

The origins of African nationalism: E.W. Blyden

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Abstract: The origins of African nationalism: E.W. Blyden. Due to Africa's specific historical development, the term of nationalism has another meaning than the European one, at least because there we do not meet classical defined nations; in our opinion, African nationalism must be understood more as an ideological and political movement of raising the awareness on the specific African development, on the opposition of "blacks" against "whites". Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) was the most representative defender of the black race. On the climax of the colonial expansion, he elaborated a genuine philosophy on the *African personality*. Our study sustains that at the source of the contemporary African nationalism are Blyden's ideas over which the black-American influence has superposed (W.E.B. DuBois, Duse Mahommed, and Marcus Garvey etc.). His laborious activity – he was in the same time clergyman, university professor, politician, journalist, diplomat, lecturer, publisher, traveller, linguist – had in view to restore the Africans' "lost trust", proving the special role had in the civilization's birth, but also their ability to form compatible institutions with the European ones. In this way, Blyden was the attorney of "the black conscience and racial pride of the African continent, but also of the Diaspora", having a crucial contribution on the birth of the Pan African movement.

Keywords: Edward Wilmot Blyden, African personality, African nationalism, racial pride, Négritude

The first effort to build a West-African Federation was made in 1920, when J. E. Casely Hayford, a Golden Cost lawyer, initiated the *West African Congress* (J. O. Sagay, D. A. Wilson, 1978). He has foreseen the enormous political and organisational possibilities of uniting all British West African intellectuals, sharing the same racial and political unrest. His attempt failed, but the idea was not abandoned, being supported by English speaking states leaders like Namdi Azikiwe and Kwame Nkrumah, but also by francophones like Leopold Sedar Senghor, Sekou Touré, Felix Houphouët-Boigny, Aimée Cesaire. The idea is put into practice in 1950 and 1960, when the ephemeral unions of Ghana-Guinea and Ghana-Guinea-Mali (A. A. Mazrui, Ch. Wondji, 1998) are carried out.

The concept of *Négritude* (blackness) is usually associated with the first president of Senegal Republic, Leopold Sedar Senghor. Although there are

considerable differences of opinion among the African thinkers over the definition and importance of *Négritude* (S. Adotevi, 1972), this concept must be understood as "the component of a vast contemporary movement regarding the freedom, integrity and originality of a part of the black race, the Africans" (L. S. Senghor, 1977, p.69).

In both cases, the understanding of the origin and maturity of these two powerful ideas for the contemporary African ideology cannot be completed without taking into account the XIXth century, which conditions – in theory and practice - their evolution. In the first years of the colonial period, the opposition towards the European political presence was due to the traditional superiors, who tried to chase away the Europeans in order to restore the precedent situation; already to the end of the century, a new form of resistance appears which did not aim to return to the pre-colonial situation. On the contrary, the intention of

the educated Africans by Christian missions or colonial administrations was to take over the control of the political and religious institutions introduced in Africa by the Europeans (R. Oliver, A. Atmore, 1970). They searched to replace the Europeans, and when this proved impossible, in spite the initial assurances (F. M. Bourett, 1960), they attempted to create similar institutions, to replace the European ones. Cultivated Africans tried various alternatives, and we must specify that the ideas of Edward Wilmot Blyden were the starting point of new African institutions compatible both with the European “civilised” ones and with the African political traditions.

The reasons that determined us to approach this subject are numerous. First, taking an interest in the study of the great powers’ colonial politics in Africa, at the end of the XIXth century and the beginning of the XXth century, we established that the British politics adapted in the West Africa, supporting the creation of a trained local elite. Unanticipatedly, it started to react against the racial theories which despised the black race, labelled as an inferior race. This fact helped to discover Blyden, the most representative defender of the black race, who created a true philosophy of the *African personality*. Secondly, his ideas surprised us through modernity, his ideas approaching the fundamental themes of the contemporary African thinking: *the African personality*, *the Pan-Africanism*, the role of the black civilisation in building the present culture and civilisation, ideas that *the common sense* connects with the name of Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor, W.E.B. Du Bois, Cheik Anta Diop, and so on. Thirdly, we were astonished that historians (R. Oliver, A. Atmore, 1970; E. M’Bokolo, 1992) and politicians (K. Nkrumah, 1958; L. S. Senghor, 1977) directly involved in the fight for the West African independence, considered the origins of western Africanism as American Negro, taking into the account that Blyden and his work were present there. We are referring to Marcus A. Garvey’s movement, developed between 1920-1925 in the U.S. and the Antilles. Garvey considered that blacks from all-over the world should come back to Africa, because they could never develop under white domination (E. M’Bokolo, 1992). In a previous work, Elikia M’Bokolo (1985) indicates Blyden’s paternity of the *African personality*, but sustains the American Negro origin of Pan-Africanism. Finally, Marianne Cornevin (1981), E. Jefferson Murphy (1981), Robert W. July (1970) regarded Blyden as the origin point of these ideas. Obviously, all these divergent opinions determined and stimulated

our interest for this theme, our preoccupation being to identify the blydenian origins of West-African nationalism. Through our approach we tried to demonstrate the two-way character of the Antilles-U.S.-West Africa ideas exchange. Through personalities like Blyden, Africa has decisively influenced the African-American body of ideas, the dearest slogans of Marcus A. Garvey - *Back to Africa and Africa for Africans* – being often used by Blyden, during his visits in the U.S.

Finally, we approached the work and personality of Blyden because it seemed to be the most significant personalization of European transformations shaped in West Africa, and of the answers given by the African educated elite to the British colonial policy change to the end of the XIXth century. Then, educated African elite had not found its place in the British colonial system and sought to give their solutions to establish a new African society with institutions and ideology based on black and white racial equality, on its right to exist, starting from the specificity of its traits. And Blyden was the most representative spokesman of this change; he founded the ideology of the African elite approach by developing new concepts of *African personality*, *Pan-Africanism* – which restored the lost confidence due to European racial theories. Since then, Africa, but also the black race, would take their well established place within all the races of the world, a place to be proud of, because, as Blyden put it, she is at the origin of civilization. In this way, Blyden was the lawyer of “black consciousness and racial pride on the African continent but also in the Diaspora, thus contributing to the birth of Pan-African movement” (A. A Mazrui, Ch. Wondji, 1998, p. 533).

Going beyond the initial enthusiasm, systematic treatment of the topic revealed a multitude of difficulties, from the hard-to-reach bibliography, the perception of Blyden's ideas in the time context, to making a real conceptual archaeology to identify and argue the priority of the African thinker. Blyden had very different concerns, being equally a Presbyterian clergyman, academician, politician and administrator in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, diplomat, lecturer, journalist and editor, traveller, linguist.

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Edward Wilmot Blyden was born in 1832, in the Virgin Islands – then part of the Danish Antilles. In 1840 the family moved to Venezuela where, over two

years, he learned Spanish. With the help of American missionaries from the Virgin Islands, he fled to the U.S. in 1850, where he stayed only seven months, discontented of the strong racial discrimination that prohibited him the access to higher theological education (O. D. Lara, 2000). In 1851, he migrated to the independent West African state of Liberia (G. Shepperson, 1960).

Although he did not possess any higher education diplomas, Blyden imposed through intelligence, ample desire of knowledge, and especially by an “active conscience of his race, which was based on the firm belief that black men can be saved only by permanent manifestation of their pride, of their black race achievements, based on historical realities” (E. Jefferson Murphy, 1981, p. 262). These are the features that **brought him into prominence**, some historians seeing him as “the greatest nineteenth century black intellectual” (E. Jefferson Murphy, 1981, p. 262).

Between 1851 and 1885, Blyden lived especially in Liberia, where he studied at “Alexander” High school – where he became teacher and even principal; he is also ordained Presbyterian pastor of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). In 1862, he resigned from the “Alexander”, and he is hired as a teacher in “Liberia” College at whose inauguration, in January 23, 1862, he delivered an “illustrious speech, celebrating the classics” - as participants to the event later affirmed (C. Abayomi Cassell, 1970, p. 225). The College will not be opened immediately because Blyden is sent to the U.S. by President Benson, to encourage black migration to Liberia; the mission was not successful due to disinterest of American Negroes for the whole process and the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War (C. Abayomi Cassell, 1970; O. D. Lara, 2000).

In the following years, he held several ministerial posts - Secretary of State (1865-1866), during President D. B. Warner; Minister of Interior (1880-1882), during President A. W. Gardner (C. Abayomi Cassell, 1970) - and led a number of diplomatic missions and delegations, obtaining in 1877 the accreditation at Queen Victoria’s Court. He was the first black Plenipotentiary received at an European Court (C. Abayomi Cassell, 1970). He was also the rector of the “Liberia” College (1881-1885), his investment speech supporting the capacity of Africans to organize and lead, declaring that the European model is not the only viable one. “Africans need to progress through their own methods. They must demonstrate a capacity different from that of

Europeans. We must show that we are able to lead ourselves, to create our own fate. Let us not be thankful for the European influence that commands our forms of government, draws up our laws, decides in our courts and spreads its ideas in our social environment. You should not believe that Anglo-Saxon methods are the best... We should study the souls of our brothers because they know better the ways of developing our race” (E. Jefferson Murphy, 1981, p. 270).

Mixing in the conflict between the political party which supported mulattos and the one maintaining racial purity, Blyden - partisan of the last position - is forced to move to Sierra Leone in 1885 (E. Jefferson Murphy, 1981). For this reason, he lived over here until his death in 1912, making numerous study trips in England, Egypt, France, and the U.S. (G. Shepperson, 1960).

Although he moved to Sierra Leone only in 1885, Blyden was present here during the years 1871-1874, as representative of the CMS and then as the British colonial administration official. He arrived in August 1871 as a linguist, with the mission- entrusted by Henry Venn, CMS Secretary - to “extend the work of the Anglican Mission to the inside, to convince the European missionaries to respect African institutions and customs, and to speed up the transmission of authority from the Anglican Mission in Sierra Leone to the Native Church” (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 396). On May 31, 1861, in Sierra Leone was established a native church pastorate with nine parishes, but whose supervision and authority remained finally in European hands. On the tenth anniversary of the pastorate, one of its clergy, J. H. Davies appealed for a fully independent native church: “We plead for an institution...that can bring alone the true freedom of the human spirit and body...We request you to aim at establishing at Sierra Leone a pure Native Church...not only for our own children’s use, but for the use of Africa at large” (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 396; see G. Leahu, 1999). His efforts to achieve the objectives produced a lively discontent among European missionaries who got Blyden's suspension on grounds of immorality, although adultery charges proved unfounded (H. R. Lynch, 1964). Considering that he could no longer influence from the inside the missionary policy towards the Africans, he decided to make it through the press and the colonial administration, leading two official expeditions — one to Falaba and another to Futa Jallon in January 1871, and becoming the

Government Agent to the Interior between January 1873 and 1874.

His goal was to know the Muslim population from the inside in order to determine “the end of mutual antagonism between Muslims and black Christians, so that they could cooperate for the good of the black race” (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 401). Discontented that the European missionary education prevented the assertion of “African racial pride” among Africans, pride that has given the Jews “an invincible vitality”, Blyden argues the necessity of founding a West African University in the Republic of Sierra Leone, led and managed by Africans; he starts the newspaper “*Negro*”, which aims “to represent and protect the interests of all blacks” (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 401).

We allowed ourselves this brief overview of the work of E.W. Blyden in Sierra Leone (1871-1874) to make an introduction of his constant concern, safeguarding and promoting the interests of the black race, highlighted by his major works published in Sierra Leone, and especially in the U.S. and Britain (see *Liberias's Offering*, 1862, New York; *The People of Africa*, 1871, New York; *From West Africa to Palestina*, 1873, Freetown; *Africa's Service to the World*, 1880, London; *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 1888, London; *The African Problem and the Method of Its Solution*, 1890, Washington; *West Africa Before Europe*, 1905, London; *The Significance of Liberia*, 1907, Liverpool; *African Life and Customs*, 1908, London). Researching Blyden's writings (H.R. Lynch, 1967, H.R. Lynch, 1965; R.W. July, 1964, R.W. July, 1970), allowed us to identify several major themes, such as *African personality*, *the creation of a powerful West African state* - by uniting all of West Africa, *the achievement of West African consciousness*, through the formation of new African educational and ecclesiastical institutions, allowing the full assertion of African personality.

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1. Blyden's view about the *African personality* was based on his theory of race. The XIXth century European anthropologists claimed that the superiority of a race depends on its physical characteristics, the Caucasoid type being superior to other human types (Ph. D. Curtin, 1964). Blyden disagreed with this allegation, saying that the physical differences between races did not involve racial superiority or inferiority, being only distinctive features. Under normal

circumstances, the black was capable of a physical, intellectual and moral development fully equal to other peoples of the world, but the specific of each race produced a different and private development (H. R. Lynch, 1967). Because of its particularities, each race had its place and role in the existence of the world; it is important that each race discovered its destiny and avoided the temptation of unfamiliar ways: “Every race is equal but separate; there is the issue of differences in endowment, and destiny” (R.W. July, 1964, p. 75). Or “Each race is endowed with peculiar talents, and watchful to the last degree is the great creator over the individuality, the freedom and independence of each. In the music of the universe, each shall give a different sound, but necessary to the grand symphony” (E. M'Bokolo, 1992, p. 349). For this reason, it was wrong for blacks “to submerge themselves in the culture of the white man” because it appears the danger to remain “separate from the powers of the country, given that they were “slaves of foreign ideas” (R.W. July, 1964, p. 76). For Blyden it was obvious that the action for compliance of Africans to western values, to the European way of life, led to stopping the development of the African race, the world being emptied of the fruits of its achievements: “Every race has a soul, and that soul of the race finds expression in its institutions, and to kill those institutions is to kill the soul, a terrible homicide” (L. Spitzer, 1972, p. 109). That's why the need to preserve and return to traditional African institutions.

Distinctive qualities of each breed determine the separation necessity of their development in order to become more productive, to be able to claim full benefits. The example chosen by Blyden was suggestive: the black African is home in Africa, while the white man is stimulated by the European climate to maintain his efficacy. Race separation is needed, especially since the trend of dominance, of imposing one race in front of the other appears in case of a larger approach, so that specific skills are affected. Although the European currently dominates Africa, he will have to leave sooner or later the Africa, with which he does not identify. “It is a truth recognized not only by us, but by strangers too, that Africa should be civilized and raised by Africans, not only because of physical adaptation but also because of the specific African way of thinking” Blyden wrote in *The African Problem and the Method of Its Solution* (R.W. July, 1964, p. 78).

In *African Life and Customs*, work published in the twilight of his life, he attributes to the African

race qualities completely opposite to the European ones: the close unity with the nature, the creation of institutions adapted to the needs of Africa, the high religiosity. Communion with nature is derived from the African capacity “to speak with the land and allow himself to be taught... to beautify the garden and to keep it” (R. W. July, 1964, p. 78).

This type of community is found in the fundamental features of *Négritude*, a concept launched in Paris by Aimé Césaire and L. S. Senghor, around the years 1933-1935. They understand the *Négritude* as a “simple recognition of being black and accepting this, the destiny of our black history and our culture” (L. S. Senghor, 1977, p. 69) or “all the economic, political, intellectual, moral, artistic and social values, not just of black African people, but also of the black minority in America, Asia and Oceania” (L. S. Senghor, 1977, pp. 90-91).

Analyzing the black soul, black man's distinguishing features, Senghor argued that “the Negro is a man of nature. He lives off the land and with the land, in accordance with the Universe” (L. S. Senghor, 1977, p. 92-93). We notice striking similarities with the ideas supported by Blyden, for us lineages are evident.

In *African Life and Customs*, Blyden noted that close communion with nature allows the African ideal custom-build institutions, adapted not only to his needs but also to the needs of regenerating Africa. Thus, traditional African society was based on relations of cooperation - which included a strong family solidarity, a collective ownership of land and its resources - and a government system that was characterized by a democratic justice. Acquiring Western ideas about governance, economic and social life, religion, marriage and family, about the welfare of the community, was a mistake - their understanding of Europe and Africa were fundamentally different. It is true that production in Europe has been collective, but consumption remained individualist, predatory, and competitive - while in Africa, the land and its fruits are available to everyone. Africa never sought poverty, hunger and the standardized existence, which can be found in abundance in the industrial cities of Europe. Increased crime levels on the white continent are evidence of the existence of individual unfulfilled desires; in Africa, such crimes do not exist for individual desires are met. Europe is full of wretched homes and hospitals for the poor, lifeless houses for the elderly, all of these being alienated answers to personal human needs. Such realities are not found in Africa,

where family and the relations within are strong in affection and goodwill. Finally, Africa has solved the problem of marriage accepting the polygamy, which allowed the creation of productive community within the family, but also the elimination of prostitution (R. W. July, 1964).

Blyden believed in the high religiosity of Africans, characterized by animation of all things and equal participation of both the living and the dead to the experience of everyday life. Through the purpose of African religion, the moral superiority that equalled material weaknesses, Africans contributed decisively to the welfare of the world, to universal civilization, carrying out the divine mission. Not incidentally, he wanted the superior skills in the field of spirituality and religion to be sent everywhere, saying that “Africa may be the keeper of the world's spirituality” (R. R. Sklar: in G. M. Carter, P. O'Meara, 1986, p. 2). The divine mission entrusted to Africa is precisely to reaffirm the fundamental spiritual values, a sense of peace and human brotherhood, humanism - threatened by European growing materialism: “The tendency of the West-Aryan genius is ever to divorce God from his works and to lay great stress upon human capabilities and achievement. Man is an end, not a means... Religion is to be cherished as a means of subserving temporal and material purposes. The material progress is the end of the human race” (R.W. July, 1964, p. 80).

In conclusion, Blyden adopted the conception of a world divided into races, with particular qualities, but equal in dignity, their interaction leading the birth of history as a divine plan. Mixing and cohabitation were not recommended, as evidenced by the inside Africans who remained purer than those of the coast, influenced by Europeans; for the same reason of impossibility of multiracial coexistence, it was desired the return of blacks from America (O. D. Lara, 2000). The integrity of the black race must be defended of misleading influences, both secular and religious, the European preached Christianity being emptied of its real content. If Europeans were destined to work for material and temporal progress of humanity, their racial strength was science and politics and individualism was the basis of their society - Africans possessed a different *racial personality*. They are members of a race characterized by a collective and cooperative spirit, not a selfish and competitive one (R. W. July, 1964).

The concept of African personality is fundamental in the doctrines of modern African nationalism. Léopold Sédar Senghor, speaking about *Négritude*, argued that it is simply the “African

Personality of English-speaking Negro... discovered and proclaimed by the New Negro American movement” (L. S. Senghor, 1977, p. 69). Its main argument is a quote from a proclamation of Longston Hughes, member of the Negro Renaissance Movement (M. Cornevin, 1981), which appeared immediately after the First World War: “We, the creators of the new black generation, want to express *our black personality*, without shame or fear...” (L. S. Senghor, 1977, p. 69). Also Senghor said that “the discovery of black values and black awareness is born in the U.S.” (L. S. Senghor, 1977, p. 274). The same American Negro pathway is supported by Kwame Nkrumah, the one that established the concept of *African personality* and used to say that Marcus A. Garvey’s philosophy and opinions had influenced him decisively during the time spent in America, through the proclaimed racial pride (K. Nkrumah, 1958).

Note that both French-speaking and English-speaking leaders of West African nationalism relate to garveyism and indicate an American-Negro origin of the concept of *African personality*. We would consider this lineage at least strange, bearing in mind that Blyden placed in West Africa - long before the emergence of Garvey’s movement - his theory of *African personality* and used the best-known garveyist slogans - *Africa for Africans and Back to Africa* (G. Shepperson, 1960; Ph. Decraine, 1959). In our opinion, the explanation is not in the American-Negro origin of these ideas, in the influence exerted on Blyden, but in the range of movement, somewhat limited, of his ideas, both in terms of space and of the social categories that had access to them, the educated (Europeanized) Africans. Secondly, let us not forget that Blyden’s revolutionary ideas have emerged in the late XIXth century, a time of intense colonial activity, of effective occupation of Africa by the European powers, who could not easily accept their popularization.

Obviously, this does not mean they could not reach the U.S., given the “trade of ideas and political concepts of the slaves’ descendants of the Antilles, North America and the ancient continent”, as a historian (G. Shepperson, 1960, p. 299), interested in the influence of American-Negro on the development of African nationalism, articulated very suggestively. While assessing the originality of Blyden’s ideas and their chronological precedence, he believed that the purpose of exchange of ideas was only from America to Africa (G. Shepperson, 1960), which is hard to believe in the mentioned situation.

Our arguments are not very numerous at this stage of research, but we consider being sufficiently relevant. Thus, the essence of Blyden’s ideas was very popular in the U.S., through his lectures, his published articles and papers, through his contacts with many American-Negro intellectuals. In 1911, he became a founding member of the history society - *Negro Society for Historical Research*, with Lewanika from Barotseland, Casely Hayford and Duse Muhammad, the last becoming the most important ideologist of Garvey’s movement (G. Shepperson, 1960). Secondly, it is attested the presence of many American-Negro intellectuals in West Africa, in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, Lagos - where the impact of Blyden’s ideas was very strong - , as for example Martin R. Delaney or Alexander Crummell (G. Shepperson, 1960).

Thirdly, the manifesto, following the first Pan-African meeting held in London in 1900 and entitled “To the Nations of the World,” respected Blyden’s views, although he did not participate. Written by W.E.B. DuBois, who had no personal contact with Blyden (R. R. Sklar: in G. M. Carter, P. O’Meara, 1986), the call includes Blyden’s famous statement: “*The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line*” (H. R. Lynch, 1967, p. 241), which shows intimate contact with his ideas. While Senghor and Nkrumah relate to the American-Negro thinkers - DuBois and Garvey (L. S. Senghor, 1977) - they were decisively influenced - in our opinion - by the body of ideas developed by the great African thinker, E. W. Blyden.

There is not an identity of views about the first mention of the concept of *African personality*. Thus, Elika M’Bokolo states that the expression *African personality* seems to have been used for the first time in 1902, when E. W. Blyden, inaugurating an independent African Protestant church in Nigeria, said that “Africa is in the struggle for a personality” (E. M’Bokolo, 1985, p. 348). L. Spitzer mentions the year 1903, when referring to racial differences between Europeans and blacks, Blyden argued that “black Africans possessed a different racial personality” (E. M’Bokolo, 1985, p. 109).

E. Jefferson Murphy does not precisely date the emergence of the concept, speaking of the early twentieth century when “he forms a deep conception of African personality” (E. M’Bokolo, 1985, p. 265). H. R. Lynch, author of numerous monographs and studies on particular aspects of life and work of Blyden, progresses the year 1893 for the first use of the *African*

Personality in a study entitled *Race and Study*, published in Freetown in May 1893 (E. M'Bokolo, 1985). At whatever time the first introduction of the concept was, for us it matters more the ability to demonstrate Blyden's paternity.

Blyden was not content only with the statement. He has developed a true *African personality theory*, "based on the specificity of the black race, from its role in the evolution of humanity, trying to define the fundamental qualities and characteristics that contributed to the uniqueness of African culture" (E. Jefferson Murphy 1981, p. 265). Thus, the paper *African Life and Customs*, published in 1908 in London, sought to demonstrate the existence of a "very well organized and thorough African economic and social system, worthy of respect, unbreakable and impregnable" (E. Jefferson Murphy 1981, p. 265). For this reason, Africans do not need to imitate the European model, but they have a duty to preserve "the flavour of their own race", as argued at the Freetown Unity Club's meeting in June 1891: "Your first duty is to be you yourselves... You need to keep in mind constantly that you are Africans, not Europeans, blacks, not whites, that you were created with special physical qualities for the glory of our Creator, and for the happiness and perfection of humanity; and in your search to transform yourselves into something else you are not only spoiling your nature and turning aside from your destiny, but you are robbing humanity of the part you ought to bring to its complete development and welfare, and you become as salt which has lost its savour - good for nothing, just to be cast out and trodden down by others" (E. Jefferson Murphy 1981, p. 267).

Following the trips made within Africa, Blyden began to regard the people here as holding the true *African personality*: "in the European settlements on the coast, the fatal effects of false or forged Europeanism are visible. All those who were in Europe bring and broadcast among their people an inclination to some European traditions, of which the educated majority seek to discard. But, fortunately, the inhospitable climate... prevents this pseudo-civilization, called "progress", to spread inwards. The tribes still retain their simplicity and remain unaffected" (L. Spitzer: in Ph. D. Curtin, 1972, p. 111).

As a colonial official in Sierra Leone, he recommended to the Governor and the Anglican Mission to civilize the area, preserving the fundamental African customs and institutions, unfortunately affected by the Christian missionaries.

Ignoring the basic principles Christ preached, Christianity came to Africa "not to save souls, but to rule bodies", showing all sins, pride, arrogance, hypocrisy. "How is Christianity, bearing on its back the burden of its caste prejudices, the liquor traffic, and its ethical intolerance, ever to make way among these people?" (R. W. July, 1964, p. 82). Hence, Blyden idealised the Islamic religion, stressing tolerance instead of prejudice, and human dignity in preference to racial discrimination: "The Mohammedan religion...extinguishes all distinctions founded upon race, colour, or nationality. To the African,...the religion of Islam furnishes the greatest solace and the greatest defence" (R. W. July, 1964, p. 82). We do not doubt that Blyden's information about the inland, the habits and lives of Africans were very serious, due to direct contact, but his writings, for antithetical reasons, idealize them, local Africans becoming an "abstraction", which had no connection with African realities. Moreover, in different circumstances, he found the inland far from perfection, citing "stupid paganism", and other "horrors" and "monstrosities" practiced by the populations there; he also admitted that local people lived a "wild live" in a "passive barbarism", only because of the "cruel environmental conditions" (L. Spitzer, 1972, p. 111; E. Jefferson Murphy 1981, p. 263; O. D. Lara, 2000, pp.149-150). It should not surprise us these opinion swings, natural to a person with a European education and willing to provide such an ideal capable of demonstrating beyond any reproach his theory of *African personality* about the special features of the black race.

In Blyden's approach to shape *African personality*, history plays a major role, highlighting the fact that Africans had a glorious past, they have "a history" to report – in spite European opinions. Stressing the past had to be made using facts that would undermine the distrust of Europeans in the ability of blacks to have had a prodigious culture and civilization. For this reason, Blyden will not report any achievements of former West African empires (Ghana, Mali, and Songhai) that the Europeans knew little. Nor the ones closer to the present (the actions of Osman dan Fodio, El Hadji Omar or Ashanti Confederation victories, or Samory, and Mahdi) that could be taken as evidence of African heroism, but they could not argue the honour and reputation of the race due to their isolation and uncertain future developments. Then, we need to consider the lack of knowledge about the African history, both at the Europeans and the Africans, the first even denying the existence of African history

before their arrival. Thirdly, there is a danger that a re-enactment of African history to be considered false, the African possibility of material reconstruction was being unattainable and oral traditions were being totally neglected in a century dominated by positivism.

Lacking the potential to rebuild the African history in advantageous terms, but also because of the need to impose before the Europeans - sceptical of the potential of "inferior" Africans - Blyden reported to the ancient black African glory, leading the black origins to a mythical time and space - the origin of civilization. Thus, in his study *The Negro in Ancient History* and in his travel memoir *From West Africa to Palestine*, he argued contribution that blacks have brought to the Egyptians, and thus to the European civilization. Starting from the Bible, he said that the black race descended from Ham through Cush and Nimrod - and so it was responsible for raising the Tower of Babel, architectural experience which later enabled the lifting of the Great Pyramids of Gizeh. Quoting Herodotus and Homer, Blyden argued the presence of "woolly hair" Ethiopians in Egypt and highlighted the obvious Negroid features of the Sphinx of Gizeh. "Her features are decidedly of the African or Negro type, with expanded nostrils. If, then, the Sphinx was placed here, is not the inference clear as to the peculiar type or race to which that king belonged?" (L. Spitzer, 1972, p. 120). It also appreciated the pyramids as the hard work of "the enterprising sons of Ham", the racial ancestors of contemporary African negro, people who gave civilization to Greece and thus were the teachers of old poets, historians and mathematicians: "This, thought I, was the work of my African progenitors...Feelings came over me far different from those I have ever felt when looking at the mighty works of European genius. I felt that I had a peculiar heritage in the Great Pyramid built...by the enterprising sons of Ham, from which I descended. The blood seemed to flow faster through my veins. I seemed to hear the echo of those illustrious Africans. I seemed to feel the impulse from those stirring characters who sent civilization to Greece...I felt lifted out of the common-place grandeur of modern times; and, could my voice have reached every African in the world, I would have earnestly addressed him...: "Retake your Fame!" (E. Jefferson Murphy, 1981, p. 265).

Blyden sustained that the black people migrated from Egypt to the coast of Guinea, a process during which changes in climate, food and lifestyle caused the loss of many of the old talents and cultural

traits, the slave trade destroying what ever survived (E. Jefferson Murphy, 1981).

E.W. Blyden was not the only one to write about "Africa's great past". Even before him, Dr. Africanus Horton in *West African Countries and People*, published in London in 1867, believed that in antique times, Africa was the origin of science and literature, Greece and Rome acquiring these arts through periods of apprenticeship made by Solon, Plato, and Pythagoras on the African continent in search of knowledge. Moreover, Christianity owes something to African development, since the Primitive Church Fathers - *Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, Clemens Alexandrinus*, - were African (C. Wauthier, 1977).

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2. To create the conditions necessary to fully develop the *African personality*, Blyden supported the idea of setting up a powerful West African state that would allow the construction of a West African nation. Here we find the first manifestation of the idea of creating a major political group, beyond ethnic and tribal differences, an idea developed in the twentieth century by J. E. Casely Hayford. He tried to form a federation of West African territories by forming the *National Congress of British West Africa* in March 1920. A list of demands was adopted after two weeks of deliberations, which included the creation of an African university, filling judicial posts by Africans, representing Africans in colonial administration, the cessation of political actions of European states which do not respect the wishes of African populations (J. O. Sagay, D. A. Wilson, 1978). We remembered Casely Hayford's action because he was the most ardent admirer and disciple of Blyden, being deeply influenced by his ideas and concepts. For this reason, we are entitled to argue that what he achieved in 1920 and developing the concept of the West African nation were due to the influence of Blyden and not the result of his own ideas, as some historians have argued (J. O. Sagay, D. A. Wilson, 1978).

Blyden saw the creation of the Great West African nation in several successive ways. At first, he thought that Liberia would be its core, maintaining its territorial expansion in West Africa, justified by a true historical mission, "U.S. providing Africa with the effective instrument of unlimited progress and development, through the Republic of Liberia" (C. Abayomi Cassell, 1970, p. 344). The growth of the

American-Negro and Antillean migration, - between 1848-1861, there were received 6000 migrants, compared to the 5000 arrived in the last 30 years (C. Abayomi Cassell, 1970, p. 343) -, the territorial extension of Liberia (R. & M. Cornevin, 1974), convinced Blyden that a large West African nation is emerging; he went to America to participate in the Recruitment campaign of American – Negro migrants for Liberia. The burst of the American Civil War and in particular, the abolition of slavery have lowered the interest in emigration, a fact criticized by Blyden, disappointed that they were diverted from their lawful duty - to help develop a large West African nation (H.R. Lynch, 1965). However, he hoped that the nation would be created, for American-Negros would never achieve full equality with the former masters, the whites. Not incidentally, in *Liberia's Offering*, published in New York in 1862, he presented in idyllic colours Liberia and its future, arguing its need for the U.S. financial support. “My heart is in Liberia, and longs for the welfare of Africa. An African nationality is the great desire of my soul...Liberia is a beautiful tropical country, teeming with the rich fruits of a perpetual summer, with mountains and valleys, and rivers and brooks. In visions of the future, I behold those beautiful hills - the banks of those harming streams, the verdant plains and flowery field, the salubrious highlands in primeval innocence and glory, and those fertile districts watered everywhere as the garden of the Lord: I see them all taken possession of by the returning exiles from the West, trained for the work of re-building waste place under severe discipline and hard bondage. I see, too, their brethren hasting to welcome them from the slopes of the Niger...Mohammedans and Pagans, chiefs and people, all coming to catch something of the inspiration the exiles have brought...and to march back hand-in-hand with their returned brethren towards the sunrise for the regeneration of a continent...” (E. Jefferson Murphy, 1981, p. 263-264).

Unfortunately, this stirring speech did not correspond to the hesitant progress of this young republic, due to the financial and economic difficulties, the inconsistency of national policy, all of these further encumbered by continuous conflicts between settlers and inside tribes, and by its political weakness (C. Abayomi Cassell, 1970). Taking into account that the Liberian expansion based on a regular migration from the New World had not the expected success, Blyden – true to his idea about Liberia’s historic role - always

sought to urge the territorial extension to the interior of the continent, but also to attract educated Africans from the West African English colonies. Again, the results were modest (C. Abayomi Cassell, 1970).

Without U.S. financial and human support, it became obvious the reality that Liberia lacked not only the inclination, but also the resources to become the core of a large West African state and a power factor in West Africa. For this reason, especially after 1871, Blyden turned his attention to the British, which he tried to convince to extend their jurisdiction and influence in West Africa. His action was prompted by the existence of a strong British tradition of humanitarianism and commercial instincts; the protectorate could have brought significant revenues through increased trade with the Africans. There are several letters sent by Blyden to the Sierra Leone Governor, A. E. Kennedy, who sent them to the Colonial Office, where they “were read with great interest”, but they could not influence the liberals’ decision to limit their new interventions in West Africa just to pay stipends to the major inside leaders. Other letters will be sent after 1874, when British policy becomes more active due to the coming to power of Disraeli (J.D. Hargreaves, 1963).

Parallel with his action by the government, Blyden appealed directly to English public opinion to get support for his plea to extend the power of England in West Africa. Thus, in a speech held in July 1874 in London, he valued that “England had it in her power to determine to a great extent what the conditions in Central and West Africa would be over the next ten or twenty years... Much has been made but more remains to be done by England in order to maintain its philanthropic history, to be able to withdraw honourably from the coast” (H. R. Lynch, 1967, p. 295).

His last attempt to persuade the British government to extend its territorial jurisdiction in West Africa was made after the end of the Berlin Colonial Conference in October 1885, in a letter to the English governor, which “the Colonial Office received with sympathy” (J. D. Hargreaves, 1974, pp. 182-183). He argued that the British action was needed immediately to prevent the French expansion in western Soudan and because the inland tribes had “good will and friendship for England, and since the extension of Samory’s wins, they were all very worried and wanted to find the protection of a strong and active government” (J. D. Hargreaves, 1974, pp. 182). Also, he reminded that Samory needed the support against the French, and

wanted to place his wins under British protectorate. This collaboration “could create a settlement for millions of farmers and black workers willing to migrate from the U.S.” (J. D. Hargreaves, 1974, p. 183).

After observing that England is reluctant to assume new responsibilities in West Africa, Blyden turned his hopes for the U.S. government. During a visit to the U.S. in 1880, he met with important American officials like William H. Evarts, Secretary of State, Carl Schurz, Minister of Interior, and even with Rutherford B. Hayes, the U.S. President, with whom he discussed the issue of financial support for American-Negro migration to Africa. Moreover, Blyden argued publicly for the U.S. to assume responsibilities in Africa, on the grounds that “The United States is the only country which.....entering on the West Coast, through Liberia,...may stretch a chain of colonies of her own citizens through the whole length of the Soudan, from the Niger to the Nile – from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean” (H. R. Lynch, 1965, p. 379).

Neither now nor in subsequent visits, would Blyden get support for his plans, which did not coincide with American imperial policy, at least in terms of territories outside the Pacific Ocean (P. Milza, 1990).

If until 1885, Blyden’s political ideal was to create a English-speaking West African state and to eliminate French influence, since the clarification of influence areas in West Africa, France became Blyden’s favourite colonizing power because it did what he wanted England and the U.S. to make: first, it strengthened and increased the old coastal claims as much as possible, then it continued the conquest of Soudan, from Senegal to Lake Chad (M. & R. Cornevin, 1974; R. Oliver, A. Atmore, 1970; D. Bouche, 1991). In this vast area unit, controlled by French, Blyden saw the origin of the great West African state that he dreamed for years, especially since the French West Africa was characterized by an integrated development based on agricultural development, building roads, railways and docks (R. Oliver, A. Atmore, 1970). The higher level of coherence among the French possessions in this part of Africa, which included seven colonies (Soudan, Mauritania, Haute-Volta, Niger, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, Dahomey), was due to the fact that they were extensions of the old territories of Senegal, the main access road being the river Senegal; also, in all lands, the conquest was made by Senegalese troops (R. Oliver, A. Atmore, 1970). Secondly, Blyden praised

the French for better appreciation of the authorities and Muslim communities, which were used to protect order and dignity of millions of people within Africa (R. R. Sklar: in G. M. Carter, P. O’Meara, 1986). His impression that the French colonial administration, unlike the English one, gave more respect to traditional African institutions was false in fact, the French being less interested in imposing European customs and structures.

Blyden supported the European colonial expansion in West Africa due to his intimate conviction that the European ruling was temporary and that it would allow the formation of that great West African nation. His idea was based on the hardships of European colonization in tropical Africa due to climate and the huge mortality caused by tropical diseases (H. R. Lynch, 1965). Because of its temporary nature, the European ruling had to prepare Africans for political independence, so that the African elite would be formed after leaving Africa, and could take the political leadership. Blyden reminded Europeans consistently the humanitarian reasons of their intervention in Africa - the elimination of slavery and inhumane practices, the ending of tribal wars and civilizing Africans in order to take part in the evolution of humanity -, while admitting that the purpose of Europe was to use Africa for its own interests (E. W. Blyden, 1883).

However, Europe served unconsciously Africa, preparing it for a future. His great fear was that imperial powers could cancel African customs and institutions, by ignoring them, even if they were useful, Africa becoming a “black reproduction of Europe” (H. R. Lynch, 1967, p. 231). For this reason, he always insisted, especially after 1880, through publications and especially through the conferences held in Europe, on explaining the African social system and how to govern better the Africans (H. R. Lynch, 1967). He also defended the need of scientific knowledge of the African population, by constantly encouraging educated Africans to explore their own society and to explain it to the world. He encouraged the pioneering efforts in explaining African society made by John Mensah Sarbah (1897) - *Fanti Customary Laws*, 1897; J. E. Casely Hayford - *Gold Coast Native Institutions: With Thoughts Upon A Healthy Imperial Policy for the Gold Coast and Ashanti*, 1903, (H. R. Lynch, 1967), and by the brave Mary Kingsley, who made three study trips to the French Equatorial Africa, publishing *Travels in West Africa* (London, 1897) and *West African Studies* (London, 1898) (J. E. Flint, 1963).

Blyden welcomed the establishment in London in 1901, of the African Society, whose aim was “to encourage scientific work on the culture and African people”; he was one of the first vice-presidents (H. R. Lynch, 1967, p. 235). His own effort to unveil the African, by studying the ancestral habits, was made in 1908 with the publication of the work *African Life and Customs*, in which he demonstrated that there was an African social and economic system, ideally organized compared with the European one, characterized by “excessive individualism and unscrupulous competition” (R. R. Sklar: in G. M. Carter, P. O’Meara, 1986, p. 4).

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3. Along with trying to set up a West African State, Blyden sought to create the West African community awareness using communication bridges between Christians and Muslims, by organizing an educational system in accordance with African traditions, by building African independent churches, by founding the nationalist press.

a. Blyden understood that any project of building a state and a West African nation needs to take into consideration the Islamic factor due to the influence and numerical strength. He was deeply impressed by the Islamic religious movements in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, which led to its rapid spread and establishment of a new economic, social and political order in West Africa (R. & M. Cornevin, 1974). For this reason, Blyden was concerned with the removal of prejudice against African Muslims and how to build bridges between them and Christians. Thus, after 1871, he began conferencing and constantly writing about West Africa Islam, to organize an integrated education, in which Muslims were taught English, western science elements and Christians Arabic. The result was that he managed to remove the distrust of the West African Muslim communities from western education and create strong links between representatives of both religions.

b. Another way, in which Blyden sought to create West African community awareness, was by organizing an education in line with African traditions that allowed training from the elementary level to the university. Because education was organized and controlled by missionaries, Blyden, like other West African nationalists, vehemently criticized their system, because it imposed European ideas and values,

supporting the idea of natural inferiority of the black race. “The exact problem of African education is how to develop the powers of the African. The method followed in general is illogical because... is used without studying the human and its intellectual opportunities... producing usually only caricatures of foreign customs... Studying in Europe, the African becomes an alien from himself and his fellow citizens. He is not African nor in feeling, nor in purpose. He can not breathe African air through the lessons he is imbued with. The smell of the African earth is not in him; moreover everything is Europe and European...” (R. W. July, 1964, p. 83).

The main charge against the European missionary education was that it hindered the development of African racial pride among Africans, taking away their vitality and originality necessary for management activities (H. R. Lynch, 1964; O. D. Lara, 2000). That advanced the need of building a West African university. His first attempt was in Sierra Leone (1871-1874), when he obtained the affiliation of Fourah Bay College to Durham University (H. R. Lynch, 1965) in 1876 that meant very little compared with the initial program, in which the university had to create a new social force, new institutions, but also a new literature. After becoming the rector of the Liberia College (1881), Blyden made it official that he believed the college as a West-African institution whose purpose was “to counter European influence and correct the erroneous presentation of African and Negro”, mission that had to be accomplished only by Africans because they could understand the African realities (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 403). Despite the hopes of educated West Africans, Blyden’s leadership was unsuccessful; he failed to achieve its objectives. The causes of failure are many: multiple responsibilities at the time (he was the Minister of the Interior between 1880-1882; he got involved in the migration campaign of American-Negros between 1882-1883, and because of that he resided more in the U.S.); lack of tact and diplomacy in business administration, leading to teachers’ dislike; his conception of education - particularly the support to return to African traditional education - unreciprocated by other teachers (H. R. Lynch, 1967). To all these, we should add Blyden’s inability to implement his ideas, being more of a visionary, a man of ideas than a practitioner.

His attempt held in Lagos (1896) was also unsuccessful despite favourable conditions: Lagos was the richest and most progressive English territory in West Africa; both the governor and the Colonial Office

had agreed with his idea, provided that the financial support came from the Africans (H. R. Lynch, 1965). The educated African elite was excited, but the public subscription campaign failed miserably, a disgusted Blyden commenting on the “lamentable incapacity of the people and their invincible apathy to anything but the accumulation of money which they know not how to use” (H. R. Lynch, 1965, p. 387).

c. To promote West African unity, together with the university, a particular role should have, in Blyden's view, the inauguration of an Independent African Church, which disregarded many confessions brought by European missionaries and to be led by Africans. In that action, he was sustained by African ministers and some laic people, but he clashed with the opposition of European missionaries, the confessional sectarianism of Africans and the difficulty of gathering the necessary funds to support such an institution with an unconfessional character (H. R. Lynch, 1965).

Although the idea of setting up a West African independent church was discussed in inter-religious meetings, the African pastors were undecided. Accordingly, laics led by W. E. Cole, a rich merchant in Lagos, disappointed by African pastors' disorientation and encouraged by Blyden's attitude, had set up - in August 1891 - the United Native African Church, the first independent African church in West Africa. It will merge in 1901 with the Independent Native Baptist Church, founded in 1888 by Majola Agbebi, another disciple of Blyden, viewed as “an outstanding African personality” (H. R. Lynch, 1965, p. 383), Blyden considered the moment of Agbebi's inaugural oath, in December 21, 1902, in Lagos as the moment in which “Africa is struggling for a separate personality” (G. Shepperson, 1960, p. 310).

The emergence of the United Native African Church was a form of protest against religious and political tutelage of Europeans. Not incidentally, the name of the church does not contain the word Christianity; it was found guilty of black race's alienation, and dogmas started anyway to be different, God became black and hell white. Also, the church wanted to be above religious differences, its message applying to all Africans, which gave Pan-African dimensions to this approach, just as with the university (C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, H. Moniot, 1974). Freedom from the European tutelage was the first step toward their dream of human liberation from white domination, so we have to see in its emergence a form of political protest - not an explicit one,

because of the inability for open political manifestation under colonial occupation. We also have the confirmation from the research of religion sociology, which demonstrated that this type of event always appears on a social fund of “anxiety, frustration and oppression” (J. C. Froelich, 1969, p. 57).

The new church will maintain its Christian character, but it will Africanize in the same time by taking the cult of the dead, with traditional purification, with offerings and sacrifices and the practice of healing the sick through prayer, accompanied by incantations and rituals, very similar to magical practices (J. C. Froelich, 1969).

d. In conducting the West African community spirit, along with the establishment of the university and the church, a particular role was retained by the press. Blyden considered the press as an indispensable means to achieve an aim, fact proven by its active participation in the establishment of newspapers and the permanent collaboration with major newspapers and magazines throughout West Africa (C. Fyfe, 1962).

Thus, in April 1872, he sets up in Sierra Leone, the newspaper *The Negro*, and several months later, *The Ethiopian*, a monthly educational publication; in 1874, he supports the development of *West African Reporter* “whose declared aim was to forge a bond of unity among English-speaking West Africans and closing the links between Liberia and Sierra Leone” (C. Fyfe, 1962, p. 462).

In 1884, he helped shape the newspaper *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, who became one of the most important of its time (C. Fyfe, 1962). During his stay in Lagos, Blyden's name is associated with the emergence of another successful newspaper, *The Lagos Weekly Record*, “one of the most important propagators of the earliest Nigerian nationalism” (H. R. Lynch, 1965). He also worked on numerous other West African newspapers and magazines - *Fraser's Magazine*, *The Watchman and West African Record*, *West African Reporter*, *Sierra Leone Times*, *Methodist Herald* and so on (H. R. Lynch, 1967); the media development in the region is one of the features that particularizes it throughout Africa and explains the profound differences between English speaking and French-speaking black African nationalisms (M. Comevin, 1981).

The most important newspaper in terms of West African nationalist program was *The Negro*. Having Blyden as publisher, it appeared in April 1872, due to the generous support of five wealthy merchants from

Sierra Leone, devoted to the idea of asserting Africans rights (H. R. Lynch, 1964). The newspaper intended to stimulate Africans to be proud of their race, as Blyden stated in the first issue: "It has been called the *Negro*...because it is intended to represent and defend the interest of that peculiar type of humanity known as the Negro, with all its affiliated and collateral branches whether on this continent or elsewhere. *West African* was considered definite enough, but too exclusive for the comprehensive intentions entertained by the promoters of the scheme: to recognize and greet the brotherhood of the race wherever found...The term is perfectly legitimate and under our circumstances indispensable" (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 402).

Newspaper publishers have wanted clearly from the beginning and throughout the publication that *Negro* became a newspaper for all black people, a pan-Negro organ, character questioned by some historians. By looking at the single copy left, which contains "four pages of purely local news", H. R. Lynch says that "its claim to be a pan-Negro body is more symbolic than real" (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 402). We hadn't the opportunity to directly study the problem, but we noticed that the above mentioned author contradicts himself when he quoted from a letter from the Anglican bishop of Sierra Leone, Henry Cheetham, which we present below because it is very significant in understanding the atmosphere created by Blyden and his paper in the region. "I turned in my diocese. We found here that the influence of Mr. Hennessy's administration and the presence of Mr. Blyden have produced most important and unfortunate results on the minds of native the pastors and some of the other upper natives... national feeling is not finding expression in *The Negro* but *The Negro* is spreading it on thick before the people are ready" (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 402).. We believe that the bishop's assessment is sufficiently conclusive for the "unwanted" effects arising from the particular activity of *The Negro*, and of Blyden. The same bishop, speaking to CMS Secretary, in April 1873, considered that "the great source of evil is Mr. Blyden; he insisted on the feelings of his race, that a powerful and virulent anti-white reaction emerged" (H. R. Lynch, 1964, p. 402). It was no coincidence that after Blyden returned in Liberia in 1874, the newspaper was closed.

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The impact of Blyden's ideas on the African educated elite was felt at least contradictory: on the one

hand, they struck in their Europeanity, in the ideas and behaviours that led to acquiring the European lifestyle, in their very existence of "civilized blacks". In addition, these ideas were extremely attractive. The belief in the existence of a distinct *African personality* and the confidence in the destiny of the black race acted as a real "psychological balm" (L. Spitzer, 1972, p. 112), allowing curative action to the personal and racial pride, so affected by Europeans' racism.

Influenced by Blyden, many educated Africans began to assign the causes of their difficult situation to the "true perverting of the black racial personalities through random Europeanization" (L. Spitzer, 1972, p. 112). In this context, they begin to believe that blind imitation of the European way of life is totally inadequate for the African environment, many trying to remove the "tyranny of foreign habits" (L. Spitzer, 1972, p. 112), by Africanising names and garments (L. Spitzer, 1972). These trials were to prove the point, both theirs and the Europeans, that there are no longer the imitators of Europe and that they have created a culture, consistent with the *African personality*, but not identical with the barbarous customs of the "uncivilized" natives.

We see here a certain ambiguity, which is specific to acculturated and educated Africans: on one hand they proclaim the freedom from the influence of the European model and a return to tradition, on the other, they do not want to identify with them, continuing to maintain the European structures. In fact, it is an ambivalence, very well noticeable at Blyden, too: he was an Europeanized African, the education, concepts, his fundamental ideas were European; he was a Christian and not animistic; he quoted from the Bible and the classics in order to argue his points of view; he used the European type of thinking analysis (R. W. July, 1964). It is a fact that should not surprise or contrary us, the very idea of nationalism - with its elements of equality, social and national freedom - is a European invention of the nineteenth century, and then imposed to the rest of the world. Blyden's biographer, H. R. Lynch, has hypothesized that he was influenced by "the writings of philosophers and European nationalists like Herder, Fichte, Hegel and Mazzini, who advocated the national and racial unity and confirmed that each people has its special mission to fulfil" (H. R. Lynch, 1967, p. 60). Personally we do not share this vision because Blyden viewed the issue in a broader racial context; he said that the dignity and integrity of a racial group were lost by foreign

occupation, despite the independence prior to colonial occupation.

A second element of his ambivalence is his desire for national independence, the critical action regarding the European occupation, while praising the colonizer. Blyden's tribute in 1891, made to the British colonial administration in Lagos was significant: "What a change took place even during the short life of a generation! Christianity and English philanthropy, as well as the British art of governance and commercial activities, have brought the things promised closer to the present; and in any place, the British government reached this coast... the native regular prayer is *God save the Queen*" (R. W. July, 1964, p. 85).

In fact, Blyden's dilemma is the dilemma of today's African intellectual leaders, which he anticipated nearly a century ago. Their ambivalence is not condemned, because their resorts are not servile to the colonizing power, as assessed for example by R. W. July, which claimed that the quoted praise above "would have made even Cecil Rhodes blush" (R.W. July, 1964, p. 85). We consider this view, and all the others expressed in the same way, totally unfounded; it may be explained at first sight either by a superficial approach, or by an ideological positioning of the author.

In our opinion, more factors must be taken into account to understand and explain his attitude. First, everything must be viewed in the context of the time. Then, he considered political imperialism as a necessary stage of historical development that could transform the world, if it was used with wisdom.

Blyden, and many other contemporaries, shared the pro-imperial feelings, considering them to be the most progressive. Do not forget that Karl Marx himself approved the British colonial expansion in India, considering it the only way to civilize it (G. Leclerc, 1972). Not incidentally, the colonial period was perceived – both by colonizers and the African educated elite - as a mandatory step in the natural evolution of the world to civilization, which is why it was so desired (H. Brunschwig, 1963).

Thirdly, in Blyden's concept, building a large West African state and a great nation was only possible with the support of a great imperial power. For this reason he was a partisan for the cooperation with Britain and France, becoming close and very well received by all the British governors of West Africa, and also by the Colonial Office. Blyden was convinced that in this way he could influence the colonial policy in the area, and given the dominance exerted by

Europe on the world, when the U.S. expressed their disinterest, what better things he could have done? Already examples of the resistance impossibility to the victorious European pressure were contemporary with Blyden (Ashanti wars, Samory or the Mahdist State's failure). Fourth, we want to say that Blyden's approach was not political, but cultural. This orientation is explained by Blyden through his observations of the Europeans trials to demonstrate Africans' cultural inferiority, their values compared with those of Europe. In defence of African values, he created the cultural nationalism "shield"; if he has accepted the idea of close political collaboration with colonial ruling, he resolutely opposed any concessions in the cultural field.

Thus, with the occasion of official discussions in England, he said: "All African thinkers cooperate gladly with England and France, if they agree with the indigenous ideas, customs and traditions" (R. R. Sklar, 1986, p. 3). Blyden understood that any sustained confrontation for political independence of British colonies, besides the fact that it was premature, would have led for his quick conviction.

Finally, the establishment of a West African state required a sense of community, a sense of belonging to a wider area, which transcended the tribe, ethnicity, religion or any artificial territorial division. Here is where the culture and institutions that the African thinker considered fundamental intervened: independent church and school

That Blyden was perceived by his contemporaries as a leading representative of the black race, the defender of its interests and not as a person dedicated to the colonial power is still an argument of the value of his message. Not incidentally, J. E. Casely Hayford offered his activity a universal character: "Blyden ...was a god descended upon earth to teach the Ethiopians a new the way of life. He came not in thunder, or with great sound, but in the garb of a humble teacher, a John the Baptist among his brethren, preaching racial and national salvation. From land to land, and from shore to shore, his message was the self-same one, which, interpreted in the language of the Christ, was: What shall it profit a race if it shall gain the whole world and lose its own soul?" (H. R. Lynch, 1965, p. 388).

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