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Sexualized Nationalism:

Lagos and the Politics of Illicit Sexuality in Colonial Nigeria, 1918-1958

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**Sexualized Nationalism:
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Abstract

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In this dissertation, I argue that historians of Africa have overlooked the intersection between nationalism and sexuality, despite the fact that these two themes are related. In addition, instead of focusing on the now stale paradigm which emphasizes the importance of race and class in the discourse of sexuality, I offer a revisionist idea that stresses the importance of age. Hence, I contend that the contrast between underage and adult sexuality largely informed the pattern of reformist condemnation of casual sex work in colonial Lagos. A clash between tradition (crudely defined as African traditional customs, values and ethos) and modernity (the so-called ideals of “modernization” and “civilization” imported by the British colonialists) was inevitable as the reformists vied to establish favorable legislation and combated laws that threatened their belief system and practices. What is more, debates around prostitution went beyond casual sex work to involve more complex matters such as the protection of soldiers, marriage, and cultural nationalism; the place and role of women and children in African society; and African or

colonialist conception of morality/immorality. Because of the complex nature of the politics of sex in colonial Nigeria, it was effectively impossible to reach common ground on dealing with the alleged medical and social nuisance caused by prostitutes. Indeed, while the ostensible subject of the popular debate was “prostitution,” the issues contested concurred with cultural nationalism and the protection of individual and group interests. Prostitution became a camouflage for negotiating issues that threatened the social, political, and sexual ideologies and orientation of a wide range of people—Africans and Europeans alike.

Table of Contents

Abbreviation.....	x
List of Tables.....	xii
Introduction.....	1
The Main Arguments.....	3
Pathology, Disease and the African Body.....	8
Women, Mobility, and Conflicting Nationalism.....	11
Sources and Methods.....	12
Organization.....	12
Chapter 1: Sexualized Crime: Sexuality and Criminality in Colonial Urban Lagos	
Introduction.....	15
This is a City of Bubbles.....	17
The West African Frontier Force.....	27
The Girls in Moral Danger.....	37
Sexual Mysticism.....	50
Prostitution, Crime and Public Order.....	52
Conclusion.....	57
Chapter 2: Sexualized Law, Criminalized Bodies: Anti-Prostitution Law and the Making of a new Sexual Order	
Introduction.....	58

VD Laws.....	62
Adult Prostitution and Vagrancy Laws.....	73
Child Prostitution Laws.....	80
Conclusion.....	83

Chapter 3: The Colony Welfare Office: Sexuality, Race and the Politics of African Cultural Difference

Introduction.....	85
The CWO.....	88
Politics of Establishment.....	95
The Social and Legal Construction of Child Prostitution.....	105
The CWO and African Culture.....	114
Tradition or Modernization.....	120
Conclusion.....	123

Chapter 4: Sexualizing Nationalism: Lagosians and the Politics of Sexual Control

Introduction.....	124
Contesting the Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance.....	127
Venereal Disease Ordinance.....	133
The Lagos Press.....	140
The Chiefs and the Native Authority Child Betrothal Ordinance (NACBO).....	155
Ethnicity and the Politics of Sex.....	159

Conclusion.....	167
-----------------	-----

Chapter 5: Protecting the Girls in Moral Danger: Lagos Elite Women and the Politics of Sexual Control

Introduction.....	169
-------------------	-----

Educated Elite Women and Politics in Twentieth Century Lagos.....	171
---	-----

Elite Women and Criminalization of Prostitution.....	177
--	-----

Elite Women, the NPF, and the Women Police Debate.....	183
--	-----

Elite Women, the Colony Welfare Office and the Girls Hostel Controversy.....	189
--	-----

Conclusion.....	203
-----------------	-----

Conclusion	205
-------------------------	-----

Bibliography	207
---------------------------	-----

Vita	237
-------------------	-----

Abbreviations

AVS	Anti-Vice Squad
CCO	Criminal Code Ordinance
COMCOL	Commissioner of the Colony
CWO	Colony Welfare Office
CYPO	Children and Young Persons Ordinance
DMSS	Director of Medical and Sanitary Service
ENG	Eastern Nigerian Guardian
LCN	Legislative Council of Nigeria
LLN	Ladies League of Nigeria
LWL	Lagos Women's League
NACBO	Native Authority Child Betrothal Ordinance
NAE	National Archives Enugu
NAI	National Archives Ibadan
NAK	National Archives Kaduna
NPF	Nigeria Police Force
NAS	Nigerian Apothecary Society
NLC	The Nigerian Legislative Council
NPS	Nigerian Pharmaceutical Society
NWP	Nigerian Women's Party
NYM	Nigerian Youth Movement

RWAFF	Royal West African Frontier Force
SND	Southern Nigeria Defender
UGO	Unlicensed Guide Ordinance
UAO	Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance
VD	Venereal Disease
VDO	Venereal Disease Ordinance
WAFF	West African Frontier Force
WAP	West African Pilot
WWC	Women's Welfare Council

List of Tables

Table I: Social Welfare, General Questions.....	44
Table II: Oged Macaulay Suggests Licensing of Prostitution.....	51
Table III: Boma Boy Menace in Lagos.....	101
Table IV: Venereal Disease Treatment at V.D Clinic.....	137

Introduction

On February 17, 1947 Justice Adetokunbo Ademola of the Lagos magistrate court sentenced Lady Welfare Officer Ayodele Potts –Johnson and Joel Toviho to six months in prison (each without the option of fine) for demanding and receiving a bribe of £5:30 from two prostitutes, Elizabeth Agadagwu and Alice George, in order not to repatriate them from brothels located at Nos. 80 & 82 Idoluwo Street, Lagos.¹ FRA Williams, noted in a 1945 directory of prominent Lagosians as “an influential politician and Barrister-at-law of good standing,” led four other African and European attorneys in defending Potts-Johnson who pleaded guilty to extortion, but not the charges of official corruption.² May and June 1947 appeals at the Supreme Court of Nigeria and West African Court of Appeal (WACA), the apex court in British West Africa, respectively, upheld the ruling of the lower court on the ground that the convicts were guilty of corruption not extortion,³ as Potts-Johnson’s counsels and supporters which comprised “privileged persons many of whom are friends, co-workers and relatives”⁴ maintained. Few cases of this character

¹ Ademola was an Egba prince who would later become the first Chief Justice of Nigeria. While Johnson was a supervising officer attached to the Colony Welfare Office, Joel Toviho was an ex-soldier, described variously as Potts-Johnson’s tout and cousin. See The Daily Service, “Lady Welfare Officer Potts-Johnson and tout gets 6 months each: Eager Crowds Fill Court Precincts,” February 18, 1947, 1.

² Williams would later in life become the first Senior Advocate of Nigeria. The other four attorneys were E.A. Akerele, J.A. Kester, N.O.A. Morgan and V.O. Munis. See The Daily Service, “5 Lawyers Appear for Mrs. Ayo Potts Johnson in Corruption Case” January 21, 1947, 3 and 4.

³ “Selected Judgments of the West African Court of Appeal, 1946/1949, vol. XII, Compiled by The Hon. Mr. Justice Abott,” (Published by the Crown Agents for Oversea Governments and Administration), 198-201.

⁴ The Daily Service, “Lady Welfare Officer Lodges Appeal against Conviction for Corruption: Decision is Reserved by Judge,” May 17, 1947, 3.

lasted more than a single trial at the magistrate court, and fewer still received appeals both at the Supreme Court and WACA. Throughout the trial, “the court premises were packed full with spectators.”⁵

Besides the involvement of prominent legal officers, Lagos elites and front page newspaper coverage (*The Daily Service* christened the trial “sensational celebrated official corruption”), Potts-Johnson’s trial proved important for a number of other reasons: (1) Having convicted some officers of Nigeria Police Force (NPF) for a similar offence of collecting bribes from prostitutes, it showed the government’s determination to rid Lagos of the “undesirables” by punishing all corrupt law enforcement officials; (2) it embarrassed the Lagos reformists community (especially Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa’s Lagos Women’s League (LWL), the Women’s Welfare Council (WWC) and Oyinkan Abayomi’s Nigerian Women’s Party, (NWP)) which had clamored since the 1920s for effective policing of prostitutes and protection of the “girls in moral danger”; (3) it dented the image of the CWO, whose top-ranked officer was convicted for committing moral crimes through the very establishment meant to address social problems; (4) it indicated that Lagos’s problems included not only the prostitutes, *boma* and *jaguda* boys,⁶ unlicensed guides and other classes of criminals christened by Police Commissioner King

⁵ The Daily Service, “Submission in case against Lady Welfare Officer Overruled: Judgment Reserved for February 17,” February 4, 1947, 3.

⁶ These were predominantly young criminals and social miscreants found in all sort of crimes ranging from armed robbery to petty theft, and public disturbances. For fuller information about their activities see, Laurent Fourchard, “Urban Poverty, Urban Crime, and Crime Control: The Lagos and Ibadan Cases, 1929-1945,” in Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola, eds., *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 295- 296.

as the “unsavoury fraternities”⁷, but also educated elites and reformists who facilitated illegal activities by ensuring the “undesirables” were not repatriated from Lagos; above all, it provides an entry point (as this dissertation will show), into a complex contention about illicit underage sexuality, colonial security and preservation of hegemonic status quo, and the relationship between sexuality on the one hand, and cultural nationalism, feminization of public politics, Africanization of immorality and pathologization of the biological and gendered body on the other.

The Major Arguments

A book length historical research on sexuality in colonial Nigeria does not exist. Indeed a quick finger count of existing articles is easy to do. As of 2010, historians of mainstream or in Paul Zeleza’s word “malestream” Nigerian history, have yet to see any connection between sexuality, and nationalism despite these two themes are related and that Nigeria (arguably Africa’s most studied country) is also one of the birth places of modern African and nationalist historiography.⁸ Even the unprecedented upsurge in the scholarship on African women since the 1980s (from Nina Mba’s path-breaking and foundation *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (1982), to Marjorie McIntosh’s brilliantly crafted *Yoruba Women*, (2009) have not found any meaningful expression in the treatment of

⁷ National Archives Ibadan (hereafter NAI), Comcol 43399, “The Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary to the government: Employment of Women in the Police Force,” December 1, 1944.

⁸ Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, “Gender Biases in African Historiography,” in Oyeronke Oyewumi, ed., *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 208.

such highly significant themes as the intersection of class, gender and sexuality in the making of Nigerian women's and gender history.⁹ Without any gainsaying, the paucity of published work on sexuality in colonial Nigeria constitutes a concern, not only because it seems to suggest that discourse of the sexual component of Nigerian past is not worth studying but also because of the enormous body of ideas and data left unexplored and uncharted.

My dissertation creates an intersection between nationalism and sexuality – themes often considered disparate. I posit that historians of Africa have merely paid lip service to not only this interconnectivity but also to the cardinal position that nationalism and sexuality occupied in the African response to colonialism. What is more, I emphasize that the contrast between adult and underage sexuality, not class or race as the current body of literature shows, largely informed the pattern of reformist response to prostitution, the most pronounced form of illicit sexuality in colonial Africa. Thanks to the enormous body of work dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century, we now know how Africans responded to the implantation of exotic ideas and customs. In addition, previous scholars have studied numerous faces as well as phases of African response to colonial policies both in the areas of economy (as seen in the cases of tax “riots”) and politics (e.g., chieftaincy disputes).¹⁰ How Africans responded to laws aimed

⁹ Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press and Institute of International Studies, 1982); and Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009).

¹⁰ Works in this category are legion. For the case of Lagos see, Rina Okonkwo, *Protest Movements in Lagos, 1908-1930* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1995).

at regulating their sexuality remains underexplored. We do not know how sexuality debates added new dimensions to the often conflagrantly relations between the British colonialists and African nationalists.

My work does not simply celebrate the almost sacred notions of “the colonialists were wrong --- the Africans were right” or “Africans were hapless victims of British draconian policies.” Rather, I argue that both agents of social change were wrong because their positions on sexuality debates were largely influenced by parochial politics of self and group protection, coated in the idiom of “civilization” and “modernization” (for the British) and cultural and political nationalism displayed by Africans. What is more, I emphasize that the contrast between adult and underage sexuality, not class or race as the current body of literature shows, largely informed the pattern of reformist response to prostitution, the most pronounced form of illicit sexuality in colonial Africa.

Sexuality was reflected in virtually all sites of Africa’s engagement with alien rule, and I argue that this sexual component can guide a systematic and critical body of academic inquiry into Nigeria’s past. Although historians of Nigeria may have deemed sexuality discourse to be obscene or ignominious, the agents of Nigeria’s past—both men and women, Africans and Europeans—not only paid attention to sexuality, but even fought over it. The feminization of sexual politics, a discourse that has largely been neglected in Nigerian studies, was at the center stage of women’s political mobilization during the 1930s and 1940s.

I subscribe to Philipa Levine’s position that sexuality discourses are expressed in virtually all aspects of human interaction and experience. Accordingly, this is the first

history of colonial Africa to *holistically* explore the intersection of sexual politics with intra and inter ethnic relations, colonial security, conflicting nationalisms, decolonization, age, marriage and family, and gender relations. As a “total” history of sexuality, my dissertation contributes meaningfully to a gamut of highly specialized fields, such as the social, cultural, political, gender, sexuality, military and medical history of Africa. It also contributes to the moribund and underdeveloped field of childhood and crime/ legal history of Nigeria. The language and vocabulary of this work is therefore not located in any particular field of African history.

Unlike existing work by Philipa Levine, Megan Vaughan, Jean Allman, Marc Epprecht, Nakanyinke Musisi, and Ronald Hyam¹¹ among others, which largely document the activities of the colonialists and their fellow agents of “civilization” such as the missionaries, and unlike Luise White’s *Comfort of Home* which focuses on women who practices prostitution, my alternative explanation gives voice to a diverse group and individuals (both the colonized and the colonizers), highlighting what issues concerned different agencies, and how each agency tried to horn or silent alternative voices. The politics of prostitution, I argue, generated tension between two classes of moralists that I identified as “official” and “un-official.” While the British colonial administrators (both civil and military) stood as the official reformists, the native authorities, educated elites (men and women) and lastly the general public all belonged to the un-official reformist

¹¹ Levine, Philipa. *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*. London: Routledge, 2003; Epprecht, Marc. *This Matter of Women is Getting Bad: Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000; Hyam, Ronald. “Concubinage and Colonial Service: The Crewe Circular (1909) *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14, 3 (May 1986): 170-186.

class. These antagonists of casual sex work expressed divergent interests and frowned against the introduction and implementation of anti-prostitution laws, which contradicted their values and sexual orientation.

A clash between tradition (crudely defined as African traditional customs, values and ethos) and modernity (the so-called ideals of “modernization” and “civilization” imported by the colonialists) was inevitable as the reformists vied to establish the importance of legislations that favored them and kicked against laws that threatened their belief system and practices. What is more, debates over prostitution went beyond casual sex work, but extended to more complex matters such as the protection of soldiers, slave trade and slavery, marriage, nationalism, the place and role of women and children in African society and African or colonialist conception of morality/immorality. Because of the complex nature of the politics of sex, there was not time in the history of colonial Nigeria that common ground on how best to deal with the real, alleged and imagined medical and social nuisance caused by prostitutes was reached. Indeed, while the subject of the popular debate was “prostitution” the issues contested concurred with cultural nationalism and the protection of individual and group interests. Prostitution, as we shall see became a camouflage for negotiating issues that threatened the social, political, and sexual ideologies and orientation of a wide range of people - Africans and Europeans alike.

While most studies labeled as “gender” solely focuses on women’s experience; mine is a “true” gender history that emphasizes the role of history and social structure in the evolution of relations between biological males and females. Unlike most work that

sees gender or/and sexuality either from the prism of men (both the colonialists and Africans agencies) or women (as heroines or victims, and agents of social changes) this study creates a conversational dialogue between both men and women. Men and women, in my narrative, are portrayed neither as victors nor victims; and heroes nor hapless elements. Rather, as individuals and groups who sought to highlight and protect their interest in the wake of situations that threatened their understanding of how prostitution should be regulated and who should be responsible for this

I focused primarily on Lagos because it was the most urbanized part of colonial Nigeria, and was also the political and administrative capital of the colonial state. The incidence of prostitution was highest in this colonial city, which also had the largest population of non-Africans. Lagos was also the seat of all brands of nationalisms, allowing it to best demonstrate the clash between the forces of “modernization” and the endangered traditional order. Although this work focuses on Lagos, most of the issues discussed had Nigeria-wide ramifications. The laws enacted by the British and the accompanying African responses had far-reaching consequences on the social and economic well-being of both Lagosians and provincial Nigerians.

Pathology, Disease and the African Body

Michael W. Tuck and Sheryl A. McCurdy have examined how anxiety over VD and declining population informed laws that controlled the movement of women in

Uganda and Tanganyika, respectively.¹² However, they do not situate this crisis within the broader contention of the contrast between “underage” and adult sexualities.¹³ In all, we are left with an impression that colonial Africa did not grapple with sexuality of the underage girls and that the contrast between adult and underage prostitution, did not play any major role in dictating the pattern of reformist condemnation of casual sex work. Meghan Vaughan and Tuck, among others have examined how the prevalence of VD among the general population in certain parts of Southern, Eastern and Central Africa defined and redefined the colonialist ideas of Africa’s sexual “savagery” and otherness.¹⁴ However, in the case of Lagos, the British were primarily concerned with

¹² Hodgson, Dorothy L. and McCurdy, Sheryl A. (eds.). *“Wicked” Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire/Oxford/Cape Town: Heinemann/James Currey/David Philip. Social History of Africa. 2001; Tuck, Michael W. “Venereal Disease, Sexuality and Society in Uganda.” in Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall, eds., *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870.* London/New York: Routledge, 2001.

¹³ Sheryl M. McCurdy, “Urban Threats: Manyema Women, Low Fertility, and Venereal Diseases in Tanganyika, 1926-1936,” *“Wicked” Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa*, 212-233; and Michael W. Tucker, “Venereal Disease, Sexuality and Society in Uganda,” in Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall, eds., *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870* (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 191-204. See other important readings on the subject Ernst, Waltraud and Bernard Harris, eds. *Race, Science and Medicine, 1700-1960.* London and New York: Routledge, 1999; Lambo, T. Adeoye. *African Traditional Beliefs: Concepts of Health and Medical Practice.* Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1963; Nichols, L.A. “Neuroses in Native African Troops.” *Journal of Mental Science* 90 (1944): 863-8; Schram, Ralph. *A History of the Nigerian Medical Services.* Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1971; Wall, L. Lewis. *Hausa Medicine: Illness and Well-Being in a West African Culture.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1988; Smith, Robert S. *The Lagos Consulate, 1851-1861.* London: MacMillan, 1978; Watts, Sheldon. *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power and Imperialism.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997; Witty, P.A. and H.C. Lehman. “Racial Differences: the Dogma of Superiority.” *Journal of Social Psychology* 1 (1930): 394-419.

¹⁴ See among others, Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 129-154; Clive Glaser, “Managing the

the impact of VD on the colonial army called the RWAFF, not on the entire population. The fear that VD might lead to a decline in population and extinction of the Buganda “race,” and reordering of existing racial order as Clive Glaser and Nakanyike Musisi explain in the case of Buganda and Johannesburg, respectively,¹⁵ did not find any expression in Lagos, where colonial administrators, due to medical problems arising from slums and poorly maintained Lagoon actually wanted to regulate the influx of people (both men and women) into the city. While single African women who traveled to industrial and urban spaces in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) were forcefully arrested and subjected to compulsory VD screening as Lynnette A. Jackson has shown,¹⁶ in Lagos and the entire country, the colonialists did not implement such policies – though legislations like the Venereal Disease Ordinance of 1943 which made provision for it existed.¹⁷ Unlike in Eastern and Southern Africa where medical missionaries as Vaughan, Musisi and other have showed placed significant role in the control of female sexuality, in Lagos European missionaries’ voice was rarely heard. This historical difference suggests that in spite of obvious common binding traits, colonial Africa’s

Sexuality of Urban Youth: Johannesburg, 1920s-1960s” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, 2 (2005): 301-327.

¹⁵ Nakanyinke Musisi, “The Politics of Perception or Perception of Politics? Colonial and Missionary Representation of Baganda Women, 1900-1945,” in Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyinke Musisi, eds., *Women in African Colonial History* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 95-115.

¹⁶ Lynnette A. Jackson, “When in the White Man’s Town,” Zimbabwean Women Remember *Chibaura*,” in Allman, Geiger, and Musisi, eds., *Women in African Colonial History*, 191-213.

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

experience of gender and sexuality, due to the uneven impact of colonial rule and varying social structures, defers from place to place.

Women, Mobility, and Conflicting Nationalism

The story of the State and chiefs' control of female sexuality as seen in the works by Jean Allman, Musisi and Marc Epprecht among others, tell only one side of the story: the chiefs and the State versus the women.¹⁸ They do not tell us for instance the involvement of educated elite women in the politics of sexual control. We are left with the impression that only men, both as colonial officers, traditional authorities and as husbands or/and fathers wanted to control the reproduction and access of women to materials needed for upward mobility by controlling their migratory tendencies. In another vein, the contributions of women to colonial African histories have centered predominantly on public politics and anti-colonial movements like the Women's War of 1929 in Nigeria. Scholars from Leith Ross to Gloria Chuku and Nwando Achebe have ventured into such terrains as the adaptation of women to colonial rule.¹⁹ Focusing on both the educated and the uneducated women, LaRay Denzer, Mba and Odim's work

¹⁸ Jean Allman, "Rounding up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante," *Journal of African History* 37, no.2 (1996): 195-214; Marc Epprecht, *This Matter of Women is Getting Bad: Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000), 80-96; Nakanyike Musisi, "Gender and the Cultural Construction of 'Bad Women' in the Development of Kampala-Kibuga, 1900-1962," in Hodgson and McCurdy, eds., *"Wicked" Women* 171-187.

¹⁹ Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria, 1900-1960* (New York/London: Routledge, 2005); and Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005).

have helped us to appreciate the contributions of these women to colonial society and ideological ferment and movement of the period.

A portion of Nigeria women's history which needs to be illuminated is the role elite women played in the politics of sexual control. Why the elite women did join the colonial patriarch in condemning casual sex work? And what impact did the idea of endangered juvenile sexuality and social class placed in this debate?

Sources and Methods

Primary archival materials for this project comes from the three main national archives in Nigeria located at Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna. They include correspondence among colonial officers, colonial laws, and administrative order. This genre of materials helps illuminate the British perspectives. The African centered materials include the minutes of meetings of the various women's associations and "tribal" unions and petitions to the colonial officers. I conducted oral interviews among Lagosians, both men and women. Evidence from this category of sources complements and cross-examines archival materials.

Organization

This work spans from 1918 when the incidence of VD among the colonial army other wise called the West African Frontier Force, began to constitute administrative panic, and 1958 when the Lagos house of representative amended the age of consent from 13 to 16. It has a total of five chapters. In chapter one I examine the medical and

moral concern about illicit sexuality placing emphasis on issues around VD and colonial army, crime and child prostitution. Chapter two looks at the various legislations put in place to address these “problems.” In chapter three I examine the activities of the Colony Welfare Officer, a government institution established for dealing with the problems of juvenile delinquency from the standpoint of what I call “colonial welfare institution and the politics of African cultural difference.” Chapter four takes a look at how African men responded to anti-prostitution laws, while chapter five dwells on the involvement of Lagos elite women in the politics of sexual control.

Chapter 1

Sexualized Crime: Sexuality and Criminality in Colonial Urban Lagos

This may sound a gospel of despair, but it is the truth. An African human nature being what it is, universal castration is the only certain method by which venereal infections can be banished from amongst the soldiery. (Senior Sanitary Officer 1918).²⁰

In the year 1945, she asked me to follow her to Ikeja where I shall be better trained. We arrived [*sic*] Ikeja early in 1945 when I was given to a certain army who took my virgin and he paid 3 pounds to this woman, from there I was forced by her to become a harlot. Sir, all the money that I have been gathering from this harlot trade from 1945 is with this woman... I do not claim for all the pounds that I have foolishly worked for her. I want £10 only from her and the three pounds my virgin fee all £13.0.0d...Please sir, ask me and I will tell you how I, a little girl like this will be force to keep three over-sea soldiers at a time. (A petition

²⁰ NAI, N 1088, "Senior Sanitary Officer to the General Staff Officer, WAFF" April 1918.

by Rose Ojenughe to the Colony Welfare Officer,
November 21, 1946).²¹

It is a plain truth and well-known fact that prostitutes and criminals go together. Without the prostitutes, there can be no home for those who live solely on crime. The two are a disgraceful pair and in order to clear any community of the menace of one the other also must be given similar attention (Editorial: Southern Nigeria Defender, “Prostitutes and Criminals” November 29, 1950).

Introduction

The above epigraph summarily captures the three main concerns about the danger prostitution posed to Lagos society during first half of the twentieth century. Like in most, if not all, of the modern world, the relationship between prostitution, crime, venereal diseases, and immorality tended to put casual sex work in the gaze of reformists. However, three major factors make the history of prostitution unique in twentieth century Africa. First is the fact that the continent hosted two major forces of social change—the resilient and eroding indigenous African tradition and the imported force of “modernity”, packaged in the idiom of advancement and civilization. Second, the colonialists’ and the

²¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Rose Ojenughe to the Welfare Officer,” November 11, 1946.

colonizers' ideas about the extent, character and danger that prostitution posed to public safety and imperialism varied so widely. Due to the varied interest each group had in the colonial state, Africans and the British colonialists disagreed on sexuality debates because illicit sexuality posed danger of different types and magnitude. Hence while the African subjects (elite women) worried about the girls in moral danger and the impact of prostitution on future generations of African motherhood, the colonialists were principally interested in the danger juvenile crime posed to the preservation of colonial hegemony. While the British saw VD and crime as a security threat to the preservation of colonialism, African elite men worried about civility and the health of a Nigerian society they anticipated to inherit after the demise of colonialism. Traditional authorities/senior men in the provinces had nothing to fear until marriage laws aimed at controlling the power they wielded on the junior men were proposed. Lastly, the colonialists' idea of Africa's racial inferiority drove the notion that African men and women who sold and bought sexual services were aberrant, as well as the general pathologization of the African body. Discrimination on the basis of color was practiced not only in the promotion of Africans in the civil service, access to loans and places of socialization, and the availability of public housing; but also in the introduction of anti-prostitution that offered protection to Europeans at the expense of Africans. Despite this divergent understanding of the impact of illicit sexuality, all reformers, regardless of gender, class and race agreed that sexuality must be controlled in order to safeguard the society from moral, ethnic and medical pestilence.

This chapter looks at the three main concerns about prostitution, namely VD among the military, juvenile prostitution, and crime, highlighting their impact on colonial society and the interest of each group. The discussion of crime and VD were predominantly structured around the problem of “prostitution proper”, that is adult prostitution, while that of juvenile prostitution or the girls in moral danger seek to show the attitude of Lagosians and the British to the idea of illegitimate sexualities of under-age girls. The dichotomy between under-age and adult sexuality is important for my larger contention that the response to illicit sexuality was informed largely by the contrast between adult and under-age sexuality and the divergent understanding of the impact of casual sex work on the colonial state and its people.

“This is a City of Bubbles”: The Social and Sexual Landscape of Urban Lagos

“This is a city of bubbles” is the phrase Cyprian Ekwensi, a pioneering African novelist, used in describing the social character and sexual networking in Lagos in his 1954 novel, *People of the City*.²² Ekwensi’s observation in the 1950s is a product of colonial structural and social transformation, which began around the mid-nineteenth century but became adequately consolidated by the second decade of the twentieth

²² Cyprian Ekwensi, *People of the City* (London: Andre Dakers Limited, 1963 revised edition), 32. Disclaimer: Ekwensi has been criticized for sexism and careless depiction of women in his novels – e.g. *Jagua Nana*. As a historian I am not influenced by any of his work. I use his phrase “the city of burbles” principally because it best explains the nature of social intermingling in Lagos.

century.²³ As elsewhere in Africa and most parts of the world, prostitution is a significant aspect of social urbanization. Casual sexual labor seemed inevitable in a colonial urban center characterized by youthfulness, cultural heterogeneity, and anonymity. It is in this light that we take a snapshot of the nature of social and sexual relations in Lagos.

As Kristin Mann has shown in a recent study, Lagos which was founded around the early seventeenth century by Awori Yorubaland owed its development in part to the trans-Atlantic slave trade.²⁴ It was the first part of modern Nigeria to be brought under colonial rule when the British, under the guise of stamping out slave trade, annexed it in 1861. The population of the port city, which A.G. Hopkins, a pioneer economic historian of Africa, christened “The Liverpool of West Africa” due to its maritime trade,²⁵ increased steadily after 1861: 25,083 in 1866; and 37,452 in 1881. But it was not until the first half of the twentieth century that the city witnessed meaningful population growth: 39,387 in

²³ Kenneth Little’s classic, remains an indispensable reading on social urbanization in Africa. See Kenneth Little, *Urbanization as a Social Process: An Essay on Movement and Change in Contemporary Africa* (London/Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

²⁴ Historians may never know the exact date of the founding of Lagos due to conflicting oral and documentary evidence. Important reading on early Lagos include the following among others, A.B. Aderibigbe, *Lagos: The Development of an African City*. (Longman: Nigeria, 1975); Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri and Jide Osuntokun eds, *History of the Peoples of Lagos State* (Ikeja, Lagos: Lantern Books, 1987); John B. Losi, *History of Lagos* (Lagos: Tika Tore Press, 1914); and Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007).

²⁵ Cited in Ayodeji Olukoju, “Maritime Trade in Lagos in the aftermath of the First World War” (*African economic history*,” 20 (1992) 119-135. For a comprehensive history of maritime trade in Lagos, see Ayodeji Olukoju, *The “Liverpool” of West Africa: The Dynamics and Impact of Maritime Trade in Lagos, 1900-1950* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004).

1901; 73,766 in 1911; 230,256 in 1950; and 650,000 in 1963.²⁶ This new development was due principally to the following conditions among others: the presence of a seaport which increased trade relations with the outside world and incorporated Lagos into the world capitalist system; the “pacification” of most of modern eastern and northern Nigeria by the second decade of the twentieth century, coupled with the imposition of Pax Britannica, which guaranteed free movement of people; the widening of the gap of economic opportunities between the colony (Lagos) and the provinces (the rest of country); the location of the main railway terminal; the country’s capital syndrome; and the availability of infrastructures such as electricity, tired roads and pipe-borne water.²⁷

African and non-African immigrants did not come alone—they brought their cultures and general ways of life. Naturally, new forms of social and musical culture supplanted the old. In a number of occasions they complemented and were syncretized into preexisting forms. This was the case with *Sakara*, *Asiko*, *juju* and Highlife, which are musical performances that borrowed from European, American and African cultural and musical idioms. *Juju*, a genre of popular music got its name from the mysterious character associated with night-light life—“a tailor-cut for the enjoyment of nocturnal spirit.”²⁸

It is difficult to firmly establish when prostitution began in colonial Lagos. There is reference to the activities of “wayward” women who deprived men of their means of

²⁶ Akin L. Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1968), 244.

²⁷ Ayodeji Olukoju, *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos, 1861-2000* (Ibadan: Institut français de recherche en Afrique, 2003).

²⁸ Afolabi Alaja-Browne, “The Origin and Development of Juju Music,” *The Black Perspective in Music* 17, No. 1/2 (1989), 60.

livelihood during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁹ But it would appear that “large” scale prostitution did not emerge in Lagos until the first and second decades of the twentieth century, a period that coincided with the birth of the colonial state of Nigeria, and the full consolidation of colonial capitalist structures which included numerous European firms, the maritime industry and the railway, to mention but a few. Lagos was designed to maintain a pool of cheap, male, wage laborers. Hence all these industries attracted a large presence of African unmarried wage earners and fortune seekers, European seamen and military personnel, and other occasional visitors. The demography and economic patterns of Lagos resemble similar trends in such colonial cities as Nairobi, Kenya and the mining regions of South Africa.³⁰ In each case, the rapid colonial urbanization and entrenchment of capitalist expropriation destabilized the traditional household system and facilitated the influx of women and men who moved to the cities to partake in the new opportunities, and to evade the enormous constraints that traditional agencies placed on social, economic, sexual and geographic mobility.

By 1932, prostitution had been so well-established in the social fabric of Lagos that a musical artist, Tijani Omoyele, dedicated an entire album to it.³¹ Although prostitution was given a sub-culture stereotype, the representation of prostitutes’ identity in the mainstream popular music appears to show the significance of casual sex work in

²⁹ The Lagos Daily News, “The Unemployed Warri Men and Women in Lagos,” March 21, 1933.

³⁰ See Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914 vol. I* (London: Longman, 1982), 103-162.

³¹ The Lagos Daily News, Ashewo-Omo Jaguda,” April 2, 1932.

the social and sexual networking of the period. From the 1920s, hotels, night-clubs, bars and cinema houses (the famous ones included The Coliseum, Seven Seas Hotel, and Crystal Garden Club) provided the typical avenues for social and sexual networking, as well as the anonymity that prostitutes and their male clients required. Color segregation in popular rendezvous reflected the prevailing notion of European racial superiority.³² Hence famous recreation places like the Ikoyi Club were not desegregated until the late 1950s.

Not all women who practiced prostitution were Nigerian nationals—some were from the neighboring countries of the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) and Dahomey (modern Republic of Benin). However, this group was numerically insignificant.³³ Unlike Johannesburg where white women practiced prostitution, I have not come across any information pointing to the presence of white prostitutes in Lagos. One should not be surprised by this since most European women in colonial Nigeria, as Helen Callaway has shown were either wives of colonial administrators or professionals/expatriates or both. In spite of medical breakthroughs in tropical medicine, early twentieth century Nigeria was still considered “no place for a white woman.” This well-circulated notion might have discouraged white women from immigrating to Nigeria in large numbers.³⁴

According to records produced by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) the Colony Welfare Office, (CWO) and various ethnic associations, the largest chunk of Lagos

³² The Lagos Daily News, “The Colour Bar,” March 7, 1931.

³³ Oral interview, Madam Aduke Aladejebi, Lagos, June 15, 2008.

³⁴ See Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture, and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (Oxford: Macmillan Press in association with St. Anthony’s College, 1987).

prostitutes were from old eastern Nigeria.³⁵ But this conclusion failed to account for the hundreds of Hausa prostitutes, locally known as *Karuwai*, that practiced prostitution (*karuwanci*) in the *Sabon Gari* (stranger quarters).³⁶ Broadly taken, the Hausa form of prostitution was completely different from the “regular/conventional” type practiced by other Nigerians in terms of patronage, method of solicitation, legality, and acceptability/normalization. While Hausa prostitutes were largely patronized by Hausa men who generally resided in the *Sabon Gari*, non-Hausa prostitutes were largely patronized by non-Hausas and served diverse groups of Africans and non-Africans alike. While Hausa prostitutes solicited mainly in the *Sabon Gari*, waited inside or in front of their rooms for men to come and rarely street walking, non-Hausa prostitutes engaged in high level street-walking and solicited in major social rendezvous and streets of Marina.³⁷ *Karuwanci* can be likened to the *Malaya* form found in Nairobi, Kenya.³⁸ The method of solicitation not only determined the income of prostitutes, the risk involved in the sale of sex, and the types of clients and ethnicity, but also the criminality and criminal perception connected to casual sex work. Thus, *Karuwanci* did not attract the form of criminality associated with the conventional form of prostitution found among other Nigerian groups. The geographical conferment of *Karuwanci* to the *Sabon Gari* allowed it to be unnoticed and unsanctioned by administrators.

³⁵ See the various reports in NAI, Comcol 1, 2600, Vol. I, “Social Welfare in Nigeria,” 1942-1951.

³⁶ Oral evidence conducted in Lagos Sabon Gari testifies to the presence of several *Karuwai* in the stranger quarters.

³⁷ Oral Interview Madam Hauwa, Lagos, June 17, 2008.

³⁸ White, *The Comforts of Home*, 15-19.

Normalization of casual sex work is another factor. *Karuwanci* was considered a socially acceptable practice among the Hausa of the *Sabon Gari* in part because the high degree of divorce created a pool of both single and unattached males and females and because their migratory culture supported short- and only occasionally long-term relationships within the enclaves.³⁹ While Africans of other ethnicities wrote petitions accusing their own people of prostitution, I have not come across any petitions from *Sabon Garis* about the activities of the *Karuwai*.⁴⁰ Indeed, the CWO did not deal with any cases of child prostitution in the *Sabon Gari* throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Hausa leaders, unlike other “tribal” leaders, neither worked with the CWO against the menace of prostitution nor did they help the government establish criminal charges against their country men and women accused of breaking anti-prostitution laws. Chieftaincy disputes within the Lagos Hausa community were the most dominant theme in their relations with the Lagos authorities from the 1930s to the 1950s.⁴¹

Prostitution-related activities, such as brothel keeping, public solicitation, living on immoral earnings, etc., were illegal. However, public brothels of varying sizes and patronage characters existed in Marina and Race Course. Most of these brothels had beer parlors and houses between 8 and 10 rooms.⁴² While some leased out rooms to prostitutes on a monthly basis, others, like the famous Round-Up Hotel and Havana Inn, both in

³⁹ NAI, Comcol 1, 1420, “Hausas in Lagos,” 1932-1956. For the Ibadan case, see See Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

⁴⁰ See chapter four for a discussion of the involvement of “tribal” union in the politics of sexual control.

⁴¹ See the various petitions and court decisions in *Ibid.*

⁴² Oral interview, Mr. Joseph Kokori, Lagos June 15, 2008.

Marina, provided hourly lodging for prostitutes and their male customers.⁴³ By and large, most Lagos prostitutes operated from their rented rooms (which were legally considered brothels) but visited popular rendezvous such as the Race Course and Marina, which had high concentrations of European bars and restaurants. The availability of military barracks in Ikeja boosted the sex market in that part of the city.⁴⁴

We do not have credible data on the profitability of prostitution, since it was criminalized and belonged to the off-the-book sector of the colonial economy. However, if Nigerian prostitutes from the Ogoja province practicing in the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) could collectively send £5,000 pounds home in 1939, there is every certainty that Lagos prostitution market outstripped this by several fold.⁴⁵

Administrative reports of the period identified the economic causation of prostitution, pointing out that limited job opportunities forced women into casual sex work.⁴⁶ In his 1944, Governor of Nigeria-commissioned report on Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, Alexander Paterson clearly identified why women were driven into prostitution:

In many countries, two major occupations absorb the labour of the unmarried girl. One is factory work and the other is domestic service. Both of these are denied to the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ See, NAI, Comcol 1, 2383 Vol. IV, "Military Accommodation in Lagos," 1940-1946.

⁴⁵ National Archives Enugu (NAE hereafter), Obubdist 4.1.71, "Nigerian Prostitutes in the Gold Coast," 1939.

⁴⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 4108, "Alexander Paterson's Report to His Excellency, The Governor of Nigeria on Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria," 1944.

Nigerian girl, and if she wants to escape from close grip of the family, prostitution is almost the only alternative open to her. If some enterprising agency would establish a factory for the making of matches or the tailoring of cheap shirts and cloths, streams of girls would be given a chance of independence, and the idea of woman as a mere household drudge and sleeping partner might be transformed.⁴⁷

How new forms of social dislocation—such as high bride-price and divorce—contributed to the proliferation of casual sex work attracted limited institutional attention, at least until WWII, but enjoyed a considerable amount of public debate in the notable Lagos newspapers such as the *West African Pilot* and *The Daily Service*. As we shall see in chapter four, provincial men, resident in Lagos would, because of what I call the “bride-price hysteria” would create adequate visibility about the connection between bride-price and prostitution.

It is important to note that prostitution was not considered a “legitimate” profession. In its entirety, it was viewed and treated as a poor woman’s job or the job of the so-called “undesirable women” who deviated from the “normal” pattern of social and sexual behavior. “Undesirable” women stood in contrast to “good” women. A good woman would stay at home with the children, avoid multiple sexual relations and respect

⁴⁷ Ibid.

the institution of patriarchy in general. Delivering his judgment in a case involving “forty hotel girls” arrested for breaking anti-prostitution laws (loitering and solicitation), Magistrate E.A.S Ogunmuyiwa sentenced all the accused to one month in prison or a fine of five pounds (each) and advised them to “find jobs or get married.”⁴⁸

A 1946 field note of two European researchers in some Lagos brothels best illuminates the interaction between social urbanization and prostitution. Disguised as potential customers of juvenile sexual labor, these two men, moved from one brothel to another taking note of the extent of child prostitution in four different locations. The first location was Seven Seas Hotel where they met a woman who had some child prostitutes in her control. In the room provided for the men were two beds in cubicles, placed on the floor and surrounded by several young child prostitutes. On request, they were presented with two child prostitutes with ages ranging from fourteen to fifteen. The second location was a traveler’s inn with twelve girls, ages fifteen to twenty-four. In a journalistic manner, the researchers wrote: “Two of the youngest girls immediately came forward to sit on men’s knees and had obviously been trained how to behave.”⁴⁹ The men asked for two virgins and the woman in charge promised to make them available the following day. The third location was a house located behind Seven Seas Hotel. They met a woman of about thirty years of age and asked for a fourteen year old girl prostitute. The woman answered that two young virgins would be available for the following day as they had to be fetched from outside. The last location was the Crystal Garden Club where they saw a lot of adult prostitutes. When the men asked a taxi driver if he would take them to a place

⁴⁸ West African Pilot, “40 hotel girls convicted,” January 1955, 1.

⁴⁹ NAI, Comcol 2844, “Child Prostitution in Lagos by Alison Izzett,” May 5, 1946.

where they could get *piccin*; he answered yes: "...and immediately others came forward offering to take us to where we can get small *piccin* as late as twelve midnight."⁵⁰ The social welfare officers submit:

No man would have any difficulty in being provided with a girl of any age, virgin if desired. The young girls all undressed to show the men their breasts to prove their age. Some of the girls appeared passive: others enjoyed themselves and were evidently being used to being given money and cigarette. The usual price appears to be about 10/- and more for a virgin. These places are patronized by European Seamen.⁵¹

The West African Frontier Force: Race, Imperialism and Venereal Disease

The military is an integral arm of political organization in most, if not all modern societies. However, what makes the history of the military in Africa and other modern colonial regions unique is its significant connection to the history of imperialism. More so, it did not serve the "common" good of the colonized by the colonizers. The fact that Africans were recruited into the army to kill fellow African makes it one of the most dehumanizing and repressive arms of the colonial enterprise. The Nigerian colonial army,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

known as the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), was needed for maintaining law and order, and for suppressing “riots” and “insurgencies” which threatened colonial rule. Without the WAFF, well-organized “riots” such as the famous Women’s War of 1929 and several others, like chieftaincy disputes, would have sounded the death knell to British colonialism in Nigeria.

The origins and development of the WAFF from the 1860s, when a paramilitary body named the “Armed Hausa Force” was established to protect British colonial territories and maintain law and order to 1960, when it was renamed the Nigerian Army, have attracted adequate scholarly attention by military historians of Africa such as Sam Ukpabi, C.N. Ubah, and David Killingray. Existing work largely examines the transformation of the military from a paramilitary edifice into a formidable colonial force, its methods and policies of recruitment, various military engagements and so on.⁵² One aspect of Nigerian military history that has eluded historians is the social and sexual identity of the African soldiers, and how this informed institutional and administrative concerns, debates and deliberation about race, sexual aberration and the future of imperialism in Nigeria.

Although the WAFF was composed of virtually all the major Nigerian ethnic groups by the 1910s, it remained largely dominated by the Hausa, who were considered

⁵² Peter B. Clarke, *West Africans at War, 1914-1918; 1938-1945: Colonial Propaganda and Its Cultural Aftermath* (London: Ethnographica, 1986); Sam C. Ukpabi, *The Origins of the Nigerian Army: A History of the West African Frontier Force, 1897-1914* (Zaria, Nigeria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1987); Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, *Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British Colonial Africa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1989); and C.N. Ubah, *Colonial Army and Society in Northern Nigeria* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Baraka Press, 1998).

the “martial race” of Nigeria.⁵³ The African rank and file was expected to be single, unattached men, preferably in their twenties. Soldiers traditionally served in regions far away from their immediate homeland. This appeared the only means of securing their loyalty in suppressing revolts and insurgency among non-familiar people. The high degree of mobility prevented the soldiers from contracting long-term relationships that could metamorphose into marriage. Inevitably, the patronage of less-committed sexual relationships became the only means of satisfying sexual desires. The presence of prostitutes around barracks was tied directly to the presence of men who wanted casual sexual services. Hence, the soldiers were the driving force of new classes of women and relationship that sprang up around barracks. Because soldiers were paid on a daily basis and did not have any strong family ties in their base, they had access to disposable income which they spent on casual sexual labor.

One major non-combatant threat to the size and productivity of the WAFF was venereal disease (hereafter VD) presumed to be spread by prostitutes. Nigerian administrators like their counterparts in other British Asia colonies got the signals right: imperialism cannot be sustained with a depleted and sick troop. When VD became a recognized problem in the colonial army is hard to tell in absolute terms. But the most comprehensive surviving document that I have found is a series of 1918 correspondences among the following high-ranked civil and military officers: the Commandant of the Nigerian Regiment of the RWAFF, the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services

⁵³ This notion is by no means unique to Nigeria. See, Timothy H. Parsons, “‘Wakamba Warriors were Soldiers of the Queen:’ The Evolution of the Kamba as a Martial Race, 1890-1970,” *Ethnohistory* 46, No. 4 (1999): 671-701.

(DMSS), and the Chief Central Secretary to the Government. The tone of these correspondences about the prevalence of VD suggests that the problem was a well established one and that it had been a subject of administrative concern probably since the opening years of the twentieth century or even the late nineteenth century. The correspondence provides information about the social and sexual behavior of African soldiers, including their psychology and disposition to VD and institutionalized means of controlling them.⁵⁴

The Commandant blamed the government for encouraging military prostitution by not providing adequate accommodation for soldiers in the barracks. The idea was that soldiers tended to lust after prostitutes because the accommodation in the barracks was not good enough to raise a family. Thus, in the Colonel's conviction, the African soldiers would likely get married if adequate accommodation were provided. And logically, marriage would provide soldiers with regular access to sex from one partner and thus reduce the risk of engaging in multiple sexual liaisons. The connection between the prevalence of VD, the lack of suitable accommodation and the desirability of starting a family appears to endorse marriage for soldiers. However, this seems contradictory because African soldiers were not expected to have strong family attachments or responsibilities that could militate against their productivity and high geographical mobility.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ NAI, Comcol 1, N 1088/1918, "Venereal Disease in the Nigerian Regiment—The Commandant to the Director of Medical and Sanitary Service, 1918."

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Reports and correspondence by British medical and military authorities about VD and African soldiers basically reaffirmed established prejudices and unscientific propositions about African sexuality, masculinity and conduct. For them, the African rank and file considered VD “a trivial” matter.⁵⁶ They were not ashamed of contracting it; but saw it as a glorifying symbol of sexual masculinity. As the introductory epigraph suggests, they were treated as stubborn, undisciplined and sexually promiscuous men who would do anything to avoid being prosecuted or prevented from patronizing prostitutes. Attacks on African troops, which were predominantly Muslim-Hausa, went beyond the idea of lacking sexual discipline to the question of adherence to Islamic faith and faithfulness to their “real” or “legitimate” wives:

Most of them are Mohammedans—at least, they profess Islam, after a fashion; few or no Mohammedans will consent to keep their genuine wives in such a state of publicity as residence in barracks involves; their women are, consequently, well high universally, ammunition wives, the rule of whose lives is promiscuity...⁵⁷

African soldiers received various kinds of punishment for contracting VD -- several methods—most notably, cock-pulling or public display of genitals—were adopted

⁵⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, N 1088/1918, “Venereal Disease in the Military, 1918.”

⁵⁷ NAI, Comcol 1, N 1088/1918, “Senior Sanitary Officer to the General Staff Officer,” April 20, 1918.

in order to detect concealment. During the 1920s, soldiers were fined 6d per day if discovered to be concealing VD. Soldiers hospitalized for VD also lost wages while on sick bed. Cock-pulling and “no work no pay” were not popular among all administrators: the Central Secretary believed that the weekly display of sexual organs is “disgusting even than the term.”⁵⁸ He added that the fine of six pence (per day) imposed on soldier who conceal venereal diseases is not enough to deter them “from answering the call which nature deter on men.” For him African soldiers “have not been trained to self restraint.”⁵⁹

In 1925, a more medically-assertive step was taken for controlling VD when irrigation clinics and early treatment centers were opened in all Lagos barracks. Prior to this period, soldier who had VD were referred to the government African hospital in Lagos Island. In addition, free treatment was offered as a means of encouraging the soldiers to seek medical help on time. It was believed that making soldiers pay for medical expenses incurred from treating VD encouraged them to conceal the disease or seek unprofessional and quack medical help, which often worsened the situation. The proposal for establishing VD clinics for the African public, as well as the military, was first made in 1925. However, this proposal remained on paper until the WWII years when the incidence of VD threatened the Win-the-War efforts.

It is important to note that throughout the 1910s up to the 1940s, military authorities neither considered subjecting women living around barracks to mandatory medical inspection as suggested by the DMSS, nor did they eject women suspected to be

⁵⁸ NAI, Comcol 1, N 1088, “Venereal Disease,” 1923.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

“living on immoral earning” within the military bases. It would appear that administrators deliberately tolerated military prostitution as long as the soldiers did not contract VD. Moreover, they probably considered military prostitution as an inevitable and ineradicable sphere of military culture. The approach to reducing VD was therefore curative not preventive. It was also troop- rather than prostitute- centered.

While rhetoric rooted in racial prejudice about African sexuality dominated military and civil discourse in the 1920s, by the 1930s another issue temporarily diverted the focus from the troop’s lack of sexual discipline to “economic” considerations which threatened the very ideological basis of imperialism and exploitation of the colonized. On February 15, 1932, the Director of Medical and Sanitary Service (DMSS) presented a report to the Chief Secretary to the Government about the circulation and sale of an aphrodisiac manufactured by a German drug firm, E.J. Jones and Co., based in Hamburg.⁶⁰ He further claimed that the firm was sending printed materials containing information about “many vaunted cures for VD, aphrodisiacs” to “school-boys in Nigerian school.” He was equally worried that local newspapers carried dubious information about drugs that can cure varieties of male and female diseases. The DMSS was convinced that the prevalence of VD among the soldiers and the larger Nigerian populace is attributable to the popularization of the German aphrodisiac which contributed to the sexual recklessness of the African troops and the general population.

Equally important was the DMSS’s observation that another important cog in the wheel of eradicating VD among the troops was the patronage of African quack

⁶⁰ NAI, MH 54 VOL. I “Venereal Disease, 1932.”

native/traditional doctors who professed to have solutions to all types of VD and female disease. For him, the only way to ensure that soldiers did not conceal VD was to block their knowledge about non-Western and vaunted remedies for treating VD and the native African doctors.

In a correspondence to the Secretary of State for the colonies, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, the DMSS wrote:

Advertisements of aphrodisiacs form the bulk of the booklets broadcasted by the least reputable chemists... It was considered that by forbidding the advertisement of aphrodisiac the public would at the same time be protected from such other undesirable quack medicines for which separate legislation could not easily be devised.

The main reason which induced me to ask that legislation might be passed upon this subject was the fact that a firms of chemists, operating from Hamburg, was sending booklets advertising cures for venereal diseases and sexual weakness to school-boys in Nigeria. An effective aphrodisiac is not likely to be used with discrimination by any population still less to by an uneducated population.⁶¹

⁶¹ NAI, MH 54 VOL. I, "The DMSS to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1932."

The DMSS's claims of ubiquitous newspaper adverts for remedies to all sort of diseases are not untrue. Indeed, advertisements of drugs are the most famous in Lagos newspapers like Herbert Macaulay's, *Lagos Daily News*, and another vernacular newspaper, *Akede Eko*.

The outbreak of the WWII and the importance of Lagos in the Win-the-War effort developed the sexual labor market and led to a serious institutional response. In addition to hundreds of buildings, which housed the WAFF, Lagos had six major military bases or barracks located at Surulere, Apapa, Ijora, Race Course, Ikoyi and Yaba during the War.⁶² The strength of the Nigerian regiment of the WAFF grew rapidly from 13,980 during the WWI to 121,652 during the WW II.⁶³ The port city was the main international gateway of the country where the Nigerian Regiment of the RWAFF, which fought at Burma and in East Africa, departed. Lagos also handled virtually all the Nigerian supplies needed for prosecuting the War. And as the political and administrative capital of the country, the effective defense of Lagos (the most prosperous British West African port city) from external invasion was significant, not only to Nigeria but to all British colonial possessions in West Africa. The need to effectively defend the port city and the whole of British West Africa increased after June 1940 when France fell to Nazi Germany. Surrounded by about a dozen French West African colonies, the British Empire in West Africa was seriously endangered by the fall of France.

⁶² NAI, Comcol 1, 2383 Vol.IV, "Military Accommodation in Lagos," 1940-1946.

⁶³ The West African Frontier Force, <http://www.onlinenigeria.com/links/adv.asp?blurb=159>. Accessed on January 3, 2010.

By 1940, it became obvious that the Nigerian government, especially military authorities, had intensified their concern about prostitutes who were stigmatized as the purveyors of venereal diseases. Although the “evils” of prostitution and venereal diseases predated the outbreak of WWII, sexual demand for prostitutes increased as the strength of the WAFF soared. Soldiers fondly called prostitutes “ammunition wives”—a name that appears to indicate their sexual indispensability. In 1942, the yearly percentage of VD incidences among the WAFF was estimated at 43.2%, a figure higher than other common diseases such as malaria. For the same year, the Nigerian figure was slightly higher than those from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Gambia, which were 39.0%, 34.8% and 20.4%, respectively.⁶⁴ In 1942, the West African Conference of Governors released a report affirming that nearly half of the force was at one time or another rendered unfit for active service on account of venereal diseases.⁶⁵ This figure for Nigeria may be higher than the above estimate since it was derived from medical attendance. And since most infected soldiers tended to seek non-Western remedies, the cases reported was definitely lower than the actual rate of infection.

Rumors about the connection between VD and heart disease also caused considerable fear. Confirming the popularity of this rumor, Colonel Bingham, (Assistant Director of Medical Services—Military) reported that the assumption that the African type of gonorrhea is more deadly than its Western type because it caused “a cold in the heart” should not be discarded by medical authorities. He also decried the financial strain of

⁶⁴ NAI, MH 544, “Venereal Disease among African Troops—West African Governors’ Conference to the Honourable Chief Secretary, Lagos” March 18, 1942.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

VD, pointing out that the military required £125 to purchase M. & B. 693, a gonorrhea medicine, for the month of May 1941 alone. It soon dawned on military authorities that Britain could not win the war if its troops were not physically and medically fit. Fighting VD was entirely part of the Win-the-War efforts and strategies.

The medical implication of VD on the general population was not considered important—in spite of a noticeable increase in reported cases from 37,085 in 1938 to 44,625 in 1944. Colonial administrators like Paterson believed that the incidence of VD among the general population would decrease if the government monitored the sexuality of prostitutes and soldiers. Colonial authorities did not have any scientific or medical evidence that prostitutes harbored VD; however, they felt that the high incidence of gonorrhea among RWAFF owed to their sexual contact with prostitutes and the so-called “surplus” women in general. Also, the CWO claimed that most child prostitutes, rescued from brothels, had VD—an indication that they might have contracted it through multiple sexual partners. In 1944, the CWO treated ninety three female juveniles (mostly child prostitutes) with ages ranging from three to fifteen for venereal diseases. Many soldiers were effectively convinced that sex with juveniles could cure venereal diseases. This partly explains why demand for child prostitutes was high among soldiers and sailors.

The Girls in Moral Danger: Underage Prostitution, Crime and Sexuality

“The girls in moral danger” was a generic name for females (mostly under fourteen) who were exposed to all forms of social ills, including, but not limited to,

prostitution, street hawking, lack of parental control, “child marriage” and illegal guardianship. Although all these activities constituted a public panic, the most worrisome of all was child prostitution. Child prostitution was both a symptom of social decadence and breakdown of the household, as well as end product of all other forms of danger. Thus while children were directly recruited to work as prostitutes in brothels, other categories of girls in moral danger such as the girl-hawkers, child wives and those under illegal guardianship could face the danger of being trafficked into the Lagos prostitution network. The history of girls-hawkers and wives is basically the history of child prostitution and vice versa.

The consequences of moral danger among underage girls meant different things to different categories of people. For the elite women, it was a cog in the wheel of their project of raising modern African womanhood. For the colonial administrators, girl-criminality and juvenile delinquency in general are colonial security issues which deserved adequate attention. Unmarried Lagos men believed that child prostitution would be ameliorated if rural patriarchy reduced the high bride-price demanded for marriage rites. A close look at the modus operandi of juvenile prostitution is worth doing.

Street Hawking

Apart from luring female juveniles into prostitution, street hawking exposed girls to moral and sexual insecurity which included rape and assault. The amount of evidence about hawking-related danger during the 1920s suggests that the menace dates back to the late nineteenth century or early 1900s. In her memoir, Sylvia Leith-Ross, a colonial

officer and renowned anthropologist famous for her book on Igbo women,⁶⁶ wrote that in the 1920s, Lagos was “free from many social problems which confront it today,” but asserted that “only the file labeled ‘Child Hawker’ lay already on the LG’s [Lieutenant-Governor] desk, growing heavier day to day. Probably it has been closed at last, but it was one I was to see again and again all down the long years, its rival in size, labeled ‘Disposal of Nightsoil’ is, I am sure, still open.”⁶⁷ The first African sources pointing to the moral and sexual danger of girl hawkers is contained in a petition by the Lagos Women’s League addressed to the Resident of Lagos in 1926. The women wanted the government to prohibit hawking by girls and boys under the age of 14.⁶⁸

By the 1930s, girl hawkers were frequently recruited into the Lagos prostitution network. Hence the elite women’s claims were correct. A May 20, 1930 editorial in *The Nigerian Daily Times* lamented “the long standing problem of the girl-hawkers who have become such hopeless prey to traffickers in prostitution.”⁶⁹ Throughout the 1930s, Lagos newspapers continued to publish stories and letters by “concerned” citizens, about the connection between child prostitution and hawking. Between the months of September and October 1935, the *Daily Comet* ran numerous stories about child prostitution, under subject headings such as “Save the Future Mothers” and “Girl Hawkers Morals.” These exposés added a new dimension to the existing anxiety, pointing out that although girl

⁶⁶ Sylvia Leith-Ross, *African Women: A Study of Ibo of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939).

⁶⁷ This memoir was written in the 1960s and 1970s. Sylvia Leith-Ross, *Stepping-Stones: Memoirs of Colonial Nigeria, 1907-1960* (London/Boston: Peter Owen, 1983), 83.

⁶⁸ NAI, Comcol 1/498, “Olajumoke Obasa on behalf of Lagos Women’s League to the Resident of Lagos,” August 6, 1926.

⁶⁹ The Nigerian Daily Times, “Problem of the Girl Hawkers,” May 20, 1930.

hawkers were frequently and involuntarily lured into prostitution by adult prostitutes, some of them acted independently, selling their “body” but disguising as hawkers.⁷⁰

The world of a girl hawker was certainly a double tragedy—in addition to being raped, murdered and recruited into the Lagos prostitution network, unscrupulous adults, especially males, took their goods without paying the right amount or without paying at all. The headline of the *West African Pilot* on Thursday, August 18, 1938 read “Counterfeiter Dupes Young Girl-Hawker.” In this case, Mulu, a girl hawker, was accosted by a male currency trickster on Moloney Bridge who gave her a fake 4s and collected the 3s 4½ pence that she made plying the major streets of Lagos Island. Although Mulu did not realize that she received fake currency until she returned home, girls who found themselves in this kind of awkward but common situation and those who recorded poor sales rarely returned home because of the fate of being punished by their parents and guardians. Instead they roamed around begging for the rest of the money. Such children were particularly open to advances for sexual intercourse, rape and murder.

The outbreak of WWII and its attendant social, demographic and economic permutation led to an unprecedented increase in the cases of underage prostitution, rape and murder. The pauperization accentuated by adverse wartime economic policies was reflected in the increase in hawking needed to augment household income. The total breakdown of law and order meant that the government could not even guarantee the safety of adult Lagosians, much less that of the streams of defenseless, underage girls

⁷⁰ See the following stories in the *Daily Comet*, “Save the Future Mothers by Sogidi,” September 21, 1935; “Save the Future Mothers by a Muslim,” October 5, 1935; “Girl Hawkers’ Morals by Kabiboy,” October 19; and “Girl Hawkers’ Morals,” by COO October 26 1935.

who sold wares on the streets of Lagos both day and night.⁷¹ A case in point was a ten year old kerosene girl hawker, Badiaran, who was raped and murdered between 7 and 10pm on March 12, 1945. The lifeless body of the girl, who left home around 5pm on March 12, was found at the Race Course the following morning.⁷² Rarely any month passed without newspaper stories about either assault or prostitution among the girl hawkers. Certainly, the reported cases reflected only a fraction of the actual total incidence.

Although the mainstream, male-dominated Lagos newspapers occasionally featured stories on the social and sexual dangers of hawking, it was the petitions and lobbying of the elite women that brought the issue closer to the Lagos and provincial authorities. In 1942, the newly formed Women Welfare Council (WWC) wrote a memo to the resident and district officers in the provinces, demanding that they prevent their girls from being trafficked to Lagos under the guise of education, marriage and informal training.⁷³ At a well-attended public protest against girl hawking, Kofoworola Abayomi, the President of the Nigerian Women's Party, asserted that "girl-hawkers usually pass into the hands of seasoned prostitutes to learn the trade at a tender age."⁷⁴ For the elite women, the future of African womanhood who would play significant role in the

⁷¹ See the following stories in West African Pilot, "Young Girl Found Dead on Race Course: Foul Play Suspected: Information Requested by Police," March 15, 1945; "Street Hawking by Young Girls" June 20, 1946; "Eleven Year Old Girl Hawker Found Dead in Public Garden," June 20, 1946. The Daily Service, "Man who assaulted young girl receives 3 months," August 19, 1941.

⁷² The Nigerian Daily Times, "Young Girl Found Dead on Race Course."

⁷³ NAI, Osun Div 1/1 667, "H. Millicent Douglas, Honorary Secretary of Women's Welfare Council to the Resident of Osun Division," dated October 12, 1942.

⁷⁴ West African Pilot, "Mrs. Abayomi Attributes Prostitution to Laziness and Undue Gaiety and Unemployment," August 10, 1944.

envisioned independence Nigerian state will be jeopardized if adequate attention was not paid to the girls in moral danger. Their interest therefore transcended the view that child prostitution was an ethical aberration to a more nuance subject of nation-building. There is no evidence suggesting that prominent male nationalists who represented Lagos at the Nigerian Legislative Council joined the elite women in campaign against moral danger. The only support the elite women had was the newspaper press which carried stories (often sensational) about prostitution.

Lagos elite women and newspapers were not the only groups convinced that girl hawking was a façade for prostitution or that hawking exposed girls to assault. One of the major activities of the CWO immediately after its inception in 1942 was the abolition of street hawking. Presenting the need for a law to prohibit street hawking by female juveniles in one of his earliest reports to the President of Lagos Town Council, Donald Faulkner, the Colony Welfare Officer relied on police reports which affirmed that, “The police have reported from time to time that many of the children who are procured for prostitution exist under the guise of hawkers.”⁷⁵ In one of her reports, Lady Welfare Officer Alison Izzett of the CWO concluded, “Girl hawkers are often sent out late at night to solicit and lead men to adult prostitutes.” She claimed that “all my female staff was unanimous in saying that girls hawkers are frequently used for prostitution.”⁷⁶

Marriage and Traditional Customs

⁷⁵ NAI, Comcol 1, “Hawking by Children in Lagos: Faulkner to the President of the Lagos Town Council,” September 1942.

⁷⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844.

If hawking exposed Lagos underage girls to a myriad of social and sexual dangers, another practice—the bastardization of betrothal/marriage by proxy—would add another compelling item to the reformists’ long list of social decadence and anxiety that required institutional attention. Posted marriage involved the corruption of the pre-eminent and traditional socio-cultural practice of betrothal, which was not only symbolic, procedural, ritualist and carried out over a long period (it was sometimes initiated before the bride and bride-groom were even born), but was not entirely monetized. In precolonial times, betrothal neither required the payment of a lump sum before marriage was consummated, nor were females given out in marriage to men unknown to the family and the entire community.⁷⁷

But with the coming of colonialism, a new form of “arranged marriage” emerged as men and women began to secure young girls from the rural areas by simply paying the parents a sum as bride-price. This development can be understood against the backdrop of the penetration of capitalist values, the introduction of a cash economy and the monetization of the entire colonial society. A kind of dependency status emerged as the rural areas became almost dependent on the cash that urban wage earners returned with and spent on a variety of social functions and responsibilities, such as marriage,

⁷⁷ The intelligence report on Nigerian ethnic groups deposited at the Ibadan, Enugu, and Kaduna archives contain information about traditional marriage customs. Notable published work on customary marriage include among others, P.A Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. II* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926); Akiga Sai, *Akiga’s Story: The Tiv Tribe as Seen by one of its Members* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965); N.A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1970); G.T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1966).

patronage, festivities, etc. The traditional process of betrothal was replaced by “cash in hand” marriage. Since monetary commitment was paramount and gradually replacing a system that was traditionally long and procedural, it was not too difficult for Lagos-based provincial people to secure young girls either for genuine marriage or prostitution or both. When this practice began will remain a puzzle, but I suggest that it became a staple around the mid-1920s. This period coincided with an unprecedented increase in bride-price and the expansion of the Lagos prostitution network—a situation that triggered the bastardization of local customs.

Tables I and II provide more insight into the sexual insecurity of female juveniles in Lagos in 1944:

Cases	No. of victims	Remarks
Raped	1	----
Unlawfully carnally known	2	One of them, age 5 had venereal disease
Child prostitutes	34	Formally in custody of adult prostitutes
Runs away from maltreatment by guardian	13	9 of them had venereal disease
Beyond parental control	3	One of them age 13 had venereal disease
Girls in moral danger	2	One of them, age 13 was found pregnant

Girl hawkers	1	Age 11, found not to be virgin
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Table I. Source: NAI, COMCOL 1, 2600 Vol. II, Social Welfare, General Questions, Establishment of Social Welfare Department, 1942-1945.

Historians may never know how the practice of recruiting underage girls for prostitution through fictitious marriage arrangement began. Suggestively, this practice may have developed as a way to circumvent the enormous monetary requirement for marriage which varied from region to region and ranged from 50 to 300 pounds during the 1930s and 1940s. It was cheaper to marry by proxy than undergoing the expensive, elaborate and time consuming rites.⁷⁸ Because non-natives (especially non-Yorubas) of Lagos were traditionally averse to marrying outside their immediate ethnicity or community, they had limited options when it came to raising money for marriage.⁷⁹ As we shall see in chapter four, by 1943, the marriage crisis would become a major source of publicized tension between the junior men (Lagos unmarried wage earners) and their senior counterparts (rural patriarchs).

While the incidence of hawking attracted reformist attention from the early 1920s, it was during the early 1940s that Lagos authorities (the CWO in particular) began to draw correlations between prostitution and betrothal. Thus, before this period, sources including Lagos newspapers and elite women rarely mentioned the connection between prostitution and betrothal. While the danger of rape and murder to hawkers was publicly

⁷⁸ Oral interview, Mr. and Mrs. Nsofor, Lagos, June 2, 2008.

⁷⁹ My conclusion here is based on my field work among some Igbo who lived in Lagos during the 1940s and 1950s.

visible to reformers; betrothed girls prostituted in “houses of ill fame,” were often hidden from the “eagle eyes” of reformists. In addition, the fact that most girl hawkers were Yoruba gave hawking a larger publicity in the traditional Yoruba town of Lagos than betrothal, which was certainly rampant among the non-Yoruba.

The CWO documented copious evidence of how parents gave out their daughters to urban dwellers who had paid their bride-price and were taken to Lagos where they worked as prostitutes. The following cases illuminate the connections between child prostitution and fictitious marriage arrangements:

Case I: A well-known boma boy heard of the death of his uncle and, remembering that there was a young girl left fatherless, went to the home and persuaded the girl to come to Lagos on the promise that there was a husband waiting for her. She was brought to Lagos, kept in close confinement and prostituted to European sailors. Eventually, she escaped from the man and reported to the police.

Case II: A woman of known bad character went to the Urhobo country and so she says paid £10 dowry for a girl to be the wife of a soldier in Lagos. The girl was found living in the woman’s house. She proved to be about 12

years of age, with little pubertal development. A soldier appeared and corroborated the woman's story.

Case III: A woman of notorious character was found harbouring a girl of 15 in circumstances strongly suggestive of prostitution. The girl was said to be the wife of her brother and £13 was said to have been paid as dowry. Repeated requests to see the alleged husband produced no result although ample time was given. As the woman raised no objection to the repatriation of the girl, and in fact arranged and paid for it herself, it was assumed that the foregoing story was untrue.⁸⁰

An observation by D.E Faulkner, the Colony Welfare Officer, further corroborates the profundity of the evidence presented above. The following excerpt is from his 1943 report of Child Prostitution in Lagos:

It appears that the modus operandi is for a woman, who may be known to them or may even be relative, to approach the parents of a girl with an offer to train her in Lagos or to find a husband for her. Very often, the woman (or man)

⁸⁰ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "Child Welfare-Prostitution and Child Marriage," undated

will actually pay some dowry on the spot, but that is not too always so. The girl is then brought to Lagos and is gradually introduced to the life of a prostitute.⁸¹

The CWO worked with provincial authorities to stem the tide of trafficking in girls both under the guise of marriage and apprenticeship. In some districts, like Kukuruku, the District Officer adopted a unique and rare approach—making people apply to him before they could take girls to Lagos. Although the officer did not explicitly state why he adopted this approach, deductively, this policy appeared to be the best means of monitoring the trafficking in girls and the people involved. His efforts paid off when he noticed that one individual had applied, using identical addresses and wording, to bring four girls to Lagos. Although the district officer promised not to allow girls to leave his area, he added the phrase “if I can help it”, which suggests that the situation was not entirely under his control. He appeared to be giving up on the struggle to change public opinion which favored marriage by proxy:

I am getting them to take the attitude that if the marriage is genuine, the intending husband must come and marry the girl in her own native village in front of all. If she and her parents then consent for her to go to Lagos with him, that is

⁸¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Child Prostitution in Lagos,” July 1, 1943.

purely their affair. If the case is genuine this can always be managed.⁸²

Three categories of petitioners—namely, “concerned Lagosians”, provincial residents and victims of child prostitution—corroborated the fact-finding reports of the CWO and created adequate awareness and institutional concern for the girls in moral danger. Although the tone, length and thoroughness of these petitions varied widely, all of the petitioners pointed to the dastardly acts of both men and women involved in trafficking in girls. Unlike the colonialists that view the girls in moral danger from the perspective of colonial security, these informants were moved to write by the “ungodly” and immoral conducts of procurers. One petitioner demanded that criminal charges be brought against Madam Afiong Bassey of 9 Onibudu Lane Lagos for keeping two girls “who she term[ed] to be her slave.”⁸³ The petitioner later described how the girls were treated and the kind of training they were receiving: “She is a professional prostitute and she is training those girls by her profession, to meet the easy anxiety of white sailors as she makes it a daily work.”⁸⁴ Presumably surprised by the conduct of a procurer or worried about the condition of girls that were taken from Okitipupa, Ogbo Abuyola wrote to Faulkner enquiring if Madam Ogudu, of 41 Taiwo Street, Lagos, was permitted “to trade with girls.” Aside from mentioning that Ogudu frequently came to her district to

⁸² NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “District officer of Kukuruku Division to the Colony Welfare Officer,” October 6, 1946.

⁸³ NAI, Comcol, 2844, “The reporter to the Commissioner of the Colony” October 2, 1943.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

recruit girls, she lamented that one of the trafficked girls died of sickness after being repatriated.⁸⁵

Sexual Mysticism: Underage Sexuality, Venereal Disease, and Masculinity

The exposure of juveniles to sexual danger through hawking and fictitious marriage arrangements only explain what appeared to be the sexual and economic exploitation of minors. It does not, for instance, explain some salient ideas, propositions and pseudo-scientific notions about underage sexuality which prompted the patronage of child prostitutes, rape and assault. Contemporary research on underage sexuality in Western societies has focused on the role that masculine-oriented, deviant sexual behavior such as pedophilia has played in allowing the molestation of minors to thrive. Since academic research on sexual aspects of masculinity in colonial and post-independent Nigeria is still in its infancy, it is difficult to determine the extent of this “deviant” sexual behavior—though as we have earlier seen, there are copious examples of sexual molestation of female children by men in Lagos.

The proposition that sexual intercourse with virgins or teen girls was capable of curing some VD such as syphilis and gonorrhea was very rampant, to the extent that it even caught the attention of social welfare officers and medical doctors. In 1942, Dr. Olorunnibe, a University of Glasgow-trained physician who would later become the first Mayor of Lagos, opined thus: “Let that erroneous idea that to cure gonorrhea, a man must

⁸⁵ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Ogbo Abuyola to Faulkner,” July 12, 1946.

have relations with a girl under 14 be abolished immediately.” Four years, later in 1946, Alison Izzett, the newly appointed Lady Welfare Officer, believed the proposition was common among the Igbo.⁸⁶ Statistics collected by the CWO are in tandem with their reports. In its 1945 report, the CWO mentioned that fifteen percent of the females who attended the VD Clinics between the months of May and August were juveniles whose ages were thirteen and below (see Table II for further details). But this unscientific notion transcends Africa. Even in Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, men believed that sexual intercourse with virgins could cure VD.⁸⁷

Cases	No. of victims	Ages
Seduced	46	3-11
Treated for venereal disease	21	3-11
Criminally assaulted	46	3-11
Seduced	59	11-15
Treated for venereal disease	47	11-15

Table II. Source: The Daily Comet, *Oged Macaulay Suggests Licensing of Prostitution*, November 30, 1944, 1.

⁸⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Child Prostitution in Lagos, by Alison Izett, the Lady Welfare Officer,” May 15, 1946.

⁸⁷ Lesley A. Hall, “Venereal Diseases and Society in Britain, from the Contagious Disease Acts to the National Health Service,” in Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall, eds., *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870* (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 120.

It is significant to note that child prostitution reached its peak at a time when venereal diseases constituted a serious medical and social panic in Lagos and the entire country. Demand for the girls in moral danger was high among the Europeans and military—two high risk populations for VD. In several petitions against procurers, such as that of Rose in the epigraph, petitioners mentioned European seamen and the military as clients of the girls in moral danger.⁸⁸

Prostitution, Crime, and Public Order

The rise of Lagos as a first-class colonial urban center also increased the incidence of the common and somewhat inevitable consequences of urbanization; urban youth, mostly unemployed social miscreants, perpetrated crimes such robbery, theft, public disturbance, murder and armed robbery, to mention but a few. Although the activities of young criminals predates the 20th century, the birth of the colonial state of Nigeria, which brought into Lagos fortune seekers of different ethnicities and background from the rural provinces, coupled with the poor disposition of the colonial state of Nigeria to youth empowerment, led to the entrenchment of urban crime. Administrators traced urban crime to unemployment which established firm root during and after the Great Depression. Two categories of urban criminals, miscreants and social deviants, namely the *jaguda* and *boma* boys, monopolized the Lagos underground culture between the 1920s and the 1950s.

⁸⁸ See among others, NAI, Comcol 1, 2844.

The connection between offences such as brothel keeping, public solicitation (committed largely by prostitutes) and crimes like theft and public disturbances (committed predominantly by urban young men) went beyond the fact that they threatened public order, morality, and sanity. Lagosians, including artists like Tijani Omoyele who composed a track entitled “Ashewo, omo Jaguda” meaning (prostitutes, *jaguda*) and administrators like the Commissioner of Police, firmly believed that these two classes of social miscreants shared the same public and social space.⁸⁹ Hence, the red-light districts of Marina and Race Course, which had the largest concentration of restaurants, beer parlors, and cinemas where prostitutes solicited, also housed the teeming population of *boma* and *jaguda* boys. To deal with the menace of one, most believed that the other had to be given adequate attention.

The *boma* and *jaguda* boys carried out two major functions in the Lagos prostitution network. As pimps, they sometimes served as brokers, connecting men with prostitutes, and also provided security by serving as prostitutes’ body guards or quasi-security agents. Because the Lagos red-light districts were under-policed, the *jaguda* and *boma* boys constituted the quasi-security outfit, ensuring that socialites conducted themselves in manner appropriate to the social conditions of the night-life and prostitution sub-culture. Drunken men who behaved violently and other unruly male customers were extorted and readily removed from the premises. Unlike the Western societies, where pimps also supplied prostitutes with drugs, there is little evidence pointing to the use of narcotic drugs among Lagos prostitutes, although some smoked

⁸⁹ The Lagos Daily News, April 2, 1932.

regular cigarettes. These pimps often assumed the role of overlord, directing the course of the prostitutes' business and resources. The reverse is however the case in Nairobi, Kenya where pimps according to Luise White did not exercise power over women's productive and reproductive capacities.⁹⁰

The activities of *boma* boys and prostitutes remained largely tolerated as long as it did not pose any danger to the institutions of colonialism. And Lagos night-life was under-policed, creating adequate opportunities and breeding grounds of individuals and groups to partake in the prostitution sub-culture. If Lagos night-life was characterized by insecurity, it was because the security of lives and property did not mean so much to government authorities, unless it impacted, directly and intensely, the infrastructures and institutions of colonial rule. The NPF, like other imperial police, were established essentially to protect the highly sensitive infrastructures of colonial rule and individuals such as the colonial administrators. Crimes within the prostitution sub-culture seldom merited an official response.

Official perception about the criminal existence and activities of prostitution and *boma* and *jaguda* boys changed radically at the onset of WWII. The incidence of crime against European seamen and expatriates who visited Lagos increased as their wartime presence soared. Britain might lose the War if men, like the seamen and the expatriates needed for international movement of goods and services, remained exposed to the insecurity of Lagos night-life. Apapa police and NPF firmly believed that by acting as "unlicensed" guides, the *boma* boys, aside from connecting foreign seamen and

⁹⁰ White, *The Comforts of Home*, 1-28.

expatriates to prostitutes, also robbed them of their money and other valuables. A case in point was Edward Salt, a seaman with the Elder Dempster Shipping Line, who reported being beaten by a “group of young criminals” at a bar in Marina. In his statement to the Police, he narrated that he paid a “young boy” to take him to a brothel. But instead of doing the job for which he was paid, the “young boy” took him to a hideout where he was mercilessly beaten and robbed of all his money and personal effects. Correspondences between the Apapa port authority and the NPF firmly establish the need to reduce the access which the *boma* boys had to the European seamen by (1) demanding that all licensed guides carry their authorization and identification tags; (2) maintaining a list of all licensed guides, (3) allowing licensed guides to form a union and making them fish out non-members, and (4) asking European seamen not to allow unlicensed guides to guide them.

While these suggestions sounded practical, they failed to yield the desired results for a number of reasons. In the first place, seamen in Lagos, as elsewhere in the world, were notorious for their night-life and patronage of sexual labor. Hence, they depended on a guide to connect them to the desired night-life and prostitution. In the social understanding of foreigners, a visiting seamen or expatriate cannot boast of having seen a place without venturing out of the wharf or port base into the interior of the port city where the real night-life existed.⁹¹ Although the wharf had a pool of bars and restaurants, the heavy police presence in these places limited the activities of prostitutes and *boma* boys, thereby making places like Marina and Race Course the nerve center of social life.

⁹¹ Oral interview Mr. Ronald Okezie, June 2008.

One could see how race played out in the debate over the protection of European seamen from the activities of prostitutes, and *boma* and *jaguda* boys. Officials and administrators were convinced that they could not change the attitude of foreign visitors to night-life and patronage of sex workers.⁹² Hence, instead of punishing the European foreigners for patronizing prostitutes, as the military did for African soldiers, they tolerated it throughout the period under consideration. They went after the *boma* boys and prostitutes, believing that they could change the socialization of the seamen by cutting their access to prostitutes. Before the promulgation of the Undesirable Guide Prohibition Ordinance, Lagos authorities did not make any law dealing specifically with the menace of prostitutes and *boma* boys. The fact that the UGPO only protected foreign seamen against the so-called criminals shows, as in other areas of colonial society, the prejudiced disposition of the colonial state to the security of lives and property of its subjects.

Lagosians understanding of the menace of the *boma* and *jaguda* boys is completely different from the colonialists. They considered presence of criminals on the street as a threat to their lives and property and as a form of social decadence that should be curbed. They did not see it as a threat to the entire colonial enterprise, neither did they believe that European seamen's safety was more important than theirs. When they condemned the UGPO, it was not because they felt the law was unimportant. Rather, it was because it protected only the white foreigners. If the colonialists and Lagosians agreed on one thing, it is that prostitution and crime are bird of a feather.

⁹² NAI, "Port Welfare Committee- the Socialization of Seamen in Lagos, 1941."

Conclusion

What constituted social and medical panic in Lagos was not illicit sex itself. Rather, it was either its consequences (as seen in the case of VD) or activities connected to it (as seen in the case of the activities of criminals). Prostitution was officially tolerated until its consequences began to undermine the very ideology of colonialism and pose a danger to colonial security. As we have seen, the real and imagined impact of prostitution resonated in different contours among diverse categories of people, Africans and Europeans, men and women. This divergence in the impact of prostitution reflected the multitudinous interest that both the Africans and the colonial agency had in the colonial state, and what they perceived as legal versus illegal—and legitimate versus illegitimate—sex.

Chapter 2

Sexualized Law, Criminalized Bodies: Anti-Prostitution Laws and the Making of a new Sexual Order

Introduction

Having previously discussed the myriads of public and administrative concerns over the contours of prostitution, venereal disease (VD), crime, social control, security and the preservation of the colonial state, in this chapter we shall examine the various legislations put in place for dealing with the above consequences of illicit sexuality. Although the criminalization of prostitution in most modern societies was considered appropriate because of the alleged medical and moral nuisance that prostitutes and their male customers constituted, this chapter argues that in the case of Nigeria, anti-prostitution laws not only dealt with illicit sexuality but were also considered an integral component of the so-called civilization package imported from Britain. This claim is supported by the emergence of anti-prostitution laws in the Nigerian criminal code in the 1910s—long before illicit sexuality became a major source of administrative concern in the WWII years. Their origin was coded in the language of racial inferiority, civilization, and pathology and difference. If some anti-prostitution laws failed to produce the desired outcome, it is because, like other models and institutions of “modernity” or “progress”, they were seeds planted on foreign soil. Their exotic character coupled with Britain’s prejudice against African culture and its compromised position on the progress of the

colonized largely explain why these laws were ineffective in ameliorating the real and imagined threats prostitution posed to British imperialism in Nigeria.

I use the imported English and Nigeria-made laws (defined as laws designed specifically to deal with problems peculiar to Nigeria) on prostitution to show the significance of sexuality in British colonialism and the impact of notion about age and sexuality on the reformist movement. While not disagreeing with Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts that laws were important mechanism of social change in colonial Africa,⁹³ I contend that anti-prostitution laws (largely grouped under a broad category of offences against morality) were distinct from other colonial laws. While most colonial laws were motivated by politics, economics or both, anti-prostitution laws were informed by far more complex and multitudinous considerations: political, economic, military, medical, racial, social, moral/ethical, etc.⁹⁴ While it is less difficult to understand the political or economic motives of most non-morality laws (such as taxation, custom, chieftaincy, and land ordinances), it is far more difficult to unearth the economic undertones of anti-prostitution laws. This is more so since these laws, as we shall see, were coded in the rhetoric of “moral” crusade, “civilization” and public health and order.

In addition, gendered and racial considerations also played an overarching role in influencing the introduction and implementation of certain anti-prostitution laws among certain groups of colonial subjects and officers. While colonial laws were predominantly

⁹³ Richard Roberts and Kristin Mann, “Law in Colonial Africa,” in Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts. eds., *Law in Colonial Africa* (Portsmouth, NH/London: Heinemann/James Currey, 1991), 19-23.

⁹⁴ I arrive at this by critically examining the content and legalistic provisions of the full compilation of *Annual Volumes of the Laws of Nigeria*.

male-centered (made by men and for men), anti prostitution laws were gender-specific and, occasionally, gender-neutral. Different sections dealt separately with males and females, and defined biologically gendered roles and expectations, while criminalizing and pathologizing the gendered African bodies.

It is an indisputable fact that women were the obvious victims of anti-prostitution laws in most, if not all, modern societies—not because there were no laws that punished men for such offenses as solicitation, brothel keeping and living on immoral earning but because the criminal justice system tended to be biased in delivering justice. However, some elements of exception to this general rule can be found in the Nigerian criminal code, where certain anti-prostitution laws, due to the overwhelming influence men had in select domains, affected men more than women.

In addition to their gendered nature, the fact that anti-prostitution laws were age-specific introduces another important, yet provoking layer of expression about the changing meaning of childhood and adulthood in a colonial city trying to reconcile the contradictions in African and Western culture. Here, I use anti-prostitution laws to further establish my stated central thesis that the contrast between underage and adult sexuality largely informed the pattern of reformist response to illicit sexuality. While most colonial laws tended to be age neutral and were expected to be implemented among male adults, a good percentage of anti-prostitution laws were age specific, as they defined the age at which sexual intercourse should not take place. While this development mirrored the public and administrative anxiety over child prostitution and the girls in moral danger in general, it nevertheless depicted the Victorian ideals about underage illegitimate sex.

All anti-prostitution laws were contained in five main bodies of legislations: Chapter 21 (Offences against Morality) of the Criminal Code Ordinance of 1916 (1944 amendment),⁹⁵ the Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance (UAO, 1932),⁹⁶ the Unlicensed Guide (Prohibition) Ordinance (UGPO, 1941),⁹⁷ the Venereal Disease Ordinance (VDO, 1943),⁹⁸ and the Children and Young Persons Ordinance (CYPO, 1943).⁹⁹

Chronologically, anti-prostitution laws first appeared in the Criminal Code of Nigeria (Chapter 21) in 1916. Between 1916 and 1944, chapter 21 appeared not to have been amended at all. The UAO was the only prostitution-related law made during the inter-war years. The fact that three major new ordinances (UGPO; VDO; CYPO) were enacted and Chapter 21 of the Criminal Code Ordinance was completely overhauled during WWII indicates the importance of that period in the history of sexuality, imperialism and African response to colonial rule.

In order to demonstrate their connection to broader societal concerns, I have grouped these bodies of laws into three broad genres, namely: (1) VD Oriented Laws; (2) Adult Prostitution and Vagrancy Oriented Laws; (3) and Child Prostitution Oriented

⁹⁵ Criminal Code (Amendment) Ordinance No. 20 of 1944, *Annual Volume of the Laws of Nigeria Containing Legislations enacted during the year 1944* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1945), A52-A57.

⁹⁶ NAI, MH 54 VOL. I “Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance, 1932.”

⁹⁷ Unlicensed Guide (Prohibition) Ordinance, 1941, *Annual Volume of the Laws of Nigeria Containing all Legislation enacted during the Year 1941* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1942), A142-A150.

⁹⁸ Venereal Disease Ordinance, 1943, *Annual Volume of the Laws of Nigeria Containing all Legislation enacted during the Year 1943* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1944), A110-A116.

⁹⁹ Children and Young Persons Ordinance, 1943, *Annual Volume of the Laws of Nigeria Containing all Legislation enacted during the Year 1943* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1944), A 424-A444.

laws. These classifications are not meant to be mutually exclusive, as the provisions as well as application of each group occasionally overlap with one another.

VD Laws: The Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance (UAO, 1932) and the Venereal Disease Ordinance (VDO, 1943)

In the preceding chapter, we dwelt on the medical concern over the importation of E.J. Jones aphrodisiac from Hamburg, the proliferation of literature and newspaper adverts on VD, and the popularization of “fake” African and “quasi” western remedies for VD offered by the so-called African herbalists, druggists and apothecaries. The first VD-related law—the UAO of 1932—came on the heels of the need to address this “problem.” The Director of Medical and Sanitary Service (DMSS) proposal for the introduction of the UAO received the blessing of the Chief Secretary to the Government. In May 1932 the UAO was passed under Chapter 130 of the Custom Ordinance. Whereas most peacetime, non-emergency laws tended to be debated for several months or years before they were passed and enforced, this law encountered no administrative opposition and was not presented before the Legislative Council.

Section 3 of the UAO criminalized “the importation into Nigeria of such advertisements notices, announcement, papers, handbills recommending to the public preparations as medicines or medications for the prevention, cure or relief of any VD or as aphrodisiacs.” It also criminalized the advertisement both in the newspapers and through other outlets such as posters, catalogues, pamphlets and handbills, of “medicines or medicaments for the prevention, cure or relief of any VD and aphrodisiacs.” “Any

packet, box, phial, or other in closure containing any preparation, affixed to or delivered with which there is or are any label or words written or printed, holding out or recommending to the public such preparation “as medicine or medicament for the prevention, cure, or relief of any VD or as an aphrodisiac.”¹⁰⁰

Since medical authorities were convinced that Lagosians were encouraged to seek “fake” medical help because of the captivating advertisement of drugs in the local newspapers and catalogues, it was not enough to prevent their importation. Ensuring that Lagosians were not even aware of “quack” medicine and practitioners appeared to be the best way of halting the circulation and availability of non-institutionalized remedies. The law criminalized local African remedies, as well as Western remedies prepared by local pharmacists (also known as druggists) and apothecaries. This section of the law is a complicated one since the preparations of the druggists/pharmacists and apothecaries were non-African, but considered Western. However, in the public health definition, Western remedies were medications and treatment given or recommended by European medical doctors operating from a government or private clinics. The druggists who were members of the Nigerian Pharmaceutical Association and the apothecaries (members of the Nigerian Apothecary Association) were not regarded as “qualified” physicians, though they were legally permitted to prepare and recommend Western drugs for all sorts of ailments.

The UAO is a custom cum medico-moral law. Indeed, few colonial laws fell into this category. While custom laws explicitly show the importance of the colonies as

¹⁰⁰ NAI, MH 54 VOL. I “Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance, 1932.”

economic appendages of the metropole and as *tabula rasa*, it is really hard to see and establish the economic undertone of medico-moral legislations. The rhetoric of “modernization” and “progress” embedded in laws that criminalized African customs veiled its economic motivation. Yet most, if not nearly all, colonial laws, irrespective of their origins and provisions, were directly and indirectly channeled towards maximizing exploitation, the corner stone of imperialism. The economic undertone of the UAO becomes clearer if we consider the fact that it was placed under the Custom Ordinance, not under the Infectious Diseases Ordinance, where most public health legislations were grouped. It fitted more into Chapter 21 of the Criminal Code Ordinance (Offences against Morality) where most morality and sexuality oriented legislation appeared.

Although masked as a medico-moral law, the UAO was informed predominantly by the need to halt the popularity of the E.J. Jones aphrodisiac which undermined the sales of Western remedies like Arsenobenzene compounds and M7B 695 prepared in the various government hospitals. Medical officers were optimistic that the law would increase demand for the Arsenobenzene compounds, but believed that African patients might be unable to afford it. But as we shall see in chapter four, while the law appeared to have halted the importation of E.J. Jones aphrodisiac, advertisement of VD drug and doctors in the newspapers, it did not increase the patronage for the “authentic” and “efficacious” Western alternative obtainable from the various government clinics.

If the UAO was an economically-motivated law, but veiled as a medico-moral one, the importation and sale in Nigeria of “Overbeck Rejuvenator” a brand of VD drug from Britain further affirms how issues around sexuality dovetails with international

protectionism and the place of the colonies as market for goods produced in the metropolis. Nigeria prevented the importation of a Hamburg drug, advertisement of any form of local remedies for VD and the indigenous treatment alternatives for VD only to permit the importation, sale and advertisement of a Britain manufactured VD drug. From 1934 to the outbreak of the WWII, Overbeck's Rejuvenator was advertised in the major newspapers, especially the *Lagos Daily News*, while publicity or adverts for Nigeria-made were suppressed.

The practice of sabotaging local industries in order to facilitate markets for British alternatives was one of the major economic policies of the British which contributed in making colonialism a dark period of African history. Indeed, trade protectionism has been studied by such scholars as Judith Byfield, Ayodeji Olukoju and Simon Heap, who use the examples of women's local textile industry (*Adire*) and liquor to shed light into the crippling of the domestic economy under colonial rule.¹⁰¹

Having established the economic undertone of this law, it is equally significant that we look into what the government should have done under ideal circumstances. Ideally, a law aimed at genuinely dealing with the problems of VD should establish a VD clinic, and increase access to cheap medications and other forms of institutionalized measures, such as propaganda. However, the only government VD clinic in Lagos up to the mid 1940s was European seamen clinic located in Apapa Wharf. This clinic served only the European seamen who were universally notorious for their sexual recklessness and high incidence of VD. International maritime standards mandate VD clinics in all

¹⁰¹ Judith Byfield, *The Bluest Hands: A Social and Economic History of Women Dyers in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1890-1940* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002)

seaports. In addition, an early treatment center was established for the African rank and file of the WAFF during the 1920s. However, this facility was not opened to the African civilian population. Apparently, the colonialists only invested in the groups that mattered most to colonial capitalism and security.

Other West African colonies, namely the Gold Coast (modern Ghana), Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Liberia, all had VD clinics for Africans dating back to the early 1920s.¹⁰² However, Lagosians did not have one until 1945 when the VDO of 1943 came into effect. When Nigeria was advised in 1926 to emulate other colonies with VD clinics, the DMSS responded that Nigeria should wait and evaluate the success of VD clinics in other colonies before establishing one. He made a non-medical recommendation for dealing with VD among Africans: “It is highly probable that education by publicity and other propaganda may be needed.”¹⁰³

It is also important to note that prior to 1943 the African body was pathologized as oversexed and diseased but was not yet criminalized. In other words, although the British in Nigeria, as elsewhere, associated VD with African sexual recklessness, a legislative regime that criminalized their body as the purveyor of VD did not come until the VDO was passed. The reverse, however, was the case in Tanganyika (modern Tanzania), Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, where VD laws from the 1900s to 1930s, aside from making provisions for VD clinics, empowered the police, medical and sanitary authorities to restrict the movement of women to certain regions of the countries

¹⁰² NAI, MH 54 vol. I “Extract from the Proceedings of the Medical Conference held at Accra- December 1925.”

¹⁰³ NAI, MH 54 vol. I “Director of Medical and Sanitary Service to the Third Medical Conference – Agendum No. 10 anti-venereal work,” March 10, 1926.

and forcefully subject them to VD screening.¹⁰⁴ This historical difference suggests that in spite of obvious common binding traits, Africa's experience of gender and sexuality, due to the uneven impact of colonial rule and varying social structures, differs from place to place.

There was no VD related law between 1932, when the UAO was passed, and 1943, when the VDO was enacted. As we have seen in chapter one, incidence of VD among the WAFF increased tremendously during WWII. Worried that sickness attributed to VD could impair the productivity of the troops—the protectors of the colonies—the government passed the VDO. Unlike the UAO, which neither made provision for the establishment of a VD clinic nor laid down any procedures for treatment as well as prosecution of infected people, the VDO criminalized the African body by empowering “qualified” medical practitioners to subject women to VD screening. The VDO was an adaptation of the Contagious Diseases Acts (CD Acts) passed in Britain in 1864, 1866

¹⁰⁴ Sheryl M. McCurdy, “Urban Threats: Manyema Women, Low Fertility, and Venereal Diseases in Tanganyika, 1926-1936,” in Dorothy L. Hodgson and Sheryl A. McCurdy, ed., *“Wicked” Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001), 212-233; and Michael W. Tuck, “Venereal Disease, Sexuality and Society in Uganda,” in Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall, eds., *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870* (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 191-204; Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 129-154; Clive Glaser, “Managing the Sexuality of Urban Youth: Johannesburg, 1920s-1960s,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, 2 (2005): 301-327; Nakanyinke Musisi, “The Politics of Perception or Perception of Politics? Colonial and Missionary Representation of Baganda Women, 1900-1945,” in Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyinke Musisi, eds., *Women in African Colonial History* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 95-115; Lynette A. Jackson, “When in the White Man’s Town,” Zimbabwean Women Remember *Chibaura*,” in Allman, Geiger, and Musisi, eds., 95-115; Michael William Tuck, “Syphilis, Sexuality, and Social Control: A History of Venereal Disease in Colonial Uganda,” (PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1997).

and 1869 for the purpose of combating the high incidence of VD among the British armed forces.¹⁰⁵ The British version of the Acts empowered plain-clothes police to detain and subject women to compulsory medical check-ups in garrisons and seaports identified as the danger zone for VD. Women found harboring VD could be detained for up to three months. The 1869 amendment increased incarceration to a year. The Acts were repealed in 1886 due to the feminist agitation of Josephine Butler and Elizabeth Wolstenholme's the Ladies' Association against the Contagious Diseases Acts.¹⁰⁶

Unlike the CD Acts, which were designed to deal with VD and prostitution in military areas (attempts to extend it to north of England and civilian areas met with hostility), the Nigerian VDO jurisdictionally covered the entire civilian population of Lagos, but empowered the Governor to apply it to any region of the country as deemed necessary. Section 4 (2) of the Ordinance empowered "medical officers" and "qualified medical practitioners" to initiate criminal charges against anyone who he or she "knows or has reason to believe is suffering from a venereal disease in a communicable form and is not under treatment therefore is not attending regularly for such treatment."¹⁰⁷ A "qualified medical practitioner" was someone trained in Western medicine, not the African or the so-called native and quack doctors. Aside from empowering them to prevent sufferers of VD from contracting marriage until they were certified healthy, the VDO also punished

¹⁰⁵ See full versions of the Acts at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2261128/>. Accessed on December 31, 2009.

¹⁰⁶ The literature on the CD Acts, the career of Josephine Butler and the emergence of a radical wave of feminist mobilization in Britain is large and expanding. See among others, Jane Jordan and Ingrid Sharp ed., *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁰⁷ Venereal Disease Ordinance, 1943, A112.

medical practitioners who failed to comply with its provisions. Indeed, the VDO made medical practitioners another arm of colonial agency like the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) that policed and regulated sexuality.

In addition, under the VDO, it was an offence for employers to employ infected persons in such responsibilities as taking care of children, food preparation and any other task that involving direct contact with people. Suspected carriers of VD were expected to foot the bill of testing and treatment. In addition, it was an offence for a suspected carrier to refuse treatment. Other sections of the VDO provided guidelines for treatment of infected persons and the procedure for establishing criminal charges against defaulters. Anyone convicted under any of the provisions of this ordinance was liable to a fine of one hundred pounds or six months in prison or both.¹⁰⁸

But the most important section of the law, which had the greatest ramifications for public health and gender relations, was section 3 that made VD a notifiable disease. By equating the gravity of VD with such highly epidemic and notifiable diseases like small pox and tuberculosis, the government sought to police the private existence of the colonized while publically stigmatizing “unattached women” -- the so-called purveyors of VD. Any sufferer from VD was a potential offender under the VDO. It basically criminalized the activities of druggists/pharmacists, the apothecaries and native doctors who recommended and offered treatment for VD since they were by law expected to report such cases to the authorities.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. A113-A116.

Class-wise, if this law were to be applied without bias, a good percentage of African-rank-and-file of the WAFF should have been incarcerated since the incidence of VD was highest among them. For the military, it was not a crime to contract VD. However, it was a crime to conceal it or be placed on sick bed. Furthermore, concealment was not prosecuted as long as VD was not detected until a soldier secretly received medical treatment. During WWII, the military abandoned the policy of making the soldiers bear the cost of VD treatment. Cock-pulling (public inspection of the penis) was abandoned because it tampered with the schedule of military and security operations. While civilians were required to pay for treatment of VD, the military received free treatment.

Race-wise, the law did not apply to the seamen, who were predominantly male and whites and who, like the African soldiers, were a high-risk population.¹⁰⁹ And like the African soldiers, they were conspicuously another class of individuals who should have been prosecuted under section 7 which empowered “qualified medical practitioners” to compelled perceived sufferers of VD to screening. Not only were seamen treated preferentially (they had segregated places of socialization and escaped prosecution for public drunkenness and disorderly conducts) because their job significantly contributed to colonial capitalism, they also had a VD clinic before other African civilians got one in 1943. The VDO was not only gender and class specific (because it was directed largely towards African female civilian population), but also domain specific, because it was not

¹⁰⁹ NAI, Comcol, 2608/s.5 “Port Welfare Committee –VD among Seamen,” 1923.

applied to the military barracks where the soldiers, among whom the cases of VD were highest, resided.

British imperial practices varied from colony to colony, and were shaped largely by local, rather than imperial or British homeland, policies. As previously mentioned, unlike in eastern and southern Africa, where women migrants into urban centers were detained and subjected to compulsory VD screening, in Nigeria, such policy was not implemented in spite of its popularity among top military officers including Oliver Stanley, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who suggested that control of prostitutes should be a war-time emergency legislation.¹¹⁰ Propaganda in the use of print media and movies were used in educating the African public about the ills of VD in Uganda but were not adopted in Lagos, despite the recommendation of the sanitary officer. Whereas the CD Acts were introduced to British colonies in Asia and were debated in Sierra Leone during the 1870s and 1880s, Lagos, a foremost West African port city, did not get a version of these notorious Acts until 1943. Even when the VDO was passed, it was not implemented until 1945.

In her discussion of CD Acts in British colonies in the second half of the twentieth century, Philippa Levine suggests that the British did not introduce CD Acts in their early West African colonies because “their European populations numbered only in the hundreds.”¹¹¹ Her presumption overlooked the fact that CD Acts in the British

¹¹⁰ NAI, MH 54/S.1, “Oliver Stanley to the Officer administering the Government of Nigeria,” dated April 7, 1943.

¹¹¹ Philippa Levine, “Public Health, Venereal Disease and Colonial Medicine in the later Nineteenth Century,” in Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall, eds., *Sex, Sin and Suffering:*

African colonies were not meant for the European settlers but for the Africans whose body were pathologized as vessels of VD.

Was VD a pandemic in Lagos? It was a pandemic in the WAFF no doubt, but was certainly not among the civilian Lagos population. Its control was restricted to the military, while the Africa-rank-and-file suffered the brunt of the disease-- both as vessels and victims. Unlike their belief in Uganda, the colonialists were not convinced that VD could lead to the extinction of the African race, because public health data and oral history did not point to that direction.¹¹² They were not afraid of the impact of VD on procreation, neither did they think that the colonial work force could be depleted by VD-related illness and death. This accounts for the late introduction and the less repressive character of the VDO. Recognizing VD as a pandemic would require institutional attention, which would expand the budget for a city of about a quarter of a million.¹¹³ Malaria and slum maintenance, not VD, was the real/major public health problem of Lagos during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. VD was politicized and tagged a “pandemic” among the Lagos civilian population only when it was used a justification for enacting such economically driven laws as the UAO of 1932.

Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870 (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 162.

¹¹² I arrive at this by examining the annual reports of the Federal Ministry of Health. Reported cases are generally in the hundreds. In addition, my interviews with Lagosians, including practitioners of indigenous medicine affirmed that there was no time in the history of Lagos that the people felt that VD would lead to the “extermination” of the African race, as the case was in Uganda.

¹¹³ This is based on a 1950 census. See Mabogunje page 257.

Adult Prostitution and Vagrancy Laws: Chapter 21 of the Criminal Code (Offences against Morality) and the UGPO

The first anti-prostitution ordinance enacted in 1916 prohibited activities such as public soliciting by prostitutes and brothel keeping and came under a broad category of “Offences against Morality” of the Chapter 21 of the Criminal Code Ordinance. There is no evidence suggesting that the laws were passed because the authorities were worried about prostitution--though prostitution had already become a visible aspect of the social and sexual networking of Lagos during this period. Rather, I argue they were an integral component of “civilization” oriented laws enacted immediately after the birth of the colonial state of Nigeria in 1914. There is also a personnel angle to this origin of this law. As Morris has noted, colonial legal officers during the early period colonial state of Nigeria demonstrated their legalistic brilliance and dedication to the colonial service by encouraging the importation of English laws into the colonies, even if they were irrelevant.

Interestingly, there is no indication that the 1916 anti-prostitution laws were implemented. Indeed, throughout the 1920s up to the outbreak of WWII, prostitution was officially tolerated. When the Lagos Women’s League petitioned Governor Hugh Clifford to police prostitution in 1923, his successor, Governor Donald Cameron, replied that “every effort is being made by the Colony police to keep it within bounds.”¹¹⁴ According to him, “any prostitute who becomes a nuisance to the general public is

¹¹⁴ NAI, Comcol 1, 498, “The Governor to Obasa,” December 20, 1923.

recommended to the Town Council for deportation forthwith.”¹¹⁵ It was not an offence to sell sex, but a crime to behave in a disorderly manner.

Prostitution was officially tolerated until 1941 when the UGPO, the first anti-prostitution law enacted during the WWII years, was passed. As we have seen in chapter one, the activities of *boma* and *jaguda* boys who were frequently accused of serving as brokers in the Lagos prostitution network, acting as guides for the purpose of harming and robbing Europeans and African alike, increased through the 1930s and appeared to have reached their peak during the war years.¹¹⁶ For the Port Welfare Committee, if the seamen were to be protected from the menace of VD and insecurity, their movement had to be regulated in such a way that they did not have access to pimps and criminals. Among other important provisions, the UGPO: (1) formalized the tourist guide business in order to prevent prostitutes and criminals from establishing direct contact with European visitors; (2) established a new security arm of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) “Anti-Vice Squad” which frequently patrolled the red-light districts looking for prostitutes and *boma* and *jaguda* boys and unlicensed guides in general; and (3) punished criminals and prostitutes who loitered in places where Europeans visitors socialized.¹¹⁷ Section 11 stated that:

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Deportation or repatriation denotes asking an offender (either Nigerian or non-Nigerian) to leave Lagos.

¹¹⁶ West African Pilot, “Touting Driver who molested 4 European gets 3 months,” April 4, 1939. The passing of UGPO did not permanently eliminate this problem. See The Daily Service, “4 Months for Robbing a Drunk Sailor,” September 26, 1944.

¹¹⁷ Unlicensed Guide (Prohibition) Ordinance, A142-150.

Any common prostitute: wondering in any public way and behaving riotously or indecently Loitering and persistently importuning or soliciting tourists for the purpose of prostitution shall be guilty of an offence and on summary conviction shall be liable for a first and second offence to a fine not exceeding five pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months.¹¹⁸

A major amendment was made to this law within a year of its passing. Legal authorities de-racialized it by repealing the term “tourist” and substituting it with “wayfarer.” While a tourist was popularly designated as white, a wayfarer could be an individual of any race or nationality. This de-racialization, a move to cover the racialized character of the law, did not change the mode of enforcement as the Anti-Vice Squad gave protection to European visitors but not Africans.

Lagos educated elite (both men and women) were not ignorant of the class and racial bias of this law despite the fact that it was meant to apply also to “any member of the public.” Both the Nigerian Women’s Party and prominent legal luminaries like Rotimi Williams publicly denounced its intent to protect only a segment of the population. However, as we shall see in chapter four, African elites did not begin to criticize the law until when innocent people men and women were indiscriminately arrested for loitering and soliciting for prostitution and conducting themselves in “manner

¹¹⁸ Unlicensed Guide (Prohibition) Ordinance, 1941, A148-A149.

likely to cause a breach of public peace.” Women and men, irrespective of their identity or profession, were arrested in lieu of the *boma* and *jaguda* boys and prostitutes at whom the law was initially directed.

The UGPO is the only anti-prostitution ordinance that made explicit provision for the protection of a certain group of non-Africans -- a reflection of the racial hierarchies of the period. The British, influenced by racial prejudice but hiding under the anxiety over public health and order, established color segregation in residential areas, clubs, and hospitals.¹¹⁹ The UGPO was just one of the numerous segregationist laws of the period. The fact that prejudice based on color was extended to the regulation of sexuality adds another interesting dimension to the existing paradigm about colonialism and race in Nigeria. Insecurity of lives and property of the sailors was capable of jeopardizing the maritime industry, which like the military was needed to conduct the war. It was not a crime for the sailors to buy sex or conduct themselves in “manners likely to cause breach of peace.” However, it was a crime for Lagosians (a *boma* or *jaguda* boy) to offer to take them to a prostitute or for a prostitute to solicit for them.

In theory and practice, Chapter 21-Offences against Morality (enacted in 1916, amended in 1944) is considered the most significant body of anti-prostitution law. Not only did this group of laws define prostitution and other terminologies such as brothels, it also criminalized activities such as pimping and public solicitation. The term “living on immoral earning” was used to designate anyone (such as brothel owners, pimps who

¹¹⁹ See among others Ayodeji Olukoju, “The Segregation of Europeans and Africans in Colonial Nigeria,” in Laurent Fourchard and Isaac Olawale Albert, eds., *Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities since the Nineteenth Century* (Paris/Ibadan: KARTHALA/IFRA, 2001), 263-287.

could be male or female and prostitutes and their families) who derived their means of livelihood from the proceeds of casual sex work. Some of the offences against morality laws were gender specific, while others were gender neutral. Section 225A (a&b) punished only men for public solicitation for sex, while both men and women could be punished for violating sections 222a (1&2) and 222B (1&2), which forbade adults from prostituting an underage (a girl under 13) in a brothel. It is important to note that up until 1944, public solicitation by men was not an offence; but the 1916 laws punished public soliciting by prostitutes.

Changes to Section One appear to be the most important modifications for they defined prostitution and brothel. According to this section, prostitution, “with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions include the offering by a female of her body commonly for acts of lewdness for payments although there is no act or offer of an act of ordinary sexual connection.” Aside from making prostitution a female-specific offence by not mentioning “male”, this definition also indicates that a female must offer her body for sexual liaison for an act legally defined as prostitution to take place. A far more complex issue is that the law did not recognize prostitution as a profession. The statement “commonly for acts of lewdness for payments” suggests that all multiple sexual behavior was prostitution—since Victorian norms of sexual behavior believed that a “common” or “licentious” sex was a multiple sex. By extension, the word “lewdness” means more than lack of “sexual restraint,” but all forms of moral and ethical aberration.

It is quite obvious that the legal officers who defined prostitution knew the difficulties of establishing criminal charges against casual sex work, not only because sex

was traditionally performed behind closed doors, but also because it was difficult to establish the motives of such association. This is probably the reason the definition of prostitution was extended to such somewhat overtly erotic behavior as “flirting” and “licentious” acts (which were policeable) and not the actual sex that took place (mostly) behind closed doors. By extending the definition of prostitution to flirting and licentious acts, the government pathologized all women, who like men, frequented places of socialization. On a number of occasions, women categorized as “unescorted” (that is women who attended night-clubs and bars alone) were arrested for breaking anti-prostitution laws, arraigned before the magistrate and given the option of one month in prison or a fine ranging from five to ten pounds or both. The implementation of anti-prostitution law tended to masculinize night-clubs by exposing “unescorted” women to legal insecurity and sanctions. Categories such as “unescorted,” “unattached” and “surplus” were loosely used to stigmatize women as prostitutes and served as strong weapons for policing women’s movement within Lagos. Delivering his judgment in a case involving “forty hotel girls” arrested for breaking anti-prostitution laws (loitering and solicitation), Magistrate E.A.S. Ogunmuyiwa sentenced all the accused to one month in prison or a fine of five pounds (each) and advised them to “find jobs or get married.”¹²⁰ These criminal proceedings did not establish that they were prostitutes, but their presence in a hotel was taken to mean that they were there to solicit for sex.

One other aspect of the Chapter 21 statute is its definition of a brothel. Section 2 defined a brothel as “any premises or room or set of rooms in any premises kept for the

¹²⁰ West African Pilot, “40 hotel girls convicted,” January 1955.

purpose of prostitution.” Unlike in North America and Western Europe where a brothel had a more definitive meaning (geographically, architecturally and socially) because of policies like reglementation which decriminalized prostitution in tolerated zones, in Lagos, a brothel had a more esoteric as well as generic meaning. All buildings and premises were potential brothels. Although only legal officers or the NPF could establish if a place passed for a brothel other citizens (mostly by co-tenants) could report women who frequently brought men to their rooms. Hence, the public as well as the police determined when a building/room or premises became a brothel. This was particularly true in Rex vs. John Iloma (male) and Adejoke Oshinlaja (female). Iloma (as landlord) was accused of renting a room to Oshinlaja for immoral purposes. Their premises at Odo Street, Obalende were legally defined a brothel because the police professed to have established that Oshinlaja’s room was being used for “immoral” purposes, and met a male customer (who escaped arrest) in her room. Oshinlaja and Iloma pleaded guilty and not guilty, respectively. The two were sentenced to six months in prison each.

The esoteric definition and application of Section 2 made prostitution difficult to police since any of the countless premises/buildings/rooms, in addition to the well known “public” brothels like the Seas Hotel and Crystal Garden Club, legally passed for a brothel. The best the police could do was patrol regular red-lights districts in the Island and trace the movement of people from such places to premises or places of abode where sexual activities could take place and relay on information from the “concerned citizens.”

Child Prostitution Laws: the Children and Young Persons Ordinance (CYPO) and Offences against Morality

Child prostitution laws were contained in two bodies of legislations, namely the Children and Young Persons Ordinance of 1943 and sections 222A (1&2) and 222B (1&2) of the Offences against Morality laws (1944 amendment). The CYPO was a derivative of the Children Act passed in Britain in 1933. Hence with the exemption of two sections on guidance under customary law, it is, like most other anti-prostitution laws, exotic in character. Although Nigeria was expected to have a version of the law during early 1932, as we shall see in the next chapter, colonial administrators felt that the children-related ordinances were too advanced for the colonial state of Nigeria. But the radical social and economic changes at the outbreak of WWII influenced colonial official perception of the danger that juveniles posed. Not only did the government pass this law to prevent delinquent juveniles from growing into adult criminals, they established the Colony Welfare Office (CWO) to oversee it. The activities of the CWO are fully examined in the next chapter.

The CYPO comprehensively laid down the legislative and reformatory procedures for dealing with children (defined as individuals under 14) and young persons (individuals above 14 but under 17). Prior to this period, Nigeria did not have any statutory arrangement for differentiating between a child or young person and an adult. The establishment of a dichotomy between a child/young person and an adult not only legitimized the need to protect children, but identified and treated them as future adult criminals. As delinquent children/young persons, they were criminals. However, the

difference between their status and that of an adult was that while an adult prostitute would most likely be prosecuted in a regular court (magistrate) and be jailed for violating anti-prostitution laws, a child prostitute who acted out of her own volition would be tried in a juvenile court and sent to a remand home. Those who were certified to have been forced or coerced by adult prostitutes would also appear before the juvenile court but would be sent to the girls hostels for rehabilitation. Before the CYPO came into full effect in 1946, delinquent children were tried in the same court as adults. For example, the *boma* and *jaguda* boys were tried in the magistrate court and kept in the same prison as adult and hardened criminals. The CYPO and Offences against Morality statutes, which criminalized child prostitution and the *boma* boys, were both preventive and curative. They also showed, as we shall fully see in the next chapter, the colonialist perception of the impact of juvenile delinquency on the future of colonial enterprise. Aside from making provision for removing destitute children and others classified as being in moral danger from the street, it laid down rules that established juvenile courts, industrial schools, boys' and girls' hostels, probation service, power structures and institutions for dealing with delinquent children.

The largest chunk of the law was a derivative of the Children's Act in Britain. However, some sections, such as those on customary laws and guardianship, were tailored to suit the Nigerian condition. The law recognized that the dangers boys and girls faced are varied. Hence various sections like those on child prostitution and female apprenticeship dealt with the girl child, while others like vagrancy, petty theft, hooliganism, riotous and violent conducts and others were directed at the boy child. It

outlawed any form of “unauthorized” and “illegal guardianship,” provided they were conducted under native law and unless that “such native law or custom is not repugnant to natural justice, morality or humanity or inconsistent with any written law.”¹²¹ This section of the law was directed at curbing the recruitment of girls for prostitution under the guise of fostering, training and marriage.

Child prostitution was not an offence up to 1944 when the Offences against Morality legislation was amended to prohibit trafficking of girls and defiling of underage women:

222 A (1) Whoever having the custody, charge or care of a girl under the age of thirteen years, causes or encourages the seduction, unlawful carnal knowledge or prostitution of, or the commission of an indecent assault upon, such a girl shall be liable to imprisonment for two years.

(2) For the purposes of this section, a person shall be deemed to have caused or encouraged the seduction, unlawful carnal knowledge or prostitution of, or the commission of an indecent assault upon, a girl who has been seduced, unlawfully carnally known, or indecently assaulted, or who has become a prostitute, if he has knowingly allowed her to consort with, or to enter or

¹²¹ Children and Young Persons Ordinance, A439.

continue in the employment of, any prostitute or person of known immoral character.

222B (1) Whoever, having in custody, charge or care of a child or young person who has attained the age of four years and is under the age of thirteen years, allow that child or young person to reside in or frequented a brothel, shall be liable to a fine of fifty pounds or to imprisonment of six months or to both such fine and imprisonment.¹²²

Conclusion

On paper, these laws appeared to be a good measure against the menace of prostitution. However, not all of them were implemented. The impact of prostitution on certain spheres of colonial society determined the extent of the implementation of anti-prostitution law. Thus, the well-implemented laws were those that were presumed to have a greater impact on colonial political economy, public order/health and security. The UAO was successfully implemented because it involved international trade protectionism and a spirited fight to kill the indigenous alternatives to VD cures. The UGPO was enforced along racial lines, as it gave protection only to the white population. Conversely, the VDO was not implemented among the Lagos civilian population because the

¹²² Criminal Code (Amendment Ordinance), 1944, A53.

government knew very much that VD was not a pandemic to deserve heavy budgetary allocation.

By and large, child prostitution-related laws were the only categories of laws that appeared to have been enforced to a greater extent. Apart from being the most elaborate single body of law, these laws were efficiently overseen by the CWO and resulted in a sort of “save the child” crusade. The CWO had virtually all the power of the NPF other than the fact that it could not directly arrest offenders. It visited popular brothels and homes of individuals suspected to be trafficking in girls, and recommended defaulters to the police for arrest. It provided evidence of illicit activity for prosecution of both procurers and the procured, and worked to truncate the systemic arrangement that furnished Lagos with delinquent children. Why delinquent children received the greatest attention by the colonialists during WWII can allow us to better understand the response to casual sex work, which I argue was influenced principally by the dichotomy between adult and underage sexuality and criminality. The next chapter aims to fully elaborate on the intersection of colonial security, prostitution and juvenile delinquency.

Chapter 3

The Colony Welfare Office: Sexuality, Race, and the Politics of African Cultural Difference

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the origins and activities of the Colony Welfare Office (CWO), the government's institution established for dealing with the menace of juvenile delinquency, from the standpoint of what I call "colonial welfare institution and the politics of African cultural difference." My contention is that the CWO and its engagement with child prostitution reinforced the idea of Africa's cultural backwardness, racial inferiority, pathology, and the other.¹²³ Although scholars of colonial Africa have engaged the numerous phases as well as faces of Africa's encounter with European prejudices—which cut across the confines of race, gender, class and sexuality in the areas of medicine, education, urban planning, and colonial civil service¹²⁴—they have largely neglected how institutions like social welfare were grafted into the idea of Africans' otherness (sexually and otherwise).

¹²³ Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Segregation of Europeans and Africans in Colonial Nigeria," in Laurent Fourchard and Isaac Olawale Albert, eds. *Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities since the Nineteenth Century* (Paris/Ibadan: KARTHALA/IFRA, 2001), 263-287; and Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes and Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

¹²⁴ Works in the category are legion, see among others, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1968); and Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Like all other institutions of colonial hegemony and social control such as the police, schools, church, courts, and prisons, the CWO treated Africans as racially inferior and distinctively different. Its officers wrote comprehensive reports pointing, implicitly and explicitly, to elements of African cultural savagery. To the CWO, certain aspects of African marriage practices such as betrothal, child marriage, and “illegal guardianship” were inimical to the sexual security and advancement of African girls. According to the CWO, in order to halt the procurement of girls for prostitution, these indigenous practices also had to go. Child prostitution, as the CWO saw it, was fallout of the “uncivilized” African culture that did not protect the African girl. Over time, the CWO facilitated the criminalization of some of the above-mentioned practices, and worked with the police, the courts, and other institutions of social control in order to halt the traffic in girls for the purpose of prostitution.

Prior to the establishment of the CWO in 1941, British officers had demonstrated unapologetic disdain for some of the above-mentioned aspects of traditional marriage practices. However, they did not take any meaningful steps to outlaw them and continued to allow them as long as the practices did not undermine the ideology and philosophy of colonialism.¹²⁵ The arrival of the CWO and the appearance of new systematic and “scientific” findings linking such practices as betrothal with prostitution validated the preexisting official stance on “backward” cultures and paved the way for new legal and administrative regimes and an agency (e.g., CWO) which had the time, resources, and power to legislate against them.

¹²⁵ See NAI, Comcol 1, 994, “Abolition of Customs which are Detrimental to Native Welfare and Economic Prosperity,” 1930.

Why was a social welfare institution established in Lagos during WWII and approximately eighty years into colonial rule? Why did the new institution focus on the treatment of delinquent children and not adults? What is the connection between race, prostitution, social control, and the preservation of colonial order? In line with arguments made in Chapter One that sexuality discourses were highly important to colonial security and the preservation of hegemony, this chapter further establishes this profound contention and shows how at the tail end of the colonial project in Nigeria, racial stereotypes regarding illegitimate “under-age” sexuality and juvenile delinquency further legitimized imperialism. I take a critical look at the complexity of defining who is a child or underage in relation to both legal and social control. Here I posit that the CWO—in its bid to forcefully legitimize the role of “modern” institutions like itself in improving the “savage” life of Africans—refused to acknowledge the difficulty of identifying the exact ages of child prostitutes, which itself was compounded by the fluidity of the cultural construction of childhood in the African setting. I establish my position by deconstructing various sources such as petitions, records of the CWO, and criminal code ordinances that mentioned or referenced the ages of child prostitutes.

Although the concept of juvenile delinquency is multitudinous and took divergent forms in different cultures, in colonial Nigeria, the CWO defined it almost exclusively as wayward and anti-social behavior perpetuated by children. Delinquent boys were vagrants and homeless children, including those involved in petty criminal activities such as pickpocketing and stealing. They were also the *boma* and *jaguda* boys who had “no visible means of livelihood” but engaged in all sort of activities ranging from pimping to

“breach of public peace.”¹²⁶ Delinquent girls were child prostitutes, runaway child wives, girl hawkers, and in general, “girls in moral danger.” Whether they acted on their own or were lured into anti-social behavior by adults, boys and girls involved in all these activities were considered delinquent children and treated accordingly. Without prostitutes, delinquent boys could not thrive and vice versa, and in order to effectively deal with the vice perpetrated by one group, the CWO knew very early that adequate attention had to be given to the other.

The CWO: The Politics of Colonial Social Control

In 1942, the colonial government of Nigeria appointed Donald Ernest Faulkner¹²⁷, an Oxford trained social worker, former officer of the Home Prison Service UK, and Assistant Superintendent of Prison and Industrial School at Enugu, as the first Colony Welfare Officer.¹²⁸ Faulkner, who came to (Enugu) Nigeria in 1937 and Lagos in 1942, was the first to be appointed as a welfare officer in British Africa.¹²⁹ Before the establishment of the CWO, Nigeria, like all British African colonies (with the exception of South Africa), did not have any government institution for dealing with juvenile delinquency. Until 1946 when the CWO sponsored the Children and Young Persons Ordinance (CYPO), which made provisions for the establishment of juvenile courts and

¹²⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 2600, “Boma Boys’ Menace in Lagos,” June 2, 1943.

¹²⁷ NAI, Comcol, 1, 2471, “Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos,” 1941.

¹²⁸ NAI, Comcol 1, 2471, “Director of Prison to the Honourable Chief Secretary to the Government: “Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos,” July 21, 1941.

¹²⁹ Reference to the fact that Nigeria will be remembered as the first colony to appoint a social welfare officer was made by Alexander Peterson who was brought in by the colonial government to carry out a survey of the social welfare in Nigeria see, NAI, Comcol 1, 2600, “Alexander Peterson: A Report to His Excellency the Governor of Nigeria on Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria,” 1944.

the probation system, adult and young offenders were tried in the same courts (magistrate, native, and supreme) and virtually went through the same criminal justice system¹³⁰ Indeed, young offenders often socialized with their adult counterparts in the same prisons. In 1930, colonial administrators were ordered to cease this practice at the direction of Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield), Secretary of State for the Colonies and the recommendation of the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations.¹³¹ However, neither Webb's circular nor the establishment of Enugu Industrial School in 1933 (designed to house just 50 juvenile offenders for the entire country) were sufficient to fully halt the joint imprisonment of adults and young offenders.¹³²

Despite the absence of any government institution for juvenile delinquency, philanthropic and humanitarian gestures by individuals and voluntary groups provided some care of delinquent youth.¹³³ From 1925, the Salvation Army kept a reformatory called Yaba Industrial Home, designed to accommodate and rehabilitate about 40 young

¹³⁰ NAI, Comcol 1, 2471, "Director of Prisons to the Honourable Chief Secretary to the Government: Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos."

¹³¹ Although Passfield also appointed his own committee to look into methods of administering justice to juveniles, it was the League of Nations that pushed the colonial powers to enquire about the conditions of children in their dependencies. NAI, Ijebu Prof., 1, 372, "Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria," September 11, 1930. See also Nigerian Daily Times, "Child Delinquents by C. A. Rust," August 13, 1932.

¹³² Apparently disturbed by the news that young offenders were kept in prison that also housed adult criminals, J. G. Mathison, the Chief Registrar sent a memo to the Police Magistrate calling his attention to this outlawed practice and demanding that it should stopped. See NAI, Comcol 1, 2471, "Chief Registrar to the Police Magistrate: Custody of Juvenile Offenders," December 8, 1942.

¹³³ Indeed, the history of juvenile delinquency is akin to that of the education sector which until the 1930s or so was largely left in the hands of voluntary organizations, notably the Christian Missionary sects.

offenders.¹³⁴ The government gave the Salvation Army a grant of £1,000 per annum and ensured that its procedures did not undermine British imperial interest. Despite its humanitarian gestures, Yaba Industrial School could not meaningfully ameliorate juvenile delinquency partly because it carried out essentially a rehabilitative and not a preventive service, and also because it lacked adequate human and material backing from the government.

By the outbreak of WWII in 1939, it would also appear that the government did not appreciate the Salvation Army's efforts. Colonel Mabb, the Director of Prisons in 1941, regretted the government expenditure on the Salvation Army, claiming that all it could show for an investment of about £16,000 "is a badly designed and unsuitably sited institution which according to recognized health and standards, is hard put to accommodate forty boys. When I think of what could have been accomplished with £16,000 under practical and common-sense management I grudge them every penny of it."¹³⁵

When the idea of the social welfare department was broached in 1942, many government departments—namely Labor, Prisons, and Education—wanted the new establishment to be placed under them. But after several deliberations between the Colonial Office in London and the Governor and Attorney General of Nigeria, the decision was made that the CWO should be an autonomous establishment under the control and supervision of the Commissioner of the Colony of Lagos. Between 1942 and

¹³⁴ NAI, Comcol 1, 2471, "Director of Prison to the Honourable Chief Secretary to the Government: Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos."

¹³⁵ Ibid.

1951, the professional and administrative staff of the CWO grew from two to nine.¹³⁶ However throughout the 1940s up to around 1954, Faulkner and his assistant Alison Izzett, a white woman hired in 1946, were the most influential of the social welfare officers. They were chiefly responsible for coordinating the activities of the CWO and produced about 95 percent of all the records and correspondence emanating from that office.

A Nigerian, Simeon Bankole-Wright, was another social worker who started the CWO with Faulkner and served as his assistant. Bankole-Wright received a Bachelor's of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School, the oldest graduate theological institution in the United States, in 1936. His authored works delve into such themes as the place of God in Yoruba traditional religion and the intersection of psychotherapy and Christianity. Bankole-Wright played a very minimal role in the activities of the CWO to the extent that his views were rarely heard and his position on British administrator's prejudice against African culture is not easily determined.¹³⁷ Racial prejudices in the colonial civil service may have led to his almost invisible, "second-fiddle" role.¹³⁸ He did not author any major reports on juvenile delinquency and was not involved in any major decision-making. Nor should we suppose that Bankole-Wright's experience was unique—far from it. In fact, it was quite common for the British in Nigeria as elsewhere

¹³⁶ The staff list as of 1953 includes the following: A Izzett; P. D. Fairclough; E. L. Jegede; P. Graham; W. McEwen; G. Brocklebank; P. Von Mohren; S. Bankole-Wright; and E. Aduloju.

¹³⁷ Some of his authored reports include, NAI, Comcol 1, 2600, "Alaru Question in Lagos 1943." NAI, Comcol 1, 2600, "Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate, 1944."

¹³⁸ An important but untapped primary source on Nigerian experience of color bar is NAI, Comcol 1, 2900, "Colour Problem."

in Africa to administratively sideline African employees who did not belong to the class of the so-called collaborating elites such as Henry Carr and Kitoye Ajasa, who shared the colonialists' ideas of modernity and progress.¹³⁹ Because Bankole-Wright was so effectively marginalized, it is difficult to ascertain how his theological training and knowledge of psychotherapy influenced his understanding of delinquency and rehabilitation.¹⁴⁰

With time, Faulkner and Izzett would become highly respected as “authorities” on the Nigerian social welfare system in Nigeria. Not only did they author “scientific” articles, reports, and books on social welfare and juvenile delinquency in Nigeria, they were also frequently invited to comment and provide guidelines on the treatment of young offenders in other British colonies.¹⁴¹ Texts of their public lectures and activities were occasionally published in the major dailies—both the anti-government prints such the *Daily Service* and the *West African Pilot*, as well as the *Nigerian Daily Times*, described by Obafemi Awolowo, as a newspaper that lacked “pungency and nationalist favor.”¹⁴² Before Izzett joined the CWO in 1946, Faulkner was chiefly responsible for coordinating social welfare work among both male and female delinquents, mostly child

¹³⁹ For fuller biographical sketch of these men, see Patrick Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 105-109; and L. C. Gwam, *Great Nigerians* (Lagos: Daily Times, 1951), chapter one.

¹⁴⁰ Simeon Bankole-Wright, *Jesus the Great Physician* (Ibadan: Dayster Press, 1981).

¹⁴¹ Donald Faulkner, *Social Welfare and Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos, Nigeria* (London: The Howard League for Penal Reform, undated); Alison Izzett, *Clubs for Women and Girls* (London: Longmans, 1949); “The Fears and Anxieties of Delinquent Yoruba Children,” *ODU* no. 1 (1955): 26-34.

¹⁴² Quoted in 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), 34.

prostitutes. However from 1946 on, a sort of division emerged as Izzett became primarily responsible for delinquent females while Faulkner concentrated on their male counterparts. Of course Faulkner remained the overall head of the establishment and his title changed during the 1950s from Colony Welfare Officer to Senior Welfare Officer. In fact, Faulkner was so powerful and popular among European administrators that he acted on behalf of the Commissioner of the Colony on several occasions. These two officers received great accolades from visiting British officers like Alexander Paterson, W. H. Chinn, W. W. Llewellyn who were occasionally invited to Nigeria to assess the progress of the CWO.¹⁴³ Summarily the history of the CWO basically amounts to the story of the activities and ideas of Faulkner and Izzett.

With particular reference to the treatment of delinquent girls, the activities of the CWO were manifold. It advised and worked with other colonial authorities (i.e., the Commissioner of the Colony, the Attorney General, and the Governor) and agents of social control (the Nigeria Police Force, courts [native, magistrate and supreme], and Nigeria Prison Service) on juvenile delinquency laws and their methods of implementation. Although the CWO would fully and readily claim credit for such laws as the CYPO, some sections of this important legislation (especially the criminalization of hawking) were actually suggested to the government in 1920s and 1930s, well before the CWO existed. For instance, Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa and her Lagos Ladies League

¹⁴³ NAI, Comcol 1, 2600, "Alexander Peterson: A Report to His Excellency the Governor of Nigeria on Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria," 1944; NAI, Comcol 1, 2786 vol. II, "W. W. Llewellyn: Report upon methods of training young offenders in Nigeria, 1951"; NAI, Comcol 1, 2600 Vol. II, "Mr. Chinn: Report by Mr. Chinn, Social Welfare Adviser to the Secretary of State, February 1950."

had campaigned for the repatriation of “women and girls of bad character” to their homes in the provinces, prevention of the influx of children to the Lagos, eradication of street hawking, raising of age of consent to 16 and establishing a girls’ hostel where “the girls in moral danger” could be housed for rehabilitation as early as 1926.¹⁴⁴

Whether through its own initiative or a result of Obasa’s suggestions, the CWO did keep a girls’ hostel, which served as a temporary home for girls rescued from their procurers or picked up from the streets. The supervisors of the CWO responded to information and petitions from “concerned citizens” by visiting brothels allegedly housing child prostitution, repossessing the girls, and providing prosecution evidence to the police if required. In order to determine if the girls had been prostituted, the CWO tested them for venereal diseases and performed virginity tests on them. Positive testing for any disease and/or lack of virginity was taken as evidence that a girl had been having sex for money and immoral purposes.

After examining individual cases, decisions were made whether to repatriate the girls to their homes in the provinces, reunite them with their parents and “lawful” guardians (if they lived in Lagos), or send them to the juvenile court. The CWO also worked with resident and district officers in the provinces in gathering family information and life histories of the provincial girls (which were rarely available) and ensuring that Lagos repatriates arrived in their respective communities.¹⁴⁵ The CWO occasionally

¹⁴⁴ NAI, Comcol 1, 498, “Olajumoke Obasa on behalf of Lagos Women’s League to the Resident of Lagos,” August 6, 1926.

¹⁴⁵ The only information, which tended to be available about provincial girls include the names of their parents and family compound. Their dates of births, school information and other important life dates were available.

toured some provinces, met with the locals, and sensitized them to the inherent danger of allowing their female children to be taken to Lagos.¹⁴⁶ They also entrusted provincial and district officers with discussing child prostitution with the chiefs at native authorities meetings.¹⁴⁷ By 1944, most of the southern provincial offices kept files on child prostitution, where correspondence between them and the CWO and Commissioner of the colony was kept.¹⁴⁸

Cases	No. Of victims	Ages
Seduced	46	3-11
Treated for venereal disease	21	3-11
Criminally assaulted	46	3-11
Seduced	59	11-15
Treated for venereal disease	47	11-15

Table II. Source: The Daily Comet, *Oged Macaulay Suggests Licensing of Prostitution*, November 30, 1944, 1.

Politics of Establishment: Young Offenders, Social Order and Imperial Security

¹⁴⁶ NAI, Kwale Dist I 49, "Moral Welfare work with the Women and Girls of the Warri Province," undated.

¹⁴⁷ The Nigerian Daily Times, "Ijebu Igbo Town Council Discusses Child Prostitution," September 16, 1943.

¹⁴⁸ NAI, Ijebu Prof., C.103, "Child Prostitution," 1944; NAI, Owo Div 703, "Child Prostitution," 1943-1946; NAI, Ondo Div 686, "Child Prostitution," 1943-1946; NAI, Oyo Prof, 3562, "Measures against Prostitution."

On the surface, and based on the numerous reports produced by Faulkner, Izzett, Paterson, Chinn, Llewellyn and others, one may be tempted to think that the British established the CWO as a selfless gesture to save future generations of Africans from the shackles of vice, crime, and immorality. However, as we shall see shortly, a closer look at the reports and procedures of the CWO suggests otherwise. For over two decades between the 1920s—when the Lagos Ladies League and newspapers petitioned the colonial government to act on child prostitution and other forms of activities like street hawking, which fed the Lagos prostitution network with juveniles—and 1942, when the CWO was established, the colonialists did not take any practical steps towards checking juvenile delinquency. If the colonialists considered a maternity hospital a luxury in October 1923, when Lagos women under the auspices of Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa's Lagos Women's League petitioned for the establishment of one, the idea of a social welfare institution was definitely out of the question.¹⁴⁹ And if in 1944 Faulkner taught that Nigeria was not yet ripe for implementing a social security system (the absence of which would later contribute the outbreak of the General Strike of 1945)¹⁵⁰, then one should consider an alternative interpretation of the real motives for some of the policies that appeared beneficial to Africans.¹⁵¹

I contend that the British did not consider establishing social welfare institutions until 1942 because the menace of prostitution and offences committed by male juveniles

¹⁴⁹ This demand was made at a meeting “where the women of the town were fully represented” See NAI, Comcol 1, 498, “Lagos Women's League to the Honourable, the Chief Secretary to Government,” February 26, 1924.

¹⁵⁰ On this see Wale Oyemakinde, “The Nigerian General Strike of 1945,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no.4 (June 1975): 693-710.

¹⁵¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 2862, “Social Security in the Colonial Territories,” 1944.

had not previously threatened British imperialism in Nigeria. In terms of security and the preservation of colonial order, the CWO was established at the most appropriate time; but in terms of budgetary factors, personnel, and logistics, the institution came at an inappropriate period in Nigerian history. Let us closely examine these two arguments in sequence.

The response of colonial administrators to a 1930 circular from Passfield about the treatment of young offenders represents the administrators' position on the extent of the threat that juvenile offenders posed to British imperialism in Nigeria, the connection between colonial security and juvenile delinquency, and their general disposition towards the advancement of the African child. Among other important recommendations, Passfield wanted administrators to introduce juvenile delinquency laws and ensure that adults and children were not housed in the same prison.¹⁵² Directed by the Lieutenant-Governor, F. P. Lynch, the Secretary of Southern Provinces responded to this circular stating that "the introduction of legislation at the present time to create special machinery for dealing with juvenile offenders in this country does not seem to be a matter of very great urgency."¹⁵³ Lynch downplayed the need for juvenile delinquency laws, referencing the criminal record supplied by the Director of Prisons, which indicates that in the entire Southern Provinces (with the exclusion of Oyo, Ijebu, and Abeokuta provinces), a total of 151 juvenile offenders were either sentenced to government prisons or whipped between 1928 and 1931. Lynch further added that Lieutenant-Governor Walter Buchanan-

¹⁵² NAI, Ijebu Prof., 1, 372, "Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria" undated.

¹⁵³ NAI, Oshun Div 1/1, "Secretary of Southern Province to the Honourable, the Chief Secretary to the Government," 1931.

Smith believed that the proposed bill to help protect juvenile offenders “appears to have been framed to meet conditions far more ‘Westernized’ than are in the Southern Provinces and [I] fear that it would be *impracticable and unwise* [emphasis mine] to try to superimpose the provisions of the Draft Bill on the Native Court System.”¹⁵⁴ The Governor’s response and that of the Commissioner of the Colony underestimated the gravity of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. For them, all petitions authored by Lagos elite women and newspaper reports on child prostitution and juvenile delinquency during the 1920s and early 1930s,¹⁵⁵ “does not seem to be a matter of very great urgency.”¹⁵⁶

The outbreak of WWII would radically change official perceptions about juvenile delinquency and the threat it posed to colonialism. The external threat of the Germans (which increased tremendously after the untimely fall of France in June 1940); the vast influx of people who deserted the provinces in search of greener pastures in Lagos; poor policing in the name of Win-the-War-Efforts; and soaring crime rates and general public disorder (attributed in part to violations of the various emergency regulations and defense

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Nigerian Pioneer, “Assault on a Girl,” January 29, 1926. See the following newspaper stories and editorials in The Nigerian Daily Times: “Lashes for Enticing Girls,” June 10, 1932,”; Child Criminals: Veteran Doctor Suggest A Solution,” August 20, 1932; “The Girl Criminal (Editorial): August 22, 1932,”; Girl Housebreaker Sentenced: Twelve Months Eighth Conviction,” August 18, 1932; “Ex-Convent Girl in Court,” August 18, 1932; “Another Girl Criminal: Young Husband’s Plea to Magistrate,” August 24, 1932; “Welfare of Women and Girls,” September 10, 1932; “Another Girl Kidnapped,” September 14, 1932, “Juvenile Offenders Bound Over,” December 3, 1932; “Boy Thieves: Babalola Given Six Strokes,” April 9, 1931, 6; “Juvenile Offenders Sent to Yaba Industrial Home,” April 3, 1931; “Youth and Crime (Editorial)” September 18, 1931; “Juvenile Offenders: Lad Sent to Yaba: Twenty Youths Before Magistrate December 22, 1931,”; “Rid the Street of Hooligans (by Wenceslas),” December 22, 1931; “The Police and Hooliganism (editorial),” December 23, 1931.

¹⁵⁶ NAI, Oshun Div 1/1, “Secretary of Southern Province to the Honourable the Chief Secretary to the Government,” 1931.

laws); all coupled with the internal threat of delinquent juveniles during the Second World War informed the need to address crime perpetuated by young people.¹⁵⁷ Even the Governor, whose predecessors had downplayed the danger of juvenile crime, publicly accepted the impact of juvenile delinquency on public and imperial order when he declared that “activities of the *Boma* Boys were becoming very much worse than a mere nuisance.”¹⁵⁸ Numerous administrative reports, such as Paterson’s “Crime and Its Treatment in Nigeria”, produced before and after 1942, affirmed that most adult criminals had previously been convicted as juveniles. In addition, British colonial officers believed that the peak age of crime in Nigeria was 26.¹⁵⁹ This basically suggests that it was only a matter of time before delinquent youths would become adult criminals—both as procurers/madams and the *boma boys* or *jaguda boys*, who served as pimps and constituted a formidable danger to the precarious public order. Hence, if child prostitutes were not rescued from their procurers and child hawkers not prevented from being recruited into the prostitution network, they would grow-up to become adult prostitutes/procurers and would later continue to bring in prostitutes from the provinces.

(This fear is expressed Faulkner’s somewhat “scientific” discussion of the life-cycle of a child prostitute (awkward sentence)):

¹⁵⁷ See the following newspaper stories from The Nigerian Daily Times: “Boma Boy sent to Prison for Assaulting a Policeman,” July 17, 1940; “Another Boma Boy gaoled: Guilty of Assault and Other Offences,” July 23, 1940; “Police up Against Boma Boys: Another Sent to Prison,” August 16, 1940; “Head or Leader of Boma Boys Sentenced,” July 26, 1941.

¹⁵⁸ See the following West African Pilot stories, “Boma Boys,” November 16, 1940; “The Boma Boy Menace,” December 30, 1940; “Menace of Pickpockets,” October 27, 1941; “Pickpockets at Large,” April 10, 1942; “The Jaguda Menace,” April 2, 1943.

¹⁵⁹ NAI, Comcol 1, 2786 Vol. I, “Women’s Welfare Council to the Commissioner of the Colony,” July 12, 1946.

The girl is then brought to Lagos, kept in an unsuspecting frame of mind by specious promises and is gradually introduced to the life of a prostitute. At first, being fresh and virginal and she fetches a good price but gradually she ages, venereal diseases leave its mark and she becomes the hardened harlot, who in a few years will be bringing young girls herself to Lagos.¹⁶⁰

On the *boma boys*, Faulkner wrote:

We identified a boma boy as one who acts as a guise or a tout for houses of ill-fame. We saw him at different stages of development. At the first stage he is a simple unsophisticated out-of-work, introduced to the trade by a friend, a casual guide without an arrangement with a particular house. He has not the experience to make the work very remunerative, so he sleeps outside and leads rather a meager existence. When he becomes more experience and by his glib tongue and polite manner can get more customers he lives in a house, dresses well and

¹⁶⁰ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "Child Prostitution in Lagos by Donald Faulkner," 1943.

feeds well. He may earn upwards of E2 per month. He probably has a definite arrangement with special harlots or particular houses... he is gradually deteriorating morally and eventually becomes a sophisticated cynical youth, up to all the tricks of the trade, lazy and immoral, perhaps acting as a master to a group of younger boys. He may now be working as a master to a group of younger boma boys. He may now be working on a percentage basis as an important partner of an organized trade.¹⁶¹

No of Boma	Age	Offence
12	9-15	Acting as unlicensed guide connecting European visitors to prostitutes
10	Ditto	Loitering in hotels, street corners and places of amusement where prostitutes also solicited
1	Ditto	Disorderly behavior in the public

Table III: Source: Compiled from Comcol 2471 “Boma Boy Menace in Lagos by Simeon Bankole- Wright” 1943.

The cycle of prostitution was not only an issue of public welfare, but also military readiness. Prostitutes were considered the main purveyors of venereal diseases to the military and a medically unfit army constituted a threat to British imperialism in Nigeria.

¹⁶¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 2471, “Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos by Donald Faulkner,” 1941.

The fact that the CWO was established during WWII, even though most resources were needed to promote the War, establishes the centrality of prostitution-related problems to the preservation of colonial status quo. The connection between sexuality and imperialism during WWII becomes clear if we consider the fact that the “the Unlicensed Guide Ordinance of 1941,” one of the first non-emergency laws enacted during the WWII years, was put in place to check the menace of the *boma boys* and prostitutes. It is no coincidence that these boys were accused of harming European seamen, visitors, and other classes of foreign expatriates, whose activities were cardinal to the Win-the-War Efforts.

Let us move from the first contention about the timeliness of a social welfare institution to the second, which sees WWII as an inappropriate period for the establishment of the CWO. The CWO came at an inappropriate moment because the colonial state did not have the resources to establish the kind of institution that could effectively address the enormous social problems that juveniles were confronting. Logically, the CWO should have been established in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the institutions of colonial control such as the police, army, and the prison were being built and when the foundations of colonial urbanization were gradually being laid. Also, social welfare should have been established during the first two decades of the twentieth century when Lagos, due to the emergence of colonial state of Nigeria, became a truly heterogeneous Nigerian society. There is the likelihood that had juvenile delinquency laws been introduced and implemented in accordance with Passfield’s circular of 1930, the incidence of delinquency during WWII would have been lower. But

since colonialism was not an African-centered project, establishing an institution like the CWO before WWII would have contradicted the ideology of colonial hegemony.

Material and human shortages during WWII negatively impacted the activities of the nascent CWO. With a deficit of £311,000,000 and restrictions placed on the recruitment of civil authorities and officers from Britain to British-African colonies, the CWO had to settle for limited funding. Between 1942 and 1950, the institution had fewer than 10 professional staff coordinating all its activities, which ranged from rescuing child prostitutes to running the remand homes, juvenile courts, probation service, girls' and boys' hostel, and Iseri Industrial School. Indeed, before Izzett was hired in 1946, the CWO was essentially a one-man institution, with Faulkner making all decisions and dominating all discussions. Because of inadequate funding, the CYPO enacted in 1943 did not come into full force until July 1946. Throughout the 1940s, there was only one girls' hostel for all of Lagos, which had a population of more than 50,000 females under the age of 30 in 1952.¹⁶² With the exception of Lagos and Calabar, government social welfare institutions were not established in other parts of the country until the mid 1950s.

The absence of provincial CWO branches partly explains why some of its procedures and legislations were ineffective. The flow of child prostitutes from the provinces into Lagos should have encouraged the establishment of the CWO in other parts of Nigeria. Although the CWO and Commissioner of the Colony sent reports to provincial officers and directed them to prevent the trafficking in girls to Lagos, these officers did not possess the legislative power and logistics to carry out this order.

¹⁶² Akin L. Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1968), 266.

Nigerians in the provinces agreed with the CWO that the provinces fed Lagos with a pool of prostitutes, as a November 24 1942 of *Eastern Nigerian Guardian* and many other authors of public opinions validate. However, several editorials and administrators, like the District Officers of Kwale, believed that the government should consider establishing a social welfare office in the province in order to (1) prevent the influx of girls into Lagos and (2) end child prostitution in the larger provincial towns of Enugu, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Aba, and Calabar.¹⁶³

Although this suggestion appeared appropriate, it is unlikely that the presence of the CWO in the provinces would have helped solve the problem, since that would have entailed effective policing of all railways, bus stations, and ports. Perhaps no native authority or resident officer would commit its scarce resources and poorly staffed police force to any effort not directly connected to preserving the status quo in their immediate area. If the native authorities faced problems using their police to implement such important laws as taxation ordinances, asking them to police young girls purportedly transported to Lagos—and out of their jurisdiction—would have been unpopular to say the least. But more importantly, as we shall see in the next chapter, in order to avoid insurgency, resident officers were traditionally not disposed towards passing and/or implementing laws that could create discord with the chiefs and destabilize their jurisdiction.

I have previously indicated that the colonial government did not create social welfare institutions purely out of concern for Nigeria's youth; instead, one can posit that

¹⁶³ NAI, Kwale Dist I, 49, "Child Prostitution," 1944.

the CWO emerged as a juvenile-centered institution because the government realized that it was more expensive to rehabilitate and prevent crime committed by adults than simply to take delinquent juveniles off the streets. This position was popular among influential colonial authorities like G. B. Williams, the Commissioner of the Colony, who asserted in 1941 that “money spent on these young potential criminals will save much greater expenditure later on.”¹⁶⁴ In his 1942 report “Crime and Its Treatment in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria” Paterson claimed that in order to reduce the prison population of 40,000, and the cost of maintaining a total of 114 prisons, it was “far more economical for the government” to invest in the treatment of juvenile delinquency. Although the number of adult criminals outstripped their younger counterparts, Paterson argued that the previous juvenile convictions of the majority of adult offenders justified this investment as a logical means of reducing the cost of running the prisons.

The Social and Legal Construction of Child Prostitution

Child prostitution was both a social and legal construction. It was a social construction because the CWO held preconceived ideas about legal and illegal and “under age” sex. This “unwritten convention” influenced the institutional disposition toward “under age” and dissident sexuality and the relationship that existed between the two. Because sex was presumably connected to maturity (psychological, physical, and intellectual), the CWO believed it should not take place under a certain age, that is, 16.

¹⁶⁴ NAI, Comcol 2471, “Juvenile Delinquency,” Commissioner of the Colony to the Chief Secretary to the Government,” July 23, 1941.

Did the CWO encounter any problems identifying the exact ages of child prostitutes? Here, I posit that the CWO paid limited attention to the fluidity and complexity of cultural constructions of girlhood and adulthood. This was not because they deemed this distinction unimportant but rather because focusing on it could complicate and compromise the process of securing government support to protect endangered African womanhood from criminal-minded madams and men. This position becomes clear if we take a critical look at the sources of ages of child prostitutes: public petitions, newspaper reports or stories, records produced by the CWO, and lastly the relevant sections of the Criminal Code Ordinance (especially chapter 21). These sources show that although the CWO claimed that childhood was not difficult to define in the African setting and that they knew the ages of the endangered children, identifying the exact ages of the child prostitutes and the girls in general moral danger was a more complex exercise, which the CWO did not undertake because of the aforementioned factors.

The CWO was not alone in its failure to focus on or reliably identify the ages of these children. In petitions sent to the CWO about the child prostitution, we read phrases and statements such as the use of “young, young and small, small girls as prostitutes.” Petitioners rarely mentioned ages when they write about child prostitution. How young were these “young, young girls?” Even when ages are provided, we cannot wholeheartedly trust these figures since their affirmation was based on public observation of child prostitutes and their conditions of work, which were generally described as “unethical.” Apparently, these petitioners had limited or no contact with child prostitutes

because prostitution traditionally took place in parts of the city regarded as “unholy. A petitioner who identified her/him self as “informant” wrote:

This is a complaint against 3 minor girls by age of 9-10-12 years old that were under a certain old woman by name Madam Ogoudi at 41 Taiwo Street Lagos. These girls they never become up to the age of sexual intercourse which this woman treating by giving them to different a kind of men for sexual intercourse. What moves me to bring my complaint against them is I went there a certain evening by 7.30 pm. I heard a girl voice was crying in the room and to my observation, I discovered that a girl not up to age of haven to do with man is in a room with a certain seamen. So pity I am...¹⁶⁵

What is the exact age of, “a girl not up to age of haven to do with man?” This petitioner neither tells us if he spoke with the child prostitute after the sexual encounter nor does he mention how he was able to establish the ages of the girls.

Aside from the petitioners, even police records and investigations are laden with contradictory information about the ages of child prostitutes. When Izzett informed the police that an Igbo woman, Madam Comfort Abes, owner of “Holly Wood Bar” located at 7 Harbour Road Apapa, was in possession of a child prostitute named Raleigh, Lance

¹⁶⁵ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Informant to the Colony Welfare Officer,” July 10, 1943.

Corporal E. Ogbe was sent as an undercover police officer to establish the validity of this claim. Ogbe gave vivid account of the bar and of the personalities like the *boma boys* that frequented the place, and mentioned that Abes, after talking to some Apapa police men who came on routine patrol, said that “there would be no offence that she would commit that would warrant Apapa policemen to take action against her.”¹⁶⁶ He confirmed that Raleigh, the purported child prostitute, was helping Comfort to serve beer to customers but did not see any evidence that she was being prostituted. Rather, his report seems to suggest that Abes herself was a prostitute because she frequently went into a room with a “Congo man” named Thomas and returned with money, which she openly displayed. Ogbe identified Raleigh as a “Yoruba girl” but could not provide concrete information about her age. In her response to Ogbe’s report, Allison queried the age of Raleigh and wanted Ogbe to re-visit Madam Abes’ bar again in order to ascertain Raleigh’s age. This report and many others not only show the complexity of identifying the ages of alleged child prostitutes but also the dubious correctness/credibility of petitions written by “concerned citizens” about child prostitution.¹⁶⁷

The records of the CWO provide better insight into the ages of child prostitutes because the welfare officers carried out extensive interviews on the life histories and backgrounds of child prostitutes after they had been repossessed from their procurers. The CWO needed the ages of child prostitutes to determine the type of rehabilitation program they would undergo and, more importantly, the criminal charges to be initiated against their procurers. A limitation of the information obtained by the social welfare

¹⁶⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Lance Corporal E. Ogbe’s Report,” November 11, 1946.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

officers is that some of the child prostitutes did not know when they were born because in most cases they had no formal education. Some were brought to Lagos at a very young age and were not able to recount significant parts of their life histories or give their dates of birth. For instance, in her petition to the CWO, Rose Ojenugbe, a child prostitute who was brought to Ikeja in 1946 and prostituted to soldiers and Europeans, did not mention her exact age but instead used the phrase “I a little girl like this.”¹⁶⁸

The CWO relied on the attainment of puberty in determining the ages of child prostitutes, but poor nutrition and genetics can sometimes delay sexual and physical development and maturity. This implies that a twenty year-old girl, due to poor nutrition and genetic factors, may not have developed certain physical features characteristic of “adulthood” and could therefore occasionally be categorized inaccurately as a child by the CWO.

Pinpointing the actual age of the girls would entail traveling to their home provinces and interviewing the parents and guardians who, in the absence of formal birth records or certificates, could use established traditional methods of dating to determine the date of birth of the girls. But throughout the 1940s when child prostitutes were taken from their procurers, treated in the hospitals, admitted into the girls’ hostel, and repatriated to the provinces, there is no evidence that the CWO had authoritative dates of birth queried from the girls’ birthplaces. Most if not all of the correspondence between district and resident officers was about repatriation of child prostitutes and about the need to sensitize

¹⁶⁸ NAI, 2844, Alice’s Petition, November 21, 1946.

the provincial Nigerians to the need of preventing their children from being trafficked to Lagos. Controversies over ages were rarely, if ever, discussed.

Working to establish the exact dates of birth would certainly have delayed and may even have undermined the activities and effectiveness of the CWO's propaganda, rehabilitation, and the validity of information they supplied to government agencies and Lagos elites about the dangers of child prostitution. I suggest that it was politically wise for the CWO to identify the ages of the girls as under-13 in order to secure adequate institutional attention and funding. I would also suggest that several of the girls identified as child prostitutes may have been in their upper teens (16-20). The CWO neither raised any major concerns about identifying the true age of the child prostitutes nor did they doubt the information supplied by the police, petitioners, and the child prostitutes.

Political administrators, not the welfare officers, showed skepticism about the real ages of the girls in moral danger. J. G. C. Allen, the Commissioner of the Colony, called Izzett's attention to the existing law relating to defiling a girl under age 13 and queried: "In this country age is always a doubtful quantity and it should be very much easier to assess age of girl at 15 than to decide whether she is over 11 or under 13."¹⁶⁹ It is difficult to ascertain why Allen was skeptical about the ages of the girls. A close interpretation of his response implies that he was telling Izzett that a 13- or 15-year-old cannot be legally treated as a child. In other words, institutional support and funds needed to rehabilitate such girls might not be necessary.

¹⁶⁹ NAI Comcol 1, 2844, "The Commissioner of the Colony to the Honourable, the Chief Secretary to the Government: Child Prostitution," May 21, 1946.

However, neither Faulkner nor Izzett agreed with Allen. In an earlier report submitted to the President of Lagos Town Council on the how girl hawkers were frequently recruited as prostitutes, Faulkner defended his proposal for the criminalization of street hawking by girls under 15 and allayed fears about problems in identifying the ages of the girls. Faulkner wrote, “There can be no difficulty in recognizing a child of eight as being approximately of that age. If all girls under the age of thirteen were banned, children in a pre-pubertal stage of development could be easily picked out. It would not be necessary to quibble over borderline cases of the law forbidding hawking.”¹⁷⁰

Definitely, Faulkner underestimated the challenges of identifying the ages of these girls. His affirmation was proved wrong when prominent Lagosians and associations including the Oba Falolu (the King of Lagos),¹⁷¹ the Ladies Progressive Club,¹⁷² Women’s Welfare Council,¹⁷³ the Women’s League, and Nigerian Women’s Party petitioned the Commissioner of the Colony that girls above the age of 15 were being mistakenly arrested for breaking the street trading sections of the CYPO.¹⁷⁴ An editorial in the *Daily Times*, while not counteracting the public knowledge that girl hawkers ran the risk of being prostituted by procurers, noted, “We appreciate fully that the police cannot be expected to be exact in determining the age of an alleged girl offender especially when she is an up

¹⁷⁰ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Faulkner to the President of Lagos Town Council: Hawking by Children in Lagos,” September 1942.

¹⁷¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 2786 vol. I “Oba Falolu to the Commissioner of the Colony,” July 15, 1945.

¹⁷² NAI, Comcol 1, 2786 vol. I, “Ladies Progressive Club to the Welfare Officer,” July 18, 1946.

¹⁷³ NAI, Comcol 1, 2786 vol. I, “Women’s Welfare Council to the Commissioner of the Colony,” July 12, 1946.

¹⁷⁴ NAI, Comcol 1, 2786, Petition to the Government Re Nos. 4 and 21 on Pages 730 and 739 of Gazette Nos. 36 vol.33 of June 27, 1946.”

country girl.”¹⁷⁵ This editorial and many other petitions were altogether not wrong. In a confidential handwritten memo about the editorial petition mentioned above, the Commissioner of the Colony admitted that “some of the facts stated in this article are true.” He continued, “I have seen some adults and grown-up girls chased around Balogun Square.” The Commissioner’s last sentence suggests that the government was not in control of its laws: “No actions are necessary on our part?”¹⁷⁶

Chapter 21 (Offences against Morality) of the Criminal Code elaborately established the dichotomy between two categories of females: “woman” and “under age.” An “under age” was a female under 13, and a “woman” was above 13. In a strictly legal sense, a brothel keeper or a procurer could not be charged under sections 222A (1) and (2) and 222B (1) and (2) of the Criminal Code if he or she allowed a 13 year-old to leave and work as a prostitute.¹⁷⁷ However, a procurer could be criminally charged for violating the provisions of sections 223 and 224, which prohibited the procuring (through seducing, force or coercion) of both under-age girls and women. Also, a 13 year-old who of personal volition practiced prostitution could not be designated and treated as “child prostitute” and could be charged like an adult female for violating sections 249 (A) and 225 (B), which criminalized such activities as brothel keeping, disorderly or indecent

¹⁷⁵ The Nigerian Daily Times, “Girl Hawker,” December 29, 1947.

¹⁷⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844 vol. II, “Handwriting Memo by the Commissioner of the Colony,” undated.

¹⁷⁷ Criminal Code (Amendment) Ordinance of 1943 (Chapter 21, Offences against Morality) *Annual Volume of the Laws of Nigeria Containing all Legislation enacted during the Year 1944* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1945), A52-A57.

manner, public solicitation for sex, and conducts likely to cause “a breach of public peace.”¹⁷⁸

If sections 249 (A) and 225 (B) were properly interpreted and applied, the CWO could not treat a 13 year-old as a child prostitute and did not have the legality to repatriate several child prostitutes including Dinah (13) and Agnes (15) of Kwale District from Lagos.¹⁷⁹ Why then did the CWO repatriate girls above the age of 13 if the law did not prevent them from working as prostitutes? One straightforward answer is that the CWO believed that females under the age of 16 were not intellectually or emotionally mature enough to engage in consensual sex and that all forms of sexual relations involving women under the age of 16, both within marriage (legitimate) and illegitimate (under sexual exploitation and prostitution), should be outlawed.

One obvious problem with the colonial legal system was its inability to reconcile contradictions arising from the use of age as a yardstick for criminalizing sex. Hence, two categories of laws, “Section 21 of the Criminal Code Ordinance” and the “CYPO,” defined childhood separately and differently. While Section 21 of the Criminal Code defined a child as a girl under 13 and criminalized “carnal knowledge” of such individuals, a child (both male and female) as enshrined in Section 2 of the CYPO is someone under 14 and a young person, an individual above 14 but under 17. The criminal code did not mention explicitly that the legal age of marriage was 13. But because it was

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., A55-A57.

¹⁷⁹ NAI, Kwale Dist 1, “Colony Welfare Officer to the District Officer, Kwale: Juvenile Prostitution in Lagos H. H. 169 & 170,” February 28, 1944.

unlawful to have “carnal knowledge” of a girl under 13, marriage and sex at 13 was considered “legal.”

The CWO and African Culture

Unlike in North America and Europe, where female juvenile problems were interpreted along multiple dimensions ranging from socio-economic and biological to pathological and psychological, in Nigeria, the CWO extolled a mono-causal explanation of juvenile delinquency—African cultural “backwardness.” Unlike in the West where psychologists, clinical scientists, physicians, and others worked with the court, prison, social workers, police, and other agents of social control in preventing and containing delinquency, the CWO did not view the girls’ motives for trading in flesh in terms of biological/psychological aberration but believed that the slack African culture was responsible for producing prostitutes for the Lagos “house of ill fame.” In other words, the infamous theories of pathology such as those propounded by the likes of Lombroso and Ferrero, which gained adequate currency among European and North American scientific, religious and moral reformers, did not find any expression in the Nigerian case. Under the CWO, psychologists, clinical scientists, and physicians were seldom enlisted to help prevent and contain delinquency.

The British did not import comprehensive preventive and curative methods in dealing with juvenile delinquents because of three main reasons. First, the paucity of trained personnel and the underdevelopment of colonial science left limited room for viewing vice from a holistic point of view. However, the CWO did not explicitly state

this as the reason for its one-way interpretation of vice. Second, because the CWO may have feared that any resources devoted to the scientific interpretation of vice might have diverted required funds from fighting the social and sexual dangers that girls faced. In another connection, blaming individual girls for deviance would not earn the desired attention of the government and the public as much as blaming the entire African civilization and the unsafe environment of Lagos. Lastly, and more importantly, a comprehensive analysis of social problems that took into account such dynamics as physiological, emotional, and psychological mutation might have suggested that the British and Africans were racial equals. This would have contradicted the notions of difference and pathology, which stood at the epicenter of the idea of Africa's racial inferiority.

I am not suggesting that Western scientific explanations of social disorder can fully decode or should be used to examine the African situation—indeed any attempt at using science to explain Africa's uniqueness during the nineteenth century produced devastating outcomes for the genuine representation of the African race. Rather, I contend that in order to sustain the established notion of Africa's otherness, European models, institutions, and practices associated with modernity and progress were selectively deployed in Africa.¹⁸⁰ Familiar rhetoric of African cultural backwardness

¹⁸⁰ This contradiction is not unique to the story of introduction of modern welfare system to Africa. In fact, the history of Africa is replete with a gamut of examples and situations in which second hand/inferior models of "modernity" were introduced in order to uphold the ideology of white supremacy. We see this in the medical and education sector where substandard practices and instructions were introduced in order to ensure that Africans did not advance beyond a prescribed and often low level. In the education sector, see,

sounded more appropriate in explaining the problems confronting the people of the “dark continent” than sophisticated scientific theories of human behavior, which the British believed were only applicable to the advanced and “civilized” race. By neglecting other theories of social and sexual deviance in favor of the alleged cultural backwardness of Africans, I contend that the CWO justified anew colonial domination during 1940s, when the momentum of nationalism and anti-colonial sentiments had reached a commendable height.

For the CWO, if the problems of child prostitution were to be abolished, certain components of “backward” African culture such as betrothal and “child marriage” had to go. Child fostering by non-biological relatives of provincial girls had to be eradicated or regulated. Hence, parents had to stop allowing Lagos-based relatives to bring their children to the city whether for the purpose of education and apprenticeship or marriage. Faulkner believed that genuine guardianship did not exist in Lagos and that all girls brought into Lagos were being trafficked for immoral purposes. In his conviction, all children brought to Lagos under the guise of marriage and apprenticeship were imperiled by or integrated into the Lagos prostitution network.

After living in Lagos for two years or less, Faulkner would confidently remark in 1943 that “there are no husbands for provincial girls in Lagos”¹⁸¹ and that men who wanted to marry “legitimately” tended to go to the provinces, perform the required traditional rites, and bring the new bride to Lagos. Presumably, this comment was aimed

Adewunmi Fajana, *Education in Nigeria, 1842-1939: An Historical Analysis* (London: Longman, 1978), chapter three.

¹⁸¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Child Prostitution in Lagos by Donald Faulkner,” July 1, 1943.

at dissuading administrators and Lagosians from the idea that it was possible to contract “legitimate” traditional marriage in Lagos and to secure administrative power and assistance for the CWO.¹⁸² Men, he believed, tended to maltreat wives married by proxy because they paid high-bridal prices and did not undergo the required traditional rite. When child wives were maltreated, they ran away and, with time, landed into the hands of procurers. He often used new terminologies like “child wives” and “child marriage” to redefine girlhood and delegitimize sex and marriage under sixteen

As mentioned earlier, the age of consent in Nigeria was 13. The CWO would criticize this law, claiming that a 13 year-old was too young to have sex, and that she was not sexually, psychologically, and intellectually mature enough to handle all the rituals and demands associated with marriage. Girls, according to Faulkner, “may mature at an earlier age than in European countries but I believe it is a fallacy that they are generally speaking, developed for child-bearing at the age of 13.”¹⁸³ Later in 1946, Izzett would lament that it is incorrect to think that African girls matured earlier than their English counterparts. “In fact, the average English working-class girl,” wrote Izzett, “matures much earlier than these girls.” But the two welfare officers tended to be putting agreeable and common arguments in two different ways. For them, early attainment of adolescence did not mean that the girls were intellectually, physically, and psychologically mature enough to make wise decisions about consensual sex and, by extension, marriage.

Llewellyn, who visited Nigeria in 1951 to conduct a supervisory survey of the progress of

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Child Welfare: Prostitution and Child Marriage by Faulkner,” 1942.

the CWO, reconciled the relationship between adolescent and sexual maturity and intelligence: “Those with long experience of West Africans agree that adolescence starts at an earlier age than amongst Europeans, but they also agree that adolescence on the physical side is a longer process and that Africans are not fully mature intellectually until they are around 21.”¹⁸⁴

Faulkner ended one of his most comprehensive reports entitled “Child Welfare: Prostitution and Child Marriage” by drawing a tight connection between child prostitution on the one hand and child marriage and apprenticeship on the other. He asserted that the British government must, as it did in the case of cannibalism, ritual murder, and slave-dealing, criminalize child marriage and all forms of apprenticeship. He was canny in recognizing that the best means of securing the attention of both the colonial officers in Nigeria and the colonial office in London was by equating the gravity of child prostitution to such highly condemned practices as slave-dealing, ritual murder, and cannibalism.

Like most colonial administrators, Faulkner often demonstrated his ignorance of African customs. Not only did he think that marriage under Native law “does not require formal ceremony,” he also believed child hawking to be an old Yoruba custom.¹⁸⁵ Throughout the 1940s and 1950s he remained consistent on his view that parents should be blamed for the sexual insecurity of their children because they tended not to take good

¹⁸⁴ NAI, Comcol 1, 2786 Vol. II, “Report upon methods of training young offenders in Nigeria, 1951 by W. W. Llewellyn,” April 1951.

¹⁸⁵ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Donald Faulkner to the President of Lagos Town Council.”

care of them. According to him, “The Yoruba people are rather averse to bringing up their own children” because of the fear of “spoiling” them.¹⁸⁶

Without referencing any particular scientific finding, Faulkner occasionally made psychoanalytic comments about the disposition of child prostitutes toward men and marriage. Because they were “introduced to sex-relations before nature prepared them for it,” child prostitutes, Faulkner contended in one of his reports, grew up to hate men and the institution of marriage, “and so they spend their time getting as much as they can from any foolish men who allow themselves to get into their clutches.” The logical consequence of this was the presence of an army of unattached women and girls practicing prostitution, luring young girls into the trade, and increasing the activities of the *boma boys* and other classes of criminals christened by Police Commissioner King Commissioner of Police, as the “unsavoury fraternities.”¹⁸⁷ Faulkner’s understanding of the world of child prostitutes and his comments about their conduct or character shifted in accordance with the audience of his reports or the administrative/legal action he wanted the government to put in place. On several occasions, he perceived child prostitutes as hapless children who had to be rescued from the clutches of their criminal-minded madams/procurers. In other instances, he believed that “no pity is felt for the children introduced to this sordid business because they were themselves hardened at an early age. All the children we have seen express repugnance.”¹⁸⁸ In all, Faulkner portrayed child

¹⁸⁶ Faulkner, “Social Welfare and Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos.”

¹⁸⁷ NAI, Comcol 1, 43399, “The Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary to the Government: Employment of Women in the Police Force,” December 1, 1944.

¹⁸⁸ NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, “Child Welfare: Prostitution and Child Marriage,” 1943.

prostitutes both as criminals, and unfortunate victims who needed to be rehabilitated and prevented from becoming adult prostitutes and procurers.

Tradition or Modernization: Critiquing the CWO's theory of African Cultural Backwardness

How genuine was the Faulkner and Izzett's claim that the laxness of African culture was responsible for child prostitution? A major flaw in Faulkner and Izzett's report is the denial of the social, economic and political impact of colonial rule. It is a truism that children were trafficked to Lagos under the guise of betrothal and illegal guardianship and those child hawkers were frequently integrated into the prostitution network and sexually abused by men. What these colonial officers refused to acknowledge was that this development was accentuated by colonial rule, monetization and the introduction of a cash economy, which corrupted the various aspects of African culture targeted for criminalization by the CWO.

While the British could control the tempo and pattern of exploitation of Africans through the numerous taxation, economic, land and international trade ordinances, they did not have power over the concomitant impact of their activities on preexisting socio-cultural formations. The British made Lagos into a first class, colonial urban center, but neither anticipated the new forms of social and sexual behavior that would emerge nor invested adequately in the necessary education and labor programs to combat the undesirable consequences of urbanization. Contrary to what Faulkner and Izzett contended, I believe that African culture was not the problem, but the modern urban society of Lagos which could not effectively guarantee the security of the African child.

As a heterogeneous society, it did not possess the traditional pre-colonial machinery which not only protected the girl child but helped raise women as indispensable, productive, and respectable members of the community.

British officers rarely acknowledge that the very practice of child prostitution was a new development in Lagos and that in pre-colonial times, parents or guardians would not have allowed their unmarried female children to have sex with men for money or material gratification. The British realized that acknowledging the negative impact of colonial rule would undermine their “civilization” mission since crime and prostitution signified barbarism, not civility. They rarely openly acknowledged that the transformation and permutation of traditional marriage and child fostering practices inevitably paved the way for the access traffickers had to children employed as child hawkers and prostitutes. While European officers were obliged to learn about the traditional, precolonial system of government in order to effectively devise indirect rule system, they cared less about understanding the pre-colonial system of marriage and child fostering practices because these did not interfere directly with the ideology of domination. Put differently, while the CWO did not make use of any of the well-known anthropological works of the period produced by such “authorities” as G. T. Basden, T. A. Talbot, C. K. Meek, etc., political administrators such as the Commissioner of the Colony and residents and districts officers could not dispense with materials about the precolonial political system.¹⁸⁹ It was not until 1947 that the British began to fully investigate the impact of colonialism on traditional

¹⁸⁹ See among other, P. A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. II* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926) and G. T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1966).

marriage practices. But this development, which came on the heels of International Missionary Council and International African Institute, did not receive adequate administrative attention from officers who actually believed that African culture was a cog in the wheel of the ideal of “civilization” they were trying to impose.¹⁹⁰ Faulkner and Izzett were probably the most ignorant of Lagos administrators of the 1940s and 1950s. Their recommendation was bizarre. They wanted the entire country to abandon such culturally and economically significant practices as betrothal and child fostering because of the need to stamp out child prostitution in Lagos.

Based on my own interviews, it seems that Faulkner’s evidence was as overblown as his recommendations. Faulkner overstated the connection between traditional African culture and apprenticeship. Oral evidence suggests that people were aware of instances in which girls from Lagos were drafted into prostitution, but the incidence was not as high as the administrators painted it. In the first instances, the safety of girl hawkers was based primarily on the part of the city they plied their trade. According to Madam Kafila and many other women I interviewed, the likelihood that a girl hawker from Isale Eko will be lured into prostitution or sexually molested was almost zero. Oral evidence also suggests that Faulkner was wrong when he asserted that girl hawkers were sometimes made to hawk very early in the morning during the Ramadan festivals. Indeed, my informants mentioned both boys and girls did the early money trading with their parents and/or adult members of their family. Some did not hawk in the street but from houses to houses. In

¹⁹⁰ NAI, Comcol 1, 3236, “An Enquiry into African Marriage Custom as affected by contact with European Civilization,” 1947.

another connection, most girls move in groups, thus reducing the incidence of molestation or rape.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the establishment of welfare institutions in Nigeria was closely connected to danger illicit sexuality and juvenile criminality posed to the preservation of colonial hegemony. The treatment of juvenile delinquency was motivated not by the altruistic cause of raising future generations of law-abiding Nigerians, but because of the fear that young offenders could upturn the precariously held peace in Lagos urban domain during the WWII. It is also important to reiterate that colonial administrators did not see any difference between the activities of the *boma* boys and *jaguda* boys and prostitutes. For them, these groups of delinquent individuals could not survive without one another. Hence the war against prostitution was essentially an integral component of the fight to end the menace of the delinquent young men

The origin and activities of the CWO found purpose and relevance in the identification of Africans as backward individuals. Although this racial ideology and stereotype was the spine of colonial domination, the appearance of the CWO in late colonial Lagos and its critique of African culture for its laxness, especially its inability to protect the girl child from being trafficked for prostitution, further affirm the age old idea that Africa needs Western civilization and models in order to be civilized.

Chapter 4

Sexualizing Nationalism: Lagosians and the Politics of Sexual Control

Introduction

One would expect that the opposition to anti-prostitution legislation to come from men and women who derived their means of economic survival and social relevance from the patronage and consumption of sexual services. Surprisingly, African reformists who initially pressured the government to legislate against brothel keeping and public solicitation would be the most vocal antagonists of such laws once they were passed. This unexpected response proves that the laws against sex workers, male customers, *boma* and *jaguda* boys and other members of the prostitution sub-culture whose activities posed moral and medical danger to the larger population were themselves a danger to that population.

Africans only rejected those laws that they believed were poorly implemented or should not have been enacted in the first place. Reaction or response was also class and gender specific, based on the varying impact of the laws on their activities and interests. Ironically, as this chapter will show, most implemented laws had more negative impact on the general population than on the so-called undesirables which they were directed against. The laws meant to tame the activities of a “criminally-minded” segment of society had far-reaching—and often harmful—consequences on the larger society.

The failure of anti-prostitution laws was not due to lack of motivation on the colonial side; indeed, the British believed that these laws would ameliorate the threat of prostitution to imperial interests in Nigeria. Instead, the fallout against this legislation can best be explained through poor implementation and the thoughtlessness of the colonial masters and Africans entrusted with enforcing these laws. Instead of focusing on the prostitutes, the *boma and jaguda* boys and male solicitors of casual sex work, the Nigeria Police and its Anti-Vice Squad arrested men and women who were neither prostitutes, nor solicitors, nor even criminals. Police impersonation increased tremendously as the wave of corruption charges brought against “authentic” police soared.

Certainly not all of the failures here were due to simple administrative incompetence. In addition, the demographic impact of WWII, the depletion of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) due to war security requirements, and the reduction of government expenditure on public service, coupled with the general breakdown of law and order all hindered the execution of anti-prostitution laws. Also, beyond the enormous challenges inherent to nation-building, Africans themselves should be held accountable for the failure of some of these colonial projects that appeared beneficial. Some anti-prostitution laws failed not because they were not well drawn, but because they were poorly implemented and executed both by the British colonialist and some corrupt Africans such as NPF and educated elites like Lady Welfare Officer Ayodele Potts-Johnson of the CWO who took bribes from prostitutes and tacitly created opportunities for their activities to flourish. Ultimately, however, the British were at the helms of affairs, and the onus of the failure falls heavily on them.

Also in this chapter, we shall discuss how select components of African culture were deployed against colonial laws that threatened the traditional relevance and agency of the native authorities. Here I argue that Africans demonstrated a sort of conflicting nationalism in the ways they responded to various anti-prostitution legislations. I elaborate this using the proposed Native Authority Child Betrothal Ordinance (NACBO) and the ethnic associations' politics. Although scholars from James Coleman and Richard Sklar to Dmitri Van Bersselaar have studied the contributions of ethnic associations to African nationalism, they have neglected how prostitution was drafted into the politics of group identities, the protection of the cultural integrity of the homeland, and the politics of aliens versus indigenes.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1965); J.D. Barkan, M.L. McNulty and M.A.O. Ayeni, "Hometown voluntary associations, local development, and the emergence of civil society in Western Nigeria," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29, No. 3 (1991): 457-480; Immanuel Wallerstein, "Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa," in Pierre L. van den Berghe (ed.), *Africa: Social Problems of Change and Conflict* (San Francisco); Shirley G Ardener, "The Social and Economic Significance of the Contributions Club among a Section of the Southern Ibo. Annual Conference, West African Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan (1953); Suzanne, Comhaire-Sylvain, "Associations on the Basis of Origin in Lagos, Nigeria. *American Catholic Sociological Review* Vol. 11 (1950); E.P. Oyeaka Offodile, "Growth and Influence of Tribal Unions," *West African Review* vol. XVIII no. 239 (1947); Simon Ottenberg, "Improvement Associations among the Afikpo Iko," *Africa* XXV No.1 (1955); S. Okafor and R. Honey, "The Nature of Hometown Voluntary Associations in Nigeria," in R. Honey and S. Okafor, eds., *Hometown Associations: Indigenous Knowledge and Development in Nigeria* (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, London), 9-16; L. Trager, "The Hometown and Local Development: Creativity in the use of Hometown Linkages in Contemporary Nigeria," *Journal of Nigerian Public Administration and Management* 1 No. 2 (1992): 21-32; "Progressive Unions and the Competition for Community Development in Nigeria: A Study of the Ifon, Ilobu and Erin Progressive Unions, 1940-1970" *African Study Monographs* 29 No.2, (2008): 51-72; Kenneth Little, "The Role of Voluntary Associations in West African Urbanization," in Pierre L. Van den Berghe, *Africa: Social*

Contesting the Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance: The Nigerian Pharmaceutical Society, Nigerian Apothecary Society and the Legislative Council

The Nigerian Pharmaceutical Society (NPS) was the first group to react to the introduction and implementation of the Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance (UAO).¹⁹² In their petition, members of the NPS noted that their means of livelihood will be adversely affected with the introduction of the law. The government insisted that the law was meant to protect the people of Lagos against both the so-called aphrodisiac from Hamburg and the numerous quack doctors who professed to have solutions to all kinds of sexual disorders, ranging from VD to impotence.¹⁹³ When the NPS discovered that the government would not yield to their request that the UAO should not be passed, they demanded that the DMSS allow them time to dispose of literature that contains advertisements for the cure of VD. This request was granted when the government decided that the law should come into effect on January 1, 1933.¹⁹⁴

Problems of Change and Conflict (San Francisco, California: Chandler Publishing Company), 325-345; Dmitri van Den Bersselaar, "Imagining Home: Migration and the Igbo Village in Colonial Nigeria," *Journal of African History* 46 (2005): 51-73; Charles W. Abbott, "Hometown Associations and Ethnic Unions," in Toyin Falola, ed., *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 359-378; Austin Ahanotu, "The Role of Ethnic Unions in the Development of Southern Nigeria: 1916-66," in Boniface I. Obichere, ed., *Studies in Southern Nigerian History* (London: Frank Cass, 1982); Kenneth L. Little, *West African Urbanization: A Study of Voluntary Associations in Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965)

¹⁹² NAI, MH 54 Vol. I, "The Nigerian Pharmaceutical Society to the Honourable Director of Medical and Sanitary Service," June 1, 1932.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ NAI, MH 54 Vol. I, "The Chief Secretary to the Government to the Director of the Medical and Sanitary Service," June 11, 1932.

The most comprehensive petition against the UAO was prepared by the Nigerian Apothecary Society (NAS). Under the Poisons and Pharmacy Ordinance, the semi-educated men who belonged to the NAS were permitted to “mix, compound, prepare, dispense and sell drugs.”¹⁹⁵ They were “quasi” medical practitioners who advised and recommend Western medicines for the treatment of various illnesses. Because their charges were moderate, they enjoined adequate patronage from middle-class, educated Lagosians who could not afford the charges of government hospitals and highly professional, UK-trained private medical practitioners, and did not have access to, or disliked the “uncivilized” traditional native remedies.¹⁹⁶ In the NAS’s petition dated May 30 and signed by five representatives (namely, C. Ayo Savage, A. Babatunde King, V. Ayo Taiwo, Fred. Mobolaji Benson and J.O. Akin Allen), the group lamented that the law forbidding the advertisement of drugs would affect their profits. They argued that all medicines or drug carried an advertisement label plainly displayed on the bottle or container. Also, most drugs, whether prepared locally or imported, contained a small leaflet with directions. The law as critically dissected by the NAS did not legislate against the preparation of VD medicine.¹⁹⁷ What was criminalized was advertisement of the preparations. The NAS apparently saw a contradiction: how would one prepare a medicine without advertising it or providing direction for use? In their view, the law was tactically designed to force members of the NAS and local African doctors out of

¹⁹⁵ NAI, MH 54 vol.I, “The Nigerian Apothecary Society to the Director of Medical and Sanitary Service,” May 30, 1932.

¹⁹⁶ Successful druggist like the famous Alabukun had a regular slot in the Lagos dailies like the Nigerian Daily Times.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

business. It is important to note that a single VD drug rarely existed. And as we have seen in preceding chapters, it was not unusual for a single preparation to be used in curing about a dozen of diseases ranging from malaria and typhoid, to syphilis, leprosy and even constipation.

While not challenging the government's stance on the ubiquity of literature on the cure of VD and the danger it could pose to medical well-being of Lagosians, the NAS came up with an idea. They wanted the government to declare that all literature and advertisement for drugs be distributed through them. "In the interest of trade," they asserted, "we are of the opinion that it is only fair for the government to allow the circulation through the proper channel only, namely, the Chemists and Druggists and selling Dispensers and their Agents."¹⁹⁸ This proposal, while preserving the economic interest of the NAS, would have constituted them into another arm of social control (not incidentally, it would have also given the NAS economic leverage against recalcitrant non-members). The government declined this proposal insisting that it reserved the sole right to ensure that its subjects were protected from "dangerous" medicines.

The UAO was never debated at the Legislative Council which had three African members from Lagos. Even if it had been debated, the three African members would have probably agreed with the DMSS that a law was needed to prevent the circulation of literature about "vouted" cures for VD among Nigerian school children. They would have also agreed with the DMSS that the promiscuous advertisement of VD drugs by fake African doctors and the so-called druggists in the Lagos newspapers was dangerous.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

But probably under pressure from the native doctors, the NAS and the NPS, African members of the Legislative Council began to ask questions about the extent of VD pandemic which the law was aimed at curtailing in October 1934 – more than a year after it came into effect. C.C. Adeniyi-Jones, a physician who trained both at the Universities of Durham and Dublin¹⁹⁹, asked the DMSS to provide answers to the following questions:

- (a) To ask whether Government will give an indication of the incidence of venereal disease, and their effects, in the sea-ports towns of Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Calabar for the ten years ended December 1933;
- (b) A comparison with that of the previous ten years;
- (c) If the comparison suggests an increasing prevalence of the complaint, what measures are in operation to arrest its spread and alleviate its effects?²⁰⁰

In his response, the DMSS claimed that because VD is not a notifiable disease, it was difficult to exactly access the extent of the “pandemic.” He defended the efficacy of the Western remedies by claiming that the increase in hospital attendance indicated “the

¹⁹⁹ See, S. O. Arifalo and Olukoya Ogen, C.C. Adeniyi-Jones, 1876-1957: A ‘Forgotten National Hero,’ *AMU: Akungba Journal of the Humanities* 1, 1 (2005), 1-5.

²⁰⁰ NAI, MH 54 Vol. I, “C.C. Adeniyi-Jones to the Legislative Council,” May 22, 1934.

spread of knowledge amongst the population that a cure is obtainable.”²⁰¹ He also asserted that there was “no evidence that venereal diseases have increased in prevalence during the past ten years.”²⁰² He gave an account of other procedures taken to reduce the incidence of VD among Africans, including free treatment to children infected with VD and public lectures and film screening for adult women and men. According to him, the only VD clinic in Nigeria was established on the Apapa Wharf “specifically for the benefit of the seamen.”²⁰³

Probably not convinced that the present arrangement was adequate for dealing with the incidence of VD among Africans, and worried that only the European seamen had a VD clinic, Adeniyi-Jones composed another query, suggesting the establishment of a VD clinic at the African Hospital in Lagos Island.²⁰⁴ The DMSS replied that one section of the Out-patient department at the African Hospital was already planned for conversion to an evening venereal disease clinic and “will be opened shortly if funds can be found.”²⁰⁵ In the end, the DMSS neither sought money to establish another VD clinic nor embarked on the immediate establishment of VD clinic in the African Hospital.

The Legislative Council seemed satisfied with the DMSS response and we may never know why they did not probe further into the obvious discrimination against Africans in the treatment of VD and the usefulness of a law that affected the livelihood of

²⁰¹ NAI, MH 54 Vol. I, “The Director of Medical and Sanitary Service to the Legislative Council,” May 23, 1943.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ NAI, MH 54 Vol. I, “C.C. Adeniyi-Jones to the Director of Medical and Sanitary Service,” October 10, 1934.

²⁰⁵ NAI, MH 54 Vol. I, “The Director of Medical and Sanitary Service to the Legislative Council,” October 11, 1934.

the NAS and NPS and the African native doctors. However, one could theorize about what might have happened at the Legislative Council by examining the general disposition of legislators and administrators to new laws. In the first place, the UAO did not require additional funding. It did not require the establishment of VD clinic or the increased allotment of money for treating VD. It only added more items to the list of commodities custom officers were expected to prevent from entering the country. It neither required a new class of law enforcement agency, nor did it radically alter the existing procedures for enforcing law and order. In general, colonial administrators and Africans tended to accommodate laws that did not have adverse implications for the colonial treasury or the general colonial bureaucracy.

How effective was the UAO in reducing the patronage of quack VD medicine and preventing the importation of aphrodisiacs from Germany? In the first place, the control of the sale of the aphrodisiac and its literature was successful, going by the report of DMSS which also stated that customs seized a large consignment of imported drugs manufactured by E. J. Jones and Co.²⁰⁶ Replying on the report produced by on-the-field sanitary officers, he claimed, that the circulation of aphrodisiac literature had been reduced. Some newspapers, like *The Lagos Daily News*, stopped the advertisement when the draft of UAO was made known to the public in March of 1932, while others, like *The Daily Telegraph*, did not stop carrying VD adverts until November of 1932, barely a

²⁰⁶ NAI, Report on Aphrodisiac,” by the DMSS June 1933.

month before the law came into effect.²⁰⁷ Throughout the 1930s, Lagos newspapers continued to comply with the UAO.

It would appear that the UAO had more impact on the NAS and NPS than on the native doctors. While the former depended on newspapers and pamphlets for the advertisement of their drugs, the latter rarely advertised their profession. At the annual general meeting of the NAS in August 1933, the members lamented a sharp drop in the sales of medicine and pharmaceutical drugs. While it is obvious that the UAO financially harmed the NAS, the law's impact on native doctors, who did not protest against it, is less clear.

Venereal Disease Ordinance: Sexuality and the Politics of Evasion

If the UAO had a limited impact on the lives of Lagosians, but more on a small group of people who depended on the media and public advertisement for sale of VD drugs, the Venereal Disease Ordinance (VDO) of 1943 was largely structured to deal with the menace of VD among the general Lagos population. While the government saw the VD problem as essentially a security concern, Lagos elite believed that VD was a matter of national development as a *Daily Service* editorial of June 24, 1942 and several other editorials following maintained:

From the foregoing, our readers would readily understand how distressingly serious is the incidence of venereal disease in this country

²⁰⁷ NAI, MH 54, "Compliance with the UAO."

today. We do not think we need emphasise the paralyzing and destructive effect of venereal disease on the national growth to bring home to all the extreme gravity of the situation. Venereal disease more than any other malady precedes virile, robust and radiant manhood, without which no nation can hope to achieve great things and command the respect of its neighbours. It is therefore a national danger of more serious type against which we cannot be too vigilant.²⁰⁸

Other Lagos newspapers gave the VDO wide publicity immediately once it was announced.²⁰⁹ The editorial of *West African Pilot* of November 5, 1943 believed the VDO “will be marked as one of the most farsighted enactment[s] of the Bourdillon administration.”²¹⁰ The editorial shared the government sentiment that prostitutes were the main purveyors of VD:

We wonder if it could not have been more sensible to attempt to rehabilitate this class of women, by first ensuring that they had the requisite attributes to enable them to conduct themselves in decent society. One of this [sic] requisite attributes which they lack is health. We can reclaim them by applying the V.D. Ordinance. Government should consider this.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ The Daily Service, “The VD Menace,” May 19, 1945.

²⁰⁹ West African Pilot, “Hotel Girls Suffering from VD will be affected by new bill” March 9, 1943.

²¹⁰ West African Pilot, “The V.D. Ordinance, 1943,” November 5, 1943.

²¹¹ Ibid.

Other editorialists shared this optimistic view of the VDO and anxiously agitated for its broad enforcement. Such columnists were not the first to suggest mass “quarantining” of “undesirable” women – military authorities (as we have seen in chapter one) had asked the government to do this for years. This “mass quarantining” request would have involved arresting and forcefully subjecting women to compulsory medical screening. One likely reason that the government did not adopt this policy was that it could generate condemnation by the elite women who had persistently complained about indiscriminate arrest of people for breaking anti-prostitution laws. In another vein, the government did not have the resources to implement such a policy during WWII, especially since other VD-oriented policies, such as offering free medical treatment to soldiers who had VD and discontinuing the policy of “no work, no pay”, seemed effective. The reduction of VD among the military, as I have persistently reiterated, was more important than among general African population.

Like the CYPO, full implementation of the VD was not carried out until the end of WWII, when the government felt it had the resources to establish a VD clinic for Lagosians and when the menace of VD took on another “devastating” dimension. Colonialists and Africans alike feared that the demobilization of soldiers serving in Nigeria and overseas would spread VD among the general population. In December 1944, Major Willcox, a highly respected military doctor, foresaw this impending danger and demanded that “arrangement should be made with the military that all soldiers before

being discharged from the Army and returned to their villages should be certified free from Venereal Disease.”²¹²

But as brilliant as the idea of the VD clinic was, it did not produce the required outcome because of institutionalized stereotypes toward victims of VD. The government and the Lagos elite believed that only sexually undisciplined men and prostitutes suffered from VD. In a public lecture by Dr. Kofoworola Abayomi, a prominent physician and member of the Nigerian Youth Movement, entitled, “Venereal Disease as a Social Problem” the physician stated categorically that “the sowers of VD were prostitutes.”²¹³ Dr. A.B.I Olurun-nimbe, a University of Glasgow-trained physician who would later become the first Mayor of Lagos,²¹⁴ also pointed at the “evil effects of venereal disease resulting from prostitution.”²¹⁵

Victims of VD basically refused to attend the VD clinic despite the fact that VD was a notifiable disease and treatment was free. The government did not subscribe to the proposal by the RWAFF and African elites that all women leaving around military barracks and bases be forcefully subjected to VD screening. Hence, attendance at the clinic was basically discretionary. As Table 1 shows, the attendance for the VD clinic located at Lagos Island does not correspond with the alleged gravity of VD among the

²¹² NAI, MH (FED) 1/1 6280), “Notes on the V.D Problem in West Africa by Major Willcox, Specialist in Venereology, General Hospital, Accra, Gold Coast,” December 27, 1944.

²¹³ The Daily Service, “Venereal Disease as a Social Problem,” by Dr. K. Abayomi, March 27, 1945.

²¹⁴ A. Oyewole, *Historical Dictionary of Nigeria* (Metuchen, NJ/London: The Scarecrow Press, 1987), 265.

²¹⁵ The Daily Service, August 10, 1944.

general population of 143,280 males and 124,127 females.²¹⁶ Several factors explain the low attendance at the VD clinic. First, Lagosians did not want to be labeled as prostitutes or their customers since the general wisdom was that prostitution gave the disease. Most of the in- and out- patients of the Ikeja VD clinic were demobilized soldiers who continued to receive free medical service throughout the 1950s.²¹⁷ Because the demobilized soldiers were mostly from the provinces (especially the Northern Province), this relative anonymity protected their identities and reduced the stigma of being a VD patient. The fact that more men than women attended the VD clinic points to the former were most likely to accommodate the stereotype associated with VD than the latter.

Males	Females	Month/Year
303	54	01/1950
277	35	02/1950
255	80	03/1950
210	142	04/1950
216	128	05/1950
203	63	06/1950
209	43	07/1950
233	46	08/1950
214	36	09/1950

²¹⁶ This figure is based on 1952 population census. See Akin L. Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1965), 293.

²¹⁷ Oral interview, Mr Fatai Adesola, Lagos, June 21, 2008.

244	38	10/1950
221	34	11/1950
299	38	12/1950
310	42	01/1951
327	52	02/1951
399	63	03/1951
447	80	04/1951
486	81	05/1951

Table IV: Source: NAI, 5852A 1/1,” Venereal Disease Treatment at V.D Clinic Lagos Return Cases, 1945-1951.

Another deterrent for prospective patients was the misinterpretation of certain sections of the VDO. For instance, there was a rumor that VD clinic patients would be arrested after completing their treatment. Oral history of Lagos corroborates this well-circulated rumor which originated from “public”/“unprofessional” misinterpretation of section 3 the VDO. According to this section, the “qualified medical practitioner” was empowered to notify the police if a patient refused to comply with doctor’s directives or did not complete treatment. Lagosians generally interpreted this section to mean that all patients would be arrested after their treatment. Section II was also misinterpreted. This section stated that employers should not employ known victims of VD in tasks that required contact with or handing of food. This section was generally misinterpreted to mean that VD patients would lose their jobs. But misinterpretation of the law should not

be blamed on the Lagosians. As we shall see, WWII was characterized by enormous breakdown of public order and poor implementation of anti-prostitution laws. Lagosians basically saw the VD clinic as one of those anti-prostitution laws which punished “responsible” citizens while sparing the “undesirables.”

The popularity of native treatments which guaranteed anonymity of patients continued to grow in spite of the availability of the VD clinics.²¹⁸ Indeed, VD was euphemistically called *arun gbajumo*, meaning the disease of the socialites. This helped in no small way to lessen the stigma associated with the disease.²¹⁹ While the African alternative guaranteed anonymity of patients, the government VD clinics collected and kept full information about social and sexual history, which patients were traditionally reluctant to give.²²⁰ The admission form for both in- and outpatients contained such fields as marital status, occupation, number of past and present sex partners and so on.²²¹ Military doctors like Dr. Taylor who manned the Ikeja clinic were quick to realize that new patients were reluctant to give information that could help him devise appropriate treatment. He believed that the low attendance in the clinic owed largely to the past sexual history collected and the stigma associated with the process of treatment.²²² In his correspondence to DMSS, he suggested that the government just treat patients without keeping records of attendees and their past sexual history.²²³ In his response, the DMSS

²¹⁸ NAI, MH (Fed) 1/1, “Annual Report of the DMSS,” 1943/1944.

²¹⁹ Oral interview, Mrs Adesola Aransiola, Lagos, June 16, 2008.

²²⁰ NAI, 5852A 1/1, “Venereal Disease Treatment at V.D Clinic Lagos: Monthly Return Cases,” 1945-1951.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² NAI, MH (Fed) 1/1, “Monthly Report by Dr Taylor,” June 1946.

²²³ NAI, MH (Fed) 1/1, “Dr. Tylor to the DMSS,” June 2, 1946.

noted that medical records are an integral component of modern medical practices.

Without records, the medical service cannot apply for funds from the Colonial

Development scheme which financed the VD clinic.²²⁴

Dr. Freshwater, who stood in at Ikeja while Dr. Taylor was posted to Ibadan, also complained about inadequate equipment at the clinic and its entire relevance:

In addition there have never been more than five attendances per week since the clinic was opened. It would thus appear that it is a complete and utter waste of Dr. Taylor's time and petrol to attend this clinic twice or even once a week. Again I would strongly advise that this clinic be closed.²²⁵

The DMSS did not yield to this request, claiming that demobilized soldiers needed the clinic for medical certification before reuniting with their families.²²⁶

The Lagos Press: Racism, Anti-Prostitution Laws and Decriminalization Debates

As we have seen in chapter two the UGPO was enacted in 1941 for the purpose of protecting European seamen, soldiers and visitors in general, who were believed to be

²²⁴ NAI, MH (Fed) 1/1, "Tylor to the DMSS," July 1946.

²²⁵ NAI, MH (Fed) 1/1- 6304, "Dr. Freshwater to the Senior Medical Officer," April 27, 1946.

²²⁶ NAI, MH (Fed) 1/1 – 6304, "Director of Medical Services to Dr. Freshwater," May 4, 1946

easy prey of *boma* boys and prostitutes. The only sections of this law which negatively impacted the Lagosians included sections 6 and 11 which punished loitering and “wandering in any public way and behaving riotously or indecently.”²²⁷ While section 6 was directed largely at the *boma* and *jaguda boys*, section 11, which also criminalized “loitering and persistently importuning or soliciting tourists for the purpose of prostitution,” was clearly directed at prostitutes.²²⁸

Lagos elites, especially lawyers like F. R. A. Williams, a highly regarded barrister who would later become the first Senior Advocate of Nigeria, were aware of the racially discriminatory nature of this law.²²⁹ They knew the law was enacted primarily for protecting European tourists, soldiers, seamen and occasional visitors. But they felt that Africans would also benefit from its implementation since the *boma* boys and prostitutes were common enemies of both African and British reformists.

However, things took a different turn by 1944 when Lagosian discovered that the “Anti-Vice Squad” known among Lagos taxi drivers as *Onlotinrin* (a Yorubalized word meaning loitering) were fraudulently accusing and prosecuting innocent people of loitering.²³⁰ In an article entitled “Is Everyone Equal before the Law?”, Williams gave a brief history of the UGPO and blamed the police for unjustly arresting and prosecuting

²²⁷ Unlicensed Guide (Prohibition) Ordinance, 1941, *Annual volume of the Laws of Nigeria Containing all information enacted in the year 1941* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1942), A. 146; and A148.

²²⁸ Ibid., A148.

²²⁹ For more information on Williams, see, Taiwo Fakoyede, ed., *F.R.A. Williams through the Cases* (Lagos: Longman, 2000). See among others The Daily Service, “Is Everybody Equal Before the Law by FRA Williams,” November 14, 1944; and The Daily Service, “Editorial: Loitering,” November 13, 1944.

²³⁰ Oral interview, Mr. Buraimo Adekunle, Lagos, June 22, 2008. There is also a reference to this word in Ibid.

innocent people. According to him, “So many of the prosecutions really ought not to have been brought at all and they do nobody any good except to add to the work of the already overworked magistrate.”²³¹ At the monthly meeting between the Chiefs of Lagos and the COC, the Onikoyi of Lagos narrated how his son was arrested for loitering while running an errand.²³² A “middle aged and educated” member of the Nigerian Women’s Party was arrested for loitering while preparing a coal pot in front of her room. The woman was later released after tipping the police officer.²³³

Prominent lawyers and politicians like Williams and the chiefs were not the only elite that saw the contradiction in the implementation of the loitering law. Even judges like E. J. Alex Taylor, according to Williams, felt that some people brought before them were not supposed to be arrested, much less prosecuted.²³⁴ In a similar vein, “a well known law clerk” narrated how a magistrate dismissed offences of loitering against two men and girls.²³⁵ According to another law clerk, the average number of loitering cases tried daily in each magistrate court was between 15 and 20.²³⁶ It seems it was not too difficult for the judges to dismiss a charge, provided that people unscrupulously arrested could provide evidence that they were not of questionable character and had a “legitimate means of livelihood.” Such evidence could include membership of reputable association (as seen in the case of a member of the Nigerian Women’s Party who would have been

²³¹ Ibid. 1.

²³² NAI, Comcol 2043, “Extract of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Oba and Chiefs with the COC at Iga Idunganran on Monday, November 6, 1945.”

²³³ The Daily Service, “Women’s Party Meets Police Officer,” December 18, 1944.

²³⁴ The Daily Service, “Is Everybody Equal Before the Law.”

²³⁵ The Daily Service, “Cases of Loitering at the Police Court,” November 16, 1944.

²³⁶ The Daily Service, “Police Criticized on Loitering,” November 15, 1944.

acquitted by the judge if she had been arraigned), membership of an elite family (as in the case of the son of Onikoyi) and evidence of gainful employment (such as a Lagos Town Council employee arrested on his way home from Victorian Beach).²³⁷

Lagos newspapers heavily criticized the injustice meted on “law-abiding” citizens by the NPF and the anti-Vice Squad, and their ineptitude in dealing with the real enemies of the Lagosians –prostitutes and *boma* boys.²³⁸ A newspaper editorial captured the extent of the susceptibility of Lagosians to indiscriminate arrest:

A casual walk at any hour of the day along such places as Marina and Tibubu Square may lead one into the clutch of a policeman, who might, to all intent and purposes look like any personage between a Roman Catholic priest in his snow-white Soutans and an aristocratic northerner in flowing gown and turban.²³⁹

It was rumored that some citizens used the law to settle personal scores with their detractors. In an editorial entitled “Oppression or Protection,” the Daily Service claiming that some “undesirable youngmen [sic]” encouraged the police to arrest innocent women and charge them with prostitution. The editorial stated, “It is the actual loiters who play

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ See the following stories and several other citations in this chapter: The Daily Service, “The Law of Loitering by Civis!” December 27, 1944; “The Police as Prosecutors by Ade Tee,” February 4, 1943; “The Police has got it: Editorial,” April 8, 1947; “C of Police asks rudeness of police to be reported,” March 24, 1943. See among others the following stories in The Comet, “Smoke Out the Prostitutes,” June 24, 1944; “Re: Irresponsible Women,” July 31, 1944.

²³⁹ The Daily Service, “Are all Idlers and Loiters,?” August 5, 1944.

the part of a police informant.”²⁴⁰ The editorial further admonished the police to conduct their investigations above board and not to rely on information gathered from people of “questionable character.”²⁴¹

This evidence is consistent with the oral history I collected. Madam Ndukka narrated how women were frequently arrested by “police in plain” clothes for mischievous accusations ranging from illegal guardianship to brothel keeping. Jealous landlords or ex- lovers used the police to intimidate women. However, few of these arrests led to prosecution because the “accused” could easily secure “bail” on the spot by bribing the “police”. Women were highly prone to give bribes to avoid being labeled as prostitutes. This largely explains why they were easy targets of both the authentic and fake police.

Police impersonation was not unusual and the increasing wave of corruption charges reduced public confidence in the police’s ability to discharge their duties judiciously and without bias.²⁴² On November 21, 1944, Jonathan Robinson, a Gambian national with 9 previous convictions was sentenced to 2 years in prison for impersonating the “loitering police” when he arrested Lasisi Aremu, an apprentice bus conductor.²⁴³ Not only was the rank and file of the police force depleted due to war-time emergencies, police impersonation went to the extent that Lagosians seemed not to know who was in

²⁴⁰ The Daily Service, “Oppression or Protection,” November 14, 1944.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² See the following newspaper stories from The Nigerian Daily Times: “Sergeant and Police on Corruption Charge,” March 4, 1943, 1; “Regular and Special constable on Corruption charge,” January 15 1943; and “Police Constable Charged with Recurring Bribe,” February 13, 1941.

²⁴³ The Daily Service, November 21, 1944.

charge of protecting lives and property.²⁴⁴ Private security outfits/ guides variously called “vigilantes” and “irregular force,” and body/personal guards of chiefs, including those of Oba of Lagos whose uniforms resembled those of the NPF, were frequently accused of impersonating the authentic police.

The most controversial irregular police was the “Ashogbon Police Force” which derived its name from Chief Ashogbon of Lagos. This vigilante squad came into existence in 1941 when the NPF and some Lagos Chieftaincy Houses, including Bajalu, Ashesi, Bajulaiye, Oshodi, Ipori and others, discovered that more involuntary and non-institutionalized arrangements were required to deal with the increasing wave of robbery in Lagos.²⁴⁵ Although the government had supported the existence of this “irregular” police force during the exceptionally insecure war years, the Ashogbon police seemed to have outlived its importance by 1946, especially in the wake of complaints about their excesses which included assaults on “innocent citizens.”²⁴⁶

This situation prompted JGC Allen, the Acting Commissioner of the Colony to declare that although he did not object to the customary night guard, he would “not tolerate the existence of any force which is likely to be confused in any way with the official police.”²⁴⁷ Less than two weeks after this declaration, Allen gave a public release outlawing the Ashogbon Police and all private security outfits/vigilantes, including those

²⁴⁴ The Daily Service, “2 Police Constable face Charge of official Corruption,” June 2, 1943; and “Special Constable Egbe who received 2/- bribe is Sentenced to 3 months April 2,” 1943.

²⁴⁵ NAI, Comcol 2498, “Office of the Assistant Superintendent Colony “A” Division to the Superintendent, the Nigeria Police, Colony.”

²⁴⁶ Editorial--August 6, 1946 “Ashogbon’s Police Force.

²⁴⁷ NAI, Comcol 1, 2498, “J.G.C. Allen to Superintendent of Police,” August 7, 1946.

of the Oba of Lagos.²⁴⁸ Although Allen's order was lauded by the Lagos press,²⁴⁹ it did not stop the privatization of security in Lagos -- vigilantes or night guards continued to exist throughout the 1940s and 1950s.²⁵⁰ For Allen, the refusal to comply with the government order was an indication that "these young hooligans [the Ashogbon police and vigilantes in general] had been making a good thing out of it for years, while the chief himself [Chief Ashogbon] must have had a very good idea of what was going on."²⁵¹

There was also a racial dimension to the entire crisis. Lagosians did not understand why Europeans who broke anti-prostitution laws should not be prosecuted, while African men and women continued to be unjustly punished under the UGPO. This discrimination added another dimension to the unprecedented wave of nationalist agitation against prejudice and color bar in promotion and employment in government service, as well as in clubs and restaurants.²⁵² Although the history of racial discrimination in colonial Lagos dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century, it reached a high point during the 1940s.

²⁴⁸ NAI, Comcol 1, 2498, "Ashogbon Police: Press Release," August 16, 1946.

²⁴⁹ The Nigerian Daily Times, "Ashogbon Police: Statement of Commissioner of the Colony," August 19, 1946; The Daily Comet, "Allen Says Only Nigeria Police is Genuine," August 19, 1946; The Daily Service, "Ashogbon Police Force is Virtually Disbanded: Colony Commissioner Says they have no authority to arrest," August 19, 1946; West African Pilot, "Public now warned about mock 'police,'" August 19, 1946.

²⁵⁰ The Nigerian Daily Times, "End of Case against 'Ashogbon Police': First and Third Accused Found Guilty and Sentenced," September 24, 1946.

²⁵¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 2498, "Notes on the Ashogbon," August 7, 1946.

²⁵² I found a useful file in the National Archives Ibadan about this subject. See, NAI, Comcol 1, 2900, "Colour Problem." Discrimination even extended to the rationing of beer during the WWII. See The Daily Service, "English Beer in Lagos," November 18, 1944.

During the war, many Lagosians began to feel that the “big guns”, as European soldiers and sailors were frequently called, facilitated prostitution and hence should be repatriated from Lagos like the prostitutes.²⁵³ A *Daily Service* editorial under the heading “Law and Prostitution” not only called for the prosecution of Europeans consumers of sex work, but redefined prostitution in an unusual and less popular manner:

Equity is the essence of law. Those who commit the same offence under the same circumstances should be made to suffer the same penalty. We do not feel the law against prostitution is altogether fair to women in that it appears, in its application to shelter one groups of offenders while it gives to the other all the punishment it justly deserves.

Women found wandering about especially at night with European visitors, now so common in Lagos, are arrested by the police and charged for an offence. It takes two to strike an immoral bargain. We wonder why the women are invariably punished and the men are allowed to go free. We do not remember a case in which one of the amorous globe trotters [European seamen and soldiers] has ever been held up for paying visits to the Red Light Street. This is unfair to the hostesses of the romantic visitors.

²⁵³ The *Daily Service*, “Social Evil of the Big Guns by T. Babs F. Opayemi,” September 29, 1944. On similar story in the East see, *Eastern Nigerian Guardian*, “Hotel Girls Complain they are being pestered by some big gun Patrons,” June 9, 1944; *West African Pilot*, “Those Demoralizing Night Clubs,” January 28, 1948.

Law is no respecter of persons. Both men and women commit practically the same offence, excepting it could of course be proved that the latter impose themselves on the former. If both are guilty of the same offence, why should one party be dragged to court and the other unscathed? The law must be fair to all. We detest prostitution no less in men than in women. Let the law apply its punitive measure to all prostitutes irrespective of race and sex.²⁵⁴

Although European seamen and soldiers were occasionally tried and convicted for cases ranging from theft to physical assault on Africans, they were not arrested or tried for breaking anti-prostitution laws.²⁵⁵ The general idea among colonial administrators was that there was nothing they could do to prevent seamen from patronizing prostitutes, as this was a world-wide problem. What the Port Welfare Committee sought to do and did was establish VD clinics for seamen and reduce the contact they had with prostitutes by policing both prostitutes and *boma* boys through such laws as the UGPO.²⁵⁶ Race in other words defined expectation.

²⁵⁴ The Daily Service, "Law and Prostitution – Editorial," March 14, 1945.

²⁵⁵ See the following newspaper stories from the The Daily Service: "European Seaman Pleads Guilty to Possessing 3 Bottles of illicit gin," November 11, 1941; European sailor gets £4 fine for Assaulting Police Constable November 27, 1941; "Seaman is fined 50/- for receiving money (20/-) under false Pretences," June 3, 1941; and "European Army Man gets four months for willful damage and stoning Africans," February 14, 1947. See the following stories from West African Pilot: "European Police Officer is fined £5 for Traffic Offence," January 9, 1939; "Court Orders Italian to pay £50 for assault on Africans," March 28, 1939; "European is fined £10 for obstructing a police officer," May 3, 1939.

²⁵⁶ NAI, Comcol, "Seamen Condition of Service" 1943.

Legalization of prostitution and regulation of night-life were among the hotly debated issues of 1940s and 1950s. Proponents of legalization would formally recognize prostitution as a legitimate profession, decriminalize associated activities such as loitering and public soliciting, confine it to some regimented areas and guarantee police security for prostitutes and their clients. In turn, prostitutes would pay taxes and conduct themselves in an orderly fashion. Not all moralists defined legalization in strictly medical and public security terms. Critics of child prostitution such as Oged Macaulay (the son of Herbert Macaulay the founding father of Nigerian Nationalism) called for the introduction of licensed “private or public brothels.” These critics felt such licenses would allow police to monitor the activities of procurers who criminally lured female juveniles into prostitution.²⁵⁷

It is important to stress that Lagosians’ idea of legalization of prostitution is different from the RWAFF. While the RWAFF’s proposal was seen as a solution to VD among the African rank and file and as an imperial security issue, Lagosians viewed it from the perspective of public order and health. Nonetheless, it is misleading to think that the protagonists of decriminalization were strictly altruistic. Some may have thought that decriminalization would give them better access to casual sex work and protection from *boma* boys who often made male solicitors feel insecure and dubious. A contributor who identified himself as a “soldier” opposed the repatriation of prostitutes: “If they are all sent back to their respective towns, men would have no ladies to dance with in halls.” His second point sounds very candid: “Young men who are yet to marry cannot do without

²⁵⁷ The Daily Comet, “Oged Macaulay Suggests Licensing of Prostitution,” November 30, 1944.

prostitutes.” Advocates of decriminalization believed that it is one of the numerous social problems that the government cannot solve. They pointed to the growing number of single men and women flocking to Lagos for economic opportunities and the effect of this immigration on social and sexual relations. Prostitution was considered as inevitable as long as places of socialization continued to increase and presence of the military and seamen continued.

Reacting to the suggestion of Sergeant Chuks Jian, a Nigerian soldier serving in India who recommended that prostitution should be legalized because it is natural and hence, ineradicable,²⁵⁸ Olu Adeyemi lamented that the belief that prostitution should be legalized because it is natural is “sheer absurdity.” In an inductive and laughable manner, he asserts, “Tomorrow, a notorious pick-pocket might come forward and ask that since the Police failed to wipe out pick pocketing completely it must become a legalized trade in the country.”²⁵⁹ The analogy between prostitution and robbery was widely accepted. And as we have seen, Lagosians and British colonialists considered “light” and violent crime perpetrated by men (the *boma* boys) and prostitution to be birds of a feather. When a contributor wrote to the editor of *Daily Service* supporting legalization of prostitution, the editor not only refused to publish it but composed an editorial that adequately represented the Lagos elites’ stance on this controversial issue:

We are shocked by a letter addressed to us by a correspondent appealing to the Government to legalize prostitution.” Should we grant license to rogues and housebreakers in the ground that stealing is one of the oldest

²⁵⁸ (The Daily Service, July 4 1944.

²⁵⁹ The Daily Service, “Prostitution in Nigeria by Olu Adeyemi,” July 10, 1944.

and most stubborn evils mankind has ever been called upon to battle...Rationalization of evil can only lead to its perpetration. Can any government worth its salt, whose duty it is to uphold the moral standard of the people under its control condone, encourage, or legalize an evil the ultimate result of which would be disastrous [sic] to the progress of same people? If prostitution cannot be wholly exterminated in Nigeria, it can be considerably reduced with the introduction of a new industrial policy broad and generous enough to accord to womanhood the position befitting it.²⁶⁰

The editorial considered the call for legalization as a foreign import. “We warn our youth” the editorial asserts, “against the importation into this country of a system which has nothing but pernicious effects on the country where it is in practice.”²⁶¹

Some argued that in “civilized” societies, nightclubs provided the avenues for showcasing the history and culture through music, food and dance. To ensure that Lagos nightclubs performed a function akin to those of the “civilized societies”, nightclubs should operate under the close eyes of the police and “well-meaning” Nigerians. A proposed nightclub law should “compel every nightclub to close at midnight, prohibit nightclubs on Sundays, bar unescorted women from nightclubs and critically assess the social reputation of a would-be nightclub proprietor.”²⁶²

²⁶⁰ The Daily Service, “Prostitution: the Editorial” December 1, 1944.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² West African Pilot, “Nigeria Wants Night Club Reforms,” February 4, 1948.

Hanging in the middle is another group which did not call for the decriminalization of prostitution but felt that the repatriation was not the best means of dealing with prostitution. These contributors, who believed that men who patronized prostitutes should also be repatriated, believed that repatriation would inadvertently introduce prostitution to other regions of the country.²⁶³ They implicated repatriation in the spread of VD as prostitutes moved from one part of the country to another.

In the absence of polls, it is difficult to measure the extent of support for or against the legalization of prostitution. Our knowledge of the issue is determined largely by the ideology of the editors of the various nationalist newspapers and the access they granted to protagonists and antagonists of decriminalizing prostitution. For instance, the *Daily Service* was definitely conservative and opposed decriminalization. This posture is reflected in the writings of S. L. A. Akintola, editor of the *Daily Service* between 1943 and 1946, who would later become the Premier of Western Region and one of the victims of Nigeria's first military coup in 1966.²⁶⁴ Akintola occasionally used his column "My Note" and public lectures to register disdain for official recognition of prostitution.²⁶⁵

The *Daily Service* was the official organ of NYM, described by Coleman as "Nigeria's first genuine nationalist organization,"²⁶⁶ and its readership was considered

²⁶³ See the following stories in The Comet: "Re: Irresponsible Women," May 31, 1944; and "Re: Irresponsible Women," August 23, 1944.

²⁶⁴ See his biography, Akinjide Osuntokun, *Chief S. Ladoke Akintola: His Life and Times* (London: Frank Cass, 1984), 13.

²⁶⁵ The *Daily Service*, "Mr. S.L. Akintola Lectures Large Audience on Men, Women, and Divorce: He Says Relations Between Man and Woman Determines National Solidarity of a Country," November 11, 1944, 1, 2, 3.

²⁶⁶ Coleman, 218.

too “civilized” to read stories demanding official recognition of prostitution. Prominent readers of the *Daily Service* included highly famed, vibrant professionals and politicians like Dr. Abayomi, F. R. A. Williams, Ernest Ikoli, Dr. C. C. Adeniyi-Jones, and Hezekiah Oladipo Davies. These men and other members of the NYM were responsible for sounding a death knell to the decade-long ascendancy of Herbert Macaulay’s Nigerian National Democratic Party.

From 1938 to 1947, members of the NYM dominated the nationalist stage of Nigeria through their membership of the Legislative Council. The NYM had a reputable history of clamoring for the criminalization of prostitution. Indeed, the group was principally responsible for bringing into limelight the Nigerian/Gold Coast prostitution when the activities of Nigerian prostitutes reached the point in which “the Gold Coast men and women who have not travelled farther than their area believe that all the Nigerian women are harlots, and that it is a recognized custom in Nigeria.”²⁶⁷ Its activities not only resulted in criminal charges against the first Nigerian to be prosecuted for trafficking in girls to the Gold Coast, but also placed the Gold Coast/Nigerian prostitution network on sustained administrative agenda throughout the 1940s.²⁶⁸

Unlike the NYM’s *Daily Service*, which maintained a rigid conservative stance on decriminalization, Nnamdi Azikiwe’s (known as Zik) newspapers, namely, *West African Pilot*, *Southern Nigeria Defender*, *Nigerian Spokesman* and the *Daily Comet*, were less conservative and tended to entertain opposing views. Indeed, Zik, a member of NYM

²⁶⁷ NAI, CSO, 36005 Vol. I, “Prince Eikineh, President of Nigerian Youth Movement, Gold Coast Branch to the President Nigerian Youth Movement, Lagos,” June 28, 1939.

²⁶⁸ See the various reports in the Public Records and Archives Administration Department, (PRAAD), 1940-1948.

until 1941 when a leadership crisis prompted him to abandon the group, was in firm control of the Nigerian newspaper industry throughout the 1940s and 1950s.²⁶⁹ But Zik's popularity went beyond his monopoly of the print media. Unlike the *Daily Service* which represented the voice of the upper class Nigerians, mostly lawyers, medical doctors and frontline politicians, Zik's newspapers represented his "populist" philosophy. Hence, they were popular among middle class, the so-called "third-class clerk" men who seemed closer to the realities of the social revolution accentuated by colonial rule. Zik's papers, which introduced into Nigerian journalism the American style of "sensational journalism", carried more pro-decriminalization stories than any other Nigerian newspapers and capitalized on the sensationalism of prostitution stories to facilitate sales and readership. Prostitution related stories fed a class of literate and semi-literate men who debated about it in an often interesting manner. Hence, Zik's newspapers printed both unedited pro-decriminalization letters and those calling for patrons of prostitutes to be arrested and tried.

The Chiefs and the Native Authority Child Betrothal Ordinance (NACBO)

While the crisis of implementation of UGPO raged, another one would emerge over the introduction of the Native Authority Child Betrothal Order, or NACBO. This law would criminalize "child marriage" or betrothal of girls under seventeen, regulate

²⁶⁹ 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), 20.

bride-price, and prevent female juveniles under seventeen from leaving their parents and/or legal guardians. The NACBO came on the heels of the CWO conviction that girls were being recruited into the Lagos prostitution network under fictitious marriage arrangements and illegal guardianship where girls were fraudulently taken from parents under the guise of formal and informal training but used as prostitutes.²⁷⁰

The CWO had the strong support of Lagos unmarried men, who claimed that the high bride-price demanded by provincial patriarchs helped procurers recruit girls for prostitution. Through newspapers and petitions to the CWO, these men argued that unmarried men lusted after and patronized prostitutes because they could not raise enough money for marriage rites. Furthermore, women were forced to migrate into Lagos to work as prostitutes after several years of waiting for suitable suitors. A “concerned” citizen asserted, “Everyone is surprised nowadays at the astonishing development and spread of prostitution. In some districts of this country, parents traffic in their daughters by as much as eighty and hundred pounds from young men.”²⁷¹ Perhaps not coincidentally, the 1930s and 1940s witnessed an unprecedented increase in bride-price in the whole of Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

Unlike the girl hawker law that was passed without consulting with the Lagos public, the NACBO was presented for deliberation by native authorities throughout the country. This law had to be passed and enforced effectively in the provinces where the CWO believed that most child prostitutes originated. In addition, the British considered marriage issues to be the exclusive legal preserve of the native authority, and rarely

²⁷⁰ NAI, Comcol1, 2844, “Child Welfare: Prostitution and Child Marriage, 1943.

²⁷¹ The Daily Comet, “Bride price in Iboland,” July 7, 1949, 3.

intervened unless in the interest of exploitation and preservation of the hegemonic status quo. Thus, the colonial authorities believed it was crucial to have native support for the NACBO to succeed.

When NACBO came up for deliberation at the meeting of the Ibadan Native Authority Inner Council on March 20, 1944, the council deemed it unnecessary in the Ibadan area. The Council defended the custom of betrothal arguing that their girls lived with their parents until sixteen when full marriage arrangements and rites (*Igbeyawo*) were made.²⁷² An extract of the council's minutes reads:

The Council replied that there was no such practices in Ibadan because it was not their custom throughout Yorubaland. Their girls generally remained in their parents' houses until they would be marriageable before they were married to their husbands...The Council replied the Senior District officer that making rules to forbid the practice in Ibadan was unnecessary because it was not their custom...²⁷³

In his response, the District Officer (DO) of Ibadan Northern District communicated the outcome of the native authority's deliberation on the matter:

The normal procedure throughout this area is that parents do not allow their daughters to marry until they are at least sixteen years of age and seventeen or eighteen is more usual...Betrothal of young children still

²⁷² NAI, Oyo Prof 1, 3562 "Extract from the minutes of Ibadan Native Authority Inner Council Meeting," 20 March 1944.

²⁷³ NAI, Oyo Prof. 1, 3562 "Extract from the minutes of Ibadan Native Authority Inner Council Meeting held on the 20th of March 1944."

takes place but is rapidly dying out as it becomes generally known that girls cannot be forced to marry against their wishes...In general the men leave young girls alone until they become of marriageable age and cases of offences against young girls are in the Courts.

On the final note, the DO submits: "I do not consider any legislation necessary in the circumstances."²⁷⁴

The Emirs of the Northern provinces also disagreed with NACBO because it contravened the teachings enshrined in Holy Quran and Hadith. According to the Secretary of the Northern Provinces, "The argument adduced by the respectable Moslems in support of child marriage, as of *purdah*, is the only way to prevent a girl's chastity in the present atmosphere of sexual promiscuity."²⁷⁵ In a confidential correspondence to the Resident of Kano Province, M. H. Varvill, the Acting Secretary of the Northern Provinces, said that the main opposition was directed towards the amendment of the term "unlawful carnal knowledge" to include sexual intercourse between husband and wife, if the wife was younger than fifteen. This, according to him, "was regarded as an unacceptable interference with Moslem marriage custom."²⁷⁶ The proposed law was equally unpopular in the east where the incidence of "monetization" of marriage was said to be highest.

²⁷⁴ NAI, Oyo Prof 1, District officer to the senior resident Oyo Province," March 29, 1944.

²⁷⁵ 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.

²⁷⁶ NAK, Kano Prof 1, 186/MSWCA, "The Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill "From Secretary of Northern Province to the Resident of Kano Province," 10 July 1946.

The CWO and other apologists of child prostitution encountered stiff opposition in their bid to regulate bride-price and betrothal in part because they posed the problem ineffectively. Terms like “child marriage” are Western derivatives, which are obviously absent in most if not all Nigerian *customary* laws.²⁷⁷ Marriage was/is a rite of passage performed at the traditionally accepted period. In some Nigerian societies (especially in the north), the appearance of a female’s first menstruation indicates her sexual maturity and readiness for full marriage arrangements. A Yoruba proverb—*Bi omode ba to loko on loko ni*—denotes that marriage and social responsibilities come with age and attainment of prescribed status, which can neither be delayed nor postponed.²⁷⁸ In their efforts to regulate bride-price and “child marriage,” the CWO and educated elites did not pay any serious attention to how the proposed law would affect customary marriage practices and masculine sexuality.

The debate over NACBO introduced cultural nationalism to issues of sexuality and showed how native authorities defended customary laws against threats to traditional agency. Since native authorities and elders received honor and respect (partly) through the possession of a harem of young wives and the collection of bride-price, the NACBO would constitute a blow to both their traditional and material status. The native authorities regarded the proposed anti-prostitution law as an attempt to regulate or censor their sexuality, and the traditional powers and authority they wielded over the junior men

²⁷⁷ I searched fervently through Ajisafe’s premier book, which documents the laws and custom of the Yoruba but did not see a word like “child marriage” See A.K Ajisafe [1924] (2003).

²⁷⁸ I thank Dr. Olusola George Ajibade of Obafemi Awolowo University and Dr. Arinpe Adejumo of University of Ibadan for enhancing my understanding of this proverb.

and women. Although the chiefs wanted adult female's migrations to Lagos prohibited, none agreed to the introduction of the NACBO. Hence the chiefs manipulated select components of African culture when colonial laws threatened their understanding of social and sexual roles.

Throughout the 1940s and up to the tail end of 1950s, the debate over NACBO raged as every constituency jealously defended customary laws or justified the introduction of NACBO. Finally in 1958, Joseph Modupe Johnson, the Federal Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, sponsored a bill amending the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen at the House of Representatives in Lagos. This law applied only to Lagos, "where the dangers to which young girls are exposed are probably more than anywhere else in Nigeria."²⁷⁹

Ethnicity and the Politics of Sex: The Tribal Unions, the Colony Welfare Office and the Policing of Morality

In Lagos as in other colonial centers in Africa, the host stereotypically saw the strangers or immigrants as the source of social problems, ranging from violent crime and petty theft to prostitution. While this conclusion may not be totally incoherent, stereotypes were integral in creating a sort of "otherness" for strangers in the wake of competition for jobs and social amenities. Successful immigrants were mostly likely to be envied, as the host worked to repress and limit their access to often scarce resources and opportunities provided by the colonial state. Ethnic unions, variously called tribal unions and hometown

²⁷⁹ West African Pilot, "Age of Consent Law to Safeguard Young Girls," May 17, 1958, 6.

associations, came into existence in part because of the need to foster cordiality among people from the same community and locality, and to devise self-help strategies germane for weathering the storm of the foreign land.

Although the tension between host and strangers appeared to be as old as the history of colonial Lagos, it first became worrisome in the second decade of the twentieth century. In addition to becoming the capital of the new colonial state of Nigeria, Lagos witnessed unprecedented population growth, rapid urbanization and full entrenchment of colonial capitalism. During the 1920s, as in the 1930s and 1940s, comprehensive stories—mostly editorials—about the alleged immorality caused by the strangers were abundant. For the indigenous Yoruba Lagosians, the non-Yoruba immigrants from the provinces especially from the east were largely responsible for all the vices in the town.

One excellent example of this anti-immigration sentiment is a 1930 editorial (Part I and II) in Herbert Macaulay's *The Lagos Daily Times* entitled "The Unemployed Warri Men and Women in Lagos – A Menace: Round up their Dens and Ship them Home." The writer acknowledges the high social menace that people from Calabar, Warri, Owerri and Ogojo provinces constituted, but singled out Warri as the most notorious. He gives a brief background to the moral nuisance perpetrated by Warri women by recounting how Chief Dore of Warri during his visit to Lagos in the early 1910s pleaded with Sir Walter Egerton to help him repatriate the Warri "undesirables." The editorial laments that the largest chunk of Warri men, "the unit which makes up the mighty army of white men's cocks and stewards, by reason of their aversion to become labourers, scavengers" were left jobless as a result of the retrenchment of their white masters during the Great Depression. But

instead of returning to their original homelands, these men allegedly engaged in all manners of vices, ranging from “burglary, illicit spirit distilling” to “broad day light stealing, *wayo* [my emphasis], gambling.” Their women folk “with the one desire of getting rich in silks and gold without toil, come to Lagos because- apart from the licence they enjoy through the flexibility and vagaries of the law, the freedom from the tyranny of avaricious Chiefs and the cruelties of barbarous husbands.”

This information cannot be completely divulged from the politics of cultural nationalism and nativism which Macaulay, the publisher of Lagos Daily News, extolled throughout his lifetime. Macaulay was a neo-traditionalist who advocated traditional order and custom in the wake of enormous erosion accentuated by alien rule. Macaulay and other Yoruba Lagosians I interviewed believed that foreign women, especially the Igbos and Calabarian, polluted the moral environment of Lagos. Although Yoruba Lagosians could bitterly complain about the activities of the foreigners, they could not expel them. This reality is not unique to Lagos but was common to the entire southern Nigeria. During the 1940s, appeals by Ibadan people that all women from the Warri province be expelled because their activities as prostitutes were causing unprecedented increases in the crime rate did not receive the blessing of the District Officer. It was only in the North that the Emir embarked on full scale repatriation of all immigrant women believed to be living on “immoral earning.”

Lagos authorities did not effectively monitor the alleged sexual and social nuisance of aliens until the 1942 when the CWO was established. The CWO and COC persistently accused the tribal unions of not keeping a strong grip on their female members during the

1940s. The personal data which included names and places of origin of prominent procurers or procurists (as adult prostitutes and traffickers in girls were called) indicated conclusively that they came from the provinces. The CWO tended to consult the tribal unions for information about people suspected to be “living on immoral earning” or procuring girls for the purpose of prostitution. The tribal unions traditionally cooperated with the CWO by providing background information (which included occupation, character, place of birth and family names) about suspects or convicts. A case in point was Madam Affiong who was accused of brothel keeping. Because the police could not establish any strong case against her after several times of sending police in “plain clothes” to her premises, they approached the leaders of Calabar Improvement League demanding information about her means of livelihood, place of birth and “whether she is living on immoral earning.”

The Unions were also important sources of information about cultural practices among their people. It was not unusual for the leaders of the unions to be called upon to provide information needed for establishing criminal charges against individuals. Hence when the CWO contacted the leader of Urhobo Progress Union over a claim by Richard Cole that Urhobo men were not required to pay bride-price on girls over 16, the leaders replied that bride-price of new brides had to be paid in full before a man can “call a girl his wife.”

Other examples of cooperation between colonial government and ethnic unions abound. When Constable Ajayi arrested two Urhobo girls for breaking anti-prostitution law, O. O. Okoro the Honourable Secretary of the Urhobo Progress Union (UPU)

demanded that Faulkner release the girls to him²⁸⁰ and convened an emergency meeting requesting that members “bring all women and girls.”²⁸¹ The arrest of these two Urhobo girls came shortly after the COC mandated the UPU to look into the allegations of trafficking in women and girls leveled against their members. Alice Samuel’s (age 9) case can be used to further illustrate the kind of alliance and cooperation between the tribal unions and the CWO. Alice, whose father hailed from Ovie in Warri Province, was living with a female guardian at No 14, Richards Lane. In the reports filed by Faulkner, “although the child appears to be in some moral danger, he is well looked after.”²⁸² The UPU convened an “Emergency General Meeting,” and concluded that Alice is in “supposed moral bankruptcy” and should be repatriated to Chief Ogagbe who was probably the head of the family, in Ovie Town, Warri Province.²⁸³

The tribal unions constituted themselves into a quasi law enforcement agency as they policed the morality of their members. Not only did they facilitate the repatriation of erring female members accused of prostitution, they also enacted laws aimed at punishing women and men who indulged in “immoral” practices. Chapter 51 titled “Indolence and Prostitution” of the Owerri Union’s constitution stated, “Any member who shall be discovered to be incurably indolent and disorderly and who shall engage solely and disgracefully in prostitution and shall thereby become ‘undesirable’ shall be sent home

²⁸⁰ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/76, “The Honourable Secretary of Urhobo Progress Union to the Colony Welfare Office,” August 7, 1943.

²⁸¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/76, “Notice.”

²⁸² NAI, Comcol 1, 248/76, “Colony Welfare Officer to the Honourable Secretary, Urhobo Progress Union,” October 2 1943.

²⁸³ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/76, “Urhobo Progress Union to the Colony Welfare Officer,” October 11, 1943.

with sanction of the authorities”²⁸⁴ The Union even had laws on adultery. Chapter 49 states that any member guilty of adultery [sic] with another’s wife whether marriage was contracted under native or European law shall be fined a sum not less than one pound. The sub-section of this chapter explicitly stated that “members are forbidden to make love unlawfully or entice away another wife”²⁸⁵

Although the tribal unions were largely dominated by men who often author the constitution, a few women-only tribal associations also had laws that “criminalized” unruly behavior of the female folks. Chapter 7 (d) of the Constitution of Efik Ladies Union, Lagos states that “any member who disgraces herself outside or in any function being a member of the Efik Ladies Union must understand that she disgraces our native land and such a member is liable to dismissal.

The tribal unions’ power to police the sexuality of their members also derived from official recognition of the native authorities in the provinces. In a communiqué issued after a general meeting of the Calabar Native Administration, the members recognized the Calabar Improvement League (CIL) as a legitimate representative of the interest of Calabar people in the colony of Lagos and gave the body the power to “prosecute all matters affecting the morality of the Calabar people resident in Lagos.”²⁸⁶

While not denying that the Unions truly wanted their members to live crime-free lives, I contend that the unions’ disposition toward the alleged “unruly” behavior of members was informed largely by the need to prevent official sanctions. The COC

²⁸⁴ NAI, Comcol “Constitution of Owerri Union, Lagos, chapter 51.”

²⁸⁵ Ibid, chapter 49, sub-section (a).

reserved the right to dissolve a union which did not comply with authorities' orders and regulations. An integral aspect of this regulation included cooperating fully with the police and CWO in investigating cases of prostitution. Thus, the unions helped the government establish criminal charges against an accused, served as resource persons on customary matters and enforced government verdicts against delinquent members more often out of fear of punishment than out of respect for the laws.

There is no evidence of the tribal unions defending their members against an accusation. Therefore, it would appear that the best means of avoiding legal and administrative sanctions was by complying with whatever decision made by the CWO and other Lagos authorities whenever members were accused of breaking anti-prostitution laws. Returning to Alice Samuel's case, there is no evidence suggesting that the UPU conducted any investigation on the allegation of "moral bankruptcy" before they advised the CWO to repatriate the girl to Warri Province. The case of John Effiong also sheds light on this conflicting nationalism. Effiong, who was suspected to be prostituting his niece Deborah to soldiers and seamen, was asked to return the girl to the Ububra in Calabar Province. Effiong denied this allegation and claimed that Deborah was an orphan who would suffer if repatriated from Lagos. But when the CWO rejected his appeal, Effiong turned to his tribal union, CIU, for assistance. The CIU replied that "he should follow the order of the government in the best interest of the Calabarians." Two months later, Effiong wrote a letter to the Secretary of the CIU, protesting the union's refusal to support his appeal against the CWO.

Effiong's case was by no means an isolated one. All my respondents confirmed that no tribal union would dare to protect its members accused of prostitution and crime in general. Thus, in the calculation of the Unions, it paid to facilitate the repatriations of a few delinquent members and put up a good image rather than to have their association stopped by the government. Without ruling out the possibility that the Unions were sincere in their devotion to colonial law, many of their rules and guidelines pander to the government's apparent ideals about respect for the law and the condemnation of unruly behavior. This is quite understandable given that the government could prohibit any association whose code of conduct was unsatisfactory.

The implications of such a prohibition were grievous. Not only would the association be unable to gather as a group and create the necessary machinery for self help, they would also not be able to give back to their "fatherland," by sponsoring development-oriented programs like scholarship and schools. By the mid 1940s, competition among Unions had risen to the point whereby their success was measured entirely by their ability to make newspaper announcements about proposed fundraising dances, money collected, the arrival of members from abroad, and big parties for influential members. Without official recognition, a Union would be doomed to failure by any of these measures.

Conclusion

Using social class and ethnicity as a framework of analysis, the chapter has shown that the involvement of men in the debate over the regulation of casual sex work was not

static, but continued to change in accordance with prevailing circumstances. Men manipulated sexuality discusses to their advantage as they sometimes favored laws that worked well for them and kicked against those that appeared to be against their interest. Intra-group relations and ethnicity was drawn into the debate over sexuality, as aliens in Lagos vied to show their commitment to crime and prostitute free Lagos, even at the expense of their country women and men. While elite women as we shall see remained resolute about their position that prostitution be criminalized, men were heavily divided on the issue. While men kicked against anti-prostitution laws that punished prostitutes and spared the male customers, especially the European visitors, elite women as the next chapter explicates cared more about the girls in moral danger and the indiscriminate arrest of “innocent” women in lieu of the bad eggs.

Chapter 5

Protecting the Girls in Moral Danger: Lagos Elite Women and the Politics of Sexual Control

I cannot subscribe to the view that in Nigeria women police between the ages of 40 and 50 will be better able than the existing policemen to prevent prostitution... I cannot visualise them dealing with the screaming and swearing prostitutes, drunken merchants, seamen of all nationalities, pimps, “boma boys,” touts and the rest of the unsavoury fraternities. (Lagos Commissioner of Police W.C.C. King to the Chief Secretary to the Government, December 1, 1944)

The chief aim of this bye-law is to protect foreigners from being molested by Boma boys or potential prostitutes; but this has been carried too far and people of unquestionable character have been arrested without necessary caution. It is therefore suggested that unless in cases of questionable character and known prostitutes and ‘Boma boys’,

intending arrests should be carefully undertaken (Nigerian Women's Party, December 18, 1944).

Introduction

The lead epigraph summarily captures the position of Police Commissioner W.C.C. King on the proposal that Nigeria should enroll women in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). This proposal, which was first broached by the Lagos Ladies League (later Lagos Women's League (LWL) in a petition to the Governor of Nigeria in the 1924, gained currency in newspaper debates in the early 1940s and was officially rekindled by the Lagos Women's Party (later Nigerian Women's Party (NWP)) in 1944, because of the idea that female offenders were safer in the hands of women police as against the traditional male police who were accused of exploiting and assaulting them. But more importantly, elite women believed that women police could best help in regulating the influx of women of "bad character" who polluted the moral atmosphere of Lagos and lured under-age girls into the "trade in flesh." The history of women police in Nigeria is therefore closely connected to the history of sexuality regulation.

The involvement of elite women in the regulation of prostitution was principally dictated by the contrast between adult and under-age sexuality. They viewed adult prostitutes and pimps as wayward women who constituted a danger to the moral serenity of Lagos and the future of African womanhood due to their involvement in trafficking of under-age girls. While they saw the girls in moral danger as an endangered group who needed the protection of the state, they considered adult women, as the second epigraph

illuminates, elements that must be policed and brought to book for their criminal activities. While elite women worked to rehabilitate the girls in moral danger, they did not work to rehabilitate adult prostitutes convicted of prostitution. Neither did they believe that adult prostitutes should be repatriated to their homes in the provinces. As we see in the preceding chapter, men, not women, wrote newspaper stories and editorials to campaign against the indiscriminate implementation of anti-prostitution laws which punished prostitutes but spared the johns. The debate regarding the decriminalization/legalization of prostitution was also monopolized by men, while the elite women remained convinced that prostitution should be effectively policed.

Although the work of elite women was reflected in virtually all aspects of African engagement with alien rule, the totality of their activities and desired outcome revolved around the idea of “modern African womanhood.” This idea, which was not designed as a radical movement (like the Zikist Movement or the radical Western feminist movement), entailed ensuring that girls grow up to become good mothers and wives. Western education and culture was considered as the key to the attainment of this goal, while social ills like hawking and prostitution, which exposed girls to sexual danger and took them out of school, were considered as a cog in the wheel of the womanhood project. The elite women sought to achieve this goal through petitioning and lobbying for institutional reforms, an increase in women’s access to Western education and government jobs, and removal of all practices that put women at the ebb of the social and economic advancement of the colonial state. The women’s columns in the newspaper served not only as an avenue for women to express their views about family, marriage and

relationship, but also to propagate and exchange ideas about “modern”/“western” dress, food and entertainment. The elite envisioned Nigeria’s political self-determination and increased women’s participation in all spheres of its life of the new nation-state: political, economic, and social.

I structure this chapter around three different but closely connected themes: (1) how the elite women did not mobilize against the contradictions in the laws that criminalized and prosecuted casual sex work because of the perceived threat that prostitution posed to the future of African womanhood and also presumably because they did not want to be labeled as advocates for immorality. The elite women, like their African male counterparts and colonialists, not only clamored for restricting the geographical mobility of women, but also helped regulate sexuality by asking Lagos authorities to keep a close grip on prostitution; (2) how sexuality control was reflected in the gendered-politics that led to the enrollment of women in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF); and (3) how the politics of sexuality regulation were reflected in the controversy over the organization and control of the new government girls’ hostel. Here, I examine how race, gender, personal and collective agendas over the establishment of a modern social welfare service created tension between the Colony Welfare Office (CWO) and the elite women.

Educated Elite Women and Politics in Twentieth Century Lagos

Bolanle Awe, Nina Emma Mba, LaRay Denzer and Cheryl Johnson-Odim have written foundational works on educated elite women and their contributions to nationalist struggles in Nigeria.²⁸⁷ The brief background information provided here prefaces a fuller discussion of the striking lack of engagement with sexuality displayed in the work of these eminent historians.

The elite women of Lagos were mostly relatives of prominent Lagos families of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Representative personalities like Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa Oyinkan Abayomi²⁸⁸ and Kofoworola Aina Ademola²⁸⁹ were descendants of wealthy repatriates from Sierra Leone, who were often merchants, colonial administrators and officers, professionals (lawyer and doctors), nationalists and politicians, to mention but a few. Most, excluding the like of Olaniwun Adunni Oluwole of the popular Jalaruru family of Ibadan, were born in Lagos.²⁹⁰ Like their male counterparts, they received Western educations both in Nigeria and the United Kingdom and took up professions ranging from nursing, teaching and clerical work to law and journalism. Abayomi studied music, while Obasa studied Music and French. Adebisi

²⁸⁷ See, among others, Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press and Institute of International Studies, 1982); LaRay Denzer, *Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo: A Public Life* (Ibadan: Sam Bookman Publishers, 2002); Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); and Bolanle Awe, ed., *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Lagos/Ibadan: Sankore Publishers/Bookcraft, 1992).

²⁸⁸ For her full biography, see Folarin Coker, *A Lady: A Biography of Lady Oyinkan Abayomi* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Nigeria Publishers Limited, 1987).

²⁸⁹ For her full biography, see Gbemi Rosiji, *Lady Ademola: A Portrait of a Pioneer* (Lagos: EnClair Publishers Limited, 1996).

²⁹⁰ G. O. Olusanya, "Olaniwun Adun Oluwole," in Bolanle Awe, ed., *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Lagos/Ibadan: Sankore/Bookcraft, 1992), 123. She died on November 13, 1957.

Adebiyi was the first Yoruba female lawyer, and Aduke Alakija, studied social science at the London School of Economics.²⁹¹ Ademola was the first African woman to earn Oxford University degree,²⁹² while Ronke Ajayi, regarded by the *Lagos Daily News* as “the first amongst her sex in West Africa to enter the arena of journalism”²⁹³ was the editor of *Nigerian Daily Herald*. Finally, Remi Ayinke and Theresa Ogunbiyi were editors of the women’s columns of *Daily Service* and *Daily Times* during the 1940s and 1950s respectively.²⁹⁴

Elite women campaigned, vigorously against the prejudiced disposition of the colonial government to female education. It is important to note that the colonial government of Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa did not acknowledge the importance of women in the colonial society. While schools were established to prepare men for public service and leadership, women received instructions mainly in domestic vocation because of the imported Victorian notion that they were best suited for the courtyard. The elite women’s agitation paved the way for the establishment of Queen’s College, the first government secondary school, in 1927. For the elite women, education was the pathway to the upward social and economic advancement of African women. These women also condemned the practice of giving European women (mostly wives of colonial

²⁹¹ Daily Service, “Miss Aduke Alakija Likes Public,” March 20, 1945.

²⁹² Gbemi Rosiji, *Lady Ademola: A Portrait of a Pioneer*. Lagos: EnClair Publishers Limited, 1996.

²⁹³ Lagos Daily News, June 6, 1931.

²⁹⁴ For the career of Nigerian women in newspaper press during the colonial period, see Patient Anne Zedomi, “Women in the Lagos Newspaper Press, 1930-1966,” (Unpublished Long Essay, Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1987).

administrators) the jobs which African women can successfully do, and demanded equal pay for men and women.²⁹⁵

They protested against the undue incarceration of women accused of breaking war-time food- price control laws.²⁹⁶ They played prominent role in important Lagos and nation-wide protest such as: introduction of taxation of women, (1927 and 1940), water rate protest, (1916) the Eleko Eshugbayi palaver 1920-1931 the Ikoyi Cemetery Controversy, the General Strike of 1945, and the public condemnation of Richards Constitution of 1945 to mention but a few.²⁹⁷ The elite women sponsored vocational training, evening classes for uneducated market women, and raised money for girls' education through exhibitions and dance.

Although some of the elite women like newspaper editor Ajayi appeared to have worked independently, writing critical editorials about the negative impact of colonial rule on the status of African women,²⁹⁸ Lagos elite women were largely organized into voluntary associations. I am not aware of any archives pointing to the existence of elite women's associations in Lagos in the nineteenth century. However, the LWL founded in 1901 can be considered the first women-centered association in twentieth-century Lagos. Between 1901 and the 1940s, its activities changed to reflect the changing character of Lagosians' engagement with colonial rule which saw a decline in the social and

²⁹⁵ NAI, Comcol 1/2705, "European Ladies-Employment," 1942-1946; and NAI, Comcol 1, 3007 "Employment of African Ladies in the Government Service," 1944.

²⁹⁶ Comcol 1/2686/1 "Profiteering –General Questions"; Comcol 1, 4030, "Prosecution for Profiteering Offenses", 1941-1944.

²⁹⁷ NAI, Protest Movement in Lagos, Comcol 1, 273, "Petition Against Taxation," 1937-1948.

²⁹⁸ Nigerian Daily Herald, April 29, 1931; June 6, 1931; September 3, 1931; November 25, 1931; March 18, 1932; May 1, 1931; and June 6, 1931.

economic place of women. Obasa was the longest serving leader of the association from the early 1920s to the mid 1940s. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, several other women-specific associations emerged and died.²⁹⁹ But the LWL was able to stand the test of time.

The activities of the LWL were complemented in the 1940s by the rise of new associations: the Women's Welfare Council (WWC) and NWP formed in 1942 and 1944, respectively. While the WWC was the umbrella body of all "Ladies organizations in Lagos", the NWP was formed by Abayomi who also served as its president. The main focus of the NWP was women's empowerment through education, as it sensed that the high level of illiteracy among women was an obstacle to their advancement:

Education of women and politics, to become useful and
loyal citizens, to know their rights and the right way to
demand them, to love and admire the highest standard of
moral, to keep women of less average ability busy on
industrial or domestic science pursuits to start mass
education of women so that mass in a year to two there will
be more literacy among women for whom suitable
employment should be given as teachers, mid wives and

²⁹⁹ See the following stories in the Nigerian Daily Times, "Ladies League of Nigeria: Lady Cameron's Active Interest: Pays Visit to Schools," August 25, 1931; "Ladies League of Nigeria: Grand Exhibition," February 11, 1933; "Ladies League of Nigeria: Annual Exhibition at Glover Hall: Another Year of Progress: Lady Cameron Distributes Prizes," February 20, 1933,1; "Ladies League of Nigeria: Exhibition," January 14, 1933 and "Ladies' League of Nigeria" Grand Exhibition, October 4, 1930.

nurses, supervisors, lecturers and in various other
department and capacities.³⁰⁰

At its inception, the NWP received a cold reception from the male nationalists of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) who were skeptical of the ability of a predominantly female party to advance the cause of women. The May 15, and 25, 1944 editorials of the *Daily Service* argued that nothing could be achieved by “an exclusively female organization.” By August, the numerous activities of the party and the public attention it received seemed to have changed the earlier perception. “Judging from its programme of work, its activity and the way it has handled one or two questions of public interest,” an August 24 editorial in the same newspaper commented, “we feel it cannot but inspire the confidence of the women of this country. The way the business of the Party is handled and active and intelligent leadership it enjoys are happy augury for the fast approaching day when the Nigerian women shall fully come into their own and exert influence befitting them in the public life of their country.”³⁰¹

The activities of the NWP gained regularly front-page coverage in the major Lagos newspapers, especially the *West African Pilot (WAP)* and *Daily Service*. The texts of their public lecturers were frequently published, and served as long and contested debates in the newspapers for weeks and even months. The elite women attracted the attention of the colonial administrators because of their personal charisma, exposure to Western culture, intellect, versatility and the social and economic standing of their

³⁰⁰ *Daily Service*, “Women’s Party Hold Grand Meeting,” August 24, 1944, 2.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

families. Some of them were even closer to the corridors of power as in the case of Abayomi, who was appointed a member of the Lagos Town Council in July 1944.

Elite Women and Criminalization of Prostitution

Much like the colonialists and African men, elite women also found casual sex work morally, medically and ethically undesirable. Indeed, elite women not only expressed disdain for prostitution, but wrote petitions asking the government to repatriate and prevent the influx into Lagos of women and girls of “questionable character.” The earliest petition I have seen addressed to Governor Hugu Clifford of Nigeria was dated October 24, 1923. The elite women, under the auspices of the “Women of Lagos” represented by Obasa of LWL, asked the government to look into:

The vulgar and obscene language on the streets of Lagos, and the lewd songs, pernicious newspaper literature, indecent behavior, and the want of action to discourage prostitutes from other parts of Nigeria openly making this town their headquarters, have nothing but an effect for much evil on growing children, which ends in making them become criminals. The number of juvenile offenders in almost every crime goes to prove this, to say nothing of the spread of venereal disease.³⁰²

³⁰² Comcol 1 498, “Lagos Women’s League to the Hugh-Clifford,” October 24 1923.

In his response to this “moral crusade”, the new governor, Donald Cameron, did not deny the increasing presence of prostitutes in Lagos. However, he claimed that “every effort is being made by the Colony police to keep it within bounds.”³⁰³ He further asserted that “any prostitute who becomes a nuisance to the general public is recommended to the Town Council for deportation forthwith.”³⁰⁴ Apparently, prostitution was officially tolerated as long as it did not create considerable public disorder; the NPF, in particular, and the criminal justice system, in general, were not empowered to repatriate prostitutes from Lagos without the approval of the Lagos Town Council, despite the presence of anti-prostitution laws.

Unsatisfied with the official policy of tolerating prostitution, the elite women reaffirmed their position on this matter in a 1924 follow-up petition:

The signatories must still express their desire that Government may discourage prostitutes from all over the country openly making Lagos their headquarters. Lagos has always been and will always be a seaport town, but then she is not the only seaport town on the West African Coast of Africa. There is no reason in their opinion why she should be allowed to be worse than other towns similarly situated.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ NAI, Comcol 1/498, “The Governor to Obasa,” dated December 20, 1923.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ NAI, Comcol 1, 498, “Olajumoke Obasa to the Chief Secretary to the Government,” February 26, 1924.

When the government did not yield to their request by 1926, the elite women again petitioned regarding the need to police prostitution:

That the government be again approached with the urgent request that the influx of women and girls of bad character into the city be rigidly controlled: that measure be adopted to repatriate those already in town to their homes and to prevent other from coming in, as their example is a source of danger.³⁰⁶

The outbreak of WWII, and its attendant social, demographic and economic disruption, led to an increase in casual sex work and the recruitment of girls into prostitution both through hawking and other means such as fictitious marriage arrangements.³⁰⁷ Elite women continued their age-old protest, demanding that the government abolish hawking by girls under 16 and police adult prostitutes who were accused of recruiting girl-hawkers as prostitutes. In 1942, the newly formed WWC wrote a memo to the resident and districts officers in the provinces demanding that they prevent their girls from being trafficked to Lagos.³⁰⁸ Abayomi asserted that “girl-hawkers usually

³⁰⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 498, “Olajumoke Obasa on behalf of Lagos Women’s League to the Resident of Lagos,” August 6, 1926.

³⁰⁷ See Saheed Aderinto, “The Girls in Moral Danger: Child Prostitution and Sexuality in Colonial Nigeria,” 1930-1950s” *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 1, no.2 (2007): 1-22.

³⁰⁸ NAI, Osun Div 1/1 667, “H. Millicent Douglas, Honorary Secretary of Women’s Welfare Council to the Resident of Osun Division,” October 12, 1942.

pass into the hands of seasoned prostitutes to learn the trade at a tender age.”³⁰⁹ At an October 4, 1944 meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Government, Hoskyns Abrahall, the NWP demanded that “women between 40 and 50 years of age should be employed as Police to prevent prostitution by going into nooks and corners to ferret out these girls.”³¹⁰ When the police embarked on indiscriminate arrests of “innocent citizens” accused of violating the Unlicensed Guide (Prohibition) Ordinance, a law enacted to protect European seamen and visitors from criminals and prostitutes, the NWP met with the secretary of the Lagos Town Council and demanded that the government:

Look into the matter of promiscuous arrests for ‘loitering’
as it appears nobody is safe under the Loitering Bye Law...
It is therefore suggested that unless in cases of questionable
character and known prostitutes and ‘Boma boys’,
intending arrests should be carefully undertaken...³¹¹

The closing sentence of a 1946 petition jointly signed by the NWP, LWL and WWC on the improper implementation of CYPO accused the government of inaction on the medical danger prostitutes posed to the African rank and file: “We are surprised at the apathetic attitude of both the Welfare Department and the Police in removing the

³⁰⁹ West African Pilot, “Mrs. Abayomi Attributes Prostitution to Laziness and Undue Gaiety and Unemployment,” August 10, 1944, 1.

³¹⁰ The Daily Service, “The Lagos Women’s Party Demands Equal Pay for Men and Women,” November 15&16, 1944.

³¹¹ The Daily Service, “Representative of Women’s Party Interview L.T.C Secretary: Street Hawking and other Matters are Discussed,” December 18, 1944.

undesirables [prostitutes] at Ikeja [a region of Lagos] who are a moral danger to our sons [soldiers] returning from overseas service in spite of their attention being called to the menace by all our local press.”³¹²

The elite women throughout the period under examination remained resolute about their stand on the need to prohibit prostitution. However, their interest in policing casual sex work was totally and strikingly different from the colonialists. While the colonialists viewed prostitution a threat to imperialism; for the elite women, it was a severe obstacle to their project of raising modern African womanhood, which included ensuring that every girl child had access to Western education, a job, and good living standards; and could become a good mother and wife. Hence, in 1941, when the government began to pass and implement anti-prostitution laws, it was not because of the agitation of the elite women, but because the implications of prostitution such as VD and crime were considered a threat to British colonialism. And when the women continued to agitate for increased policing of prostitution during WWII, it was because of the indiscriminate and ineffective implementation of such laws.

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, public opinion expressed through the newspapers was divided on the legalization and decriminalization of prostitution through the creation of “legalized brothels.” However, the elite women did not condone this suggestion, not only because it was unpopular among the elite men but also because institutionalizing/normalizing prostitution would further put girls, the future generation of African mothers, in moral danger. They did not protest against the gender-biased nature

³¹² NAI, Comcol 2786, “Petition to the Government: Re: Nos. 4 and 21 on pages 730 and 739 of Gazette Nos. 36 vol. 33 of June 27, 1946,” October 3, 1946.

of anti-prostitution laws which prosecuted prostitutes but excluded the male customers. What they frowned against, as the epigraph shows, was the indiscriminate arrest of “innocent” women in lieu of those who live on “immoral earning.”

One could also see elements of ethnicity and nativism in the elite women’s desire to protect the moral environment of their community (Lagos) from the ethical decadence being brought in by the provincial female “foreigners.” They did not petition for the stamping out of sex work in the provinces, but instead demanded that Lagos should not be made the haven of women and girls of “bad character.” They sought to protect Lagos, both as their cherished community and the bastion of colonial modernity and Western civility. While the so-called tribal union attacked the repatriation of female members for “immoral” conduct, the elite women who were predominantly Nigerian Yoruba or Yoruba of Aku or Saro origin rarely protested against such activities.

Importantly, the contrast between adult and under-age sexuality influenced the role elite women played in the sexual politics of Lagos during the period under examination. Adult women who practiced prostitution were considered the product of disintegration of provincial households and morally irredeemable. However, elite women saw redemption in the girls in moral danger who could still be repossessed from the streets and brothels and rehabilitated in the girl’s hostel for the good of the society.³¹³ Hence, as we have seen, they asked the government to criminalize girl hawking, to establish hostels where they could be rehabilitated, and to increase funding and enrollment for girls’ education and vocational training. However, the elite did not work to

³¹³ The Daily Service, “The Women’s Welfare Council Club,” October 27, 1944.

rehabilitate adult prostitutes accused of breaking anti-prostitution statutes, nor they think that repatriating the women to the provinces would create any problems, both for the repatriates and their community. Whereas they protested against VD and virginity screening among underage girls, they did not protest the VDO which empowered “qualified medical practitioners” to subject adult women suspected to be harboring VD to compulsory medical screening.

It is misleading to assume that the women elite did not have any avenues to campaign against the indiscriminate implementation of anti-prostitution laws—they had access to the colonial administrators through meetings and petitions. In terms of public politics and alternative, they wrote comprehensive stories which ran for several series about the status of Nigerian women in the Lagos dailies. Indeed, the *Daily Service* can be regarded as the *de facto* organ of the NWP. It carried information about the association’s activities including minutes of both their general meetings and those with Lagos authorities. Other Lagos newspapers, such as the *Daily Times*, *WAP*, and *Daily Comet*, had women editors who managed/moderated their women’s columns. These columns formed an integral component of the women elite culture in Lagos.

The Elite Women, the NPF, and the Women Police Debate

There was no time in Lagos history that women faced a higher degree of criminal prosecution than the WWII years. Most of these women were accused of violating anti-prostitution and Defense Regulation Acts, which criminalized buying and selling essential items (mostly food) beyond certain prices and quantities. The cardinal position

women occupied as traders and distributors of essential food items left them highly susceptible to criminal prosecution under the so-called profiteering laws of the Defense Regulation Acts. Rarely a day passed without newspaper stories about the arrest and prosecution of women accused of violating either the anti-prostitution or food-price control laws.

Furthermore, the unprecedented wave of corruption charges brought against the NPF reduced public confidence in their ability to make sound judgment in the arrest and prosecution of female offenders and, of course, treat women with respect and dignity. In 1944 alone, more than ten Lagos “authentic” policemen were reported fined, incarcerated or dismissed for offences ranging from bribery and fraud to false accusation. And as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the rate of police impersonation was so high that Lagosians seemed not to know who were responsible for maintaining public order.

A more complex and larger issue was the indiscriminate arrest of women because they were most likely to give bribes to avoid being incarcerated for offences they did not even commit. Oral evidence from the 1940s reveals that it was wiser to bribe the police in order to be freed of being wrongfully accused of loitering, an offence associated with prostitution and street walking, than to go through the humiliation associated with arrest and prosecution. This evidence does not contradict documented agitation against police assault on innocent women. In a meeting with Mr. Mitchelin, the Superintendent of Police for the Colony, the NWP and leaders of market women narrated the story of victim of false accusation:

A member of the Party [Nigerian Women's Party] middle-aged and educated made a coal – pot fire, and as her house was a small one, she put the coal –pot at her door, for the smoke to go off a bit before she took it in. A policeman came and told her to carry the coal-pot on her head and come with her to the station – she had committed an offence. She naturally refused to do such a thing, as she was no “Sango” worshipper, who usually carry fire. After a lot of begging and some tipping, he let off the old lady.³¹⁴

Public opinion expressed through the newspaper press favored the arrest and prosecution of prostitutes and the *boma* and *jaguda* boys. What it opposed, as the second epigraph elucidates, was torture and assault while in custody and the prosecution of “innocent” citizens. A *Daily Service* editorial of November 14, 1944 entitled “Oppression or Protection” asserted that “many among women arrested from day to day for loitering suffer for victimization.” Another piece, entitled “Policewomen for Nigeria”, opens with a bold statement decrying the refusal of Nigeria to enroll women into the police force as had happened in other parts of the world. It claimed that “handling of cases involving women exclusively by male police constables did not contribute to the dignity of womanhood.” While pointing out that women were better understood by their own gender, the editorial infused a moral/ethical tone, claiming that “the vital information

³¹⁴ The Daily Service, December 18, 1944.

which may assist the police in the conduct of case might due to her sense of decency and respect for convention not be given by an accused woman to a male police officer.”³¹⁵

It was against the backdrop of indiscriminate arrest of women and maltreatment of female offenders that Lagosians called for the enrollment of women in the NPF. In addition, there was the notion that prostitution as a female crime can best be policed by women police. Although this idea was broached in the 1920s by the LWL, the unprecedented increase in female offenders during WWII caused advocates of women police (both men and women) to intensify their position on the matter. Furthermore, the idea of the role that women could play in policing female offences expanded somewhat between the 1920s and 1940s. In the 1920s, it was considered the best method of policing prostitution. By the 1940s, Lagosians additionally believed that female citizens—guilty and innocent alike—were safer in the hands of women police.

While the “press war” about this issue continued in the *Daily Service* and other newspapers in the 1940s, the NWP took the matter up officially with Lagos authorities, as the LWL had in the 1920s. In a meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Government Hoskyns Abrahall on October 4, 1944, the Political and Social Committee of the NWP, represented by Mrs. Oyinkan Abayomi (President), Mrs. T. Dedeke and A. Manuwa (Honorable Secretaries), Mrs. Ekemode (Treasurer), Mrs. A Coker, Mrs. B. Oyediran, Mrs. L. Timson, and Mrs. E. Kuti, claimed that “women between 40 and 50 years of age should be employed as Police to prevent prostitution by going into nooks and corners to

³¹⁵ Editorial of August 10 1944.

ferret out these girls.”³¹⁶ It is difficult to tell why the elite women recommended women of a certain age bracket (40 – 50) and not younger ones.

Police authority did not welcome the idea of enrolling women in the NPF. In his response to the NWP’s demand, Police Commissioner King opposed this proposal, as the lead epigraph elucidates. The reminder of his objection read:

They may patrol along the Marina or round the Race
Course, where prostitutes wait for their victims, but I
cannot see that they will do any better than the police do at
present. The only other places are low class bars or so-
called “hotels” and the “red light” areas where as soon as
there is a trouble or interference with “clients” a free flight
ensues and the scene is then certainly no place for any
woman.³¹⁷

King wanted Lagos to depend on parents, teachers and the church in dealing with “the problems of brothels, immorality, women criminals etc.”³¹⁸ He believed that the problem could not be solved by appointing police women and that civilians did not understand “how difficult a Policeman’s job is.”³¹⁹ He also asserted that if women were not qualified to police prostitutes in some counties in Britain, where incidence of prostitution was

³¹⁶ The Daily Service: November 15, 1944; The Daily Service, November 16, 1944 3.

³¹⁷ NAI, “Lagos Commissioner of Police W.C.C. King to the Chief Secretary to the Government, December 1, 1944).

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

higher, the Nigerian demand was simply unattainable. He presented the general position among British policemen that “only women of exceptional physique and possessed of special qualities of intelligence, tract and courage are qualified to undertake Police duties.”³²⁰ For them “the PC’s [police constable] job is essentially a man’s job.”³²¹

Another obstacle to this proposal was that it challenged the Victorian ideals of masculine superiority, especially in tasks that required intrepidity and force. King did not see women police’s role as complementary, but competitive—not necessarily in the sense of women vying for jobs with men, but rather in encroaching on a career considered the “natural” preserve of men. The excuse that women “only women of exceptional physique” could deal with criminals functioned as a cover-up to preserve and extol chauvinism and the institution of patriarchy in general.

The idea of “policewomen” hung in the air until 1953 when Nnamdi Azikiwe, A.O. Ogedengbe, Anthony Enahoro and other nationalists in the House of Representatives agitated for female recruits to help enforce anti-prostitution laws and deal with female offenders in general. In 1954, the first batch of women was recruited. They received no training in firearms and riot drill and were used mainly in enforcing traffic, street hawking and juvenile delinquency laws. In other words, the enrollment of policewomen in the NPF did not change the earlier misconception that women were physical and mentally unfit to police Lagos and of course Nigeria as a whole.

Although the government appeared to have yielded to the demands of the nationalists, the enrollment of women in the NPF probably had a more international origin

³²⁰ Ibid

³²¹ Ibid.

than local. By the 1950s, the use of women in policing prostitution was common among the nations that subscribed to the UN's numerous conventions on the trafficking in women and children. Nigeria was apparently embarrassed to repeatedly report its lack of policewomen to the UN on its annual questionnaires. The Lagos House of Representative's interest in the matter may have been merely coincidental.

Elite Women, the Colony Welfare Office and the Girls Hostel Controversy

Lagos elite women, as we have seen in various sections and chapters of this work, were the first to bring the problem of sexual danger of juveniles into the public eyes through a 1924 petition to the Lagos authorities. When the CWO was established in 1942, these elites supplied information about the nature and dynamics of the moral danger of female juveniles and how the various organizations had worked to stem its tide. Within a few months of the creation of the CWO, the relations between the elite women and CWO appeared to have gone smoothly—they held residential meetings with Donald Faulkner, the Colony Welfare Officer, and agreed on a number of core issues, such as the connection between child prostitution and street hawking.

But the friendship between these groups of reformists was short-lived. Personality clashes—coated in the politics of race and gender—were grafted into the politics of the advancement of African womanhood. Starting from around December 1942, the elite women emerged as a formidable watchdog of the CWO and protested against practically all of its procedures and laws, especially the eradication of street hawking by girls, which they themselves had clamored for from the mid-1920s until as recently as October 1942.

But why would the elite women object to the laws they had proposed for over two decades? And why could they not work together? The answer to these questions can be found in the tussle that emerged over the role the elite women thought they should play in the activities of the CWO and the colonialists' decision to keep non-governmental bodies out of institutionalized juvenile welfare service.

On September 9, 1942, the LWL convened a meeting attended by "about 500 people of all creeds" to discuss the moral danger of hawking in Lagos. The need for legislation to ban hawking of girls younger than 14 was popular among attendees who included Faulkner, S. Bankole Wright, his assistant and Major Akinwande Jones of the Salvation Army. Attendees also agreed that "many of those children had been reduced to a terrible state of degradation" and that action was urgently necessary.³²² But the one most proactive outcome of the meeting was the formation of the WWC, a conglomerate of all "Ladies organization[s] in Lagos."³²³ H. Millicent Douglas was appointed the Honorary Organising Secretary, saddled with the responsibility of coordinating the activities of the nascent body, especially correspondence with the CWO, the Chief Secretary to the Government and the Commissioner of the Colony.

At the inaugural meeting of the WWC, convened by Faulkner on October 5, a resolution for the establishment of girls' hostel was made. It was also at this meeting, according to Millicent, that Faulkner "emphatically" told the women that they would be responsible for running the proposed girls' hostel. The WWC swung into action

³²² NAI, Comcol 248/107 "Child Hawkers' H. Millicent Douglas, Honorary Secretary of the Women's Welfare Council to the Governor of Nigeria," dated October 11, 1942.

³²³ Ibid.

immediately after its formation. They sent out a memorandum dated October 12, 1942 to the district and provincial officers explaining the moral—as well as sexual—danger of street hawking. They informed colonial officers of a proposed hawking law and “urged all parents to recall their children from Lagos now and to prevent other children from coming to Lagos.”³²⁴

On November 11, 1942, the new WCC wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Government asserting that the Council is prepared to “give practical help in the running of a hostel for girls if the government should be able to see its way to finance such as laudable cause.”³²⁵ The letter essentially reiterated the role that Faulkner had earlier proposed. The women took this promise to heart and were convinced that the new CWO, which was understaffed and led by two men (Faulkner and S. Bankole Wright), would need elite women who knew the nature and dynamics of the problems and who had been working to stem its tide long before the government’s intervention. This conviction is well represented in the last sentence of the correspondence:

The Women’s Welfare Council has given serious consideration to the subject and, find [sic] that there are many questions and difficulties which they as practical women of the world, can easily help elucidate. It is

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

therefore, confidently hoped that the government will heed
the Council's desire to help the girls of the country.³²⁶

In his response the Chief Secretary to the Government thanked the WCC but did not accept their proposal that they should help organize or be in charge of the girls' hostel. When the WWC sent another letter to G.B. Williams, the Commissioner of the Colony, demanding official recognition "because it "felt that the Council is working in the dark,"³²⁷ Williams replied that while the government appreciated their proposal to help organize the girls' hostel, "the method of running the hostel [was] still under consideration and it would not be possible at this stage either to accept or reject your Council's offer."³²⁸

What seems obvious was that Faulkner rescinded his promise, after assuring the women that they would be responsible for running the girls' hostel at the September 9 meeting. He probably had second thoughts after consulting with his superiors and employers (the Chief Secretary and the Commissioner of the Colony). Not only did he refuse to communicate with the WWC on their official status, but went behind their backs to ratify Marble Hall as the girl's hostel. It is important to note that the WCC and Faulkner had inspected several buildings together for the proposed hostel before Faulkner unilaterally approved Marble Hall

Sensing the decision of the government to sideline them in running the girls' hostel and disappointed by the Commissioner of the Colony's response, the WWC convened a

³²⁶ NAI, Comcol 1/248/107, "H. Millicent Douglas to the Honourable Chief Secretary," November 11, 1942.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

meeting and sent a petition to the Commissioner of the Colony stating that Faulkner “emphatically” told them at the inaugural meeting of the WWC that they would be responsible for running the hostel. The petition narrated the history of the controversy and cleared the women of any wrong doing:

The Council was made to understand at the inaugural meeting convened by Miss H.M Douglas at the instance of the Welfare Officer that the Council would undertake the entire charge of the organization. This statement was emphatically made by the Welfare Officer. It was on the strength of this statement that on November 10th at a second meeting Mrs. Dorcas Doherty was unanimously recommended by the Council to the Welfare Officer as a suitable matron.³²⁹

But instead of dragging out the issue of who should be responsible for planning and running the hostel, they accepted the “mere advisory” role the government wanted them to play. But they did win some concessions – their recommendation of Mrs. Dorcas Doherty, who was later fired under controversial circumstances after less than 2 years , as the first matron of the hostel was approved. However, it seemed that the battle lines were clearly drawn when they began to criticize CWO activities. Two major decisions of the CWO--

³²⁹ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, “The Women’s Welfare Council to the Commissioner of the Colony,” dated January 19, 1943.

namely the choice of Marble Hall as the new girls' hostel location and the proposal to appoint a European woman as Lady Welfare Officer--came under attack.

On the first, the WWC pointed out that the building was located in between a three and two story building. To them, this location is capable of creating a distress environment for the girls who needed a serene environment in order to maximize instructional gains. What is more, Marble Hall is opposite the Grand Hotel. A hostel located in front of a notorious hotel where people of shady character congregated was definitely no place for rehabilitating girls in moral danger, according to the elite women. "The language of crowd and taxi drivers who congregate in the street" according to the WCC will be "edifying" to the girls.³³⁰ S. Bankole Wright, Faulkner's assistant who was present at the meeting where the WWC protested the choice of Marble Hall, asserted that the women considered the Grand Hotel as "a den of iniquity."³³¹ He reported to Faulkner and the Commissioner of the Colony that the women discussed the implications of employing girls in hotels and bars "for purpose calculated to be immoral."³³²

If the location of the hostel did not go well with the WCC, another proposal made by Gladys Plummer, the Lady Education Officer, that a European lady be employed as Lady Welfare Officer "because she knows of no woman of the African race who is competent" went even worse. In fact, the WCC felt that this sentiment could jeopardize or undermine the women's movement altogether. To be sure, Lagos elites had long protested against the practice whereby European women, the majority of whom were expatriates and

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, "S. Bankole-Wright to the Commissioner of the Colony and Colony Welfare Officer," January 13, 1943.

³³² Ibid.

wives of colonial officers³³³ and lived on the tax payers' money, were absorbed into government service in lieu of qualified African women. The official colonial records on the subject contain numerous protest letters and petitions by the elite women dating from the mid 1920s. The WWC disagreed with Plummer that a European lady must be appointed as Lady Welfare Officer and that sending an African woman to the United Kingdom for training would not be possible owing to war conditions.³³⁴ They mentioned Aduke Alakija, the daughter of Sir Adeyemo Alakija, President of the Nigerian Youth Movement, who "is actually taking a course in Social Work" in the UK as a likely candidate for the position.³³⁵ The letter's conclusion intimated that the government was not prepared to hire an African for the job: "In the meantime, if government needs an experienced Social Worker of the African race, the Council would like it to be known that there is a member of This Body who can safely be recommended for such an appointment."³³⁶

The government was not apologetic about the location or choice of the girls' hostel, nor did it accept the assertion that Faulkner had promised to allow the elite women run the girls' hostel. In a correspondence that seemed to have permanently put the controversy over the location of the hostel and the appointment of the Lady Welfare

³³³ Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture, and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (Oxford: Macmillan Press in association with St. Anthony's College, 1987).

³³⁴ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, "The Women's Welfare Council to the Commissioner of the Colony," January 19, 1943.

³³⁵ Three other notable advisories of Macaulay include, Ernest Ikoli, Kitoye Ajasa, Henry Car and Lugard. He equally served as member of the Legislative Council, the Governor's Executive Council and President of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa.

³³⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, "The Women's Welfare Council to the Commissioner of the Colony," January 19, 1943.

Officer to rest, the Commissioner of the Colony defended Faulkner, arguing that “the Council must have misunderstood Mr. Faulkner since it was never his intention or mine that your Council should have the entire charge of the organization of the Girls’ hostel.”³³⁷ He went on to state that he did not agree with the women that the location was unsuitable and that the government was not ready to employ a paid Lady Welfare Officer in the near future. Sensing that the women would not be satisfied with his explanation, he closed the correspondence saying that he would like to meet with them for further clarification.

When the WWC demanded that Governor appoint and officially recognize them as visiting committee to the girls’ hostel,³³⁸ the Commissioner of the Colony and Faulkner quickly realized the women’s intent to constitute themselves into a watchdog of the reformatory activities of the hostel. In a confidential handwritten memo to the Commissioner of the Colony, Faulkner lamented that “these people [the elite women] can be very troublesome,” pointing out that CYPO did not make any provision for a visitation committee.³³⁹ Under the direction of the Commissioner of the Colony, Faulkner replied to the WWC that the government appreciated their desire to help the Nigerian girls and that their request was under consideration.³⁴⁰ However, the WWC request was never granted. Instead, all attempts were made to ensure that the elite women did not have any official supervisory or advisory role in the activities of the girls’ hostel.

³³⁷ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, “Commissioner of the Colony to the Women Welfare Council,” February 2, 1943.

³³⁸ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, “Women’s Welfare Council to the Commissioner of the Colony,” October 10, 1944.

³³⁹ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, “Faulkner to Commissioner of the Colony,” October 14, 1944.

³⁴⁰ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, “Social Welfare Officer to the Women’s Welfare Council,” October 17, 1944.

The government also rejected the WWC's request that African women be appointed as the first Lady Welfare Officers, lying that "there was no intention of employing a paid Lady Welfare Officer in the near future"³⁴¹ even as it attempted to transfer a European lady, Davis, from the Department of Education to the CWO. For more than 2 years between 1943 and 1946, the CWO was not successful with this new hire. Yet Faulkner was not ready to appoint an African lady, whom he sensed could be loyal to the elite women, into this highly sensitive position. The position remained "vacant" until 1946 when Alison Izzett was hired.

Another twist came when the Children and Young Person Ordinance (CYPO), which had been promulgated in 1943 but could not be implemented due to WWII budget constraints, came into effect on July 1, 1946. Although the law made elaborate provisions for the establishment of juvenile courts, remand homes and, in general, modern institutions for dealing with juvenile delinquency, some sections were deemed unacceptable by the WWC. In particular, the WWC intensely criticized section 25 which criminalized street trading by boys and girls under the age of 14 and girls between 14 and 16, "unless she is employed by her father or her mother or by the guardian appointed by a court."³⁴²

A combined petition by the NWP, LWL and WWC condemned both the law and its implementation. The women noted that while they appreciated the efforts of the government to halt hawking and its attendant consequences, they "failed to see the

³⁴¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, "Commissioner of the Colony to the Women Welfare Council," February 2, 1943.

³⁴² "Children and Young Person Ordinance," *Annual Volume of the Laws of Nigeria, Legislation enacted during 1943* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1944).

necessity for the passing of the portion of the ordinance which restricts the free movement of young person (females).”³⁴³ They held that girls contribute to the household economy through the proceeds from hawking. Moreover, this old practice of child fostering, according to the elite women, prepared children for adult roles and helped them save towards marriage. The women also condemned other procedures of the CWO which included policing the railway terminal and removing all incoming female passengers under 16 and performing virginity and VD tests without the consent of the girls’ parents.

It is important to note that the elite women had from the early 1920s up to the mid 1940s condemned girl hawking. The economic and cultural significance of girl hawking, an argument used against the CWO, did not surface until 1946. Why they changed their position on the “infamous” practice is difficult to tell, but evidence suggests that it may have been an attempt to frustrate the activities of the CWO.

The CWO’s reaction to this petition is partially reflected in a handwritten memo composed by Alison Izzett, the Lady Welfare Officer, and addressed to Faulkner. This brief memo vividly portrays the CWO’s perception of the elite women’s politics and personality, and the extent of what appeared like an irreconcilable difference between these groups of reformists. “Unless forced to answer,” Izzett wrote to Faulkner, “I think the best plan is to ignore it or one starts an acrimonious discussion in the press with all the corresponding publicity.”³⁴⁴ She continued:

³⁴³ NAI, Comcol 1, 2786, “Petition to the Government: Re: Nos. 4 and 21 on pages 730 and 739 of Gazette Nos. 36 vol. 33 of June 27, 1946,” October 3, 1946.

³⁴⁴ NAI, Comcol 1, 2786, “Memo addressed to the CWO,” October 15, 1946.

If there must be a reply I will produce some interesting facts, but I think it is best to ignore it. The Women's Party are [sic] alone at the back of it and they have no sympathy with ill used children and see everything from the point of view of how it concerns their pocket.³⁴⁵

Izzett was not successful in persuading her boss not to make her respond to the women's petition. It would appear that the Commissioner of the Colony and Faulkner discovered that their silence would cause more harm than good. Unsurprisingly, Izzett's response included all the points raised in her memo. She defended the CWO's VD and virginity screening, claiming that they conducted tests only when the girls were removed from brothels—the "house of ill fame"—and if the court and police required evidence of child prostitution for prosecuting procurers.³⁴⁶ She provided data and life histories of some girls in moral danger, claiming the situation would continue to deteriorate unless drastic steps were taken.

The most elaborate aspects of her response reiterated the reason girls under 16 should not be allowed to come to Lagos: "Girls who are frequently transferred from one guardian to another are enticed away from their guardians by undesirable people and are initiated into prostitution...Girls under 14 years of age are brought to Lagos ostensibly for marriage but in fact are found to be used for prostitution."³⁴⁷ Izzett went on to argue that

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ NAI, Comcol 1, 2786, "Re-Petition," October 28, 1946.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

the population of both adult and child prostitutes would increase if government does not prohibit hawking and influx of girls under 16 into Lagos. But Izzett's response did not reveal any new information about the girls in moral danger and failed to placate the elite women.

Thus far, we have not discussed the reason the CWO decided not to get the elite women involved in the running of the girls' hostel and the activities of the CWO in general. Two closely related reasons, namely "the politics of sexuality and colonial security" and the "politics of gender and race," best explain why the elite women were sidelined. "The politics of sexuality and colonial security" is explicable in terms of the ideological disparity between the colonialists and the elite women about impact of illicit sexuality on the colonial society. While the elite women viewed the protection of the girls in moral danger as a humanistic gesture targeted at protecting future generations of African motherhood from the shackles of immorality, the colonialists saw it as essentially as a security issue. For the British during the 1940s, juvenile delinquency was a security issue which could not be entrusted to voluntary associations.

This position was popular among prominent administrators and superiors of Faulkner like Colonel Mabb, the Director of Prisons who asserted, during the planning of the CWO in 1941, that "it would be a great mistake to commence work on the problem with a voluntary organization."³⁴⁸ He contended that treatment of juvenile delinquency "from whatever source it springs, is essentially a function of Government which should be directed and controlled by the Government...the problem is far too difficult and serious to

³⁴⁸ NAI, Comcol 1, 2471, "Director of Prison to the Honourable Chief Secretary to the Government: Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos," July 21, 1941.

be left to the spasmodic efforts of voluntary workers who at the best can only devote their spare time to the work.” Mabb’s assertion was informed by a preexisting situation.

Between 1925 and 1941, the government invested E16,000 to have the Salvation Army run a 40 person juvenile delinquent reformatory. Mabb did not appreciate the efforts of the Salvation Army and described the reformatory as:

a badly designed and unsuitably sited institution which according to recognized health and standards is hard put to accommodate forty boys. When I think of what could have been accomplished with £16,000 under practical and common-sense management I grudge them every penny of it.³⁴⁹

Not only did the government refused to allow the elite women to be involved in their reformatory activities, they also frustrated their ambition to organize an “industrial center for women,” by not approving the use of both the old Officers Mess at Race Course and the old market stall at Freeman street, in February and July 1945, respectively. The Commissioner of the Colony’s excuses for not approving the use of the old Officers’ Mess ranged from its proximity to “motor roads which “makes them unsuitable as regards for classes for young children,” to the building “needed extensive repairs.”³⁵⁰ No reason was

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ NAI, Comcol 1, 3080, “Commissioner of the Colony to Mrs. O.M Abayomi,” February 1945.

given for disapproval of the use of the old market stall.³⁵¹ A close reading of the tone of the correspondence suggests that the Commissioner was simply not disposed to approving the use of the building – a reflection of the authorities’ decision to frustrate the elite women’s activities and vengeance for their condemnation of the CWO’s choice of Marble Hall and its activities in general.

The second factor—“the politics of gender and race”—cannot be divorced from the first because it also bordered on the issues of colonial security. As a male-centered edifice, colonial service rarely appointed European women into positions that commanded administrative power, let alone African women. If the colonialists did not trust African men with colonial security related positions and grumbled over the mismanagement of funds allocated to the Salvation Army, their female folks, who were traditionally considered less educated and “civilized”, were certainly not seen as capable hands—despite the elite women’s claim that “there are many questions and difficulties which they [the members of the WWC] as practical women of the world, can easily help elucidate.”³⁵²

It is important to note that although the CWO painted the elite women as “trouble makers” and “selfish”, their interest in the protection of the “girls in moral danger” and future generations of African womanhood was altruistic and in the genuine interest of the African girl. No other African groups, not even the male nationalists and politicians such as Dr. C.C. Adeniyi-Jones and others who represented Lagos both at the Nigerian

³⁵¹ NAI, Comcol 1, 3080, “The Commissioner of the Colony to Mrs. T.A. Manuwa,” July 28, 1945.

³⁵² NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, “H. Millicent Douglas to the Honourable Chief Secretary,” November 11, 1942.

Legislative Council and at the Lagos Town Council, placed the protection of the girls in moral danger at the forefront of their agitation.

Conclusion

In bringing this chapter to a close, it is important to emphasize that the pattern of elite women's involvement in sexuality regulation and by extension political mobilization was influenced principally by their African cultural identity as well as their acquired Western culture. They loved Western culture and education and wanted women to acquire Western knowledge in order to gain the prerequisites for women's upward mobility and strategic positioning in the colonial state and the independent Nigeria that they envisioned.

This chapter has ventured into a less known aspect of women political mobilization in colonial Nigeria and Africa at large: the role of elite women in the regulation or prohibition of illicit sexuality. Like men (both the colonized and the colonizers) elite women wanted casual sexual work to be criminalized. Social class played a significant role in determining their understanding of the impact of casual sexual work on the ethical standing of the society. They saw prostitution as a sub-cultural profession that dented the image of the African women. Prostitutes were bad eggs which needed to be repatriated. Moreover, they believed that future generation of African mother would be in danger if the government did not keep close grip on prostitutes. Hence, prostitutes in their imagination posed two categories of danger, namely, medical/ethical, and more important the future generation of African mothers who were

criminally lured into casual sex work. They did not consider prostitution as a way out of poverty or as a profession that could create a multiplier effect on the economy when prostitutes use their proceeds to send their family members to school or invested in landed property.

If elite women and the Lagos authorities (CWO in particular) could not work together, it was because each group understood the problem from different angles. While the elite women were definitely humanitarian in their approach, conceive the problem of girls' moral danger as an impediment to their project of mother African womanhood, the colonialist thought in terms of the sustenance of imperialism. They both agreed on the obvious issues such as the nature and dynamics of the problem. What divided them include the manner and the groups or individuals to be responsible for rehabilitation of the girls in moral danger.

Conclusion

Sexuality discourse remains one of the most complex ideas to grapple with in modern historiography, in part because the motives of political players were rarely expressed explicitly. Unlike other aspects of the Africa's encounter with colonialism which can be more or less easily deciphered, one needs to be able to read beyond the letters in order to come to terms with sexuality related themes. Sex in colonial Africa is connected to everything, directly and indirectly. It is reflected in virtually all spheres of social and political engagement and found expression in racial inferiority, difference and pathology—the cardinal ideas and philosophy of domination—and in cultural nationalism and African resistance to alien rule.

I have challenged conventional ideas about prostitution and sexuality emphasizing that reformists' campaign against illicit sexuality was largely informed by the age of women and girls who practiced prostitution. I have also emphasized how issues around sex intersects with fundamental concern such as imperialism and colonial security, and nationalism and African response to colonial laws aimed at regulating their sexuality. Laws targeted at select “delinquent” Lagosians had far reaching consequences on pattern of relations among influential members of the colonial society. Throughout the period under examination, ideological fervent about how best to regulate or prohibit casual sex work continued to change in accordance with issues contested. The concomitant effect of this was that while the reformists were busy fighting one another over laws and their implementation, prostitutes, their male customers and others like owners of restaurants and bars continued to derive means of livelihood, enjoyment, freedom and social

relevance from casual sex work. The project of “demobilization and repatriation of the undesirables” failed principally because the reformists could not put their house in order.

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