

Urban Issues

Researching Colonial Childhoods: Images and Representations of Children in Nigerian Newspaper Press, 1925-1950

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Abstract: This article takes an introductory excursion into newspaper sources for researching Nigerian children's history during the colonial period by analyzing and describing items including news, editorials, stories, photos, advertisements, columns, debates, features, and letters among others. It situates these newspaper sources within the context of the circumstances under which they were produced and the prevailing politics of identity, gender, and agency, on the one hand, and the interaction between the forces of "tradition" and "modernity" on the other. Instead of approaching children's experience from the well-established standpoints of disease, violence, delinquency and crime, this paper examines the following areas: children and education; children and motherhood; and children as consumers. These uncharted areas of Nigerian children's history render alternative and useful perspectives on agency and the centrality of childhood to colonial state's ideas of progress, civilization, modernity, and social stability.

Résumé: Cet article relate une exploration initiale à travers des sources journalistiques pour effectuer une recherche sur l'histoire des enfants du Nigeria pendant la période coloniale par la description et l'analyse entre autres de nouvelles, d'éditoriaux, d'histoires, de photos, de publicités, de rubriques, de débats, de chroniques, et de lettres. L'article situe ces sources journalistiques dans le contexte et les circonstances dans lesquels elles ont été produites: l'opinion politique

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dominante concernant les questions d'identité, de relation entre les sexes, et d'organisation d'un côté, et de l'autre, l'interaction entre les forces de "tradition" et de "modernité." Au lieu de considérer le monde de l'enfance sous les angles constamment explorés de la maladie, de la violence, de la délinquance et du crime, cet exposé examine les domaines suivants: les enfants dans l'éducation; les enfants et l'expérience maternelle; et enfin les enfants en tant que consommateurs. L'investigation de ces domaines non encore explorés de l'histoire des enfants du Nigeria permet l'émergence de perspectives utiles et différentes concernant la relevance et l'importance du domaine de l'enfance dans la construction des idées propagées par l'état colonial sur la notion de progrès, de civilisation, de modernité, et de stabilité sociale.

Introduction †

Reference to children in Africanist literature is legion; but works that critically place childhood at the center of historical inquiry are few. Indeed, children's history has yet to take a firm root as a sub-field of African history despite the recent appearance of literature dealing with the colonial era.¹ Most of works on this aspect of African experience have come from the social sciences: anthropology, psychology, sociology, and political science. And have been influenced by post-colonial quagmires of child soldier and labor, poverty, disease and HIV/AIDS pandemic, and crime and

† I would like to thank the editors and anonymous reviewers of *History in Africa*, and Simon Heap for their useful comments on earlier versions of this article.

¹ The following list of works on children and juvenile history is not exhaustive: Beverly C. Grier, *Invisible Hands: Child Labor and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Portsmouth NH, Heinemann, 2006); Abosede George, "Within Salvation: Girl Hawkers and the Colonial State in Development Era Lagos," *Journal of Social History* 44 (2011), 837-859; Owen White, *Children of the French Empire: Miscegenation and Colonial Society in French West Africa, 1885-1960* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999); Laurent Fourchard, "Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria (1920-1960)," *Journal of African History* 46 (2006), 115-137; Simon Heap, "'Jaguda boys': Pickpocketing in Ibadan, 1930-1960," *Urban History* 24 (1997), 324-343; Simon Heap, "'Their Days are Spent in Gambling and Loafing, Pimping for Prostitutes, and Picking Pockets': Male Juvenile Delinquents on Lagos Island, 1920s-60s," *Journal of Family History* 35 (2010), 48-70.

² See among others Emmanuel Jal with Megan Lloyd Davies, *War Child: A Child Soldier's Story* (New York, St. Martin's Griffin, 2009); Loretta E. Bass, *Child Labor in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Boulder CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004); Bill Rau, *Combating Child Labour and HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2002); Anne Kielland and Maurizia Tovo, *Children at Work: Child Labor Practices in Africa* (Boulder CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006); Alcinda Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa* (Philadelphia PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Sudhanshu Handa, Stephen Devereux, and Douglas Stewart (eds.), *Social Protection for Africa's Children* (New York, Routledge, 2011).

delinquency.² As highly useful as social-science centered scholarships are, critical knowledge of children's experience under colonialism and the changing definition of childhood since the precolonial period is important in unveiling the genesis of some of the problems confronting African children today. For instance through the innovative scholarship of Abosede George and Beverley Grier, we now know the transformation that child "labor" has taken since the precolonial times; and that children have been an integral but "invisible" category of workforce.³ Hence capitalist expropriation of children's labor is not a "new" ethical and development challenge in postcolonial Africa. Laurent Fourchard's and Simon Heap's works on youth delinquency have provided the much needed colonial root of urban vagrancy and juvenile delinquency in contemporary Nigeria.⁴ Yet, as we are going to see, African children's encounters with colonialism transcend socially constructed problems of labor, delinquency, and vagrancy. Historical research does not just supply the origins of some of the post-colonial crises of development, but is capable of rendering systemic solutions grounded in a society's transformative processes. In addition, research on colonial childhoods is capable of helping to bridge the often rigid divide between colonial history and postcolonial ideas about education, health, rights, and identity. Continuity and change in children's engagement with the society establishes multiple trajectories about their existence as active agents in the colonial society.

The history of the newspaper industry in Nigeria – one of the few enterprises dominated almost entirely by Nigerians – is as old as the story of colonial incursion into the country.⁵ The Church Missionary Society established the first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba* (Newspaper for the Egba and Yoruba), in 1859 mainly to improve literacy and facilitate evangelism among its early Yoruba converts in Abeokuta, "the bastion of Christianity in Yorubaland."⁶ However, it did not take long for the newspaper press to transform from its religious background to a symbol and tool of anti-colonial movement.⁷ The scope and intensity of

³ Grier, *Invisible Hands*; George, "Within Salvation."

⁴ Fourchard, "Lagos and the Invention," 115-137; Heap, "Their Days are Spent"; Heap, "Jaguda boys."

⁵ For general history of Nigerian newspaper press, see among others, Increase H.E. Coker, *Landmarks of the Nigerian Press: An Outline of the Origins and Development of the Newspaper Press in Nigeria, 1859 to 1965* (Lagos, Daily Times Press, 1968); Dayo Duyile, *Makers of Nigerian Press: A Historical Analysis of Newspaper Development, the Pioneers Heroes, the Modern Press Barons, and the New Publishers from 1859-1987* (Ibadan, Gong Communications, 1987).

⁶ Quoted in Babatunde Agiri, "Kola in Western Nigeria, 1850-1950: A History of the Cultivation of Cola Nitida in Egba-Owode, Ijebu-Remo, Iwo and Ota areas," PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin (Madison, 1972), 72.

⁷ James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1958); Fred I. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937* (Atlantic Highlands NJ, Humanities Press, 1978).

newspaper nationalism expanded as Britain intensified its exploitation of Nigeria's enormous human and material resources.⁸ Although scholars have examined the contributions of the print media to the development of nationalism, decolonization, and Win-the-War mobilizations, they have largely neglected other significant themes about the press.⁹ With the exception of very few studies – such as Ayodeji Olukoju's work on the cost of living in colonial Lagos and LaRay Denzer's critical biography of Henrietta Douglas, a female journalist and columnist – which are based almost wholly on newspapers, the impression one gets is that the print media revolved mainly around political nationalism and constitutional issues.¹⁰

This trend of discourse is not only misleading but also one-sided. It excludes several other themes including but not limited to children/childhood; consumer culture; crime; urban lifestyle; honor and respectability; and religion, faith and spirituality. Limited attention has been given to the role the print media played in promoting colonial popular culture which blended the indigenous with Western practices of recreation and leisure.¹¹ Ronke Ajayi's emergence as the first female newspaper editor in 1931 opened the floodgate of representation of diverse aspects of gender – from romance, love and fashion to courtship, marriage and family – in mainstream print media.¹² It is a fact that the newspaper press from the 1880s served as the watchdog of the colonialists; but it is also a truism that by the 1930s it became a major site of literary and artistic production. By this period, its scope and contents extended to other aspects of Nigeria's colonial encounter, not directly related to anti-British sentiments or

⁸ Coker, *Landmarks of the Nigerian Press*, chapter 1 and chapter 2.

⁹ Inyeseh Ihator, "The Impact of the Second War on West African Press and Politics: The Case of Nigeria," PhD thesis, Howard University (Washington DC, 1984); John Enemugwem, "The Impact of the Lagos Press in Nigeria, 1861–1922," *Lwati: A Journal of Contemporary Research* 6 (2009), 13–24; Emmanuel N. Mordi, "Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1937–1966," PhD thesis, University of Nigeria (Nsukka 1994); Emmanuel N. Mordi, "The Nigeria Win the War Fund: An Unsung Episode in Government-Press Collaboration in Nigeria during the Second World War," *Journal of Social Science* 24 (2010), 87–100.

¹⁰ Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Cost of Living in Lagos, 1914–45," in: David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone (eds.), *Africa's Urban Past* (Oxford, Heinemann/James Currey, 2000), 126–143; LaRay Denzer, "Intersections: Nigerian Episodes in the Careers of Three West Indian Women," in: Judith Byfield, LaRay Denzer and Anthea Morrison (eds.), *Gendering the African Diaspora: Women, Culture, and Historical Change in the Caribbean and Nigerian Hinterland* (Bloomington IN, Indiana University Press, 2010), 251–266.

¹¹ Newspapers give so much information on dress, cinema culture, music, dance and other aspects of popular culture in the first half of the twentieth century.

¹² Patience A. Zedomi, "Women in the Lagos Newspaper Press, 1930–1966," BA long essay, University of Ibadan (Ibadan, 1987).

rhetoric of decolonization. Unlike in the pre 1930s when the primary audience of the newspapers was educated adults, the 1930s saw the recognition of children as consumers of the print media. They had their own regular columns dedicated to issues appropriate for their age and experience. Without any gainsaying, historians have under-utilized the wealth of data in more than one hundred and fifty newspapers and magazines published in a century of Britain's imperial presence in Nigeria.¹³

I chose the following newspapers – *Lagos Daily News* (LDN), *Nigerian Daily Times* (NDT), and *West African Pilot* (WAP) – for my analyses partly because they were all published daily during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.¹⁴ Also they had divergent ideological positions which allowed me to present contrasting and contradictory views about the resilience and adaptation of “traditional” child rearing practices in a rapidly “modernizing” colonial society of the 1930s and 1940s. As we shall see later on, while the LDN held neo-traditionalist views and tended to condemn British-styled child rearing practices, the NDT and WAP both promoted the idea of “modern” African childhood. The newspapers regardless of their ideology constructed “normative” boyhood and girlhood behavior as core component of nation-building. Debate over child rearing reflected the divergent postures held by leading nationalists about the best means of preparing future generations of Nigerians who in theory and reality would inherit the independent state after the anticipated demise of colonial rule.

The newspaper sources to be discussed range from highly coherent editorials and columnist debates, to fragmentary entries such as advertisements, photos/images, and announcements. They could be used to supplement other sources such as official colonial archives, oral history and childhood memories. In all, one would need serious grounding on theories and practices of imperialism, and mainstream Nigerian history to fully comprehend the politics of representation of children in the newspapers and “modern” childhood, a phenomenon that had a global nexus during the twentieth century.¹⁵ The representation of children in the print media offers a useful entry into broader and intricate politics of class, agency, gender, and race in colonial Nigeria.

Childhood was both a social and historical construction in colonial Nigeria. If a child was defined in accordance with the culture of each eth-

¹³ For a comprehensive list of newspapers published in colonial Nigeria, see Simon Heap, “The Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan: An Introduction for Users and a Summary of Holdings,” *History in Africa* 18 (1991), 164-167; Coker, *Landmarks*, 116-121.

¹⁴ The LDN and NDT did not appear on Sundays. WAP was published everyday of the week. The Great Depression occasionally affected the appearance of the newspapers.

¹⁵ A good and concise reading on modern global childhood is Karen Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009).

nic group in precolonial era,¹⁶ colonialism imposed unitary and inconsistent criteria for differentiating between a child and young person or adult. According to Section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Ordinance, the most comprehensive legislation introduced in 1943 to protect children, a child was a boy or girl under fourteen.¹⁷ This legal construction of childhood is important for two reasons: (1) it provided the tool for prosecuting offences against children; and (2) it determined eligibility and the type of rehabilitation program victims of child abuse would undergo.¹⁸ But this is not an absolute definition of a child. Before 1958, the age of consent was thirteen. This implies that an individual ceased to be a child on attaining this age. Marriage at thirteen (both for boys and girls) could not be labeled as “child” marriage. And there was no criminal liability for defiling a girl, except outside marriage. Attempts by the colonialists to raise the age of consent or marriage to sixteen by criminalizing “child” marriage were condemned by Native Authorities both in the South and North.¹⁹ Throughout the colonial period, the definition of a child was contested despite attempt by the British to impose a rigid dichotomy between a “child” and “young” person. However, both the newspapers and colonial government identified an individual under seventeen as a child.

“Girls’ Education Has Always Been Pointless”: Gender and the Politicization of Children’s Education

The print media did not begin to feature adequate information on children until around the late 1920s. This is attributable (in part) to the overwhelming importance placed on political and constitutional issues by the editors and owners of the newspapers. In addition, only two newspapers, namely (LDN and NDT founded in 1925 and 1926 respectively) appeared daily in the 1920s.²⁰ More space for issues not directly related to imperial

¹⁶ Nathaniel A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1970), 100-105; Percy A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria II* (London, Frank Cass, 1969 [1923]), 388-415; Percy A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria III* (London, Frank Cass, 1969 [1923]), 538-561; Percy A. Talbot, *Life in Southern Nigeria: The Magic, Belief, and Customs of the Ibibio Tribe* (New York, Barnes and Noble, 1967 [1923]), 26-29; 38-39; 126-127.

¹⁷ *Children and Young Persons Ordinance, Annual Volume of the Laws of Nigeria, Legislation enacted during 1943* (Lagos, Government Printer, 1944), A111-A113.

¹⁸ *Children and Young Person Ordinance, Annual Volume of the Laws of Nigeria, Legislation enacted during 1943* (Lagos, Government Printer, 1944), A111-A113.

¹⁹ National Archives Kaduna (hereafter NAK) Kano Prof 1, 186/MSWCA, “Child Prostitution and Child Marriage,” Secretary Northern Province to Resident Kano Province,” 22 June 1946; NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Child Welfare: Prostitution and Child Marriage by Faulkner,” 1942.

²⁰ Coker, *Landmarks*, 17.

politics began to open-up from the 1920s – a period which according to Babatunde Fafunwa witnessed the colonialists' direct involvement in Western education.²¹ Before the 1920s and 1930s, the British left the education of its colonial subjects to the missionaries who pioneered Western literacy from the 1840s – about five decades before the imposition of colonial rule.²² The increase in public literacy from the 1930s was matched by opportunities to express ideas of progress and development of the colonial subjects in the newspapers. The WAP, the flagship Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's press empire and the *Daily Service*, the official organ of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) were founded in 1937 and 1938 respectively.²³ During the 1940s new dailies such as the *Southern Nigeria Defender*, *Eastern Nigerian Guardian*, *Daily Comet*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Nigerian Spokesman* complemented the literary achievement of their predecessors.

Britain's new interest in education fueled newspaper coverage of childhood education which can be used for researching Nigerians' attitude towards school culture and child discipline. Some editorials also shed light into debates over the best school curriculum for boys and girls. A 20 July 1932 editorial in the LDN titled, "Education of Children" welcomed the new interest the colonialists were showing in education and thought that a good portion of the 1931/1932 budget should be allocated for the "education of the Children in Africa who represent the dawns of the manhood of the country."²⁴ After presenting a well-composed poetic representation of the place of children in the family and the society, this editorial went on to advise parents not to "overlook minor childish follies" and advocated for "the conquest of the will of the children." Portions of this highly informative editorial are worth quoting:

Children have been described as the poetry of the world, the fresh flowers of our hearts and homes; little conjours with their "natural magic" evoking by their spells which delights and enriches all ranks, and equalizes the different classes of society. Everyone knows that a child softens and purifies the heart, warming and melting it by its gentle presence. A child enriches the soul by new feelings and awakens within it what is favourable to virtue. It is a beam of light, a fountain of love, a teacher whose lessons very few can resist (...) Because the neglect of timely correction permits their contraction a stubbornness and obstinacy which ultimately become unconquerable unless through the most painful sever-

²¹ Babatunde Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1974), 53-56.

²² Magnus O. Basse, *Missionary Rivalry and Educational Expansion in Nigeria, 1885-1945* (Lewiston, Edwin Mellen, 1999), 23-59.

²³ The *Daily Service* was initially established as a weekly newspaper in 1933 and later became a daily in 1938 under the new editorship of Ernest Ikoli. Coker, *Landmarks*, 20.

²⁴ LDN, "Education of Children," 20 July 1932.

ity. Before overlooking minor childish follies, the will of the child should be subdued and brought to revere its parents. (...) The conquest of the will of the children at home and at the school seem to be the only strong and rational foundation for a religious education without which it will not be unreasonable to expect that both example and precept will be practically ineffectual. The child must be capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents and spiritual teachers and masters till its own understanding shall come to maturity and the principles of religion shall have taken root in its mind.²⁵

This editorial's (among others) dual portrayal of children as "innocent" and "vulnerable" elements that needed to be "governed" by the will of adults was probably influenced by Yoruba culture of child rearing and "communal" parenting, which endorsed corporal punishment (e.g. spanking) and strict discipline as the best means of ensuring that children grow-up to be responsible members of the society.²⁶ Punishment and discipline were traditionally conceived as core components of formal and informal education and training. During the first half of the twentieth century, parents would send stubborn children to live with disciplinarian school-teachers within and outside the community if they believed that an external agent would help enforce discipline. Except in cases of serious deliberate cruelty, the Yoruba traditionally did not perceive "beating" as an improper method of raising a child.

Foreign social workers and authors writing in the 1950s and 1960s misinterpreted this method of parenting in diverse ways. While one thought Yoruba did not love their children and were insensitive to the "emotional problems of childhood,"²⁷ another believed that punishment led to child delinquency.²⁸ This conclusion failed to recognize the cultural construction of parental love for children among Nigerian ethnic groups, and the impact of colonial modernity and urbanization on child rearing practices. Indeed, the LDN editorial cited above best explain the duality of Yoruba attitude towards the relationship between the parents and the children that emphasized strong affection and strictness. As the official organ of neo-traditionalists in the 1920s and 1930s, the LDN (as we shall fully see in the next paragraphs) clamored for the retention of certain aspects of child-rearing practices which colonial modernity was

²⁵ LDN, "Education of Children," 20 July 1932.

²⁶ See also, NDT, "Children are Treasures," 27 July 1932; "Children of the Dark Continent," 4 May 1931; "What could be done with the boys," 25 May 1933.

²⁷ Peter Marris, *Family and Social Change in an African City: A Study of Rehousing in Lagos* (Evanston IL, Northwestern University Press, 1961), 64.

²⁸ Alison Izzett, "The Fears and Anxieties of Delinquent Yoruba Children," *Odu* 1 (1955), 33.

rapidly supplanting. Its ideology stood in contrast to the NDT which promoted “modern” parenting style that recognized the “emotions and feelings of children.”²⁹

Other information about childhood education in the newspapers includes announcements and posters about scholarships, leadership programs like the boys’ scout and girls’ guide, and fund raising activities for schools.³⁰ This array of often fragmentary data gives insight into the school curriculum and scholarship eligibility. It helps unearth the nature of involvement of private individuals in children’s affairs, and social construction of boyhood and girlhood. For instance, Madam Gertrude La Page, the White second wife of Duse Mohammed Ali, a frontline Egyptian pan-Africanist who adopted Nigeria as his home,³¹ organized a drama and costume night to raise money for “an industrial school where, boys will be taught useful occupations including farming... joinery, carpentry, bricklaying, and plastering. The girls will be taught practical household work, dressmaking and crafts.”³² Like her husband, she felt that modern style of parenting should equip children with the skill to read and write, and to generate income for self-sufficiency. Ali told the NDT that his family was motivated to establish the industrial school because they “have been approached by a number of boys and girls who are unable to complete their education through lack of funds to pay their school fees.”³³ Although the missionaries spearheaded the blending of Western education and vocational/industrial training, the twentieth century saw the involvement of individuals and groups not connected with the church.

²⁹ Expanded analyses of the difference between LDN and NDT advice on child rearing is given in the section on children and motherhood.

³⁰ See (1) LDN, “Igbobi College for Boys,” 28 October 1931; “The National School Fund,” 23 December 1931; “National School Fund,” 23 February 1932. (2) WAP, “Scholarship for Girls,” 24 June 1941; “Scholarship for Girls,” 24 June 1941; (3) NDT, “Girl’s School Opened at Ife [Ile–Ife]: Ceremonies Performed by Oni of Ife,” 26 March 1943; “Lagos Girl Guides’ Memorial Service for Lord Baden-Powell, Chief Scout,” 26 March 1943; “Opening and Dedication of Girls’ Model School: Ceremony Performed by Rev. E.E. Williams,” 11 August 1942; “Donations to Green Triangle Hostel Fund,” 16 June 1943; “Women’s Welfare Council Visits Boys Hostel,” 19 December 1942; “Lady Bourdillon at Green Triangle Hostel,” 16 December 1942.

³¹ Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1789* (London, Routledge, 2003), 4.

³² NDT, “Music and Drama in Costume: Madam Gertrude La Page and Duse Mohammed Ali,” 7 September 1932.

³³ NDT, “Music and Drama in Costume: Madam Gertrude La Page and Duse Mohammed Ali,” 7 September 1932.

The newspapers provide a glimpse into the politics of modernization and Western education among Nigerian girls. They also highlight the debate over the credibility of the individuals and agencies responsible for promoting “modern” girlhood. During the 1920s and 1930s, two main voluntary associations of educated women namely – Lagos Women’s League (LWL) led by Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa and the Ladies League of Nigeria (LLN) founded by Lady Thomson, the wife of Sir Graeme Thomson, the Governor of Nigeria between 1921 and 1925 – played significant role in girls’ education. While the LWL was dominated by educated African women,³⁴ the LLN was a “pet project” of wives of governors of Nigeria managed by White women.³⁵ These associations organized baby-shows, dances, and exhibitions to raise money for Queen’s College, the first government secondary school for girls in Lagos and other female-centered projects.³⁶ They also promoted girls’ vocational training in dress making, needle-work, and gave afternoon classes on hygiene.³⁷

As well received as the women’s activities were among the literate Lagos community, some critics like the LDN editorial thought the elites were introducing “foreign” knowledge “that cannot meaningfully impact the life of an average girl of this colony [Nigeria].”³⁸ It believed the elite

³⁴ For biographies and autobiographies of some of the African elite women, see: Bolanle Awe (ed.), *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Lagos, Sankore, 1992), 107-148; Nina E. Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women’s Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* (Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1982), 214-224; Folarin Coker, *A Lady: A Biography of Lady Oyinkan Abayomi* (Ibadan, Evans Brothers, 1987); Gbemi Rosiji, *Lady Ademola: Portrait of a Pioneer* (Lagos, EnClair Publishers, 1996).

³⁵ Lady Cameron, the wife of Sir Cameron who succeeded Sir Thomson as the Governor of Nigeria continued to promote the LNN. A study on white women in colonial Nigeria is Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture, and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (Urbana IL, University of Illinois Press, 1987).

³⁶ See the NDT, “Ladies League of Nigeria: Grand Exhibition Nota Bene,” 4 October 1930; “Ladies League of Nigeria: Lady Cameron’s Active Interest,” 25 August 1931; “The Ladies’ League,” 26 January 1932; “The Ladies League of Nigeria,” 12 April 1932; and “The Ladies League of Nigeria,” 21 April 1932. See also the LDN: “Ladies League of Nigeria,” 1 February 1934; “The Ladies League of Nigeria,” 3 February 1934. For more on the politics of girls’ education see Rina Okonkwo, *Protest Movements in Lagos, 1908-1930* (Enugu, ABIC, 1998), 67-85.

³⁷ Vocational works for girls fitted into colonial ideology of female domesticity. For more on this see: LaRay Denzer, “Domestic Science Training in Colonial Yorubaland, Nigeria,” in: Karen Tranberg Hansen (ed.), *African Encounters with Domesticity* (New Brunswick NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1992), 116-139.

³⁸ See the following editorials in the LDN: “Nigerian Women and Social Work,” 7 April 1932; “Educated Women and Native Industry,” 14 April 1932; “The Education of Nigerian Women,” 12 May 1932; “The Education of Muslim Girls,” 14 May 1932; “Education of Children,” 12 May 1932; “Training in Domestic Work,”

women should not parade themselves as “social workers” because they received training in subjects such as “piano playing and dress-making” that are “not useful for the African girlhood.” It accused them of arrogance towards African culture and the illiterate girls, and gave recommendation on how to do professionally social worker. “A person who has not studied a people so well as to be able to appreciate the good that is in them,” a 7 April 1932 editorial asserted, “cannot succeed in doing social work among them.” A social worker, the editorial continued “must not go about her work with condescension or patronizing attitude; she should be able to identify herself with the people among who she is to work, understand them thoroughly, not look down on them in her heart. (...) The educated class has a long way to go, yet to qualify to do social work.”³⁹

For the LDN, Western-styled vocational education for girls that was not grounded in African living realities and the immediate need of the teeming population of uneducated class was useless. “When we expect women whose standard of living is high to teach practical economy in the home to girls who hail from poor middle class homes,” another editorial argued, “it would be strange if the girls were not taught to look forward to things which they can never obtain.”⁴⁰ The editorial created an interesting intersection between girls’ education and their roles as future wives and mothers in projecting the elite women’s work negatively: “One cannot expect women who do not habitually wear native dress at home to teach economy in dress to girls who after being married and during the period of nursing their babies must resort to native dress.”⁴¹

Another editorial of 14 May 1932 argued that girls’ education “has always been pointless” and demanded that girls should not be pushed to clerical work that was already overflooded by men.⁴² It believed British method of child-rearing promoted laziness and domestication of women. It extolled the creativity and hard work of the market and uneducated women and their method of raising girls. The editorial went on to review the shortcomings of “modern” girlhood education and passed the following remarks on the proposed Domestic Science College for girls: “But when one reads of the emphasis on making the girl an intelligent member of her Church, Bible Study, home prayers, and Churchmanship, we presume it is going to be a religious not a social institution. And here we part company with the promoters.”⁴³ The editorial introduced politics of reli-

14 May 1932; “Nigerian Women and Social Work: The Girl Aina,” 8 April 1932; “Vocation for Women,” 10 October 1932; “What Women Can Do,” 21 September 1931.

³⁹ LDN, “Nigerian Women and Social Work,” 7 April 1932.

⁴⁰ LDN, “The Education of Nigerian Women,” 12 May 1932.

⁴¹ LDN, “The Education of Nigerian Women,” 12 May 1932.

⁴² LDN, “Training in Domestic Work,” 14 May 1932.

⁴³ LDN, “Training in Domestic Work,” 14 May 1932.

gion to the debate by highlighting discrimination against Muslims girls: "Is not a Muslim girl among the group that stands most in need of such an institution, and to receive the advantages of such an institution without surrendering for moment her religious consciences?"⁴⁴ Lagos newspapers gave publicity to the allegation that Muslim girls were sidelined from modern girlhood training and enrolment in Christian schools. During the 1940s, elite Muslims who had previously prevented their children from enrolling in missionary schools because of fear of conversion began to take Western education serious.⁴⁵ So important was their project of blending Islamic and Western education that the Lagos Muslim community donated the skin of their rams during the 1942 *Ed il Kabir* festival to support a £20,000-pound education scheme for boys and girls.⁴⁶

The LDN editorials promoted the ideology of Herbert Macaulay, the so-called father of Nigerian nationalism who founded the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), the "first well-organized political party in Commonwealth West Africa."⁴⁷ According to Tekena Tamuno, Macaulay "was responsible for running the paper and deciding the political tone of what was published."⁴⁸ He was also believed to have personally authored all the editorials. Historians of Nigeria have highlighted the strong relationship between Macaulay and the market women (largely uneducated Muslims) who helped his party to dominate Lagos politics for fifteen years – between 1923 and 1938.⁴⁹ They have also established his involvement in land and chieftaincy politics which won him several accolades as "the biggest threat" to British imperialism and "defender of traditional institutions" against Western cultural implantations.⁵⁰ However, the politics of childhood education, a significant aspect of his neo-traditionalist politics in the 1930s has been overlooked.

⁴⁴ LDN, "Training in Domestic Work," 14 May 1932.

⁴⁵ WAP, "Muslim Education in Lagos," 12 February 1938. See the following stories in the NDT, "Cutting of the First Sod of Ansar-Ud-Deen School, Okepopo," 18 June 1942; WAP, "Ansar-Ud-Deen Society Launches £20,000 Educational Programme in the Lagos Colony," 7 July 1941.

⁴⁶ See NDT, "Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society in aid of £20,000 Education Fund: Salvage of Skins of Rams Slaughtered during the Bairam Ileya Festival," 16 December 1942; "Mass Meeting of Muslims in Glover Hall: Ansar-Ud-Deen Secondary School Scheme Discussed," 5 June 1943.

⁴⁷ Tekena N. Tamuno, *Herbert Macaulay, Nigerian Patriot* (London, Heinemann, 1976), 35.

⁴⁸ Tamuno, *Herbert Macaulay*, 23.

⁴⁹ Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized*, 193-206; Cheryl Johnson-Odim, "Grassroots Organizing Women in the Anti-colonial Struggle in Southwestern Nigeria," *African Studies Review* 25 (1982), 137-157.

⁵⁰ Tamuno, *Herbert Macaulay*, chapter 4 and chapter 5.

Macaulay and his party did not publish any specific “blue-print” for girls’ education in the newspaper. As the content of LDN clearly reveals, he was primarily concerned about the impact of “modern” practice of child rearing on “traditional” methods. Moreover, his arch political enemies were the fathers and husbands of the elite women that promoted the “modern” girlhood.⁵¹ As it turned out, childhood education was appropriated by the elites to register their political relevance in a society struggling to fashion the “best” pathway to modernity. Macaulay was not just carrying out his highly revered role as the most powerful nationalist of his time, but working to preserve his popularity among the predominantly uneducated voters who kept his party in power for fifteen years. Although it is difficult to measure the popularity of his position on girls’ education, his stance would have been well-received among the market women that preferred indigenous method of girl-rearing.

“The Children of Lagos Send Letter to British Children”: Colonial Education and Imagined Global Childhood

Beyond the politics of gender, identity, and “modern” girlhood, the newspapers had columns variously called “Children’s Page,” and “Children’s Corner,” that contain information about daily living, child rearing, stories and riddles, toys and domestic science. The content of these columns could help historians to reconstruct how colonial children spent their free time and the types of books they read. They could also be used to research cross-cultural or comparative early childhood education in the British Empire. The NDT’s “Children’s Page” began to appear in 1930. It is hard to tell if its contents were adapted from other sources or written specifically for the newspaper. Written in children-friendly language with images of children and toys, the column had stories about animal and plant world, play poems, and word puzzles. It is hard to tell how the contents of the column were used in school or at home. They could have been used as evening-bedtime stories. Animals in stories like “The Pussy Cat,” “The Bird in the Underground,” and “The Silly Little Frog,” behaved like humans and carried out extraordinary activities such as solving mathematical problems, preparing meals, and performing household chores. Some stories promoted princess fairy tales and advised children to always tell the truth. In “An Old Indian Legend,” children were presented with the story of a beautiful daughter of a beggar who lied to a prince that she was a princess. But because royal blood was not flowing in her veins, she died tragically

⁵¹ Kitoyi Ajasa, the first Nigerian knight was Oyinkan Abayomi’s father, while Dr. Kofoworola Abayomi was her husband. For more on politics of class and colonial agency, see Patrick Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975), 73-89.

after the wedding. Her magician-guardian buried her, and the puppies that sprung from her grave, “were the first puppies ever seen on the earth.”⁵² Children also solved basic puzzles like the one below:

Questions

Why do you go to school?

Why did the chicken cross the road?

What did you find in the middle of Paris?

Why is the good clock like an article left at the pawnshop?

Answers

Because the school cannot come to you

To get to the other side

The letter R

It is always on tick.⁵³

Unlike the NDT’s “Children’s Page” which carried children’s stories and tales, the WAP’s “Children’s Corner” featured children’s science and practical lessons on how to make toys and play items. It began to appear in November 1937, when the WAP was founded. The “Children’s Corner” introduced children to hands-on activities such as making paper elephants, stereoscopes, soap bubbles, paper tree, lamp house, lens, and caricature machine. Children were counseled on how to arrange their rooms and manage their toys. Like the NDT’s “Children’s Page,” the WAP’s “Children’s Corner” was unsigned. The WAP had a well-defined philosophy: to develop scientific skills and imagination among children. Parents were expected to help their children in making the items mentioned above. In all, the newspapers promoted Western education and modern childhood. They did not carry stories grounded in Yoruba tales and thought: for example the famous moonlight stories of tortoise which generation after generation of Nigerian children learned, enjoyed, and recited offhand. Children did not get to read about science rooted in indigenous life and practices or activities like farming, blacksmith and other traditional methods for rearing children, supporting the household and passing skills from generation to generation. Although it is not obvious why the newspapers’ children’s stories were grounded mainly in Western culture of child rearing, one could suggest that they satisfied the need of upper class educated elites (both Africans and Europeans) who sought to raise “modern” children. This group had the disposable resources to purchase newspapers for their household.

⁵² NDT, “Children’s Page: An Old Indian Legend,” 2 November 1932.

⁵³ NDT, “For the Children,” 3 November 1931.

Newspaper representation of childhood had transnational and global outlook. Images of white children skating in winter exposed their Nigerian counterparts to another life outside their immediate environment. On 26 January 1938, the WAP's "Children's Corner" featured a story about Shirley Temple (later known as Shirley Temple Black), the ten-year Hollywood "kid star," who just lost her milk teeth and who was preparing for a role as a schoolgirl in a new movie. Temple was variously described as "sweet and quite natural," "not seem to have any idea of the fact that she was world-famous," and "not a bit different from all other little girls of the same age." It is hard to tell how Nigerian children reacted to the story about Temple; or the photos and news about Princess Maria Luise of Bulgaria, about the daughter of Spanish leader General Franco, and about Ananda Mahidol, the boy king of Thailand, among others.⁵⁴ One could suggest that the newspapers felt that the stories about famous princes and princesses would appeal to children's inquisitiveness about the world or foster "imagined community of children."

Conscious and consistent attempt were made to foster a sort of "global" childhood during the Second World War. Aside being taught anti-Hitler songs in schools, Nigerian school children were encouraged to compose letters of condolence to their counterparts in Britain regretting the impact of the War on their education.⁵⁵ One of such letters written by Master R. Okonjo was broadcast on the Lagos Radio Re-Diffusion Service and later published in WAP with a headline, "The Children of Lagos Send Letter to British Children." Extract of this interesting letter is worth reprinting here:

Dear Friends in Britain,

We in the British Empire and especially those of us in West Africa have been greatly scared and very much alarmed at the way Hitler has been dropping his bombs on your houses and schools. We feel that this is a most cruel and inhuman act for him to do as you have not wronged him in any way... Time after time, we hear of a school in London, in Plymouth or in Coventry having been hit by a bomb... We send our sympathy to those of you who have been evacuated from your homes to other more secure places, either in England or other parts of the British Empire. We too, although not in the war zone, have had some war experiences. We have had to leave our schools and boarding houses for military purposes... Our diet has been cut down and we have been made to rely more on local foodstuffs...⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See WAP: "Photo of Princess Maria Luise," 6 January 1938; "Photo of Ananda Mahidol," 8 February 1938; "Photo of Daughter of General Franco," 14 February 1938.

⁵⁵ Example of anti-Hitler song: "Hitler that is throwing the world into confusion, push him with a shovel into the grave." See G.O. Olusanya, *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria, 1939-1953* (Lagos, Evans Brothers, 1973), 51.

⁵⁶ WAP, "The Children of Lagos Send Letter to British Children," 25 April 1941.

Portion of another letter titled, "Girls in Nigeria Pray for Girls in the United Kingdom," by Miss Violetta Kemmer of Owerri Division read: "We say our prayer continuously to God to guard and guide you in all you do."⁵⁷ Violetta also mentioned that Nigerian children were contributing their "pocket money" towards the Win the War Fund. The practice of promoting global childhood and loyalty in the British Empire predated the Second World War – text of Empire Day celebration (occasionally published in the newspapers) emphasized love and cooperation.⁵⁸ What seems interesting during the Second World War was how the colonialists used the newspapers to enlist children in the War against Nazi Germany and attempted to instill spirit of loyalty. The British could also be using the children to pressurize parents and guardians to contribute more to the War. One is not suggesting that children of Nigeria could not have independently thought of the impact of the War on fellow children around the world. However, the tone of the letters which were probably written under adult supervision suggests a conscious attempt to ignite anti-Germany sentiments among children by highlighting the suffering and sacrifices of their counterparts in the British Empire. The newspapers do not tell if children were "truly" patriotic to the British campaign. One might have to rely on childhood memory to help ventilate this. For instance, when Isaac Fadoyebo, a Second World War veteran was asked why he enlisted in the colonial army at the age of 16, he replied: "I saw the army as a good job. At the age of 16, I didn't know what I was doing. They call it 'youthful exuberance'..."⁵⁹ When asked further if he was loyal to the British war goals, he responded: "Not at all. There was no question of loyalty or patriotism. No, no, no. I saw people joining and I followed suit. Not knowing I was heading for trouble."⁶⁰

But some people felt that Nigerian children should contribute more towards Britain's Win the War Fund. In its 28 April 1941 editorial titled "British Children's Appeal," the WAP praised the fund-raising activities of British children. It believed that Nigerian children should do more than send condolences to their counterparts in Britain: "Broadcasting letters to boys and girls of Britain and admiring their courage will not do much. We want more than mere words of mouth."⁶¹ More research is required to

⁵⁷ WAP, "Girls in Nigeria Pray for Girls in the United Kingdom," 26 April 1941.

⁵⁸ WAP, "Hon. Woolley Address Lagos Children on Empire Day," 26 May 1941.

⁵⁹ Aljazeera Correspondent, "The Burma Boys," <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeracorrespondent/2011/08/2011810111351997.html> (accessed 5 January 2012). Fadoyebo saw action at Burma and published his wartime memoir in 1999. See: Isaac Fadoyebo, *A Stroke of Unbelievable Luck: A Moving Account of the Experience of a Teen-age Soldier in the Battlefield during the Burma Campaign, 1944* (Madison, African Studies Program/University of Wisconsin, 1999).

⁶⁰ Aljazeera Correspondent, "The Burma Boys" (see previous note).

⁶¹ WAP, "British Children's Appeal," 28 April 1941.

shed light on why the WAP felt that Nigerian children should contribute more to a War that originated outside their immediate communities. One would think that children who were traditionally at the receiving end of any hostility be excused from war-time politics and intrigues. Some of them lost their parents to war-time military service and were badly affected by stringent emergency measures and food scarcity. In addition, rumor of impending German air raids reduced children's play hours, especially in big cities like Lagos.⁶²

"To Live Ignorant of Children's Way Is to Miss Something Very Important": Children and Motherhood

The NDT's unsigned column "Women's Affairs" is one of the most elaborate sources of information on childhood and motherhood. Although the column's coverage extended to other issues such as women's fashion and romance, it extensively covers various aspects of child care. Structured entirely to advise parents on "modern" technique of raising a child, this column's audience was definitely the upper and middle class educated Nigerian elites and Europeans. Indeed, most of the recommended facilities for childrearing were beyond the reach of the majority of Nigerian children and their parents. From the column we learn about the "ideal" food for kids, the responsibilities of mothers, and even child psychology. A researcher is capable of mapping out the major ethos of "modern" colonial childhood by critically appraising entries with such headings as: "Children' Diet," "An Apple a Day," "A Cake Children Will Like," "A Child's First Teeth," "Food for Growing Children," "A Baby's Skin," among others.⁶³ The children of the elite and educated class not only enjoyed some of the privileges of their parents such as traveling on first-class coach and socializing with the *crème-de-la-crème* of the colonial society, but experienced a childhood different from the majority of other Nigerian children as gleaned from a July 1932 entry titled, "The Children's Bedroom":

When two or perhaps three, children share a room it should be a large room. Small children should indeed, be given the best room in the house, for they spend so many hours – the greater part of their lives – in bed. It should be large, sunny with many windows. If possible, do not

⁶² Interview with Chief Idirisu Olorunda on 4 June 2008 in Lagos.

⁶³ The following entries are from NDT: "Food for Growing Children," 29 May 1931; "A Baby's Skin," 13 June 1931; "Measles: A Dangerous Disease," 2 July 1933; "Of Importance to Mothers," 18 August 1931; "A Child's First Teeth," 24 February 1931; "Washing Baby's Garments," 18 October 1932; "Children's Teeth," 20 July 1932; "Children's Diet," 21 April 1932; "A Cake the Children will Like," 6 September 1931.

choose a room with a west or south-west aspect for the children's use, as the late afternoon and evening sunshine into their bedroom will make it hot in summer and keep them awake. A room facing south-east and which receives the morning sunshine is the best for them. Stuffy upholstery furniture is quite unsuitable for the children's room, which should contain the minimum of articles. Furniture of painted wood is pretty and easily cleaned.⁶⁴

This "ideal" sleeping arrangement would work best for nuclear family living in high and medium grade residential districts of East Ikoyi, Marina, and Surulere. These residential districts were laid out from the 1850s, and enjoyed all the splendor and paraphernalia of modern urban planning.⁶⁵ They were reserved for high-ranked African and European administrators and expatriates. During the 1930s and 1940s few Nigerian children in the low grade and densely populated residential districts of Lagos Island, Ojuelegba, and Mushin among others had rooms of their own.⁶⁶ Most shared rooms with their mothers, grandmothers, stepmothers and members of the extended families.⁶⁷ And it was not unusual for up to ten children and adults to be cramped inside a small room.⁶⁸ Poor sanitation and crowded living arrangement principally accounted for the high infant mortality, especially during the influenza pandemic in Lagos.⁶⁹

But reading beyond the depiction of an "ideal" child rearing practice, the Women's Column like other columns dedicated to political and economic issues promoted a model colonial society patterned along European culture. Employment opportunities, urban and social security, housing, virile education and public health policies were among the major issues of modernization frequently discussed in the newspapers. Hence, the Women's Column's advice on children's diet, room, and health fitted adequately into an established public discourse and practice about progress and development in the British Empire. It established global standard for child rearing.

The Women's Column was definitely popular among educated Lagos women. Readers regularly sent in letters, thanking the anonymous columnist for the useful advice, and narrating how they implemented it at home. Even the LDN, which criticized the NDT for its pro-government stance commended the columnist for helping to promote sound health among children.⁷⁰ Unedited versions of readers' letters were published, and sometime served as basis of well-sustained correspondences and debates

⁶⁴ NDT, "Women's Realm: The Children's Bedroom," 11 July 1932.

⁶⁵ Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*, 300-311.

⁶⁶ Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*, 300-311.

⁶⁷ Interview with Mr. Adebayo Adisa on 2 June 2008 in Lagos.

⁶⁸ Interview with Madam Abike Olaore on 2 June 2008 in Lagos.

⁶⁹ LDN, "Infantile Mortality in Lagos," 7 October 1932.

⁷⁰ LDN, "Women and the Nigerian Daily Times by a Correspondence," 16 July 1931.

for several months. New mothers benefited from the column as gleaned from the letters to the columnist about infant behavior. The idea that children are “sinless,” “cute,” “delicate,” and “delightful” filled this column. It also placed women at the center of child-care by reinforcing Victorian ideas of domesticity.

Unlike the LDN that recommended subduing the “will of the child” the NDT’s Women’s Column did not feature any article recommending punishment for a child. It did not depict children’s existential duality as elements that must be loved and punished. One does not get to read about the importance of religion both at school and home.⁷¹ Rather some entries delved into how to meet, teach or work with children under unstrained environment:

To live ignorant of children’s way is to miss something very important. It is not really very difficult to make children like you. Don’t thrust yourself on a child. Say “How do you do? And shake hands as you would with a grown-up person, for most children have strong objection to being kissed. Start a conversation about something in which children are interested – aero planes, trains, their pet dog or kitten, for instance.⁷²

Newspaper coverage of “Baby shows” was equally representative. Held regularly and sponsored by the government and private individuals such as wives of governors, the baby shows featured children from birth to around five.⁷³ All mothers that attended government prenatal clinics and their babies were eligible to enter for the contests to determine the healthiest child. The shows provide some insight into campaign for “modernization” of African motherhood. They were quite popular: about four thousand audience attended a week-long competition held at the popular Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos between 20 and 25 April, 1942.⁷⁴ From the 1940s, photos of the “healthiest baby” and their mothers were featured in the dailies. The caption on the photo of the winner of April 1941 contest read: “A healthy specimen of Nigerian babyhood. Thanks to the excellent work of the Maternity and Child Welfare Centres the Nigerian Child now had a fairer chance of survival against the scourge of abnormal infantile mortality.”⁷⁵

⁷¹ LDN, “Education of Children,” 20 July 1932.

⁷² NDT, “Women’s Realm,” 29 October 1932; NDT, “Of Importance to Mothers,” 18 August 1931.

⁷³ See NDT, “Baby Show Competition at Glover Hall: Exclusive to Babies’ Attending Welfare Clinics,” 18 April 1942; “Lady Burns Distribute Prizes to Winners at Baby Show: End of Successful Baby Week: Large Gathering in Glover Hall,” 22 April 1942; “Infant Welfare Demonstration at Ikeja: Rev and Hon T.A.J Ogunbiyi Presides,” 6 January 1942; “Baby Show at Lokoja,” 10 June 1943.

⁷⁴ NDT, “Baby Show Competition at Glover Hall,” 25 April 1942.

⁷⁵ NDT, “A Healthy Specimen of Nigerian Baby-hood,” 9 April 1941.

Table 1: Schedule for Baby Show Competition at Glover Hall, Lagos, 20-25 April 1942

Source: Computed from NDT, "Baby Show Competition at Glover Hall: Exclusive to Babies Attending Welfare Clinic," 18 April 1942.

Day	Event
Monday April 20	Class I: Birth to 6 Months
Tuesday April 21	Class II: 6 months to 1 year
Wednesday April 22	Class III: 1 year and over
Thursday April 23	Class IV: Twins; any age; and motherless babies

"Childhood's Happy Days with Ovaltine": Colonial Children as Consumers

The twentieth century heralded the official recognition of children in industrial societies as consumers.⁷⁶ This new wave of strategic marketing and production drive was introduced into the colonies which served as "dumping" ground for European manufactured goods.⁷⁷ The modern global childhood which emerged verily in the twentieth century recognized that children across cultures and space used similar products.⁷⁸ Advertisement became another tool for fostering global childhood which had a multiplier economic impact, not in Africa but in the West. Nigerian children were not only an integral category of colonial workforce, but consumers of commodities they helped produce – directly and indirectly. Newspaper adverts obviously revealed that most, if not all foreign children's products were imported from Britain. As consumers, children helped Britain in its primary project of maintaining the colonies as markets for metropolitan products and modernizing the empire by ruthlessly promoting the patronage of "superior" British products. Advertisements of products, including toys, clothes, and drugs provide a glimpse into colonial children's consumer culture, a grey area in African children's history that is capable of revealing interesting dynamics about their contributions to capitalism. Adverts did not explicitly indicate the most popular brands

⁷⁶ Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, chapter 10.

⁷⁷ Similar trend took place in the United States where mass production of toys and children's items in general transformed ideas of children as consumers. See: Lisa Jacobson, "Advertisement, Mass Merchandising, and the Creation of Children's Consumer Culture," in: Lisa Jacobson (ed.), *Children and Consumer Culture in American Culture: A Historical Handbook and Guide* (Westport CT, Praeger, 2008), 2-25.

⁷⁸ Jacobson, "Advertisement," 2-25.

or products consumed by children. However, a researcher could apply “the law of frequency,” that is, how often the advertisement of a particular product appeared as an indication of its popularity among children. For instance, a brand of quinine called “Howards,” for common ailments like malaria featured regularly in the newspapers. About 1 out of every 6 advertisements in the NDT in the 1940s popularized “Menthalatom,” a brand of body lotion.

Table 2: Samples of children’s products and advertisement

Source: Collated from WAP and NDT (1930s and 1940s).

Brand/Product	Advertisement/Product Description
ABS Mixture (vitamin supplement)	The Survival of the Fittest! Only Healthy Babies – the joy of Motherhood. This is the latest discovery of the nursery world. It promotes robust and gives vigor to babies, making them the pride of their mothers.
ABC Mixture (vitamin supplement)	Strictly Legal! A Baby’s Birthright is good nursing. The first law of the country forbids gambling with the lives of babies.
Osram (coiled lamp)	Dim Lights does not help the children. Even more than adults, they find it depressing and a strain on their eyes and nerves. Let them be as happy and bright as they are in the day time. Light your home with Osram Coiled lamp.
Ovaltine (beverage)	Childhood’s Happy Days with Ovaltine
Eno (laxative)	Healthy, Happy Childhood, thanks to Eno
Mentholatum (body cream)	Give your baby a Beautiful Skin
Ashton (teething powder)	Teething? Yes! But nobody would know: happy baby-happy mother!
Horlicks (appetizer)	Doctors everywhere recommend Horlicks for thin, nervy children who are below their proper weight. They soon get strong and healthy, full of vigor and vitality.

Advertisements also give insight into the connection between race and children’s consumer culture – images of smiling white children and mothers were probably used to show that if a particular brand of drug or beverage was good for a White family, then it would also be good for the Black. Generally, the deployment of whiteness to sell commodities in the colonies fitted into the established assumption of the racial superiority of the colonialists and their institutions. It is only interesting to see that the practice of “selling whiteness” also extended to children’s consumer cul-

ture in colonial Nigeria. Carefully read, adverts of baby products are capable of revealing the cost of raising kids in “modern” British-styled culture.

Advertisements also unveil children’s consumer culture along the confine of social-class. For instance, while advertisements in newspapers published in English targeted educated Africans and Europeans who were most likely to buy UK manufactured children’s products; their Yoruba (otherwise called vernacular) counterparts popularized local herbal medicines and targeted individuals who were not literate in English. Advertisement of Gbomoro (literally translated as “make child strong”), a children’s herbal medicine for malaria appeared regularly in *Akede Eko* and *Eko Igbeyin* during the 1930s. Childhood memories of 1940s Lagos revealed that this product’s popularity continued well into the 1960s.⁷⁹ It even received public endorsement by prominent Nigerian physicians and neo-traditionalist like Dr. Oguntola Sapara. Unlike most of his UK trained contemporaries (like Dr. Kofoworola Abayomi) who collaborated with the colonialists to undermine traditional medical practice,⁸⁰ Sapara spent the last three decades of his life promoting the works of indigenous healers and their struggle towards mainstreaming their profession.⁸¹

The pharmaceutical and baby product companies realized that images of children could be used to market non-age specific products. This is particularly evident in the case of Ovaltine, the most popular beverage of the 1940s which predominantly featured pictures of smiling children with highly captivating captions such as: “Childhood’s Happy Days with Ovaltine” and “Children Know-Ovaltine Hot or Cold is the Most Delicious Drink.” The marketers of these products probably felt that children’s choice influenced parents’ purchasing options. Other popular products such as lotion (Mentholum) and soaps (Lifebuoy) had images and captions describing them as the best products for children. One advert on coiled lamp even advised parents on the importance of bright light to the children’s feeling: “Dim Light doesn’t help the children. Even more than adults, they find it depressing and a strain on their eyes, and nerves. Let them be as happy and bright as they are in the day time... So light up with Osram and set the children smile.”⁸² It is easy to interpret the use of children’s image to market non-age specific products as a form of subordination or exploitation. But reading beyond exploitation, one sees the power of children in determining the failure or success of capitalism.

⁷⁹ Interview with Alhaji Basiru Iyanda on 5 June 2008 in Lagos.

⁸⁰ For the conflict between the native doctors and Nigerians trained in Western medicine, see NAI, Comcol 1, 857, “Local Native Doctors.”

⁸¹ Adelola Adeloje, *African Pioneers of Modern Medicine: Nigerian Doctors of the Nineteenth Century* (Ibadan, University Press, 1985), 131-158.

⁸² NDT, “Osram: The Wonderful Lamp,” 14 February 1941.

Conclusion

Like all sources for writing history, newspapers have their own limitations and challenges. First, they represent modern childhood experience of minority children whose parents and guardians were literate in English and had disposable income to buy newspapers. Indeed, the newspaper best represent the intersections between childhood and other competing forces, including but not limited to “tradition,” “modernity,” and “agency.” Although one could see traces of religion and ethnicity – in announcements of scholarships eligibility restricted to children from a particular religion and ethnicity – the representation of modern childhood is the most overarching thread that runs through the newspapers’ representation of colonial Nigerian childhood. Newspaper is therefore not a good source for researching rural and lower-class childhood experience. One would require careful deployment of oral or life history to study non-urban childhoods.⁸³ Second, in terms of geographical coverage, the audience of the three newspapers analyzed here were predominantly Lagosians who constituted the largest chunk of “modern” or “educated” Nigerians. Although the newspapers had circulation outside Lagos, its contents mainly reflected the challenges of living in a colonial state’s capital. The *Southern Nigeria Defender* (Ibadan),⁸⁴ *Eastern Nigerian Guardian* (Port Harcourt) and *Nigerian Spokesman* (Onitsha) were all established by Zik’s Press to give literary and political visibility to non-Lagosians.⁸⁵

But the greatest challenge of working with newspapers in the NNA is that they are in a dilapidated condition. The NNA, like virtually all government institutions, is poorly funded. Lack of funds and infrastructural problems are negatively effecting the effective preservation of valuable historical documents. The newspapers like other holdings of the archives are decomposing very fast. It is sad to say that some of the newspapers (especially the WAP) I analyzed here might not be available in the future going by their precarious condition.⁸⁶ The NNA does not have the equipment to convert the print versions of the newspapers into microfilm or microfiche; so they are at the mercy of natural enemies like termites and moisture. North America and Europe based researchers have access to the major

⁸³ Elisha P. Renne, “Childhood Memories and Contemporary Parenting in Ekiti, Nigeria,” *Africa* 75-1 (2005), 63-82.

⁸⁴ First published in Warri and later moved to Ibadan.

⁸⁵ For full listing of the newspapers and magazines published between the 1880s and 1960s, including their publishers and base, see Coker, *Landmarks of the Nigerian Press*, 116-121.

⁸⁶ For more on the problems facing the Nigerian national archives, see: Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester NY, University of Rochester Press, 2010), chapter 2.

Nigerian newspapers through few research libraries and centers.⁸⁷ However, the NNA remains the largest repository of the newspapers published during the colonial period.

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⁸⁷ It is easy to find out which library has the newspapers by searching through the WorldCat database.

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