatically. He arrived in 1909 and had been eager to work with “heart and hand” for the British Empire. After more than a decade of low pay, racism, and maltreatment at the hands of that empire, however, and as financial and emotional burdens accumulated, Alexis began to rethink the structure of—and his position in—the British Empire. He saw Trinidad as a place where he could remove himself from imperial strictures, a place where he could ease personal, financial, and familial pressures. It is unlikely that Alexis ever called for independence, but in his own thinking, he cleaved himself, his family, and his country, Trinidad, away from a pitiless entity that he no longer wanted to be a part of. Alexis’ intellectual shift, from an embrace of empire to a rejection, was characteristic of many other Caribbean administrators.

Such changing articulations of home and country took more than one form, however, and other cases illuminate these different trajectories. For example, to William Beaudu of Carbet, Martinique, home was a destination for mental and physical healing. Beaudu studied law in Paris, and in June 1913, he went to Senegal to take up his appointment as a judge in Saint-Louis. His wife, Lucie Bouverat, accompanied him. Not long after arriving in Saint-Louis, Bouverat became seriously ill and began experiencing “persecutory delusions” (*délire de persécution*).³¹ In

²⁹ Proceedings of Medical Board Examination of Mark Alexis, 29 October 1926, PRAAD, Alexis Personnel File.

³⁰ I have not been able to locate an obituary for Alexis, but he did own a house at 148 Charlotte Street. Alexis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 December 1921, NAUK, CO 295/539.

³¹ William Beaudu to Minister of Colonies, 25 October 1924, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File, EE/ii/2294/5. In this letter, Beaudu mentions that his wife first experienced these “morbid feelings” in Saint-Louis in 1915.

January 1916, Beaudu went on leave and the couple travelled to Guadeloupe, Bouverat's home island. While there, Beaudu sent a letter to his director asking for an appointment in Guadeloupe. Beaudu explained that by remaining in Bouverat's "*pays natal*...her health could be consolidated and would not relapse."³² Beaudu's director granted the request, and so Beaudu and Bouverat stayed in Guadeloupe for the next four years. In January 1920, Beaudu believed that his wife's health had sufficiently recovered, and so he chose to head back to West Africa.³³

This time, the Ministry of Colonies appointed Beaudu to Dakar. At first Bouverat remained healthy, but before long she again fell ill. In November 1923, Beaudu sent a letter to the Minister of Colonies asking for another transfer back to Guadeloupe, even if it meant reduced pay.³⁴ Nothing came of Beaudu's request, however, and so while in France in July 1924, Beaudu pleaded with his director to intercede on his behalf. Beaudu explained that they were "living a nightmare" and that "only a definitive return to the *pays natal* will allow my wife to forget these dreadful persecutions." Bouverat believed that she was "the victim of dreadful persecutions at the hands of certain people of [their] *dakarois* community."³⁵ After receiving no response for several months, Beaudu wrote again to the Minister of Colonies and attached a doctor's report explaining that Bouverat's health was worsening. The doctor noted that Bouverat was suffering the same "persecutory delusions" as before, but that they were now "complicated by auditory

³² Beaudu to Director, 31 January 1916, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

³³ Beaudu to Minister of Colonies, 25 October 1924, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

³⁴ Beaudu to Minister of Colonies, 27 November 1923, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

³⁵ Beaudu to Director, 14 July 1924, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File. "*Plus que jamais, j'estime avec tous les médecins qui ont traité ma pauvre femme que seul le retour définitif au pays natal lui permettra d'oublier les persécutions effroyables dont elle croit avoir été victime de la part de certaines personnes de notre entourage dakarois.*" Emphasis in original.

hallucinations.”³⁶ Were these allusions to witchcraft? Beaudu and Bouverat may have understood her illness in this manner, even if the doctor did not voice such accusations in his official correspondence. Indeed, references to “persecutions” “delusions,” and “hallucinations” were common in descriptions of witchcraft in Senegal—and elsewhere.³⁷ Beaudu and Bouverat’s engagement with this language alone reveals an acknowledgement of African forms of power, a shift in their thinking.

In any case, the doctor recommended that Bouverat return immediately to Guadeloupe where, in the “presence of her parents and a familiar climate,” she would find “moral comfort and reassurance” and would be able to “improve her mental and physical state.”³⁸ In his own letters, Beaudu explained that even “long and costly treatments” in France could only “ameliorate” Bouverat’s condition, not heal her. It was in Bouverat’s “*pays d’origine*,” Beaudu claimed, that she would benefit from “childhood memories and her parents, which would have the most positive influence on her recovery.” Beaudu was desperate for a transfer back to Guadeloupe because he knew that he could not bring Bouverat back to Senegal with him, nor could he leave her “alone in France.”³⁹ Guadeloupe was the only place where she could recover her health.

The Minister of Colonies did not respond immediately, but Beaudu was able to extend his leave and so he and Bouverat returned to Martinique for several months. While there, Beaudu again requested a transfer to Guadeloupe. In his letter to the Minister of Colonies, he explained

³⁶ Report of Dr. Edgard Blum, 22 October 1924, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

³⁷ See, for example, Emmanuel Akyeampong, Allan Hill, and Arthur Kleinman, eds. *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

³⁸ Report of Dr. Edgard Blum, 22 October 1924, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

³⁹ Beaudu to Minister of the Colonies, 8 October 1924, and Beaudu to Minister of the Colonies, 25 October 1924, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

that he and his wife had benefitted tremendously from being back in Martinique, his “*petit pays natal*” and that his wife had recovered her “mental equilibrium.”⁴⁰ In order to avoid a transfer back to West Africa, Beaudu also made a suggestion: if there was no position available in Guadeloupe, then what about Réunion? Beaudu believed that in Réunion his wife could at least live in “a climate and lifestyle similar to that of her *île natale*.”⁴¹ The Minister of Colonies acquiesced and in April 1926, notified Beaudu to take up his new position in Réunion. Bewildered, Beaudu sent an urgent letter to the governor general of Martinique explaining that he had only suggested Réunion to ensure that he would avoid “a forced return to Dakar.”⁴² He also stated that going to the Indian Ocean island would be “a true disaster.” The governor general forwarded Beaudu’s letter on to the Minister of Colonies and urged the Minister not to send Beaudu and his wife to Réunion. This effort was to no avail, and several months later, Beaudu and Bouverat were bound for Réunion. They lived there until August 1930. At that time, Beaudu chose to retire, explaining that to finally calm his wife’s “nervous troubles,” it was “fundamentally important that [she] return as soon as possible to her family and her *pays d’origine*.”⁴³

For Beaudu and Bouverat, life in Senegal, France, and Réunion had led to fear, delusions of persecution, and general instability. The “*pays natal*,” meanwhile, had become a long sought-after but often elusive destination. Yet Martinique and Guadeloupe were not vague or abstract memories. Rather, they were vivid and bright lights, always on the horizon. Beaudu’s requests to return to the Caribbean were not wistful nostalgia, but a visceral yearning for all the specifics of

⁴⁰ Beaudu to Director, 3 September 1925, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

⁴¹ Beaudu to Minister of Colonies, 25 January 1925, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

⁴² Beaudu to Governor General of Martinique, 3 April 1926, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

⁴³ Beaudu to Minister of Colonies, 22 August 1930, ANOM, Beaudu Personnel File.

home. There was utter longing for the totality of the *pays natal*, for the family networks, friends, climate, and memories of childhood that could sustain their health. The feeling of being at home was a source for mental and physical recovery not attainable elsewhere—not in Senegal, not in France, not in Réunion, and not anywhere in the French Empire, for that matter. In Beaudu's rendering, Martinique and Guadeloupe were not colonies, but places of sustenance and renewal. Much like Alexis' Trinidad, *les Antilles* in the minds of Beaudu and Bouverat were distinct from the French Empire, separate from the pain, confusion, and instability of imperialism. For all their troubles, however, Beaudu and Bouverat were still able to return home. Many other Caribbean administrators became lost in the unforgiving mazes of imperial networks, and for them, the notion of home remained almost entirely intangible. In these cases, home was a source of emotional orientation. The case of Francis Simmons demonstrates this pattern poignantly.

Simmons was born in Princes Town, Trinidad, in October 1892. His father worked for the Trinidad Government Railway and died in 1910. It seems likely that he died on duty because the manager of the Trinidad Railway subsequently hired Francis and his brother so that they could support their widowed mother.⁴⁴ Several years later, in August 1914, Simmons signed a three-year contract to work as a railway guard in Nigeria. Then, in May 1915, less than a year after his arrival, the Nigerian Railway terminated Simmons' agreement because of "breach of duty, insubordination, and misconduct."⁴⁵ With little disposable income, Simmons was stranded and only able to make his way back to London thanks to the generosity of several other Caribbean railway workers. Once in London, however, Simmons could not afford a ticket to Trinidad and he quickly became destitute. On October 5, 1915, he wrote a long letter to the

⁴⁴ Francis Simmons to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 November 1915, NAUK, CO 295/503.

⁴⁵ Colonial Office official in file on Francis Simmons, 7 October 1915, NAUK, CO 583/40.

Crown Agents begging them to cover the cost of his journey back home.⁴⁶ He appealed to the government as “a British subject” who could “scarcely get a breakfast” and carefully described the events that led to his termination. The letter reveals not only the details of Simmons’ desperate situation, but also how he began to rethink his position in the British Empire.

According to Simmons, he fell ill in early April 1915 and missed several days of work. When he sent for the doctor, the doctor refused to attend to Simmons and sent his “dresser” instead, who was “a native man, that never being to no institute.” Simmons sent the man away and again asked for the doctor, but “the doctor never came.” The only other option was going to the hospital, but to Simmons, this was a place known to “make a sick worst than better.” Nevertheless, Simmons’ condition began to improve when a friend, also from the Caribbean, brought him some medicine. A few days later, Simmons reported back to work at the railway station in Minna. When he arrived, the station master told Simmons that he would have to “furnish a medical certificate” for the days he had missed. Simmons explained that the doctor had not even been willing to see him, much less provide him with a medical certificate. The station master refused to listen to this explanation and instead sent Simmons home and told him to submit a “further statement.” By April 23, Simmons had not produced this “further statement,” and so the station master suspended him for “insubordination.” That same day, Simmons showed up at the railway station to pick up some bananas from Stephen Raymore, a railway guard from Jamaica. When Simmons arrived, the station master informed Simmons that he was suspended and had to leave the property immediately. Simmons again tried to explain himself, but the station master ignored him and sent for the police. A police sergeant then arrested Simmons for trespassing and imprisoned him “among the native prisoners.”

⁴⁶ Simmons to Crown Agents, 5 October 1915, NAUK, CO 583/40.

Four days later, the Resident in Minna released Simmons. The Resident also told him, unhelpfully, that he had “nothing to do with this case” and that Simmons should discuss his issues with the district traffic superintendent, one level up in the bureaucracy. Following suit, the district traffic superintendent made no effort to help and instead sent Simmons to Nigerian Railway headquarters in Ebute Metta, near Lagos. There, officials also brushed him off. With no one to turn to in Nigeria, Simmons sent a telegram to the colonial secretary of Trinidad asking for help. Yet he too disregarded Simmons’ situation. Then, on May 24, the general manager of the Nigerian Railway terminated Simmons’ agreement. This left him stranded. On an annual salary of £72, Simmons could not afford the trip back to Trinidad. The colonial secretary in Lagos would not cover the cost either because Simmons had not fulfilled the terms of his agreement.⁴⁷ It was at this point that a group of Caribbean railway workers pooled their money and bought Simmons a ticket back to London.

Simmons arrived in London at the beginning of October 1915 and his situation was precarious. He described himself as “penniless and without any means of sustenance whatsoever.” He also stated that he was “without any relation or friends” and that he was “so many thousand miles away from home.” Desperate to return to Trinidad, Simmons offered to pay back the cost of the passage by working on the ship and by paying out of his subsequent employment. At the end of his letter, Simmons gave a general description of work conditions for Caribbean administrators in Nigeria: “I might as well mention the ill treatment that the West

⁴⁷ According to Simmons’ agreement, he was only entitled to a free passage back to Trinidad “on the satisfactory completion” of his three year agreement. The colonial government in Nigeria appears, however, to have ignored section 8 of the agreement, which states: “In the event of the person engaged being incapacitated by accident or by ill-health from carrying out the terms of this agreement, the Government may terminate the same and in such case shall provide the person engaged with a free second class passage back to [Trinidad]. “West Indian Railway employees,” June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/22. See also “List of Appointments, Increments, Reductions, and Leave granted during September 1914,” NAUK, CO 741/1.

Indians received out in Nigeria from the head of their department which the head authorities here [in London] know nothing of is quite wrong and is advantage taking upon us while in Nigeria.”

A few days after receiving Simmons’ letter, the Crown Agents forwarded it to the Colonial Office. Most of the notes in the thin file on Simmons’ case focused on whether Nigeria or Trinidad would have to pay for Simmons’ “repatriation” back to Trinidad—and if they should even consider this option. As one official wrote: “It seems to be for the Nigerian Government to pay for repatriation.” Another declared, “I don’t think we can ask Trinidad to pay for repatriating this man.” A third was adamantly against even the suggestion of “repatriation”: “If those who are dismissed are given a free passage to the West Indies, I fear that all those who find Nigeria not such a paradise as they expected will adopt this easy method of getting back to their homes.”⁴⁸ Of all the comments in the file, not one made reference to the closing lines of Simmons’ letter regarding the “ill treatment that the West Indians received out in Nigeria.” The conduct of British officials in Nigeria was apparently unimportant. And so, Simmons was stranded in London, destitute and hungry and “without any relations or friends,” alone in the “centre” of the empire he supposedly belonged to.⁴⁹

While the Colonial Office was mulling over their options, Simmons found lodgings at the Harrow Workhouse of the Paddington Board of Guardians. On October 22, S. J. Langford of the Guardians wrote to the Colonial Office on Simmons’ behalf. Langford commented on the “slight offence” for which Simmons had been dismissed and explained that Simmons was “destitute” and “desirous of returning to the West Indies.” Langford also petitioned the Colonial Office to

⁴⁸ Note by Colonial Office official in file on Simmons, 13 October 1915, NAUK, CO 583/40.

⁴⁹ The file on Simmons includes a draft of a letter back to the Crown Agents saying that the Colonial Office was “not prepared to sanction the grant of a free passage from this country to Trinidad to F. A. Simmons.” NAUK, CO 583/40.

pay for Simmons to return home.⁵⁰ Remarkably, Langford's appeal proved successful, and in early November, the Colonial Office authorized Simmons' ship passage back to Trinidad. This decision was hardly one of compassion, however. As the Secretary of State for the Colonies noted, if they did not send Simmons back to his "native Colony," he would be "for some time at least a charge of public funds."⁵¹ On November 22, seven weeks after arriving in London, Simmons boarded the *Catalina* and headed back to the Caribbean.⁵²

Simmons' story illuminates much about the intellectual shifts of Caribbean administrators in Africa. To begin with, Simmons appealed to the Colonial Office as "a British subject." He was evidently not highly educated, but growing up in Trinidad, he believed in the British Empire and in the myth of its benevolence. In other words, he likely considered himself to belong *within* the British Empire. Yet after spending over a year in Nigeria and England, Simmons knew the exploitative and racist realities of the Empire. Whenever he asked for help, nobody was willing to listen to him: not the doctor, not the district station master, not the district traffic superintendent, not the Resident, not the governor of Trinidad, not the colonial secretary in Lagos, and not the Colonial Office in London. Were it not for S. J. Langford and the Paddington Board of Guardians, Simmons may never have returned to Trinidad. The closest anyone in the British government came to commenting on Simmons' well-being was a Colonial Office official who wrote that Simmons "has himself to thank for his present situation."⁵³ This treatment from representatives at nearly every level of the imperial bureaucracy surely soured Simmons' notions

⁵⁰ S. J. Langford, Acting Clerk to the Guardians, to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 October 1915, NAUK, CO 583/42.

⁵¹ Draft letter from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of Nigeria, 8 November 1915. NAUK, CO 583/42.

⁵² List of Out-going Passengers, "Catalina," 22 November 1915, NAUK, FamilySearch Genealogy Service.

⁵³ Colonial Office official in file on Simmons, 11 October 1915, NAUK, CO 583/40.

of belonging within the empire. Indeed, when Simmons alluded to the “ill treatment that the West Indians received out in Nigeria,” he displayed a newfound awareness that people from the British colonies in the Caribbean were not “British subjects” but rather subject *to* the British, subject to “ill treatment” in Nigeria and subject to poverty and isolation in London. Simmons thus coated his appeal as “a British subject” in private irony. He understood very clearly that he *belonged* to the British Empire, but not in the sense of membership—rather, as a piece of disposable machinery.⁵⁴ Establishing a sense of home in the British Empire proved impossible for Simmons, but finding a way back to his *pays natal* had proven almost as unlikely.

Also significant was the question of repatriation. Among all the remarks regarding the “repatriation” of Simmons in his file, there was no interrogation of why Simmons’ return to Trinidad was a “repatriation.” The Nigerian Railway had terminated Simmons’ agreement, but he was still a British subject. According to that logic, he was in his *patrie* in any place flying the Union Flag—whether in London, Lagos, or Princes Town. In reality, however, the geography of the empire was uneven, stratified, and divided, largely along racial lines. London, at the centre of the metropole, was the *patrie* of the white station master, but it was decidedly not the *patrie* of Francis Simmons, the “insubordinate” black railway guard from Trinidad. To colonial officials, Simmons’ *patrie* lay elsewhere, across the ocean, in his “native colony.”⁵⁵

Before working in West Africa, Simmons would have been shocked at the suggestion of such a geographical division, given his attachment to and belief in the British Empire. However, after his experiences with racism and marginalization in Nigeria and England, Simmons’

⁵⁴ As Lara Putnam puts it, many West Indians at this time began to see themselves not as “British subjects” but as “British objects.” Putnam, *Radical Moves*, 3. Here I am also building on Jinny Prais’ work on British subjecthood. See Prais, “Imperial Travelers: The Formation of West African Urban Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in London and Accra, 1925-1935” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), especially Chapter 3.

⁵⁵ Draft letter from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of Nigeria, 8 November 1915. NAUK, CO 583/42.

thinking shifted. In fact, he likely embraced this separation between the metropole and his home. The British government saw “repatriation” as the most financially prudent solution, but Simmons saw it differently. Leaving Nigeria and England behind and heading for Trinidad was an opportunity to extract himself from the British Empire. In his mind, “repatriation” to Trinidad allowed Simmons to “repair” himself to his home where he could help support his brother and widowed mother.⁵⁶ By repatriating (*repatriare*) to Trinidad, Simmons was both severing his connection to the empire and re-pairing (*reparare*) the divisions of time and space created by that very same empire. In other words, repatriation allowed Simmons to restore himself to and “join together” with the things he had been separated from—his family and his *patrie*.⁵⁷

The preceding examples demonstrate how Caribbean administrators began to rethink their positions in the British and French empires. Before going to Africa, people like Samuel Moseley and William Beaudu had felt and described a sense of imperial belonging. They had proudly identified as “British” and as “French.” Yet their devotion began to waver when these fairly abstract empires became concrete realities of racism, violence, isolation, and death in Kumasi, London, Bangui, Freetown, Paris, Dakar, Lagos, and elsewhere. This change in thinking is particularly evident in their evolving articulations of “home” and “country.” Caribbean

⁵⁶ By November 1915, the family was under significant financial duress. Francis Simmons to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 November 1915, NAUK, CO 295/503.

⁵⁷ For more on the connections between “repairing” (to go), “repatriation” (*repatriare*, returning to one’s country), and “re-pairing” as restoring or bringing together (*reparare*), see Geoffrey Hartman, “Poetics of Prophecy,” in *High Romantic Arguments: Essays for M. H. Abrams*, ed. Lawrence Lipking (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 15-26. This reference to Hartman’s essay comes from Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), especially 83-87. My thanks to Diana Pardo Pedraza for bringing these references to my attention.

administrators realized that they were “not at home in empire.”⁵⁸ They longed for a return to the *pays natal* where they did belong, though they did not always have the means to do so.

Crucial to this realization was the experience of migration. Caribbean administrators had grown up in the Caribbean, they had studied in, or at the very least travelled through, Europe, and they had lived and worked in one or more African colonies. By moving between—and writing between—different parts of the British and French empires, they helped to create and form these empires. Indeed, they saw far more of the world than their peers, including many Europeans, and this mobility allowed Caribbean administrators to establish links in a transatlantic imperial community. Simultaneously, however, mobility allowed Caribbean administrators to recognize global patterns of imperial exploitation and racist thinking. Migration thus had the doubled, paradoxical effect of both creating a lived sense of “empire” and rendering the notion of imperial belonging into a glaring fiction. In its place, Caribbean administrators drew on imperial configurations to generate new forms of belonging that, even if only in their minds, lay outside of imperial boundaries.

RECREATING HOME

Strangerhood and dislocation were often pervasive forces in the lives of Caribbean administrators in Africa. Yet not all were desperate to return to the Caribbean. One also finds stories of connection—social gatherings, meals, marriages, and families. Many of those involved also began to rethink empire, but they did so in a different way than those who wanted to return

⁵⁸ There is more to this feeling than the “anxiety” that Ranajit Guha describes among British administrators in India, because Caribbean administrators could not long for the metropole. Instead, they longed for a home outside of empire. Guha, “Not at Home in Empire,” *Critical Inquiry* 23, No. 3 (Spring, 1997): 482-493.

to the Caribbean. Instead of trying to return to the *pays natal*, they strove to recreate “home” in Africa.

In August 1915, for example, when Milton Fairley of Trinidad transferred from a railway station at Ido to one in Abeokuta, his Jamaican colleague Ivanhoe Maye hosted a goodbye party. The “select company” in attendance—likely other railway workers from the Caribbean—enjoyed a “good time” and made speeches in order to “hearten [Fairley] in the strange place to which he was going.”⁵⁹ Similarly, at a November 1911 dinner party in Sekondi in honour of John Maxwell, many of the guests were from the Caribbean: John Barbour-James, Leonard Muss, Percy Roberts, and William Simmons, all from British Guiana; David McNeil-Stewart from Trinidad; and George James Christian, a lawyer from Dominica. Muss told a story of two miners that “called forth much laughter,” while McNeil-Stewart presented two recitations and a formal address in honour of Maxwell. Later in the evening, Barbour-James and Christian both sang songs, including “Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep,” a hymn about trusting God in difficult times, “though stormy winds sweep o’er the brine.”⁶⁰ The hymn, with its allusions to sea voyaging, likely comforted those present at the gathering, many of whom were an ocean away from their families and friends.

Similarly, in late 1920s Bamako, administrators from the French Caribbean gathered regularly at the “Soudan Club” to eat and drink together. These included Maxime Letin, Louis Nottet, Joseph Cleret, and Edouard Labuthie, all from Guadeloupe, and Fernand Forgues, Charles Bayardelle, and Jean Silvandre of Martinique.⁶¹ Silvandre was particularly well

⁵⁹ “News, Notes, and Comments,” *The Lagos Standard*, 25 August 1915, 7.

⁶⁰ “Seccondee,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 9 December 1911, 3.

⁶¹ “Incident du Soudan Club de Bamako,” Archives Nationales du Sénégal (ANS), Fonds A.O.F., 17G/243, accessed at ANOM in Aix-en-Provence.

connected with others from the Caribbean. When he was in Dakar several years later, he became an active member of the “Association des Antillais.” He was also the president of the 1936 celebrations in Dakar for the tricentenary of the incorporation of the French Caribbean into the French Empire.⁶²

Meals also provided occasions to make connections with others from the Caribbean. Many Caribbean administrators complained about having to eat food imported in tin cans,⁶³ so it is no wonder that George Christian cherished his meals with Percy Roberts and Roberts’ wife in the Gold Coast. In a January 1925 letter, Christian wrote: “I am looking forward to the time when I shall have a chance to come to your end to be indulged by Mrs. Roberts in a good West Indian chop, such as she gave me at Tarquah some time ago.”⁶⁴ That same year, when the French writer André Gide travelled to Central Africa and visited Félix Eboué in Oubangui-Chari, Eboué hosted a party and served what Gide described as “an endless meal.” Eboué, who Gide described as “a remarkable and very friendly man,” killed a pig so that he could prepare blood sausage and other dishes he had grown up with in French Guiana.⁶⁵ And, when Vivian Renwick of Trinidad came to Nigeria to work for the Agriculture Department, he met an old friend from Trinidad, John Soloman, who was working on the Nigerian railway. In 1915, the two spent Christmas together in Ilorin, “chatting and drinking, recalling old friends and other Christmases.” The

⁶² From 1946 until 1955, Silvandre was deputy for French Soudan in the French *Assemblée Nationale*. See his biography, “Jean Silvandre, 1896-1960”: [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/6839](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/6839)

⁶³ McNeil-Stewart to Under Secretary of State for Colonies, 6 April 1913, PRAAD, McNeil-Stewart Personnel File, PF 3/32/922-923; Mark Alexis to Under Secretary of State for Colonies, 9 August 1917, NAUK, CO 96/586; C. M. G. Hoyte to Under Secretary of State for Colonies, 26 September 1917, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/239.

⁶⁴ George Christian to Percy Roberts, 26 January 1925, Alma Jordan Library, University of the West Indies—St. Augustine, Special Collections (UWISC), George James Christian Paper (GJC), Box 3, Folder 72.

⁶⁵ André Gide, *Voyage au Congo* (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), 64; Weinstein, *Eboué*, 100. When Eboué first arrived in Central Africa in 1909, he worked in the same region as two other Caribbean administrators, and their white French colleagues referred to the area as “Creole Road.” Weinstein, *Eboué*, 35-36.

experience made a strong impression on Renwick, who later described how “memories of home and friends passed through my mind.”⁶⁶

Some Caribbean administrators created more formal social groups. For example, in Freetown in early 1917, a number of West Indian railway workers formed the “Railway West Indian Employees Recreation Club.” They met at the Railway Compound for “reading” and “indoor games.” Club members also played cricket, using the grounds of Fourah Bay College. They played against British civil servants as well as against African clubs, including “Muslim East End.”⁶⁷ A few years earlier, West Indians in Ebute Metta formed a similar “West Indian Sports Club.” They played mainly in Lagos, but they also travelled around Nigeria. In March 1915, for instance, they travelled to Ibadan to play against the Ibadan Cricket Club.⁶⁸

In addition to sports clubs, meals and other social gatherings, Caribbean administrators also often helped to welcome one another to various African colonies. For example, when Félix Eboué first arrived in Bangui in 1909, he met Herménégilde Maran of French Guiana, the father of his old friend from school, René Maran. And when René Maran himself arrived in Bangui in February 1910, his father was still there. Herménégilde Maran left for France in November 1910, and then died, but when Maran later reflected on their time together in Bangui, he described their joy in reconnecting: “Six months of daily work revealed to us our real feelings and our flaws. We

⁶⁶ Renwick, “Forty Years On...,” 216.

⁶⁷ Members of the cricket teams included Leslie. A. Barnett, Horatio Llewellyn Lake, Leonard Willoughby Blackmann, and H. Smart, among others. “R.W.I.E Recreation Club,” *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 16 March 1918, 5; “Athletics,” *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 28 December 1918, 2; “Civil Service Cricket Tournament—1919,” *The Colonial and Provincial Reporter*, 1 February 1919, 6.

⁶⁸ “Cricket: West Indian S. C. v. Ibadan C. C.,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 7 March 1915, 10; “Cricket: Railway West Indian Team versus Unity Club Lagos,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 24 March 1922, 8. Members of the West Indian team in Ebute Metta included Arthur Agard, Philip Davilar, and Abraham Warner.

began to love each other even more for not having known each other before... We also cried a lot, both of us, for a long time, before the departure of the boat that would separate us forever.”⁶⁹

When Vivian Renwick arrived in Lagos in 1915, a railway worker from Jamaica named Amos Shackelford greeted him at the port. Years later, Renwick described his relief at meeting Shackelford, who was wearing “one of those remarkably big helmets that resembled, when placed on its crown, the hull of a Roman galley.”⁷⁰ And when George Christian wrote about his arrival in Accra in 1902, he noted similar relief about Caribbean connections: “There being no hotels...and not knowing anyone, the sandy beach had to accommodate me until by accident a West Indian named Leonard Muss heard of me and sent a cart for me.”⁷¹ Muss and Christian then remained close friends until Muss’ death in 1918. At that point, Christian took on the responsibility of raising Muss’ son, Leonard Muss Jr., whose mother was an “African girl.”⁷² Christian funded Muss Jr.’s education and years later he became a teacher in Anomabo, Gold Coast. Muss Jr. stayed in touch with Christian and in his letters referred to Christian as “father.” He also signed off his letters as “your own son, Leo J. Muss.”⁷³ Muss Jr. did make contact with his father’s brother Reginald who lived in British Guiana, but it seems that Muss Jr.’s “home” was with his “father” in the Gold Coast.

Christian acted similarly when Robert Dick of Trinidad died in December 1924. Dick was a railway worker in the Gold Coast and after fainting on December 8, headed with his wife to the “African Hospital” in Sekondi. Dick had anemia and was also dealing with gout. Two

⁶⁹ René Maran to Paul Culine, 29 November 1910, quoted in *Hommage à René Maran*, 100.

⁷⁰ Renwick, “Forty Years On...,” 194, 197.

⁷¹ G. J. Christian to Robert Broadhurst, 5 January 1940, UWISC, GJC, Box 3, Folder 70.

⁷² Reginald Muss to G. J. Christian, 10 February 1938, UWISC, GJC, Box 12, Folder 270.

⁷³ Leonard Muss Jr. to G. J. Christian, 22, 26, and 31 January 1940, UWISC, GJC, Box 3, Folder 67.

weeks later, on December 25, he suffered a cerebral haemorrhage that paralyzed the left side of his body. He called for his friend, Christian, who stayed with Dick and his wife for the entire night as he slowly died.⁷⁴ After his death, Christian began inquiring with the Gold Coast government about compensation for Dick's widow. It soon became clear, however, that the government was not going to offer her even a "small pension"—by mid-January she had "not received a penny." During this time, Mrs. Dick was suffering from a fever, so Christian began fundraising.⁷⁵ One of his efforts was a raffle of Robert Dick's car, a Dixie Flyer. Percy Roberts, Cunliffe Hoyte, William Simmons, and several others from the Caribbean helped to sell tickets.⁷⁶ In the absence of support from the colonial government in Accra, Caribbean administrators in the Gold Coast formed their own support networks to help each other.⁷⁷

Christian's support for Muss and the Dicks was not entirely unique, as many others supported each other in times of need. I have already shown how Caribbean administrators in Sierra Leone and Nigeria supported each other in petitions for higher war bonuses (Chapter 2), and earlier in this chapter I described how Caribbean railway workers in Nigeria grouped together to buy a ticket to London for the stranded Francis Simmons. In December 1913, Caribbean administrators in Nigeria also rallied to the defense of Stephen Raymore, a railway

⁷⁴ Report on Fatal Illness of Mr. R. E. Dick, PRAAD, R. E. Dick Personnel File, PF 1/45/251. The Dicks were the godparents for one of Christian's children. See Herminie Christian's baptism ticket, UWISC, GJC, Box 2, Folder 32.

⁷⁵ G. J. Christian to P. H. Roberts, 13 January 1925; G. J. Christian to P. H. Roberts, 19 February 1925, UWISC, GJC, Box 3, Folder 72.

⁷⁶ P. H. Roberts to G. J. Christian, 23 January 1925, UWISC, GJC, Box 3, Folder 72; G. J. Christian to C. M. G. Hoyte, 19 February 1925, UWISC, GJC, Box 3, Folder 71.

⁷⁷ Freemason networks also played a role in this fundraising effort. Percy Roberts suggested that Christian ask for support from "the Brethren of Gold Coast Lodge." P. H. Roberts to G. J. Christian, 23 January 1925, UWISC, GJC, Box 3, Folder 72. Both Roberts and Christian were active members of lodges in the Gold Coast, as were a number of other West Indians in Africa: Joseph A. Britton, E. A. James, John Barbour-James, and Edward Godding, among others. Félix Eboué was also a mason. For more on these networks in French imperial contexts, see Hélénon, *French Caribbeans in Africa*, 64-66 and 104-108. See also Owen White, "Networking: Freemasons and the Colonial State in French West Africa, 1895-1914," *French History* 19, no. 1 (March 2005): 91-111.

guard from Jamaica. Raymore had not allowed a European merchant to collect a shipment of packages in Ibadan because he did not present the appropriate paperwork. After a disagreement and altercation between the two men, police arrested Raymore and the courts sentenced him to two months in prison. In response, John Ambleston of Antigua submitted a petition to Frederick Lugard, the governor, claiming that key witnesses were missing from the trial. More than a dozen other Caribbean railway workers signed the petition, including Ivanhoe Maye and Amos Shackleford. The petition also claimed to be voicing the “unanimous sentiment of every one of His Majesty’s loyal subjects from the West Indies residing in Nigeria.” Lugard made no effort to change Raymore’s sentence, but the petition nonetheless reveals the pan-Caribbean solidarity that developed in African colonies.⁷⁸ In a similar case from Cameroon, Jules Ninine of Guadeloupe organized an informal “*colonie Antillais*” that brought together about a dozen people from Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana. Among other things, the group served as a relief from “hostility” with a “racial sense” that many of them encountered.⁷⁹

One significant aspect of all of these interactions—social gatherings, meals, support networks, even cricket matches—is that they involved people from a range of places in the Caribbean. People from Martinique mixed with people from Guadeloupe and French Guiana, while people from Barbados mixed with people from Jamaica and Trinidad, and so on. In other words, through their lived experiences of recreating home in Africa—even through the most mundane experiences—Caribbean administrators in Africa were beginning to rethink their imperial identities. Instead of aligning primarily as “British” and “French,” they began to articulate broader West Indian or Caribbean identities, something that was uncommon at the

⁷⁸ “Nigerian Justice,” *African Times and Orient Review*, Volume 1, No. 15, 30 June 1914, 353-356.

⁷⁹ Jules Ninine to Félix Eboué, 20 November 1940, Fondation Charles de Gaulle (FCG), Fonds Félix Eboué (FFE), F22/20, Folder 1.

time. Indeed, as Nemata Blyden has shown in her work on West Indian civil servants in nineteenth-century Sierra Leone, “most of the blacks from the West Indies did not perceive themselves as one group, unless it was expedient to do so.” Blyden suggests that this was because of the stratified racial societies they grew up in. The examples above, from West and Central Africa, reveal that in the first few decades of the twentieth century, things had changed.⁸⁰

Some Caribbean administrators also found a sense of belonging among Africans. I will discuss these interactions in greater detail in subsequent chapters, but it is worth noting several relevant examples. For instance, while working in Kouango in 1915, Félix Eboué met and married a Banziri woman named Bada Marcelline. Eboué had befriended a Banziri leader named Raymond Sokambi, and Bada Marcelline was Sokambi’s relative.⁸¹ According to Banziri customs, Eboué gave her brother a dowry and he also built her a cement house. Several years later, they had a child, Robert Eboué. In 1922, Félix Eboué married a woman from French Guiana, Eugénie Tell, but he continued to support Bada Marcelline until her death from leprosy in 1928.⁸²

The case of Henri Chefdrué of Guadeloupe reveals how the colonial identities of Caribbean administrators influenced their relationships with Africans. Chefdrué worked in the

⁸⁰ Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa*, 166 n.9.

⁸¹ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 44-45. Eboué was close with many local leaders. Some aspects of these “friendships” seem to have been sincere, but his primary purpose for cultivating such relationships was to solidify French authority. As Eboué later wrote, an administrator should know “what touches the chief, his vulnerable point.” Eboué, *La Nouvelle politique indigène pour l’Afrique équatoriale Française*, 8 novembre 1941, 19. Sokambi also needed Eboué alive in order to maintain his own power. Weinstein writes that Sokambi “manipulated the administration...for his own benefit as much as they manipulated him.” Weinstein, *Eboué*, 52. See also Weinstein, “Eboué and the Chiefs.”

⁸² When Eboué first arrived in Oubangui-Chari in 1909, he was working in Bouca and had a child with his Mandjia housekeeper. The circumstances of their two-year relationship are unclear, and it is unknown what happened to her. This was common among colonial officials, but unlike many of his peers, Eboué raised this child, Henri Eboué, alongside Robert and the other two children he had with Eugénie Tell, Ginette and Charles. Henri Eboué became friends with Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor in Paris in the 1930s, while Ginette married Senghor in 1946. Robert attended the *Ecole Coloniale* in 1945 and worked in Madagascar and Senegal.

southeast of Cameroon, and in the early 1920s he married a powerful woman in Abong-Mbang known as Madame Bilounga. Using her “*charmes*,” she convinced Chefdrué to relocate the regional headquarters from Lomié north to Abong-Mbang. There he built the imposing residency for the “*chef de région*” in 1927. Aside from his relationship with Bilounga, Chefdrué also cultivated a broad sense of loyalty. In 1943, the people of Abong-Mbang inaugurated their stadium as “Stade Chefdrué,” and even today people there remember his name fondly. In Lomié people also remember Chefdrué, though more bitterly.⁸³

Finally, Amos Shackelford, a railway worker from Jamaica, integrated himself into the social and political worlds of Lagos. He first arrived in Nigeria in 1913, and over the course of his three-year contract,⁸⁴ he became friends with a Saro businessman named Peter J. C. Thomas. When Shackelford’s contract ended in April 1917, he went back to Jamaica, but in January 1918 he returned to Lagos and became a clerk at Thomas’ commercial firm, S. Thomas & Co.⁸⁵ Shackelford eventually left S. Thomas & Co. and founded a successful bread-making business, but he and Thomas remained friends. Another friend of Shackelford’s was Herbert Macaulay, the early Nigerian nationalist.⁸⁶ Shackelford was also a regular at Christ Church in Lagos, where he

⁸³ Personal communication with Guillaume Lachenal, January 2018; “Inauguration du stade Chefdrué à Abong-Mbang,” *Le Cameroun libre*, no. 216, 10 September 1943. See also Lachenal, *Le médecin qui voulut être roi: Sur les traces d’une utopie coloniale* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2017), 74-75, 101, 319, 323. The story of Bilounga and Chefdrué comes from Lachenal’s interviews in Abong-Mbang with M. Jean Marie Evina and Mme. Ateba, niece of Mme Bilounga.

⁸⁴ Governor of Jamaica to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 October 1913, NAUK, CO 137/699.

⁸⁵ On Shackelford, see Rina Okonkwo, “Amos Stanley Wynter Shackelford: Bread King and Nationalist,” in Okonkwo, *Heroes of West African Nationalism* (Enugu, Nigeria: Delta, 1985): 45-58; Okonkwo, “A Jamaican Export to Nigeria! The Life of Amos Stanley Wynter Shackelford,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 1984): 48-59; and Okonkwo, “The Garvey Movement in British West Africa,” *Journal of African History* 21, no. 1 (1980): 105-117. On Shackelford’s friendship with Thomas, see Chapters 6 and 7.

⁸⁶ On the links between Macaulay, Shackelford, and Shackelford’s wife, Gwendolyn James, see Chapter 7.

was an organist, and was an active member of the Nigerian Cricket Association.⁸⁷ To be sure, Shackleford remained a member of an elite minority, and as I will show in the next chapter, his notions of Caribbean superiority inflected his thinking about most Africans. Nevertheless, Shackleford built a network with other West Indians and Africans in Lagos and recreated a sense of “home” in Nigeria. Perhaps most representative of this shift in thinking is a letter Shackleford sent to Macaulay in July 1931 while on his way back to Jamaica to visit family and friends:

I take away to the West Indies with me the very highest esteem for the Community in which I lived and worked and am looking forward with some anticipation to the day when I shall come back home...Wishing you a long life pregnant with further useful work for our great country.⁸⁸

For Shackleford, Lagos was “home” and Nigeria was his “country.” As with Samuel Moseley, Mark Alexis, and William Beaudu, among others, Shackleford’s notions of “home” and “country” had changed, along with his thinking about empire. Yet Shackleford had not sought a return to the Caribbean. Instead he had recreated home, country, and a sense of “Community” in Africa. Indeed, after his trip back to Jamaica in 1931, he returned to Lagos and lived in his adopted homeland until his death in 1954.⁸⁹

CONCLUSION

Before Caribbean administrators came to Africa, many felt a sense of imperial belonging. Some even referred to the British and French empires as their “countries.” Yet when they came to Africa, they found themselves caught between Europeans and Africans. They experienced racism, exclusion, and dislocation. Without networks of support, and with a growing awareness

⁸⁷ Okonkwo, “The Life of Amos Stanley Shackleford,” 56.

⁸⁸ Shackleford to Macaulay, 12 July 1931, Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Special Collections (UISC), Herbert Macaulay Papers (HMP), Box 91, File 3.

⁸⁹ Shackleford actually died in Accra in May 1954, but he was buried in Lagos as he requested. Okonkwo, “The Life of Amos Stanley Shackleford,” 56.

of their expendability, they realized that the abstract sense of being “at home” in the British and French empires was a myth. As a result, their notions of home, country, and belonging began to shift. Many sought to return to the Caribbean, to places that, at least in their conceptualizations, lay outside of empire. Some, such as Samuel Moseley, Mark Alexis, William Beaudu, and Francis Simmons were able to return to the Caribbean, to places of renewal where they could ease physical, financial, and emotional burdens. Others longed for similar returns but were unable to go home and instead became lost in mazes of disconnection and pitiless bureaucracy.

Still others, however, were able to recreate a sense of “home” in Africa. Through lived experiences of social gatherings, meals, friendships, marriage, and even death, people such as Félix Eboué, Amos Shackelford, Jean Silvanre, and Vivian Renwick forged support networks and new senses of belonging in Africa. When the British and French empires let them down, they had their own communities to rely on. No wonder then that Cunliffe Hoyte referred to Robert Dick and Mark Alexis as his “countrymen,”⁹⁰ or why George Christian described the Gold Coast “West Indian contingent” in his letters.⁹¹ Caribbean administrators were disillusioned and began to rethink their positions in the British and French empires—as well as the very nature of empire. They sought new senses of belonging, whether back in the Caribbean or in Africa.

The stories of Caribbean administrators and their changing ideas about home and empire are part of a larger shift in Caribbean intellectual history. In the 1930s and 1940s, writers such as Claude McKay, C. L. R. James, Léon-Gontran Damas, and Aimé Césaire all wrote extensively about strangerhood, dislocation, assimilation, colonialism, and above all, “home.”⁹² In fact, the

⁹⁰ C. M. G. Hoyte to Medical Officer of Health, Accra, 10 March 1915, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File.

⁹¹ G. J. Christian to Dr. R. A. Hoyte, 7 December 1931, UWISC, GJC, Box 3, Folder 68.

⁹² See Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002 [1927]), C. L. R. James, *Letters from London: Seven Essays by C. L. R. James*, ed. Nicholas Laughlin (Port of Spain: Prospect Press, 2003), Léon-Gontran Damas, *Pigments* (Paris: Guy Lévis Mano, 1937).

title of this chapter is a not-so-subtle reference to Césaire’s landmark 1935 poem, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. The poem, written while Césaire was a student in Paris, is a fiercely evocative meditation on many of the themes raised in this chapter. Following these writers, scholars such as Paul Gilroy and Robin D. G. Kelley have shown that the idea of finding home in a transnational “diasporic consciousness” guided many black intellectuals in the twentieth century.⁹³ It is rare, however, for scholars to show how people created this “diasporic consciousness” in concrete terms. Much of this work focuses on an imagined, discursive notion of “home,” even though for many black intellectuals, “home” was a concrete place. The experiences of Caribbean administrators in Africa help to better illuminate this process. Indeed, it was through daily, ordinary experiences that Caribbean administrators in Africa began to intellectualize a common identity. This “consciousness” was anything but a given, and it was imagined and created in specific times and places as a result of concrete circumstances.

This is not to imply, however, that Caribbean administrators were quickly embracing a spirit of anticolonial black unity. Even though they began to grow disillusioned with the possibilities of empire and began to support each other, they were rarely willing to link their struggles with the struggles of Africans in the manner of Césaire, George Padmore, and others. Part of the reason for this narrower vision of solidarity was that most Caribbean administrators maintained their colonialist ideas about Africans. How did Caribbean administrators grapple with the tension between their experiences of racism, their growing suspicions about the nature of empire, and their views of Africans as “backwards” and “uncivilized”? How did they reconcile the tensions in their thinking about empire, black unity, and racial uplift?

⁹³ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Robin D. G. Kelley and Sidney Lemelle, eds., *Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora* (New York: Verso, 1994).

4

TENSIONS ON THE RAILWAYS

Shortly after sunset on a warm evening in May 1908, John Barbour-James of British Guiana presented a lecture at the Metropole Hotel in Sekondi, Gold Coast. The main subject of the lecture was Barbour-James' home country and he discussed topics such as geography, demographics, and economics.¹ Others sang songs over the course of the evening, making the event into a "grand affair." Near the end of his lecture, however, Barbour-James stirred up a controversy by declaring that "if anyone wants to find the best developed negroes, they are to be found in British Guiana and [the] West Indies." This contention of West Indian superiority angered the Africans in attendance.

Two weeks later, one attendee wrote a letter to the editor of *The Gold Coast Leader* under the pseudonym "Guiana" to express his anger at Barbour-James: "Does he mean to tell us that through the whole length of West Africa there are no negroes well developed to meet any Guianan or West Indian?"² Guiana continued by claiming that there was no inherent inequality between Africans and Caribbean people and that "but for the advantage afforded to the Guianans and West Indians by the Missionaries by giving them college education they would have been no better." Guiana then stated that Barbour-James was not welcome in the Gold Coast and should return to British Guiana, "the sooner...the better." Near the end of the letter, however, the tone changed from anger to regret: "I am sure all those that went to the lecture only went because a

¹ More specifically, Barbour-James discussed "the area, boundaries, rivers, populations, gold and diamond industry, churches, [and] education." *The Gold Coast Leader* (supplement) 13 June 1908, 1. Barbour-James arrived in the Gold Coast in 1902 and had given similar lectures in February 1903, June 1904, and March 1905 on the history of British Guiana and the history of agriculture. See *The Gold Coast Leader*, 28 February 1903, 1; 25 June 1904, 4; 18 March 1905, 3.

² "Guiana," letter to the editor, 30 May 1908, published in *The Gold Coast Leader* (supplement), 13 June 1908, 1.

negro was going to give a lecture in a European Hotel and therefore it was no use for Mr. James to insult us when we had paid monies to listen to a lecture.” Guiana then noted plaintively that he was “sorry to see that West Indians and other blackmen like ourselves when they come in contact with whitemen then they commence to spurn their colour.”

Guiana had evidently been proud that he would have a chance to see an inversion of the segregated norm—“a negro” giving a lecture at a European hotel. Yet Barbour-James had dashed this pride with a disparaging comment about Africans. Guiana was frustrated when he saw “blackmen” like Barbour-James “spurning” their colour and aping the attitudes and ideas of white Europeans. Instead of using the rare occasion of a black man giving a lecture at a European hotel to foster a sense of racial pride, Barbour-James had used the opportunity to emphasize “developmental” differences between Africans and Caribbeans.

The publication of Guiana’s letter set off further reaction. On July 18, *The Gold Coast Leader* printed a letter in response to Guiana from someone writing as “British Guiana.”³ British Guiana came to the defence of Barbour-James, describing him as a “gentleman in the true sense of the word” and as “a blackman who loves his race from the very bottom of his heart.” British Guiana then criticized Guiana for his “self-conceit and pride” and assured readers that these “unreasonable and contemptible sarcasms” would not “interfere” with Barbour-James’ “good works.” A week later, *The Gold Coast Leader* printed a second letter in support of Barbour-

³ “British Guiana,” letter to the editor, *The Gold Coast Leader*, 18 July 1908, 4. “British Guiana” was likely Alfred William Downer, a Police Superintendent who was a friend of Barbour-James and, like Barbour-James, was from British Guiana. In his letter, Downer claimed that there was “no one in this Colony who knows Mr. Barbour-James as well as I do.” Both Downer and Barbour-James worked in Sekondi from July 1906 until January 1907, when Downer transferred to nearby Accra. Furthermore, several years earlier, during an anniversary celebration for the Cape Coast Reading Club, Downer and Barbour-James performed a duet together. “General News,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 3 December 1904, 1; Gold Coast Blue Book 1907, NAUK, CO 100/57.

James, this time from someone writing as “Jamaica.”⁴ Jamaica defended Barbour-James as “a man avowedly and admittedly sincere in his love for his race.” He also criticized Guiana for trying to “belittle” Barbour-James and responded to Guiana’s claim that Barbour-James was not welcome in Africa: “Mr. James is a full-blooded negro and as such cannot be regarded as an intruder in Africa.” Finally, Jamaica expressed his concern that people like Guiana were hampering racial solidarity and progress: “Strength lies in union,” Jamaica claimed, and he was disappointed to “see Guiana stir up internal strife in the camp of the Pan-Africans by fostering local prejudices.”

Barbour-James’ speech and the subsequent reactions of Guiana, British Guiana, and Jamaica reveal much about the relationships between Africans and Caribbean people in African colonies. Jamaica and British Guiana were likely both West Indians living in the Gold Coast, and alongside Barbour-James, they claimed to be genuinely working for black racial unity. Yet their criticisms of Guiana, who they claimed was trying to “stir up internal strife,” only reinscribed the divisions between Africans and West Indians. Both British Guiana and Jamaica saw Guiana’s letter as an expression of anger and jealousy. This narrow reading precluded them from considering Guiana’s letter instead as a regretful reflection on African-Caribbean acrimony. After all, it was not “Pan-Africanism” that Guiana opposed, but the discrimination of Africans by Caribbean administrators. Guiana believed in racial unity but had a problem with the exclusivity of the “camp of the Pan-Africans,” with the way Caribbean people looked down on Africans as “undeveloped negroes.” Jamaica and British Guiana never considered the possibility that Guiana was also “sincere in his love for his race.” Instead, they insulted Guiana and fell back on the

⁴ “Jamaica,” letter to the editor, 21 June 1908, *The Gold Coast Leader* (Supplement), 25 July 1908, 1. “Jamaica” may have been William Simmons, who worked in Sekondi and would have also known Barbour-James. Simmons, however, was from British Guiana, not Jamaica. Gold Coast Blue Book 1907, NAUK, CO 100/57.

pretense and bland solidarity of phrases like “strength lies in union.” More significantly, they did not understand that rather than trying to “stir up internal strife,” Guiana was trying to reckon with and bridge African-Caribbean tensions. Guiana seemed to understand—far more clearly than Barbour-James, British Guiana, and Jamaica—why racial unity was essential for confronting European imperialism. Barbour-James, British Guiana, and Jamaica used the *language* of racial unity, but this was a unity inflected with an unmistakably hierarchical relationship. They seemed to believe in racial unity only so long as “undeveloped” Africans did not get in the way.

The final turn in the Barbour-James “undeveloped negroes” controversy came a month later, in August 1908, when *The Gold Coast Leader* printed a third response to Guiana’s initial letter. This time, the response came from someone based in Uchi, Nigeria, who wrote under the sarcastic pseudonym “An Undeveloped Negro.”⁵ Undeveloped Negro criticized Barbour-James for his “reckless” statement and, like Guiana, claimed that if West Africans had “equal advantages,” they would not be any different from West Indians. Undeveloped Negro then noted that “some class of negroes have an insatiable thirst for power to alter the colour of their skin into that of the whiteman but West Africans, yes poor, uneducated, undeveloped, ignorant, and any other name under the sun one would think to qualify them with, are still proud of their colour and race and will stick to them like a leech.” He closed by inviting Barbour-James and other West Indians to leave Africa and to take their assimilationist ideologies with them: “Oh! ye self-praisers, sensation-mongers, money-hunters, why-don’t-you-acknowledge-me-superior, go to

⁵ “An Undeveloped Negro,” letter to the editor, 25 June 1908, *The Gold Coast Leader*, 8 August 1908, 4.

your own native soil and there, in your strenuous endeavour to keep body and soul together, there I say, learn to be content.”⁶

Tensions between Africans and Caribbean people were common in African colonies, and the case of Barbour-James’ “undeveloped negroes” speech is only one among many. In chapter 2, I demonstrated how such tensions developed through the collision of different ideas about race and nation. Caribbean administrators were involved in violent colonial occupations, were entrenched in the British and French administrations, and came to Africa with imperious and paternalistic attitudes about Africans. Many Africans, meanwhile, looked down on Caribbean administrators as “corrupted” or as the descendants of slaves. In this chapter, I explore how and why these tensions endured, even as some Caribbean administrators started questioning the nature of the British and French colonial occupations in Africa and began calling for racial unity.

To do so, this chapter focuses on the railways of Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria. The railway departments of these three colonies provide a useful lens through which to analyze the fraught relationships of Africans and Caribbean administrators because they had higher concentrations of Caribbean employees than any other area in the British and French colonies in Africa. I begin with an examination of the recruitment of Caribbean railway workers. In the second half of the chapter, I analyze the exchanges between Africans and West Indian railway workers, especially in newspapers. Such exchanges reveal how Africans and West Indians thought about racial unity, civilizational hierarchies, and the legacies of the Atlantic slave trade.

⁶ This was an interesting and perhaps intentional echo of the famous passage from W. E. B. Du Bois’ 1903 *Souls of Black Folk*, in which he describes double consciousness: “One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1903]), 8.

RECRUITMENT: MEN OF “THE DESIRED QUALITY”

West Indians make fair drivers and fitters, if kept strict.

JAMES P. AUSTIN, 1901⁷

In 1900, Francis Waller, the acting general manager of the Sierra Leone Railway, began petitioning the governor, Frederic Cardew, to hire West Indian railway workers. Waller’s thinking was similar to most other colonial officials: West Indians could provide the same quality of work as Europeans but at a lower cost and they were less susceptible to tropical diseases. In the burgeoning railway departments of West Africa, skilled labour was essential for repairing engines, driving locomotives, surveying land, laying track, managing stations, and organizing paperwork. Waller and other officials believed that it would take far too much time to adequately train Africans to perform these tasks.⁸ It would be cheaper and simpler, they contended, to import West Indians who had experience working on the railways of Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, and British Guiana.⁹

⁷ James P. Austin, Chief Clerk of Bridgetown and St. Andrew’s Railway, Barbados, to F. H. Waller, Acting General Manager of the Sierra Leone Government Railway, 9 October 1901, NAUK, CO 267/459.

⁸ In October 1901, the governor of Sierra Leone explained that “a native would require from 10 to 15 years training before he could be trusted with an engine.” He also wrote that he would “continue to give attention to the training of Sierra Leone natives in the Railway Department; but [was] bound to recognize that such training must be gradual and slow and that it should not under any considerations be hurried.” Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 October 1901, NAUK, CO 267/459.

⁹ There is no “general” history of Caribbean railways, due in part to the fact that, as Victor Bulmer-Thomas argues, there was no Caribbean “railway age.” Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of the Caribbean Since the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 141. There is substantial literature on the history of railways in Cuba, where the first railway in the Caribbean was built in 1837. See, for example, Oscar Zanetti and Alejandro Garcia, *Sugar and Railroads: A Cuban History, 1837-1959*, trans. Franklin Knight and Mary Todd (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). There is much less work on railways in other parts of the Caribbean. Jamaica established a railway in 1845 and the network was a major boon to plantation owners and fruit producers. By the 1930s, however, the Jamaican railways were in decline. For more on Jamaica, see the detailed article by Veront M. Satchell and Cezely Simpson, “The Rise and Fall of Railways in Jamaica, 1845-1975,” *The Journal of Transport History* 24, no. 1 (March 2003): 1-21. The British also established railway networks in Trinidad and Barbados, but not until the 1880s. British Guiana, meanwhile, established a railway in the 1840s, but it remained quite small until the 1890s. West Indians also left their islands to work on other railways. Many travelled to Central America to build and maintain railways in Panama and Costa Rica. See Putnam, *Radical Moves*, 26, and Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of the Caribbean*, 133-145.

Cardew, as well as his successor, Charles King-Harman, were sympathetic to Waller's requests, but skilled labour was also in high demand in the Caribbean and the colonial governments there were reluctant to release workers. Nevertheless, in October 1902, two men from British Guiana named Reginald Best and Joseph Daly joined the Sierra Leone railway as engine drivers.¹⁰ Four months later, two more West Indian engine drivers arrived in Sierra Leone: John Hercules of Trinidad and Simon Gill of British Guiana.¹¹ News of these arrivals travelled to the Gold Coast and soon thereafter Matthew Nathan, the governor, began enquiring with the Colonial Office about bringing West Indian railway workers to the Gold Coast. Nathan, who had the same ideas about West Indians as Waller, Cardew, and King-Harman, pointed out that bringing West Indian engine drivers to the Gold Coast would "undoubtedly tend to economy, less sickness, and greater continuity of service."¹²

Several years later, the general manager of the Gold Coast Railway, W. E. Smith, wrote to the colonial secretary in Accra explaining that importing "West Indian skilled labour" had several benefits.¹³ Echoing his colleagues in Sierra Leone, Smith noted that compared to Europeans, West Indians came at "half the salaried cost" and were "capable of enduring more

¹⁰ Both Best and Daly signed five-year agreements worth £120 per annum, as opposed to £220 and £250 for European engine drivers. Upon completion of this five-year term they had six months of leave and could apply for re-engagement if their service was satisfactory. Sierra Leone Blue Book 1903, NAUK, CO 272/80; Colonial Secretary of Sierra Leone to Crown Agents, 15 November 1907, NAUK, CO 267/499; R. R. Best retirement file, NAUK, CO 267/616/5.

¹¹ Sierra Leone Blue Book 1903, NAUK, CO 272/80 and Hercules' pension file, 13 February 1914, NAUK, CO 295/490.

¹² Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 August 1903, NAUK, CO 96/409. The Colonial Office also kept Nathan informed on West Indians in Sierra Leone. Alfred Lyttleton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote the following to Nathan: "It has occurred to me that you may be unaware that West Indian drivers have now been tried for some time on the Sierra Leone Railway, and that you may wish to make enquiry as to the success of the experiment in that Colony before engaging West Indian drivers and firemen for the Gold Coast." Lyttleton to Nathan, 16 November 1903, PRAAD, 1/1/153.

¹³ W. E. Smith to the Gold Coast Colonial Secretary, 21 January 1907, NAUK, CO 96/455.

readily the climatic disabilities of the place.” Smith also noted that hiring West Indians would allow the Railway to “make far better and quicker headway with the native employees.” In Smith’s mind, West Indians were uniquely qualified to teach African workers—they had just enough familiarity with European technology and institutions, and just enough familiarity with “native” culture and thinking. Yet the plan never moved far along, leading one exasperated clerk at the Colonial Office in London to comment: “This question has been raised again and again.”¹⁴

Five West Indian railway workers did end up coming to the Gold Coast in 1908 but one of these returned to the Caribbean almost immediately due to health issues, highlighting the falsity of the claim that West Indians were better suited to the climate of West Africa than Europeans.¹⁵ That same year, about 50 ex-soldiers from a disbanded West Indian regiment in Sierra Leone began working on the Nigerian railway. None had any railway experience, however, and the majority soon returned to the Caribbean.¹⁶ By 1913, fewer than 20 remained, and according to one official in Lagos, these workers were not “of particular ability.”¹⁷ The West

¹⁴ Colonial Office notes on correspondence regarding West Indian employees in the Gold Coast Railway Staff, 6 February 1907, NAUK, CO 96/455.

¹⁵ C. H. Grant returned to Trinidad on account of poor health shortly after his appointment. In a letter to the Colonial Office in London, Grant wrote that he was “unable to carry out the terms of the agreement owing to the climate” and that he “suffered from fever constantly.” C. H. Grant to Crown Agents, 7 September 1908, NAUK, CO 96/474. The other four men were W. E. Carter, Robert. E. Dick, H. Hackshaw, and V. S. Roberts. Acting Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 March 1908, NAUK, CO 295/444.

¹⁶ According to C. D. Blades of Trinidad, who worked in Nigeria, “some fifty or sixty men were taken on by the Lagos Railway” in 1908. C. D. Blades, “Experience of a West Indian on the Nigerian Railway,” *The Barbados Advocate*, 17 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27. And in December 1913, the general manager of the Nigerian Railway wrote that “We have now on the railway some 20 West Indians who were recruited some years ago from a disbanded Regiment in Sierra Leone and who have done very well, although they have had no previous railway experience.” A. S. Cooper to Director of Railways & Works, 2 December 1913, NAUK, CO 583/10. See also Michael Mason, “The History of Mr. Johnson: Progress and Protest in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1921” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 27, no. 2 (1993): 212, n.16.

¹⁷ Note from W. Scott Evans, Assistant Secretary, in a file on West Indian railway workers from the Lagos Colonial Secretary’s Office, 7 March, 1913. NAI, N 389/1913.

Indian presence on the railways of West Africa thus remained quite minimal for another few years.

The railways continued to expand, however, and by 1912, the need for skilled labour was increasingly important. Francis Waller was by this time the deputy general manager of the Nigerian Railway and in his annual report for 1912, he bemoaned the “shortness of native skilled labour” and the fact that “only a small proportion trained in the workshops show any signs of becoming skilled artisans.”¹⁸ Waller claimed that the only way to keep the Nigerian railway network running at a reasonable cost was to recruit approximately 200 West Indian railway workers.¹⁹ Herbert Morcom, the general manager of the Sierra Leone Railway—and one-time assistant traffic manager of the Trinidad Railway—echoed Waller’s sentiments in 1913: “We continue to be very short of native skilled labour... I am proposing, with a view of getting over the difficulty, the employment on agreement of West Indian mechanics commencing next year.”²⁰ Waller made enquiries with the British colonies in the West Indies, but by the end of 1913, just seven new West Indian employees were working in Nigeria; six from Trinidad and one from Jamaica.²¹ Undeterred by this meager outcome, Waller began petitioning the Colonial

¹⁸ Nigeria Annual Report on the Railway, 1912, NAUK, CO 657/1.

¹⁹ Governor of Nigeria to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 February 1914, NAUK, CO 583/10.

²⁰ Sierra Leone Annual Report on the Railway, 1913, NAUK, CO 270/45. Morcom worked in Trinidad from 1899 to 1907, when he transferred to deputy general manager of the Gold Coast Railway. In October 1912, the Colonial Office appointed him general manager of the Sierra Leone Railway. Administrator of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 June 1907, NATT, CSO 3653/1907; Sierra Leone Blue Book 1912, NAUK, CO 272/89.

²¹ These were Josiah F. Ward, Charles C. Neptune, Milton A. Fairley, Albert E. Donawa, Abraham Adolphus Warner, and C. Darlington Blades, all from Trinidad, and Amos Stanley Wynter Shackelford from Jamaica. Governor of Nigeria to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 July 1913, NAUK, CO 583/4.

Office for permission to travel to the West Indies to recruit the 200 railway workers himself.²² By early 1914, officials in London were finally convinced that “the natives” were simply not of “the desired quality” and they granted Waller permission for his recruitment tour. One official even pointed out the fortuitous timing of Waller’s trip: “The completion of the Panama Canal should have released a considerable number of coloured West Indians with some education and training—so now is the time to try to get them.”²³

Waller arrived in Barbados on June 15, 1914, accompanied by C. D. Blades, one of the Trinidadian railway workers who had started working in Nigeria the previous year.²⁴ Recruitment did not begin smoothly. The day after their arrival, *The Barbados Advocate* published a letter to the editor that depicted life in Nigeria for West Indians in an extremely negative light. The letter-writer, “A Jamaican,” claimed to be a West Indian railway worker in Nigeria and was most likely Amos Shackleford, a Jamaican who had signed an agreement to work in Nigeria in October 1913.²⁵ In the letter, Shackleford wrote that “the batch of station masters who left Trinidad in October last, with the exception of the recruiting agent Mr. Blades, was disappointed over the miserable state of things generally and the high cost of living.” Shackleford emphasized the high prices of food and the huge discrepancies between the salaries of West Indians and the “handsomely paid” Europeans appointed to the same positions.

²² Waller apparently had bigger goals, however: he arrived in the Caribbean with 500 copies of blank West Indian agreement forms. Crown Agents to Under Secretary of State, 4 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/22; Governor Lugard to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 February 1914, NAUK, CO 583/10.

²³ Colonial Office notes on the question of using West Indians on the railways in West Africa, 10 February 1914, NAUK, CO 583/10.

²⁴ Waller to A. J. Harding, Colonial Office, 22 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27; Waller to Under Secretary of Colonies, 28 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27.

²⁵ “West Indian Employees on Nigerian Railways,” letter to the editor of *The Barbados Advocate* from “A Jamaican,” Southern Nigeria, Nigerian Railways, Ebute Metta, 4 May 1914, printed 16 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27. For Shackleford’s agreement, see Governor of Jamaica to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 October 1913, NAUK, CO 137/699.

Europeans were earning annual salaries upwards of £204, and some up to £350, while the highest paid West Indian station master was earning £138, and that had come only after seven years of service. Shackleford did not definitively recommend against West Indians coming to Nigeria, but he did make a few suggestions: “Stick out for from £150 and upwards, also for furnished wooden quarters.” Shackleford also warned about discrimination from European colleagues: “Mr. Neptune, West Indian station master at Menna, was recently assaulted by a European for not raising his hat.”²⁶ Shackleford did not elaborate on this reference to racially motivated violence, but this was not an aberration for Caribbean administrators in African colonies.

When Waller read Shackleford’s letter in *The Barbados Advocate*, he perceived it as sabotage and demanded an interview to smooth things over. The next day, on June 17, the newspaper published its interview with Waller alongside advertisements for job openings in Nigeria for station masters, signallers, clerks, guards, locomotive fitters, turners, and machinists.²⁷ In the interview, Waller explained that this “correspondent” was “not correct” and provided details regarding the “true” conditions of service in Nigeria. Waller claimed that the cost of living was “high in imported stuffs...but cheap in what the West Indies constitutes good living, poultry, eggs, fresh beef, etc.” He also indicated that the salaries were generous and could “afford a good workman an excellent start in life.” Regarding violence, Waller stated that his “employees” received “all the protection they may need.” Waller also emphasized that he was offering qualified men in Barbados the opportunity to join an enterprise that was “taking Nigeria out of savagery fast.” Once again, the recruitment of West Indians was focused on the superiority

²⁶ Shackleford, “West Indian Employees on Nigerian Railways.” Shackleford was referring to Charles Neptune of Trinidad, who was a station master at Minna.

²⁷ “Interview with Mr. Waller,” *The Barbados Advocate*, 17 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27; Governor of Nigeria to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 February 1914, NAUK, CO 583/10.

of West Indians, who were apparently skilled enough and civilized enough to redeem the “savagery” of Nigeria, but not skilled enough or civilized enough to merit the same pay as Europeans.

The Barbados Advocate complimented Waller’s interview with an article written by his Trinidadian recruitment assistant, C. D. Blades.²⁸ In his article, Blades described the geography, climate, and demographics of Nigeria, as well as the growing railway network. He also described his “liberal” agreement: three years of service at £96 per annum, increasing by £6 annually, free quarters, free second-class passages to and from Nigeria, and two months of paid leave after completion of the agreement. As for his responsibilities as a station master, Blades claimed that he “experienced no difficulty getting into the work.” He also wrote that he found it easy to adapt to life in Nigeria. In fact, he extolled the lower cost of living as well as the small community of Jamaicans and Barbadians already in Nigeria. Blades glorified the opportunity for transatlantic travel and the “amazing grandeur” of London. Finally, he declared that working in Nigeria was the perfect option for West Indians trying to “obtain employment or better their positions and prospects in life.”

The combined efforts of Waller and Blades yielded just 13 recruits from Barbados, three of whom were in poor health and were quickly disqualified. In June and July, Waller and Blades proceeded to Trinidad and then British Guiana, where they encountered more negative publicity. Shackleford sent a copy of his letter to *The Mirror* in Port of Spain and the newspaper published it shortly before the arrival of Waller and Blades. *The Mirror* also published two other letters describing the difficulties for West Indians working in Nigeria. In the first, Thomas Davis offered a “word of warning”: “Be not deceived by any oily and honey tongued, smiling man who

²⁸ C. D. Blades, “Experience of a West Indian on the Nigerian Railway,” *The Barbados Advocate* 17 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27.

will speak golden words in your ears... You will find as soon as he reaches Nigeria that he is Chamelion-like; and when friction arises it will be easier to take a trip to Saturn or the Moon in these days of aeroplane than to see any of the would be gods of Nigeria.”²⁹ Continuing on the deceptive tactics of Waller and Blades, Davis stated: “The hook will be full baited, and that dangerous hook will not be seen until it has begun to do its worst.” Like Shackelford, Davis also warned about the conditions of life in Nigeria: “Don’t think that preparations are being made on the railway for you. If you come, you run the risk of having to live in a little grass hut, with a grass mat for protection.” Finally, Davis commented on racial prejudice and the lack of medical aid: “You will run the risk of having to stay in bed for days without medical aid, though the Doctor may be only 100 yards off; for you will certainly hear the words, ‘I did not come here to attend to any black man.’”³⁰

The second letter, from “Junior Lieutenants,” was much harsher.³¹ Lieutenants, likely Josiah Ward,³² explained that he “hurriedly” wrote the letter to warn “all the boys” at the main railway stations in Trinidad. Ward stated plainly that he and other West Indians in Nigeria were “all suffering hardships, inconveniences, and worst of all indignities.” Like Shackelford and Davis/Fairley, Ward criticized the administration and the high cost of living, but he especially emphasized racial prejudice in northern Nigeria, where he was working: “I have to go hatless

²⁹ Thomas Davis, letter to the editor, *The Mirror*, 18 June 1914, 2.

³⁰ There is no “Thomas Davis” in any files on the Nigerian railway. The name was likely a pseudonym for Milton Fairley, one of the six men from Trinidad who joined the Nigerian Railway in 1913. In fact, in a February 1914 letter to the general manager of the Nigerian Railway, Fairley made a nearly identical complaint about medical care: “Instead of a qualified Dr., though one lives just half a mile away, a barefooted native boy who could hardly understand me was sent.” Fairley to Colonial Secretary of Trinidad, 8 February 1914, NATT, CSO 7452/1912-1926.

³¹ Junior Lieutenants, “Recruiting for the Nigerian Railway: British West Indians Knocked About - A Warning,” *The Mirror*, 22 June 1914.

³² In the letter, Junior Lieutenants/Josiah Ward referred to “myself, Donawa, Fairley, and Neptune” having to travel to Lagos because they were sick. In February 1914, Ward, Albert Donawa, Milton Fairley, and Charles Neptune left their posts and travelled to Lagos to seek medical care.

nearly all day to avoid having to take it off every minute to most of the white men here.”

Continuing, he explained that his “booking clerk some days ago got a few cane strokes on the head (in the office mark you) for not removing his hat to a Lieutenant who came in the office.”³³

Finally, Ward explained that if he “retaliate[d] on the white man” in northern Nigeria, the punishment was “jail and flogging on the naked skin in the open market place.”

Altogether, it seems that Shackleford, Fairley, and Ward worked jointly to scuttle Waller’s recruitment tour in the Caribbean. Coming together as “West Indians,” they sought to disrupt the empire they had once been eager to serve. In fact, a few months earlier, Ward, Fairley, and two others from Trinidad—Charles Neptune and Albert Donawa³⁴—had abandoned their stations in northern Nigeria and travelled together to Lagos to seek higher wages and access to medical care. Their letters plainly reveal that this group effort was a direct result of their experiences with racism and marginalization in Nigeria.³⁵ Initially, the administration in Lagos cancelled their contracts and so they demanded to return to the Caribbean.³⁶ However, after meeting with the central secretary, who approved small salary increases, they returned to work.

³³ Ward may have been referring to the incident described in Chapter 2, in which Ward witnessed the abuse of his African colleague McCaulay.

³⁴ Donawa was one of the few Caribbean administrators of East Indian descent. After meeting with the four men in February 1914, Central Secretary Donald Cameron noted that Donawa “seem[ed]...to be of East Indian extraction.” Note in file, 10 February 1914, NAI, N 856/1914.

³⁵ In a petition to the governor, the four men wrote that they were “forced to come in to Ebute Metta” because of their “ill health.” They also explained that they were “stranded” and were “existing only by the kind help of friends.” J. F. Ward, M. A. Fairley, A. E. Donawa, and C. C. Neptune to Governor of Nigeria, 3 February 1914, NAI, N 856/1914. In an earlier letter, Ward summarized their experiences: “I find it impossible to remain here any longer in consequence of my failing health, caused by the bad housing accommodations and want of good food.” Fairley, meanwhile, had found that “white Drs find it very much below their dignity to attend black or coloured people personally, so they depute this work to native boys.” Ward to general manager of Nigerian Railway, 13 January 1914; Fairley to colonial secretary of Trinidad, 8 February 1914, NATT, CSO 7452/1912-1926.

³⁶ Upon arriving in Lagos and realizing their new circumstances (similar to the situation of Francis Simmons, Chapter 3), the four men sent a short and pointed telegram to the Governor of Trinidad, George Le Hunte: “Stranded help return notify families.” Le Hunte reported the telegram to the Colonial Office in London but decided to take “no action with regard to it” because he was “unable to understand the telegram.” Le Hunte to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 February 1914, NAUK, CO 295/490.

Such experiences explain their subsequent collective motivation to warn other West Indians about the realities of working in Nigeria.

Despite the negative publicity campaign of Shackelford, Fairley, and Ward, Waller's recruitment trip was a modest success. In Trinidad and British Guiana, Waller and Blades signed 74 men.³⁷ They also travelled to Panama, but there Waller noted that the "West Indian coloured staff" was not "up to the standard."³⁸ Moreover, the British Consul in Colon advised Waller to "defer recruitment" in Panama due to "the circumstances" which were arising in Europe at the time. Waller did not go to Jamaica because the governor of Jamaica could not promise any men with railway experience, and so Waller returned to England in late August having confirmed 84 new employees and established strong links for future recruitment.³⁹

The British recruited West Indians to work on the railways of British West Africa instead of training Africans in large part because of their experience with railway work. Yet the British also recruited West Indians because they considered them to be more "advanced" than Africans. West Indians already considered themselves to be superior to "backwards" Africans, and thus the recruitment process only amplified the hierarchical attitudes of West Indians. This undoubtedly contributed to the emerging African-West Indian tensions when West Indians began arriving en masse in the railway departments of Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria.

³⁷ Waller to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27; Waller to Under Secretary, 4 August 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27; Waller to Under Secretary, 30 August 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27.

³⁸ Waller to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 August 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27. While in Panama, Mr. Nutting, the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Isthmian Canal Works, informed Waller that "the American negro was troublesome and should be avoided."

³⁹ Waller to Harding, 9 July 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27; Waller to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 August 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27. There were plans for a second recruitment tour in 1918, see "Recruiting of East and West Indians for the Railway," 7 April 1919, NAI, N1250/1919.

HIERARCHICAL UNITY

When West Indian railway workers arrived in West Africa to take up their appointments, they faced much of the same racism, violence, particularization, dislocation, and alienation described in Chapter 2. They had lower salaries, segregated living quarters, and the British administrations usually ignored their complaints. Francis Waller had promised the opportunity to bring Nigeria “out of savagery,” but in many cases, West Indians arrived in West Africa and were the victims of “savagery.”⁴⁰ Indeed, the experiences of Ward, Fairley, Neptune, and Donawa were symptomatic of the racism that dominated life in African colonies. The central secretary’s small concession to them was hardly indicative of improving attitudes. Yet, like other Caribbean administrators, West Indian railway workers also encountered discrimination from another angle—the sudden influx of West Indians infuriated African railway workers. By early 1915, more than 120 West Indians were working on the railways of West Africa,⁴¹ and Africans were not shy about expressing disapproval. The complex dynamics of this situation quickly spilled over into the flourishing newspaper cultures of Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria. Dozens of articles detailed resentment about West Indian railway workers.

In January 1915, for instance, *The Nigerian Pioneer* published an article on the recent arrivals of newly recruited West Indian railway workers.⁴² The anonymous writer declared that the government of Nigeria needed to “stop the disgrace of imported labour” and that West Indians were being imported “not because they are better men, but because they are better trained.” The writer claimed that instead of importing West Indian labour, Africans should

⁴⁰ See above for Waller’s interview with *The Barbados Advocate*, 17 June 1914, NAUK, CO 583/27.

⁴¹ Ivanhoe Fitzherbert Maye, “West Indians in Nigeria,” *The Lagos Standard*, 10 February 1915, 5. Maye claimed that “The Nigerian railway is responsible for over 100 West Indians in its various departments.” See also “List of Appointments, Increments, Reductions, and Leave granted during 1915,” NAUK, CO 741/1.

⁴² “West Indian Labour in West Africa,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 15 January 1915, 3.

receive better training, and that the problem was not with Africans, “but with the men who train them and the system they are trained under.”

In Sierra Leone, meanwhile, similar tensions arose in the first half of 1916, not long after the Colonial Office began actively encouraging the Sierra Leone Railway Department to replace Europeans with West Indians.⁴³ In February 1916, a man named Olympio wrote a letter to the Freetown-based *The Weekly News* and questioned whether West Indians were really “doing their work better and quicker than our boys.” Olympio also claimed that he had interviewed “a good many” of the African railway workers and could thus claim with certainty that importing West Indians was “a gross blunder” and that the Sierra Leone Railway Department would be better off providing adequate training to African workers.⁴⁴

Two months later, in April 1916, *The Weekly News* published a column by “Rambler” who claimed that “the charge of [African] incompetence has no foundation in fact” and that Africans would “not let any ties of blood blind [their] eyes to truth, fairness, and justice.”⁴⁵ Olympio then wrote another letter to *The Weekly News* and made a more complex argument on the issue by appealing to the state of Sierra Leone’s coffers and to an abstract ideal of “liberty.” He claimed that if the colonial government had trained Africans instead of importing West Indian labour, the colony would have saved £15,708. Olympio suggested that Britain could have

⁴³ Acting Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 August 1915, NAUK, CO 267/566; Colonial Office notes in same file. According to the file, the Sierra Leone Government preferred to hire Jamaicans.

⁴⁴ Olympio, “The Importation of West Indian Fitters into Sierra Leone: Letter to the Editor,” *The Weekly News*, 5. “Olympio” was likely related to the Olympio family of Togo. This family descended from Francisco Olympio, who was born in Brazil in 1833 and “returned” to West Africa in 1850. Sylvanus Olympio, grandson of Francisco Olympio, later became the first Prime Minister and then first President of Togo. For more, see Antonio Olliz Boyd, *The Latin American Identity and the African Diaspora: Ethnogenesis in Context* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2010), 244.

⁴⁵ Rambler, “African Mechanics at the Railway,” *The Weekly News*, 1 April 1916, 8.

used such a sum in its “struggle for the liberty of the World.”⁴⁶ By July 1916, the controversy had made its way from the newspapers to the governor’s office. In a letter to the Colonial Office in London, the governor wrote that “the introduction of West Indian fitters is unpopular among the people of Freetown as it is felt to be a slur upon the capacities of the Sierra Leone African.”⁴⁷

Calls for fairness and better training for Africans went unheeded, however, and so the tension between Africans and West Indians continued to mount. In July 1918, for example, one writer in the Gold Coast stated angrily: “Ordinary clerks from the West Indies are imported into the service of this Colony to hold responsible appointments when there are natives equally competent to do the work.”⁴⁸ A month later in Freetown, *The Weekly News* published a short editorial on the “just grievance” of African railway workers, suggesting that in the inverse situation—African railway workers replacing West Indians in the Caribbean—West Indians would have taken “recourse to a less pacific way of redressing their grievances than the method which our own countrymen have pursued.”⁴⁹ And in January 1919, Freetown lawyer C. D. Hotobah During sent a letter to *The Weekly News* explaining that there was “no need to have imported West Indian Fitters as these were more or less trained in some Railway Establishments (outside Europe) similar to the Railway Establishments here. Our men could be thus locally trained by the Railway Department here and paid the same salaries now paid to the West Indians.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Olympio, “The Sierra Leone Government Railway and African Mechanics,” *The Weekly News*, 15 April 1916, 7.

⁴⁷ R. J. Wilkinson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 July 1916, NAUK, CO 267/571.

⁴⁸ “Pour Encourager les autres,” *The Gold Coast Independent*, 20 July 1918, 27.

⁴⁹ Rambler, “African Mechanics on the Railway,” *The Weekly News*, 22 June 1918, 8.

⁵⁰ C. D. Hotobah During, “The Proposed Government Secondary School,” *The Weekly News*, 4 January 1919, 17.

West Indian railway workers in West Africa thus found themselves in a difficult position. They faced frequent and understandable animosity from Africans, but they also had to reckon with continued racial discrimination at the hands of Europeans. In the face of this double-edged marginalization, some West Indian railway workers began calling for racial solidarity with Africans. Africans, however, rarely welcomed these efforts. One of the more revealing examples of this trend is the controversy that erupted in February and March 1915, when *The Lagos Standard* published an article by Ivanhoe Fitzherbert Maye titled “West Indians in Nigeria.”⁵¹

Maye, from Jamaica, was a clerk in the Nigerian Railway Department. In the article, he detailed his views on the role of West Indians not only in Nigeria, but in Africa more generally. He began by stating that he wanted to improve relations between Africans and West Indians. West Indians, he explained, were “further advanced” than their “African brother[s]” because of their longer history with “European civilization,” but this did not mean that they should separate themselves as distinct from Africans. Instead, Maye argued, West Indians should “assist in bringing the [African] up to him and not, as in the majority of cases, to treat him as the ‘bottom dog.’” Maye evidently believed in the “civilizing” effects of colonialism—at one point he referred to “the advancing light of civilization”—yet because West Indians were “of the same blood [as] the African Negro,” he also saw a special role for West Indians in this “civilizing” mission. Pursuing the point of blood, Maye emphasized that “the African and the West Indian are kith and kin” and that as a result, “the same brotherly feeling existing between West Indians of different grades of society should be extended to Africans.” If this were done, Maye contended, “the realization would come to the native that the West Indian is here, not to exploit, but to assist him.” According to Maye, this would be “a great step to closer unity between the

⁵¹ Ivanhoe Fitzherbert Maye, “West Indians in Nigeria,” *The Lagos Standard*, 10 February 1915, 5.

two peoples.” West Indians, Maye insisted, should make efforts to “elevate and assist” Africans: “cease to mistrust him, and his suspicion of you will disappear; treat him as a man and brother, and he will do the same; do not speak disparagingly of his backwardness where you observe it, but educate him, and he will appreciate you.” Maye closed his article by alluding to the providential design of the West Indian presence in Africa:

The coming of West Indians to Nigeria is probably only in fulfillment of some portion of God’s plan for the amelioration of the social and economic condition of the Negro, and it is incumbent on West Indians to do all in their power to assist, and not to retard, the future of the race. Let West Indians in Nigeria prove a blessing and not, as it will prove, a curse...and so be a credit to their country.

Maye’s article reveals much about the thinking of Caribbean administrators in Africa. First, Maye might have condemned the “exploitation” of Africans, but he saw no link between this exploitation and the “assistance” that West Indians were bringing to Africa. Instead, his optimistic view of European occupations and “the advancing light of civilization” reveals how entrenched he and other Caribbean people were in a European historicist view of “civilization” and world history. Maye saw the West Indian presence in Africa as “some portion of God’s plan for the amelioration...of the Negro.” This allusion to providential design reveals the influence of Edward Blyden, among others, who contended that the transatlantic slave trade was part of a divine strategy to arrange the redemption of Africa.⁵² In other words, Maye thought that this “amelioration” could be best accomplished—and indeed was *meant* to be accomplished—through a divinely ordained colonial “civilizing” mission, and not, for example, by challenging European occupations in Africa.

Second, Maye’s ideas about “closer unity” between Africans and West Indians demonstrate how some West Indians in Africa reckoned with racial discrimination and

⁵² On providential design, see Chapter 1.

alienation. Maye claimed that a “brotherly feeling” had helped West Indians overcome race and class divisions in the Caribbean, even though he grew up in a Jamaica where race and class lines defined most aspects of life. At first glance, this recasting of Jamaican society as harmonious is puzzling. Yet by 1915, Maye had been in Nigeria for three years⁵³ and had experienced the worst of colonial racism. Coupled with animosity from Africans, Maye would have been eager to find a place to belong. In this context, it makes sense that he imagined the Caribbean as a beacon of racial unity, one that he hoped to replicate in Nigeria.

Finally, Maye’s article reveals the hierarchies embedded in West Indian calls for racial solidarity with Africans. At no point in his article did Maye suggest equality between Africans and West Indians. He encouraged West Indians to “treat” Africans as “man and brother,” but his case for unity actually rested on the notion that West Indians were “further advanced” than Africans and could thus “elevate” Africans *into* unity. Instead of insisting that Africans were not “backwards” or that African ideas about culture and history might be worth considering. Maye stated that West Indians should simply “not speak disparagingly” about African “backwardness.” In other words, Maye believed that the only way to unify “the race” was for West Indians to first ignore this “backwardness” and then second, to stoically and nobly bring Africans up to speed. Instead of asserting that West Indians and Africans should unify as equals, Maye argued that “closer unity” would be achieved only if “the native” realized that West Indians had come to Africa to “elevate” and “assist.” Much like John Barbour-James, Maye used the language of racial unity, but this was a unity rooted in hierarchy.

A week after the publication of Maye’s article, two other West Indians in Nigeria wrote letters to *The Lagos Standard* to distance themselves from Maye and his opinions. In the first,

⁵³ “List of West Indian Employees in the Railway Department,” NAI, N 389/1913.

John Phillips stated that Maye's article contained "grave misrepresentations of West Indians in [Nigeria] as regards their attitude towards the Native" and was concerned that such a "rabid article" would create tension between Africans and West Indians.⁵⁴ Attempting to smooth things over, Phillips asserted that there was no "wide line of demarcation" between Africans and West Indians. Instead, he claimed, "a bond of blood" connected them and they lived in "friendly intercourse...in all walks of life." Yet Phillips' attempt to paint Africans and West Indians as equals contained the same paternalism and hierarchy found in Maye's article. In the second half of his letter, Phillips claimed that Maye's article was unnecessary. West Indians, he wrote, did not need guidance in their interactions with Africans because "coming as he does from the older Colonies, the West Indian fully realizes the importance which would be attached by the Native to his every word or action." Moreover, Phillips explained, the West Indian in Nigeria was "quite aware of the fact that he should so live that his example may be a guiding beacon to his African Kinsman." Phillips may have claimed that there was no "wide line of demarcation" between Africans and West Indians, but he clearly still believed that West Indians were examples of what Maye called the "advancing light of civilization."

Amos Shackleford of Jamaica wrote the second response to Maye's article.⁵⁵ Shackleford rejected Maye's claim that West Indians were "arrogant" or that they were engaged in the "overlordship" of Africans. Instead, Shackleford claimed, West Indians always carried themselves in a spirit of "goodwill." Yet, like Phillips, Shackleford's defence of West Indians betrayed his own sense of superiority. For example, he made the circular argument that if West Indians really were "further advanced" than Africans, they would not put on airs of superiority

⁵⁴ John H. Phillips, "Letter to the Editor," *The Lagos Standard*, 17 February 1915, 6.

⁵⁵ A. S. Wynter Shackleford, "Letter to the Editor," *The Lagos Standard*, 17 February 1915, 6.

because they would be “guided” by a “higher civilization.” In other words, Shackelford did not deny the possibility that West Indians were more “advanced” than Africans, but he did deny Africans the opportunity to criticize West Indian prejudice. For Shackelford, West Indians were either not “further advanced,” in which case they would not be “arrogant,” or they were “further advanced,” in which case their “higher civilization” would keep them from arrogance.

Shackelford reinforced this implicit paternalism with repeated references to “the native.” He argued that West Indians who came to Africa had “pledged co-operation with the native,” that West Indians had “nothing but praise for the native,” and that even if there had been instances of tension between Africans and West Indians, “the native must have taken it in good part as he made no complaints.” Shackelford, it seems, did not consider that arrogance could exist even if “the native” did not voice “complaints.” In these formulations, just as with Maye and Barbour-James, Phillips and Shackelford were not willing to consider themselves the equals of Africans and their thinking was deeply entrenched in hierarchical understandings of culture, religion, education, and civilization. These views seeped into their assertions of racial unity and Africans took notice.

One week later, on February 24, 1915, *The Lagos Standard* published two more letters responding to Maye’s article. This time, however, the letters came from Africans.⁵⁶ In the first letter, a Nigerian named Akinola dismissed Maye sarcastically as the “leading light in the West Indian domain of the Railway Service” and criticized his “elevation and advancement Crusade.” Akinola also expressed doubt about a “bond of union” between Africans and West Indians. He stated that such unity was impossible because “the West Indian clings to his opinion, expressed and implied, that he is far and away superior to the African co-worker both in civilization and

⁵⁶ Akinola, “West Indians in Nigeria: Letter to the Editor” *The Lagos Standard*, 24 February 1915, 4-5, and Sheba, “West Indians in Nigeria: Letter to the Editor,” *The Lagos Standard*, 24 February 1915, 5.

intellect.” Akinola continued by writing that “whatever advantages the West Indian may have gained from his long contact with European civilization are not being displayed by those imported into Nigeria.” In closing, Akinola proposed a straightforward solution to the friction between Africans and West Indians: “Let the West Indian only erase from his imagination the present illusory notion of his superiority over the Nigerian...and the latter will no longer resent the advent of the former in his domains.”

Evidently, Akinola was unconvinced by a notion of unity in which West Indians “elevated” and “assisted” Africans. His letter cut straight through the hierarchies embedded in Ivanhoe Maye’s call for a “bond of union.” More significantly, Akinola’s letter drew a direct line between the imperious attitudes of West Indians and their “long contact with European civilization.” By referring sarcastically to the “advantages” that West Indians “*may have gained*” from this connection and pointing out that none of these “advantages” were on display in Nigeria, Akinola was suggesting that “long contact” with Europe had not been advantageous at all. Instead, this contact with what Shackleford had termed “higher civilization” had resulted in racial alienation, manifested in this case by attitudes of superiority over Africans. Akinola thus understood the link between “European civilization” and the economic and psychological exploitation of colonialism. He proposed that West Indians “erase from [their] imagination[s]” their “illusory,” European-inspired notions of superiority. This was both a rejection of cultural imperialism and a genuine call for unity between Africans and West Indians against the onslaught of “European civilization” in Africa.

The second letter, from a Nigerian named Sheba, also criticized Maye and the imperious attitudes of West Indians toward Africans. Sheba claimed that the “intelligence” of West Indians did not imply that Africans were “not intelligent.” Such a view was “in conflict to reason” given

that Africans and West Indians “developed under agents foreign to each other.” Sheba thus rejected a zero-sum equation for judging the “attainment to civilization” of Africans and West Indians and instead called for a plural, coeval understanding of historical processes in Africa and the Caribbean. In Sheba’s mind, the Atlantic slave trade had placed West Indians on a different historical path from Africans, but that did not mean that West Indians were more or less advanced; to make such rankings was ahistorical.

More significantly, Sheba declared that the tension between Africans and West Indians in Nigeria ran contrary to “African Spirit.” The only elaboration he provided on this phenomenon was that “every inhabitant of the West India islands who lays claim to the commemoration of 1st August 1834—the Emancipation Day of liberated Africans—is of African descent and therefore AFRICAN.” Sheba’s mention of an “African Spirit” and his claim that West Indians had never ceased to be “AFRICAN” are particularly noteworthy. Sheba would have been well aware of the role of Africans in the slave trade and the fiction of a unified “Africa”—the last slave ships left Lagos in the 1850s, while “domestic” slavery continued unabated in Nigeria until its “slow death” in the 1930s.⁵⁷ Yet by claiming that West Indians were “African” and pointing to the existence of an “African Spirit,” Sheba was imagining the potential of transnational unity between Africans and African-descended peoples. In other words, Sheba was asserting an African-centred view of world history. Instead of framing the histories of Africans and West Indians as mediated or dictated by Europeans—or by providential design, as Ivanhoe Maye had claimed—Sheba articulated a view of history in which Africans and African-descended people

⁵⁷ On the end of slavery in Nigeria, see Kristin Mann *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). More generally, see Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London: Routledge, 2006).

walked different paths but remained linked by a common spiritual force. Sheba's call for unity thus moved beyond hierarchical notions of advancement, assistance, and elevation.

The controversy over Ivanhoe Maye's "West Indians in Nigeria" article took a strange turn a few days later when another letter appeared. This time, it came from "An European" and it provides a comically misinformed reading of the debate.⁵⁸ "An European" believed that Ivanhoe Maye was an African complaining about West Indian attitudes towards Africans, rather than a West Indian paternalistically calling for unity with Africans. In his letter, "An European" stated brashly that Maye's article was simply another example of West African "apathy" and the tendency of West Africans to "beg for help or kindness from the other races who are beating him in the struggle for existence." He suggested that Africans needed to instead help themselves as Europeans did, and pointed out that "the Lord loveth him who helpeth himself."

The following week, an African named Solade wrote a letter responding to Maye's article, as well as to the letters written by John Phillips, Amos Shackleford, and "An European."⁵⁹ Solade began by criticizing the calls for unity made by Maye, Phillips, and Shackleford. After quoting extensively from their letters, Solade argued that their descriptions did not "tally with the actual state of affairs" and that their letters were in fact "an attempt to impose on the credulity of the Native and lull him into a false sense of security." "The attitude of the West Indians, generally, towards the Native," Solade continued, "has been nothing but impolitic, and carries with it an air of arrogance." Solade then turned his criticism to "An European." He suggested that in confusing Maye for a West African, "Mr. An European," had been "presumably swayed by colour prejudice and racial bigotry." This confusion, Solade

⁵⁸ An European, "West Indians in Nigeria: Letter to the Editor," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 26 February 1915, 8. Maye's article and subsequent letters were printed in both *The Lagos Standard* and *The Nigerian Pioneer*.

⁵⁹ Solade, "West Indians in Nigeria: Letter to the Editor" *The Lagos Standard*, 3 March 1915, 6.

suggested, was an “unconscious revelation of the pitch which Mr. An European’s negrophobism had attained.” In the second half of the letter, Solade targeted the heart of the issue. At every turn, West Africans were “encircled by restrictions” instead of given opportunities. Solade then called for the removal of all “unnatural obstacles” from the path of Africans. In closing, he paraphrased incisively from Thomas Gray’s famous 1751 poem, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*: “Would anyone attempt to deny that the flower of the intelligence of many a Native has blushed unseen and wasted its sweetness in the desert air?” By pointing out the “arrogance” of West Indians, the “racial bigotry” of Europeans, and condemning the “unnatural obstacles” of colonialism, Solade made clear the issues facing Africans in the British colonies of West Africa.

The last act in the controversy surrounding Ivanhoe Maye’s article came a week later, when *The Lagos Standard* published a final letter to the editor.⁶⁰ Submitted anonymously, the writer supported the idea of unity between West Indians and Africans. Like Akinola and Sheba, however, he pointed out that this unity should not be dependent on West Indians “elevating” Africans, but rather on Africans and West Indians uniting together against European colonialism. He stated that West Indians like Maye, Phillips, and Shackelford were not “saviours of the Race” but were in fact “permeated and saturated by Europeanism and European Ideas and Ideals.” As a result, they required “mental Emancipation.” Then, like Sheba, the writer asserted a common African identity by claiming that the “return” of West Indians to Africa could “rightly be termed repatriation” and that West Indians of “whatever shade of colour, if not purely white, are of African descent.” In closing, he called for international black unity against Europeans:

Every broadminded West Indian we are sure will find African Natives everwilling and ready to extend the open hand of an undying friendship. He will be welcome to our hearts and welcome to our homes. The forces against us and the times in which we are living must compel, and to appeal to all Negroes wherever found to combine and co-operate. For ‘United we Stand! Divided we fall!’

⁶⁰ “To the Sober Minded,” *The Lagos Standard*, 10 March 1915, 4.

This anonymous writer may have criticized the imperious Europeanized attitudes of some West Indians, but his letter was nonetheless an open invitation to all Africans and people of African descent. Referring to “us,” “we,” “the Race,” and “All Negroes” was a radically inclusive stance. It brought together Africans and West Indians under a common racial identity, one that was unified to fight European colonialism—“the forces against us.” In many ways, the writer was anticipating Marcus Garvey before there was Garveyism. Additionally, unlike Maye’s call for unity, this was a unity grounded in equality, not paternalism, a unity without reference to levels of “civilization” or “backwardness.” By asserting that West Indians needed to embrace a collective “Negro” identity, the writer upended Maye’s conviction that West Indians in Africa needed to “elevate” and “assist” Africans. If anything, the writer was advocating for Africans to “assist” West Indians, both in ridding themselves of “Europeanism” and in going through “mental Emancipation.”

After the publication of this anonymous letter, the controversy surrounding Ivanhoe Maye’s newspaper article appears to have quieted down, at least in the press.⁶¹ There were no further responses published, either from Maye or anyone else. Despite this open-ended conclusion, however, the controversy is still revealing of much about the relationships between Africans and West Indians. When Caribbean administrators like Maye, John Phillips, and Amos Shackleford advocated for racial unity between Africans and West Indians, their thinking was usually inflected with hierarchy. They were attracted to the *idea* of racial unity, but continued to

⁶¹ This controversy played out over the course of a month in the pages of *The Lagos Standard* and *The Nigerian Pioneer*. The *Standard* was founded in 1895 by George Williams, a man of Egba origins born in Sierra Leone in 1851. Williams started the paper with financial support from a government official and Kitoye Ajasa, a Nigerian lawyer. Over time, the *Standard* became more nationalistic. In reaction, Ajasa withdrew his support and founded his own newspaper, the more conservative and pro-British *Pioneer*. For more, see Fred I. A. Omu, “The Newspaper Press in Southern Nigeria, 1880-1900,” in Boniface I. Obichere, ed., *Studies in Southern Nigerian History: A Festschrift for Joseph Christopher Okwudili Anene, 1918-68* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1982), 101-124. See also Derek R. Peterson, Emma Hunter, and Stephanie Newell, eds., *African Print Cultures: Newspapers and Their Publics in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

see themselves as distinct from and inherently superior to Africans. Many Africans, meanwhile, such as Akinola, Sheba, and Solade, rejected these calls for “unity.” Some responded with animosity, resentment, and irony, but many also expressed regret about the acrimony between Africans and West Indians. In fact, in some instances Africans even made efforts to surmount this tension. West Indians, however, seemed unwilling to take similar steps and their thinking often remained locked in hierarchical unity, civilizational ranking, and imperious ideas about Africans.⁶²

CONCLUSION

When the British recruited West Indian railway workers for West Africa, they did so because they believed it would be cheaper and more effective than training “backwards” Africans. This attitude compounded the thinking of West Indians, who already typically considered themselves to be superior to Africans. After arriving in African colonies, however, Caribbean administrators had to navigate a number of personal, social, and intellectual factors, including marginalization from both Europeans and Africans. Some, disillusioned, tried to return home to the Caribbean. Others tried to recreate “home” in Africa and forged new networks of support. In this chapter, I have shown how some also felt compelled to call for racial unity with Africans, genuinely believing this would strengthen their positions. Yet as the preceding examples reveal, attitudes of superiority continued to inform and even overshadow calls for unity. Africans, meanwhile, typically saw through Caribbean paternalism and rejected this hierarchical thinking.

⁶² One notable exception from this chapter is that of Amos Shackelford, who, over time, appears to have changed some of his attitudes about Africans. The rest of Shackelford’s story comes in Chapters 6 and 7.

In her 2005 book on Marcus Garvey, Claude McKay, and C. L. R. James, Michelle Stephens wrote about similar patterns of thought. According to Stephens, these three West Indian intellectuals were “both resisting empire and carrying its tropes along in their wake.”⁶³ Many Caribbean administrators were also carrying the “tropes” of empire with them as they migrated between the Caribbean and Africa. Their calls for black unity intertwined with their loyalties to the British and French empires and with their attachments to the British and French nations. Yet Caribbean administrators took different physical and intellectual paths than Garvey, McKay, and James. In migrating to West and Central Africa, they saw the broader racist and exploitative realities of empire. Some continued to view Africans as lower down in a civilizational hierarchy, but in other cases, Caribbean administrators began to change their ideas about race and nation. In African colonies, they became aware of the global implications of anti-black racism far more quickly than people who remained in the Caribbean or who travelled only between the Caribbean and Europe. Caribbean administrators not only encountered racism but also witnessed the effects of European racial ideologies being writ large on millions of Africans. As a result, some began to see themselves as implicated by the same underlying racial ideas.

In the next three chapters, I will focus on the stories of Caribbean administrators who recognized the global reach of European colonial racism and wrestled with their notions of superiority. As they forged a Caribbean-Africa nexus, they moved beyond hierarchical thinking and articulated new ideas about national belonging and transregional racial identities.

⁶³ Michelle Ann Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 31. Lara Putnam makes a similar case, pointing out the overlap of membership in the interwar Caribbean between Pan-Africanist groups such as Garvey’s U. N. I. A. and British “moral reform” groups such as the Salvation Army and the Boy Scouts. Putnam notes that “British-led moral reform and anti-imperialist black activism...were not mutually exclusive alternatives but oft-united goals.” Putnam, “To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World,” *The Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 621.

5

LANGUAGE, INTERPRETERS, AND TRANSLATION

Yet an interpreter, no matter how competent, can let errors slip into his translation, or even cause them himself.

JULES MARCEL DE COPPET, 1937¹

“My experience in this country does not encourage the idea of considering the possibility of the renewal of a contract,” wrote Elias Buckmire in September 1911.² Buckmire, from Grenada, started working for the Gold Coast Agriculture Department as a travelling instructor in May 1909. Upon the completion of his three-year contract, he was eager for a transfer back home. Buckmire’s supervisor, W. D. Tudhope, sent the application on to the Gold Coast governor along with a letter of support for the transfer: “[Buckmire] has shown a good knowledge of his work since he took up his appointment and I have always found him keen and interested.” Near the end of the letter, however, Tudhope also mentioned that “being a black man and requiring an interpreter places him somewhat at a disadvantage.”³

Tudhope’s letter points to the importance of language in African colonies. Indeed, many scholars have analyzed the significance of translation and the resulting understandings, misunderstandings, and altered meanings.⁴ Buckmire, and anyone else without an understanding of African languages, was certainly “at a disadvantage.” Yet Tudhope’s letter also suggests that

¹ Jules de Coppet, Governor General of AOF, to the Governors of the Colonies, 27 October 1937. ANOM, 18G/98. “*Or un interprète, si compétent soit-il, peut laisser des contre-sens se glisser dans sa traduction, voire les glisser lui-même.*”

² Elias Buckmire to W. D. Tudhope, Director of Agriculture, 30 September 1911, NAUK, CO 96/511.

³ W. D. Tudhope to Colonial Secretary of Accra, 7 November 1911, NAUK, CO 96/511.

⁴ See, for example, Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*; Lawrance, Osborn, and Roberts, eds., *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks*.

had Buckmire been a white man, he would not have been at the same “disadvantage.” “Being a black man *and* requiring an interpreter” was apparently different. Tudhope, in other words, saw black Caribbean administrators as doubly affected by their lack of linguistic knowledge.

Buckmire was hardly alone. When Caribbean administrators arrived in African colonies, most had no facility with African languages. Some in the French administrations took African language classes at the *École Coloniale*,⁵ but those who worked for the British had no advance opportunities for language training. Once in Africa, linguistic barriers were often more than just a “disadvantage”—they also created serious confusion. For example, when Caribbean railway workers struggled to adapt to the conditions of life in Nigeria, it was due in part to their ignorance of African languages. Milton Fairley of Trinidad explained their situation: “We had to rely on Domestic Servants who are half savage natives and unable to speak a word of English, hence we could not understand them, nor make ourselves understood, which resulted in our having to work several days without cooked food, resulting in illness.”⁶ Fairley raised this concern about communication again in a subsequent letter: “You will run the risk of sending a boy to get some water and he brings some wood, all because you will be sent to interior stations where the people know not a word of English, and you not a word of their language.”⁷ For Caribbean administrators in Africa, the issue of language thus created significant problems, from the concerns of daily life to the entrenchment of divisions with Africans. Indeed, language barriers often exacerbated African-Caribbean tensions and left Caribbean administrators even more isolated.

⁵ Hélénon, *French Caribbeans in Africa*, 41.

⁶ Milton Fairley to Colonial Secretary of Trinidad, 8 February 1914, NATT, CSO 7452/1912-1926.

⁷ Thomas Davis, letter to the editor, *The Mirror*, 18 June 1914, 2. On Thomas Davis as Milton Fairley’s pseudonym, see Chapter 4.

Yet not all Caribbean administrators were dependent on interpreters. Many learned African languages. In fact, both the British and French encouraged all administrators to learn “Native Languages” and rewarded proficiency with financial gratuities, promotions, and salary increases.⁸ Ultimately, the British and French promoted language acquisition because this made administrators more useful. Yet learning African languages was never simply a rote exercise, nor solely a means of fulfilling colonial objectives more effectively. Language acquisition also had profound intellectual impacts that allowed Caribbean administrators to understand and engage the social worlds around them in new ways. In this chapter, I examine how learning African languages and interacting with Africans in their own languages engendered mutual understandings between Africans and Caribbean administrators. I begin by considering the African language exams of three Caribbean administrators in the Gold Coast. In the second half of the chapter, I analyze Félix Eboué’s linguistic research in Central Africa.

EXAMS AND ENGAGEMENT

In British colonies, there were three levels of language exams: a Progress Examination, a Lower Standard Examination, and a Higher Standard Examination.⁹ For the Progress exams, administrators needed to know “the numbers up to 100,” “travelling directions,” “the usual greetings and salutations,” local ideas about money and prices, the days of the week and months of the year, or the names of the seasons.¹⁰ Administrators also had to show that they could “read

⁸ For example, in the Gold Coast, the government awarded £25 to administrators who passed a “Lower Standard” exam and £50 to administrators who passed a “Higher Standard” exam. Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of the Gold Coast, 6 August 1909, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/178.

⁹ “General Instructions,” PRAAD, McNeil-Stewart Personnel File, PF 3/32/922/923.

¹⁰ On this requirement, “very considerable latitude in translation [had to] be allowed owing to the fact that in some Native Languages, at least, there [were] no equivalents for the months as known in English.”

and translate a simple passage.” The examiners, who were typically missionaries, either chose or composed these passages themselves. To pass the Lower Standard Exam, administrators had to “read a passage in the Native Language” that related to “the Office held by the candidate,” translate a “simple passage in the Native Language,” “write from Dictation a simple passage in the Native Language,” and “carry on a conversation with the examiner” about “ordinary subjects” and “subjects connected with the candidate’s official business.” Administrators also had to “show some knowledge of the constructions of sentences and of grammar.”

Finally, to pass the Higher Standard exam, administrators had to “write from dictation,” translate from “Native Language to English” and from “English to Native Language,” “show facility in conversation,” and demonstrate a “power of understanding natives of different classes and of making [one]self understood by them, both in common conversation and in the usual course of the candidate’s official business.” During this part of the exam, administrators were “confronted with one or more natives whose knowledge of English [was] limited.” Administrators also had to “act as an interpreter between the examiner and a native absolutely ignorant of English.”

Some of the content in the language exams is blandly bureaucratic and practical, but even in the translation of numbers, prices, days, and seasons, the effects of language learning are apparent. Moreover, the exams often allude to ideas and realities beyond the practicalities of daily life, and so the exams reveal much about Caribbean administrators and their engagement with African cultures. As they learned languages, translated, and acted as interpreters, Caribbean administrators participated in the re-shaping of ideas and meanings. They also embodied the transfers and slippages of translation. I will begin with the exam of Cunliffe Malcolm Hoyte, a sanitary inspector from Trinidad.

Hoyte arrived in the Gold Coast in 1910 and over the next few years he did sanitary work in Accra and the surrounding area. During this time, he also began studying Gã. Then, in October 1914, he applied to take the Gã Lower Standard Examination.¹¹ Hoyte's advisor supported the application, noting that "it would be an advantage if [Hoyte] could speak the language."¹² Hoyte took the exam in early January 1915 at the Basel Mission Parsonage in Ussher Town, Accra, and "satisfactorily passed."¹³ Over the next year, Hoyte continued to study and also transferred to Kumasi. In January 1916, he passed the Gã Higher Standard Exam, scoring 81/100 for dictation, 91/100 for translation, 95/100 for conversation, and 89/100 for interpretation.¹⁴

Most of the questions from the conversation and interpretation sections centred on sanitary work, as examiners were supposed to use questions "connected with the candidate's official business." For example, "Can you show me where the waste paper basket is in this room?" and "How many people suffering from smallpox are here?" Other questions touched on more general aspects of life: "You have a fine cloth. Who gave it to you? How much did it cost? I like it; please buy one for me." "I eat rice but cassava is my chief food. What food do you like?" "Do you know that the money-doubler has been imprisoned? This is a lesson for all men and women." Such questions demonstrate a comprehension of—or at least an entanglement with—local ideas about cloth, food, wealth, and security.

Further questions in the conversation portion of the exam more directly linked Hoyte's work with local ideas about health, especially concerning mosquitoes and water. While in Accra,

¹¹ Hoyte to Medical Officer of Health, Accra, 23 October 1914, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File, PF 3/32/473.

¹² More generally, Hoyte's advisor wrote that it would be "favourable" if "West Indian employees... [were] permitted to sit to Examinations in Native Languages." Principal Medical Officer, Accra to Colonial Secretary, 29 October 1914, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File.

¹³ Basel Mission to Secretary for Native Affairs, 7 January 1915, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File.

¹⁴ Basel Mission to Acting Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, 31 January 1916, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File.

Hoyte had organized a “Mosquito Brigade” and spent much of his time collecting mosquito larvae and inspecting households and “water-holes.”¹⁵ Hoyte continued these efforts in Kumasi, and so the examiner made the topic a focus of his questions: “Do you really believe mosquitoes give fever? How do they do so?” “Wells in this town will be about how many?” “How many belong to the government?” And then, “What is called *dudɔ*?”

The logic of this line of questioning suggests that the examiner saw a link between mosquitoes, fever, wells, and *dudɔ*, a medicine pot consisting of herbs, barks, and roots boiled together with water. *Dudɔ* were common in households, where people drank, bathed in, or inhaled the steam of the herbal remedies to restore health from fevers and other illnesses. In shrines, *dudɔ* also held the healing power of deities.¹⁶ The examiner, however, seems to have understood *dudɔ*—a receptacle of standing water—as one of the “causes” of malaria, fever, and other mosquito-borne illnesses, rather than as a form of therapy that Africans used to treat these very same illnesses. In fact, healers and herbalists intentionally used bitter herbs such as *haatso*, *nyanyara*, and *sulu* to make *dudɔ* unattractive to mosquitoes and other insects.

How did Hoyte make sense of such entanglements? During the course of his regular household inspections in Accra and Kumasi, he surely came across *dudɔ* and must have known the difference between *dudɔ* and pots of drinking water. Yet it seems that Hoyte did not take seriously—at least at first—the healing power and spiritual significance of *dudɔ*. For example, several months after the exam, in June 1916, a journalist in Kumasi for *The Gold Coast Nation*

¹⁵ Letters from Hoyte to Medical Officer of Health, Accra, 20 January 1911, 19 February 1913, and 9 March 1914, PRAAD, Hoyte Personnel File.

¹⁶ *Dudɔ* hold physical and spiritual healing power. Healers, herbalists and others keep *dudɔ* in special rooms in households and in shrines. The medicine can restore health, drive away bad spirits, and offer physical protection. My thanks to Jonathan Roberts for his explanation of *dudɔ*. For more, see Dennis M. Warren, “Disease, Medicine, and Religion among the Techiman-Bono of Ghana: A Study in Cultural Change” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1974). See also Charles Kingsley Coffie, “Obosom Tigare of Nsiakrom: A Study of an Indigenous Religious Movement among the Akan of Ghana” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2003).

known as “The Man in the Corner” named and criticized Hoyte’s relentless “gospel of the mosquito”:

[Hoyte’s] dipping of the enamel ladle into the drinking water stored in houses is as offensive as it is abominable and would hardly be an effective panacea to exterminate the thousand and one mosquitoes swarming about the country... What is more, there are generally two or more water receptacles in a house and to resort to this measure of dipping the ladle into drinking water has a sure means of spreading diseases from one house to the other, and the sooner such dirty practice is stopped the better for the health of the community.¹⁷

The Man in the Corner’s report referred only to “drinking water” not *dudɔ*, though his mention of “two or more water receptacles” may have been an indirect allusion. Nevertheless, this description of Hoyte’s negative impact on “the health of the community” reveals Hoyte’s ineffective and one-dimensional approach to health. As Hoyte attempted to prevent the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses with his ladle, he was likely also contaminating the means by which Africans combatted these illnesses. Other residents of Kumasi—and Accra for that matter—likely shared The Man in the Corner’s views, even if their criticisms did not appear in print. In their minds, Hoyte’s actions were “offensive.” Hoyte not only appeared to be “spreading disease,” his water inspections revealed an ignorance of the treatments and knowledge systems that Africans had long relied on to restore and maintain personal and social health. If Hoyte, while inspecting a household, dipped his ladle into *dudɔ*, the people in that household would have been furious at the waste of valuable medicine. And if Hoyte sampled *dudɔ* in a shrine, the pushback would have been doubly strong. It seems that Hoyte was unable—or perhaps unwilling—to recognize the broader social basis of health, the causes and therapies that concerned far more than mosquitoes and standing water.

As a colonial-trained sanitary inspector, Hoyte likely viewed both *dudɔ* and pots of drinking water as potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Yet his exchanges with Africans,

¹⁷ “The Sanitary Inspector’s Ladle,” *The Gold Coast Nation*, 15 June 1916, 1379.

some of which took place in Gã, must have had an effect on his approach to sanitary work. Moreover, to carry out his work he needed the cooperation of Africans. Hoyte thus had to at least acknowledge the power of *dudɔ* and other forms of therapy, regardless of his scientific understandings of illness. As he moved from household to household with his “enamel ladle” and asked about mosquitoes and fever, he may have even learned that *dudɔ* were also effective means of treating disease. Fundamental to such an intellectual shift was Hoyte’s understanding of language, the only structure through which this kind of dialogue was possible. The concrete evidence of this kind of transformation is admittedly thin, although in January 1918, when Hoyte returned to Kumasi from leave, another journalist from *The Gold Coast Nation* in Kumasi celebrated the occasion, writing simply: “We welcome him.”¹⁸ Had Hoyte continued with his imperious approach to sanitary work, such a welcome would not have been forthcoming.

The dictation section from Hoyte’s exam also reveals how learning African languages necessarily led him and other Caribbean administrators to engage with African cultures and histories. For the dictation, the examiner chose a story about the arrival of Europeans in Accra, titled “The History of Ga Towns” (“*Ga Maji Ablema Saji*”):

Nɛkɛ nii nɛɛ ni magba he sane nɛɛ, gbalɔ lɛ gba mi akɛ akɛ ejɛ ɲshɔ mli ni ebabɔ ade kɛ ewekumɛi fiaa shi kome, ni ameyato ɲshɔ nɛɛ naa. No mli lɛ mɔ ko mɔ ko bɛ biɛ; shi ɲmɛnɛɲmɛnɛ Gamei ni yɔɔ nɛɛ kosɛɛbii ji amɛ, ni kosɛɛ hu amɛyɔɔ. Nɛkɛ nuu nɛɛ kɛ ewekumɛi yaa wuo. Gbi nɛɛ eɛhɛ ye ɲshɔ naa ni lɛlɛ ko damɔ shi ni emli gbɔmɛi tɛ lɛ akɛ eba, ni ekwɔ ahima lɛ ketee eyajie amɛ kɛba shikpɔɲ. Nuu lɛ, egbɛi ji Lakote Aduaoshi. Gbɔmɛi ni yɔɔ lɛlɛ mli lɛ, Okeshi blɔfomɛi ji amɛ ni amɛkɛ lɛ hi shi. No sɛɛ lɛ Kinka kɛ Osu kɛ Dleshi blɔfomɛi hu baba. Amɛ fiaa amɛha lɛ wolo akɛ shikpɔɲ nɛɛ ɛnɔ ni koni lɛlɛ fiaa lɛlɛ ni aabadamɔ shi lɛ eke wolo lɛ atsɔɔ amɛ koni amɛwo lɛ nyɔmɔ ejaakɛ shikpɔɲ nɛɛ ɛnɔ ni. Nakai mɛi ni yɔɔ sa lɛ ha lɛ, ni ekɛɛ amɛ akɛ wojo nɛɛ aaafite, shi amɛfɛɛ lɛ ye shikatso he, koni ekɛye odase akɛ shikpɔɲ lɛ ɛnɔ ni. Ni amɛfɛɛ nakai.

This thing that I’m going to tell to you, was told to me by a prophet [*gbalɔ*], that he came from the sea and settled along the shore with his entire family at the same time. At that time nobody lived here [Accra coast]; but the modern Gã people who lived here were villagers/bush people, and they lived in the village/bush. This man and his relatives were fishermen. On that day, while he was catching fish, a boat docked and the people in it called him to come over. He got into his canoe and got the men onto land. The man’s name is Lakote Aduaoshi. The men in the boat were *Okeshi* white men [Portuguese] and they stayed with him. Later, white men from *Kinka* [Dutch], Osu, and England [*Enlesi*] came. They all gave him a document indicating his ownership of the land, so that

¹⁸ “Coomassie,” *The Gold Coast Nation*, 12 January 1918, 6.

he could claim revenue from any ship that stopped over by showing the documents to them because he owned the land. Those people gave him [the documents], and he told them that since the documents might get damaged they should do it on a *shikpɔŋ* [“money tree,” i.e. they should carve the agreement on a golden stick/pole] so he could use that as evidence that the land belonged to him. And they did just that.¹⁹

This passage points to a number of key themes in the history of Ghana: social, political, and economic organization, the arrival of Europeans, and the formation of early trade relationships between the Gã and the Portuguese, Dutch, and English. The passage also points to the introduction of documentary land claims and European ideas about land ownership, “evidence,” and wealth. The story suggests that Lakote Aduaoshi, known as the first person to settle the coastal region of what is now Accra, accepted and even embraced these forms of power.

The history of the passage itself is also noteworthy. Johannes Zimmerman, a Basel missionary, first recorded the story in his 1858 book *Grammatical Sketch and Vocabulary of the Akra or Ga Language*. In fact, Hoyte’s examiner took the exam dictation word for word from Zimmerman’s book.²⁰ Hoyte’s engagement with this “African” story was thus actually an engagement with a colonial document, a story already mediated, adapted, and codified into written Gã. Moreover, Hoyte likely relied on Zimmerman’s book as he studied for his Gã exams, and so even before writing out this dictation, Hoyte was well aware of the layered contexts of language and power in the Gold Coast.

It is unknown what Hoyte thought of this passage, but as someone well versed in history, Greek literature, poetry, and political philosophy,²¹ he surely saw more in it than merely a description of the first European arrivals in the region. For one thing, Hoyte knew the links

¹⁹ My thanks to Seth Ni Moi Allotey and Hermann von Hesse for their help with translation from Gã to English.

²⁰ Johannes Zimmerman, *Grammatical Sketch and Vocabulary of the Akra or Ga Language* (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1858), 183.

²¹ In his letters, Hoyte referred to The Odyssey, Machiavelli, and Rudyard Kipling, and the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. See Chapter 2.

between early European involvement in West Africa and the transatlantic slave trade. Indeed, as the descendant of African slaves himself, Hoyte also understood this history on a personal level. He had grown up in a Trinidad that remained saturated with the legacies of slavery, and his parents had given him an “African name,” Dhani, as was the custom among many families in Belmont.²² Thus, when Hoyte listened to this dictation, he was well aware that similar African-European interactions all along the coasts of West and Central Africa had led to the displacement of millions to the Caribbean, and elsewhere. He knew that such interactions had spread slavery, mass violence, and death around the world for over 400 years.

Secondly, Hoyte must have identified the continuities between early African-European exchanges and the relations between Africans and the British colonial state in the early-twentieth century. More specifically, Hoyte would have recognized how the contours of early European trade in West Africa had continued to inflect African ideas about land and wealth. Lakote Aduaoshi had used “documents” to assert “ownership of the land” and to “claim revenue.” Such practices had only grown more entrenched by 1916. The only significant difference was that the British now asserted firmer control over the structures and meanings of documents, land ownership, and wealth. In the course of Hoyte’s daily routines, he encountered Africans who had to pay taxes, adjust to colonial land laws and labour “regulations,” and be wary of “money doublers.”

For someone in Hoyte’s position, the clear long-term impacts of European ideas on everyday life in the Gold Coast would have been striking. Moreover, as the descendant of African slaves *and* a colonial official, Hoyte was doubly implicated in this history. Learning Gã thus created a space for Hoyte to reflect more critically on how European imperialism affected

²² Dr. Ralph Hoyte Jr., “Interview with Dr. Ralph Hoyte,” by Dr. Margaret Rouse-Jones and Mrs. Estelle M. Appiah, 28 June 2005. For more, see Chapter 1.

the cultures and histories of both Africa and the Caribbean. Whether or not Hoyte acted on such reflections and attempted to challenge the impacts of colonial rule is another matter—and indeed, this seems unlikely, since he continued working for the Gold Coast administration until his retirement in 1939. Nevertheless, given his marginalized position between Africans and Europeans and his knowledge of Gã language and culture, it seems likely that he continued to think about the effects and contradictions of empire, and the similar exploitations of Trinidad and the Gold Coast. It is also worth noting that Hoyte remained in the Gold Coast after his retirement. He married an African woman²³ and maintained a strong social network with other West Indians.²⁴ Through family networks, he even developed links with George Padmore and Eric Williams, the vociferous opponent of British imperialism and the first Prime Minister of independent Trinidad.²⁵ Hoyte remained in West Africa until his death in Adabraka in 1966.²⁶

Marie Austin's language exam similarly reveals the intellectual impacts of engaging with African languages and cultures. In particular, the exam demonstrates how Austin began to see links between education, religion, and economic exploitation. Austin was a teacher from Barbados, and she moved to the Gold Coast in 1914 to start work at the Accra Government Girls

²³ When Hoyte first left for the Gold Coast in 1910, he took two children with him but left his wife and third child behind in Trinidad. Relatives in Scotland raised the two children that he brought along, and he visited Scotland and Trinidad while on leave. Dr. Ralph Hoyte Jr., "Interview with Dr. Ralph Hoyte," by Dr. Margaret Rouse-Jones and Mrs. Estelle M. Appiah, 28 June 2005.

²⁴ Indeed, when George Stanley Lewis of St. Lucia died in Ghana in December 1999, the funeral program listed Hoyte alongside Lewis and several others as one of the West Indian "Pioneers" who "settled in the Gold Coast." "Burial and Thanksgiving Service for the Life of George Stanley Lewis," UWISC, GJC, Box 1, Folder 19. Lewis was the older brother of famed St. Lucian economist Sir W. Arthur Lewis.

²⁵ Hoyte's brother, Dr. Ralph. A. Hoyte, who also worked in the Gold Coast, married a woman who was part of the Nurse family in Trinidad, and Malcom Nurse/George Padmore, was a cousin. While in London, Ralph Hoyte also met with Eric Williams. Interview with Dr. Ralph Hoyte Jr.; Eric Williams 1957 Day Planner, Eric Williams Memorial Collection, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine (EWMC), Folder 590.

²⁶ "Interview of Dr. Ralph Hoyte Jr."

School.²⁷ She began studying Gã a few months after arriving, and then in August 1916, she took the Lower Standard Exam at the Wesleyan School in Accra.²⁸ Austin passed, scoring 20/25 on reading, 20/25 on translation, 24/25 on dictation, and 40/50 on conversation. As with Hoyte, the content of Austin's exam mirrored the contours of colonial objectives. The first topic of the conversation portion, for example, was "Punctuality": "What it is; advantages and disadvantages in connection with school work; methods to be adopted to cultivate it." The second topic, "Obedience," had a similar slant: "Meaning, aim, and uses in a school; difference between slavish and cheerful." The examiner declared that he and Austin "conversed at length on how the future men (boys) and women (girls) of our country should be trained to the benefit of both parents and the colony." As a British-trained teacher, Austin was likely sympathetic to ingraining such behavioural foundations and colonial ideologies in young African students.

Other sections of the exam moved beyond Austin's role as a teacher. Several phrases in the reading section, for example, linked education with religion and extractive trade relationships: "She teaches us well," "This teacher beats us too much," "Teach the children the fear of God," and "Large quantities are exported abroad [*Ablotsiri*] where they are used to manufacture pomade." The juxtaposition of these statements made the connections between the daily realities of colonial education and imperial trade networks unavoidable. Austin may not have immediately identified the connections between her role in the classroom and the global circulations of palm oil and pomade. Nevertheless, learning Gã allowed Austin to consider how Africans viewed the world beyond the Gold Coast, how they understood the actions of strangers from "abroad" and their impact on local economies. In light of her exam and her discussion with

²⁷ PRAAD, Marie S. Austin Personnel File, PF 3/32/473.

²⁸ Wesleyan School, Accra, to Secretary of Native Affairs, 9 August 1916, PRAAD, Austin Personnel File.

the examiner, Austin surely thought about these alternative perspectives. It is also likely that she reflected on the connections between her students and the work of the clerks and merchants at the nearby port of Accra. At the very least, she must have considered her role in linking the cultural effects of colonial education with the violence of colonial resource extraction.

The dictation section of Austin's exam would have spurred further reflection. The examiner chose a passage that provided an alternative image of agricultural production:

Duade gbɛi lɛ shishi ji: tso yɛlɛ. Esu tamɔ tso, shi ebɔɔ yɛ shikpɔŋ tamɔ yɛlɛ. Etso lɛ, kuku ko atɛɔ, ni ehɛɔ. Ejeɔ bai ni egbalaa niji, ni etsɛrɛɔ kpai aaafee nyɔŋma yɛ shikpɔŋ. Fai lɛ nɔŋŋ ji duade ni ayeɔ lɛ. Eko ti tamɔ gbɔmɔ nine, eko hu shɛɛ nakai.

The meaning of *duade* [cassava] is: yam stick [*tso yɛlɛ*]. It has the characteristics of a tree, but it matures in the ground like yam. It is only a small portion of its stick that is put in the ground, and it germinates. It produces leaves and branches, and grows about ten threadlike roots in the ground. The roots are the same cassava that is eaten. Some are as thick as the arm of a human being, whilst some are less so.

Compared with the manufacturing of pomade, this evocative description of cassava growth illuminated the differences between earlier models of subsistence agriculture and the emergent cash crop economy of the Gold Coast. By the time Austin took her exam in August 1916, colonial modes of production had deeply enmeshed the economies of Accra and further inland. The image of cassava plants “germinating” while remaining firmly rooted “in the ground” neatly captured the small-scale farming patterns that Africans in the Gold Coast once relied on. Unlike cocoa, palm oil, and other cash crops that left African farmers with little food or resources to feed their families, these “leaves and branches,” emerging from “thick” roots, suggested a sustainable, less extractive model of agricultural production. Austin's comprehension of Gã and this image of *duade* cultivation must have led Austin to consider the economic circumstances of the Gold Coast in a new light.

This is only one interpretation of Austin's exam, of course, and it is impossible to say whether or not she reached similar conclusions. Moreover, she left the Gold Coast permanently

in 1919 without taking a Higher Standard Gã Exam, and so it is difficult to expand on how learning Gã affected her thinking and her approach to teaching.²⁹ Nevertheless, the content of her exam reveals that even small engagements with African languages created the possibility for dramatic intellectual shifts on topics such as education, religion, and economic exploitation.

A third language exam from the Gold Coast, that of David McNeil-Stewart, further highlights the power of language. McNeil-Stewart, like Hoyte, was a sanitary inspector from Trinidad, and he arrived in the Gold Coast in May 1910. Over the next few years he worked mainly in Sekondi and several other towns along the southwest coast.³⁰ McNeil-Stewart was unpopular among Africans, much like other sanitary inspectors, and this tension occasionally reached the pages of local newspapers. In November 1910, for instance, a writer in *The Gold Coast Leader* described McNeil-Stewart as a “West Indian Inspector of Nuisance.”³¹ The writer also decried McNeil-Stewart’s “idiotic performance” at the Roman Catholic School in Sekondi several weeks earlier. McNeil-Stewart had entered the school to look for mosquito larvae and had begun “prying behind the school maps and the ink pots on the desks,” all while “the priest and school teachers stood up heads erect...with great astonishment.” Shortly thereafter, McNeil-Stewart “left the premises *without saying a word*.”³² Clearly focused on his work, McNeil-Stewart was unaware of—or perhaps simply not concerned with—the impact of his actions on those around him. McNeil-Stewart’s silence and the “astonishment” of the priest and schoolteachers reveal McNeil-Stewart’s inability to communicate. He did not understand the

²⁹ Austin resigned her appointment in January 1918, though she only left the Gold Coast in March 1919 because of the difficulty of finding a passage. She also wanted to wait to travel with her sister and her sister’s husband, David S. Payne, another teacher from Barbados working in the Gold Coast. PRAAD, Austin Personnel File.

³⁰ Gold Coast Blue Books 1910-1917, NAUK, CO 100/60 - CO 100/67.

³¹ “Seccondee,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 5 November 1910, 4.

³² “Seccondee,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 5 November 1910, 4. My emphasis.

language of social life in Sekondi and he was apparently unwilling to learn. As a West Indian in the Gold Coast administration, he was already an outsider, but his ignorance of any African languages further marginalized his position.

In April 1913, an editor at *The Gold Coast Leader* made a similar complaint. He noted that while sanitary work was important, officers such as McNeil-Stewart needed to convince Africans to “intelligently associate and co-operate with them in the work of Sanitation.”³³ The writer also issued a warning: “Without this co-operation sanitary work in West Africa can be of little use and at Seccondee absolutely nothing is being done to teach the people or invite their co-operation.” Finally, the writer stated that “sanitary inspectors at Seccondee...appear to regard themselves as a malignant type of police officer.” McNeil-Stewart had evidently remained disengaged with those around him in Sekondi and had not formed any relationships with Africans. His silence and his inability to “co-operate” only deepened existing tensions.

Around this same time, however, McNeil-Stewart began studying Fante in preparation for language exams. In July 1916, McNeil-Stewart passed the Lower Standard Fante exam and one year later, in Kumasi, he passed the Higher Standard Fante exam.³⁴ There is little trace of the Lower Standard exam content, but his Higher Standard exam reveals the intersections of McNeil-Stewart’s work, the war, and links with the Caribbean.

For example, the text of the dictation section described an incident involving a sanitary inspector:

Bir a Ahwihwesonmun’ baan’ amunum ho bian’ du tsa dsin. Wāwā kitsa mbrantsen dsindsin; wo de nyimpa yi oabontsi oekoh bebi mbre wotsi. Ahwihwesonmun’ bisabisa hon nsem pi, na nkurofun’ enyiyi-anu yien’, okyir hon mu duenum kogu efiadsi.

When the Sanitary Inspector came the disturbances calmed down in the neighborhoods. Wawa held the young men vigorously; they said these people had searched diligently to find out where

³³ “Editorial Notes,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 19 April 1913, 3-4.

³⁴ PRAAD, David McNeil-Stewart Personnel File, PF 3/32/922/923.

they live. The Sanitary Inspector asked them many questions and when the people didn't answer them well, he arrested twelve of them and put them in jail.³⁵

Some of the details from the text are unclear: What disturbances? Who was Wawa? Who were "these people"? Nonetheless, this remarkably specific situation may have emerged directly from McNeil-Stewart's personal experiences. The approach of this "Sanitary Inspector" was certainly in keeping with descriptions of McNeil-Stewart. He made no effort to "co-operate" with Africans and he acted like "a malignant type of police officer," questioning and arresting people with whom he could not properly communicate ("The people didn't answer them well.")

McNeil-Stewart's exam also reveals local preoccupations with the effects of war. In the translation section, for instance, a number of the Fante sentences McNeil-Stewart translated into English concerned soldiers and Germany. "Many of the Coomassie peoples children go to East Africa." "The war is for a long time." "Have you heard that the Germans have destroyed the English ship 'Abossa'? Yes I have heard, it is a pity." Such sentences may be more revealing of the thinking of McNeil-Stewart's examiner, Reverend J. A. Assan, who was the "Senior Native Minister" at the Wesleyan Mission in Kumasi. The British recruited hundreds of West African soldiers to fight against Germany not only in neighbouring Togo, but also in Cameroon and in East Africa. Many died, and the losses of these "children" for the abstract causes of World War I must have been profound.³⁶

Another sentence from the translation section concerned alcohol. Referring to a recently arrived governor, the examiner's Fante sentence read: "We are looking forward to his arrival; when he comes we will bring the issue before him so that he bans the illegal sale of hard liquor

³⁵ My thanks to Efua Osam for her help with translations from Fante to English.

³⁶ For more on West Africans in East Africa during World War I, see David Killingray and James Matthews, "Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 13, no. 1/2 (1979): 5-23. Killingray has also written extensively about African soldiers in World War II.

here in our country.”³⁷ In McNeil-Stewart’s translation, however, he wrote: “We hope his road is here; if he comes we will place before him to forbid the sale of rum in this country.” McNeil-Stewart’s translation of *mbrosã* [*mмосã*] to “rum” rather than the more general (and more appropriate) “liquor,” reveals his own connections with the Caribbean.³⁸ By 1917, McNeil-Stewart had lived in the Gold Coast for seven years, rum, one of the Caribbean’s best-known exports, had remained a part of his world. When asked to translate “liquor,” he thought of rum.

The specific content of McNeil-Stewart’s exam is not as revealing as the exams of Hoyte or Austin, yet his acquisition of linguistic and cultural knowledge seems to have effected equally significant changes in his outlook and his relationships with Africans. In June 1918, he moved to Keta in the southeast Gold Coast, and there seems to have promoted the exact “co-operation” that he lacked in Sekondi. In a letter to the Medical Officer of Keta, Fia Sri II of Awuna (Anlo) declared that ever since McNeil-Stewart’s arrival three years earlier, sanitary work in Keta had been “carried out with the highest efficiency” and had garnered praise from “every European (Official or non-official) as well as other natives of the Colony passing through.”³⁹ Sri II also described his specific appreciation for McNeil-Stewart:

His courtesy to the lowest and the most illiterate of my subjects, as well as to the higher and more intelligent ones, his ever willingness to make the ignorant and illiterate people understand sanitary methods which are new to them, instead of unwisely frequently putting them before the Court for things of which they are ignorant, have won for him the love and esteem not only of the people, but also of the Chiefs, the European element (Official and non-official) and likewise mine.

Sri II’s support for McNeil-Stewart stemmed in part from a desire to create a “modern,” sanitary town. As Sandra Greene writes, the Bremen-mission educated Sri II had been eager to do so ever

³⁷ “*Hen enyi dan kwan wo ha; se obaa yedsi botu n’eyim ma oabra mbrosã ton wo hen man yi mu ha.*”

³⁸ For translations of *mмосã* as “liquor,” see Rev. Johann Gottlieb Christaller, *A Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language Called Tshi (Chwee, Twi)* (Basel: L. Reinhardt, 1881), 356, 401.

³⁹ Fia Sri II to Medical Officer of Quittah, 11 August 1921, PRAAD, McNeil-Stewart Personnel File.

since the whole of Anloga burned in 1911. He and his advisors thus sought to align with sanitary inspectors and those with power in the British administration.⁴⁰ Yet Sri II's praise also reflected a change in McNeil-Stewart's approach to sanitary work and to his interactions with Africans. Rather than going about his duties in silence, McNeil-Stewart was now willing to explain his role to "the ignorant and illiterate people." Instead of arbitrarily arresting Africans and bringing them to court like a "malignant type of police officer," McNeil-Stewart earned the "love and esteem...of the people." Most in Keta would have spoken Ewe, not Fante, though it is likely that McNeil-Stewart also began learning Ewe. Perhaps, as he learned new languages and interacted with the "ignorant and illiterate," he thought of his own upbringing and the ways that British colonial officers imposed foreign languages and cultural practices in Trinidad. On one hand, language acquisition allowed McNeil-Stewart to perform his colonial duties more effectively. On the other hand, his increased awareness of languages in the Gold Coast also changed his thinking about his own position and about the interactions between Africans and the colonial government.

Around the same time that Fia Sri II wrote his letter of praise, McNeil-Stewart presided over a public meeting in Keta at the Jubilee Memorial Hall.⁴¹ The highlight of the meeting, according to one observer, was a "very interesting" speech by Samuel Athanasius Pomeyie, who was a personal secretary to Sri II. Pomeyie's speech was entitled "The Anlo (Awuna) District—and its Development and Progress of its People." In it, he called for the creation of the "Anlo (Awuna) Progress Union." One important influence on Pomeyie's ideas about racial uplift was his belief in the British Empire. Only a few months earlier, he gave a "very elaborate" speech

⁴⁰ For more on Fia Sri II, see Sandra E. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), especially chapters 2 and 3.

⁴¹ "Quittah," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 6-13 August 1921, 8.

about the Union Jack “and the purport of saluting same.”⁴² Yet Pomeyie’s thinking was also informed by his experiences at Livingstone College in North Carolina. Livingstone was an African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church school, and once back in the Gold Coast, Pomeyie became a leader at the AME Zion Church in Anlo. This connection likely brought him together with McNeil-Stewart, as the AME Zion Church formed an important nexus between the Caribbean, West Africa, and North America. To be sure, the AME Zion Church’s goals often intertwined with British colonial ideology, yet the Church nonetheless shaped many early expression of Pan-Africanism. In fact, James Kwegyir Aggrey of Cape Coast had also studied at Livingstone College, thanks to the recommendation of an AME Zion Church missionary from Barbados, John Bryan Small.⁴³

Such connections likely also fuelled Pomeyie’s call for creation an “Anlo Progress Union.” The idea was remarkably similar to the “African Progress Union” of London, founded three years earlier by Africans and Caribbean people living in England, including Marcus Garvey’s mentor, Dusé Mohamed Ali, as well as John Barbour-James of British Guiana, John Alcindor of Trinidad, and Thomas Hutton-Mills and Joseph Casely Hayford of the Gold Coast.⁴⁴ It is unclear whether McNeil-Stewart was directly linked with the African Progress Union,

⁴² “Empire Day Celebrations at Awunaga,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 23 July 1921, 2.

⁴³ For more on Pomeyie (1889-1938) and the AME Zion Church in Ghana, see Sandra E. Greene, *West African Narratives of Slavery: Texts from Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Century Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), Chapter 8. See also Charles M. K. Mamattah, *The Ewes of West Africa: The Anlo-Ewes and their Immediate Neighbours* (Accra: Volta Research Publications, 1978), 439-440; and Jenkins, *Black Zion*. On Aggrey at Livingstone, see Daniel Boamah-Wiafe, “Dr. James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey of Achimota: Preacher, Scholar, Teacher, and Gentleman,” in *Black Lives: Essays in African American Biography*, ed. James L. Conyers (New York: Routledge, 2015), 183.

⁴⁴ Other members included H. C. Bankole Bright and Chief Oluwa (Amodu Tijani) of Nigeria. See “The African Progress Union,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 20 August 1920, 5-6; and “African Progress Union Dinner,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 26 March 1921, 4-5 (reprinted from *West Africa*, 26 February 1921). For more on the African Progress Union, see Chapter 8.

though he knew many of those involved, including Barbour-James.⁴⁵ Over the course of a decade, McNeil-Stewart had transformed from a “West Indian Inspector of Nuisance” to a supporter of the AME Zion Church. No doubt this had to do in part with the racism and exclusion he encountered at the hands of the British administration, yet his linguistic acquisition also influenced this shift. Learning Fante and Ewe engendered an openness to African cultures and a willingness to support African-centred initiatives. McNeil-Stewart was now able to communicate and “co-operate” with Africans. With his support for the AME Zion Church in the Gold Coast and for the Anlo (Awuna) Progress Union, McNeil-Stewart was, at least to some extent, aligning his own struggles with those of Africans.⁴⁶

For Hoyte, Austin, and McNeil-Stewart, learning African languages effected major changes in their thinking about Africans and empire. Growing up in the Caribbean and attending colonial schools, they were personally familiar with the complex dynamics of language and power. As a result, they knew that language acquisition in Africa was far more than simply a way of carrying out colonial duties more effectively. Learning African languages allowed Caribbean administrators more direct insights into the places they lived and into the experiences of the people around them. It also allowed Caribbean administrators to more clearly understand the effects of colonial rule and the historical connections between Africa and the Caribbean. This trend is even more apparent in the case of Félix Eboué.

⁴⁵ “Seccondee,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 9 December 1911, 3. McNeil-Stewart was also acquainted with many of the other Caribbean administrators in the Gold Coast, including Leonard J. Muss, Robert. A. Dick, and Percy Roberts.

⁴⁶ It seems that McNeil-Stewart also passed these attitudes on to his son, Kenneth McNeil-Stewart, who remained in the Gold Coast long after his mother and father returned to the Caribbean. Kenneth McNeil-Stewart was a key member of the Gold Coast Press in the 1920s and 1930s. He was the first editor of the *West Africa Times* and was a friend of J. B. Danquah. For more on Kenneth McNeil-Stewart, see Prais, “Imperial Travelers,” especially chapter 5 and 6.

DICTIONARIES, FOLKTALES, AND INTERPRETERS

In 1918, René Maran was facing disciplinary action based on the testimony of several African porters in Oubangui-Chari.⁴⁷ Maran, however, disputed the veracity of translations made by the “sworn-in interpreter,” Michel Sodji, who was from Dahomey. Maran knew Sango and Banda, and he noted that there were “errors in the translation of the debates that [Sodji] was brought in to explain.” Maran also criticized “the licence with which [Sodji] translated that which was told.” More generally, Maran claimed that based on his “experiences,” he had “no confidence in interpreters...even when they were sworn-in, and especially when, as with Sodji, they had long held administrative positions where they had numerous interests.”⁴⁸ African interpreters, as Maran made clear, were never disinterested language convertors. Rather, in their exchanges with European and Caribbean administrators, they made their own decisions about translation, often based on their own interests. In their hands, language was a powerful tool. As a result of these circumstances, Maran requested a change of interpreters: “In light of the gravity of the grievance against me, I respectfully ask you, Governor, to arrange that M. Eboué, colonial administrator, well-versed in all the languages and dialects of these regions, be chosen as the sole official interpreter.”⁴⁹ Maran likely suggested Eboué because of their long-standing friendship,⁵⁰

⁴⁷ For more on this case, see Chapter 2.

⁴⁸ “*Connaissant aussi pour avoir, à plusieurs reprises, relevé chez l’écrivain Sodji, interprète assermenté, des erreurs dans la traduction des palabres qu’il était amené à expliquer, la liberté avec laquelle il traduisait ce qui venait de lui être raconté; n’ayant au surplus, par expérience, qu’une confiance nulle dans les interprètes en général, même lorsqu’ils sont assermentés, et surtout lorsqu’ils ont longtemps séjourné, comme SODJI, en un poste administratif où ils ont des intérêts nombreux.*” Maran to Governor of Oubangui-Chari, 13 September 1918, ANOM, FP/8APOM/4.

⁴⁹ “*Vu enfin la gravité de la plainte portée contre moi, je vous demande respectueusement, Monsieur le Gouverneur, de faire en sorte que M. EBOUE, administrateur des Colonies, versé dans toutes les langues et dialectes de ces régions-ci, soit exceptionnellement choisi comme interprète officiel.*” Maran to Governor of Oubangui-Chari, 13 September 1918, ANOM, FP/8APOM/4.

⁵⁰ Maran first met Eboué at school in Bordeaux in 1901. Weinstein, *Eboué*, 17-21.

but the gesture is also revealing of Eboué's well-recognized command of Central African languages.⁵¹

Eboué, born in French Guiana in 1884, studied in Bordeaux and at the *École Coloniale* in Paris. In 1909 he joined the French colonial civil service and then headed for Oubangui-Chari. In many ways he was no different from other French administrators. He was responsible for “pacifying” conflicts, developing agriculture and education, and collecting taxes.⁵² In addition to this work, however, Eboué also conducted a great deal of linguistic and ethnographic research. For example, in 1911, he began collecting wordlists in a notebook.⁵³ The more organized pages featured a column of French words and then adjacent columns for the equivalent words in Sango, Banda, and Mandjia. Most of the words concerned basics such as “me,” “you,” “men,” “women,” “children,” “chicken,” “eggs,” “water,” “eat,” “drink,” and the words for different body parts. Yet some of the entries, especially the verbs, revealed the alignment of Eboué's word choices with his colonial duties: “Give me that,” “paper,” “come quickly,” “to work,” “to hit.”⁵⁴ The fact that these were some of the first words that Eboué was learning—or at least choosing to write down—reveals how colonial imperatives informed these seemingly innocuous wordlists and limited the scope of language acquisition. Indeed, the wordlists themselves appear together with Eboué's other (un)related notes, such as detailed, down-to-the-minute schedules of his “tours,” as well as various math calculations, perhaps regarding taxes, agricultural production, or the collection of rubber and other resources.

⁵¹ In fact, Maran also had a great deal of fluency in Central African languages. In one of his notebooks, he carefully transcribed the meanings of hundreds of village names. Bibliothèque Centrale, Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD), Fonds René Maran (FRM), MS 31.

⁵² For more on Eboué's initial experiences in Central Africa, see Chapter 2.

⁵³ Félix Eboué Notebook 1911, FCG, FFE, F22/1.

⁵⁴ “*Donne-moi ça,*” “*papier,*” “*viens vite,*” “*travailler,*” “*frapper.*”

Over the next few years, Eboué continued his linguistic research alongside his administrative responsibilities. Then, in 1918, he published a five-language dictionary (French, Sango, Banda, Baya, and Mandjia).⁵⁵ This work was the result of close ties and exchanges with several local leaders and interpreters, including Raymond Sokambi and Soumoussi. Equally significant was Eboué's relationships with his first wife, Bada Marcelline, whom he married in 1915.⁵⁶ In addition to explaining the grammars and basic structures of the African languages, Eboué's dictionary also included a glossary containing just over 1,000 French words and their equivalents in the other languages. Eboué did not elaborate on any of his word choices, yet even the word-for-word conversions he provided are significant. Some of the words Eboué chose to include simply reveal his role as a colonial official: "money," "rubber," "tax," "ivory," "paper," and "porter." Other entries in the dictionary, however, reveal the patterns of Eboué's thinking about colonialism, Africans, and African cultures and institutions.

For example, for the French word *chef* (chief, or leader), Eboué listed two Sango words: "bia" and "makūdji." "Bia," or "gbia," as it has been transcribed in other dictionaries, is the word that the Nzakara and Azande used to refer to their leaders before the French arrived in the region.⁵⁷ Only the Nzakara and Azande, however, had centralized rulers in the precolonial period. Other groups of people instead chose leaders for a limited amount of time and only for

⁵⁵ Félix Eboué, *Langues sango, banda, baya, mandjia: notes grammaticales, mots groupés d'après le sens, phrase usuelles, vocabulaire* (Paris: Larose, 1918).

⁵⁶ Sokambi was a French-appointed Banziri chief near Kouango, northeast of Bangui, and Soumoussi was a chief from near Damara, just north of Bangui. Weinstein, *Eboué*, 45, 166. Bada Marcelline was a relative of Sokambi. For more on these relationships, see Chapter 3 and Weinstein, "Eboué and the Chiefs."

⁵⁷ Indeed, in his draft of a Zande dictionary, Eboué noted that the equivalent for *chef* was "gbia." See "Notes sur la Grammaire et le Vocabulaire de la langue Zande," FCG, FFE, F22/5, Folder 2.

specific purposes such as war or hunting.⁵⁸ “*Makūdji*,” on the other hand, (also spelled as “*mokonji*” or “*mokonzi*”), is a Lingala word that people in Central Africa used specifically to describe the leaders that the French chose and imposed.⁵⁹ Eboué’s decision to include both “*bia*” and “*makūdji*” indicates a subtle deference to African institutions of leadership. Indeed, as he wrote in his 1933 ethnography of Oubangui-Chari: “We...dulled the native authority by dividing it and breaking it apart, and we sometimes imposed chiefs on them...people that local traditions clearly indicated should not have been in these positions.”⁶⁰ In light of Eboué’s dictionary entry for *chef*, this criticism is especially notable. Eboué’s knowledge of precolonial African history allowed him a clearer understanding of how French colonialism affected African cultures. By studying African languages, Eboué learned how the mess of colonial rule disrupted and entangled a variety of African intellectual traditions. As he wrote to Maran in 1924:

I am surprised to note the ravages of the West in these primitive lands. There are no traditions left. The young natives are no longer initiated, and this is terrible, because they are caught ‘up in the air.’ With this Latin mania to disrupt everything in order to facilitate assimilation, the natives are wedged between their traditions, which they have forgotten, and our civilization, which is poured to them with an eye-dropper, and which they cannot yet digest.⁶¹

Eboué saw Africans through a colonialist lens and believed in the “civilizing mission.”

Moreover, his assessment that there were “no traditions left” gave too much credit to the

⁵⁸ Pierre Kalck, who was himself a colonial administrator in Oubangi-Chari, writes that “the idea of a chief whose competence was restricted to a given geographical area was so alien to traditional Central African conceptions that the people invented a new term, of foreign origin, to refer to these official chiefs.” Kalck, *Central African Republic: A Failure in De-Colonisation*, trans. Barbara Thomson (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 28.

⁵⁹ Luc Bouquiaux, Jean-Marie Jobozo, et Marcel Diki-Kidiri, *Dictionnaire sango-français* (Paris: Société d’études linguistiques et anthropologiques de France, 1978), 216; Gaston Giraud, *Vocabulaire des dialectes sango, bakongo et a’zandé* (Paris: A. Challamel, 1908); J. Calloc’h, *Vocabulaire français-sango et sango-français, langue commerciale de l’Oubangui-Chari, précédé d’un abrégé grammatical* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1911); R. P. Charles Tisserant, *Sango, langue véhiculaire de l’Oubangui-Chari* (Issy-Les Moulineaux: Les Presses Missionnaires, 1950).

⁶⁰ Félix Eboué, *Les Peuples de l’Oubangui-Chari* (New York: AMS Press, 1977 [1933]), 67.

⁶¹ Félix Eboué to René Maran, 24 July 1924, quoted in Maran, *Félix Eboué: Grand commis et loyal serviteur, 1885-1944* (Paris: Les Éditions Parisiennes, 1957), 80. Weinstein also quotes part of this letter, but cites the date as 24 July 1928. Weinstein, *Eboué*, 55.

influence of European empires. Nevertheless, with his dictionary, Eboué also acknowledged the legacy of these “traditions” and the pernicious effects of colonization. Indeed, his characterization of Africans as “wedged between” was as much an appraisal of Africans as it was of himself. Eboué was uniquely qualified to grasp the intricacies of the situation because he had grown up in a French colony. The history of French Guiana was different, but Eboué must have recognized some of the societal transformations and turmoil wrought by French colonialism in Central Africa. As he learned to speak African languages, Eboué began to think differently about Africans and colonialism, even though he did so within the structure of the French empire.⁶²

Eboué’s understanding of precolonial African institutions was not restricted to the topic of leadership. His dictionary also reveals an understanding of long-standing forms of social organization. For the French words *esclave* (slave) and *captif* (captive), he used the Sango word “*mba*” and the Banda word “*kāga*.” *Mba* means “compatriot” or “fellow-citizen,” while *kāga*, or *kanga* as it is spelled in other dictionaries, relates to a whole field of ideas about the physical and metaphorical ties between things and between people.⁶³ The root for *kanga*, *-gàng, means “tie up,” while the related *-kúng” means “gather up” or “assemble.” Intertwined with these words were conceptualizations about social reproduction, wealth in people, and slavery.⁶⁴ For centuries in Central Africa, people were the highest unit of value, and Africans described the accumulation

⁶² Years later, Eboué pushed the French administration in Central Africa to make room for African institutions. See his 1941 publication, *La Nouvelle politique indigène pour l’Afrique équatoriale Française*.

⁶³ Luc Bouquiaux et al., *Dictionnaire sango-français*, 223, 144; Charles R. Taber, *A Dictionary Of Sango* (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1965), 118, 78-79; Charles Tisserant, *Dictionnaire Banda-Français* (Paris: Institut d’Ethnologie, 1931), 188-189. On the religious implications and legacies of “*kanga*” in Haiti, see Terry Rey, “Kongolese Catholic Influences on Haitian Popular Catholicism: A Sociohistorical Exploration,” in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 282-284.

⁶⁴ For more on this topic, see Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), and Jane Guyer and Samuel M. Eno Belinga, “Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge,” *Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 91-120.

of people—whether slaves, children, wives, pawns, and others—in terms of physical and metaphorical ties. The “ties” of slavery in Central Africa, however, were more flexible than the rigid, permanent binds of slavery in the Caribbean.⁶⁵ Scholars have thus described such relationships in the region as existing along a continuum between slavery and kinship.

Eboué must have understood the multiple meanings of *kāga*—his Sango entries for the words *amarrer* and *lier* (to tie up, to bind) are both “*kāga*.” Eboué’s use of *mba*, meanwhile, indicates that he also understood the fluidity of slavery in Central Africa, the possibility for slaves to become “compatriots.” As the grandchild of slaves in French Guiana, Eboué may have been surprised, at least initially, to hear that *mba* corresponded to “slave.” The stories he heard from his grandmother about plantation slavery in the Caribbean left no room for mobility, much less a sense of kinship. Did Eboué discuss slavery with Africans, with the interpreters who helped him write the dictionary? Those conversations are impossible to hear, but by keeping *mba* as the Sango word for *esclave*, Eboué evidently came to understand the malleable meanings of slavery, freedom, and kinship in Central Africa.

Equally revealing are the expressions Eboué used for “*prison*” (prison): “*Da ti kāga*” in Sango and “*ada kāga*” in Banda. According to Eboué’s dictionary, Africans had folded earlier meanings of *kāga*—alongside precolonial notions of confinement—into ideas about contemporary incarceration and colonial prisons. In other words, by the 1910s, “*kāga*” was laden with connotations much closer to the notion of slavery and boundedness that Eboué grew up

⁶⁵ From the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was also a significant trans-Saharan slave trade in the region, especially in the northern regions of Oubangui-Chari. For an overview, see Andrea Ceriana Mayneri, *Sorcellerie et prophétisme en Centrafrique: L’imaginaire de la dépossession en pays Banda* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2014), 25–32. See also Dennis Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti and the Last Years of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press).

with.⁶⁶ In some ways this link was appropriate, because Eboué knew the realities of colonial prisons. By using “*kāga*” to refer not just to the literal actions of tying and binding but also to describe slavery and the newly established prison systems, Eboué demonstrated a keen understanding of the multiple meanings of *kāga* in southern Oubangui-Chari. His awareness of such continuities and changes in language reflected his awareness of the larger continuities and changes in Central African society. As Africans reckoned with challenges to existing forms of social organization, Eboué’s linguistic knowledge allowed him unique insights.

A third group of words demonstrating Eboué’s deep engagement with the social world around him concerns healing. For the French word “*poison*” (poison) he used the Sango word “*yolo*,” also spelled as *yòrò*, and the Banda word “*oyo*.” What is significant about these word choices is that Eboué used the very same words, *yolo* and *oyo*, as the equivalents for *fétiche* (fetish, talisman), *médicament* (medicine), and *remède* (remedy). He also used *ho yolo* and *de oyo* for the verb *empoisonner* (to poison).⁶⁷ The fact that Eboué used the same words for “medicine” and “poison” is remarkable given that in his French educational background, these concepts were binary opposites. Yet over the course of eight years in Oubangui-Chari, Eboué evidently came to understand the fluidity of ideas about health, medicine, and poison. Rather than opposites, healing and harming were part of the same “therapeutic continuum.”⁶⁸

Africanist scholars have uncovered similar dynamics in a range of contexts around the continent and the African diaspora, though Steven Feierman puts it most succinctly: “Powerful

⁶⁶ For more on the history of confinement in Africa, see Florence Bernault, ed., *Enfermement, prison, et châtements en Afrique du 19e siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Karthala, 1999).

⁶⁷ Subsequent dictionaries provide similar definitions. See Bouquiaux et al, *Dictionnaire sango-français*, Taber, *A Dictionary Of Sango*, and Tisserant, *Dictionnaire Banda-Français*.

⁶⁸ James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 71, 124.

medical substances cannot be used to heal unless they also have the capacity to kill.”⁶⁹ Eboué understood this continuum between poison and medicine, between harming and healing. He had realized that *yolo* and *oyo* referred, without distinction, to objects and substances with the power to both cure and destroy. Unlike many other colonial officials in Africa, Eboué did not divide this power, at least not in his dictionary.⁷⁰ With such an outlook, it seems likely that Eboué also understood the social basis of healing in Central Africa, the idea that individual health was inseparable from the broader health of a community. Eboué may have also recognized the power that healers had, and that the impositions and incursions of biomedicine overlooked the social context of health.⁷¹ Above all, it was Eboué’s engagement with Africans in African languages that allowed him this unique comprehension of African systems of thought.

A final example from Eboué’s dictionary demonstrates his vivid understanding of the racial and cultural hierarchies of African colonies. For the French word *nègre*, Eboué used the Sango term “*zo vuko*.” *Zo* means human being and *vuko* simply means the colour black. Put together, *zo vuko* translates to “Black person.” *Zo vuko* is distinct, however, from “*vuko zo*,” a “person with dark complexion.” The word order of adjective—*vuko*—and subject—*zo*—thus

⁶⁹ Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 11.

⁷⁰ In her work on healing in southeastern Tanzania, Stacey Langwick writes that British colonial officials sometimes separated certain forms of *uganga*, or healing, as *uchawi* (witchcraft). This “technique of governance,” Langwick writes, was “an effort to refigure African therapeutics into realms of practice that could be disciplined by law and science.” Langwick, *Bodies, Politics, and African Healing: The Matter of Maladies in Tanzania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 57.

⁷¹ Julie Livingston, in her work on Botswana, writes representatively of this trend in African colonies: “The relatively rigid boundaries of the self that underpinned first colonial and later postcolonial medicine prevented that therapeutic system from fully addressing the needs of Tswana patients, whose selves were socially permeable.” Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 236-7. See also the pioneering work of Mennonite anthropologist John M. Janzen and Steven Feierman: Janzen, *The Quest for Therapy in Lower Zaire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Janzen, *Lemba, 1650-1930: A Drum of Affliction in Africa and the New World* (New York: Garland, 1982); Feierman, “Struggles for Control: The Social Roots of Health and Healing in Modern Africa,” *African Studies Review* 28, no. 2/3 (1985): 73-147; and Feierman and Janzen, *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

changes the texture of the language. Eboué must have understood such nuances. This insight is particularly noteworthy with regard to the Sango word *mbunzu*, meaning a European or white person. The word *mbunzu* is conspicuously absent from Eboué's dictionary, but other dictionaries explain its variations. "*Vuko mbunzu*" means a white with dark complexion, but "*mbunzu vuko*" carries a very different meaning: "an *évolué*, or African working for the colonial administration, educated in European ways, often used pejoratively with the meaning of 'Black person playing at being European, who slavishly imitates the White.'"⁷² In other words, a *zo vuko* is not just a person with dark skin (*vuko zo*), but a black person or a *nègre*. *Mbunzu vuko*, meanwhile, is not just a white person with dark complexion (*vuko mbunzu*), but a black person who thinks and acts as if they are white.

Sango speakers likely applied the term *mbunzu vuko* to the African interpreters who spoke French and helped Eboué write the dictionary. These interpreters, or "middle figures," would have discussed the appropriate equivalencies for words like *nègre* with Eboué. During such exchanges, these African interpreters likely described the nuances of terminologies like *mbunzu vuko*, as well as their own experiences with the epithet. Most Africans probably also considered Eboué himself to be an *mbunzu vuko*.⁷³ In fact, a more recent dictionary even suggests that Sango speakers use *mbunzu vuko* to refer to Antilleans.⁷⁴

As a black Caribbean administrator, Eboué was constantly navigating fraught relationships with Africans and Europeans. Eboué's use of "*zo vuko*" reflects this reality and suggests that he understood how colonialism affected understandings of identity. In other words,

⁷² Bouquiaux et al, *Dictionnaire sango-français*, 233, 352, 396; Taber, *A Dictionary Of Sango*, 123.

⁷³ Much like the way that some Africans labelled Maran a "*bonjouvouko*." See Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ Georges-Antoine Chaduteau, *Sango, langue nationale de Centrafrique: dictionnaire français-sango, lexique sango-français, grammaire pratique du sango* (Sancerre: Dictionnaires d'Aujourd'hui, 2006), 145.

Eboué was reckoning with the racial and cultural tensions portrayed so vividly by Frantz Fanon more than 30 years later. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon famously described the alienation caused by assimilation and racism—two forces that Eboué knew intimately: “The educated black man...feels at some point in time that his race no longer understands him. Or that he no longer understands his race.”⁷⁵ Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that Eboué also chose to include the French word “*aliéné*” in his dictionary. The word literally means “alienated,” but typically refers to institutionalized mental patients. Eboué’s Sango equivalent, *buba*, carries a similar connotation of madness, but also refers to a degraded or ruined person, such as someone serving a long prison sentence.⁷⁶ Eboué must have felt deeper resonances in this *aliéné-buba* translation. His experiences of “alienation” and racism in Central Africa were also experiences of degradation and debasement.

In short, Eboué’s dictionary entries reveal the power of linguistic knowledge. The complexities of the social world around Eboué infused even the most “scientific” details of the dictionary. Eboué had a nuanced understanding of many aspects of life in Central Africa, including leadership institutions, social organization, health, and discourses of race and difference. These insights were possible largely because of Eboué’s persistent and direct engagement with Africans in their own languages.

In addition to linguistic research, Eboué also collected folktales.⁷⁷ As with his dictionary work, Eboué relied extensively on interpreters, especially Albert Gouandjia, Paul Doumatchi, and Michel Goumba. The folktales, which Eboué carefully preserved in dozens of multi-lingual

⁷⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xviii. Elsewhere in the book, Fanon wrote that “the black man has to wear the livery the white man has fabricated for him.” Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 17.

⁷⁶ Bouquiaux et al, *Dictionnaire sango-français*, 78.

⁷⁷ This collection is located in FCG, FFE, F22/4, Folder 1.

notebooks, cover a range of topics: nature, animals, creation and origin stories, as well as “trickster” tales, usually centred on the figure of Tere.⁷⁸ In most cases, the interpreters listened to the stories, carefully transcribed them “*mot à mot*,” and then translated them into French. They were writing in languages that had no codified standard, and so they did this work intuitively. The arrangements of the translations themselves is also noteworthy: alternating lines—or pages—of text in an African language and the French translation. Eboué’s collection of these oral stories, codified into a new form and language, are fascinating sources. They reveal the intellectual exchanges between Eboué, Gouandjia, Doumatchi, Goumba and others, and also show how Africans used folktales to refract their own experiences.

One example is the story of Lion and Squirrel, as transcribed by Albert Gouandjia in Banda and French, and likely collected in the south-central part of the colony, near Bangui:

Bamara lorére kindi akora né é, balé ndeyi no tsé na deké wou tsélé kindi ne tsé wou nde éyi agba lene, bale tsé pa olo mo ére ké wou élui agba se mo à ne detsé lire renezé bale eu bé olo déze bale bamara ne wou Badda deyi lé kindi ne, bale tsé za tsé gai en youtsé eu pa obo ké zou agba okara ne mo lono sé mo kpéssé mo wou bo gai mo si ké voo bo, bale Badda pandéne ké bamara eu pa bo li nde ké voo mo ni ni mo se te kossi ma ta bo ze, mo to oko ovva azou te bandane é wou aguia zé te bandane balé bamara pa à ne demo ka mo yissé koumou azou de koumou aguia ne mo, mo wo enjé, bal’e enjé de Badda ne tsé yissé koumou azou de koumou aguia mo tsé ovo enj’e ké Badda, bale Badda pa ké Bamara eu pa ane detsé gou eu ne yi tsé koumou azou de aguia mo eu ne wo enjé bale Bamara de Badda gou, Badda yissé kasso mo à yasse kpou ga la kendé ké Bamara eu pa tsé wou maé eu ne sé eu ne kpou morofo maé se mo kété koumou azou kessé mae, ka eu ne sé zazou maé mo kété koumou aguia késsémo, bale Bamara wou remo bale eu gbi eu pa avro apou késsémo, bale tsé kpé gai, Badda za avoaé de ké kpe te.

Lion à fait sa plantation d’arachide chaque fois qu’il va le matin pour visité sa plantation il trouve le trasse d’un voleur. il dit mais comment que ce qui à vole toujours comme ça dans ma plantation, un beau jour ci je trouve cet voleur y va voir ce que je lui ferait. un beau matin Lion va dans sa plantation il est trouvé écureuil qui vole d’arachide dans la planation ah! ah! je te pris, alor c’est toi vole toujours dans ma plantation, aujourd’hui tu ne bougera pas, je veut te tué. moi tu veut me tué d’ailleur tu ne pas capable de me tué comme tu dit là, je suis un homme aussi comme toi, moi aussi je faire la guerre, je tué aussi des hommes et beaucoup des animeaux comme toi. Lion dit à écureuil tu ma dit ça je veu te montrez la cranes des hommes et des animaux que je tué. Le écureuil suive Lion jusqu’à dans la case de Lion. Lion lui montrez toutes la cranes des hommes et des animaux. Le écureuil dit Eh! Bien tu va venir aussi avec moi, je veu te montrez la miène aussi.

⁷⁸ According to Luc Bouquiaux et al, the Tere “folktale character” changes “depending on the ethnic group.” In different contexts he is “a spirit of the earth, a civilizing hero, a cunning and deceitful character, a clever man caught in his own traps or a fool.” Different groups call Tere Ètèrè, Tòrò, Tòlò, and Tùnlè, among others. Bouquiaux et al, *Dictionnaire sango-français*, 338. See also Jacqueline C. Woodfork, *Culture and Customs of the Central African Republic* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 45-48; Mayneri, *Sorcellerie et prophétisme*, 80-88.

Le écureuil amène Lion dans le champ de courge qu'il a fait mettre en tas dans le champ arrive tous près il fait arrêter Lion dix metres de champ et lui dit tu vois là-bà il y a dix tas des cranes des hommes que je le tu dans la guerre, et vingt tas que tu vois là-ba c'est rien que la cranes des animaux. Alors comment tu peux me tuer comme tu m'as promis tout à leur. Lion a vu les tas des courges qui lui ont montré de long. Lion crut que c'est vrai, il les sauva et laissa partir l'écureuil.

Lion planted a field of groundnuts. Each time he went out in the morning to visit his fields he found the traces of a thief. He asked, how can someone always be stealing like this from my fields? One day I will find this thief and he will see what I will do. One morning, Lion went to his fields and found Squirrel, who was stealing groundnuts. "Ah! Ah! I have you, and so it is you who is always stealing from my fields. Today you will not move, I want to kill you." "Me, you want to kill me, but you are not capable of killing me like you say. I am a man like you, I also make war, I also kill men and many animals like you." Lion said to Squirrel "You tell me this, I want to show you the skulls of the men and animals that I've killed." Squirrel followed Lion to Lion's hut. Lion showed Squirrel all the skulls of the men and animals. Squirrel said "Eh! Now you will also come with me, I want to show you mine too." Squirrel brought Lion to the field of gourds that he had arranged into piles. Getting close, Squirrel stopped Lion ten metres from the field and said "You see over there, there are 10 piles of skulls of men that I killed in the war, and the 20 piles you see over there are nothing but animal skulls. So how will you be able to kill me as you just promised?" Lion saw the piles of gourds that Squirrel showed him from afar. Lion believed that Squirrel was telling the truth, and so he let Squirrel go and ran away to save himself.⁷⁹

At the most basic level, the tale is one of deception. The weaker Squirrel relies on his wits to scare and ultimately "defeat" the much stronger Lion. According to Denise Paulme, variations of the story appear in other parts of Africa, though more often under the title "Hyena, mount of the Hare." In Central African folktales, the squirrel and lion are more common characters than the hyena or hare, and the squirrel often plays the role of Deceiver.⁸⁰

It is difficult to know who told the story to Gouandjia, and equally difficult to know what Gouandjia and Eboué thought about the story. Nevertheless, as Jan Vansina and Wyatt MacGaffey pointed out long ago, such folktales, legends, myths, or histories are actually "examples of sociological theory" that reveal "what a society says, thinks, and feels about

⁷⁹ FCG, FFE, F22/4, Folder 1. I have reproduced the Banda and French versions directly from Gouandjia's Banda transcription and French translation. There are grammatical and orthographical errors, but I have chosen to retain the original work. The English translation is my own. I have attempted to balance clarity and Gouandjia's style.

⁸⁰ Note by Denise Paulme in Anne Retel-Laurentin, *Contes du pays Nzakara (Centrafrique)* (Paris: Karthala, 1991), 186. For a variation on this story, see Remy Hetmann, "Lion et Écureuil," in *Contes du pays Nzakara*, 187-189.

itself.”⁸¹ What then does the story of Lion and Squirrel reflect about Central African society in the late 1920s, when Gouandjia transcribed the story? First, the threats of death exchanged by Lion and Squirrel reflect the persistent violence of the French colonial government and European concessionary companies.⁸² Their acts of violent coercion and recruitment of forced labour over several decades devastated the region. Particularly vicious was the French conscription of Africans from Oubangui-Chari to work on the Congo-Océan railway between the Atlantic Coast and Brazzaville. Yet for all of Lion and Squirrel’s threats, neither physically harms the other. Instead, Lion and Squirrel rely on images of past violence and the potential for future violence. This too is reflective of French colonialism in Central Africa, particularly its unevenness: the French relied just as much on images and threats as they did on real violence to enforce their power. The themes of violence in the folktale may have also reflected the spread of rumours about the Gbaya revolt against the French in the western part of the colony.⁸³

At the heart of the story, however, was an economic issue: stolen groundnuts. By the 1920s, most Africans in the region had to rely on cash crops such as groundnuts, rubber, and cotton. Many would have understood the impacts of French colonialism on the agriculture economy as robbery—at the very least. Such economic changes engendered jealousy, hatred, deception, and violence. All of these themes are apparent in the story of Lion and Squirrel.

⁸¹ Wyatt MacGaffey, “Dialogues of the Deaf: Europeans on the Atlantic Coast of Africa,” 250-251, in Stuart Schwartz, *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Jan Vansina, “Comment: Traditions of Genesis,” *Journal of African History* 15 (1974): 317-322; MacGaffey, “African History, Anthropology, and the Rationality of the Natives,” *History in Africa* 5 (1978): 101-20.

⁸² For more on the violence of the concessionary companies, see Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Le Congo au temps des grandes compagnies concessionnaires, 1898-1930* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1972).

⁸³ On this revolt, see Philip Burnham and Thomas Christensen, “Karnu’s Message and the ‘War of the Hoe Handle’: Interpreting a Central African Resistance Movement,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 53, no. 4 (1983): 3-22.

Albert Gouandjia, who carefully transcribed and translated the story, may have used the opportunity to emphasize such themes. Indeed, as he codified oral tales into written Banda and then into French, Gouandjia was free to change and embellish any aspect he wished. As in the case of René Maran and Michel Sodji (above), interpreters were liable to change stories to suit their interests. Gouandjia thus had the power to produce his own “interpretations” of Banda folktales and use them to express any ideas he wanted. In some instances, Gouandjia may have used the opportunity to articulate the long and rich cultural histories of the Banda and other groups in Central Africa, histories that Europeans influenced, but did not control. In other cases, Gouandjia may have used his position to explain his own experiences with colonialism to Eboué, however subtly. After all, it is unlikely that Gouandjia felt comfortable sharing his own ideas about French colonization with Eboué directly, given that he was an employee.⁸⁴

Eboué, for his part, seems to have had little sympathy for complaints about violence. In a March 1928 letter to his friend René Maran, Eboué described his task of recruiting workers for the construction of the Congo-Océan railway in fairly positive terms. He did concede that he was “sick of it,” but this objection did not prevent him from elaborating on what he considered to be the beneficial aspects of recruitment: “It is necessary to recognize that an amelioration can be noted in the condition of the workers.”⁸⁵ In light of such attitudes, Eboué may have read Gouandjia’s version of the story of Lion and Squirrel as simply a tale of deception and overlooked its critique of colonial violence.

Yet Eboué’s careful annotations on Gouandjia’s transcriptions and translations suggest a strong engagement with the text as well as genuine intellectual exchange with Gouandjia. Eboué

⁸⁴ In a later interview, Félix Eboué’s daughter, Ginette Eboué, referred to Gouandjia as the family’s “boy.” Interview of Ginette Eboué by Herbert Pepper and Eliane Barat, FCG, FFE, F22/5, Folder 1.

⁸⁵ Eboué to Maran, 21 March 1928, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 116.

wrote a number of draft “title pages” for the Banda folktales, and they all state: “Text and translation by the interpreter Albert Gouandjia. Word for word and explanatory footnotes by the administrator Eboué.”⁸⁶ Eboué also knew and respected the power of interpreters. Consider, for example, his description of another Banda interpreter, Pounébanda Ayongou of Grimari: “Pounébanda learned the legends...from his father who was taught by his grandfather Koméya... He knows perfectly the old Banda legends, but has a tendency to distort them according to the whims of his very lively imagination.”⁸⁷ Perhaps Eboué did then at least consider Gouandjia’s interpretation of the story as one of French violence and theft in Central Africa. In any case, Eboué’s knowledge of Banda and other African languages, along with his engagement with African intellectuals, allowed him unique insights into Central African society and culture. Whether or not he chose to act on these insights was another matter.

Another example from Eboué’s collection of folktales further illustrates his engagement with the world around him, as well as the uneven process of translating colonialism in Central Africa. In 1930, Paul Doumatchi collected a story about the water spirit, Badagui, or Maman Ti Ngou. According to the Banda, and other Africans in the region, Badagui had white skin, sometimes the torso of a fish, and inhabited the rivers, the realm of the dead.⁸⁸ The text, more of a personal story than a folktale, is a remarkable one:

Linga, makoundji néyé ke dé yamaka té za agba ogbo nayé ma tsi Pendé ne mazi, balé é padé éné
kona tené ogbo gatsi mo balé agba né vosé té sangou ne érré za yana ayo balé éné ogalafo balé,

⁸⁶ “*Texte et traduction de l’interprète Albert Gouandjia. Mot à mot et explications en renvoi de l’administrateur Eboué.*” FCG, FFE, F22/4, Folder 1.

⁸⁷ “*Pounébanda a appris les légendes...de son père qui avait été initié par son grand père Komeya... Pounébanda connaît à merveille les vieilles légendes Banda mais a tendance à les déformer au gré de son imagination qui est très vive.*” “Notice sur Pounébanda,” FCG, FFE, F22/4, Folder 1.

⁸⁸ For more on Badagui, see Didier Bigo, *Pouvoir et obéissance en Centrafrique* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1988), 27-28; Mayneri, *Sorcellerie et prophétisme en Centrafrique*. On water spirits more generally, and the music of Mami Wata, see Henry Drewal with Charles Gore and Michelle Kisliuk, “Siren Serenades: Music for Mami Wata and other Water Spirits in Africa,” in Lina Austen and Inna Naroditskaya, eds., *Music of the Sirens* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

Badagui (Maman-Tingou) à Kouagé sé timbiyené mandana mainidjou balé tsé yassé ili nayé n'dessé ma boudou oungou né mazi balé tsé zassé galé koutou-koutou balé ékpé n'dessé gounayé ma le gueié la kpo né n'djé mazi balé tsé zerré le koutou-koutou balé à Moundjou, n'dé à bozou no gbo n'dé ké oussé, balé n'djé za m'belego balé kessé, é padé tsé zi balé tsé waratéyé, bosonio é n'dessé ké zi m'belego ne gayé tsé tchou. Balé sé hourré na boudou oungou né mazi no. Anda Badagui (Maman-Tingou) n'da a andana mondjou no é n'djé so kédé brique, n'da à andana tourougou e n'djé gbogbo n'da sio ago andana mba bazou m'ba-m'ba n'djé mazi, tsé padé né houï kindé rougo mazi kélé vota: djourou bapou m'belego. Balé tsé n'djéré né Badagui (Maman Tingou) ke dé Kongo e n'dé zou ké m'bozo embouri ona balé a zi a mba érré na gana à lo no balé é n'dé Kongo né ké hou balé té gou n'dé ké pandéné ké Badagui (Maman Tingou) balé é n'dé bo Kena n'dé ké djoungou Badagui (Maman Tingou) né zabo balé n'dé ké hâbo, té padé oungou né hâ ou ko é sé manda andara.

Le M. Linga du village Yamaka traversait la rivière Pendé avec la pirogue. Mais, à son retour la pirogue a chaviré, alors il a commencé à nager jusqu'à ce qu'il prit une branche d'un arbre pour grimper la haut. Mais la Maman-Tingou à qui la peau blanche comme celle des Européens, l'a pris et la ramené au fond de l'eau et l'a remis dans une voiture et la conduit jusqu'aux grands villages qui se trouvent au fond de l'eau et il descendait de la voiture, mais tous les blancs et les noirs se réunissent pour le voir. On lui donna une banane pour manger mais, celui-ci, malin, il a refusé, parce que s'il la mangeait il mourrait. Mais il a vu tout ce qui se passe au fond de l'eau. La maison en brique de Maman Tingou il a beaucoup de maisons en briques pour européens et les cases de miliciens sont en pisé et il y a des cases des indigènes la-bas. Mais il a dit qu'il a vu seulement trois plantations, Mil, manioc, bananier. La sentinelle de Maman Tingou est le crabe, si quelqu'un fait toujours mauvais exemple et vole toujours les choses des amis et que la sentinelle, Crabe le voit elle vient rendre compte à son patron Maman Tingou et si celui-ci voulait aller boire de l'eau il serait pris par Maman Tingou et tué. Il a dit que de l'eau que nous voyent c'est comme brouillards.

M. Linga of the Yamaka village crossed the Pendé River in a pirogue. Upon his return, the pirogue capsized, and so he started swimming until he found a tree branch to climb up. But Maman Tingou who has white skin like that of the Europeans, grabbed him and brought him to the bottom of the water and put him in a car and drove him to the big villages at the bottom of the water, and he got out of the car, and all the whites and blacks gathered together to see him. They gave him a banana to eat, but this one [Linga], who was clever, refused it, because if he ate the banana he would die. And he saw all that occurred at the bottom of the water. The brick house of Maman Tingou there were many brick houses for Europeans and the soldier's huts are made of earth, and there are huts for natives over there. But, he said that he saw only three plantations, millet, manioc, and bananas. The sentinel of Maman Tingou is the crab, if anyone makes a bad example and steals often from their friends and the sentinel, Crab, sees it she reports this to her patron Badagui and if he [the thief] wanted to drink water he would be taken by Maman Tingou and killed. He [Linga] said that the water we see is like fog.⁸⁹

Paul Doumatchi, the interpreter who transcribed Linga's story, gave some further context at the bottom of the page: "This story was recounted by M. Linga of the Langbassi race (Banda) of the village of Yamaka, canton of Pierlat, subdivision of Kouango, a farmer around 18 years old with

⁸⁹ FCG, FFE, F22/4, Folder 1. As with the Gouandjia transcription and translation, I have reproduced the Banda and French versions directly from Doumatchi's work. I have chosen to retain the original grammatical and orthographical errors, and sought to balance them into my English translation. My thanks to Marcel Diki-Kidiri for his help with analyzing these transcriptions and translations.

no notable particularities.” Doumatchi also declared: “I collected this story myself from his mouth and transcribed it word for word.”⁹⁰

Linga may not have had any “notable particularities,” but his story certainly does. To begin with, the story sharply reflects the changes wrought by the French presence in Central Africa. Earlier stories about Badagui would not have included Europeans, much less brick houses or cars. Such changes reveal how Africans adapted the content of folktales to suit contemporary circumstances. In 1936, French anthropologist Antonin Marius Vergiat similarly documented how the incursions of Europeans influenced stories about Badagui: “At nighttime, [Badagui] wandered into the villages [and] entered the huts of women who were alone... These women gave birth to Albinos who were considered the children of Badagi... Should we not see in this myth a memory personified by the first European navigators and explorers?”⁹¹ Ideas about albinos pre-dated the arrivals of Europeans, but Vergiat’s suggestion does point to how European occupations changed the content of African folktales.

Secondly, Linga’s encounter with Badagui demonstrates how Africans adapted not only their stories but also their languages to absorb the impacts of Europeans. In the Banda version of the story, Linga explained that Badagui brought him to the bottom of the water in a “*koutou-koutou*.” The word was an onomatopoeic imitation of a motor, an innovation used to refer to “an

⁹⁰ “Cette histoire est racontée par le M. Linga de race Langbassi (Banda) du village Yamaka, canton de Pierla subdivision de Kouango, agriculteur d’environ 18 ans sans particularité notable. Je l’ai recueillie moi-même de sa bouche et notée mot par mot.” FCG, FFE, F22/4, Folder 1.

⁹¹ “La nuit venue, il erre dans les villages, pénètre dans les cases où se trouvent des femmes seules... Ces femmes donnent alors naissance à des Albinos qui sont considérés comme les enfants de Badagi... Ne faudrait-il pas voir dans ce mythe un souvenir personnifié des navigateurs et des premiers explorateurs européens?” A. M. Vergiat, *Les rites secrets de primitifs de l’Oubangui* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1981 [1936]), 47, quoted in Mayneri, *Sorcellerie et prophétisme en Centrafrique*, 38. Interestingly, Eboué claimed that Vergiat had plagiarized from his own ethnographic work. Weinstein, *Eboué*, 166-167.

automobile in general, and more specifically, to a truck.”⁹² By the late 1920s, automobiles were more common in the region, yet this association between Badagui and *koutou-koutou* suggests a deeper entanglement of spiritual power, mobility, and European technology.⁹³ As French missionary Charles Tisserant later declared: “In my early years in Africa, the Banda said that Badagui provided an abundance of the things that we, Whites, brought with us, especially the machines that fill them with astonishment.”⁹⁴ Linga’s emphasis on Badagui using a *koutou-koutou* corroborates Tisserant’s observations.

Third, the story reflects the impacts of colonialism on agriculture. the story reflects the impacts of colonialism on agriculture. Linga saw “only three” (“*kélé vota*”) different crops underwater: millet (“*djourou*”), manioc (“*bapou*”), and bananas (“*m’belego*”). He was also wary of eating a banana for fear of dying. Africans had grown millet, manioc, and bananas for centuries, but had also grown other crops, fruits, and vegetables.⁹⁵ The imposition of taxation and the cash crop economy, however, drastically narrowed the scope of agricultural production. Africans had long relied on diversified planting to ensure sustainability, and large-scale cash crops had the inverse effect. Many became dependent on fragile and circumscribed economic structures. In other words, under the power of Europeans, agricultural products could pose the threat of death.

⁹² *Vatiré*, meanwhile, is the word for *voiture*, or car. Bouquiaux et al, *Dictionnaire sango-français*, 177, 350.

⁹³ For similar analysis on such entanglements, see Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*, especially Chapter 4; Patrick Otim, “‘The Iron Donkey’: The Silent Tales of Bicycles among the Acholi of Northern Uganda, 1903-2015,” (forthcoming).

⁹⁴ “*Dans mes premières années d’Afrique, les Banda disaient que le Badagui nous donnait à profusion les choses que nous, Blancs, nous amenions avec nous, surtout les machines qui les remplissaient d’étonnement.*” Archives de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit, chemise 2D71.2a7, typed document of Père Charles Tisserant, *Le clan et la religion. A propos du recueil d’Instructions Pastorales de Mgr. De Clerq, CEPSI, Année 1949, n° 9*; quoted in Mayneri, *Sorcellerie et prophétisme en Centrafrique*, 37.

⁹⁵ On the history of manioc in Central Africa, see Jan Vansina, “Histoire du manioc en Afrique centrale avant 1850,” *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 43 (1997): 255-279.

For all these changes, however, Linga's story also reveals the remarkable durability of folktales and the persistence of spirits such as Badagui. In the face of European languages, ideas, architecture, machines, and violence, Linga presented Badagui in a position of power. Badagui may have used a European *koutou-koutou*, but did so to exert control. Moreover, Badagui clearly controlled not only Linga and other Africans, but also the Europeans in the "big villages at the bottom of the water." According to Linga, Badagui had the power to grab and kill anyone caught stealing, whether African or European. Perhaps Linga wanted to tell the story of Badagui in such a way that reflected his own desires for retribution or his hope for redemption. Linga's allusions to Badagui as a source of creative and instrumental power demonstrate the resilience of African institutions. Finally, by comparing "the water that we see" to fog, Linga may have also been suggesting that the world around him was not the way it seemed. Even though Europeans appeared to control the territory, their power was sometimes as uneven and fleeting as fog.

What did Eboué think of Linga's story and Doumatchi's translation? For one thing, Eboué must have read it closely, because he included it in a 1933 article for the French anthropological journal *Bulletin de la Société des Recherches Congolaises*. In the article, Eboué summarized the narrative of the story and formalized the French translation. He also changed several small details, altering the spelling of Doumatchi's name to "Domatchi" and shifting the geography of the story from the Pendé River to the Ouaka River.⁹⁶ More significantly, Eboué derided Linga's story as a "dream."⁹⁷ Was that Eboué's true understanding of the story? He may

⁹⁶ Given that Linga lived in the canton of Pierlat in Kouango, it does seem more likely that he crossed the Ouaka River, rather than the Pendé, which was some distance away from Pierlat in the northwest of Oubangui-Chari. On territoriality in Central Africa, see Christopher Gray, *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa: Southern Gabon, C. 1850-1940* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002).

⁹⁷ Félix Eboué, "Les Peuples de l'Oubangui-Chari: essai d'ethnographie, de linguistique, et d'économie sociale," *Bulletin de la Société des Recherches Congolaises*, no. 18 (1933): 57-86. A longer version was published as *Les Peuples de l'Oubangui-Chari: essai d'ethnographie, de linguistique, et d'économie sociale* (Paris: Comité de l'Afrique Française, 1933).

have made this distinction in order to suit the tastes of interwar French anthropologists, as publishing ethnographic articles strengthened his case for promotions. Privately, however, Eboué must have seen more in the story than merely a “dream.” He may even have understood Linga’s story—and Doumatchi’s transcription—as a vision of an alternative future, one where a powerful African spirit controlled and regulated the actions of Europeans. Indeed, the theme of an alternate world with inverted African-European power relations was common at the time along the Oubangui River.⁹⁸

Ultimately, whether or not Eboué interpreted these folktales in the manner I am suggesting is less important than the fact that he was engaging with African cultures. He accumulated far more material than he ever attempted to publish and so his ethnographic research reflects not just a motivation for promotions but a deep interest in the peoples and cultures of Central Africa. As Eboué collected wordlists and folktales, he cultivated close relationships with African intellectuals and through them learned much about their languages and histories. His annotations and footnotes on countless transcriptions reflect committed and genuine intellectual exchanges with interpreters. This engagement had a profound impact on how Eboué understood his position, the impacts of the French presence in Central Africa, and his ideas about the future of the region. Eboué’s interactions with African intellectuals allowed him to find new meanings in the words and cultures around him. This does not mean that Eboué was any less brutal in his implementation of colonial objectives. Nevertheless, he did begin to rethink his relationships with Africans, his “French” identity, his position in the French empire—and the very nature of the empire.

⁹⁸ Personal communication with Andrea Ceriana Mayneri, 11 March 2018. For a more detailed analysis of the interactions between Linga, Doumatchi, Gouandjia, and Eboué, see Janzen, “Linga’s Dream?: Translation and Interpreters in Central Africa” (forthcoming).

CONCLUSION

What divides men against each other is less the difference of race than the difference of language. Language is the worst of boundaries. It separates men far more than colour.

RENE MARAN, 1950⁹⁹

In 1932, Eboué contributed a Banda folktale to the Paris-based journal *La Revue du monde noir*.¹⁰⁰ “Les Eléphants et les Hippopotames” explained why elephants lived on land and why hippopotamuses lived in rivers. At one time, the animals took turns grazing in the same fields. Where the elephants ate, the vegetation grew back again. Where the hippopotamuses ate, it did not. Tired of this pattern, the elephants began plotting how to get rid of the hippopotamuses. Then, one day, the elephants convinced the hippopotamuses that a forest fire was nearby and warned them to jump into a river. Only after doing so did the hippopotamuses realize that there was no forest fire. Ashamed at their foolishness, the hippopotamuses never left the river again. The elephants, meanwhile, were quite pleased with their trick and never again had to compete for land.

Albert Gouandjia had collected the story for Eboué several years earlier. Together, they had codified the folktale into Banda and translated it into French. Gouandjia had carefully transcribed their work into a notebook in both languages, on alternating pages. Within the neatly printed lines of the *Revue*, however, there was no room for any of this contextual information. There was no description of the decisions Gouandjia and Eboué made, nor even a mention of Gouandjia. Instead, the folktale appeared in the journal’s unique French/English bilingual

⁹⁹ “*Ce qui divise les hommes contre eux-mêmes, c’est moins la différence de race que la différence de langue. La langue est la pire des frontières. Elle sépare plus les hommes que ne le fait la couleur.*” René Maran review of Georges Duhamel’s 1949 book, *La pesée des âmes*, 2 March 1950, UCAD, FRM, Res. 5182.

¹⁰⁰ Félix Eboué, “Les Eléphants et les Hippopotames,” *La Revue du monde noir* 3 (1932): 35-36.

format. On each page were two columns of the same content: one in French and the other in English. This style mirrored the bilingual layout of Eboué's ethnographic notebooks, but elided the intellectual exchanges between Gouandjia and Eboué, between Banda and French. In fact, the only reference to Banda in the *Revue* was a subtitle—"A Banda Tale"—and a short note at the end of the story: "translated from Banda by Félix Eboué, *Administrateur en Chef des Colonies*." Stripped away from its Central African context, all that remained was an "African Fable," with only animals as characters.

In his 2003 book, *The Practice of Diaspora*, Brent Hayes Edwards analyzed the confluences of African, Caribbean, and African-American intellectuals in Paris. Edwards argued that by translating between French and English, black intellectuals "practiced" diaspora and helped to establish a sense of unity. In other words, this unity was possible not despite linguistic and cultural differences, but because of them. In Edwards' terms, diaspora was "articulated" through these differences.¹⁰¹ One of the examples Edwards used was *La Revue du monde noir*. Paulette Nardal of Martinique and Léo Sajous of Haiti, who ran the journal, used a French/English bilingual format in all six published editions. Thus, alongside poems by Claude McKay, one finds essays by Jean Price-Mars, all in French and English. Nardal and Sajous used this approach in order to build connections with people who did not speak French. This decision, however, also precluded any connections with the millions of Africans and African-descended peoples who did not speak, much less read, French *or* English.

In a similar vein, Edwards' focus on Paris precluded any analysis of diaspora being "practiced" in languages other than French and English, especially African languages. This is not to say that Edwards' argument is wrong. If anything, broader geographical and linguistic scopes

¹⁰¹ Edwards' argument draws on Stuart Hall's theorizations of "articulation" and on the French word *décalage*.

strengthen his case. Yet by using only French and English sources, Edwards and other scholars of black internationalism have excluded the ideas and exchanges of many African and African-descended peoples from their analyses, many of whom also had ideas about empire and racial unity. Indeed, one of Eboué's interpreters, Michel Goumba, was the father of Abel Goumba, who worked alongside anticolonial leader Barthélemy Boganda during the 1950s.¹⁰²

In some ways, Eboué's engagement with African languages was exceptional. As one of his colleagues later recalled, Eboué could even communicate with Africans by using a talking drum.¹⁰³ Yet many Caribbean administrators acquired at least basic understandings of African languages, and communicating with Africans in their own languages had profound effects. As the preceding examples demonstrate, language acquisition allowed Caribbean administrators to interact with Africans directly and, sometimes, to break through the fog of colonial stereotypes. In doing so, Caribbean administrators also learned more about African cultures and histories. Such interactions allowed them to consider colonial situations from alternative, particularly African, perspectives. These exchanges also allowed Caribbean administrators—and Africans—to recognize the similarities of European rule in Africa and the Caribbean.

These engagements did not lead to the creation of political organizations, journals, or anticolonial manifestoes. Moreover, Caribbean administrators who learned African languages often used this knowledge to be more effective colonial officers. Nevertheless, language acquisition also engendered openness and connection. It created links between Africans and

¹⁰² Abel Goumba, *Les Mémoires & les Réflexions politiques du Résistant anti-colonial, démocrate et militant Panafricaniste, Abel GOUNBA* (Paris : Ccinia, 2006).

¹⁰³ When Eslanda Goode Robeson travelled to Central Africa in 1946, she met one of Eboué's former colleagues who explained that Eboué was fluent enough in local languages to communicate with Africans using a talking drum. On one occasion, he even used a drum to calm a revolt among the Bambara. Howard University, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC), Eslanda Goode Robeson Papers (EGR), Box 17, Diary #1, 1946, "African Trip," pp. 55. My thanks to Lorelle Semley for bringing this reference to my attention.

Caribbean people, and in some cases, generated opportunities to imagine alternatives to the structures and abuses of empires. In the next chapter, I will consider how colonial education—and Caribbean teachers—created similar openings.

6

EDUCATION AND RACIAL UPLIFT

The head master occupied a rather unusual position in the social structure of a West Indian territory... [They] were the real centres of intellectual life, in the towns as well as in the country, particularly in the early days when there was very little elementary education. They not only taught the children and trained the teachers. They were responsible for the prevailing conceptions of social behaviour... [The] channel of communication between the local community and the leaders of a highly artificial society was the head teacher.

C. L. R. JAMES, 1959¹

C. L. R. James grew up in Trinidad as the son of a headmaster.² This upbringing evidently made an impact on him, but his father's position also had a much broader influence. As James' description makes clear, headmasters and teachers in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Caribbean played crucial social roles. They were not just instructors, but civic leaders, historians, career advisors, and intermediaries between communities and colonial governments. Scholars of the Caribbean, echoing James, have also emphasized the importance of teachers and headmasters. Franklin Knight, for example, writes that they acted as intellectuals, lay preachers, and even "quasi-legal arbiters."³

Between 1880 and 1940, the British Colonial Office recruited more than a dozen teachers from the Caribbean to work in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. These teachers, accustomed to their

¹ C. L. R. James, manuscript of "Notes on the Life of George Padmore," UWISC, C. L. R. James Collection (CLRJ), Box 18, Folder 345. A printed version of these "Notes" appeared in eleven instalments, from October 1959 to January 1960, in *The Nation*, the newspaper of Trinidad's People's National Movement. James was the newspaper's editor. For more, see Bill Schwarz, "George Padmore," in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. Bill Schwarz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 132-152.

² The fathers of George Padmore and Grantley Adams were also headmasters. James, "Notes on the Life of George Padmore." For more on James' childhood in Trinidad, see his autobiography, *Beyond a Boundary*. See also Kent Worcester, *C. L. R. James: A Political Biography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

³ Knight also writes that the schoolmaster "remains a potent force in the politics of the English-speaking Caribbean." Knight, *The Caribbean*, 218.

work both in schools and as community figures, continued to play this dual role in West Africa. Yet the social, political, and cultural contexts of Nigeria and the Gold Coast were quite different from the Caribbean, and so their social responsibilities were different as well.

This chapter examines the experiences of West Indian teachers who worked in West Africa, particularly their complicities with—and challenges to—the British Empire. These teachers experienced the same racism and marginalization as other Caribbean colonial officials in Africa, but as teachers they responded to their situations in unique ways. They recognized the falsity of stereotypes about substandard “African” intellect, defied the contours of colonial education, and cultivated feelings of racial pride among their students. Moreover, their experiences in Africa motivated them to internationalize their ideas and work for racial solidarity in Africa, Europe, and back in the Caribbean. I begin the chapter by describing the backgrounds and positions of West Indian teachers in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, and then examine their relationships with students and with other Africans. In the final section, I analyze the effects of these experiences and demonstrate how West Indian teachers sought to galvanize African-Caribbean connections.

WEST INDIAN TEACHERS IN WEST AFRICA

The first forms of Western education in southern Nigeria and the Gold Coast came in the form of missionary schools in the nineteenth century. Missionaries from Europe and North America began establishing missions in West Africa long before formal British occupations, and a major part of this work was the establishment of primary schools. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, especially by the 1880s, the British colonial government began to assert more control along the coast of West Africa. One result of these occupations was the

establishment of government schools. These schools—first primary and later secondary schools—were set up alongside the earlier missionary schools and they generally worked together. In addition to Christianity, the main imperatives of government schools were basic arithmetic, reading and writing in English, the history and geography of Europe, and other “skills.” For boys, there was often additional focus on agricultural work, manufacturing, and manual training (blacksmithing, carpentry, and so on). For girls the extra focus was on domestic training, such as needlework and household work. More generally, there was an emphasis on “rationality” and loyalty to empire. Above all, the British designed the schools and curriculums to support the economic and administrative needs of colonies. “Educated” Africans could work as bookkeepers for merchants or work as low-level clerks in the civil service.⁴

The specific focus of education in Nigeria and the Gold Coast changed in the 1920s. Colonial officials started coupling the Tuskegee/Hampton model of industrial education with the notion of “adapting” European education to meet the circumstances of life in African colonies.⁵ Nevertheless, the broader contours of schooling remained defined by assimilation and paternalism and the orientation remained fundamentally British. Students continued to write the Cambridge exams, teaching was grounded in English (and Latin), and the new “adapted” curriculums rested on racist notions about inferior “African” ability. In short, when the British

⁴ On the history of education in Ghana and Nigeria, see Philip Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); C. K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana: From the Earliest Times to the Declaration of Independence* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1971); Bob W. White, “Talk about School: Education and the Colonial Project in French and British Africa (1860-1960),” *Comparative Education* 32, no. 1 (March 1996): 9-25; Michael Omolewa, “Educating the ‘Native’: A Study of the Education Adaption Strategy in British Colonial Africa, 1910-1936,” *The Journal of African American History* 91, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 267-287; Lacy Ferrell, “Fighting for the Future: A History of Education in Colonial Ghana, c. 1900-1940” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2013); Gita Steiner-Khamsi and Hubert O. Quist, “The Politics of Educational Borrowing: Re-Opening the Case of Achimota of British Ghana,” *Comparative Education Review* 44, no. 3 (August 2000): 272- 299; Hans N. Weiler ed., *Education and Politics in Nigeria* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1964).

⁵ Philip Foster describes this turn to “adaption” as the “educational analogue of indirect rule.” Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana*, 164.

brought government schooling to West Africa, European-trained instructors attempted to impose their languages, cultures, and worldviews on students and groom them to become agents of the Empire. This process, however, was hardly a linear trajectory. Philip Foster has demonstrated that there was no systematic program for controlling schools and organizing them into coherent stepping-stones for the colonial civil service. As with other aspects of colonial occupations, there was a “disparity between policy pronouncements and actual developments.”⁶ It was this very “disparity” that allowed West Indian teachers to make their own unique contributions to the education systems of West Africa.

Initially, however, West Indian teachers appeared to fit the mold of British colonial schoolteachers. They were educated and began their careers in the Caribbean, where the general style and goals of the government schools were not unlike those of West Africa (Chapter 1). Joseph Britton, for instance, born and educated in Berbice, British Guiana, became the headmaster at Providence Primary School in Berbice in the 1870s. He held that position for over a decade before heading to the Gold Coast in 1885, where he worked until 1912.⁷ Edith Goring of Barbados, who worked in Cape Coast from 1906 until 1920, had eight years of experience working as a teacher in Barbados elementary schools.⁸ Levi Dawes, who worked in Nigeria from 1908 until 1930, did his first teaching in his hometown of Sturge Town in St. Ann, Jamaica.⁹

⁶ Foster, *Education and Social Change*, 103. Most Africans, for example, sent their children to colonial and missionary schools not because they sought or embraced paternalism, but rather because they understood the value and potential rewards of “European” education in the structure of colonial African society.

⁷ When Britton left for the Gold Coast, *The Daily Chronicle* of Demerara declared: “Mr. Britton’s object in visiting the land of his forefathers is not generally known; but in any case we wish him a successful and prosperous journey.” “Berbice Items,” *The Daily Chronicle* (Demerara), May 22, 1885; Gold Coast Blue Book 1912, NAUK, CO 100/62.

⁸ Inspector of Schools for Barbados to the Governor of Barbados, 16 August 1906, NAUK, CO 28/266/22.

⁹ “The Vice-President of The Union of Teachers, *The Gleaner*, 6 January 1915, 6.

And Lebert Josiah Veitch, another teacher from Jamaica, studied at Mico College and also started his career in St. Ann. He then moved south to teach in Kingston and then on to Nigeria, where he worked from 1905 until 1930.¹⁰

Much like in West Africa, the educations and subsequent teacher training of West Indian teachers in the Caribbean emphasized English, science, and religion, as well as manual training for men and domestic work for women. Veitch, for example, took examinations from the Jamaican Education Department on “Drawing and Manual Occupations,” “Woodwork,” and “Manual Training.”¹¹ Another Jamaican teacher, Edith Locke, took training in “English, writing, science, scripture, Geography, Geometry and Domestic Economy.”¹² A number of West Indian teachers were also committed to Teachers Associations. Britton was an active member in the Berbice Teachers Association, while Veitch was involved with the Brown’s Town Teachers Association and was later the Secretary of the Kingston Teachers’ Union.¹³ The ideals of the Empire thus imbued the training of West Indian teachers, and they were staunchly committed to the larger goals of the British education system. Indeed, this was the main reason the British

¹⁰ “Mr. L. J. Veitch Returned after Long Stay in Nigeria,” *The Gleaner*, 11 January 1928, 19. John James Mills, a former student of Dawes and Veitch, remembered them both favourably. Regarding Dawes, Mills remembered that he was “young, stylish, a laughing cricketer, a violinist, a player of the harmonium, a good shoe maker and a tailor.” Mills also wrote that Dawes brought with him “new things and ways” and that the school in Sturge Town soon “stood out among the best schools in Jamaica.” Veitch, meanwhile, Mills described as “original in the extreme.” Mills claimed that Veitch “could be most winning in his ways and humour...the villagers loved him; the children feared and loved him. All were very sorry when he left for Wesley Church School in Kingston.” Mills, *J. J. Mills: His Own Account of His Life and Times* (Jamaica: William Collins and Sangster, 1969), 23-27.

¹¹ “Drawing and Manual Training,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 22 January 1903.

¹² Director of Education to Colonial Secretary of Jamaica, 10 April 1911, NAUK, CO 137/684.

¹³ “Berbice correspondent,” *The Demerara Daily Chronicle*, 25 January 1883; “Brown’s Town Teachers’ Association,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 3 November 1896, 2; “Teachers’ Union: Meeting of the Kingston Branch,” *The Gleaner*, 11 March 1904. Brown’s Town was also the main missionary site of James Johnston, who took six Jamaicans with him on his trip across Southern Africa between 1891 and 1892. See James Johnston, *Reality Versus Romance in South Central Africa* (London, 1893).

recruited them: they were colonized subjects who espoused and exemplified the “benefits” of colonialism.

When West Indian teachers arrived in Africa, they brought their colonialist approaches to education with them and were often eager to begin implementing the assimilationist ideals of British education. For example, when the Gold Coast hired Edith Goring to work as a Headmistress in Cape Coast, the Inspector of Schools in Barbados assured the colonial government that Goring was “a good disciplinarian” and had, in 1904, “passed 85 per cent of the children...through the Standards for which they were presented.”¹⁴ David Payne, another teacher from Barbados, was no less committed to imperial “Standards.” On Empire Day in May 1908, he gave an address in Accra on “the rise and extent of the British Empire.” He also explained the “make up of the union jack.”¹⁵ The report provides no further details about Payne’s speech, but the context suggests a celebration of the history and spread of the British Empire. When L. J. Veitch arrived in Nigeria in January 1905, he taught woodworking, agriculture, and typewriting at the Government High School in Bonny. He was also responsible for running the Church Missionary Society’s “Book Depot,” which promoted literacy and Christianity.¹⁶ Finally, when Edith Locke of Jamaica arrived in Accra in July 1911 to work at the Government Girls School, she was to teach “general elementary subjects, especially hand and eye training, nature study, needle work and singing.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Inspector of Schools for Barbados to the Governor of Barbados, 16 August 1906, NAUK, CO 28/266/22.

¹⁵ “Empire Day Celebration,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 30 May 1908, 2.

¹⁶ 1906 Annual Report on the Education Department of Southern Nigeria, NAUK, CO 592/3; NAI, NC 70/1919. Methodist, Presbyterian, and C. M. S. missionaries all ran “book depots” in Nigeria. Apart from books, the book depots sold paper, writing implements, and so on. In rural areas, the depots were connected to larger central book depots. These networks facilitated the dispersion of books and other materials to regions removed from urban centres. My thanks to Caitlin Tyler-Richards for this explanation.

¹⁷ Education Department, Jamaica, to Edith Locke, 22 May 1911, NAUK, CO 137/684.

To the British, the recruitment of West Indian teachers appeared successful. Indeed, colonial officials in West Africa often praised West Indian teachers for their work. The teachers seemed enthusiastic, competent, and committed to the Empire. For example, when Lady Elizabeth Clifford visited Cape Coast in 1916, she was highly impressed by the work of Edith Goring at the Cape Coast Government Girls School. In a memoir written two years later, Clifford remembered the “intelligent faces, upright bearing, and excellent work of the Girls of the Government School, under their most efficient, energetic and business-like West Indian Headmistress.”¹⁸

Joseph Britton’s superiors gave him similar praise. In a July 1889 report, the governor declared that Britton’s appointment was “a far better one than any that could have been made from Sierra Leone, whose people, generally speaking, are greatly disliked by those on the Gold Coast.”¹⁹ A decade later, Britton was still enjoying the good favour of the administration. In 1900, the director of the Education Department, W. C. F. Robertson, wrote that in the Gold Coast, “the style of both Teacher and Scholars is stereotyped and mechanical...with the exception of the Cape Coast Government School, where, under Mr. Britton, who is a native of British Guiana, teaching is carried out on more intelligent lines than usual.”²⁰ Britton’s students

¹⁸ Lady Elizabeth Clifford, *Our Days on the Gold Coast, in Ashanti, in the Northern Territories, and in the British Sphere of Occupation in Togoland* (Accra: Charles Fairweather and Government Printing Office, 1918), 10-11. Lady Clifford was the wife of Gold Coast governor Hugh Clifford.

¹⁹ Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 July 1889, NAUK, CO 96/203. British missionaries and colonial governments often relied on recaptive slaves and their descendants in Sierra Leone. Like West Indians, they were literate and familiar with colonial infrastructure. The British also used them in other parts of West Africa. As the governor’s remark reveals, the Sierra Leone colonizers were “greatly disliked” by other Africans. Later in this chapter, I will show that there was some affinity between West Indians and these “Sierra Leonean” colonizers, perhaps because of their similar experiences of assimilation, migration, racism, and alienation. On recaptive slaves and their descendants who worked as missionaries in Nigeria, see J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

²⁰ W. C. F. Robertson, “Report of the Education Department for the Year 1900,” 13, NAUK, CO 98/10. The following year Robertson again commended Britton’s work, noting, in reference to Britton, that “At Cape Coast there has not for several years been any European in charge, but the Principal Teacher is a native of the West Indies,

also frequently took top prizes in annual exams.²¹ Generally speaking, then, when West Indian teachers arrived in Africa, they appeared committed to the goals and ideals of the British Empire, appeared to be no different from British-born teachers. They were educated in the British system, trained as teachers in the British system, and were implementing British curriculums, ideas, and “Standards” in the schools of Nigeria and the Gold Coast.

Like other Caribbean administrators in Africa, however, West Indian teachers *were* different from their colleagues. When they arrived in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, they had to cope with the alienation of not belonging, of being not quite European, nor African. For example, when the governor appointed Edith Goring to work in Cape Coast, he stated that he would have “preferred to ask for the appointment of a European Mistress.” Yet he also noted that because there was no “European nursing sister...attached to the Hospital” in Cape Coast, a “European Mistress” would have to live “without a companion of her own sex.” To the governor, this was a situation that would be “lonely and prejudicial to good work.”²² Loneliness apparently did not afflict women from the Caribbean, or at the very least, was not “prejudicial” to their work. This marginalization had significant effects on how West Indian teachers thought about education—and colonialism more generally.

David Payne of Barbados encountered discrimination with regard to promotions. He worked in Accra, at the Government Training College for Teachers. In a December 1917 petition to the colonial secretary, he stated that in the future, he “should not suffer from the disadvantages due to place of engagement or colour but be granted a fair chance for higher promotion whenever

and he has ably fulfilled the duties of a Head Master, in lecturing and assisting his Pupil Teachers in their studies.” Robertson, “Report of the Education Department for the Year 1901,” 16, NAUK, CO 98/10.

²¹ “A Farewell Gathering,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 25 April 1908, 2; “General News,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 25 January 1908, 2.

²² Acting Governor of the Gold Coast to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 June 1906, NAUK, CO 96/443.

a suitable vacancy occurs.”²³ The following year, Payne sent a letter to the director of the Education Department noting that even though he was a “House Master,” he had been “assigned to Class Teaching” and was working alongside “a lad who passed under my training at the College.” Payne also pointed out his one promotion in the previous nine years and declared: “It is not work that I object to, but the principle.”²⁴ Payne’s petitions did not have any effect. The “principle” at issue remained that the Gold Coast government constrained West Indians on the grounds of “colour.” Such experiences lessened the imperialist zeal of West Indian teachers and led them to reconsider their roles in African colonies.

The Gold Coast administration adhered to similar thinking regarding Joseph Britton. In February 1902, the governor explained to the Colonial Office that there was no need to hire a new “European headmaster at Cape Coast” because the school there was already being “efficiently conducted by the native Principal teacher Mr. J. A. Britton.”²⁵ In other words, the government could rely on Britton to provide the same level of service as a “European” while paying him at the “native” rate.²⁶ Nine years later, in March 1911, an editor at *The Gold Coast Leader* questioned why the Education Department had never promoted Joseph Britton to Inspector of Schools, despite his long record of exemplary service. Britton, the writer claimed, was “competent, capable, and cultured,” and had more experience in “educational work” in the Gold Coast than “any European in the Department.” The writer concluded by castigating the

²³ David Payne to Gold Coast Colonial Secretary, 31 December 1917, PRAAD, Payne Personnel File, PF 3/16/518.

²⁴ Payne to Director of Education, 11 November 1918, PRAAD, Payne Personnel File.

²⁵ Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 February 1902, NAUK, CO 96/395.

²⁶ Britton’s annual salary did increase over his 26 years of service—from £60 in 1886 to £200 in 1912—yet the salary of the “European Headmaster” in 1912 in Cape Coast remained well over 50% higher. That year, “European Principal Teacher” Walter J. Pitt earned £315. J. A. Britton Pensions Form, enclosure in letter from Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 May 1913, NAUK, CO 96/531; Gold Coast Blue Book 1912, NAUK, CO 100/62.

racism of the Gold Coast government: “Colour should not be a bar sinister in the way of progress and advancement. We long to see the *traits* of Englishmen as a class more prominently displayed in this country.”²⁷

Then, in July 1911, the administration excluded Britton and George Amissah from a coronation service in Cape Coast in honour of King George V. Both Britton and Amissah were “Licensed Lay Readers” of the Anglican Church, but were replaced by Walter Pitt, a headmaster, and J. L. Atterbury, a provincial commissioner. Both Pitt and Atterbury were white men from England. A week later, the editor of *The Gold Coast Leader* decried the omissions of Britton and Amissah and expressed his “profound regret” at the “exclusion” of these two “Black functionaries” from the service.²⁸ Britton, he pointed out, had presided over the previous Coronation Service in Cape Coast in 1902. He also noted the “striking coincidence” that this exclusion had occurred at the same time that the British had banned “representative Black Soldiers at the Coronation of King George V” in London.²⁹ The writer closed by reflecting on the nature of British racism in the Gold Coast: “One may make allowances for the colour line in everyday life as being due to snobbishness, etc.—but when it finds its way into the Church it warps one’s religious ardour and makes one undecided as to the whiteman’s sincerity in his own religion.”³⁰ Here, an African newspaper writer referred to both Britton and Amissah as “Black functionaries” who had to reckon with the same “colour line.” The writer was thus taking issue with anti-black racism and with a line that often discriminated against both Africans and West

²⁷ “General News,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 18 March 1911, 2. Emphasis in original.

²⁸ “Coronation Day,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 1 July 1911, 3-5.

²⁹ Apparently the British imposed this ban because white women in England had “lavished so much attention on black soldiers” at Edward the VII’s coronation in 1902, George V’s father. Sheila Tully Boyle and Andrew Bunie, *Paul Robeson: The Years of Promise and Achievement*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 248.

³⁰ “Coronation Day,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 1 July 1911, 3-5.

Indians, not between them. Britton and other West Indian teachers found themselves implicated in the same acts of discrimination as Africans. Such realizations further weakened imperial bonds and motivated West Indian teachers to move outside the strictures of colonial schooling.

The racial thinking of colonial officials also extended to the families of West Indian teachers. The Colonial Office typically covered family travel costs between the Caribbean and Africa only after an administrator completed a three-year term. This deterred many West Indians from applying to work in West Africa. In June 1912, J. R. Williams, the Director of Education in Jamaica, informed the Colonial Secretary of Jamaica that he would be able to attract stronger applicants if colonial governments paid for families to accompany teachers to West Africa. Williams noted the example of James Adolphus Clarke, who was eager to bring his wife and infant to Nigeria, and that of Levi Dawes, who had already brought his wife to Nigeria from Jamaica, but had done so “at heavy cost to himself.”³¹

At first glance, Williams’ plea appeared to serve the interests of West Indian teachers. He seemed to be encouraging family bonds. Elsewhere in the letter, however, Williams made clear his ideas about family and marriage: “One man who was sent out married a white woman when he took leave in England or so at least I am informed. This appears to me very undesirable from the point of view of the Nigerian Government and the work it desired him to do under its control.”³² Williams thus promoted marriage and family for West Indian teachers, but only “desirable” marriages and families—a category that did not include white women from England.

³¹ Director of Education, Jamaica, to Colonial Secretary of Jamaica, 24 June 1912, PRAAD, ADM 1/1/200.

³² This “one man” was Lebert Josiah Veitch, who married a “white woman” in Deal, Kent, England. I have not been able to find their wedding certificate, but there are several references to Veitch’s wife as “a lady from Kent, England” in the Kingston *Daily Gleaner*. Veitch and his wife lived in Deal for several years after his retirement in 1930. Their daughter, Anne Florence Patricia Veitch, also married in Deal in September 1939. “Mr. L. J. Veitch Returned after Long Stay in Nigeria,” *The Gleaner*, 11 January 1928, 19; “Niece of Hon. F. G. Veitch Wed in Motherland,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 29 September 1939, 14.

Williams, and many other colonial officials, believed that Veitch and other West Indians were “under [their] control” and that a transgression of this order was not only a violation of racial norms, but a violation of the goals of the colonial government in Nigeria.³³

The case of Edith Locke of Jamaica further reveals British intransigence and its effects on West Indian teachers. Locke arrived in Accra in July 1911 and her first two years there appear to have gone well. She worked as an assistant teacher at the Government Girls School and even served as “Acting Headmistress” from September 1912 to July 1913.³⁴ In January 1914, however, Locke sent a letter of resignation to the Director of the Education Department: “I have been cruelly wronged,” she wrote, “and have fallen from that standard of moral rectitude which is necessary for the life of a school teacher, and which I have always striven to maintain. At present there is nothing for me to do, but to tender my resignation.”³⁵ Locke was six months pregnant at the time, but the circumstances around her pregnancy are unclear. Did “cruelly wronged” imply rape? Or seduction? Was the father British or African? Or West Indian? Would the combinations of these factors have made a difference in judging Locke’s “standard of moral rectitude”? The answers to these questions are unknown. In any case, the colonial government immediately dismissed Locke and put her on a boat back to Jamaica, via England. Once in London, however, Locke asked for permission to stay in the city “for some time” at her own expense before returning to Jamaica.³⁶ The Colonial Office demanded that she proceed directly

³³ For more on the relationships between black men and white English women, see Carina E. Ray, “‘The White Wife Problem’: Sex, Race and the Contested Politics of Repatriation to Interwar British West Africa,” *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (November 2009): 628-646. See also Ray, “Decrying White Peril: Interracial Sex and the Rise of Anticolonial Nationalism in the Gold Coast,” *American Historical Review* 119, no. 1 (2014): 78-110; and Ray, *Crossing the Color Line*.

³⁴ Gold Coast Blue Book 1912, NAUK, CO 100/62; Gold Coast Blue Book 1913, NAUK, CO 100/63.

³⁵ Edith Locke to Director of Education, Gold Coast, 5 January 1914, NAUK, CO 96/541.

³⁶ Edith Locke to Colonial Office, 16 February 1914. NAUK, CO 96/541.

to Jamaica, but Locke refused and instead checked in to the City of London Lying-in-Hospital where she gave birth on February 28, 1914. The child died a few days later. After several weeks of rest and recovery, Locke travelled back to Jamaica.³⁷ A West Indian teacher with a white wife may have been “undesirable,” but a pregnant West Indian teacher was a far greater issue, and so they removed her from West Africa. The colonial government fostered paternalism in its education system, but maternalism was clearly unacceptable.

The Gold Coast government moved quickly to replace Locke, and the discussions about her replacement are noteworthy. In June 1914, one colonial official in London declared that they should “give Barbados a chance” because they had “asked Jamaica last time.” Yet he was also skeptical about the differences between teachers from Barbados and Jamaica, remarking: “I don’t know that there is likely to be much difference in intellectual or moral standards.”³⁸ Another official disagreed: “In view of the lamentable result of the last appointment, I would be inclined to tell the Government to see if anyone can be found in Sierra Leone. If they failed, I would go to Barbados, as the Barbadian has more self-respect than the average West Indian Negro.”³⁹ The fact that colonial officials ranked West Indians, not only between islands but also in comparison with Africans, is revealing of the colonial ideologies that affected West Indian teachers in West Africa. Perhaps the British saw Barbadians as having more “self-respect” than Jamaicans because the island had “always” been under British rule. In any case, the Gold Coast government

³⁷ The City of London Lying-in-Hospital seems to have treated Locke reasonably well. They even advocated on her behalf to allow her more time to rest before travelling to Jamaica. Locke also gave the hospital a donation of £2/2/0d when she left. 1914 Annual Report of the City of London Lying-in-Hospital, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) H10/CLM/A/06/004 Annual Reports; Secretary, City of London Lying-in-Hospital to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 March 1914; Secretary, City of London Lying-in-Hospital to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 March 1914, NAUK, CO 96/553.

³⁸ Note in file on Locke, 8 June 1914, NAUK, CO 96/545.

³⁹ Note in file on Locke, 9 June 1914, NAUK, CO 96/545.

eventually settled on Marie Austin, a woman from Barbados. Austin was the sister-in-law of David Payne, another teacher from Barbados working in the Gold Coast.⁴⁰ This was evidently a family arrangement that suited the tastes of the British administration.

The British administrations designed government schools to train Africans in European systems of thinking. Paternalistic curriculums centered on Europe and promoted assimilation to European culture. As several scholars have shown, however, the process was never that straightforward in practice. Colonial schools created different forms of education and power relations than the British intended, and these dynamics and “unanticipated results” affected both students and teachers.⁴¹ In the cases of schools with West Indian teachers, the results were particularly unique. West Indian teachers had to reckon with racism, particularization, and marginalization, and these experiences informed their teaching and shaped their interactions with students. In fact, many West Indian teachers started pushing against the parameters of the colonial education system. In some cases, they completely upended the trajectories of paternalism and assimilation.

RECOGNITION

It is difficult to know specifically what West Indian teachers said in their classrooms or exactly what they taught, but one can trace their influence and glean much about their important

⁴⁰ For more on Austin, see Chapter 5.

⁴¹ See, for example, Louis Brenner’s analysis of *médersas* in Mali over the course of the twentieth century. Brenner claims that while these schools opposed colonial authority, they also “absorb[ed] various pedagogical and organizational concepts and practices” from the French. Brenner argues that the “power relations” and “technologies of power” of schooling typically “function outside the consciousness and intention of those involved in the schooling process and almost inevitably produce unanticipated results.” Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 11-14. Foster uses the same phrase, “unanticipated results,” to describe colonial education in Ghana. Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana*, 103-104.

roles as teachers by analyzing the memories and testimonials of their former students. Indeed, it is significant that the former students remembered their West Indian teachers at all.⁴² In itself, this is suggestive of how West Indian teachers pushed against the parameters of colonial education. For example, Hezekiah Oladipo Davies, one of L. J. Veitch's students at King's College Lagos, wrote fondly of "Mr. L. J. Veitch, a vivacious West Indian, who taught History and Geography."⁴³ Years later, Davies co-founded the Nigerian Youth Movement, joined the London-based West African Students Union, and was a major nationalist figure in Nigeria. This does not mean that Veitch was directly responsible for Davies' future endeavours.⁴⁴ Yet, it seems likely that in addition to explaining the geography of the British Isles and the history of England since the Norman Conquest, Veitch made other contributions.

Another one of Veitch's students at King's College was Adetokunbo Ademola, later a member of the Nigerian Youth Movement and then also Chief Justice of the Nigerian Supreme Court. Ademola remembered both Veitch and another West Indian teacher, J. B. Liverpool of British Guiana, writing that students referred to Veitch and Liverpool "affectionately" as "Pa Veitch and Pa Liverpool." Ademola also wrote that Veitch was an "energetic, colourful and resourceful Jamaican." As for Veitch's teaching, Ademola explained that Veitch often taught the

⁴² No less a figure than Nnamdi Azikiwe paid tribute to his West Indian teachers: "In those days, the British West Indies gave some of their finest products to the British West African colonies. Among our West Indian teachers were the Rev. W. E. Blackett (from Barbados), Messrs McKay and Stewart (the latter died at Onitsha), the Reverends Brown and Llwellyn." Azikiwe, *My Odyssey*, 27. Chinua Achebe also mentions Blackett in *Arrow of God*: "There was somebody else who had impressed Oduche even more. His name was Blackett, a West Indian missionary. It was said that this man although black had more knowledge than white men. Oduche thought that if he could get one-tenth of Blackett's knowledge he would be a great man in Umuaro." Achebe, *Arrow of God* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969 [1964]), 46. I have not included the West Indian missionary teachers in this chapter because they were not working in colonial government schools. On West Indian missionaries in Nigeria, see Wariboko, *Ruined by "Race."*

⁴³ H. O. Davies, *Memoirs* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nigerian Publishers) Limited, 1989), 28.

⁴⁴ In 1953, at the request of Kwame Nkrumah, Davies travelled to Kenya to defend Mau Mau activists and Jomo Kenyatta. See Meredith Terretta, "Anticolonial Lawyering, Postwar Human Rights, and Decolonization across Imperial Boundaries in Africa," *Canadian Journal of History* 52, no. 3 (2017): 448-478.

class “how to answer question papers so that the examiner may fall in love with us:—‘If you answer the question in this way, the examiner will fall in love with you.’ It became a joke that he only had to start about what and what to do or say, the class will finish the sentence:—‘and the examiner will fall in love.’” Regarding Liverpool, Ademola mentioned only that “Pa Liverpool was of a gentler disposition.”⁴⁵

Other memories of West Indian teachers were more overtly political, as in the case of Ernest Ikoli, who was Veitch’s student at the Bonny Government High School. Like Davies, Ikoli was a founding member of the Nigerian Youth Movement in the 1930s and an important figure in Nigerian nationalism. Before that, however, he became an influential newspaper editor, and in a 1920 article arguing that the colonial government should incorporate more Nigerians into its upper levels, he praised the work of “black men” who had “nurtured” the Education Department “from the frail child it was about fifteen or twenty years ago.” Ikoli specifically mentioned Hylton Lynch, “long retired to the West Indies with a broken health” and “Mr. L.J. Veitch, still in harness,” along with several others.⁴⁶ Ikoli had positive memories of Lynch and Veitch as teachers but beyond that he also saw them as “black men” who supported the Africanization of the colonial civil service.

The story of Francis Bowen, another teacher from Jamaica, is particularly revealing of the significant relationships formed between West Indian teachers and their African students. Bowen taught at King’s College and then at Yaba Higher College in Lagos from 1931 until

⁴⁵ Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, “King’s College, 1920-1924,” in *75 Years of King’s College* (Lagos, 1987), 13. See also NAI, NC 70/1919.

⁴⁶ Ernest Ikoli, “The Regrading of the African Staff of the Nigerian Civil Service,” *The Lagos Weekly Record*, 14 August 1920, 7.

1947.⁴⁷ During this time, Bowen also founded the “University Evening Classes” with C. D. Akran. One of Bowen’s students at King’s College was Simeon Adebo, later the head of Nigeria’s civil service and Nigeria’s representative to the United Nations. In his memoirs, Adebo remembered that he and other students found Bowen’s “companionship” to be “particularly agreeable” because Bowen “identified completely with Africans inside as well as outside King’s.”⁴⁸

Bowen’s “identification” with Africans was rooted in familial networks. One of his aunts moved from Jamaica to New York City in 1915 and there married a man from Sierra Leone, Matthew Ogunjami Wilson.⁴⁹ In 1919, Bowen followed his aunt to New York to study at Columbia College. Over the next decade, his aunt gained prominence as an artist in the United States. She also began claiming that she was born in Nigeria to Igbo parents and went by the name Suzanne Wilson Ogunjami. Bowen, who like his aunt was born in Jamaica to parents also born in Jamaica, was well aware of his aunt’s claims. Nonetheless, he supported her artistic pursuits. While it is possible that the census data citing Suzanne Ogunjami’s birthplace as Jamaica is inaccurate, the veracity of this data is much less important than her orientation towards Africa and her “identification” with Africans.⁵⁰ Unlike many middle-class Jamaicans, Ogunjami did not see Africans as inferior to West Indians, and this attitude appears to have

⁴⁷ The British appointed Bowen to Nigeria in December 1931. Gold Coast Blue Book 1931, NAUK, CO 660/22; *The Pelican Annual, 1955*, 151. *The Pelican Annual* was the annual yearbook of the University College of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica, established in 1948. It is now one of the three University of the West Indies campuses.

⁴⁸ Simeon O. Adebo, *Our Unforgettable Years* (Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Limited, 1983), 25.

⁴⁹ Matthew Norman Ogunjami Wilson was the son of Nupe and Igbo parents. His father was an Archdeacon in Freetown, and Wilson came to New York to study at the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church. For more on Wilson and Ogunjami, see Simon Ottenberg, “Suzanna Ogunjami: An Enigmatic Modern Artist,” *The Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migrations of African Peoples*.

⁵⁰ On debates about claims to “African” and “Igbo” identity, see James H. Sweet, “Mistaken Identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domingos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora,” *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 279-306.

influenced Bowen. When he arrived in Nigeria in 1931, he held views about Africans that were markedly different from those of his European colleagues and from those of other Caribbean officials.

In 1940, Bowen's "identification" with Africans manifested itself in an especially noteworthy form. That year, the "West Indian Community in Lagos" staged a production of Una Marson's 1938 play, *Pocomania*. Bowen acted in the play and from then on, his students nicknamed him "Pocomania."⁵¹ Marson's play tells the story of Stella Manners, a "respectable" Jamaican woman, and her attraction to Pocomania, portrayed as an African-derived Revival religion popular among the working class. Stella moves back and forth between her Christian middle-class family home and Sister Kate's yard, where people gathered to sing, dance, and play drums. Marson contrasts Stella's relationships with her father, a stern Baptist deacon, David, a doctor and her suitor, and Sister Kate, a Pocomania leader, to analyze the tensions of race, class, and gender in 1930s Jamaica. The play reveals the challenges of unity in a stratified colonial society, the different effects of patriarchy on middle- and lower-class black women, and the middle-class disdain for "African" aspects of Jamaican culture.⁵² Marson glosses "Pocomania" as "a little madness," but the longer history of Pocomania gives deeper meaning to both her play and Bowen's nickname.

⁵¹ Otonba Adeniran Ogunsanya, "King's College Around the War Years 1939-1945," in *75 Years of King's College* (Lagos, 1987), 30.

⁵² For further analysis of Marson's play, see Carolyn Cooper, "'Something Ancestral Captured': Spirit Possession as Trope in Selected Feminist Fictions of the African Diaspora," in *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia*, ed. Susheila Nasta (London: The Women's Press, 1991): 64-87; Leah Rosenberg, "Una Marson's *Pocomania* (1938): Class Gender, and the Pitfalls of Cultural Nationalism," *Essays in Theatre* 20, no. 1 (November 2001): 27-42.

The roots of Pocomania are in Kumina, a BaKongo-based religion that arrived in Jamaica with indentured servants from Central Africa between the 1840s and 1860s.⁵³ Kumina centres on ancestor worship, spirit possession, healing, and continuities between the living and dead. Adherents in Jamaica considered themselves to be “Africans.”⁵⁴ In the wake of Jamaica’s Great Revival in the early 1860s, the term “Pukkumina” applied to any religious groups that grafted aspects of Christianity into African religious traditions such as Kumina. Then, in the early twentieth-century, Pukkumina evolved into Pocomania, a generic and often derisory term used by “respectable” people to describe African-derived or inspired religions in Jamaica.⁵⁵ Older forms of Kumina rituals persisted, however.⁵⁶

Given middle-class aversion to “African” elements of Jamaican culture, it is not likely that Bowen or other West Indians in Lagos participated in Kumina or Pocomania rituals. Yet the West Indians in Lagos were well aware of the Kongolese, or at least the African origins of

⁵³ On the introduction of Kumina to Jamaica, see Schuler, *Alas, Alas, Kongo* and Kenneth Bilby and Fu-Kiau Kia Bunseki, “Kumina: A Kongo-based Tradition in the New World,” *Les Cahiers du Cedaf* 8 (1983): 1-114. Earlier scholars mistakenly claimed that the religion had existed in Jamaica since the 1700s: Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969); Leonard Barrett, *Soul Force: African Heritage in Afro-American Religion* (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1974); and Edward K. Brathwaite, “Kumina: The Spirit of African Survival in Jamaica,” *Jamaica Journal* 42 (1978): 44-63.

⁵⁴ On Kumina religious practices, see Schuler, *Alas, Alas, Kongo*; Bilby and Bunseki, “Kumina”; Warner-Lewis, *Central Africa in the Caribbean*; Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, especially 139-158. One of the earliest scholarly works on Kumina is Joseph Moore, “Religion of Jamaican Negroes: A Study of Afro-Jamaican Acculturation” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, June 1953).

⁵⁵ Stewart and Bunseki propose that the prefix “poco” is from the Kikongo word *mumpoko*, a “powerful plant” used in rituals and for healing. Stewart also suggests that the term “poco” was a Revival Zion word “corrupted by antipathetic Whites, who attached ‘mania’ to it to classify Revival Zion religiosity as Pocomania.” Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 117-118 and 271 n.53. Claudette Anderson, meanwhile, argues that “Pocomania” comes from the Kikongo words *mumpoko* and *kumina*, which formed “*mpokominya*” and subsequently Pukkumina. Anderson also suggests that the Spanish form, Pocomania, was the result of Jamaicans who worked on the Panama Canal and returned to Jamaica in the 1910s. Anderson, “Gnostic *Obia* from *Chukwu Abiama* to Jah Rastafari: A Theology of the JamAfrican *Obia* Catholic Church” (PhD diss., Emory University, 2010), 198-199.

⁵⁶ Pocomania gradually became a generic “African” religion, much like calundu. On the dilution of African religions in the Americas, especially Brazil, see Sweet, “The Evolution of Ritual in the African Diaspora.”

Pocomania. Indeed, in the play itself Sister Kate informs Stella that one of the drummers, Josiah, learned to play from his father, who learned from his own father, a man who came to Jamaica “pon slave ship from Africa.”⁵⁷ West Indians in Lagos also knew about Marson’s political activism in London between 1932 and 1936. Marson was an active member of the *League of Coloured Peoples* and she helped organize protests against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. She was even (briefly) the personal secretary of Haile Selassie.⁵⁸ Thus, when the “West Indian Community in Lagos” decided to stage *Pocomania*, they understood the powerful symbolism: African-descended people putting on a play written by an African-descended woman about an African-derived religion—in Africa. Lagosians, meanwhile, evidently responded positively to the production. The playful nicknaming of Bowen suggests a curiosity in Lagos about the historic connections between Africa and the Caribbean—especially the history the slave trade and the peoples and ideas that European ships took across the Atlantic. The nickname and the production of *Pocomania* reveal a shared desire among Africans and West Indians to braid themselves together into this longer history. Africans and West Indians may have even seen the production as a creative act of resilience. African religious and cultural ideas, along with language, often persisted through the trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery in the Americas. The staging of *Pocomania* thus symbolized the durability of African ideas and their power to bring together Africans and African-descended peoples from around the world.

This interpretation resonates strongly with the earliest meanings of the word “kumina.”

While likely unbeknownst to Bowen or the others in Lagos, the root of kumina, *-kúm, was

⁵⁷ Una Marson, “Pocomania,” in *Pocomania and London Calling*, ed. Tanya Batson-Savage (Kingston, Jamaica: Blouse & Skirt Books, 2016), 33.

⁵⁸ I discuss the *League of Coloured Peoples* in greater detail in Chapter 8. For more on Marson’s activism in interwar London, see Alison Donnell, “Una Marson: Feminism, Anti-Colonialism, and a Forgotten Fight for Freedom,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, 114-131; Delia Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson, 1905-65* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998).

distributed in virtually every Bantu-speaking region of the continent. This quite literally “pan-African” word meant “to be honoured” or “to be rich.” More significant, however, was an innovation on this root to the noun *-kúmú, meaning “chief,” “medicine man,” or “rich person.” This innovation, like its proto-Bantu root, is also distributed across much of Central and Southern Africa. As Jan Vansina, David Schoenbrun, and Christopher Ehret have shown, the word *-kúmú—and its subsequent derivations in other languages—centre on ideas about political and ritual power, community formation, and healing.⁵⁹ These were precisely the ideas that Bowen and other West Indians and Africans were grappling with in Lagos: contesting the power of the British administration and trying to create a sense of shared community.

The staging of *Pocomania*, along with Bowen’s nickname, established links between Africa and the Caribbean and gestured to a source of power that lay outside the lines of the colonial government. *Pocomania* was thus a symbol of the potential for unity between Africans and West Indians. Experiences of marginalization, racism, and alienation engendered an openness among Africans and West Indians to work toward such unity. Bowen was an important figure in Lagos, especially for young people, and though no one would have considered him a healer, he may have seen himself in this light. His role in creating new connections across the Atlantic using an older African idiom was an act of public healing, an effort to create a transatlantic community and to heal the fractures of the slave trade. In many ways, these

⁵⁹ Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 274; David Lee Schoenbrun, *The Historical Reconstruction of Great Lakes Bantu Cultural Vocabulary: Etymologies and Distributions* (Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 1997), 139; and Christopher Ehret, *An African Classical Age: Eastern and Southern Africa in World History, 1000 B.C. to A.D. 400* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 146-160. Fu-Kiau Kia Bunseki understands the word *kumina* in Jamaica as an adaption of *lusakumunu*, the Kikongo noun for “blessing” and *sakumuna*, the Kikongo verb for “to bless.” Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 156.

connections were no different from the connections and communities forged by powerful healers and chiefs in many regions of Africa centuries earlier.⁶⁰

Another influential West Indian teacher, even more revered than Bowen, was Joseph Britton. Britton arrived in Accra in September 1885 and then transferred to the Cape Coast Government Boys School in January 1893. He worked there until his retirement in July 1912.⁶¹ Over the course of his long career, Britton taught hundreds of young students and many of them became well known figures in the Gold Coast. Britton's influence is particularly evident when one considers the lives, actions, and ideas of his former students. E. J. P. Brown, for example, became a lawyer, politician, and historian, and played an active role in nationalist politics.⁶² Vidal Buckle also became a lawyer and was the father of radical communist and Pan-Africanist Desmond Buckle. Frederick Nanka-Bruce became one of the first African doctors in the Gold Coast and, like Brown, an important political figure—he was involved with the National Congress of British West Africa. Josiah Spio-Garbrah, meanwhile, took over for his mentor as

⁶⁰ When Bowen returned to Jamaica in 1947 to take up a position at the University of the West Indies in Mona, he attracted another nickname, “Bo-Bo.” This nickname was decidedly less political—it was chosen by Mark Springer, the young son of the University Registrar (and hero of Barbados), Sir Hugh Worrell Springer. Kean H. W. Springer, *Truly a Gentleman: The Right Excellent Sir Hugh Worrell Springer* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2008), 34.

⁶¹ The Gold Coast administration first appointed Britton as schoolmaster in Cape Coast, but in March 1886 they dismissed him because of “insubordination.” Thanks to an intervention by Bishop Ingham of Sierra Leone, however, (Chapter 1), the government reappointed Britton to the Colonial Secretary's Office. With Ingham's continued support, Britton returned to teaching in February 1889 as a schoolmaster in Accra. Four years later, in January 1893, Britton transferred back to the Cape Coast Government School. Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 March 1889, NAUK, CO 96/200; Gold Coast Blue Books 1885-1893, NAUK, CO 100/35-43.

⁶² “A Farewell Gathering,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 25 April 1908, 2. Brown also became a member of the Legislative Council and wrote a nationalist history of the Gold Coast, *A Gold Coast and Asante Reader* (London, 1929). Brown made the book's purpose clear in the preface, pointing out that neither missionaries nor the British colonial government had made an “appreciable effort” to write books that presented “local history, mythology (Mfantasi-Akan Fables), biography, or a brief outline of indigenous social polity.” Brown further explained that his “object” was to “instil into the rising generation a knowledge of the things which concern them and their country most.” See Brown, *A Gold Coast and Asante Reader*, Book I, vii. Brown's work details the history and customs of the Gold Coast and Asante up to the early twentieth century. In his acknowledgements, Brown thanked both Joseph Spio-Garbrah and James E. Kwegyir Aggrey. Joseph Britton's name is conspicuously absent. Today there is a school in Cape Coast named after Brown.

the Principal Teacher of the Cape Coast Government Boys School.⁶³ There are many other examples of Britton's influence, and it seems that he had a profound effect on virtually all of his former students.⁶⁴ The story of Britton's retirement party in July 1912 best illustrates the significant impact of his teaching.

When rumours of Britton's retirement began circulating earlier that year, testimonials from friends and former students started pouring into Gold Coast newspapers. In April 1912, for instance, the editor of *The Gold Coast Leader* declared that Britton's "influence for good in the country is enormous," and called for the entire Gold Coast to take notice to ensure that the "genial old gentleman" would not leave "without signal mark of appreciation by all classes of the population."⁶⁵ A month later, during an Empire Day celebration in Cape Coast, Joseph Casely Hayford acknowledged the rumours of Britton's upcoming retirement and expressed his "appreciation, and that of the native inhabitants, of Mr. Britton's services to the Colony."⁶⁶ In June, former student H. O. Kuofie wrote to *The Gold Coast Leader* praising Britton as "our good father" and declared that "the noble work" of Britton had "borne good fruit in the many sons of the Gold Coast." Kuofie also called for the creation of a "Committee of gentlemen" to "show the gratitude and appreciation of the whole country for Mr. Britton's eminent services."⁶⁷

⁶³ "General News," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 11 January 1913, 2; Gold Coast Blue Book, 1912, NAUK, CO 100/62.

⁶⁴ In April 1908, for example, just before Britton left Cape Coast on leave, a farewell gathering was held in his honour and E. J. P. Brown praised Britton for his "strenuous, consistent, and upright life." He also described the "affectionate respect which [Britton's] boys always had for him." "A Farewell Gathering," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 25 April 1908, 2.

⁶⁵ "General News," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 20 April 1912, 2.

⁶⁶ "Empire Day Celebrations," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 1 June 1912, 2.

⁶⁷ H. O. Kuofie, letter to the editor, *The Gold Coast Leader*, 1 June 1912, 7. Since leaving Cape Coast, Kuofie had taken up a position in Aboh, Nigeria, working for the Forestry Department.

By July 1912, several of Britton's former students created just such a "Committee," and they organized a retirement party for the evening of July 30. The celebration took place in a "tastefully decorated and brilliantly lit" room at the Cape Coast Government Boys School—familiar surroundings for Britton and his former students.⁶⁸ The party featured a number of speeches from friends and former students, including Josiah Spio-Garbrah, Samuel Isaac Wilberforce, Rev. Egyir-Asaam, Peter Awoonor Renner, George Amissah, and Rev. Attoh-Ahuma, among others. All praised Britton for his tireless work ethic and for his steadfast commitment to education. Many other distinguished guests were also in attendance, including Mrs. Casely Hayford, Mrs. George Amissah, and Joseph William de Graft Johnson.⁶⁹ Other West Indians, including fellow teacher Edith Goring and Mrs. Simmons, the wife of police superintendent William Simmons, helped organize the evening and prepared refreshments.

Of the speeches, Samuel Wilberforce's was particularly revealing in that it directly reflected Britton's influence. Wilberforce declared:

Your noble work has been evinced by the specimens of boys produced who are scattered all over the West Coast holding prominent positions of trust and responsibility. These numerous pupils of yours bear a lasting testimony of your good services rendered to our Country and Race which will never be effaced from the annals of the history of the Gold Coast Colony.⁷⁰

That Wilberforce would refer to a singular "Race" and to the Gold Coast as "our Country" is significant. He still referred to this "Country" as the Gold Coast "Colony," but the mention of the

⁶⁸ Information on the event comes from "Grand Conversazione - A Unique Send-off. Mr. Jos. A. Britton Honoured," *The Gold Coast Nation*, 1 August 1912, 110; "The Retirement of Mr. J. A. Britton," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 3 August 1912, 2; "The Retirement of Mr. Britton," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 3 August 1912, 4.

⁶⁹ This was likely Joseph William de Graft-Johnson Sr. (1860-1928), a close associate of Joseph Casely Hayford and a co-founder the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. It may, however, have been his son, also Joseph William de Graft-Johnson (b. 1893), who became the headmaster of the Cape Coast Wesleyan School in 1921 and later wrote *Towards Nationhood in West Africa* (London: Headley Brothers, 1928). The following year he wrote the equally nationalistic *Historical Geography of the Gold Coast* (London: Headley Brothers, 1929), which opens with "Ode to Ethiopia," a poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar.

⁷⁰ The transcript of Wilberforce's speech comes from "Grand Conversazione - A Unique Send-off. Mr. Jos. A. Britton Honoured," *The Gold Coast Nation*, 1 August 1912, 110.

“annals of history” suggests that Wilberforce held a view of West Africa that predated the British, and more broadly, European presence. He likely also had a vision of the future of the “Country” as a place not controlled by the British. Above all, his speech gestured to the potential for cooperation between Africans and West Indians, that members of the same “Race” could join together to lead a new “Country.” Whatever Wilberforce thought of the future, Britton undoubtedly influenced his thinking. Even the fact that Wilberforce would group West Indians and Africans into a singular black “Race” is remarkable given the tension that often existed between West Indians and Africans.

After Wilberforce’s speech, a committee of Britton’s former students made up of Wilberforce, Josiah Spio-Garbrah, Thomas Aikins, Daniel Sackey, and J. A. Aggrey presented Britton with “a gold watch, a gold chain, a purse of sovereigns and a number of photographic groups of Old Government School boys sent from Coomassie, Calabar, Accra, Zungeru, &c.” At the end of the evening, a “deeply touched” Britton gave his own address: “I feel happy to know that my labours have not been in vain...I have endeavoured by precept and example...to show you the right course in life.” Britton also mentioned his “satisfaction” in knowing that many of his former students were now “holding prominent positions of trust and responsibility.” He then declared: “The secret of the success which everybody tells me has attended my work is the love I have for it, for the good of you all, and for the uplifting of the race.” In closing, Britton stated: “Although I will be many miles away from you, my heart will always be here where I have received nothing but kindness.”

Over the next few days, the Gold Coast newspapers reported on the party and heaped more praise on Britton. The editor of *The Gold Coast Leader*, for instance, remarked that “All over the colony and protectorates and beyond in Northern and Southern Nigeria and in the

United States of America there are many men now occupying high and responsible positions in Church and State or conducting successful businesses or workshops of their own who have been Mr. Britton's boys and whose character he has moulded."⁷¹ The writer also claimed that before Britton arrived at the Cape Coast Government School, the institution "bore an indifferent name," but after he began working there, it became "the best elementary school in the Colony, with a reputation extending far beyond the boundaries of the Colony." On the morning of August 3, 1912, a crowd gathered on Cape Coast beach and watched Britton leave West Africa for the last time.⁷²

None of this is to say that Britton was solely responsible for the contributions of his students to Gold Coast nationalism or to Pan-Africanist movements. Britton was not working in a vacuum and there were many other important influences. Moreover, many of his students did not become nationalist or Pan-Africanist figures. And indeed, Britton was no anticolonialist: at the end of his retirement party, everyone joined together to sing "God save the King." Nevertheless, the presence of a black teacher who talked about racial uplift and believed in a singular "Race" surely had an effect on young students in their intellectualization of a shared racial identity. Britton had ideas about black racial pride and, as Wilberforce's speech so powerfully shows, he cultivated these ideas in his students. As a result, Britton's legacy endured long after he left the Gold Coast. In fact, his legacy even endured in other parts of West Africa. In March 1917, a writer in Lomé, Togo, reported the arrival from Cape Coast of a new teacher for the Government School and stated: "May he be another Britton for Lome."⁷³

⁷¹ "The Retirement of Mr. Britton," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 3 August 1912, 4.

⁷² "General News," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 3 August 1912, 2.

⁷³ "Lome," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 3 March 1917, 1 (supplement).

Britton's legacy was strongest, however, in Cape Coast. Among his biggest supporters was Josiah Spio-Garbrah, who was one of Britton's students in the 1890s and was involved in planning Britton's retirement party. After completing his studies, Spio-Garbrah became a teacher at the Cape Coast Government School and then, after Britton's retirement, was Britton's successor as the school's Principal Teacher.⁷⁴ Moreover, shortly after Britton's departure, Spio-Garbrah and several other former Britton students established a "Brittonite Club" to honour their teacher.⁷⁵ James Marmah, the club secretary, sent a letter to *The Gold Coast Leader* explaining the club's mission: "The object of the club is to preserve the name of [Mr. Britton] from extinction." Club members, Marmah continued, were committed to Britton's "methods, principles in life, manners of teaching, and philosophizing." Marmah also praised "the character, the spirit, the vigor, the nobleness, the sincerity, and the faith" of Britton's work.⁷⁶ It is difficult to know precisely what Marmah meant by "philosophizing." Likely this included Britton's ideas about race and empire and his thoughts about British colonialism in Africa and the Caribbean. The club seems to have died out by 1918,⁷⁷ but Spio-Garbrah ensured that Britton's legacy persisted. Indeed, in many ways Spio-Garbrah's life trajectory reflected the direct influence of his former teacher. In 1923, Spio-Garbrah became the first African Inspector of Schools in the Gold Coast, a position that Britton himself never reached.⁷⁸ Spio-Garbrah was also involved in

⁷⁴ "General News," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 11 January 1913, 2; Gold Coast Blue Book, 1912, NAUK, CO 100/62.

⁷⁵ "General News," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 31 August 1912, 2.

⁷⁶ James Marmah, "The Britton Club," Letter to the Editor, *The Gold Coast Leader*, 18 January 1913, 5.

⁷⁷ In September 1917, a club member wrote to *The Gold Coast Leader* regretting that there had been no recent meetings. "Has the Brittonite Club Proved a Failure?" *The Gold Coast Leader*, 1 September 1917, 7. The last mention of the club in the Gold Coast press was in January 1918. A correspondent from Lomé declared: "From Cape Coast we hear of a Brittonite club in honour and memory of Mr. Britton, a West Indian, who did so much in uplifting many Fanti youths who are well-to-do today." "Lome," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 12 January 1918, 7-8.

⁷⁸ Gold Coast Blue Book 1923-1924, NAUK, CO 100/73.

the creation of Achimota College in Accra in the mid-1920s alongside James Kwegyir Aggrey.⁷⁹ Britton would have undoubtedly supported the initiative given his commitment to education and the success of African students. Spio-Garbrah also preserved Britton's legacy on a more personal level. Less than a year after Britton's departure, Spio-Garbrah and his wife had a son and named him "Britton." Britton Spio-Garbrah followed his father's example and became a teacher at Achimota College. He was also an avid supporter of Kwame Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party. In the 1960s, he even served as a foreign diplomat for the Nkrumah Government.⁸⁰

Years later, Ghanaians also remembered Joseph Britton for bringing football to the country. According to Stephen Borquaye in his 1968 biography of the legendary Accra Hearts of Oak Sporting Club, football arrived in Ghana with "a Jamaican educationist, a Mr. Briton, who was headmaster of the Government Boys School at Cape Coast."⁸¹ Britton, Borquaye explained, was an "all-round sportsman" who taught his students to play cricket and lawn tennis and then in 1903 "introduced" football. Interest in the game quickly spread beyond the school grounds, and so Britton also established a local football club, *Excelsior*. This name—the Latin word for "ever

⁷⁹ Aggrey was Headmaster of the Wesleyan Centenary Memorial School in Cape Coast during Britton's time at Cape Coast Government School. I have not found any traces of a connection between them but they must have interacted given their mutual commitments to education and Christianity. At the very least, they would have met at annual school exams or other events that brought Cape Coast schools together.

⁸⁰ "Britton Spio-Garbrah, May 1913 - Nov 1988: Educator, Administrator, Ambassador" *West Africa*, issue 3974-3975, 22-28 November 1993, 2119. In the late 1940s, Britton Spio-Garbrah studied at the University College of North Wales and became a close friend of Ivor Wilks. Apparently Spio-Garbrah "patiently initiated Ivor into the intricacies of Gold Coast politics." According to Wilks, after they both received their degrees in 1951, Spio-Garbrah "was returning home to the Gold Coast, and I was moving to Oxford to do postgraduate work. Sadly and solemnly, we shook hands. 'You must come to my country one day,' he said. 'I will,' I replied, but we both knew how very unlikely that was!" Nevertheless, two years later, in September 1953, Wilks arrived in Accra to begin teaching at the University College of the Gold Coast and renewed his friendship with Spio-Garbrah. See John Hunwick and Nancy Lawler eds., *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks: Papers on History and Society, Ghanaian and Islamic in Honour of Ivor Wilks* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 8.

⁸¹ Stephen Borquaye, *The Saga of Accra Hearts of Oak Sporting Club* (Accra: New Times Press, 1968), 27.

upward” or “still higher”—could not have been more appropriate. Uplift, whether through schooling or sports, was central to Britton’s educational approach. His initiative proved successful, and the popularity of football spread rapidly all along the coast.⁸²

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this account is Borquaye’s error in describing Britton as a Jamaican. At first glance, this appears to reproduce the inconsistent colonial classifications that at different times rendered Britton a “West Indian,” a “native,” and an “African.”⁸³ Yet this slippage is actually revealing of how people remembered Britton in Ghana. Borquaye wrote his book in the wake of Kwame Nkrumah’s overtly Pan-Africanist administration, and the popular symbolism of Marcus Garvey and Jamaica did not disappear with the 1966 military coup. Indeed, Ghana’s national football team “The Black Stars,” had the same name as Garvey’s shipping line. For Ghana, as for many other newly independent African countries, the football team was a powerful symbol of national unity. But in the case of Ghana, the national football team was also a powerful symbol of international black unity. Memories of Britton, the black teacher from the Caribbean, braided into a Pan-Africanist narrative. Whether or not Britton actually did introduce football to Ghana is less important than the fact that Ghanaians wove his legacy into a symbol of racial solidarity.

West Indian teachers such as Veitch, Bowen, and Britton thus had important influences on their students. They drew on longer discourses of racial uplift and on the longer histories of connection between Africa and the Caribbean. Isolated by racism and marginalization, these teachers forged close bonds with their students, and these relationships sustained powerful

⁸² In 1910, Africans in Accra founded the Accra Hearts of Oak Sporting Club.

⁸³ Peter Alegi also reproduced this error in his book *African Soccerescapes: How a Continent Change the World’s Game* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 10.

legacies. The students of West Indian teachers not only remembered their teachers years later, but lived out their lives in ways that honoured the ideas of their former teachers.

The positive relationships that West Indian teachers cultivated with their African students also spilled over into their interactions with Africans outside the classroom. Much like in the Caribbean, West Indian teachers proved to be both role models for their students and important leaders in their communities. They learned much from these exchanges, and in doing so developed stronger connections with Africans. For example, in Warri, Nigeria, in August 1919, the “members of the Native Clerical Staff” held a “Social gathering” at the Warri Government School where Levi Dawes of Jamaica was the headmaster. This appears to have been some sort of transgression—*The Nigerian Pioneer* reported that the event may have been held at the school “without permission.” Yet the newspaper also noted that “so long as Mr. Dawes was there, all was safe!” The report also mentioned that Dawes gave a memorable speech.⁸⁴ This “gathering” occurred on the same night as a “Peace Dinner” at the European “Warri Club,” likely commemorating the recently signed Treaty of Versailles. It seems that the “Native” clerks were unwelcome at the “official” dinner. The fact that they chose to gather separately is noteworthy in its own right, but it is also significant that Dawes, a West Indian, not only provided a “safe” place for them to meet, but also joined *with* them and even presented a speech. It is unclear whether or not Dawes was invited to the “official” dinner, but his role in facilitating this alternate gathering at the school suggests that his views of “Natives” were notably different from those of his European colleagues, and that he had earned the respect of at least the African clerks in Warri, as well as the respect of a newspaper editor.

⁸⁴ “Echoes from Jekriland” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 29 August 1919, 8. The report did not elaborate on the content of Dawes’ speech, but did state that “those who attended won’t forget in a hurry.”

Africans also praised Edith Goring, the headmistress at the Cape Coast Government Girls School. In a report on the May 1912 Empire Day celebrations in Cape Coast, *The Gold Coast Leader* noted that “great credit” was due to Goring: “It is certainly very encouraging and most astonishing to us,” the writer stated, “to hear girls whom we are prone to think are in the background creditably and with such ease and homeliness reciting recitation and dialogues.”⁸⁵ Goring’s main role was in the classroom, but the success of her efforts brought pride and even “astonishment” to the people of Cape Coast. Like Dawes, Goring seems to have been a respected member of her community, and even challenged ideas about the capabilities of female students.

L. J. Veitch’s time as headmaster at the Bale School in Ibadan, meanwhile, reveals how West Indian teachers forged bonds with Africans through clothing and Christianity. In 1916, a man writing as “Sir H. C. Eyeneda” submitted an “Appreciation” of Veitch to *The Nigerian Pioneer*.⁸⁶ Eyeneda described Veitch as “courtesy personified” and wrote that “a better qualified man could not have been selected for the responsible post of Headmaster of an important school having a national aim or character.” Eyeneda’s reference to the connection between Veitch and the “national character” of the school hints at the nascent Nigerian or possibly racial nationalism in Ibadan: four years later, a group of young men affiliated with the Bale School developed an interest in Garveyism.⁸⁷ Eyeneda also claimed that Veitch had been in Ibadan so long that “he has come to be looked upon as an Ibadan.” Eyeneda then described his first meeting with Veitch,

⁸⁵ “Empire Day Celebrations,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 1 June 1912, 2.

⁸⁶ Sir H. C. Eyeneda, “Mr. L. J. Veitch, West Indian Headmaster of the Bale School, Ibadan: An Appreciation,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 4 August 1916, 4.

⁸⁷ See Gavin Williams, “Garveyism, Akinpelu Obiesesan and his Contemporaries: Ibadan, 1920-1922,” in Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan, eds., *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1993): 112-132.

which had occurred at the 1914 anniversary celebration of the African Church in Nigeria.⁸⁸

Veitch, who gave a short talk at that celebration on “the education of our children,” had not worn the “conventional evening dress with the inevitable high collar and cuffs.” Instead, he had appeared wearing the “highly valued Yoruba principal dress of Etù gown of the purest texture.” Eyeneda stated that upon seeing this, he had been inspired to “go back entirely to the use of our national or tribal dress.”

That Veitch would even attend, much less speak at, a celebration for the African Church is significant in its own right. The African Church, after all, was established by Africans in Nigeria tired of racism in the Anglican Church. Veitch’s speech on the education of “*our*” children at this event suggests that he had begun to set himself apart from his white European colleagues and realize that his place in the colonial context was not among Europeans. Moreover, his decision to wear Yoruba clothing demonstrates that he had begun to recognize and embrace the cultures of the Africans around him.

In fact, Veitch’s involvement with African churches began nearly a decade earlier, when he was teaching in Bonny. In June 1908, Veitch gave a speech at the 16th anniversary celebration of the Niger Delta Pastorate.⁸⁹ Archdeacon Dandeson Coates Crowther, the son of Samuel Ajayi Crowther and founder of the church, presided over the celebration. The Niger Delta Pastorate remained linked to the Church of England, but much like the African Church in Ibadan, it was

⁸⁸ Jacob Kehinde Coker founded the “African Church Organization” in Lagos in 1901 after a split with a C. M. S. church. After C. M. S. officials dismissed Nigerian Assistant Bishop James Johnson, Coker and hundreds of others formed a separate congregation. Allan Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001), 60-64.

⁸⁹ “Celebration of the Sixteenth Anniversary of the Niger Delta Pastorate,” *The Lagos Weekly Record*, 13 June 1908, 6.

established and led by Africans—mostly people born in Sierra Leone.⁹⁰ It is not known exactly what Veitch said in either of these speeches. Nevertheless, his involvement with the African Church and the Niger Delta Pastorate suggests that soon after arriving in Nigeria, he chose to worship with African-run churches instead of the Anglican Church—the church he had grown up with in Jamaica and occasionally served as a preacher.⁹¹ Thus, for Veitch, Nigeria was no longer a “distant portion of His Gracious Majesty’s Empire,” as he had once written.⁹² Instead, it was a place rich in culture and history, the vast majority of which had nothing to do with “His Gracious Majesty’s Empire.”

Joseph Britton was also an active church member and like Veitch, he used this arena to build relationships with Africans. Unlike Veitch, however, he remained within the Anglican Church. In fact, he was ordained as a Lay Reader by no less a figure than Bishop Ernest Ingham of Sierra Leone.⁹³ Britton presided over dozens of funerals, led regular Bible studies with the Cape Coast Reading Club, served as an interim preacher and chaplain, and even played an important role in fundraising efforts.⁹⁴ Yet even as Britton remained a member of the British

⁹⁰ For more on the Niger Delta Pastorate, see Wariboko, *Ruined by “Race”*; Jehu J. Hanciles, “Dandeson Coates Crowther and the Niger Delta Pastorate: Blazing Torch or Flickering Flame?” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (October 1994): 166-172, and G. O. M. Tasie, *Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta, 1864-1918* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978).

⁹¹ “Preachers Tomorrow,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 10 February 1900; “Preachers for Tomorrow,” *The Gleaner*, 14 March 1903, 10.

⁹² See Veitch’s letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Chapter 1.

⁹³ For more on Ingham, see Chapter 1. On Ingham’s interventions on behalf of Britton, see note 571 earlier in this chapter.

⁹⁴ While in Accra at the beginning of his time in West Africa, Britton was also the organist for the Anglican Church services at Christiansborg Castle. Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 March 1889, NAUK, CO 96/200. On Britton’s extensive church activities, see “Bishop Hamlyn,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 6 December 1913, 5; “General News,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 6 June 1903, 1; “General News,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 23 January 1904, 1; “Among the Churches,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 27 September 1902, 4; “General News,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 26 September 1903, 1; “General News,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 26 November 1904, 2; “Editorial Notes,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 23 January 1909, 2; “Dedication of the New Organ at Christ

establishment church, he nonetheless pushed against its parameters. In November 1904, for instance, Britton led a Bible study in Cape Coast on “Gather up the fragments” and apparently gave a “splendid address.”⁹⁵ The phrase “gather up the fragments” comes from the story of Jesus feeding the crowd of five thousand with only five loaves and two fish. According to that story, after feeding the crowd, Jesus instructed his disciples to “gather up the fragments” of the meal. It is unclear what Britton said about the passage in his “splendid address” because the only source for this Bible study is a four-line newspaper report.⁹⁶ Churches typically use the phrase to teach frugality, and Britton may have discussed that theme, but it is doubtful that this was the only subject of his Bible study. Far more likely is that Britton also talked about gathering up and gathering together the “fragments” of his “race.”

Another translation of the “gather up the fragments” passage is “gather the remnants that are left.”⁹⁷ For Britton, who was very familiar with scripture, the notion of gathering “remnants” or “fragments” would have resonated strongly with the writings of Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, who prophesied about a “gathered remnant.” From Jeremiah, for example: “Saith the Lord... ‘I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.’” And also from Jeremiah: “For thus saith the Lord... ‘Behold, I will bring them from

Church,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 6 April 1912, 2; “Preachers for Next Sunday,” *The Gold Coast Nation*, 11 April 1912, 3.

⁹⁵ “General News,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 26 November 1904, 2.

⁹⁶ “The members of the Reading Club attended Service in a body on last Sunday afternoon at the Christ Church, when Mr. Britton gave them a splendid address on ‘Gather up the fragments.’”

⁹⁷ My thanks to Anthony Siegrist for bringing this translation and possible Old Testament connections to my attention.

the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth.”⁹⁸ And from Isaiah: “The Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.”⁹⁹

In the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, many West Indians and African Americans turned to these and other Bible passages to support their belief in the providential design of the slave trade.¹⁰⁰ It is not clear whether Britton subscribed to this thinking, but it is easy to see how he might have used these passages—particularly the idea of God gathering “remnants” from the “ends of the earth” and from “the islands of the sea”—as metaphors for black racial unity.¹⁰¹ Britton was born in British Guiana in 1853 and was keenly aware of the impacts of the transatlantic slave trade. Cape Coast, meanwhile, where Britton had lived and worked since January 1893, had been a major slave-trading port. That legacy endured, with the Cape Coast Castle still occupying a prominent place in the town. Britton, who believed in a singular black “race,” would thus have seen Cape Coast as a site of fracture, a place where “the Race” had been broken apart. But as he prepared his Bible study in November 1904, and as he thought about the gathering of “fragments” and “remnants,” he likely also began to see Cape Coast as a place where these fragments and remnants could be gathered together again and made whole.

⁹⁸ Jeremiah 23:3 and Jeremiah 31:7.

⁹⁹ Isaiah 11:11.

¹⁰⁰ On the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the notion of providential design, see Chapter 1.

¹⁰¹ South African Garveyite J. C. Humble used the passage from Jeremiah 23 for similar purposes in 1925. Robert Trent Vinson, *The Americans are Coming!*, 91.

Britton's efforts to find common ground with his students and with others in Cape Coast did not go unnoticed. In a March 1904 article in *The Gold Coast Leader*, a man named Attoo praised Britton and his work at the Cape Coast Government School, "the best and most efficient primary institution of its kind in town."¹⁰² Attoo claimed that this success was due to "the ardent and dutiful exertions of Mr. Joseph A. Britton, the only beautiful exception among the host of our brethren from elsewhere, who has proved himself honest in the belief that what is sauce for the Gold Coast African is sauce alike for any other African."¹⁰³ Attoo thus separated Britton from other West Indians in the Gold Coast, the "brethren from elsewhere." He saw Britton as an "African" because of his respect and recognition of Africans. Unlike many other West Indians in the Gold Coast, Britton seems to have approached Africans on equal footing instead of treating them as uncivilized or backwards. Indeed, as another writer declared in 1912, Britton was "popular among and respected by all classes of the native community."¹⁰⁴

To be sure, not all Africans in Nigeria and the Gold Coast were eager to send their children to colonial schools. Many continued to rely on "traditional" forms of education. And, while I have presented the stories of West Indian teachers as a nearly unmitigated success, colonial schools also created conflicts within families and communities. Moreover, the small,

¹⁰² Attoo, "Scrutineer," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 26 March 1904, 3. "Attoo" may have been the pseudonym for Reverend Samuel Richard Brew Attoh-Ahuma (previously Samuel Richard Brew Solomon). He was Britton's friend and gave a speech at Britton's retirement party in July 1912. According to Stephanie Newell, "Attoo" was a "popular" contributor to *The Gold Coast Leader*. Newell, *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 30.

¹⁰³ Attoo added that "this creed has induced him to always perform his duties conscientiously," and predicted that Britton's name would "surely pass to posterity with a din of blessedness."

¹⁰⁴ "The Retirement of Mr. Britton," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 5 August 1912, 4.

literate elite that emerged from these schools—in part due to the work of West Indian teachers—led to many problems through the decolonization and independence periods.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, West Indian teachers played important roles in West Africa. Like other Caribbean administrators in African colonies, they had to reckon with racism, and exclusion. Such experiences motivated them to create close bonds with their students and cultivate notions of racial pride. West Indian teachers also extrapolated from their experiences in schools and developed close relationships with many Africans in the communities where they lived and worked. Much like in the Caribbean, they were often at the centre of intellectual life. They played important roles in churches and community meetings and they acted as intermediaries between Africans and colonial governments. Above all, West Indian teachers recognized the need to align their struggles with those of Africans and attempted to unify under a singularized “Race.” They sought to create African-Caribbean connections that drew on earlier histories and that lay outside the boundaries of empire.

AFRO-ATLANTIC DIALOGUE

In December 1918, the Nigerian colonial government transferred L. J. Veitch to King’s College in Lagos. He had just recovered from a “serious attack of Influenza,” and when he arrived in Lagos, the governor informed him that he would have to find his own living quarters. Veitch was “utterly taken by surprise” because until that point, living quarters had always been

¹⁰⁵ For more on this topic, see Lacy S. Ferrell, “Fighting for the Future.” See also Jack Lord, “The History of Childhood in Colonial Ghana, c. 1900-1957” (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, 2015). On similar dynamics in Senegal, see Kelly M. Duke Bryant, *Education as Politics: Colonial Schooling and Political Debate in Senegal, 1850s-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015).

provided to him.¹⁰⁶ Annoyed, he began looking around Lagos for a place to live. After a week or so of searching, he found a room in Ebute Metta but it cost him £10 per month. When Veitch wrote to the governor inquiring about a housing allowance to cover the cost of his rent, the governor informed Veitch that he had “no right to free quarters or an allowance in lieu thereof” and that free quarters were “meant for *European* officers and should not have been given to him” in the first place.¹⁰⁷ Nearly a year later, however, the Nigerian government relented and granted Veitch a housing allowance.¹⁰⁸

At first glance, this is simply one more example of the discrimination meted out to Caribbean administrators by Europeans. Yet what is significant about this story are the extra-imperial networks embedded within it. For instance, in the midst of the controversy, the Colonial Office in London received a letter of support for Veitch from Dusé Mohamed Ali, one of the most important Pan-Africanist figures of the early-twentieth century. Ali claimed that Veitch deserved free quarters even if they were only meant for “Europeans.” “It is true that Mr. Veitch is a coloured man,” Ali wrote, “but it appears from his communication that his engagement was on European lines rather than native lines, because he is not a native of Nigeria, but a West Indian.”¹⁰⁹ Ali was the editor of the *African Times and Orient Review*, a London-based Pan-

¹⁰⁶ In fact, before coming to Nigeria, the British administration had assured Veitch that they would always provide him with “furnished quarters with the necessary furniture.” Veitch to Acting Governor General of Nigeria, 13 February 1919, NAUK, CO 583/75.

¹⁰⁷ Veitch to Acting Governor General of Nigeria, 13 February 1919, NAUK, CO 583/75; Colonial Office official “D. C. C.” 26 June 1919, NAUK, CO 583/75. My emphasis.

¹⁰⁸ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of Nigeria, 23 September 1919; Governor of Nigeria to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 October 1919, NAUK, CO 583/78.

¹⁰⁹ Dusé Mohamed Ali to Colonel Aubrey Herbert, M. P., 18 July 1919, NAUK, CO 583/75. Ali had corresponded with Herbert during World War I while attempting to arrange for black war correspondents. In inter-office correspondence, Herbert and other colonial officials had derided Ali as “that nigger editor.” Ian Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali and the Development of Pan-Africanism, 1866-1945” (PhD diss., Edinburgh University, October 1971), 315-317.

African publication started in 1912 and he had also been a mentor to Marcus Garvey when Garvey was in London. Veitch evidently knew or at least knew of Ali, and had asked for his help. In fact, several years later, Ali moved to Lagos and started a newspaper, *The Comet*.

That was not the only international dimension of the story. When Veitch first arrived in Lagos in December 1918 and was looking for a place to live, he had stayed at the homes of three men: Amos Shackelford, Ernest Ikoli, and John Ambleston.¹¹⁰ Shackelford was a fellow Jamaican who had worked for the Nigerian Railway and then started working as a clerk for S. Thomas & Co, a shipping company run by Saro businessman Peter J. C. Thomas.¹¹¹ Ernest Ikoli, meanwhile, was one of Veitch's former students from the Bonny Government High School. And John Ambleston, who had worked for the Nigerian Railway, was from Antigua. More significantly, in September 1920, Shackelford, Ikoli, and Ambleston co-founded the Lagos branch of Marcus Garvey's *Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)*.¹¹² Shackelford was the president, Ikoli was the secretary, and Ambleston was the treasurer. Peter Thomas probably also played a role, given the connections to his business and the fact that he attended the 1921 Pan-African Congress in London.¹¹³ It is unclear if Veitch was involved in the creation of the UNIA branch, though it seems likely given his entrenchment in Lagos' African-West Indian networks. Indeed, two years later Veitch attended a party organized by Peter Thomas and

¹¹⁰ L. J. Veitch to Acting Governor General of Nigeria, 13 February 1919, NAUK, CO 583/75; Veitch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 July 1919, NAUK, CO 583/83.

¹¹¹ Okonkwo, "A Jamaican Export to Nigeria!," 51-52.

¹¹² "Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities' League: Lagos Branch," *The Lagos Weekly Record*, 25 September 1920, 7. See also Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Vol X: Africa for the Africans, 1923-1945* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 709-711.

¹¹³ S. K. B. Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1977), 120. Asante writes that Thomas made a "significant contribution" to the Congress.

among the other attendees was Ernest Ikoli.¹¹⁴ In any case, what is clear about this story is that when Veitch was let down and pushed aside by the colonial government in Nigeria, he turned to an international network of Africans and West Indians, including his former students.

Veitch's connections with Ali, Shackleford, Ikoli, Ambleston, Thomas, and the UNIA were part of a larger story of "Afro-Atlantic dialogue." In an important 1999 article (and 2005 book), J. Lorand Matory used the concept of Afro-Atlantic dialogue to argue that African diaspora scholars should view Africa not as an ancestral homeland separated from the diaspora by time and space, but rather as a coeval and engaged catalyst in the movement of people, goods, and ideas around the world.¹¹⁵ Matory demonstrated that the ideas and writings of a group of Afro-Brazilians who travelled between Brazil and Nigeria at the turn of the twentieth century resulted in major cultural transformations on both sides of the Atlantic. In Lagos, Afro-Brazilians interacted with "Westernized" Africans and played a major role in creating a "Yorùbá tradition." They also helped to transmit these ideas back to Brazil where they propagated this new "tradition," a tradition which included "purely African" religions such as *Candomblé*.

In the final section of this chapter, I examine how West Indian teachers engaged in their own form of Afro-Atlantic dialogue. They learned from their experiences in Africa, especially from their interactions with Africans, and they brought new ideas back to the Caribbean and to the broader Atlantic world. In doing so, they made significant contributions to the spread of black internationalist thinking. And, while imperial networks made this "dialogue" possible, these interactions and ideas also transcended the boundaries of the British Empire.

¹¹⁴ "List of Invitees in Connection with the 'At Home' Given by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Thomas," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 29 December 1922, 8a. The article listed both Veitch and Ikoli among the "Africans," alongside Ladipo Oluwole and W. G. Nicol, one of Veitch's colleagues at King's College.

¹¹⁵ Matory makes this case in his 1999 article, "The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 1 (1999): 72-103, and in his 2005 book, *Black Atlantic Religion*.

West Indian teachers began cultivating transatlantic connections almost as soon as they arrived in West Africa. For example, in January 1907, two years after L. J. Veitch arrived in Nigeria, there was a major earthquake in Jamaica. In response, Veitch began fundraising in Bonny, where he was teaching. By the end of May, Veitch had raised £13. *The Daily Gleaner*, Kingston's major newspaper, celebrated Veitch's efforts.¹¹⁶ Then, at the beginning of June, Veitch brought the cause to the attention of the Niger Delta Pastorate, which was celebrating its 15th anniversary. At one gathering—following sermons by Reverend James Boyle, Reverend Hugh S. Macaulay, and Archdeacon D. C. Crowther—Veitch gave a lecture on the earthquake.¹¹⁷ Veitch's description of circumstances in Jamaica brought the audience to "sobs and tears." The Pastorate then passed several resolutions, among them a resolution to help Jamaica: "That this meeting having heard of the great disaster which took place in Jamaica, through the Earthquake, in the early part of the year desires to express sympathy with the inhabitants and prays that adequate funds for their relief may be contributed." In a letter to *The Lagos Standard* several days later, Veitch noted that "the people did not only show their sympathy with poor Jamaica in tears, but also in a very practical way for by the next evening our subscription list rose from £13 to £20 and now stands at over £28."¹¹⁸ At the end of June, *The Daily Gleaner* happily reported this news, noting that after Veitch's "stirring appeal," the fund had "reached over £28."¹¹⁹

The power of this transatlantic dialogue was even more apparent when West Indian teachers returned to the Caribbean on leave. On these occasions, West Indian teachers often gave

¹¹⁶ "Nigerian Help," *The Daily Gleaner*, 1 June 1907, 1.

¹¹⁷ Boyle's sermon was on Joshua 24:15, Macaulay's on Joshua 21:45, and Crowther preached on Hebrews 11: 24-25. All three passages focus on the theme of serving God—as opposed to other gods—as a difficult but ultimately redemptive choice. L. J. Veitch, "Letter to the Editor," *The Lagos Standard*, 5 June 1907, 6-7.

¹¹⁸ L. J. Veitch, "Letter to the Editor," *The Lagos Standard*, 5 June 1907, 6-7.

¹¹⁹ "Current Items," *The Daily Gleaner*, 29 June 1907, 2.

public lectures about their experiences in West Africa. For example, in June 1916, when James Clarke and his wife were in Jamaica, they gave a “Lecture on Africa” in James’ hometown, Savanna-la-Mar. The “highly appreciative audience” at the Presbyterian Church heard “one of the most thrilling lectures it is possible to conceive.” The Clarks told stories of “absorbing interest” and showcased “a number of African curios--cloth, brasswork, etc.” as well as some photographs.¹²⁰ Years later, when Clarke returned to Jamaica on leave in January 1930, he attended the Mico College Annual meeting and gave a lecture on “the Education System of Nigeria.” He also “encouraged the teachers onward.”¹²¹

Levi Dawes gave similar lectures while on leave. In September 1916, Dawes and his wife Laura Mills were in Sturge Town, Dawes’ hometown, and while there Dawes attended a meeting of the Jamaican Agriculture Society’s local branch. After discussing some business matters, Dawes addressed the group. He “gave hints as to how he caused potatoes to thrive to a success on the poor African soil” and also talked about “the uses that the cassava should be put to” and encouraged farmers to “plant it more.”¹²² Similarly, in December 1927, L. J. Veitch returned to Jamaica on leave with his wife and children and was “arranging to give a lecture on Nigeria.” A writer for *The Daily Gleaner* reported that Veitch planned to talk mostly about Nigeria’s “educational and industrial advancement.” The writer also noted that it was “very interesting to hear Mr. Veitch talk on Nigeria” and that Veitch’s “delights [were] not so much to tell of the dark side of life there but to tell of wonderful progress of the people.” Veitch apparently claimed that

¹²⁰ “Lecture on Africa Delivered at Sav-la-Mar by Mr. & Mrs. Clarke,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 1 July 1916, 14.

¹²¹ “Old Students of Mico to Erect a Memorial,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 11 January 1930, 16.

¹²² “The Process of Agriculture,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 19 September 1916, 16.

they could soon place Nigerians “educationally alongside the people of any other civilized country of the world.”¹²³

These kinds of public lectures became even more common when West Indian teachers retired back to the Caribbean. Not long after Levi Dawes returned to Jamaica, he gave a “Lecture on Africa” at the Mount Nebo Baptist Church in St. Catherine.¹²⁴ Several years later, Dawes gave a lecture on “Nigeria” to the Jamaica Union of Teachers Conference. According to the newspaper report, Dawes had a “wealth of knowledge on the mannerisms, crafts and attainments of Africans.” Accompanying the report was a picture of Dawes holding “an intricately hand-carved ebony stool, the product of African handcraft.”¹²⁵

James Clarke was the most prolific speaker. After retiring back to Jamaica in 1932, he gave a number of talks about his experiences in Nigeria. In October 1932, for instance, he gave a lecture on “Africa” at the St. Andrew’s Kirk Literary and Debating Society at Cochrane Hall in Kingston. Clarke was apparently a “very forceful and eloquent speaker” and his “masterly discourse” was “full of thought” and was “followed with great interest by all present.” When the lecture was over, the audience “heartily applauded” for Clarke.¹²⁶ The following March, Clarke gave another lecture at a meeting of the Kingston Teachers’ Association. He created a “very vivid picture” of his voyage to Nigeria, the “geographical position of the country,” as well as the “history, social life, education and religious atmosphere of the people.” The report noted that it

¹²³ “Mr. L. J. Veitch Returned After Long Stay in Nigeria,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 11 January 1928, 19.

¹²⁴ “Latest News of the Religious Denominations,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 19 February 1932, 21.

¹²⁵ “Lecture on Africa,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 14 January 1937, 27.

¹²⁶ “Current Items,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 31 October 1932, 2; “Lecture on Africa,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 4 November 1932, 15.

was a “well thought out address” and that the information was “very valuable to the teachers.”¹²⁷ Clarke gave similar lectures on “Africa” in October 1933 and April 1935 to the Literary Society of the famous East Queen Street Baptist Church in Kingston,¹²⁸ and to the Kingston and St. Andrew Literary and Debating Association.¹²⁹

In all of these lectures, Clarke, Dawes, Veitch, and other West Indian teachers brought “Africa” to the Caribbean—whether through photographs, cloth, brasswork, stools, agricultural knowledge, or stories of “educational advancement” and “wonderful progress.” These objects and stories presented a significantly different narrative of Africa and Africans than what many in the Caribbean were accustomed to. West Indian teachers likely placated some ideas about the need to “civilize” Africa—indeed, West Indian teachers maintained these ideas to varying degrees. Yet their lectures still challenged many of the derogatory views held in the Caribbean about Africa and Africans. Moreover, their popularity and frequency suggest that there was great interest in the Caribbean for learning more about Africa and about the links between Africa and the Caribbean—just as there was in West Africa. In fact, there was a broader awakening towards Africa in the 1930s Caribbean, marked by protests against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the rise of Rastafari. West Indian teachers, with their lectures and examples, were part of this turn.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ “Teachers of City Given Address by Mr. J. A. Clarke” *The Daily Gleaner*, 4 March 1933, 16.

¹²⁸ “East Queen Street Baptist Church Literary Society,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 29 September 1933, 19.

¹²⁹ In fact, Clarke was a Vice-President of the Association. “Current Items,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 8 April 1935, 2.

¹³⁰ The public lectures of West Indian teachers must have been fairly political: Levi Dawes attended Garvey’s speeches and rallies, L. J. Veitch was a member of the London-based *League of Coloured Peoples*, and his brother was an elected member of Garvey’s People’s Political Party in Hanover. Joseph Britton, meanwhile, who may have given his own public lectures in British Guiana, joined the London-based *African Progress Union*. I will discuss these stories further in Chapter 8, but these facts alone are suggestive of how the political ideas of West Indian teachers changed in Africa, and how they sought to spread notions of racial unity around the world.

Also significant was the fact that nearly every report remarks on the noteworthy speaking abilities of West Indian teachers. They were “very forceful and eloquent” and presented “masterly discourse,” “stirring appeals” and “splendid addresses.” The power of strong oration skills allowed West Indian teachers to wield considerable public influence. Indeed, many of them were also preachers, and so in addition to their lectures, their roles at weddings, funerals, and regular Sunday services only fortified their positions of public authority.¹³¹

Finally, these public lectures reveal the indelible influence that living and working in West Africa had on West Indian teachers. Their experiences in Africa marked how they thought about themselves, Africa and Africans, and the connections between. For example, in November 1931, a number of Jamaicans who had worked in Nigeria, either for the British administration or as missionaries, held a “Nigerian Reunion Dinner.” The event took place at the South Camp Road Hotel in Kingston. Among the attendees were Levi Dawes and his son Winston, L. J. Veitch, and Amos Shackleford. Gwendolyn James, who married Shackleford two months later and went back to Nigeria with him, was also there and she sang a “beautiful song.”¹³² There was evidently a desire to share their experiences with other Jamaicans, and also to maintain bonds with others who had lived and worked in West Africa. After one of James Clarke’s lectures, *The Daily Gleaner* reported that while in Nigeria, Clarke had “kept up the name of Jamaica.”¹³³ Once

¹³¹ Levi Dawes was particularly involved in church and public life. After returning from Nigeria, he regularly gave Sunday sermons, in addition to presiding over funerals and other public events until his death in 1943. See, for example, “Missionary Services at Runaway Bay,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 26 September 1931, 28; “At Sturge Town,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 13 October 1931, 22; “Cantata at Mt. Zion,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 6 October 1934, 24; “Sturge Town Events,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 10 January 1935, 17; “Late Happenings in Some Country Parts,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 13 August 1935, 24; “Saint Ann Branches Associated,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 3 December 1936, 13; “St. Ann Federation of Teachers,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 28 March 1938, 16; “J. A. S. Branch Visit Grove Place Farm,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 11 November 1938, 8.

¹³² “Nigerian Reunion Dinner in Jamaica,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 21 November 1931, 12. For more on their relationship, see Chapter 7.

¹³³ “Teachers of City Given Address by Mr. J. A. Clarke” *The Daily Gleaner*, 4 March 1933, 16.

back in the Caribbean, West Indian teachers also kept up the name of “Africa.” In doing so, they played a crucial role in galvanizing growing feelings of international black solidarity.

The connections between Africa and the Caribbean forged by West Indian teachers were remarkably durable. In 1936, James Clarke’s son, Hugh Clarke, graduated from Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone. After graduating, he followed his father’s path to Nigeria and began teaching at the Uzuakoli Institute in Nigeria, a C. M. S. school.¹³⁴ Similarly, Levi Dawes’ son Neville Dawes studied at Oxford in the late 1940s and then took up a teaching position at the Kumasi Institute of Technology in 1955. In 1960, he began lecturing at the University of Ghana-Legon, and remained there until 1970.¹³⁵ In other cases, African students even reconnected with their West Indian teachers in the Caribbean. Simeon Adebo, who studied under Francis Bowen at King’s College Lagos in the 1930s, visited his old teacher in Jamaica in 1966. At the time, Adebo was Nigeria’s representative to the United Nations and in a later memoir, Adebo recounted meeting his “old friend.” Bowen had returned to Jamaica in 1947 to begin teaching at the University of the West Indies, though by 1966 he was retired. According to Adebo, after a “separation of so many years,” the two men were “very glad to meet again.”¹³⁶

The connections between Africa and the Caribbean seem to have endured particularly strongly for L. J. Veitch. In a 1942 letter to the editor of *The Daily Gleaner*, Veitch called for the creation of a new convalescent home in Lucea, Hanover, in the model of those established in Nigeria. Reminiscing specifically about Ibadan, he declared: “I have in mind the home at

¹³⁴ “Success of Young Jamaican Abroad,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 28 August 1936.

¹³⁵ Neville Dawes also spent the academic year of 1963-1964 at the University of Guyana. For more on Dawes and his remarkable literary career, see Edward Baugh, “Neville Dawes, 1926-1984,” in Daryl Cumber Dance, ed., *Fifty Caribbean Writers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 141-150. See also Neville Dawes and Kwame Dawes, *Fugue and other Writings* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2012). Kwame Dawes, son of Neville Dawes, is a prolific author, poet, and playwright and the Chancellor’s Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

¹³⁶ Simeon Adebo, *Our International Years* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1988), 165.

IBADAN, one hundred and twenty miles from Lagos, and about 600 feet above sea level, the very prospect of entering which is like a health injection.”¹³⁷ Memories of Africa thus continued to inform the lives of West Indian teachers, even many years after returning to the Caribbean.

CONCLUSION

The British Empire used colonial education in the Caribbean and Africa to emphasize assimilation and paternalism. European-trained instructors imposed languages, cultures, and worldviews on students and groomed them to become imperial agents. When West Indian teachers started working in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, they appeared to fit this mold. They were educated and trained in the same British institutions and presented themselves as loyal British subjects. Yet in the Caribbean, West Indian teachers were also preachers, intellectuals, and community leaders, and they continued to play these roles in West Africa. Their experiences with racism and alienation motivated them to push against the parameters of colonial education and upend the trajectories of assimilation and paternalism. They recognized the falsity of stereotypes about substandard “African” intellect and were able to cultivate feelings of racial pride and unity in their students. In their teaching, they were “following the rules, yet creating new forms at the same time.”¹³⁸

Drawing on their experiences in the Caribbean, West Indian teachers also became respected members and even leaders in their communities in West Africa. They sought to align their struggles with those of Africans, and their exchanges with African intellectuals had a major effect on their thinking about race and empire. When they returned to the Caribbean, they

¹³⁷ L. J. Veitch, “Convalescent Homes,” Letter to the Editor, *The Daily Gleaner*, 1 May 1942, 4.

¹³⁸ Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, 13.

brought their experiences with them and internationalized their nascent ideas about racial solidarity by giving public lectures and by joining black internationalist groups. In the hands of West Indian teachers, colonial education was not a unidirectional imposition, but rather a powerful tool for Afro-Atlantic dialogue, one that they mobilized for the development and internationalization of a common racial identity from West Africa to the Caribbean. Many other Caribbean administrators created similar networks, and it is to these stories that we now turn.

PART III
ALTERNATIVE GEOGRAPHIES

7

BLACK NETWORKS AND IMPERIAL BOUNDARIES

In the first half of the twentieth century, London and Paris loomed large in the British and French Caribbean. For most, these two powerful capitals represented hubs of civilization, commerce, and culture around which much of the world seemed to orient itself. Colonial education systems reinforced this worldview, and so Caribbean administrators grew up with imperial understandings of geography—metropole at the “centre” and colony at the “periphery.”¹ As they grew older, some studied in London and Paris, and when they travelled to West and Central Africa, all of them passed through ports in England and France. In short, Caribbean administrators and their thinking circulated along the itineraries of empire.

Within these imperial boundaries, however, Caribbean administrators often created their own networks, usually with others from the Caribbean, but also with Africans. As I have described in previous chapters, people from Basse-Terre and Bangui, from San Fernando and Sekondi, forged links through common ideations of home, as well as through language, cross-cultural exchange, and nascent ideas about international black identity. To be sure, these networks were dependent on imperial channels, and this explains in part their latent colonial ideologies and sometimes paternalistic views about Africans. Nevertheless, these networks also served as foundational spaces, eventually leading some Caribbean administrators to imagine alternatives to the Paris- and London-centred geographies of empire.

In many cases, connections created within imperial boundaries informed the creation of black networks that transcended empire. As Caribbean administrators formed these networks,

¹ In this chapter I draw on world systems theory, though I have tried not to weigh down the text with heavy-handed theoretical discussions.

they started to define their relationships less by British and French nationality and increasingly by ideas about racial unity and the links between Africa and the Caribbean, though the legacies of imperial geography did not simply disappear. In the first half of this chapter, I present examples of some of the networks created within the French and British empires by Africans, Caribbean administrators, and politicians. In the second half, I analyze three case studies of Caribbean administrators who built on these networks and envisioned alternative geographies.

IMPERIAL NETWORKS

In the French Empire, connections between Antillean administrators and Antillean politicians were fairly common. These links allowed for promotions, personal advancement, and even personal safety. At the forefront of these networks was Gratien Candace, who represented Guadeloupe as a deputy in the *Assemblée Nationale* in Paris from 1912 until 1942.² In 1915, for instance, when René Maran complained of racism at the A. B. C. Hotel in Thysville (see Chapter 2), it was Candace who brought Maran's concerns to the Minister of Colonies.³ And in 1916, Candace again supported Maran by calling for the Minister of Colonies to give Maran a promotion.⁴ Candace made similar interventions for many other Caribbean administrators. In October 1919, Candace recommended Victor Basquel of Martinique for a promotion.⁵ Around

² Candace, born in 1873, studied in France and won seven consecutive elections in Guadeloupe. He was involved in the 1919 and 1921 Pan-African Congresses in Paris and London, but remained an advocate of black progress within the French Empire. In 1940, he supported Maréchal Pétain and the establishment of Vichy France. He died in Lomaye, France, in 1953.

³ Minister of Foreign Affairs to Minister of Colonies, 6 January 1916, ANOM, FP/8APOM/4.

⁴ The Minister forwarded the request on to the Governor General of AEF, but he denied the request. Minister of Colonies to Governor General of AEF, 27 January 1916; Governor General of AEF to Minister of Colonies, 20 March 1916, ANOM, GGAEF/C//74/Maran.

⁵ Governor General of AOF to Minister of Colonies, 2 October 1919, ANOM, Victor Basquel Personnel File, EE/ii/2323.

the same time, Candace wrote two promotion recommendations for Georges Antier of Guyane, once in 1919 and again in 1920.⁶ Candace also intervened with French officials and called for promotions on behalf of Elie Charles Héber of Guadeloupe⁷ and Lionel Attuly and Marius Larcher of Martinique, among others.⁸

Candace was thus an important hub in these networks, but other Antillean politicians were also involved in advancing the careers of Caribbean administrators. In July 1931, Alcide Delmont, deputy for Martinique, recommended Henri Collat of Martinique for promotion.⁹ In October 1933, the deputy for French Guiana, Gaston Monnerville, recommended Marius Larcher for promotion,¹⁰ and in 1937, Monnerville made a similar recommendation for Henri Collat.¹¹ Meanwhile, in 1939, both Maurice Satineau, deputy for Guadeloupe, and Henri Lémery, senator for Martinique, wrote to the Minister of Colonies to support a promotion for Louis Thine. Thine was from Martinique and worked in Cameroon.¹² While such letters were normal for politicians to write, the connection between all these people, aside from their Antillean origins, was that they were all black men and were all trying to help each other advance within a system that often restricted upward mobility on racist grounds. Their efforts were not always successful, but there

⁶ Gratien Candace to Minister of Colonies, 30 July 1919; Candace to Minister of Colonies, 4 June 1920; Candace to Minister of Colonies, 8 November 1920, ANOM, Georges Antier Personnel File, EE/ii/2282/2.

⁷ Minister of Colonies to M. Héber, 22 May 1929, ANOM, Elie Héber Personnel File, EE/ii/1439/2.

⁸ Note in Lionel Attuly Personnel File, ANOM, EE/ii/4569/B/7; Notes on Personnel, Service de la Justice, 3 March 1932 and 13 October 1933, ANOM, Marius Larcher Personnel File, EE/ii/4086.

⁹ Notes du Bureau du Cabinet, 2 July 1931, ANOM, Henri Collat Personnel File, EE/ii/4336/3.

¹⁰ Notes on Personnel, Service de la Justice, 4 October 1933, ANOM, Larcher Personnel File.

¹¹ Notes du Bureau du Cabinet, 2 March 1937, ANOM, Collat Personnel File.

¹² Minister of Colonies to Maurice Satineau, 30 June 1939; Henri Lémery to Minister of Colonies, 13 December 1939; ANOM, Louis Thine Personnel File, EE/ii/6567/1.

was certainly a sense of recognition between Antillean politicians and Antillean administrators that they needed to rely on each other.

This recognition also extended to Africans, as Antillean politicians sometimes brought the grievances of Africans to Paris. One example comes from 1927, when Gratien Candace came to the defence of Troyen Cera of Duékoué, Côte d'Ivoire. Cera was working as a cook for the *Compagnie des Scieries africaines* (SCAF) in Moossou. In July 1927, three of Cera's European colleagues brutally assaulted him. The three men, Manet, Scandella, and Belonville, tied Cera to a tree with wire and beat him, threw sand into his wounds, and then left him there for 48 hours. Cera later developed gangrene and both his arms had to be amputated. The following month, Candace wrote to the Governor General of AOF and demanded an inquiry into the assault, and also that he be kept informed of the situation.¹³

Acts like this one gave Candace and other Antillean politicians reputations that spread around the continent. In February 1928, for instance, Victor Aubame of Libreville wrote to Candace asking for his help in bringing a complaint to the Chamber of Deputies or to the Minister of Colonies. Aubame was an entrepreneur working in forestry and a previous employee of the French administration. When he started a new worksite in 1927, the French colonial government in Libreville interrupted the project by arresting a number of his workers for being "vagabonds." When Aubame protested, the police arrested and fined him. It is unclear what happened to Aubame's complaint, or even whether Candace tried to help him, but what is significant about Aubame's letter to Candace is the racial bond that Aubame believed bound

¹³ Procureur de la République to Lieutenant-Governor of Côte d'Ivoire, 30 July 1927, ANOM, 5G/48; Gratien Candace to Governor General of AOF, 26 August 1927, ANOM, 5G/48. Cera's name is spelled "Séa Ronan" in some of the documents.

them together. Near the end of the letter he stated: “I know that you consider yourself among the colonial Deputies who take the most interest in the blacks.”¹⁴

Aubame’s letter reveals that Candace’s reputation as someone who took “interest in the blacks” extended all the way from Guadeloupe to France to Gabon. The letter also reveals that Aubame was aware of the networks that existed between Antillean politicians, Africans, and other colonial officials, and he was eager to draw anything he could from them. Moreover, Aubame rendered both Africans and Antilleans as “*noirs*.” In other words, for Aubame, Candace was both a “colonial Deputy” and a “black,” someone who operated on two planes, one imperial and one racial. Aubame recognized that Candace’s power came from his role within the imperial sphere, but he also appealed to Candace’s sense of racial solidarity. Aubame recognized the complex interplay between “colonial” and “black” identity and understood the importance of creating alternative networks, even within the empire.

In addition to Antillean politicians coming to the support of Africans, there are also cases of the inverse: African politicians coming to the defence of Antillean administrators. For example, in December 1933, Blaise Diagne, deputy for Sénégal, was trying to establish a “Comité des Colonies” to support “the development of the French colonies.” Diagne was to be president of the Comité, but he wanted his “former colleague,” Georges Sully of Martinique, to be Director. Sully likely met Diagne in Dakar, where Sully had served as the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal for AOF since 1927. Sully had previously worked in Congo, Oubangui-Chari, and Gabon.¹⁵ Diagne’s interest in Antillean affairs, meanwhile, may have stemmed from his own time in French Guiana, where he worked as a customs agent from 1910 until 1914.

¹⁴ Victor Aubame to Gratien Candace, 8 February 1928, ANOM, III SLOTFOM/7. “*Je sais que vous vous classez parmi les Deputés coloniaux qui s’intéressent le plus aux noirs.*”

¹⁵ Blaise Diagne to Minister of Colonies, 15 December 1933, ANOM, Georges Sully Personnel File, EE/ii/2317/3.

Further demonstrating the racial bonds created through French imperial networks were the interventions that Antillean politicians made on behalf of Africans and Antilleans in Paris. In August 1923, for instance, Gratien Candace sent an official appeal to the President of the French Chamber of Deputies decrying the “daily incidents,” both in Paris and “*en province*,” by “foreign tourists and French shopkeepers who insult and harass Frenchmen of the black race solely because of the colour of their skin.”¹⁶ This was likely in reaction to the treatment of Marc Kojo Tovalou Houénou of Dahomey. Earlier that month, a group of American tourists had beaten Houénou and forced him out of a café in Montmartre.¹⁷

René Boisneuf, a deputy for Guadeloupe, made similar interventions. In October 1922, Boisneuf made a presentation on “human rights” in Paris and promoted the “extension of universal suffrage to all natives in French possessions.” He also condemned the “abuses of power” that occurred during elections in the colonies. In a police report on the event, one government official noted that Boisneuf appeared “sympathetic to the associations of colonial agitators in Paris.”¹⁸ Despite this “sympathy,” politicians like Boisneuf, Candace, Diagne, Satineau, Delmont, Monnerville, and Lémery were frequently in conflict with the “colonial agitators in Paris.” Lamine Senghor of Sénégal, for instance, claimed that Candace and Diagne “represented the black race dishonourably.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, these politicians played a vital role

¹⁶ Interpellation de Gratien Candace, 11 August 1923, Archives Nationales de la France, (ANF) C//14718. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷ For more on Houénou, see Dewitte, *Les mouvements nègres*, 74-75 and Lorelle D. Semley, “‘Evolution Revolution’ and the Journey from African Colonial Subject to French Citizen,” *Law and History Review* 32, no. 2 (2014): 267-307. On Houénou’s interactions with Marcus Garvey in Harlem, see Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 99-104.

¹⁸ “Note sur la Propagande Révolutionnaire Intéressant Les Pays d’Outre-Mer,” December 1922, ANOM, SLOTFOM III/103.

¹⁹ Report on meeting of the *Comité de la défense de la race nègre* (CDRN) in Marseille, 13 September 1926, ANOM, SLOTFOM III/37. Similarly, in October 1932, Isidore Alpha of Martinique named “Diagne, Candace, Lémery, etc.” as “*bourgeois nègres*” and “lackeys of imperialism.” “Rapport de Joe” 22 October 1932, ANOM, II

in creating black networks within the lines of the French Empire. They were committed to supporting the careers of other Africans and Antilleans and defending personal safety and “human rights,” even as they remained committed to the Empire. Such networks proved particularly important in the defence of René Maran between 1922 and 1923.

In November 1922, Maran was in Koumra, Chad, and was eager to return to France. A year earlier, his first novel, *Batouala*, won a major French literary prize, the Prix Goncourt. Yet Maran was hardly awaiting a *fête* in Paris. Maran had used the novel—especially the preface—to make strident criticisms of French colonialism and the drunken abuses of white French colonialists. “Civilization, civilization, pride of the Europeans and mass grave of innocents,” he wrote, “you build your kingdom on corpses...You are not a torch light, but an inferno. All that you touch, you consume.”²⁰ Maran was no anticolonialist—he believed in colonial reform and he made these criticisms alongside a steadfast belief in the French Empire. His critics, however, overlooked this fact. As a result, when the novel won the Goncourt, the resulting publicity created a national scandal in France.²¹ In Chad, meanwhile, Maran quickly became *persona non grata* among his colleagues and he was anxious to leave Central Africa because he began to fear for his life.

SLOTFOM II/16; “Rapport de Paul” 25 October 1932, ANOM, SLOTFOM II/19. I analyze these tensions in greater detail in Chapter 8.

²⁰ René Maran, *Batouala: véritable roman nègre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1938 [1921]), 11. Maran also declared: “The natives were broken down by incessant toil for which they were not paid, and were even robbed of the time to sow their own crops. They saw disease come and take up its abode with them, and saw famine stalk their land, saw their numbers grow less and less.” Maran, *Batouala*, 15-16. This passage is also used in Phyllis Martin’s essay, “The Violence of Empire,” in *History of Central Africa*, vol. 2, eds. David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin (London: Longman Group, 1983), 28.

²¹ Reviewers disparaged the *académie Goncourt* for its decision. Henri Bidou, for example, was outraged that Maran “ha[d] written a book against the whites in the colonies.” Henri Bidou, “Parmi Les Livres,” *La Revue de Paris* t.1 (jan-fév 1922), 405.

In light of the situation, Maran wrote to his old friend Félix Eboué and asked for help to leave Chad via Nigeria instead of returning the usual way through Bangui, Brazzaville, and the Belgian Congo. Eboué then went to see Gratien Candace and “insist[ed] that the Ministry permit [Maran] to return by English territory.”²² Candace did approach the Minister of Colonies, but the Minister ignored Candace’s plea. Maran also wrote to René Boisneuf. In January 1923, Boisneuf followed Candace by writing to the Minister of Colonies and requested that Maran be allowed to return to France via Nigeria.²³ In his letter, Boisneuf explained that Maran was concerned that angry French colonialists would murder him if he travelled via Brazzaville. Around the same time, other members of the Chamber of Deputies attacked Maran and his book, and both Candace and Boisneuf defended him.²⁴ Eventually the Minister of Colonies relented, and Maran left Chad in May 1923 via Nigeria, arriving in Bordeaux in August.²⁵

The connections between Maran, Eboué, Candace, and Boisneuf were not an entirely unique phenomenon. Rather, as the preceding examples demonstrate, the bonds that united around Maran are indicative of the larger web of black networks between Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean that Africans and Antilleans relied on for support within the French Empire. Faced with barriers of racism, black administrators and politicians created networks through which they attempted to support each other’s careers and livelihoods, and also to defend each other against injustice. Antilleans also recognized similarities with the racism the French directed at Africans, and many extended their networks from the Caribbean and France to include people from Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Dahomey, and elsewhere. These networks brought together a

²² Félix Eboué to René Maran, 20 November 1922, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 81.

²³ René Boisneuf to Minister of Colonies, 14 January 1923, ANOM, Maran Personnel File, GGAEF/C//74/Maran.

²⁴ Félix Eboué to René Maran, 20 February 1923, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 81.

²⁵ Dennis, “The René Maran Story,” 157.

wide range of people, linked together through the empire by colour, by an opposition to racism, and by an emerging transregional black identity. Promotions and other advancements were thus not only personal, but shared victories.²⁶ These networks remained within the scope of empire, but they also created a foundation for future black networks between Africa and the Caribbean.

Such imperial networks were no less prevalent in British colonies. They were different from those in the French Empire, however, in that Africans and Caribbean people typically created them through more informal channels. Much like the connections made by West Indian teachers in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, the networks that Caribbean administrators created in British colonies were not facilitated by letters between deputies and ministers, but rather in newspapers, local associations, informal gatherings, and friendships. One example of this is the network that grew around John Barbour-James in the Gold Coast.

Born in British Guiana, Barbour-James began working as a postmaster in the Gold Coast in 1902 and remained there until 1917. In 1915, he was trying to raise money to print a short pamphlet, “The Burden of Empire and its Obligations.” To promote his fundraising effort, Barbour-James drew on his connections with other Caribbean administrators as well as the Gold Coast intelligentsia. Josiah Spio-Garbrah, a former student of Joseph Britton, wrote a promotional article in *The Gold Coast Nation*.²⁷ Spio-Garbrah expounded Barbour-James’ key points and then mentioned several others who had read and supported the work: J. P. Brown, the former president and co-founder of the Gold Coast Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society; Peter Awoonor Renner and C. J. Bannerman, two prominent lawyers; E. J. P. Brown, another one of

²⁶ Indeed, such a feeling surrounded Félix Eboué’s appointment as interim governor of Martinique in June 1933. In a letter to Eboué, René Maran offered his “most fraternal congratulations” and heralded Eboué’s position as “a new victory for our race.” Letters from René Maran to Felix Eboué, 1 July 1933 and 14 August 1933, quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 142.

²⁷ Joseph Spio-Garbrah, “In the Press: To be published shortly, An Essay on ‘The Burden of Empire and its Obligations’ by J. A. Barbour James,” *The Gold Coast Nation*, 21 January 1915, 807.

Britton's former students; and Joseph Casely Hayford, co-founder of the National Congress of British West Africa. Spio-Garbrah also wrote that notable British officials such as Winston Churchill and Alfred Milner were "sympathetic" to Barbour-James' ideas.

The following year, in September 1916, Barbour-James organized a concert in Kumasi to raise further funds for his pamphlet. Among the performers who "enliven[ed] the town" were three West Indians: Edward Godding, a police officer from British Guiana, his wife, also from British Guiana, and Edwina Alexis of Trinidad, the wife of Mark Alexis, an agriculture instructor from Trinidad.²⁸ "The Burden of Empire" was undoubtedly imperialistic, a fact highlighted by Spio-Garbrah's references to Churchill and Milner. Yet Barbour-James and Spio-Garbrah were relying mainly on their relationships with other Africans and West Indians to promote the book. In other words, they interwove their vision of empire with the connections they had made between the Caribbean and West Africa. Barbour-James, Spio-Garbrah, and other Africans and West Indians in the Gold Coast understood that the British Empire had brought them together, but even within these imperial contours, they understood the importance of creating bonds based on race.

When Barbour-James retired several years later, two tributes in the Gold Coast press revealed further evidence of the links that Barbour-James inspired. One appeared in Casely Hayford's *The Gold Coast Leader*:

We have received with intense regret the news of the retirement of Mr. Barbour-James from the Gold Coast Civil Service... The ties of friendship which Mr. Barbour-James made on the Coast during his fifteen years of active service will, doubtless, remain unbroken for many years to come. Mr. Barbour-James has our heartiest wishes for many happy days in his fatherland.²⁹

²⁸ "Coomassie," *The Gold Coast Nation*, 12 October 1916, 1507.

²⁹ "General News," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 30 March 1918, 2.

The Gold Coast Nation also published a commemoration of Barbour-James' time in West Africa: "He was not only genial to people outside the service, but he was kind to those serving under him." In closing, the writer declared support for Barbour-James' continued efforts "for the benefit of his race."³⁰ These short acknowledgements of Barbour-James' career reveal him as an important figure in early-twentieth century Gold Coast life. He was someone with the ability to bring Africans and West Indians together in "ties of friendship" to support "his race." Barbour-James made these links within the lines of empire, but he clearly understood the value of creating and nurturing bonds between Africans and West Indians. After retiring from the civil service, Barbour-James moved to London where he continued to draw on these connections.

A second example of African-Caribbean links in the Gold Coast is the network that coalesced around Walter and Eva Callender. Walter Callender, born in British Guiana in 1871, worked for the Gold Coast police force from 1911 until his retirement in 1928. For much of that time, he lived in Kumasi. Among his friends were Francis Leung, a lawyer of Chinese descent from British Guiana and George Christian, a lawyer from Dominica. Leung died in 1916,³¹ but just before his death he asked the Callenders to look after his daughter, Margaret. The mother was an African woman named Araba, and she appears to have accepted this arrangement. In 1928, however, when the Callenders were preparing to leave Kumasi and return to the Caribbean, Araba and her extended family grew wary, fearing that Margaret would never return. Christian intervened and eventually facilitated an agreement between Araba's family and the Callenders. In May 1928, they left for Barbados, and over the next few years, Margaret and her mother stayed in touch, sending each other letters and photographs via Christian. Then, in April

³⁰ "Mr. J. A. Barbour-James," *The Gold Coast Nation*, 6-13 July 1918, 4.

³¹ Rouse-Jones and Appiah, *Returned Exile*, 267 n.5.

1933, Araba died of tuberculosis and so Margaret never saw her mother again.³² Around the same time, the Callenders moved from Workmans in Saint George to Marchfield, Saint Philip, and they named their new house “Kumasi Cottage.” By bringing Kumasi to Barbados, in the forms of an adopted child and the name of their home, the Callenders quite literally joined the geography of West Africa and the Caribbean. They evidently felt a strong connection to the Gold Coast and with Ashanti people and culture. In fact, Walter Callender had even learned to speak Twi.³³ Above all, when the Callenders returned to the Caribbean, they drew on their relationships in the Gold Coast to sustain a transatlantic black network.

In Sierra Leone, Caribbean administrators relied on similar connections, such as in March 1920, when Frederick Joseph Burke of Jamaica died in Freetown. Burke was a railway worker, and early on the morning of March 21, he developed pains in his chest. He travelled from his home in Cline Town to the home of his friend, Fred Stuart of the Bahamas, who lived on Rawdon Street.³⁴ Once there, Burke called for a doctor. The doctor, E. J. Wright, determined that Burke had acute dyspepsia and “treated him accordingly.” That evening, Wright told Burke to come to the hospital and Stuart accompanied him. The next day, Burke “suddenly showed signs of collapse.” Wright diagnosed a ruptured gastric ulcer and successfully performed surgery, but Burke died two hours later. Stuart remained with Burke throughout. Afterwards, Burke’s body

³² Correspondence between George James Christian, Walter Callender, and Eva Callender, 1927-1933, UWISC, GJC, Box 3, Folder 54. For more on this story, see Rouse-Jones and Appiah, *Returned Exile*, 203-204.

³³ “African Service Sheet,” PRAAD, Walter Callender Personnel File, PF 3/37/49.

³⁴ The documents refer only to a “Fred Stuart,” and so it is unclear whether this was Frederick Brew Stuart or his son, Frederick Sydney Stuart. Frederick Brew Stuart was born in Nassau in 1865 and died in Freetown in 1925. He married Leontine Madeline, born to a French father in Freetown in 1869. Frederick Sydney Stuart was born in Freetown in 1897 and died in Jamaica in 1965. For the Stuart family tree, see <https://www.geni.com/family-tree/index/6000000000127513262>

was “handed over to his friends—who attended to the funeral rites.”³⁵ Stuart and Burke’s fellow West Indian railway workers organized the funeral service.

Burke’s family back in Jamaica also memorialized his life. Less than a week after his death, *The Gleaner* in Jamaica noted the passing in Sierra Leone of the “beloved son of the late Frederick George and Mrs. Burke of No. 41 Smith Lane, Kingston.” Burke left behind his “sorrowing mother, sisters, and relatives to mourn their irreparable loss.” The obituary also urged “English, American, and Canadian papers” to “copy” the announcement.³⁶ Three years later, Burke’s mother and sister submitted a memorial announcement to *The Gleaner*, noting that their devoted son and brother was “in ever constant memory.”³⁷ The friendship of Burke and Stuart reveals how important black networks were within the British Empire. Burke’s relationships with other West Indians in Sierra Leone were not only crucial to his healthcare, but also to his funeral arrangements and the preservation of his memory by friends and family spread around the Atlantic.

West Indians in Nigeria created similar support networks. In Lagos, the relationship at the core of these networks was the friendship between Amos Shackelford of Jamaica and Peter J. C. Thomas. Shackelford arrived in Nigeria in December 1913 to begin a three-year appointment as a station master on the Nigerian railway. Over the course of the three years, Shackelford befriended Thomas, who owned and ran a Lagos-based shipping firm called S. Thomas & Co.

³⁵ E. J. Wright, Medical Officer of Freetown, to Principal Medical Officer, 25 March 1920, NAUK, CO 267/586. Wright also mentioned a Father Noirjean, who came to the hospital just before the operation and “attended” Burke. This may have been Father Joseph Noirjean, a Spiritain priest from Strasbourg who left Marseille for Sierra Leone in September 1891. “Départs de Missionnaires,” *Les Mission Catholiques: Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l’œuvre de la propagation de la foi*, no. 1166, 9 October 1891, collected in t. 23, January-December 1891 (Paris: Mougin-Rusand, 1891), 482.

³⁶ “Deaths,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 27 March 1920.

³⁷ “In Memoriam,” *The Daily Gleaner*, 22 March 1923, 2.

Shackleford also grew increasingly frustrated with colonial racism,³⁸ and so when his contract ended in April 1917, he went back to Jamaica. But then, in January 1918, he returned to Lagos and became a clerk in Thomas' firm. Several years later, Shackleford left S. Thomas & Co. to start a transport company of his own, as well as a bread-baking business. In fact, around Lagos, people knew him as "The Bread King."³⁹ Shackleford also married Catherine Ricketts, daughter of Edward Ricketts, a Jamaican Baptist missionary who came to Lagos in 1895.⁴⁰ Without Thomas' initial support, however, and his guarantee of employment in Lagos, it is doubtful that Shackleford would have returned to Nigeria at all, let alone become a thriving businessman. Shackleford and Thomas remained friends and became important advisors, interlocutors, and benefactors to many others.⁴¹ In short, their friendship created an important base of support for other Caribbean people in Nigeria.

As in Sierra Leone, these networks were especially important in times of ill health and death, and there are a number of cases of Africans and West Indians in Nigeria rallying to support each other in such circumstances. One example is that of Donald Kryenhoff of British Guiana. Like Shackleford, Kryenhoff had come to Nigeria on a three-year agreement with the Nigerian Railway. When he finished his contract, he also joined S. Thomas & Co. where he worked as a shipping agent alongside Shackleford. Soon thereafter, however, on October 23, 1918, Kryenhoff died of influenza. A number of Africans and West Indians came to the

³⁸ For example, Shackleford publicized the racial discrimination of the Nigerian government in several Caribbean newspapers in order to disrupt the recruitment of other West Indian railway workers. See Chapter 4.

³⁹ Non-English speakers referred to bread as "Shackleford." Okonkwo, "Amos Stanley Wynter Shackleford: Bread King and Nationalist."

⁴⁰ Okonkwo, "A Jamaican Export to Nigeria!," 48-49.

⁴¹ Shackleford was not the first West Indian to establish himself in Lagos. One earlier example is Robert Campbell (b. 1829 in Jamaica), who arrived in Lagos in 1862 and ran a newspaper. R. J. M. Blackett, "Return to the Motherland: Robert Campbell, A Jamaican in Early Colonial Lagos," *Phylon* 40, No. 4 (1979): 375-386.

assistance of his family. Peter Thomas made the funeral arrangements, including renting a “motorcar” for Kryenhoff’s “West Indian friends” to attend the funeral.⁴² Shackleford, meanwhile, submitted an obituary to *The Lagos Standard*, writing that Kryenhoff had “hosts of friends” in Nigeria and noted that Reverend Thomas Adesina Ogunbiyi conducted the funeral at the Ebute-Ero Anglican Church.⁴³ Shackleford also sent word to Kryenhoff’s brother-in-law in British Guiana, W. A. Branker, and enclosed a copy of the obituary.

Kryenhoff’s wife had died five years earlier, and so there were now five children—three girls and two boys—in Georgetown under the care of Branker. Kryenhoff had sent back regular remittances to support his children, but with his death, Branker was desperate for the proceeds of the modest estate.⁴⁴ Aware of this situation, Thomas took charge of Kryenhoff’s affairs and recruited the help of Joseph Arthur, another railway worker from British Guiana and one of Kryenhoff’s friends. Arthur was heading back to the Caribbean on leave in April 1919, and he agreed to bring Kryenhoff’s tin trunk back to the family.⁴⁵ The trunk contained mostly clothing, some jewelry, and a shaving kit. The financial part of Kryenhoff’s estate remained unresolved, partly because of some missed letters and broken exchanges, but also because Thomas encountered some difficulties acquiring Kryenhoff’s war bonus from the Nigerian government. Eventually, at the end of December 1920, Thomas was able to settle Kryenhoff’s accounts and

⁴² “Kryenhoff Statement of Account,” NAI, N 939/1920.

⁴³ Amos Shackleford, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Lagos Standard*, 13 November 1918, 7.

⁴⁴ W. A. Branker to Colonial Secretary of British Guiana, 19 January 1920, “Estate of D. Stanley Kryenhoff to British Guiana,” NAI, N 939/1920.

⁴⁵ Arthur later found himself in similar difficult circumstances. He retired from the railway in 1938 after 25 years of service, but remained in Nigeria. By 1950, he had fallen on hard times. In a letter to the Nigerian government, he described himself as “a West Indian recruited in 1914 to work for Nigerian Railway.” He also noted that King George V had decorated him for conscientious Empire Service, but that since World War II he was reduced to “beggary.” The administration did not offer Arthur any support. Letter from Arthur to Chief Secretary of Government, 14 April 1950, Nigerian Railway Corporation Headquarters, Ebute Metta, Nigeria, SL 696. Personal communication with Lisa Lindsay, 28 April 2015. See also Lindsay, *Working with Gender*, 67, 75 n.59.

the Nigerian government arranged to transfer the £35-15-1d to Branker.⁴⁶ Without the support of Shackleford, Thomas, Arthur, and the rest of the African-West Indian network in Lagos, Kryenhoff's situation would have ended much differently. His memory would likely have been submerged or even forgotten, and his family would not have received his estate. Shackleford and Thomas, along with the rest of the African-West Indian network around Kryenhoff, understood the importance of creating social bonds to stave off isolation.⁴⁷ The connections between the Caribbean and Nigeria were facilitated by the British Empire, but they were also informed by an emergent sense of racial solidarity.

A similar and particularly revealing case from Nigeria is that of William Walcott. Walcott was from British Guiana and he worked as a goods clerk for the railway in Ibadan. In mid-October 1916, he began passing blood. At first he consulted with the medical officer in Ibadan, who told Walcott to go to the Government Hospital for further examination. According to the general manager of the Nigerian railway, however, Walcott "refused," explaining that he wanted to "try some native remedies." Several weeks later, Walcott started vomiting blood and again visited the medical officer in Ibadan. This time he agreed to enter the Government Hospital. At first, the doctor reported "slight improvements," but Walcott's condition "gradually grew worse" and he died on November 21, 1916. The general manager reported that the "necessary funeral arrangements were made, and all the West Indians who could be excused duty attended."⁴⁸ Walcott had arrived in Nigeria two years earlier, in November 1914, along with

⁴⁶ The details of this story come from "Estate of D. Stanley Kryenhoff to British Guiana," NAI, N 939/1920.

⁴⁷ In October 1914, Kryenhoff himself had come to the support of a West Indian railway worker. Theophilus Augustus King of British Guiana died of heart disease en route to Nigeria to work as a signaller on the railway. He was "buried at sea" near Madeira on October 30. Kryenhoff, who was on the same boat, ensured that King's belongings were "sealed and weighed" properly and returned to King's "legal heirs" in Demerara. King's "effects" included several trunks, a watch, brooch, ring, keys, and £1-7-2 in cash. NAI, N 4248/1914.

⁴⁸ General Manager of the Nigerian Railway to Central Secretary Lagos, 13 December 1916, NAI, N 2584/1916.

Donald Kryenhoff, Joseph Arthur, and others. During his time in Nigeria, Walcott evidently formed friendships with other West Indians, both in Ibadan and back in Lagos. He also appears to have developed connections with Africans, even African healers, to the point that he “refused” to be treated in the Government Hospital and instead chose to rely on “native remedies.” It is uncertain what these “remedies” were, but it is clear that unlike West Indians who complained about being treated by “natives,”⁴⁹ Walcott recognized the importance of making connections with Africans. His experiences are indicative of wider efforts to build black networks in the British Empire.⁵⁰

As the preceding examples demonstrate, Africans and West Indians often came together to support one another, whether in the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, or Nigeria. These connections sometimes even extended back to the Caribbean, creating transatlantic black networks. Like the interventions of politicians from the French Caribbean, these connections operated firmly within the geography of empire, facilitated through imperial channels. Nevertheless, by creating and participating in these networks, a number of Caribbean administrators began thinking beyond empire and sought to form links between Africa and the Caribbean that lay outside imperial

⁴⁹ See the complaints of Francis Simmons (Chapter 3) and Josiah Ward, Milton Fairley, Charles Neptune, and Albert Donawa (Chapter 4).

⁵⁰ The importance of these networks is particularly clear in the case of Frank Reid, whose death stands in stark contrast to those of Kryenhoff and Walcott. Reid worked as a station master for the Nigerian railway at Itori and died of cardiac disease in early April 1913. In July, Miss F. L. Ford of St. Andrew, Jamaica, wrote to the Nigerian Railway asking for “information regarding Frank Reid.” She described Reid as “a Jamaican; colour brown; height about five feet eight inches; disposition quiet and well-mannered.” Ford explained that Reid’s widowed mother, Annie Reid, was “very anxious about him” and had “not heard from him for some months” even though he was a “most attentive and dutiful son.” Francis Waller, the acting general manager, wrote back to Ford in September 1913 to inform her that Reid was a “most efficient officer” but had died four months earlier. Waller had reported Reid’s death to the colonial secretary in Lagos, but had not contacted Reid’s family in Jamaica. It is unclear whether or not Reid’s estate and belongings ever made their way back to Jamaica. The only reference to these arrangements is a September 1913 statement from the Supreme Court Registry in Lagos, in which the Chief Registrar explained that “the Chief Registrar is not administering the estate of the late Mr. F. L. Reid.” Frank Reid was not able to create or join a network in Nigeria, and as a result, his memory was nearly forgotten, his mother nearly left to wonder what had happened to her son. “Death of Mr. F. L. Reid, West Indian Clerk, Nigerian Railway,” NAI, N 431/1913.

boundaries. They also started to reformulate their understandings of geography, moving away from worlds centred on London and Paris to worlds centred on the imbricated histories of Africa and the Caribbean. In the remainder of this chapter, I present three examples of Caribbean administrators in Africa who made explicit links with Africans and in doing so, established black networks that moved beyond imperial boundaries and established alternative—and in some cases explicitly anti-imperial—geographies.

THE *GEOGRAPHIE CORDIALE* OF FELIX EBOUE AND FILY DABO SISSOKO

In February 1932, the Minister of Colonies assigned Félix Eboué to the Caribbean after more than twenty years in Oubangui-Chari. Eboué worked first as the secretary general of Martinique, and then in June 1933, the Minister of Colonies named him interim governor of the island. But then, after a change in the French Government in February 1934, the new Minister of Colonies, Pierre Laval, assigned Eboué back to Africa. Instead of sending Eboué to AEF again, Laval named Eboué acting governor of French Soudan. And so, in August 1934, Eboué and his family settled into the *quartier administratif* in Koulouba, just outside Bamako, on a hill overlooking the Niger River valley.⁵¹ Eboué was the top colonial official of the colony, but his time in French Soudan was nonetheless marked with familiar French racism. These experiences, along with his many migrations between Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean, influenced his thinking about empire and geography. Eboué remained committed to his work in the French administration, but in his writings and interactions with Africans, it is clear that his thinking started to shift.

⁵¹ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 156.

In October 1935, a little over a year after arriving in Koulouba, Eboué began drafting a preface for a yearbook (*annuaire*) on life in Martinique.⁵² Eboué remembered the Caribbean island fondly and vividly, and on a loose piece of typed manuscript, he reflected on his time in Martinique. First he described the “splendors” of Martinique that “brought glory” to the island’s “three centuries of *attachement*—and not *rattachement*” with France.⁵³ The word *rattachement* refers to the politicized connection of territories, such as through annexation or occupation, in the most administrative sense. *Attachement*, meanwhile, describes an emotional connection, a sense of fondness or mutual affection. Eboué was thus making an overt decision to describe the relationship between France and Martinique not as an exploitative colonial relationship, but rather as one informed by equity and warmth. At first glance, this may seem like nothing more than a romanticized and sanitized view of empire—a view that reveals how the most nefarious effects of colonialism went much deeper than mere “*rattachement*.” Yet by reading the rest of the preface, it becomes clear that Eboué was articulating a new vision of geography, one where Martinique—and other colonies—were not subordinate to continental France. Eboué understood the importance of geography to these relationships, and he attempted to reshape them.

For example, Eboué claimed that it was the *annuaire*’s emphasis on the condition of being an island that shed the most light on Martinique and its people. He even referenced Jules Michelet’s famous witticism about England—“England is an island, gentlemen, and now you know as much as I do about England”—and turned it towards Martinique.⁵⁴ In Eboué’s

⁵² Eboué, Draft preface for the *Annuaire de la Vie Martiniquaise*, FCG, FFE, F22/4, Folder 5. The volume was published the following year in Martinique: Emile Sylvestre and Eustache Lotaut, *Annuaire de la Vie Martiniquaise, 1936* (Fort-de-France, Martinique: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1936). Eboué’s preface in the published version was largely unchanged from his draft.

⁵³ “*Trois siècles d’attachement—plutôt que de rattachement.*”

⁵⁴ “*L’Angleterre est une île, Messieurs, et maintenant vous en savez autant que moi sur l’Angleterre.*”

estimation, the volume as a whole was “far more” than an “*annuaire*” because it documented “life.” In addition to “statistics,” “official texts” and “other information,” it was a “landmark of human geography.” By expressing an interest in spatial connections and the dynamics between people and place, Eboué made clear his view that Martinique was not merely a French colony, but also its own island, a place brimming with a unique culture.

Eboué was also attentive to the naming of space. He referred to the island as both Martinique and, longingly, as Madinina, an older Amerindian name:

The music of Daniel Thaly, like an obsession, returns to me and soothes me and I find myself whispering, thinking of Madinina, where I enjoyed the sweetness of living, in all of its nuances, ‘Once departed, one never knows if the gods will allow you to return again.’⁵⁵

By alluding to his personal history in the Caribbean and to the pre-Columbian Caribbean—and to an ultimately irretrievable past—Eboué was also gesturing to an alternative geography, one that transcended three hundred years of “*attachment*.” To be sure, Thaly was a white French poet born in Dominica who lived in Martinique,⁵⁶ yet it is precisely this kind of confluence of Europe and the Caribbean that led Eboué to look to older geographies and to imagine something new. Elsewhere in the preface, Eboué turned and looked east from the Caribbean islands, perhaps towards the future: “In the distant East shines the ruby-gilded sun of daybreak, brightening the peaceful hills.”⁵⁷ In removing himself from imperial chronologies and geographies, Eboué very consciously acknowledged the history and geography of the world that existed before the spread of European empires and that would endure despite them.

⁵⁵ “*La musique de Daniel Thaly, comme une obsession, vient encore me bercer et je me surprends à murmurer, pensant à Madinina où j’ai apprécié, dans toutes ses nuances, la douceur de vivre, ‘Car une fois partie, on ne sait si les dieux / Voudront bien t’accorder d’y revenir encore.’*” Eboué put this final line in quotation marks in his text, and so it is presumably from one of Thaly’s poems, though I have not been able to confirm this.

⁵⁶ Later Antillean poets derided Thaly’s work as that of a *béké*.

⁵⁷ “*A l’orient lointain luit le soleil vermeil / De l’aurore dorant le front des monts tranquilles.*” I have not found the source for this quotation either. It may also be from a Thaly poem.

Eboué summed up his ideas about the geography of empire by reflecting on his new perspective from the governor's residence in Koulouba: "Fort-de-France — Koulouba, a journey already completed; Koulouba — Fort-de-France, a journey in thought, by way of 'intimate geography,' with all of Martinican life in my eyes and in my heart."⁵⁸ In French, the term I have translated as "intimate geography" is originally "*géographie cordiale*," an expression that Eboué took from the title of Georges Duhamel's 1931 book, *Géographie cordiale de l'Europe*. Duhamel based his book on his travels throughout Europe and his efforts to identify the "universal" aspects of European civilization. In Duhamel's words: "I go from town to town, from border to border, from people to people, sometimes joyful, sometimes disappointed, sometimes singing in the secret of my heart the funeral march of Europe, sometimes celebrating Europe's recovery and glory."⁵⁹ Eboué was familiar with Duhamel's work and he very consciously adopted Duhamel's title by placing quotation marks around the phrase "*géographie cordiale*."⁶⁰ The difference from Duhamel, however, was that Eboué radically shifted the European geographic focus of France, Finland, Holland, and Greece to a transatlantic bond between French Soudan and Martinique. Duhamel was looking for unity in Europe, but Eboué, by way of his imagined "journey in thought" back to Martinique, was looking for unity between Koulouba and Fort-de-France, between Africa and the Caribbean. In other words, Eboué was moving outside imperial time and space, separating "Madinina" from its colonial relationship with France, and

⁵⁸ "*Fort-de-France—Koulouba, effectivement réalisé; Koulouba—Fort-de-France, voyage en pensée, en manière de 'géographie cordiale,' avec sous les yeux et dans le cœur, cette somme des activités martiniquaises.*"

⁵⁹ "*Je vais, de ville en ville, de frontière en frontière, de peuple en peuple, tantôt joyeux, tantôt déçu, tantôt entonnant dans le secret de mon cœur le chant funèbre de l'Europe, tantôt célébrant sa guérison et sa gloire.*" Georges Duhamel, *Géographie cordiale de l'Europe* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1931), 21.

⁶⁰ It is possible that René Maran recommended Duhamel's book to Eboué. Maran later wrote reviews of Duhamel's 1948 book *Le bestiaire et l'herbier* and his 1949 work, *La pesée des âmes*, UCAD, FRM, Res. 5182.

joining it with West Africa, leaving France entirely outside the conversation and off the map of his imagined geography.

That very same year, 1935, a young Martinican student in Paris named Aimé Césaire began work on a poem that would become *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*.⁶¹ The sprawling imagined beauty of the poem represents one of Césaire's earliest written expressions of *négritude*. It was also in this poem that Césaire made a similar move to Eboué by drawing links between Africa and the Caribbean and suggesting a new unity beyond Europe. This is hardly evidence of a direct link between Eboué and Césaire,⁶² but it does show that even as a colonial administrator, Eboué was working through many of the ideas that are usually associated only with anticolonial intellectuals. In other words, black internationalist ideas circulated within and without imperial spaces. This is not to imply that Eboué had dismissed the empire or that his politics were in line with those of Césaire. After all, Eboué was still the governor of a French colony and he adhered to the protocols of that position. Yet in this and other writings, there was a noticeable turn: a re-thinking of imperial geography, coupled with an interest in the connections between the Caribbean and Africa. This change is also noticeable in Eboué's interactions with Fily Dabo Sissoko, a young colonial official in French Soudan.

⁶¹ Césaire began writing the poem in summer 1935 while on a vacation in Croatia with a school friend, Petar Guberina. Césaire saw an island that reminded him of Martinique and was inspired when Guberina told him that the island was known as "Martin." In Césaire's words: "After buying a *cahier d'écolier*, I started to write *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*." Césaire, *Nègre je suis, nègre je resterai: Entretiens avec Françoise Vergès* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005), 26.

⁶² Although, Eboué's son Henri was a friend of Césaire and other Antillean students in 1930s Paris. Weinstein, *Eboué*, 148-9. Furthermore, one of the contributors to the *Annuaire* was Eugène Revert, who taught a young Césaire at the Lycée Schoelcher in Fort-de-France. Césaire credited Revert with teaching him not just the history and geography of France, but also about the natural marvels of Martinique. On the influence of Revert, see Louis, *Conversation avec Aimé Césaire*, 23-27. See also Georges Ngal, *Aimé Césaire: Un Homme à la Recherche d'une Patrie* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1994); A. James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1-18.

Sissoko was born in the small village of Horokoto in what is today the southwest of Mali.⁶³ He studied at the École Normale William Ponty in Senegal and then worked as a teacher. By the 1930s, he had become the canton chief in Niambia. He had fairly conservative and paternalistic views about “civilization” and the French empire, but he also came under suspicion of the administration and had a reputation for challenging French authority. In June 1928, for instance, the lieutenant-governor of French Soudan wrote to the Governor General of AOF in Dakar and explained that Sissoko was the likely author of a tract that made “venomous” critiques of the government. At the time, Sissoko was working as a teacher in Ségou and the lieutenant-governor described Sissoko as an “ambitious and combative” administrator who was “driven by a dubious mind.” He also mentioned that Sissoko had been the subject of “numerous disciplinary measures.”⁶⁴

Eboué and Sissoko met because of their roles in colonial government, but they developed a friendship that moved beyond this association. Indeed, Sissoko was proud of “seeing a black man” in charge of French Soudan.⁶⁵ Both also had a strong appreciation for African history, and they talked extensively about traditions and ancient African civilizations. Eboué’s ethnographic interests from his time in Central Africa persisted in French Soudan, and he encouraged Sissoko to write up some of his own ideas. Yet their time together in West Africa ended prematurely, in September 1936, when the Minister of Colonies appointed Eboué as acting governor of Guadeloupe.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Eboué and Sissoko stayed in contact, and one can glean significant

⁶³ For two recent accounts of Sissoko’s life and literary career, see Modibo Halassi Sidibe, *Fily Dabo Sissoko, un grand sage africain* (Bamako: Cité du Niger, 2007); Ministère de la Culture du Mali, *Tradition et Modernité dans l’oeuvre littéraire de Fily Dabo Sissoko* (Bamako: Jamana, 2001). Some of Sidibe’s claims are not well founded.

⁶⁴ Lieutenant-Governor of French Soudan to Governor General of AOF, 16 June 1928, ANOM, 17G/58.

⁶⁵ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 163.

⁶⁶ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 174.

traces of their relationship from their writings and correspondence. Above all, they were both concerned with ethnography and the future of the French Empire in Africa, but they were also both interested in geography.

For example, in October 1936, the *Bulletin de Recherches Soudanaises* published an essay by Sissoko called “La Politesse et les Civilités des Noirs.” The essay described the political organization of the region, with a history going back to Soundiata, and then detailed customs such as greetings, conversations, and other social interactions. The essay was overtly colonialist, and it concluded that “*les Noirs*” had much to learn before becoming “civilized.” Sissoko sent a copy of the article to Eboué in Guadeloupe and offered his “*très respectueux hommage*.”⁶⁷ Eboué, meanwhile, sent Sissoko a copy of one of his speeches from Guadeloupe. Then, at the end of December 1936, Sissoko wrote a letter back to Eboué thanking him for the speech, for his letter, and for news about Guadeloupe. According to Sissoko, the “*Géographies et les Atlas*” were not enough to “sufficiently know” the Caribbean. In other words, Eboué’s descriptions of Guadeloupe gave Sissoko a more adequate understanding of life in the Caribbean than the books written by French imperialist geographers. In closing, Sissoko expressed his joy that Eboué, the new leader of Guadeloupe, was “*un Français et que ce Français est un Noir!*”⁶⁸ Sissoko used “*les Noirs*” in his ethnographies rather than “*Soudanais*” or “*Africains*,” or “*indigènes*.” “*Noirs*” was unquestionably a colonial category, but by using “*Noirs*,” Sissoko molded the category to create a bond between himself and Eboué, between Africans and African-descended peoples around the world, a bond that was not beholden to empire. The following March, Sissoko sent another publication to Eboué, an article on divination in French Soudan titled “*La Géomancie*.”

⁶⁷ Fily Dabo Sissoko, “La Politesse et les civilités des Noirs,” *Extrait du Bulletin de Recherches Soudanaises* 4 (October 1936): 1-14, FCG, FFE, F22/6, Folder 2.

⁶⁸ Fily Dabo Sissoko to Félix Eboué, 23 December 1936, FCG, FFE, F22/3, Folder 8.

Sissoko again included an inscription at the top of the first page, though this time it was more overtly political: “*Très respectueux hommages et excellents souvenirs d’un frère de race.*”⁶⁹

Sissoko thus saw himself as connected to Eboué on two planes of identity: one tied to empire (“*Français*”) and the other tied to colour (“*Noir*”). Their friendship—not to mention their correspondence—was only possible through the networks of the French empire, but their relationship also superseded imperial boundaries. Sissoko’s description of Eboué as a “brother of the race” reveals how the extra-imperial dynamics of their personal bond mirrored their larger ideas about the French empire and the black networks that existed within and without its boundaries.

In August 1938, the Minister of Colonies recalled Eboué from Guadeloupe, and then several months later sent him back to Central Africa. This time Eboué worked as the lieutenant-governor of Chad, and he arrived in Fort-Lamy in January 1939. The following year, in June 1940, Charles de Gaulle delivered his famous speech over the radio calling for support. Eboué responded by “rallying” AEF to side with de Gaulle and the Free French instead of with the Vichy government as many other colonies were doing. In light of Eboué’s efforts, de Gaulle named Eboué Governor General of AEF in 1941. Unsurprisingly, French historians, museums, and governments have commemorated this part of Eboué’s life in plaques, memorials, metro stations, and in the Panthéon in Paris.⁷⁰ As the myth goes, here was a descendant of liberated slaves who then liberated the empire. Scholars of the French Empire thus frequently mention Eboué, but they rarely analyze Eboué outside the World War II context, much less consider his

⁶⁹ Fily Dabo Sissoko, “La Géomancie,” *Bulletin de Recherches Soudanaises* 8-9 (November-December 1936): 1-21 [248-268]. Inscription made by Sissoko at Horokoto on 8 March 1937, FCG, FFE, F22/6, Folder 2.

⁷⁰ Eboué died in Cairo in 1944, but in 1949, the French government relocated Eboué’s remains to the Panthéon, alongside Victor Schoelcher.

ideas about language and geography or the impacts of his continued friendships with Africans such as Sissoko.⁷¹ Eboué's leadership during this time was unquestionably important, but even as he rose up the ranks of the French government, his experiences with racism did not simply evaporate into a fog of devotion to France and de Gaulle.⁷² Eboué firmly believed in France and was entrenched in the Empire, yet he also continued to draw on his relationships with Africans and Antilleans and to think about a world beyond the scope of empire. By looking more closely at Eboué's time in Brazzaville, it becomes clear that Eboué continued to believe in the importance of geographical links between Antilleans and Africans.

On July 21, 1943, Eboué gave a speech in Brazzaville in honour of Victor Schoelcher.⁷³ He also used the occasion to praise the people of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana for their dignity under three years of dictatorial Vichy rule and for remaining "faithful" to "long-standing French traditions."⁷⁴ These "French traditions" in the Caribbean were, as Eboué well knew, genocide, slavery, racism, and colonial exploitation. Near the end of the speech, however, Eboué gestured to older traditions in the Caribbean, declaring: "Frenchmen of the Antilles, this is a son of *France Equinoxiale* who is addressing his cordial salute to you, the children of

⁷¹ For more on the mythologies around Eboué and de Gaulle in Central Africa, intertwined with the mythology around Savorgnan de Brazza, see, Bernault, *Démocraties ambiguës en Afrique centrale*, 137-147.

⁷² On one occasion as Governor-General, Eboué went to the Brazzaville railway station to meet a new administrator from France. Eboué was not in uniform, and when the young man saw Eboué, he "told Eboué with great authority to pick up his bags." Eboué politely took the luggage. Later, when the new administrator formally met Eboué, he was "shocked and frightened to learn that the 'porter' was his *chef*." Eslanda Goode Robeson, "Félix Eboué: The End of an Era," *New World Review* (October 1952): 47-48, MSRC, EGR, Box 13. See also Box 17, Diary #1, 1946, "African Trip," pp. 57 (back). Weinstein recounts a version of this story in *Eboué*, 281. Weinstein also notes that arguments between white French administrators and African subordinate clerks in Brazzaville sometimes resulted in the senior administrators saying: "If you don't like my decision, you can go see *your* governor general, the big monkey, to complain." Weinstein, *Eboué*, 262.

⁷³ "Message aux Antillais," 21 July 1943, FCG, FFE, F22/18, Folder 3.

⁷⁴ "*Vous êtes restés fidèles à nos vieilles traditions françaises.*" In his draft of the speech, Eboué scratched out "*traditions republicaines*" in favour of "*traditions françaises.*"

Madinina and Karukera.”⁷⁵ Here again, Eboué demonstrated his mixing of French and extra-imperial geographies. “France Equinoxiale” was the old colonial word for the French occupations in South America, while Madinina and Karukera were the Amerindian names for Martinique and Guadeloupe. Thus, in Eboué’s rendering, the people of the Antilles were both “Frenchmen” and the products of a legacy that pre-dated the arrival of Europeans in the Caribbean. For Eboué, the place-times of Madinina and Karukera existed long before the rise of the French empire, and were enduring both because of and in spite of “long-standing French traditions.” Even more significant was Eboué’s final claim in the speech: his “cordial salute” to Madinina and Karukera was not only on behalf of himself, but on behalf of “all the people of French Equatorial Africa.”⁷⁶ Eboué’s belief in the importance of links between Africa and the Caribbean and his effort to reshape imperial geography could not have been clearer. His changing views of geography and history were made all the more stark by an invitation he received later that year from the Yacht Club of Guadeloupe. The club invited Eboué to a celebration to “commemorate the 450th anniversary of the discovery of Guadeloupe by Christopher Columbus.”⁷⁷ This view of the Caribbean and French imperial history was markedly different from the one expressed by Eboué in his Brazzaville speech.

Despite Eboué’s frequent moves across the Atlantic, he maintained his friendship with Sissoko. They continued to exchange letters and other writings as well as ideas about geography and empire. In December 1943, for instance, Sissoko sent Eboué a copy of an essay he had

⁷⁵ “*Français des Antilles, c’est un fils de la France Équinoxiale qui adresse aux enfants de Madinina et de Karukera, son salut cordial.*”

⁷⁶ “*Non seulement en son nom personnel mais aussi en celui de toutes les populations de l’Afrique Équatoriale Française.*”

⁷⁷ “Yacht Club de la Guadeloupe,” Invitation to Eboué, 20 October 1943, FCG, FFE, F22/20, Folder 1.

written, “An Overview of the Cultural Evolution of Colonial Peoples.”⁷⁸ This was just a few weeks before the famous January 1944 Brazzaville conference, and Eboué relied on Sissoko’s arguments against assimilation to make his own anti-assimilation arguments at the conference. Equally significant, however, was the hand-written message that Sissoko had written at the top of the first page: “To Mr. Félix Eboué, Governor General of the Colonies, respectful wishes from a brother who has never lost hope in the Race.”

I am not trying to suggest that Eboué was secretly an anticolonialist. Instead, I am trying to show that even as a colonial administrator, Eboué was aware of pasts and places in Africa and the Caribbean that existed outside of the French empire, and that he believed in possible futures that also lay outside imperial boundaries. Eboué’s friendship with Sissoko, laden with a racial bond, reveals how Eboué imagined an alternative geography, even as he defended the boundaries of the (Free) French Empire. When Eboué was sitting at the conference table in Brazzaville in January 1944, his mind, like the minds of the other men around the table, was likely focused on how to best organize the empire after the war. Yet his thoughts must have also turned to his childhood in the Caribbean, to the friendships he had developed in Central and West Africa, in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and in France, and to his encounters with racism everywhere he went. These various migrations and intellectual influences undoubtedly had a strong bearing on Eboué’s ideas about the geography of the world and the future of empire in Africa. In other words, even though scholars always study Eboué as an imperial figure, and his legacy typically remains bound by “empire-state” framing devices, he clearly thought beyond the French empire. He drew on the framework of empire to imagine an alternative geography of the world.

⁷⁸ Fily Dabo Sissoko, “Vue d’ensemble de l’évolution culturelles des peuples coloniaux,” FCG, FFE, F22/19, Folder 3.

A WORLD FIT TO LIVE IN: GWENDOLYN SHACKLEFORD AND HERBERT
MACAULAY

A second example of how interactions between Africans and Caribbean people inspired alternative geographies comes from Lagos, Nigeria, and the interactions between Gwendolyn Shackleford and Herbert Macaulay. As I described earlier in this chapter, the friendship of Amos Shackleford and Peter Thomas formed the basis for the dynamic African-West Indian networks of Lagos in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. These networks often focused on financial support and mutual aid, but sometimes they were also overtly political, such as with the establishment of the Lagos branch of the UNIA in 1920 (Chapter 6).

By the early 1930s, most West Indians had left Nigeria, but Amos Shackleford was still around. His transportation business, the Inland Transport and Supply Company Ltd., was well established, and his thriving bread-making company had expanded north from Lagos to Abeokuta and Ibadan, and west to Accra, Takoradi, and Kumasi.⁷⁹ Along with his business ventures, Shackleford also maintained a strong social network.⁸⁰ He remained a close friend of Peter Thomas, and he also befriended Dusé Mohamed Ali, now in Lagos, as well as Herbert Macaulay, the early Nigerian nationalist.

In July 1931, Shackleford visited Jamaica and while there he met a dental hygienist named Gwendolyn James. They married in January 1932 and the following month, when he returned to Nigeria, she went with him.⁸¹ Once in Lagos, Gwendolyn Shackleford integrated herself into her husband's social and political networks and played a key role in the politics of 1930s and 1940s Lagos. During this time, the Shacklefords appear to have formed a particularly

⁷⁹ Okonkwo, "A Jamaican Export to Nigeria," 52-53.

⁸⁰ For more on Shackleford's life in Lagos, see Chapter 3.

⁸¹ "'Nigerian' Wedding at St. Michael's," *The Daily Gleaner*, 7 January 1932, 21.

strong bond with Herbert Macaulay—they visited each other’s homes, shared dinners and books, and exchanged birthday, Christmas, and New Year’s cards. The Shacklefords also sent Macaulay complimentary bread.⁸² Gwendolyn Shackleford in particular developed a close friendship with Macaulay, and through these interactions developed an alternative to imperial geography. This is most evident in their work together to protest the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-1936.

The Italy-Ethiopia crisis of 1935 sparked protests across West Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe.⁸³ In Nigeria, these protests brought together many of the key nationalist and Pan-Africanist figures of the time. The first major protest against came in July 1935, when Ernest Ikoli’s newspaper, the *Nigerian Daily Telegraph*, called for a public demonstration. Ikoli was the editor of the newspaper, and Dusé Mohamed Ali was the associate editor.⁸⁴ Several months later, on 20 September 1935, 2,000 people attended a public meeting in Lagos to discuss the invasion of Ethiopia. Ikoli and Eric Olawu Moore presided over the gathering. Other notable attendees included James C. Omosanya Vaughan, first president of the Nigerian Youth Movement,⁸⁵ and Peter Thomas. Those present at the meeting passed a resolution condemning Italy’s incursions into Ethiopia and praised Britain because of Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare’s recent speech at the League of Nations. On 11 September 1935, Hoare had pledged the full support of Britain to the Covenant of the League of Nations and in particular to “collective resistance to all acts of

⁸² Correspondence between the Shacklefords and Macaulay, 1924-1945, UISC, HMP, Box 91, Files 3, 4, and 11, and Box 31, File 4.

⁸³ For the best analysis of these protests in Africa, see Asante, *Pan-African Protest*.

⁸⁴ Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 120-122.

⁸⁵ J. C. Vaughan was also the grandson of James Churchwill Vaughan of South Carolina. For the remarkable story of his “return” to Africa, see Lisa A. Lindsay, *Atlantic Bonds: A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from America to Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

unprovoked aggression.”⁸⁶ Many in Lagos—and elsewhere—took this to mean that Britain would fight to defend Ethiopia against Italy. Several weeks later, however, Italian forces invaded Ethiopia and Britain did nothing to deter them. This set off further protests across West Africa, which were fomented by the Italian defeat of Addis Ababa in May 1936.

In Nigeria, the first group to confront the British government for its change in position was the Prominent Lagos Women Society led by Gwendolyn Shackleford. Shackleford arranged meetings with Nigerian government officials and also formed the Save Abyssinia Society to raise funds. To this end, she organized concerts and dances and promoted sympathy for the cause among the market women of Lagos, led by Alimotu Pelewura. Shackleford also convinced the Acting Chief Secretary of Nigeria, G. C. Whiteley, to make a donation to the fund.⁸⁷ In May 1936, Shackleford delivered a particularly stirring plea for support:

Lift up your heads with pride oh men of my race. Think of your past deeds and valour—the American Civil War, the Boer War, the recent War of 1914-1918 for England and France... Brothers! Men of Africa, you have bled and died for others... We ask for your MORAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT. These can reach us much easier than yourselves. SEND HELP SPEEDILY... Give and Give and Give! Even as you did in the World War. Give us some encouragement. We die not for ourselves alone but for you too. You who have fought, bled, and died for OTHERS.⁸⁸

Shackleford appealed to the roles played by Africans and African-descended peoples within the British and French (and American) empires, but she was also calling for the “men of [her] race” who had “died for OTHERS” to now consider their extra-imperial racial bond. Shackleford’s speech highlighted the fact that her activities in Lagos and her links with Africans were firmly

⁸⁶ Documents on British Foreign Policy, second series, XIV, appendix 4, ‘Sir S. Hoare’s Speech at the League Assembly 11 September 1935,’ 789; quoted in Robert Mallet, *Mussolini in Ethiopia, 1919-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 215.

⁸⁷ NAI, CSO 26, File No. 30468, Vol. II, 4 November 1936; quoted in Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 149.

⁸⁸ *Comet*, 2 May 1936; quoted in Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 148-9.

outside the boundaries of the British Empire. This alternative view is also evident in Shackleford's correspondence with her friend Herbert Macaulay.

On April 19, 1936, Shackleford sent a letter to Macaulay asking if he was coming to see her and declared: "It's high time we get to this Abyssinia Pamphlet." She also noted that she had "other things to report about the fund," referring to the "Save Abyssinia Fund" she had initiated with the Prominent Lagos Women Society.⁸⁹ The next month, Shackleford sent Macaulay a letter thanking him for his help in organizing a "mass meeting" and reported the success of ongoing fundraising efforts.⁹⁰ In June 1936, Shackleford organized a deputation of women from the Society to submit a petition to the League of Nations through the Nigerian governor, Bernard Bourdillon. The petition condemned the use of poison gas by Italian military forces and called for the League of Nations to denounce the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. After returning from a meeting regarding the petition at Government House in Lagos on June 24, Shackleford sent a letter to Macaulay detailing the events: "In spite of the rain, our women rallied to the Cause and met at Breadfruit Church where we had a short prayer meeting and read the Petition then representatives signed and took it to His Excellency. He received us graciously and promised to cable the Petition (we gave him the money of course) and also to send a copy by next mail."⁹¹ Bourdillon did indeed send the petition to London, but officials in the Colonial Office and Foreign Office declined to forward the petition on to the League of Nations, explaining that Shackleford and the Prominent Lagos Women Society should send the petition to the League of Nations themselves. Bourdillon informed Shackleford of this outcome in August 1936.

⁸⁹ Gwendolyn Shackleford to Macaulay, 19 April 1936, UISC, HMP, Box 91, File 3.

⁹⁰ Gwendolyn Shackleford to Macaulay, 5 May 1936, UISC, HMP, Box 91, File 3.

⁹¹ Gwendolyn Shackleford to Macaulay, 24 June 1936, UISC, HMP, Box 91, File 4.

Shackleford and the other women in the Society were undeterred. In a September 1936 letter to Macaulay, Shackleford informed him of a meeting to be held at the Glover Memorial Hall on September 19 in support of the Save Abyssinia Fund. The invitation was a typed form letter, but in a personalized, hand-written section at the bottom of the page, Shackleford encouraged Macaulay to attend and noted that she would be “enrolling members for the Association (London).”⁹² It is unclear what “Association” she was referring to, likely the Abyssinia Association, but it may also have been the West African Students Union (WASU) or the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP). The leader of WASU, Ladipo Solanke, was another correspondent of Macaulay, and he helped organize protests in London against the invasion of Ethiopia.⁹³ Regardless of which “Association” Shackleford was referring to, however, it is significant that this parenthetical reference to London is the only reference to the city in her correspondence with Macaulay. The war in Ethiopia and the meetings and fundraising activities taking place in Lagos were at the centre of Shackleford and Macaulay’s attention. London entered their discourse only because there were other black-centred associations in London that were involved in the protests against Italy. For Shackleford and Macaulay, the protests in Lagos were a nexus between Jamaica, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. London, on the other hand, was in the parenthetical periphery.

Shackleford and Macaulay reinforced this extra-imperial link throughout their correspondence. For example, in a May 1936 letter, Shackleford thanked Macaulay for his

⁹² Gwendolyn Shackleford to Macaulay, 17 September 1936, UISC, HMP, Box 91, File 3.

⁹³ There were many connections between the African-West Indian networks in Lagos and the black internationalist groups in London. Hezekiah Oladipo Davies, one of L. J. Veitch’s former students and a co-founder of the Nigerian Youth Movement, was the president of WASU in 1935 and 1936. L. J. Veitch, meanwhile, was a member of the LCP, and the March 1936 edition of the LCP newsletter, *The Keys*, published an article by C. L. R. James titled “Abyssinia and the Imperialists.” Additionally, Peter Thomas’ daughter, Stella Thomas, was a member of both WASU and the LCP. For more on these connections, see Chapter 8. See also Matera, *Black London*, 41.

“support” for her fundraising efforts, and noted that without him, her “Committee” “should have failed.” To express her appreciation, Shackelford promised to come by his house with “a few of the members of our Committee to say ‘*Adupe eku gbogbo ajó.*’”⁹⁴ Then, at the end of the letter, Shackelford declared: “Men like you make us negroes feel this world is fit to live in. Carry on!”⁹⁵

The short letter is significant for several reasons. First of all, Shackelford’s claim that she, Macaulay, and others—whether in Jamaica, Nigeria, or Ethiopia—were all “negroes,” challenged the prevailing stereotypes that many Caribbean people believed about African inferiority. As Frantz Fanon later wrote: “In every West Indian, before the war of 1939, there was not only the certainty of a superiority over the African, but the certainty of a fundamental difference. The African was a Negro and the West Indian a European... In 1939 no West Indian in the West Indies proclaimed himself to be a Negro, claimed to be a Negro.”⁹⁶ In direct contrast, Shackelford embraced the idea of being a “Negro” alongside Africans. Moreover, she claimed that it was Macaulay, an African, who led her to embrace this identity.

Secondly, Shackelford articulated this expression of black racial unity in the context of Yoruba, an African language—and Macaulay’s first, or at least one of his first languages. In other words, she was indicating that the languages of Africans were no less important to being a

⁹⁴ “Thank you for all your efforts.” My thanks to Philip Olayoku for this translation.

⁹⁵ Gwendolyn Shackelford to Macaulay, 10 May 1936, UISC, HMP, Box 91, File 4. Okonkwo cites this closing quote as from an “undated letter” as she seems not have found the first page, which is dated. The papers in the boxes of the Macaulay papers do not always correspond to the index.

⁹⁶ Fanon, “West Indians and Africans,” in *Toward the African Revolution* trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 20-21. This essay was originally published as “Antillais et Africains,” *Esprit* 223, no. 2 (February 1955): 261-269. The essay was reprinted posthumously in *Pour la révolution Africaine: écrits politiques* (Paris: Editions Maspero, 1964), and translated in *Toward the African Revolution*. “*Chez tous Antillais, avant la guerre de 1939, il n’y avait pas seulement la certitude d’une supériorité sur l’Africain, mais celle d’une différence fondamentale. L’Africain était un nègre et l’Antillais un Européen... En 1939, aucun Antillais aux Antilles ne se déclarait nègre, ne se réclamait nègre.*” Fanon, “Antillais et Africains,” 263-264.

“Negro” than English and French. It is unclear how well Shackleford knew Yoruba, though by 1936 she had already lived in Lagos for four years. Moreover, this was not the only time she used Yoruba in her letters to Macaulay. In a July 1942 letter to Macaulay, she thanked him for a gift and then proudly remarked: “I shall always be able to say: ‘These were given to me by that grand old man Mr. Herbert Samuel Heelas Macaulay.’ *Okunrin gan, okunrin metta*. How generous and thoughtful of you. A thousand thanks!”⁹⁷ Shackleford thus recognized the importance of African languages and deliberately included Yoruba in her letters, whether simply to say thank you or to express an international “negro” identity. The 1936 letter, however, is especially significant because Shackleford was using Yoruba in the midst of the campaign against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. In doing so, she acknowledged that her role in Lagos was only part of the larger international protests against Italy—protests leveraged not just in English, but also in Yoruba, Twi, Krio, Wolof, and so on. Shackleford was thus reconfiguring the relationships between Africa and the Caribbean within the context of an African language and moving beyond the borders of an imperial language.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, Shackleford declared that men like Macaulay made her feel that “this world” was “fit to live in.” This statement highlights Shackleford’s new ideas about geography. She had grown up in Jamaica as a subject of the British Empire, a “world” centred in London and a world in which everything was done to make “Negroes” feel as though they did not belong, or at most, that they were “fit” only for the lowest ranks of society. In Lagos, however, Shackleford began to develop new ideas about her world. Instead of trying to fit in to the world circumscribed by the British Empire, she found a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose in a world that lay outside imperial boundaries. The “world” in which Shackleford

⁹⁷ Gwendolyn Shackleford to Macaulay, 3 July 1942, UIISC, HMP, Box 91, File 3. “*Okunrin gan, okunrin metta*” means “A solid man, a strong man.” My thanks to Philip Olayoku for this translation.

felt she was “fit to live in” was a world that transcended the British Empire, a world founded on links like those between Shackelford and Macaulay and the people of Ethiopia. Shackelford’s geography was coterminous not with the British Empire but rather with the “men of [her] race.” By prompting Macaulay to “Carry on!,” Shackelford was evidently looking forward eagerly to the implementation of such a geography, with all of its corollaries. In short, Shackelford’s interactions with Macaulay—and others in Lagos—reveal that while imperial channels often facilitated African-West Indian networks, Africans and West Indians used these networks to forge connections that lay beyond the boundaries of imperial geographies.

HENRI JEAN-LOUIS AND “THE REPUBLIC OF AFRICA”

Like other Caribbean administrators, Henri Jean-Louis of Guadeloupe travelled frequently between the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. These migrations had a major impact on his thinking, as did his interactions with a range of Africans and other Antilleans. Jean-Louis, born in Sainte-Anne, Guadeloupe, in December 1874, studied law in Paris and then worked as a lawyer and judge back in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Then, in 1923, the Minister of Colonies appointed Jean-Louis as a colonial judge in Brazzaville.⁹⁸ By the 1940s and 1950s, however, Jean-Louis was calling for decolonization and independence. His writings document the development of these views over the course of several decades, and so his case provides a particularly illuminating example of how Caribbean administrators began to envision alternatives to the geography of empire.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ General biographical information on Jean-Louis comes from Charles W. Scheel, “Jean-Louis Baghio’o père et fils: Deux écrivains antillais du vingtième siècle entre quatre continents,” *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 537, no. 1 (2016): 63-77. See also http://ile-en-ile.org/baghio_henri_jean-louis/

⁹⁹ Charles W. Scheel very generously allowed me access to the Fonds Jean-Louis in Martinique. Scheel, a scholar of Caribbean literature at the Université des Antilles in Martinique, has long studied the writing of Henri Jean-Louis’ son, Victor Jean-Louis. In 2012, Scheel and Victor’s daughter, Wyck Jean-Louis, were looking for some of Victor’s

Not long after arriving in Brazzaville in 1923, Jean-Louis started to quietly denounce the abuses of French colonizers while also beginning to rethink the political organization of Central Africa. For example, in a manuscript from February 1924 on “The Political Organization of Africa,” Jean-Louis explained that Africans were “reduced to the state of serfs” and then outlined his ideas for a new “*politique indigene*.”¹⁰⁰ He began the exposition with a straightforward question: “How can we organize an *Afrique délivré*?” His proposed solution was to return to the political structures that were in place “before the conquest.” Among these, according to Jean-Louis, were “the King of Gabon, the King of BaKongo, the King of the Batekes, the Sultan of Oubangui, the Sultan of Chad, the Sultan of Cameroun, and the King of Katanga.” Above these kings would be an “Emperor, the leader of the Congo Empire.” This “Emperor of Congo” would also be the leader of a “confederation” called “The United States of Africa,” made up of the Congo Empire and the three “independent states” of Ethiopia, Egypt, and Liberia. With such a political system in place, Jean-Louis argued, the population of Central Africa would “double in 30 years” and “The African Republic” would become “the world’s top power.”¹⁰¹ In the “epilogue,” Jean-Louis declared himself to be “a supporter of Colonization” but warned that France had a responsibility to “develop the natural riches of its colonies,” “maintain peace among the turbulent populations,” and “cultivate their primitive civilization.” “The Union of France and the black Race,” Jean-Louis continued, could be “legitimate and durable,” but had to start from “justice and humanity.” In closing, he stated: “I do not despair the spirit of justice or

papers in the basement storage unit of her Paris apartment. Among their findings was a suitcase containing more than 2,500 pages of the writings of her grandfather, Henri Jean-Louis. Since then, Wyck Jean-Louis has donated the papers of her grandfather to the Archives Départementales de la Martinique.

¹⁰⁰ Henri Jean-Louis Notebook, October 1924, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 3.

¹⁰¹ Marcus Garvey’s idea of creating a “Black Empire” evidently influenced Jean-Louis. Indeed, in an October 1924 journal entry, Jean-Louis briefly mentioned meeting a man named “Leonard” and “discussing Marcus Garvey.” Henri Jean-Louis Notebook, October 1924, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 2.

the philanthropic feelings of the French people. Yet it is time...for the government to show these in AEF.” He signed his manuscript as “Jean d’Afrique.”

Jean-Louis’ criticisms of the French administration were significant and anticipated the thinking of many African intellectuals in the postwar period, but his idea to create a Congo Empire was a dream for the future; in the mid-1920s he was still a “supporter” of the French occupation in Central Africa. Nevertheless, Jean-Louis’ ideas about empire and colonialism still caught the attention of colonial authorities in Brazzaville. In May 1925, while Jean-Louis was on leave in France, the Minister of Colonies transferred him to a judicial position in Madagascar. Jean-Louis refused to go, however, and then resigned from the colonial service.

Newly unemployed, Jean-Louis joined the Paris-based *Comité de la défense de la race nègre* (CDRN), and the organization even named him the honorary president.¹⁰² In January 1926, Jean-Louis returned to Central Africa and started working as a lawyer on behalf of Africans in Brazzaville, Pointe Noire, and Port-Gentil.¹⁰³ He also continued to denounce the French administration: in a February 1926 journal entry, he listed the “15 Harmful Effects of European Civilization in Africa,” and included capitalism, slavery, forced labor, prostitution, and famine.¹⁰⁴ The French administration in Brazzaville was hardly enthusiastic about Jean-Louis’ continued presence in Central Africa, and in November 1926, the Governor General of AEF wrote to the Minister of Colonies describing Jean-Louis as an “*Antillais de couleur*” and a “notorious communist” lawyer.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² “Note sur la Propagande Révolutionnaire Intéressant les Pays d’Outre-Mer,” ANOM, AEF/GGAEF/5D/65. I discuss Jean-Louis’ connections in Paris in greater detail in Chapter 8.

¹⁰³ ANOM, Henri Jean-Louis Personnel File, EE/ii/1427.

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Louis Notebook, February 1926, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 2.

¹⁰⁵ Governor General of AEF to Minister of Colonies, 20 November 1926, ANOM, SLOTFOM IX/2.

For the next few years, Jean-Louis continued to work as a lawyer in Central Africa but he also began to travel more widely, building up a network of Africans and Antilleans that spread from Brazzaville to Dakar to Paris. Of Jean-Louis' many connections with Africans and Antilleans during this period, however, perhaps most significant was his connection with Richard Manga Bell of Douala. Jean-Louis first met Manga Bell in Cameroon during his initial trip to Brazzaville in 1923, but in 1929 he became Manga Bell's lawyer.¹⁰⁶ Over the next two years, Jean-Louis helped Manga Bell submit two petitions to the League of Nations in Geneva on behalf of a group of chiefs in Douala. The petitions, which were among other petitions written by the Douala chiefs, demanded the return of land that Germany had expropriated and then France had taken over after World War I. The petitions also asked the League to remove France from its "mandate" in Cameroon. In a letter to a group of Douala leaders, Jean-Louis explained that he would promote their cause by raising their concerns in the French press and with the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* and by sending pamphlets to each French deputy. Jean-Louis also explained that he could rely on his connections with several Antillean politicians in Paris: Alcide Delmont, one of the deputies for Martinique, and Henri Lémery, the senator for Martinique.¹⁰⁷

Ultimately, the campaign was not successful, but Jean-Louis' work on behalf of Manga Bell and the Douala chiefs further illustrates his ability to create networks between Africans and Antilleans. His commitment to combatting colonial injustices also demonstrates his eagerness to defend Africans against European governments, regardless of national or even imperial boundaries. Jean-Louis returned to Guadeloupe in 1933, where he spent the majority of his

¹⁰⁶ Jean-Louis, *Visions of Africa*, 8-9.

¹⁰⁷ Henri Jean-Louis to Chiefs of Douala, 1 December 1929, ANOM, TGO//31; Commissaire de la République in Cameroon to Minister of Colonies, 17 March 1930, ANOM, TGO//31; Commissaire de la République in Cameroon to Minister of Colonies, 22 May 1930, ANOM, TGO//31; Minister of Colonies to Commissaire de la République in Cameroon, 23 June 1930, ANOM, TGO//31. See also Hélénon, *French Caribbeans in Africa*, 103.

remaining years. Nevertheless, his role in creating African-Antillean networks in Africa and Europe laid the groundwork for the rest of his political life and sowed the seeds for his ideas about geography and decolonization.

Once back in the Caribbean, Jean-Louis began to write more frequently, especially poems. The poems were rarely more than one or two pages long, and they used basic ABAB rhyming patterns. Yet he was a prolific poet. From 1933 until his death in 1958, he usually wrote between 30 and 40 poems per year, and sometimes many more. (In 1957, for instance, he wrote over 100 despite being nearly blind from cataracts.) Almost none of the poems were ever published, but it is in these seemingly simplistic writings that Jean-Louis most clearly articulated his ideas. He wrote on a range of subjects, including assimilation, empire, Pan-Africanism, slavery, and decolonization. In this section, I will analyze some of the more significant poems chronologically to show how the ideas he was forming in the 1920s and 1930s evolved into a radical vision of anticolonial geography, a vision built around “The Republic of Africa.”

Jean-Louis was critical of French occupations in Africa as early as the 1920s, but he continued to support a France-centred political system. In several poems from 1935, he called for the immediate “assimilation” of Antilleans and Africans into France.¹⁰⁸ 1935 was the 300th anniversary of the “*attachement*” of Martinique and Guadeloupe with France, but Jean-Louis was not blindly promoting assimilation into France with no understanding of what had happened during those 300 years. For Jean-Louis, this was assimilation into France on an equal basis, something that would make “all French people sons of the same mother” and put an end to the

¹⁰⁸ “Assimilation,” June 1935, and “Notre Assimilation,” June 1935, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 10.

“perverse regime” of colonial rule. In many ways, this was a precursor to Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor’s efforts for non-national sovereignty after World War II.¹⁰⁹

In 1936, Jean-Louis further developed his ideas about assimilation in an extended poem/open letter to Léon Blum, then the Prime Minister of France, head of the SFIO, and a supporter of the *Ligue des Droits de l’Homme*.¹¹⁰ In the letter, Jean-Louis posed a critical question: “Given the financial situation of the Métropole, is she truly capable of attending to the economic and social development of her colonial subjects?”¹¹¹ Jean-Louis evidently understood the direction France and its empire were headed, and he answered his own question rather plainly: “Doubt is permitted.”¹¹² His proposed solution was for France to transform its empire into an allied confederation by making its colonies into “Dominions,” much like Canada, New Zealand, and Australia in relation to Britain. Jean-Louis argued that this would create a “genuine society of free people, people conscious of their rights as well as their obligations” instead of a “vague and powerless *société des nations* at the heart of which the strong devour the weak.”¹¹³ He also claimed that such a re-organization would help prevent war in Europe.

The following year, 1937, Jean-Louis moved to Trinidad, and his criticisms of colonialism became more pointed. In fact, his arrival in Trinidad coincided with Tubal Uriah Butler’s famous strike on the oilfields in June and July 1937. The strike—and its aftermath—had

¹⁰⁹ On this topic, see Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*.

¹¹⁰ “Le Monde et les Colonies, Lettre ouverte à Monsieur Léon Blum,” ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 17.

¹¹¹ “*La situation financière de la Métropole la rend-elle capable de suffir vraiment au développement économique et social de ses sujets coloniaux?...le doute est permis.*”

¹¹² This is the core argument of Frederick Cooper’s work on the end of the French empire in the 1950s and 1960s. See Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*; Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*; Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*.

¹¹³ “*Nous aurions ainsi une véritable société de peuples libres et conscients de leurs droits, autant que de leurs devoirs, et non plus une vague et impuissante société des nations au sein de laquelle les forts dévorent les faibles.*”

a significant influence on Jean-Louis' ideas about empire.¹¹⁴ It was also at this time that he met Marcus Garvey, though apart from one letter to Jean-Louis from Garvey, there is almost no trace of their interactions.¹¹⁵ Yet Garvey's ideas, already important to Jean-Louis, took on further significance. In a draft letter to Garvey from 1937, he scrawled a quick poem: "God save our Saviour / Long live our saviour! / God Save Garvey! / Send him victorious / Happy and glorious / Long to reign over us / God save Garvey!"¹¹⁶ Jean-Louis' subversion of the British national anthem into a pro-Garvey hymn was a sign of things to come—drawing on the forms of empire but radically reshaping the content.

In another Trinidad poem, "Epistle to the European People," Jean-Louis was more direct, even as he held on to his belief in a France-centred federation. In presenting the "facts of colonization," he explained that "Christopher Columbus bloodied the world / and transformed America into a vile mass grave."¹¹⁷ He also gave a warning to the "civilized" people of Europe: "You will die tomorrow / In the flame and the fire that you will light with your own hands... Your homes will be broken / Your women, your children, all will be in flames / If you do not follow what the heart demands: / Transform subjects into brother citizens / Their lands into States with common walls / Yes, every colony into a single Republic."¹¹⁸ Jean-Louis'

¹¹⁴ For more on the 1937 strike and riots, see Roy Darrow Thomas ed., *The Trinidad Labour Riots of 1937: Perspectives 50 Years Later* (St. Augustine, Extra-Mural Studies Unit: University of the West Indies Press, 1987).

¹¹⁵ Scheel, "Jean-Louis Baghio'o père et fils," 70.

¹¹⁶ "Discours à Marcus Garvey," 1937, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 20.

¹¹⁷ "*Christophe Colomb ensanglante le monde / Transformant l'Amérique en un charnier immonde.*" "Epistle to the European People: Life or Death," September 1938, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 23.

¹¹⁸ "*Vous mourrez des demain / Dans la flamme et le feu qu'allumeront vos mains / ... Vous vos foyer brisés / Vos femmes, vos enfants, tout ne sera que flammes / Si vous ne décidez ce que le cœur reclame: / Transformer des sujets en frères citoyens, / Leurs pays en Etats avec murs mitoyens / Oui, chaque colonie en simple République.*"

reconceptualization of the French empire into a “single Republic” was a powerful geographical argument, one that struck at the core of the imperial world-view.

The following year, Jean-Louis wrote another wide-ranging poem, titled “Humanity.”¹¹⁹ In it, he inverted the *mission civilisatrice* by writing that the “flame” of civilization actually came from Africa and that Africans had “changed white savages into true civilized people.” He also castigated the history of European colonialism: “Your three centuries of history uniting the *patrie* are three hundred years of murder and piracy.”¹²⁰ Jean-Louis aimed the poem especially at Germany, and he continued to dovetail his criticisms of colonialism with a devotion to France, yet the influence of Marcus Garvey began to weaken that bond. At the end of the poem, Jean-Louis outlined what would happen if Germany attempted to take control of French colonies: “The blacks of the world would lift a flag / Marking their independence and would not rest / They would come from the Caribbean and America / To found a *patrie* in their Africa... And I would proclaim: Africa for the Africans!”¹²¹

During World War II, Jean-Louis returned to Martinique and Guadeloupe and his Pan-Africanist ideas remained similarly bracketed within the confines of a French federation. For example, in his April 1940 poem, “Chants de Guerre,” he called for all “disdained Africans” to “unite under the black, green, and red flag of their independence” but also praised France for “declaring all men equal” and expressed his hope that all would be “treated alike” in France.¹²² Jean-Louis was invoking Garvey’s Pan-Africanist flag, but within a French context. Jean-Louis

¹¹⁹ “Humanity,” 1 December 1938, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 22.

¹²⁰ “*Vos trois siècles d’histoire unifiant la patrie, / Sont trois cents ans de meurtre et de piraterie.*”

¹²¹ “*Les Noirs du Monde entier lèveraient le drapeau / De leur Indépendance et sans prendre repos / Ils courraient tous des Antilles, de l’Amérique / Fonder une patrie en leur terre d’Afrique / ... Je proclame à mon tour: l’Afrique aux Africains!*”

¹²² “Chants de Guerre,” 10 April 1940, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 25.

made this point even clearer in his August 1944 poem, “La Victoire de la France.”¹²³ He dedicated the poem to “the memory of Governor General Félix Eboué” and presented a re-imagined version of the allied victory. Jean-Louis described African soldiers marching north from Chad across the Sahara desert to Tunisia, where they defeated Rommel, and then continuing across Europe to liberate France, before finally arriving in Paris and marching through the Arc de Triomphe. Throughout, Jean-Louis emphasized the role of the “valiant soldiers of Chad” in “saving France from the teeth of the sharks.”¹²⁴ The poem highlighted the crucial role of African soldiers in preserving the pre-war geography of Europe, and called for France to recognize their efforts. Jean-Louis thus still understood black progress within the contours of France, but he also saw the need for correctives to those contours. Near the end of the war, the French removed West African troops from the front for political reasons, and it is no coincidence that Jean-Louis wrote this poem on August 26, 1944, a day after the German surrender and the same day of the victory march along the Champs Elysées in Paris that explicitly excluded black soldiers.¹²⁵

As the war drew to a close, Jean-Louis’ patriotism quickly wore off. In November 1944, for instance, he described how Columbus had “taken the whole globe as his colony” and “covered it with death.” Columbus, Jean-Louis continued, had initiated a colonialism that “decimated the Red, enslaved the African, and unleashed the White towards his final ruin, transformed from Christians into sharks.” Thanks to Columbus, the world was now a “volcano of

¹²³ “La Victoire de la France,” 26 August 1944, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 29.

¹²⁴ At the end of the poem, Jean-Louis declared that Eboué deserved a place in the Panthéon in Paris. Eboué had died five months earlier in Cairo, but in 1949, Eboué actually did end up in the Panthéon.

¹²⁵ For more on this *blanchissement* or “whitening,” see Mann, *Native Sons*, 19-20.

hell.”¹²⁶ In other words, what Columbus started had destroyed Amerindians, Africans, and Europeans alike. By the end of 1944, Jean-Louis had come to realize that the spread of “civilization,” whether by the Germans, French, British, or anyone else, was always accompanied by the spread of barbarism.¹²⁷

Three years later, Jean-Louis was demanding immediate independence for all colonies. In a March 1947 poem, he declared: “Independence will put an end to the bloody and ruinous feast of the falcons of Europe.”¹²⁸ Jean-Louis had understood the connections between empire, “civilization,” and barbarism for more than a decade, but he now articulated how these forces would affect the French Empire: “It is the law of history in all times and places / The worn out Metropole begins to disintegrate / And so the colony takes its independence.”¹²⁹

At the same time, Jean-Louis began looking for new connections to replace the link between the Antilles and France. In his October 1947 poem, “Contre l’Assimilation,” he rejected “assimilation” into France and instead advocated for a Caribbean confederation:

¹²⁶ “Le Génie de Colomb,” 4 November 1944, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 31. Columbus “[a] prit le globe entier comme sa colonie / Pour le couvrir de morts, par le feu, par le fer / Transformant le vieux monde en volcan de l’enfer... / Qui supprima le Rouge, enchaîna l’Africain / Et, déchaînant le Blanc vers sa ruine finale, / A métamorphosé des chrétiens en requins.”

¹²⁷ German philosopher Walter Benjamin made a similar declaration a few years earlier: “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.” Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 256. Several years later, Aimé Césaire made a nearly identical claim, describing colonization as “a campaign to civilize barbarism, from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civilization.” Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 40.

¹²⁸ “Speech à Truman,” 17 March 1947, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 34. “L’Indépendance en tout mettra fin au festin / Sanglant et ruineux des gerfauts de l’Europe.”

¹²⁹ “Décadence et Renaissance,” 3 December 1947, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 35. “C’est la loi de l’histoire en tous temps et pays / La Métropole usée arrive au décadence / La colonie alors prend son indépendance!”

No Antillean wants an assimilation / That deprives them of the right to their own Republic / Where they control their own public affairs. / Our future is in a Confederation / Of the Islands of America or the *Union Caraïbe*.¹³⁰

Jean-Louis' geography of decolonization was thus tied into the idea of a Caribbean federation, not atomized independence. He drew on the geographical structure of empires, but adjusted their political and social inequalities. In January 1949's appropriately titled "L'Union Antillaise," Jean-Louis took an imagined journey from Trinidad up to St. Kitts and described it as "*notre archipel*."¹³¹ Jean-Louis even began repurposing the call of "Africa for the Africans" for the Caribbean by using the phrase "*Les Antilles aux Antillais*."¹³² Indeed, Garveyism imbued his ideas about a Caribbean confederation. In "Union Nationale des Isles d'Amérique," an August 1949 poem, Jean-Louis stated: "I rhyme to the love of my race, to the awakening / Of the people of colour who have been dormant too long."¹³³ This proposed "Union" even bore the same initials as Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.¹³⁴

Jean-Louis' calls for a "*Union Caraïbe*" were a striking precedent to the efforts of West Indian politicians in the 1950s. Even more striking, however, was Jean-Louis' suggestion that the capital of this *Union* be named "Delgrès-ville," the "*belle capitale*" where the "tree of federalism would flourish."¹³⁵ Louis Delgrès was the leader of the resistance against re-enslavement in Guadeloupe at the end of the eighteenth century, and Jean-Louis drew direct links between re-

¹³⁰ "Contre l'Assimilation," 18 October 1947, ADM, FJL, Box 3, Folder B. *Nul Antillais ne veut d'une assimilation / Qui le prive du droit d'avoir sa République / Où lui-même gère ses affaires publiques. / Notre avenir est dans la Confédération / Des Isles d'Amérique ou l'Union Caraïbe.*

¹³¹ "L'Union Antillaise," 18 January 1949, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 41.

¹³² "Evangile de Baghio'oh," 5 July 1947, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 34; "Speech a Truman," 17 March 1947, Box 1, Folder 34.

¹³³ "Union Nationale des Isles d'Amérique," 6 August 1949, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 41.

¹³⁴ Scheel, "Jean-Louis Baghio'o père et fils," 70.

¹³⁵ "Delgrès-ville, capitale des Antilles," 16 May 1948," ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 39.

enslavement and colonialism. Jean-Louis also claimed a personal link to the legacy of Delgrès, noting in a number of poems from the mid-1940s that his great-uncle, “Jean-Louis dit Baghio’o,” fought to defend the abolition of slavery in 1794 in Sainte-Anne, Guadeloupe and was hanged by the French.¹³⁶ Jean-Louis claimed that the mission handed down to him by his ancestor was to “save liberty from the hands of the White Masters and from the feet of the Black Lackeys.”¹³⁷

Curiously, there is no mention of Aimé Césaire in any of Jean-Louis’ writings, but as an intellectual who moved between Guadeloupe and Martinique in the 1940s, Césaire would have been unavoidable. Thus it is likely that Jean-Louis’ calls for independence, his rejection of assimilation, and his condemnation of “Black Lackeys” were all aimed at Césaire and others who advocated for departmentalization after the war. Jean-Louis furthered these arguments in several other poems. In “Espérance,” a poem from one of his rare published collections, 1949’s *Trophées d’Or*, Jean-Louis made his position on assimilation and departmentalization clear. Writing to the “Angel of Hope,” he stated:

Come deliver the country, our families / From assimilation / Disgrace of the nation / Remove this lie / Dreadful like a fantasy / Change colonization to Liberation... / Come save our race / that still keeps the trace / of being a herd / because of its skin.¹³⁸

Similarly, in his September 1950 poem, “Pensées d’Outre-Mer,” Jean-Louis simply stated: “I prefer a macaque to the Assimilated Blacks.”¹³⁹ Jean-Louis’ rejection of France and French

¹³⁶ “Soleil d’Octobre,” 1 October 1944, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 29; “Le testament du Poète de la plage,” 1946, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 37; “Tu reverras notre île,” 16 January 1947, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 34; “Delgrès-ville, capitale des Antilles,” 16 May 1948,” ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 39.

¹³⁷ “Soleil d’Octobre,” 1 October 1944, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 29. “*Sauvez la liberté / Des mains des Maîtres Blancs, des pieds des valets Noirs.*”

¹³⁸ Jean-Louis Jeune dit Baghio’oh, “Espérance,” *Trophées d’Or* (Martinique, 1949), ADM, FJL, Box 3, Folder B. “*Viens délivrer, ma fille, le pays, nos familles / De l’Assimilation / Honte de la Nation / Supprime ce mensonge / Désolant comme un songe / Change en Libération la Colonisation... / Viens sauver notre race / Qui garde encore la trace / d’avoir été troupeau / A cause de sa peau.*”

¹³⁹ “Pensées d’Outre-Mer,” 3 September 1950, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 43.

assimilation was also symbolized by his use of the Amerindian names for Martinique and Guadeloupe: Madinina and Karukera.¹⁴⁰

In the early 1950s, Jean-Louis continued to travel around the Caribbean, as well as to and from France, but his writing began looking more frequently to Africa and took on a more overtly Pan-Africanist tone. He also drew on themes of immortality and reincarnation to cut across time and space between the Caribbean and Africa. Indeed, in a number of poems from the late 1940s and early 1950s, Jean-Louis described himself as the direct descendant—and sometimes the reincarnation—of a man named Mohammed Baghio’o, who Jean-Louis claimed was a “Pasha Cheikh” of Timbuktu in the fifteenth century. In an “autobiographical poem” from 1948, Jean-Louis outlined his lineage: “From the Pasha Cheikh of Timbuktu, Soudan / Mohammed Baghio’oh, two descendants / Were thrown to Sainte-Anne in slavery. / One, named Jean-Louis, broke his savage yoke / And, as a runaway slave, demanded the law / From the cross he was hanged by *nos gaulois*.”¹⁴¹ Jean-Louis thus linked the story of Mohammed Baghio’oh to the story of his great-uncle, Jean-Louis dit Baghio’oh of Sainte-Anne, who fought against slavery in Guadeloupe in 1794. In doing so, Jean-Louis connected the histories of slavery in Africa and the Caribbean, as well as their enduring legacies.

Jean-Louis furthered these ideas in a March 1950 poem, “De la Métempsyose.” In it, he claimed that “by the laws of metempsychosis,” he was “St. John, Socrates; and after Jean de la Croix, / And Mohamed Baghio, then Voltaire.”¹⁴² Jean-Louis also made connections between his

¹⁴⁰ For example, a September 1948 poem called “Ma Karukéra,” 7 September 1948, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 39.

¹⁴¹ “Le testament du Poète de la Plage,” 14 July 1948, ADM, FJL, Box 1, Folder 33. “*Du pacha cheick de Tomboctou, Soudan / Mohamed Baghio’oh les deux descendants, / Sont jetés à Sainte-Anne en esclavage. / L’un nommé Jean-Louis brise un joug sauvage / Préférence les bois demanda la loi / A la croix fut pendu par nos gaulois.*”

¹⁴² “De la Métempsyose,” 29 March 1950, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 47.

ancestor and his present day political concerns. In an October 1950 poem called “Humanité,” he explained that the “Antillean Republic” would one day sing “its own Marseillaise,” composed by “the Guadeloupean, Mohamed Baguioh, the legitimate heir of the Cheik of the Tidganiyas.”¹⁴³ Jean-Louis, who had in fact already written a national anthem for his proposed Caribbean federation, “*L’Antillaise*,” thus saw himself as the reincarnation of Mohammed Baghio’o, a Muslim leader of the inviolable city of Timbuktu, and also as the descendant of Jean-Louis Baghio’oh, who fought against re-enslavement in Guadeloupe in the late-eighteenth century. Jean-Louis’ geography of decolonization was informed by imagined journeys across time and space, but he also continued to ground these wide-ranging visions in concrete realities. For instance, in an uncharacteristically long poem from 1954 (60 stanzas), he declared that colonialism was a “disease” and that an Antillean Confederation would “put an end to European domination in the Caribbean sea.”¹⁴⁴ In the same poem, Jean-Louis demanded independence in Indochina and—foreshadowing the trajectory of his thinking—called for “*Afrique du Nord*” and “*Afrique Noire*” to unite and form a new independent “state.”

By the mid-1950s, Jean-Louis focused increasingly on African independence. This focus, however, remained tied to his imagined connections with Mohammed Baghio’oh. Jean-Louis claimed that Baghio’oh had tried to unify “Arab and Black Africa” and pledged to fulfill the efforts of his ancestor. In his August 1956 poem, “*La Confédération Arabo-Africaine*,” Jean-Louis stated: “With my soul and my spirit, I will govern Africa... under the name of Sultan of

¹⁴³ “Humanité,” October 1950, ADM, FJL, Box 3, Folder I. “*Un jour, la République appelée Antillaise / Pourra publiquement chanter sa Marseillaise: / L’Antillaise, chant National Caribéen / Que jadis composa le Guadeloupéen / Dit Mohamed Baguioh, l’héritier légitime / Du cheik des Tidganiyas.*”

¹⁴⁴ “Les Héros de la Paix,” 29 July, 1954, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 45.

the Black United States.”¹⁴⁵ In other 1956 poems he gave further details about his plans. In “Lâchons l’Amérique,” for instance, he called for all African-descended peoples to return to Africa: “Give up America, the land of slavery, and take back our Africa.”¹⁴⁶ And in “L’Avocat d’Afrique,” he reprised his role as a lawyer working on behalf of Africans: “I am the Defender of the poor and weak / Against a Colonialism with a great appetite / That is why I will be returning to my country, Africa / To protect it against Europe and America.”¹⁴⁷

Jean-Louis’ imagined plans to lead the liberation and unification of the African continent continued into 1957. In February’s “Carthage a Vaincu Rome,” he portrayed himself as a modern Hannibal born in the Caribbean who would defeat the new Rome in Africa and found “an African Empire.” Later in the poem, he likened himself to Christopher Columbus, explaining that by an “imagined journey,” he would “discover in Africa its Civilization and the end of the colonizers.”¹⁴⁸ In a similar poem, “Espérance,” he stated: “I will return to Africa, to my black territory / To carve on its ancient soil a page of History... / I will come last, me, Mohamed Baghio’o / To unify our Africa into a Republic!”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ “La Confédération Arabo-Africaine,” 6 August 1956, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 48. “*Par l’âme et par l’esprit, je gouverne l’Afrique...sous le nom de Sultan des Etats-Unis noirs.*”

¹⁴⁶ “Lâchons l’Amérique,” 8 September 1956, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 48. “*Lâchons tous l’Amérique, / La terre d’esclavage, et reprenons notre Afrique.*”

¹⁴⁷ “L’Avocat d’Afrique,” November 1956, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 58. “*Je suis le Défenseur du pauvre et du petit / Contre un Colonialisme à très gros appétit / C’est pourquoi je retourne en mon pays, l’Afrique / Le protège contre l’Europe et l’Amérique.*”

¹⁴⁸ “Carthage a Vaincu Rome,” 20 February 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 55. “*Poète, je ressemble à Christophe Colombe, / Le génial génie qui découvrit l’Amérique, / Voyageur de l’esprit, je découvre en Afrique / Sa civilisation et la fin des colons.*”

¹⁴⁹ “Espérance,” 4 June 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 54. “*Je retourne en Afrique, en mon noir territoire / Graver sur son vieux sol un page d’Histoire ... / Je viens le dernier, moi, Mohamed Bagio’oh, / Unifier notre Afrique en un République.*”

In the last year of his life, Jean-Louis's poetic output became even more radical and voluminous, and ever more centred on African independence and unification. He compared himself to Lenin returning to Russia in 1917 to help lead the Bolshevik Revolution¹⁵⁰; he appointed himself "Sultan Mohammed Baghio'oh"¹⁵¹ and the "*Sultan de l'Afrique Noire et Arabe*"¹⁵²; he predicted that the "Black Continent would become a Republic / The Great United States of the new Africa" and that this would "end all exploitation of race and colour"¹⁵³; he reiterated his "dream of forming an Empire in Africa"¹⁵⁴; and he claimed that "the Arab and the Black...with three hundred million hearts" would "form the 3rd Empire of the World."¹⁵⁵ Jean-Louis' continued adherence to a Garvey-esque "Black Empire" in Africa was never more explicit. He credited Garvey for "posing the question"¹⁵⁶ and declared that he would lead a new "Confédération Africo-Musulman" under a "black, green, and red flag."¹⁵⁷ He also called for all the "children" of Africa to return to the continent and unify with Arabs into a "Republic" against the European "sharks."¹⁵⁸

Jean-Louis' radical ideas about leading an African Republic were surpassed only by the final development in his thinking, one that looked toward an even broader goal than the

¹⁵⁰ "Espérance," 4 June 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 54.

¹⁵¹ "Le Drapeau de le C. A. M.," 7 March 1958, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 56.

¹⁵² "Jean Mohammed Bagio'oh, Le S. A. N. A. (Sultan de l'Afrique Noire et Arabe)," 9 June, 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 54.

¹⁵³ "Le Chant d'un Guadeloupéen," 16 July 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 51.

¹⁵⁴ "L'Afrique aux Africains," 5 October 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 55.

¹⁵⁵ "Seconde lettre au President Pinay," 15 October 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 55.

¹⁵⁶ "Seconde lettre au President Pinay," 15 October 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 55.

¹⁵⁷ "Le Drapeau de le C. A. M.," 7 March 1958, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 56.

¹⁵⁸ "L'Afrique aux Africains: Hymne National de la République de l'Afrique Noir," 15 May 1958, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 58.

unification of Africa: an international socialist confederation. In June 1957's "Paix et Fraternité," Jean-Louis expanded on his call for a "*Confédération Africo-Musulman*." He proposed that this union join with "its brothers" in China, Russia, and India to form the "*Union des Nations Socialistes*."¹⁵⁹ In a similar poem written a week later, Jean-Louis claimed that a "*Union Républicaine, Humaine, et Socialiste*" between China, Russia, Africa, and India offered an alternative to the war mongering of France and England. He also cited the examples of the French war in Algeria and the British at Suez.¹⁶⁰ And in a July 1957 poem titled "The Union of Socialist Nations," he declared that such a confederation would stand up against the "capitalist bloc, the oppressors of workers and Liberty" and would bring "peace and fraternity" to the world.¹⁶¹ It seems likely that the 1955 Bandung Conference and Ghana's independence in 1957 influenced Jean-Louis' idea of a non-aligned "confederation," and he held onto this dream until his death. Indeed, he emphasized these same ideas in one of the last poems he wrote, "La Revanche de Carthage sur Rome," written at the hospital of Saint-Claude in Guadeloupe on July 21, 1958.¹⁶² In it, Jean-Louis again expressed his admiration for Hannibal's defeat of Rome at the Battle of Cannae and called for the formation of an "African Empire." He also advocated for the creation of a "Grand Empire Uni Socialiste Oriental" between India, China, Africa, and Russia:

The G. E. U. S. O. will govern the world / And will maintain peace in the vile countries / By targeting the prejudices of race and nation / That they call, alas! Civilization!

¹⁵⁹ "Paix et Fraternité," 2 June 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 54.

¹⁶⁰ "L'Excursion d'un Poète et Juriste Nègre en URSS," 9 June 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 54.

¹⁶¹ "L'Union des Nations Socialistes," 2 July 1957, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 51.

¹⁶² "La Revanche de Carthage sur Rome," 21 July 1958, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 58.

For Jean-Louis, the imperial legacies of European empires had only spread the “civilization of hatred and misery / Of Lords and serfs, of science and war.”¹⁶³ The “G. E. U. S. O.,” on the other hand, would promote “peace” in a divided world. Jean-Louis thus maintained his faith in large political structures, such as empires and confederations, but wanted to base them on humanity and socialism, not corruption, racism, exploitation, slavery, and violence. A little over a month later, Jean-Louis died at the Saint-Claude hospital.

Jean-Louis’ geographical reconceptualizations of the world were as radical and imaginative as those of any anticolonial thinker. As he travelled, his views on empire evolved continuously, from denouncing the treatment of Africans in Brazzaville to calling for independence in Africa and the Antilles; from promoting a Caribbean federation to suggesting the creation of an African Republic and an international socialist confederation. His experiences with migration and his interactions with people from around the world, both within and without imperial boundaries, led him to envision an alternative geography of decolonization, one inflected by empire but not circumscribed by empire. Jean-Louis’ life and ideas also provide important historical insights into the creation of regional federations in the 1950s and 1960s that challenged the authority of European-centered empires.

CONCLUSION

As Caribbean administrators travelled between the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe, they became accustomed to the geography of empire: metropolises and colonies, “centres” and “peripheries.” Yet as they moved along these imperial itineraries, they realized that they did not

¹⁶³ “*Le G. E. U. S. O. gouvernera le monde / Et maintiendra la paix dans ces Etats immondes / En proie aux préjugés de race et de nation / Qu’ils appellent, hélas! la Civilisation! / La Civilisation de Haine et de Misère, / De Seigneurs et de serfs, de science et de guerre.*”

belong within the British and French empires, that their European colleagues would never consider them to be “British” or “French.” Many Caribbean administrators thus sought to build links with each other, with Africans, and with prominent Caribbean politicians. Such networks, often fragile and unstable, were crucial not only for career advancement, but also for personal safety, health, and mutual aid in times of death or other crises. In creating these connections, Caribbean administrators oriented themselves away from London and Paris and towards emerging ideas about the bonds between the Caribbean and Africa.

These African-Caribbean networks were made possible by imperial channels, but were not beholden to the British and French empires. Rather, as the examples of Félix Eboué, Gwendolyn Shackleford, and Henri Jean-Louis reveal, Caribbean administrators drew on the configurations of empire in order to create alternatives. Out of these experiences came new ideas about race, nation, and belonging. Africans and Caribbean administrators adapted colonial ideas about a singular black “race” in a range of contexts and mobilized this essentialized “sameness” for their own ends. They imagined geographical networks—and even worlds—that transcended imperial boundaries and were grounded in the construction of transregional black solidarities. In the next (and final) chapter, I examine how the intellectual currents of this Caribbean-Africa nexus, forged in Africa, also circulated to the peripheries of London and Paris, where they influenced the nascent black internationalist groups of interwar Europe.

8

REFRAMING BLACK INTERNATIONALISM

There were also the [West Indian] civil servants working in Africa. Through them one saw a country of savages, of barbarians, of natives, of servants... The metropolitan civil servant, returning from Africa, has accustomed us to stereotypes: sorcerers, makers of fetishes, tom-toms, guilelessness, faithfulness, respect for the white man, backwardness. The trouble is that the West Indian speaks of Africa in exactly the same way.

FRANTZ FANON, 1955¹

In the preceding chapters, I have tried to reorient the metropolitan focus of scholarship on black internationalism and to show that similar interactions and exchanges occurred in Africa, whether in Dakar, Freetown, Koulouba, Sekondi, Ibadan, Douala, Brazzaville, or Bangui. Such interactions had a decidedly different texture than those that occurred in the capitals of Western Europe. They emerged from the violence of African colonies and challenged the peculiarities of colonial racism. They often included the ideas of non-elites and sometimes took place in African languages. They challenged colonial abuses but did not often call for the end of empires. Above all, the demographics were entirely different. Unlike in Paris, London, and New York City, Africans made up the vast majority of the populations. The “reframing” of the study of black internationalism thus requires not just a geographical shift, but also methodological and ideological shifts.

My overall focus remains Caribbean administrators in Africa, but in this chapter I will examine those who also spent time in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. My purpose here is not to retread the well-worn steps of scholars who have already painted detailed sketches of interwar

¹ Frantz Fanon, “Antillais et Africains,” 267.

“*Paris Noir*” and “Black London.”² Indeed, only a dozen or so Caribbean administrators spent significant time in Europe and most played only tangential roles in black internationalist groups. Nevertheless, scholars of black internationalism often omit these individuals or sever their experiences in Africa from their involvements in Europe.³ These omissions and separations obscure how the particular perspectives of Caribbean administrators, shaped in Africa, informed black internationalist thinking in unique ways. Moreover, their stories highlight how the intellectual currents forged by Caribbean administrators in Africa also circulated to colonial metropolises. To be sure, some of their ideas reinforced “stereotypes,” as Fanon suggests, and they emerged from colonial contexts. Nevertheless, for young black students and thinkers in Europe, the experiences of Caribbean administrators in African colonies came to represent the possibilities for black networks that lay outside imperial boundaries.

CARIBBEAN ADMINISTRATORS IN PARIS AND LONDON

In 1923, René Maran resigned from the French colonial civil service and made his way to Paris.⁴ The French public, especially Africans and Antilleans living in France, already knew Maran’s name thanks to the 1921 publication of—and scandal around—his first novel, *Batouala*. Before long, Maran was involved in the black political scene of the city. In 1924, for instance, he

² See, for example, Dewitte, *Les mouvements nègres en France*; Michel Fabre, *Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1840-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris: The African Writers’ Landscape* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*; Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*; Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich*; Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*; Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom*; Matera, *Black London*; Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*.

³ For example, in her 2010 book on Africans and Antilleans in Paris, Jennifer Boittin discusses René Maran at length but neglects to mention that he spent over a decade working for the French administration in Central Africa. Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*.

⁴ For details on the arrangements for Maran’s journey from Chad to France via Nigeria, see Chapter 7.

and Marc Kojo Tovalou Houénou of Dahomey launched *Les Continents*, the first black newspaper in Paris.⁵ Maran also began an extensive correspondence with Alain Locke, the “Dean” of the Harlem Renaissance, and they became close friends.⁶ And in 1925, Maran joined the newly-created *Comité de défense de la race nègre* (CDRN), led by Joseph Gothon-Lunion, a militant communist lawyer from Guadeloupe, and Lamine Senghor, a Marxist war veteran from Senegal. Another key member of the group was Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté of Ségou, French Soudan.

By 1926, a schism had emerged in the CDRN. This was due in part to disputes over communism and assimilation, but there was also a marked division between Africans and Antilleans. Guadeloupean Léon Hanna-Charley’s remarks at an October 1926 meeting only reinforced this division. In a speech, he declared that the “intelligence” of the black race was “at the same level as that of the white race” and that there existed, among all black people, a common “Negro-African culture.” Yet he also noted that this “Negro-African culture” could be “found among the most advanced black people as well as among the most backward.”⁷ The implication about which black people were “advanced” was not lost on the other members of the *Comité*.

⁵ Dennis, “The René Maran Story,” 86-7. In 1925, Maran used the newspaper to anonymously accuse Blaise Diagne of taking money for each African recruit during WWI. Diagne sued *Les Continents* and Maran narrowly avoided a prison sentence. On this case, see Alice Conklin, “Who Speaks for Africa? The René Maran–Blaise Diagne Trial in 1920s Paris,” in Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 302-337. See also Mercer Cook, *Five French Negro Authors* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1943), 133.

⁶ Maran even had a picture of Locke hanging in his apartment. Ikonné, *Links and Bridges*, 320. For more on the Maran-Locke exchanges, see Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, especially Chapter 2.

⁷ “Il existe une culture Nègro-Africaine...dont les traits principaux se retrouveraient aussi bien chez les peuples noirs les plus avancés que chez les plus arriérés.” Report on a CDRN meeting in Le Havre, 11 October 1926, ANOM, SLOTFOM III/24.

By January 1927, the tension between Lamine Senghor and Joseph Gothon-Lunion personified the geographical division. Most Africans wanted Senghor to remain head of the organization, while most Antilleans wanted new leadership.⁸ Then, at a particularly tense meeting in February 1927, the entire group voted “unanimously” for Maran to take over as president. Maran refused and remarked that they were “stupid to make divisions between themselves, and would be better served by defending their race than getting into disagreements about communism.”⁹ In the end, Senghor’s group, supported by Kouyaté, left the CDRN and formed the *Ligue de défense de la race nègre* (LDRN).¹⁰ Yet this “unanimous” decision to elect Maran highlights his unique position. Maran’s seniority and disposition were likely important factors in this vote, but Africans and Antilleans evidently also saw him as an intermediary, someone who could bring together different factions of Africans and Antilleans. Maran, after all, was familiar with the effects of such tensions after spending over a decade in Central Africa navigating the lines between “French,” “African,” “*Antillais*,” “*indigène*,” and “*nègre*.” Because of these experiences, Maran understood that the only way forward was by working together and “defending their race” as a unified whole.

Maran’s appeal also spread beyond Paris. By the end of the 1920s, his apartment on rue Bonaparte was a locus for black intellectuals from Africa, the Caribbean, and North America. Among those who visited were W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude

⁸ At the end of January, Senghor expelled Gothon-Lunion from the CDRN. “Note sur la propagande révolutionnaire intéressant les pays d’outre-mer,” 31 January 1927, 28 February 1927, 31 March 1927, ANOM, AEF/GGAEF/5D/70. On this schism, see also Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres*, 150-153; Jennifer Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*, 89-95.

⁹ “*Les noirs étaient stupides de se déchirer entre eux et qu’ils feraient bien mieux de défendre leur race que de politiquer avec les communistes, ce qui leur attire des désagréments.*” “Note sur la propagande Révolutionnaire Intéressant les Pays d’Outre-Mer,” March 1927, ANOM, AEF/GGAEF, 5D/70.

¹⁰ “Note sur la propagande Révolutionnaire Intéressant les Pays d’Outre-Mer,” April 1927, ANOM, AEF/GGAEF, 5D/70.

McKay, Gwendolyn Bennett, Paulette and Jane Nardal, and Alain Locke.¹¹ In the 1930s, when Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Léon-Gontran Damas arrived in Paris, they also found themselves at Maran's home.¹² Senghor later named Maran as the "precursor of negritude,"¹³ while Césaire gave Maran a copy of his poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, inscribed with a message: "To M. René Maran, who was the first to raise the *nègre* to literary dignity, this is witness to my admiration and recognition."¹⁴ By joining radical groups and hosting meetings for a transatlantic network of black intellectuals, Maran had made himself a part of the black internationalist scene in Paris.

By the late 1930s, however, Maran appeared weary of his role in this community, especially his relationships with young Antilleans. In a September 1938 letter to his old friend Félix Eboué, Maran declared: "I have a phobia of Antilleans. There is, between them and me, a complete incompatibility of temperament... They only seek you out when they need you to make solicitations or write recommendations. I have made sure to separate these beggars from my circle... with the exception of Cenae and Mlle. Paulette Nardal."¹⁵ Maran, it seems, remained preoccupied by his experiences in Central Africa. Indeed, the region and its peoples were the dominant focus of his literary output and endured as his main source of intellectual orientation.¹⁶

¹¹ Michel Fabre, "Autour de René Maran," *Présence Africaine* 86 (1973): 171-172.

¹² Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 165.

¹³ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "René Maran, Précurseur de la Négritude," *Hommage à René Maran*, 9-13. Senghor became close friends with Maran. Interestingly, in 1946, he married Félix Eboué's daughter Ginette Eboué.

¹⁴ Quoted in Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 165.

¹⁵ Maran to Eboué, 12 September 1938, FCG, FFE, F22/15, Folder 5. "J'ai la phobie des Antillais. Il y a, entre eux et moi, totale incompatibilité d'humeur... Ils ne vous connaissent que lorsqu'ils ont besoin de vous pour faire des démarches ou écrire des recommandations. Je me suis arrangé pour éloigner ces mendiants de mon entourage... à l'exception de Cenae et de Mlle. Paulette Nardal."

¹⁶ Almost all of his novels and poetry focused on his time in Central Africa. In addition to *Batouala*, see, for example, *Djouma, chien de Brousse* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1927); *Le Livre de la brousse* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1934);

Maran's continued focus on Central Africa accompanied his continued sympathy for the potential of the French Empire, even as he criticized colonial abuses. In 1936, for instance, he described French colonies as "lands for which [France] has paid with her blood and made rich by her labour." He also praised France for "having drawn from their immemorial lethargy, races who only asked to be allowed to pursue in peace their hereditary hibernating slumber."¹⁷ Five years later, Maran wrote a glowing biography of Savorgnan de Brazza, "a man of heart whose work and name symbolize, today more than yesterday, in the history of the world and its civilizations, a native policy...of lucid altruism, sympathy, and fairness."¹⁸ De Brazza's record in Central Africa was the exact opposite.

Nevertheless, the Caribbean-Africa link embodied by Maran was a powerful symbol. Maran's experiences in Africa, his knowledge of African languages and cultures, and his ability to unite Africans and Antilleans made him an important figure in interwar Paris. Despite Maran's grievances and his continued sympathy for the French Empire, young black intellectuals revered him. Many even sent letters of "*respectueux hommages*." For example, after Maran wrote a review of Léon-Gontran Damas' 1937 book *Retour de Guyane*, Damas sent Maran a letter of thanks. Damas expressed his gratitude to Maran not only for the book review but also for his overall guidance, and presented himself as a "younger brother" ("*frère cadet*") to Maran.¹⁹

Les Belles images, poèmes (Bordeaux: Editions Delmas, 1935); *Livingstone et l'Exploration de l'Afrique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938); *Bêtes de la brousse* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941); *Brazza et la Fondation de l'A.E.F* (Paris: Gallimard, 1941); *Mbala, l'éléphant* (Paris: Editions Arc-en-Ciel, 1943); *Un homme pareil aux autres* (Paris: Editions Arc-en-Ciel, 1947).

¹⁷ Maran, "French Colonization: What it Might Have Been," *Opportunity* 14, no. 2 (February 1936): 57, 63.

¹⁸ Maran, *Savorgnan de Brazza* (Paris: Editions du Dauphin, 1951 [1941]), 244. On the mythologization of de Brazza, see Florence Bernault, "Colonial Bones: The 2006 Burial of Savorgnan de Brazza in the Congo," *African Affairs* 109 (July 2010): 367-390. See also Bernault, *Démocraties ambiguës*, 135-146.

¹⁹ Léon-Gontran Damas to Maran, 16 April 1938. UCAD, FRM, Rés. 10348. For more on the links between Damas and Maran, see the interview of Léon-Gontran Damas by Chidi Ikonné in Ikonné, *Links and Bridges*.

In the 1940s and 1950s, writers such as Édouard Glissant and Joseph Zobel sent similar letters to Maran, along with inscribed copies of their novels.²⁰ Maran continued to promote African and Caribbean literature, but his personal focus remained on Central Africa. In a 1952 letter to André Fraisse, a colonial official in Brazzaville, Maran declared: “What appeals to me about A.E.F. are its vast expanses, its immense expanses of water, bush, and forests. The sands of Tchad lend themselves less to my need for reverie. I owe my gratitude to her [AEF] because, still young, she taught me quickly to truly know man and to search for the solution to problems.”²¹ That Maran lived out his days in Paris was much less important than his continued sense of attachment to Central Africa. For the young African and Caribbean intellectuals who looked up to Maran, this bond was more important than his colonialist views. It represented a connection they sought to emulate, networks that could provide alternatives to the status quo.

Another Caribbean administrator who spent time in France was Henri Jean-Louis. By 1926, Jean-Louis had resigned from his position as a colonial judge in Brazzaville and had helped his wife and children settle in Paris. During this time, he travelled frequently back and forth to Central Africa, where he worked as a lawyer. He also became involved in the black internationalist circles of Paris.

Like Maran, Jean-Louis joined the CDRN. In fact, when Lamine Senghor, Gothon-Lunion, and others founded the group in April 1925, they named Jean-Louis as the honorary

²⁰ Édouard Glissant gave Maran an inscribed copy of *La Lézarde*, while Joseph Zobel gave Maran inscribed copies of three novels: *Diab'la*, *Les Jours Immobiles*, and *Laghia de la mort*, UCAD, FRM. For an analysis of the exchanges between Zobel and Maran, see Charles W. Scheel, “Introduction au dossier « Zobel » retrouvé dans la bibliothèque universitaire de l’UCAD à Dakar,” *Continents manuscrits* 8 (2017): 1-12.

²¹ Maran to Fraisse, 24 April 1952, ANOM, FP/8APOM/4. “*Ce qui me plait de l’A.E.F. ce sont ses vastes espaces, ses immenses espaces d’eaux, de brousse et de forêts. Les sables de Tchad se prêtent moins à mon besoin de rêverie. Ma gratitude lui est acquise parce que, jeune encore, elle m’a appris de bonne heure à bien connaître l’homme et à chercher la solution de problèmes.*”

president.²² Several months later, in an October 1925 report, Gothon-Lunion described Jean-Louis with effusive praise, and his description gives some insight into what he and others in Paris thought of Jean-Louis:

Un noir de valeur... In a short amount of time he has acquired considerable influence... On many occasions his interventions have restrained the arbitrary rule of the government [in AEF]... This valiant comrade refused to take up his new post [in Madagascar]. ‘As I am a *nègre*, I must defend *nègres*,’ he said... He confided to me that he does not need more than two years to rouse all of Equatorial Africa against French imperialism. The crimes, he declared, are daily realities. Accustomed to suffering, the unfortunate natives have become indifferent to pain. They are buried in an extreme fatalism.²³

As with Maran, Gothon-Lunion and other younger black intellectuals in Paris revered Jean-Louis. No matter their politics or whether they were from Africa or the Caribbean, they held him in high esteem. They valued Jean-Louis’ personal experiences of working and travelling in Africa, his support for Africans, and his condemnations of French colonial abuses.

After the split into the CDRN and the LDRN, Jean-Louis attended several LDRN meetings. At one gathering, in November 1929, Jean-Louis informed the others that “Africa has its own civilization, its traditions and customs, just like any other region.” According to a police informant in attendance, Jean-Louis “undoubtedly knew more than all the others about what was happening in the colonies and about the harmful effects of colonization.”²⁴ This was almost certainly the case, as Jean-Louis had, by this time, spent time in French colonies in the

²² “Note sur la Propagande Révolutionnaire Intéressant les Pays d’Outre-Mer,” April 1925, ANOM, AEF/GGAEF, 5D/65. See also correspondence of the CDRN in the archives of the Ligue des droits de l’homme at the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine in Nanterre (BDIC), F Delta Res 798/65.

²³ Joseph Gothon-Lunion, “Rapport sur la Question Coloniale,” 25 October 1925, Archives Départementales de la Seine-Saint-Denis, Archives microfilmées de l’Internationale Communiste, 3 MI 6/110. “*Un noir de valeur... Il a acquis en peu de temps une influence considérable... Plusieurs fois son intervention indirecte a freiné l’arbitraire du gouvernement... Ce vaillant camarade a refusé de joindre son nouveau poste [in Madagascar.] ‘En tant que nègre, je dois défendre les nègres,’ dit-il... Il m’a confié qu’il n’a pas besoin plus de deux ans pour soulever toute l’Afrique Equatoriale contre l’impérialisme français. Les crimes! déclare-t-il sont des fait journaliers. Habités à souffrir les pauvres indigènes deviennent insensibles à la douleur. Ils sont plongés dans un extrême fatalisme.*”

²⁴ “*L’Afrique a eu sa propre civilisation, ses mœurs et coutumes, tout comme un autre pays’...Il connaît sans doute mieux que tout autre ce qui se passe aux colonies et les méfaits de la colonisation.*” ANOM, AEF/GGAEF, 5D/68, “Rapport de Paul,” 3 November 1929.

Caribbean, Central Africa, and West Africa. Others at the meeting called for Jean-Louis to put together “some pamphlets about his travels and memories of his years in the colonies.” Another report on the meeting noted that Jean-Louis then outlined his plans to publish several articles and volumes that would “discuss above all the injustices.”²⁵ Other black intellectuals, it seems, were impressed by Jean-Louis’ experiences in Africa—especially his knowledge of African history and civilizations. Yet Jean-Louis, for his part, was hesitant about the political alignment of the LDRN. In October 1930 he seemed to regret his involvement with the *Ligue*, noting that the organization was “essentially communist.”²⁶

The following year, Jean-Louis helped to co-found *La Revue du monde noir* along with Paulette Nardal of Martinique, Léo Sajous of Haiti, and several others.²⁷ He also contributed an article to the inaugural issue: “Introduction to a Study on Creole Art and Literature.”²⁸ Then, in August 1931, he travelled to Dakar on behalf of the *Revue* to promote the journal and sell subscriptions. While in Dakar, Jean-Louis apparently also “made contact with people suspected of having extremist opinions.”²⁹ The Minister of Colonies notified the Governor General of AOF about the trip and in his letter described Jean-Louis as “a disreputable individual” who belonged

²⁵ ANOM, AEF/GGAEF, 5D/68, “Rapport de Joe,” 3 November 1929.

²⁶ ANOM, SLOTFOM II/21, “Rapport de Joe,” 11-16 October 1930.

²⁷ Jean-Louis’ precise role in founding the *Revue du monde noir* is unclear, though in November 1930, he prepared his own handwritten draft of a monthly journal titled “*Le Monde Noir: Revue mensuelle pour la Défense et l’Education de la Race Noire*.” The table of contents surveyed a number of topics, including theatre, poetry, literature, and history. Jean-Louis even made extensive calculations on the costs of printing and the necessary sales numbers. ADM, FJL, manuscript of “Le Monde Noir,” Box 1, Folder 4.

²⁸ Jean-Louis, “Introduction to a Study on Creole Art and Literature,” *La Revue du monde noir* 1 (1931): 8-11.

²⁹ Governor General of AOF to Governor General of AEF, 8 September 1931, ANOM, Jean-Louis Personnel File, EE/ii/1427.

to the French socialist party, the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*, (SFIO). The Minister also wrote that Jean-Louis' ideas were "hostile to our influence in Africa."³⁰

Jean-Louis had travelled to Dakar on behalf of the Paris-based *Revue*, but his sojourn there was also indicative of his dislike for the politics of Black Paris. He was bored of the divisions and metropolitan focus. Indeed, in a February 1934 meeting with Kouyaté he made this clear: "The affairs of the blacks in France no longer interest me. I would prefer to work with the Africans and work seriously on Cameroon."³¹ The bonds that Jean-Louis had created in Africa—whether in Brazzaville, Douala, or Dakar—evidently inspired a stronger commitment than the black intellectual circles of interwar Paris. Jean-Louis spent much of the rest of his life in the Caribbean, but even near the end of his life, he remained connected to Central Africa. In "Notre Hotel," a poem written from a hotel in Le Diamant, Martinique, in February 1951, Jean-Louis wrote: "This evening I see myself in a *village nègre* / In Central Africa."³² In other words, Jean-Louis' physical and intellectual trajectories between the Caribbean and Africa left Paris behind and created a powerful example for younger black students, thinkers, and activists in France.

Félix Eboué was also involved in the black intellectual scene of interwar Paris. He was still working for the French administration during this time, however, and so he spent considerably less time in France than Maran or Jean-Louis. Moreover, Eboué was at odds with many the black political groups in the city. For example, he described the articles of *Légitime Défense*, a journal created by Martinican students, as "abominable."³³ He also disapproved of

³⁰ Minister of Colonies to Governor General of AOF, 17 September 1931, ANOM, SLOTFOM V/28.

³¹ "*Les affaires des noirs en France ne m'intéressent plus, j'aime mieux travailler avec les Africains et m'occuper sérieusement du Cameroun.*" "Rapport de Moïse," 3 February 1934, ANOM, SLOTFOM II/3.

³² "Notre Hôtel," 25 February 1951, ADM, FJL, Box 2, Folder 43.

³³ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 140. *Légitime Défense*, the Marxist/Surrealist journal created by Martinican students Etienne Léro, René Ménil, and others, only ran one issue, in 1932. It was in some ways a precedent for the collaborations of

Maran's involvement in communist groups such as the LDRN. And, when Eboué's son Henri Eboué became friends with Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas, Eboué wrote Henri a stern letter forbidding him from associating with "reported communists."³⁴

Nevertheless, through Maran, Eboué became acquainted with Léo Sajous and the Nardal sisters.³⁵ He even made two contributions to their journal, *La Revue du monde noir*. Years later, after Eboué's death, an anonymous *souvenir* of Eboué appeared in the French press. While short, the reflection reveals Eboué's prominent place in 1930s *Paris Noir*:

I see him again, on rue Bonaparte, in the studio of his dear friend, René Maran, the famous black writer. It was '32. The African wall-hangings, blue from the night and striated with muted red, the small statues made of ebony and the walls with shelves full of books make an appropriate setting for his conversation: he tells us about Oubangui, Chad, as a scholar, as a colonial, as a man passionately attached to the social progress of black humanity, as a realist too. There is also Dr. Léo Sajous, the Director of *La Revue du Monde Noir*. . . It was that evening that we sensed the crucial role that Félix Eboué could be called to play one day as part of the black race and as part of the Empire.³⁶

Eboué's knowledge of Central African languages and cultures made a significant impression, especially for those who had not been to Africa. Indeed, in October 1931, Léo Sajous declared that he wanted to take "*un petit tour*" to Africa—to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Belgian Congo—and then open a store in Paris where he would sell "black products." He noted that in this way he could "continue the *Exposition nègre* in its own way."³⁷ The Colonial

Césaire, Senghor, and Damas several years later. Césaire, however, disputed a genuine intellectual lineage between *Légitime Défense* and Negritude. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 187-198.

³⁴ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 106-7, 148-9.

³⁵ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 130.

³⁶ "Un épisode oublié de la vie du Gouverneur Général Félix EBOUE," Newspaper unknown, FCG, FFE, F22/23, Folder 1. The author, "A." may have been Andrée Nardal, one of Paulette Nardal's sisters and a contributor to the *Revue*. "Je le revois, rue Bonaparte, dans le studio de son ami fraternel, René Maran, le célèbre écrivain noir. C'était en 32. Les tentures africaines bleu de nuit striées de rouge assourdi, les statuettes en bois d'ébène et les murs aux rayons chargés de livres font un cadre approprié à sa conversation: il nous parle de l'Oubangui, du Tchad, en érudit, en colonial, en homme passionnément attaché au progrès social de l'humanité noire, en réaliste aussi. Il y a là le Dr Léo Sajous, Directeur de la Revue du Monde Noir... C'est ce soir-là que nous avons pressenti le rôle capitale que Félix Eboué pourrait être appelé à jouer un jour dans le cadre de la race noire et de l'Empire."

³⁷ ANOM, SLOTFOM II/21, "Rapport de Joe," 8 October 1931.

Exposition took place in Paris from May to November 1931, and Eboué had participated in the event.

Maran also introduced Eboué to Alain Locke during one of Locke's visits to Paris. Eboué, who owned a copy of Locke's *The New Negro*,³⁸ later sent Locke some knives from Oubangui-Chari for an art exhibition in Harlem. In his return letter, Locke thanked Eboué and noted his preference for "old objects that don't show European influence," such as the knives, because they could be used to "show our people the ancient power of our race."³⁹ Through Locke, Eboué's reputation also spread beyond France and to the United States. In 1939, for example, when the French Minister of Colonies transferred Eboué from Guadeloupe to Chad, Mercer Cook, a professor at Howard University and a friend of Maran's, wrote an article in *Opportunity* lamenting the loss of Guadeloupe's "first negro governor."⁴⁰ Other African-American newspapers and magazines began closely following Eboué, whose experiences in Africa evidently lent him an aura of authenticity. Indeed, in 1944, George Padmore wrote an article for *The Chicago Defender* claiming that Eboué had won the "first round in the fight for self-government in Africa."⁴¹ Despite his colonialist views, many black intellectuals saw in Eboué the potential for a different future—or at least sought to use his example to work toward a different future.

³⁸ Weinstein, *Eboué*, 107.

³⁹ Locke to Eboué, 30 July 1928, quoted in Dennis, "The René Maran Story," 189. Also quoted in Weinstein, *Eboué*, 108.

⁴⁰ Mercer Cook, "Guadeloupe Loses Its First Negro Governor," *Opportunity* 17, no. 4 (April, 1939): 112.

⁴¹ George Padmore, "Eboué wins First Round In Fight For Self-Government in Africa," *The Chicago Defender*, 4 March 1944, 4. In other articles, Padmore praised the "native forces recruited by Governor General Félix Eboué" and noted that "the first troops to battle their way to Hitler's 'Eagles' Nest' amidst the steep Alpine crags near Berchtesgaden were the African 'Black devils,' troops of the late African General Félix Eboué." Padmore, "Race Troops Help Crack Mareth Line: Eboué Men Rip Nazis in Flank Attack," *The Chicago Defender*, 3 April 1943, 1; Padmore, "Negro Troops Take Hitler's Alps Hideout," *The Chicago Defender*, 12 May 1945, 1.

The NAACP also became interested in Eboué. In 1941, the organization sent him a letter declaring that “Thirteen million American Negroes have been stirred by the steadfast resistance of French Equatorial Africa...We applaud your courage.” The letter also stated: “American Negroes have a great concern with and interest in Africa...we join with you and the other citizens of French Equatorial Africa in the struggle.”⁴² Two years later, Walter White, the Secretary General of the NAACP, even began making inquiries about making a film based on Eboué’s life.⁴³ On April 8, 1944, Eboué responded to the NAACP. In his letter, Eboué declared his “sympathy and solidarity...to the brave people of the United States of America who fight courageously for the liberty of the world and betterment of the human condition.”⁴⁴ Eboué saw Americas as Allies in the war against Germany. The NAACP, however, seemed to regard Eboué as a Pan-African hero, as someone who represented the possibility for connections between Africans and African-descended peoples around the world.⁴⁵

Eboué’s influence also spread to British Guiana. In 1942, a lawyer in Georgetown named Mohammad Omar (B. Basil Marshall) wrote Eboué a letter of effusive praise:

I am an Afrikan unadulterated, a Muslim, and a British subject...Every Demararian is proud of your achievements, as colonial secretary of Martinique, and as Governor of Guadeloupe, and finally as Governor of Lake Chad Territory... Your instrumental stand in AFRIKA at Lake Chad, against the Vichy traitors to France, will live forever, let me assure your Excellency, that every

⁴² NAACP to Félix Eboué, 17 December 1941, Library of Congress (LOC), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records (NAACP), Part II, General Office File, 1940-1956, Box II: A3, Félix Eboué, 1941-1944.

⁴³ Walter White to Lowell Mellet, Bureau of Motion Pictures, Office of War Information, 25 February 1943, LOC, NAACP, Part II, General Office File, 1940-1956, Box II: A3, Félix Eboué, 1941-1944.

⁴⁴ Eboué to Walter White, 8 April 1944, LOC, NAACP, Part II, General Office File, 1940-1956, Box II: A3, Félix Eboué, 1941-1944.

⁴⁵ In an interview with Eboué shortly before his death in May 1944, Walter White asked Eboué if he ever thought of “eventual abolition of the colonial system...which would mean complete independence and freedom for the natives of Africa.” Eboué replied, “We are Frenchmen and we are loyal to France.” Walter White, *A Rising Wind* (New York: Doubleday, 1945), 121.

Afrikan adores you for this. My fervent hope is to get to AFRIKA as soon as possible, and your Excellency, I should be proud to have the honour of serving under you.⁴⁶

Eboué's role in the *ralliement* of Free France undoubtedly influenced the letter, yet Omar's association of Eboué with "AFRIKA" also gestures to the Pan-African symbol that Eboué had become. Omar himself had been affiliated with Duse Mohammed Ali and the *African Times and Orient Review* decades earlier,⁴⁷ and he saw Eboué as a representation of the links between the Caribbean and Africa. Perceptions of Eboué by black intellectuals—whether in France, the United States, or British Guiana—were informed more by the symbol of Eboué as a black Caribbean man in Africa and less by Eboué's support for the French Empire.

Particularly revealing of this trend is Frantz Fanon's praise of Eboué. In a 1955 essay, "Antillais et Africains," Fanon explained that Eboué,

though an *Antillais*, had spoken to the Africans at the Brazzaville conference and had called them 'my dear brothers.' And this brotherhood was not evangelical; it was based on color. The Africans had adopted Eboué. He was one of them. The other *Antillais* could come, but their pretensions to superiority were known.⁴⁸

On one hand, this was an odd thing for Fanon to write, especially in light of Eboué's call for a "native bourgeoisie," an idea that Fanon denounced as hollow and artificial.⁴⁹ Yet in claiming

⁴⁶ Mohammad R. Omar to Félix Eboué, 14 January 1942, FCG, FFE, F22/3, Folder 8.

⁴⁷ *African Times and Orient Review*, August 1913, 77-78.

⁴⁸ Frantz Fanon, "Antillais et Africains," 267. Weinstein also cites part of this passage in the introduction to his Eboué biography. Fanon also praised Eboué in *Black Skin, White Masks* while lambasting René Maran. After labelling Maran a "black abandonment neurotic," Fanon declared: "When we read such passages we cannot help thinking of Félix Eboué, unquestionably a Negro, who saw his duty quite differently in the same circumstances." Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 79, 71.

⁴⁹ In 1941, Eboué declared that chiefs were part of a "true native bourgeoisie," "members of a natural aristocracy." He also argued that this elite class of "*notables évolués*" should help run African colonies. Eboué, *La Nouvelle politique indigène pour l'Afrique équatoriale Française*, 17-19, 25-27. Florence Bernault explains that the *évolués* did not end up becoming the intermediary class that Eboué envisioned, in large part because the French made it incredibly difficult to achieve this status. Bernault, *Démocraties ambiguës*, 89-92, 332-333. For Fanon's condemnation of the "native bourgeoisie," see *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004 [1964]).

that Eboué placed himself on equal footing with “the Africans,” Fanon himself revealed the power and extent of Eboué as a symbol for Africa-Caribbean links.⁵⁰

In short, the political views of Maran, Jean-Louis, Eboué, and other Caribbean administrators were less important than the precedent they established. Their migrations and exchanges helped create an important nexus between Africa and the Caribbean. When they arrived in France, they brought the intellectual currents of these networks with them and inflected the thinking of black internationalist groups. Despite their colonialist views, their lives came to represent the possibility of building connections between Africa and the Caribbean, even connections that lay outside imperial boundaries.

Similar dynamics unfolded in London. The two Caribbean administrators most involved in London-based black internationalist groups were John Barbour-James of British Guiana and Edith Goring of Barbados. Barbour-James retired from the colonial civil service in the Gold Coast in 1917, but instead of returning to British Guiana, he settled in London, where he had already begun to establish himself and his family.⁵¹ He soon became involved in politics, and the following year he helped found *The African Progress Union* (APU). The first president of the organization, John Richard Archer of Liverpool, was the first black mayor in England. Other key figures were John Alcindor, a doctor from Trinidad, and Kwamina Tandoh, a businessman from the Gold Coast. The APU sought to “promote the general welfare of Africans and Afro-peoples” and also proposed an international network of branches stretching from North America to Europe

⁵⁰ Even Aimé Césaire praised Eboué. In December 1945, Césaire pointed out that “all French overseas Territories” had elected representatives to the French Chamber of Deputies, and that this “represent[ed] the first application of the program of reforms outlined by M. Eboué, late Governor General of French Equatorial Africa, and adopted at the Brazzaville Conference.” Thyra Edwards, “2 French Deputies Chide U.S.,” *The Chicago Defender*, 29 December 1945, 11.

⁵¹ When Barbour-James first took up his position in the Gold Coast in 1902, he moved his wife Caroline and their five children to London and visited while on leave. In London, the couple had three more children. Caroline died in 1917 and by 1919, five of their eight children were also dead. Green, “John Alexander Barbour-James.”

to the Caribbean and across Africa.⁵² At the inaugural dinner in December 1918, Barbour-James gave a speech, sang a song, and presented a toast.⁵³

Edith Goring's path to London intertwined with that of Barbour-James. In May 1920, she retired from her position as Headmistress of the Cape Coast Government Girls School and settled in London. Several months later, she married Barbour-James, whom she had known in the Gold Coast. Their wedding, at St. Dunstan's Anglican Church in Acton, reflected the connections they had established and continued to sustain between the Caribbean, West Africa, and London: among the attendees were Herbert Macaulay and Amodu Tijani, Chief Oluwa of Lagos.⁵⁴ The Gold Coast press even covered the wedding.⁵⁵

Goring joined the APU alongside her husband, and over the next several years the organization brought together people from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. Among those who attended meetings and informal gatherings were W. E. B. Du Bois, Dusé Mohammed Ali, Joseph and Adelaide Casely Hayford, Robert Broadhurst, Herbert Bankole-Bright, and Solomon Plaatje. The group also sent a delegation to the 1921 Pan-African Congress in London. Barbour-James later served as treasurer and vice-president of the APU, and when Alcindor died in 1924, he also acted as chair. Another Caribbean administrator involved in the organization was Joseph Britton of British Guiana. Britton had worked as teacher and headmaster at the Cape

⁵² *Constitution of the African Progress Union* (London: Furnival Press, 1918), Weston Library, Oxford University, H2/70.

⁵³ "The African Progress Union: Inaugural Meeting and Dinner, Great Eastern Hotel, London, December 18, 1918," *West Africa* vol. II, nos. 102 - 106, January 11 – February 8, 1919.

⁵⁴ Macaulay and Amodu Tijani were in London to challenge land appropriation around Lagos in the famous Apapa land case. For a video clip of the wedding that shows Barbour-James, Goring, Macaulay, and Amodu Tijani, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUrSwSpf_iI

⁵⁵ "Wedding of Colour," *The Gold Coast Leader*, 13 November 1920, 7.

Coast Government Boys School and was a friend of both Barbour-James and Goring, who taught at the Cape Coast Government Girls School.⁵⁶

Barbour-James, Goring, Britton, and other Caribbean administrators who spent time in London rarely played prominent roles in black internationalist organizations. Instead, like their Francophone counterparts, they were often more interested in sustaining their connections with the Caribbean and West Africa. For example, in the late 1920s, Barbour-James and Goring inaugurated an annual “Africa Day” celebration in Acton, West London. Among the various events were speeches by figures such as H. Hudson Phillips of Grenada and J. C. de Graft Johnson, an old friend from the Gold Coast. “Africa Day” festivities also included music by Alyce Fraser of British Guiana, among others.⁵⁷ Throughout the rest of the year, Barbour-James gave public lectures on “African and Afro-West Indian subjects,” with his daughter Amy Barbour-James joining him and performing solos.⁵⁸ He and Goring also persistently promoted African and Caribbean arts and culture events around the city.⁵⁹ In their minds, politics were less important than creating effective, durable networks between Africans and Caribbean people.

Another important hub of “Black London” was the West African Students Union (WASU). Led by Ladipo Solanke, Herbert Bankole-Bright, and J. B. Danquah, the group advocated for the interests and welfare of African students in London. Like the APU and other groups, WASU served as a meeting place for black intellectuals from around the world, such as

⁵⁶ For more on Britton, see Chapter 6. Reports on the APU’s annual meetings from 1918 to 1924 are located in the weekly newspaper *West Africa*. See vol. II, nos. 102 - 106, 11 January – 8 February 1919; vol. V, no. 245, 8 October 1921; vol. VI, no. 309, 30 December 1922; vol. VII, no. 354, 10 November 1923; and vol. VIII, no. 369, 23 February 1924.

⁵⁷ Press coverage for “Africa Day” appeared in *West Africa*, vol. XIII, no. 625, 19 January 1929, 24; vol. XV, no. 733, 14 February 1931, 152; vol. XVIII, no. 911, 14 July 1934, 772.

⁵⁸ “Mr. J. A. Barbour-James as Lecturer,” *West Africa*, vol. XIX, No. 942, 16 February 1935, 171.

⁵⁹ “A Coaster’s London Log,” *West Africa*, vol. XIII, No. 664, 19 October, 1929, 1405.

Paul and Eslanda Goode Robeson of the US, Amy Ashwood Garvey of Jamaica, and later, Kwame Nkrumah. Neither Barbour-James nor Goring were directly involved with WASU, but Arthur Vigo of Jamaica, who worked for the Nigerian Agriculture Department, was highly active in the organization. In the early 1930s, Vigo served as the vice-president of the WASU branch in Zaria, Nigeria, where he was working for the British administration. In 1933, Vigo and his wife, Beatrice Vigo, travelled through London while on leave. Arthur apparently “conveyed an impressive address” to the WASU members in London. A subsequent report in *Wāsù*, the WASU journal, noted that Vigo “related, among other things, the activities of the Zaria WASU Branch.” The report also mentioned that Vigo spread WASU’s message to “Negro cousins in the United States” and “created for WASU a large circle of eminent Negro personalities.” Finally, the report praised the “quality of nationalistic stuff of which Brother Vigo is made.”⁶⁰ A later issue of *Wāsù* similarly praised Beatrice Vigo for “creat[ing] in America a large number of subscribers” for the WASU magazine, and for her “promotion of the status of our womenfolk in Nigeria.”⁶¹

Arthur and Beatrice Vigo were hardly “nationalists”—he worked for the British administration in Nigeria until his retirement in 1940. Nevertheless, WASU members saw “nationalistic stuff” in their experiences, exchanges, and ideas. For the Vigos, London was a stop on their migrations between Nigeria, the US, and Jamaica, and for WASU members, among other black intellectuals in London, this pattern represented the links they sought to create themselves.

⁶⁰ *Wāsù* vol. III, no. 1, March 1934, 10.

⁶¹ *Wāsù* vol. IV, no. 1, July 1935. Beatrice Vigo was also a friend of Herbert Macaulay. They corresponded about education in Lagos in 1936 and in 1942 she sent him an elaborate pop-up birthday card. Beatrice Vigo to Macaulay, 4 April 1936; Beatrice Vigo to Macaulay, 8 November 1942, UISC, HMP, Box 91, Folder 7. For more on Vigo and “Black Feminist Internationalists,” see Matera, *Black London*, Chapter 3.

Around the same time that Arthur and Beatrice Vigo passed through London, John Barbour-James and Edith Goring joined the newly created *League of Coloured Peoples* (LCP).⁶² Harold Moody, a doctor from Jamaica, had founded the *League* in London in 1931. The LCP was committed to promoting the “welfare of Coloured Peoples” and to “improv[ing] relations between the Races.”⁶³ Goring was a member of the executive from April 1934 until April 1937, while Barbour-James served as vice-president from January 1935 until early 1938, when he returned to British Guiana. Amy Barbour-James was also a member of the LCP, as was Lebert Josiah Veitch of Jamaica, another Caribbean administrator. After retiring from teaching in Nigeria in 1930, Veitch spent several years in Deal, Kent, where he lived with his English wife. He returned to Jamaica in October 1935.

Through the LCP, John Barbour-James, Edith Goring, and L. J. Veitch met a number of younger black intellectuals. These included Una Marson of Jamaica, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya (then known as Johnstone Kenyatta), Desmond Buckle of the Gold Coast, Hezekiah Oladipo Davies and Stella Thomas of Nigeria, and W. Arthur Lewis of St. Lucia. These interactions occurred in London, but in many cases they emerged from pre-existing networks in West Africa. Stella Thomas, for example, was the daughter of Peter J. C. Thomas of Lagos, who was a close friend of Veitch. H. O. Davies had been one of Veitch’s students at King’s College Lagos. Desmond Buckle was the son of Vidal Buckle, one of Joseph Britton’s former students.⁶⁴ And Arthur Lewis’ older brother, George Stanley Lewis, had lived in the Gold Coast since 1929 and

⁶² Background information on the LCP and its membership comes from Roderick J. Macdonald’s compilation of the LCP’s newsletter, *The Keys*. See Macdonald, ed., *The Keys: The Official Organ of the League of Coloured Peoples* (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1976).

⁶³ *The Keys*, vol. I, no. 1, July 1933.

⁶⁴ Desmond Buckle later joined the Communist Party of Great Britain. Hakim Adi, “Forgotten Comrade? Desmond Buckle: An African Communist in Britain,” *Science & Society* vol. 70, no. 1 (January 2006): 22-45.

was a close friend of George James Christian. Christian, a lawyer from Dominica who worked in Sekondi from 1902 until 1940, was a friend of Barbour-James and Goring. In fact, Christian himself joined the LCP and served on the executive committee in 1938.⁶⁵

Another notable member of the LCP was C. L. R. James of Trinidad, who joined in 1933 when he arrived in London. James was a member of the executive in 1934 and the LCP newsletter, *The Keys*, featured several of his essays.⁶⁶ He also attended many of the annual LCP conferences, on some occasions making speeches.⁶⁷ In 1936, *The Keys* published a review of his play, "Toussaint L'Ouverture," starring Paul Robeson. Two years later, the newsletter published a review of his landmark book, *Black Jacobins*.⁶⁸ James' comrade George Padmore was not a member of the organization, but the *League* nonetheless promoted Padmore's public lectures⁶⁹ and published a book review of *How Britain Rules Africa*.⁷⁰ In 1938, the newsletter also printed an excerpt from an essay by Eric Williams, "The Abolition of the Slave System in Britain."⁷¹

⁶⁵ *The Keys* vol. V, no. 4, April-June 1938. Christian carefully preserved his League of Coloured Peoples Membership Card. UWISC, GJC, Box 2, Folder 43. Christian also made donations to the West African Students Union. Ladipo Solanke to George James Christian, 9 December 1936, UWISC, GJC, Box 8, Folder 195.

⁶⁶ C. L. R. James, "The West Indies Cricket Team, 1933," *The Keys* vol. I, no. 1, July 1933, 11-13; James, "West Indies Self-Government," *The Keys* vol. I, no. 4, April-June 1934, 72, 84; James, "Abyssinia and the Imperialists," *The Keys* vol. III, no. 3, January-March 1936, 32, 39-40.

⁶⁷ At the 1933 conference, James gave a speech on "The West Indian" and explained "how the black man in the West Indies had been shorn of all African civilization and had been engulfed by Western civilization. This meant that there was no spirit of nationalism, which gave force to democratic movements in other countries." "Conference Report," *The Keys* vol. I, no. 1, July 1933, 5. At the April 1936 Annual Conference, James discussed "Economic Organisation in the Tropics." *The Keys* vol. III, no. 4, April-June 1936, 48.

⁶⁸ "Toussaint L'Ouverture," *The Keys* vol. III, no. 4, April-June 1936, 68-69; "Black Jacobins," review of C. L. R. James' *Black Jacobins*, *The Keys* vol. VI, no. 2, October-December 1938, 12-13.

⁶⁹ In 1937, the newsletter promoted one of Padmore's upcoming lectures, "The Negro in the Modern World." "Forthcoming Events," *The Keys* vol. V, no. 1, July-September 1937, 22.

⁷⁰ "The British in Africa," review of George Padmore's *How Britain Rules Africa*, *The Keys* vol. IV, no. 1, July-September 1936, 10-11.

⁷¹ Eric Williams, "The Abolition of the Slave System in Britain," *The Keys* vol. VII, no. 1, July-September 1939, 11-13.

James, Padmore, and other radicals of their generation later criticized organizations such as the APU and LCP for their elitism, conservatism, and links with the Colonial Office. Their criticisms were not unfounded. Until the end of World War II, Africans and West Indians in London often called for the “development” of Africans toward greater autonomy, but rarely for independence.⁷² In January 1929, for example, Barbour-James made a speech at a meeting of the Union of Students of African Descent and said that “nothing but good could come from the free exchange of views between Africa and Great Britain, which all Africans recognised as a real foster-parent.”⁷³ Nevertheless, the ability of Caribbean administrators to build networks between Africans and Caribbean people in London was no small feat. As C. L. R. James later remarked, there was considerable tension between Africans and West Indians in London:

The average West Indian in London did believe, or at any rate came to London believing that Africans were no more than savages. He swallowed whole all of the stuff about the inability of Africans to create a culture, their childish mentality, all that imperialist compound of ignorance and lies which is now being blown sky-high by events and historical investigators. The West Indian in London might have an emotional sense of kinship with the African, but the African, sensitive to attitudes towards him and his civilisation, soon discovered what were the ideas that the West Indians held. They called the West Indians ‘black white men,’ and by 1935 there was a definite cleavage between the two groups in London. No one should pass hasty judgement on these undoubted facts, for facts they were in the thirties.⁷⁴

By working consistently to bring together Africans and Caribbean people, Barbour-James, Goring, Britton, and Veitch helped bridge this “definite cleavage.” Their political views may not have aligned with the ideas of younger black intellectuals, but their unique experiences,

⁷² Anne Spry Rush, “Imperial Identity in Colonial Minds: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-1950,” *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no. 4 (2002): 356-383. Rush argues that Harold Moody and other members of the *League of Coloured Peoples* deployed “imperial identities” that both supported black rights and embraced “Britishness.” See also Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁷³ “The U. S. A. D. and Hackney College,” *West Africa*, vol. XIII, no. 626, 26 January 1929, 56.

⁷⁴ C. L. R. James, manuscript of “Notes on the Life of George Padmore,” UWISC, CLRJ, Box 18, Folder 345.

networks, and perspectives helped create foundational spaces for later organizations and movements.

Frantz Fanon's description of Caribbean administrators propagating negative stereotypes about Africa in the Caribbean was not unfounded. In many instances, Caribbean administrators retained their colonialist views about Africa as a "country of savages, of barbarians, of natives, of servants" and reinscribed these views in the Caribbean. For all their colonialist ideas and paternalism, however, Caribbean administrators in interwar Paris and London made their own "radical moves."⁷⁵ They travelled to Africa and engaged with Africans; they recognized the falsity of colonialist stereotypes; they learned to speak African languages and learned about African cultures and histories. They also had personal experiences with African-Caribbean tensions and knew the effects of alienation. Thus, when they arrived in Paris and London, they sought to surmount this tension by creating links between Africans and Caribbean people. They promoted African and Caribbean writers and artists, made speeches, supported cultural events, and joined black internationalist organizations. They also often drew on pre-existing networks from West and Central Africa. Indeed, in many instances, Caribbean administrators remained tied closer to their experiences in Africa than to the politics of Paris and London. Through their migrations and interactions between Africa and the Caribbean, some Caribbean administrators even became symbols for the possibilities of future Africa-Caribbean linkages. Despite their political ideas about empire, they established an important basis for younger generations of black intellectuals, moving within and beyond imperial boundaries. In short, their earlier experiences in Africa were crucial to sustaining the black internationalist networks of interwar Europe.

⁷⁵ Lara Putnam's 2013 book takes a similar "nonmetropolitan" focus to the study of black internationalism. Putnam, *Radical Moves*, 7-8.

CONCLUSION

The central components in most studies of black internationalism are migration, racist particularization, and cosmopolitanism. Through migration, people from Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere realized that they were “black,” not “British” or “French,” or any other identity they claimed. Aimé Césaire’s later reflections on his arrival in Paris as an 18 year old are typical: “I realized very quickly that I was not a European, nor a Frenchman, but that I was a *Nègre*.”⁷⁶ Yet these migrations did not result only in “racial downgrading.”⁷⁷ They also brought together Africans and African-descended peoples. In other words, through the combined processes of migration, particularization, and cosmopolitanism, black people from around the world became “black” and “international.” They identified the underlying similarities in their particular struggles and sought to align together against global white supremacy.

The stories of Caribbean administrators do not fit neatly into this narrative. When they arrived in Africa, they realized, like Césaire, that they were not “European,” yet it was not clear that they were “black,” either. Europeans and Africans excluded them, while they typically saw Africans as “backwards.” The result was marginalization and dislocation. Many, disillusioned about their positions in the French and British empires, simply finished their work contracts—or not—and returned home. Others clung to their imperial identities and continued to look down on Africans. For some, however, this sense of alienation also had dramatic intellectual impacts. As they moved between the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe—and saw far more of the British and French empires than any of their peers—they also saw through the myth of imperial belonging.

⁷⁶ Louis, *Conversation avec Aimé Césaire*, 31. See also Bill Schwarz, “Introduction: Crossing the Seas,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, 1-30.

⁷⁷ This is Winston James’ term, referring to West Indians who arrived in the United States and “realized” that in the binaried racial landscape of that country, they were “black.” James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1998), 70.

They became aware of the global implications of anti-black racism far more quickly than people who remained in the Caribbean, or who travelled only between the Caribbean and Europe. In African colonies, Caribbean administrators not only encountered racism, but witnessed the effects of European racial ideologies being writ large on millions of Africans. Caribbean administrators understood that British and French colonial officials implicated them in the same underlying racial thinking.

Such experiences also taught Caribbean administrators the flexibility of ideas about race, nation, and empire, and they learned to deploy this flexibility for their own ends. Out of racism and rigid imperial categories came new ideas about identity and belonging. Caribbean administrators rarely formed associations or leagues or *comités*. They did not publish journals or manifestoes or issue grand declarations about “Africa for the Africans.” For them, “Africa” was not just a symbol, and “Africans” were more than abstractions. They knew personally the difficulties of uniting such vastly diverse groups of peoples under a singularized identity and were much less eager to make such claims. Nevertheless, they formed connections with Africans in daily exchanges, marriage, as colleagues, teachers, and students, by eating food and drinking together, by learning each other’s languages and by learning about each other’s cultures and histories. Through such interactions, Caribbean administrators created genuine bonds with Africans, surmounted stereotypes, and began to see the grim similarities of colonial rule in the Caribbean and Africa. These exchanges, however mundane, were the basis of important intellectual work. Amidst the effects of migration, racism, and alienation, Caribbean administrators formed bonds with Africans and together created new ideas about race and nation. Some retained the structure of colonial ideologies, while others lay outside of imperial boundaries. In their search for belonging, Caribbean administrators created an Atlantic nexus that

circulated around Africa, back to the Caribbean, and even to Europe, creating foundations for others.

The stories of Caribbean administrators in Africa, though mostly unknown, are important to the history of black internationalism, and that is why I suggest a “reframing” of the scholarship. First, studying black internationalism in Africa, specifically the stories of Caribbean administrators, reveals more complex intellectual lineages than typical narratives of black internationalism. As the preceding chapters demonstrate, many black intellectuals drew on colonial ideologies, imperial structures, and experiences with empire to articulate new ideas about race and nation. Their ideas were often constrained by empire, but they created an important basis for subsequent generations, for whom the horizons were broader. When scholars focus on anticolonial intellectuals, however, or cleave towards nationalist interpretations, they elide this intellectual development, this incremental internationalism.

Secondly, while the inclusion of Africa may seem fairly straightforward, this “alternative geography” carries with it important methodological and ideological implications. When scholars exclude Africa except as an imagined or symbolic place, they also exclude the ideas of Africans, many of whom thought deeply about race, nation, colonialism, and the future. Even when scholars do include Africans in their work, they typically do so within the contexts of metropolitan histories. This tendency risks creating a pattern whereby Africans are part of the history of black internationalism only when they move along and within imperial lines. What about Africans without the means—or desire—to travel to Europe? Or those who did not read or speak English and French? Many Africans, of course, understood this issue keenly. In July 1919, *The Gold Coast Leader* published an article on the February 1919 Pan-African Congress in Paris led by W. E. B. Du Bois and Blaise Diagne. The writer described the conference as one of “great

importance and significance.” Yet near the end of the report, he also described the derogatory views many Pan-Africanists held towards Africans, noting wryly:

West Africans will do well to remember that to most of our Afro American and West Indian friends we are still in the back woods of civilisation unlettered, untutored, very much requiring articulation through our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic. And it is perfectly natural this innocent assumption. They know no better. They have no means of judging. It is for us to enlighten them.⁷⁸

Scholars of black internationalism would do well to pay attention to the histories of these supposedly “untutored” Africans, to expand their understandings of black internationalism geographically, ideologically, and methodologically. My research has focused rather narrowly on Caribbean administrators, but other researchers could take up many other strands of the history of black internationalism in Africa. By moving away from a history of Europeanized elites in metropolitan capitals to include African languages, African political institutions, African cultural traditions, and the ideas of African intellectuals, this scholarship will only become more significant. It will enrich our understandings of the networks and hubs of the late colonial and early postcolonial periods; it will centre African ideas about race, nation and empire; and it will broaden and reframe the history of black internationalism.

⁷⁸ “The Pan-African Conference,” *The Gold Coast Leader*, 12 July 1919, 3.

EPILOGUE

During the course of my research, I rarely came across photographs. To be sure, there are dozens of freely available images of the more well-known Caribbean administrators, such as Félix Eboué, René Maran, and John Barbour-James, but for the vast majority of these individuals, there are no visual records. On one occasion, however, while in Accra, I came across photographs of Mark Alexis and his wife Edwina Violetta Alexis.

Mark Alexis was an agriculture instructor from Trinidad, and he worked in the Gold Coast from 1909 until 1926. I found the photographs in his personnel file, alongside a passport application from April 1917. At the time, the couple were preparing for a brief leave from the Gold Coast with their sixteen-month old daughter, Ruby. Unable to return to Trinidad because of the war, they were planning on travelling to London. The small, black and white photographs accompanying the application revealed a stern, smartly dressed couple—Edwina Alexis, after all, worked as a seamstress. Yet the descriptions on the passport application were more revealing than the images. Down the right side of the application, after the lines for name, age, and place and date of birth, was a list of personal features, including forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, chin, complexion, and “special peculiarities.” Colonial officials evidently thought it important to identify Mark Alexis’ “broad” forehead, “slightly flat” nose, “Black” complexion, and “round” face, as well as Edwina Alexis’ “prominent” nose, “medium size” mouth, “Brown” complexion, and “long” face.

It was through such classifications and images that the British and French empires “saw” Caribbean administrators. These descriptions and photographs—captured with an imperial lens—reduced people like Mark and Edwina Alexis to names, dates, places, and racialized “peculiarities.” In many ways, scholars reproduce such flattened views when they consider the

histories of Africa and the Caribbean—and Europe, for that matter—solely through the lens of “empire.” The files I found in national archives in West Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe were important, but they always remained tied to the preoccupations of colonial governments. When I travelled to different archives, along the pathways that Caribbean administrators followed themselves, I was able to piece together more three-dimensional narratives. With different sources, different pictures emerged.

A year or so after finding the Alexis photographs in Accra, I was in Port of Spain, Trinidad. One afternoon, after a day at the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, I wandered east on Oxford Street towards Charlotte Street. I knew, from research in the UK, that the Alexises had once lived at 148 Charlotte Street.¹ I did not expect their house to be there anymore, as the road was now a busy one that I crossed each day on my commute. Nevertheless, I was curious to see what I might find. Eventually I found the right corner, a few blocks south of the hospital and the famous Queen’s Park Savannah. The house at 148 Charlotte where they had once lived was indeed gone. In its place was a concrete apartment block. As I stared at the site of their former home, I thought back to those black and white photographs in Accra. I tried to imagine the Trinidad that they had grown up in, the Trinidad that they had thought about and sought to return to, and their experiences in between. Turning south, I walked near Woodford Square, site of the 1903 Water Riots as well as speeches and concerts by figures such as Eric Williams, Stokely Carmichael, Paul Robeson, and Winnifred Atwell.² A few blocks further

¹ Alexis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 December 1921, NAUK, CO 295/539.

² For more on the history of Woodford Square (and Brunswick Square before it), see Tiy Cross-Lovelace of the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, “100 Years of Woodford Square,” <http://nationaltrust.tt/100-years-woodford-square/>

along, I crossed Independence Square and bought some doubles before heading to the bus station to find my way home.

It has been a true privilege to research and write about a remarkable group of people over the last four years. Their migrations, experiences, and ideas were captivating and often moving. I have tried to make arguments and articulate historiographical interventions from the scraps left behind, though perhaps I have missed the mark. In any case, I do believe this work is important, if only to capture a few faint glimpses of people such as Mark and Edwina Alexis, to give some texture to extraordinary lives now mostly forgotten. I sincerely hope that reading a few of these stories has proved as meaningful as writing about them.

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