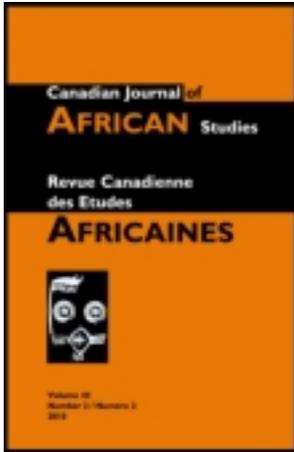


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“ The problem of Nigeria is slavery, not white slave traffic” : Globalization and the politicization of prostitution in Southern Nigeria, 1921-1955

Saheed Aderinto ^a

^a Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina, USA

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“The problem of Nigeria is slavery, not white slave traffic”: Globalization and the politicization of prostitution in Southern Nigeria, 1921–1955

Saheed Aderinto*

Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina, USA

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Résumé

Cet article met en question une supposition bien établie dans les sciences sociales et parmi les organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) selon laquelle la prostitution est un «nouveau» défi post-colonial du développement de l’Afrique qui a surgi «subitement» dans la foulée des impacts économiques et sociaux des programmes d’ajustement structurel du milieu des années 1980. En mettant au jour le premier cas de prostitution d’envergure au niveau national et transnational en Nigéria entre les années 1920 et 1950, je cherche à connecter l’histoire coloniale de la prostitution à ce qui est désigné de façon ésotérique dans les études post-coloniales et la littérature populaire comme la «traite d’êtres humains». Mais surtout, je démontre comment et pourquoi les colonialistes ont déguisé la prostitution nationale et transnationale – connue aussi dans le monde politique mondial comme l’esclavage blanc – comme une forme d’esclavage nationale. Cette étude observe que les experts n’ont pas effectué assez de recherches sur l’interaction entre les forces mondiales et locales dans l’élaboration de la politique de l’Afrique coloniale en matière de sexe. De plus, la manière dont la politique d’abolition de l’esclavage national en Afrique coloniale concorde avec la réglementation de la prostitution n’a pas suscité une attention critique, malgré le fait que la rhétorique du barbarisme du transport de cargaisons humaines ait occupé une place de premier plan dans la justification de l’envahissement et de la colonisation du continent.

Abstract

This article challenges a well-established assumption in the social sciences and among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that prostitution is a “new” post-colonial challenge of Africa’s development that “suddenly” emerged in the aftermath of the economic and social impacts of the Structural Adjustment Programs of the mid-1980s. By uncovering the first major domestic and transnational prostitution in Nigeria between the 1920s and 1950s, I seek to connect colonial history of prostitution with what is esoterically designated in post-colonial studies and popular literature as “human trafficking”. But more significantly, I demonstrate how and why the colonialists disguised domestic and transnational prostitution – also known in world politics as white slave traffic – as domestic slavery. This study observes that scholars have under-researched the interaction between global and local forces in the making of colonial Africa’s politics of sex. In addition, how the politics of abolition of domestic slavery in colonial Africa dovetails with the regulation of prostitution has not received critical attention, despite the fact that the rhetoric of barbarism of human cargo featured prominently in the justification for the encroachment and colonization of the continent.

Keywords: gender; prostitution; slavery; imperialism; white slave traffic

*Email: saderinto@email.wcu.edu

Introduction

The Gold Coast men and women who have not travelled farther than their area believe that all the Nigerian women are harlots [prostitutes], and that it is a recognised custom of Nigeria. Things have grown to diggy height. Gold Coast has become a place of Nigerian refuge. Not only grown-up women from Nigeria were to be found here for this nefarious traffic of the flesh [prostitution] but also girls under age are kidnapped and brought here as a training ground.¹

The above epigraph is culled from a 1939 petition by Prince Eikineh, the leader of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) branch of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) described by Coleman (1958) as “Nigeria’s first genuine nationalist organization” to the president of the parent body in Lagos.² It detailed the “criminal” activities of Nigerian women from the southern provinces of Calabar, Owerri, and Ogoja who lured underage girls into an elaborate prostitution network traversing the Gold Coast towns of Accra, Sekondi, and Takoradi.³ The prostitutes were popularly called *Akunakuna*, a name of a town in Ogoja Province where most of them were believed to have originated from. This first major transnational prostitution in twentieth-century Nigeria involved “thousands of known professional Nigerian prostitutes” who in 1938 remitted an estimate of 2,000 pounds to their communities monthly.⁴ Indeed, so important was prostitution to the economy of Ogoja Province that the Native Authorities suggested a direct tax of 30 shillings to returnee prostitutes because “they possessed as many loads as a white man”.⁵ In February 1941, the district officer of Obubra Division noted that the people of Usulutong demanded a post office “solely because they want to keep in touch with their itinerant gold mine – the whole population battens on them”.⁶

Although Prince Eikineh’s petition compelled the colonial government of Nigeria to formally investigate transnational prostitution, he did not broach the subject of the trafficking with the authorities of the two British West African colonies.⁷ In fact, the authorities had been aware of it since the early 1930s. However, they tolerated prostitution because it did not constitute any danger to the colonial status quo – at least until the outbreak of the Second World War. Moreover, Prince Eikineh’s petition did not only berate the colonialists for not arresting an ugly situation, but also powerfully reflected the constant attempt by diaspora communities to address issues that smeared their image.⁸ Organized mostly into “tribal” and “home-town” improvement unions or associations, Nigerian diaspora communities like their counterparts in other parts of Africa consistently worked with authorities to repatriate or prosecute members whose activities were perceived as a danger to their collective success or livelihood in their places of sojourn (Little 1965, 96–102; White 1990, 190–94).⁹

But the NYM was not the first group of nationalists to campaign against prostitution. Indeed, African elite women, a small but highly influential class of educated women under the leadership of Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, from 1923 onwards wrote petitions asking the government to criminalize “the influx into Lagos of women and girls of bad character”.¹⁰ They were the first to suggest to the government that women be enrolled into the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) as a panacea to the indiscriminate arrest of “innocent” women for prostitution offences.¹¹ To be sure, the role of Lagos elite women who organized themselves into pressure groups like the Lagos Women’s League (LWL) and Nigerian Women’s Party (NWP) in sexual politics has not received any meaningful treatment by scholars who have studied the intersection of gender and nationalism in Africa’s colonial encounter (Mba 1982, 193–289; Coker 1987; Awe 1992; Rosiji 1996; Denzer 2002). While the NYM’s campaign centered on transnational prostitution, the elite women’s agitation focused mainly on the domestic sex trade, i.e. the trafficking in girls from other regions of Nigeria to Lagos, colonial Nigeria’s political and economic

epicenter. The women localized their reformist agenda and expressed purely nativist ideology until the mid-1940s when they began to develop “Nigeria-wide” programs because they considered themselves first as Lagosians and second as British subjects of Nigeria. Lagos was important to them, not just because it was their place of birth, but also because it epitomized both the good and the bad of colonialism. If colonial modernity gave the women access to Western education and social mobility, it nevertheless produced social ills like prostitution, which they vehemently opposed.

Although both the elite women and the NYM frowned upon the sex trade because of the well-established notion that it facilitated the tripartite vices of crime, venereal disease (VD), and public immorality, what set the former apart was their project of rehabilitating prostitutes. Whereas the NYM and other male politicians and commentators did not have any project aimed at ameliorating the conditions of African women or removing British and African cultural practices that were widely considered the causation of prostitution,¹² elite women had a scheme dating back to the early 1900s that centered on empowering African women through the establishment of schools, vocational industries, and employment in colonial service (Mba 1982, 193–289; Coker 1987; Rosiji 1996).¹³ For the elite women, criminalizing prostitution was not enough – empowering and increasing the girl child’s access to the dividends of “civilization/enlightenment” and colonial capitalism that men monopolized was the best means for maintaining a morally-upright society (Aderinto 2012a).¹⁴

The British authorities agreed with the nationalists that domestic and transnational prostitution was a staple in Nigerian and Gold Coast cities, but failed to criminalize and report it to the League of Nations, later the United Nations, between 1921 and 1941. Instead, they declared that “the problem of Nigeria is slavery, not white slave traffic”.¹⁵ When they finally notified the League about white slave traffic from 1941 to 1955 – when it became obvious that they could no longer hide the situation from international surveillance – they claimed that women and girls were not trafficked, but engaged in prostitution “at will”.¹⁶ In addition, the authorities refused to ascend to the numerous League of Nations and United Nations sponsored conventions on traffic in women and girls from 1921 to 1955. Why did the British acknowledge the prevalence of prostitution at home, but fail to report the situation to the international community as all countries in the world were mandated to do? What is the connection between domestic slavery, which dates back to centuries of African civilization, and white slave traffic, a term first used in 1870 by Victor Hugo, a famous French poet to designate sexual exploitation of women and girls through prostitution (Ringdal 2004, 313). To be sure, white slave traffic threatened global security and was a major humanitarian crisis between the 1870s and 1940s. This article responds to these questions and many others within the context of manipulation and negotiation between local and global politics of sexuality regulation. It argues that scholars of gender and sexuality in Africa have paid little attention to how the continent’s history of prostitution intersects with the global movement against illicit sexuality.

Colonialism was essentially an edifice of contradiction. From education to health and fiscal policies, the imperialists’ activities were marred with inconsistencies. The British used civilization as one of the justifications for imposing imperial rule from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, but did not begin to take the education of their subjects seriously until the 1930s (Fafunwa 1974).¹⁷ The idea of racial inferiority influenced the creation of “otherness” for Nigerians; however, Western biomedicine and culture was not totally successful in “civilizing” the people. Nigerians did not get a psychiatric hospital until the last decade of colonial rule in the 1950s, despite the well-entrenched notion that mental illness among them was a product of their “distinctively” different and backward race (Heaton 2008, 72–106). In addition, Britain’s professed “open trade” or “free trade”

fiscal policy was regularly abandoned in favor of “protectionism” whenever its economic interests were threatened (Olukaju 1999, 13–28). As I will demonstrate, the veiling of white slave traffic as domestic slavery was not just one of several prejudiced practices of the colonialists, which scholars have grossly overlooked, but a story that underscores the inherent contradictions in Britain’s so-called civilizing mission in Nigeria. If the continuity of domestic slavery up to the 1940s in some parts of Nigeria appeared to have embarrassed the British who had used the abolition of human cargo as one of the justifications for imposing colonial rule, white slave traffic openly exposed the ills of imperialism, in that it was largely a product of the social and economic permutations accentuated by alien rule. But, as we shall see, white slave traffic embarrassed the colonialists more than domestic slavery, partly because it proved imperialism incapable of preventing prostitution through its civilizing mission or eradicating cultural practices like betrothal that the authorities believed facilitated it.¹⁸ What seems obvious is that the story of prostitution cuts deep into the cardinal philosophy of imperialism, that is, civilization.

This article’s sources are primary official documents from Ibadan and Enugu offices of the Nigerian National Archives, and the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD), Accra Ghana. They include correspondence between Nigeria and the League of Nations; and medical, military and social welfare records produced between the 1910s and 1940s. The establishment of the Colony Welfare Office (CWO) in 1941 and the institutionalization of juvenile welfare service paved the way for systematic documentation on prostitution regulation. I checked the international correspondences between Nigeria and the League against the documents produced by local colonial administrators in order to pinpoint the nature and dynamics of the politics of the period. The aforementioned sources, which mainly highlight the perception and thought of the colonialists, complement news, editorials, and articles produced by literate Lagos men and women published in newspapers and magazines such as the *Daily Service*, *West African Pilot*, *Nigerian Daily Times*, *Southern Nigeria Defender*, *Eastern Nigerian Guardian*, and *The Comet*.¹⁹ In terms of geographical coverage, this article focuses mainly on southern Nigeria. While Lagos was the hub of domestic prostitution, the transnational sex trade between Nigeria and the Gold Coast involved women from Ogoja, Owerri, and Calabar provinces.

Conceptual clarification and analytical framework: prostitution and abolition of slavery in Africanist literature

The following definitions of terms, despite their limitations, are important for understanding the wide-range of connotations ascribed to socio-sexual behavior and the politics of naming. Prostitution is conceptualized as commoditization of sex, or a form of casual labor that involved payment for sexual services (White 1990, 11–13; Akyeampong 1997, 144–50). Women who sold sex and men who paid for it were involved in relationships that were mostly transient and geared toward erotic and material satisfaction. Regardless of the period and location, women traditionally practiced prostitution outside their native communities – hence prostitution, like most forms of labor that emerged under colonialism, was associated with migration (Little 1973, 76–129). The term “white slave traffic or trade” gained popular usage from the 1870s onwards and describes the condition of women and girls coerced into the sex trade. Religious purity groups and abolitionists, such as the International Abolition Federation and the International Bureau for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children, rhetorically adopted the term to call the attention of global institutions and governments to the plight of hapless victims of the underground sex trade by equating the gravity of forced prostitution to the infamous trans-Atlantic slave trade

(TST; Roe 1979; Glickman 2000; Donovan 2006). Hence, the politics of the term reflected the broader global attack on human servitude in the Atlantic world. Both the TST and white slave traffic involved deprivation of freedom, sexual violence, and exploitation of women and girls (Limoncelli 2010, 17–70). Victims of white slave traffic like the TST were treated as items of trade.

However, there are striking differences between the triangular trade and white slave traffic. Whereas the victims of TST were both male and female, predominantly from Africa and sold to the New World, where they worked chiefly on plantations; victims of the white slave traffic cut across cultural and racial divides and were female. They were “sold” globally into the “house of ill fame” or “house of shame”, as brothels were colloquially named (Roe 1979, 13). Whereas TST operated in the public domain under the brutal agency of African, European and the New World slavers, the white slave traffic was an underground sex market that flourished in the red-light districts of major cities, military bases, and mines across the globe. It operated clandestinely partly because of its illegal status and its association with a sub-culture that threatened mainstream secular and religious ideologies (Bell 1910). Although not all women who practiced prostitution were forced into the sex trade, abolitionists were convinced that domestic and transnational prostitution must be eradicated for the sake of social purity and civilized morality (Connelly 1980 1–9). In addition, white slave traffic was illegal but “officially tolerated” in most parts of the world largely because institutionalized authorities thought prostitution helped provide socio-sexual balance in spaces such as military bases dominated by men whose existence was considered important for maintaining security. Hence, the global history cum political-economy of sex was inseparable from the prevailing practice of power and hegemony. The gender-biased or double-sided character of anti-prostitution laws – for example, the notorious Contagious Disease Acts in Britain and its colonies – concurred with Victorian and racist ideologies of women’s inferiority (Walkowitz 1980; Levine, 2003).

This study is theoretically influenced by literature on prostitution and the abolition of domestic slavery in twentieth-century Africa. Working on different regions of the continent, scholars of Africa demonstrate how the colonialists perceived prostitution as a symptom and manifestation of African women’s sexual and physiological aberration – despite the fact that it was a widespread phenomenon across, time, race, ethnicity, place, and space (Sanger 1937; Walkowitz 1980; Otis 1985; McGinn 2004). In deconstructing this prejudiced and racist assumption, scholars argue that to reduce prostitution merely to a construction of difference is to underestimate the profundity of alternative narratives of how casual sex work realigned gender roles, empowered women, and created or redefined new and old identities associated with colonial modernity (White 1990; Naanen 1991, 57–79). Prostitution was not only the most ubiquitous form of illicit sexual practice constructed by the colonialists as “uncivilized”, as seen in the works of White (1990), Laketch Dirasse (1992), and Charles van Onselen (1982) among others, it was indispensable in that it maintained the socio-sexual balance in male-centered domains such as military bases, mines, and cities. The indispensability of casual sex work did not deter the colonialists and African male agency from moralizing and ethicizing it. The moralization of prostitution found solace in the well-circulated notion that prostitutes and women in general were the purveyors and facilitators of crime, venereal diseases (VD), and public immorality (Jeater 1993; Shear 1996, 393–415). This prompted the colonialists to impose a myriad of migration and infectious disease laws that prevented women from moving into certain regions of the colonial state or subjected them to compulsory VD screening

(van Heyninge 1984, 170–97; Vaughan 1991, 129–54; McCurdy 2001, 212–33; Musisi 2001, 171–87; Jackson 2002, 191–213).

In deconstructing the moralization of prostitution, White (1990), Naanen (1991, 57–79), and Akyeampong (1997, 144–73) turn to power relations within the colonial system and the upward mobility that women achieved through the control of their own productive and reproductive power. According to Naanen (1991), women from the Obubra Division of southern Nigeria capitalized on new opportunities afforded by colonialism to acquire landed property and wealth, which both the colonial masters and Native Authorities envied. Hence attempts to control women's movements found expression in colonialists' recognition of the body as a site of power: policing the body was essentially a metaphor for preserving the values of the male-dominated colonial state. On several occasions, the colonialists' position on prostitution regulations was informed by the economic and social structure of various colonial domains. While the rural African male agency, as espoused by Naanen (1991), viewed the negative impact of migratory prostitution on procreation and taxation, urban and mine authorities tolerated sex work because it provided a socio-sexual balance in male-dominated spaces (van Onselen 1982). Prostitution only became a "social problem" when men contracted VD and were unable to work for the state or when urban crime threatened the livelihood of "law-abiding" colonial subjects.

The studies cited above and many others situate sexuality regulation mainly as a domestic phenomenon. They do not seriously consider it as a flow of capital and a movement of the body across colonial boundaries during the first half of the twentieth century. I posit that the politics of prostitution was not just between the colonial masters and African male agency, on the one hand, and women on the other. Rather, it was also between the colonial administrators and the international community. By inserting African prostitution into global politics of vice and humanitarianism, I show that local ideas about sex and regulation are capable of dictating the pattern of relations among both sovereign and dependent states. The "problem" of prostitution was not exclusively African, but traversed cultural and geographical terrain between the 1870s and 1940s. However, the colonialists in Nigeria framed illicit sexuality as an "African problem" to justify imperialism and its professed mission of civilization.

There is equally a dearth of literature on the connection between the abolition of domestic slavery and white slave traffic in colonial Africa (Igbafe 1975, 409–29; Miers and Roberts 1988; Korieh and Kolapo 2007). Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn's (1993) and Adiele Afigbo's (2006) studies in northern and southeastern Nigeria, respectively, describe the negotiations and intrigues between the natives and the British regarding the abolition of slavery and the slave trade. The discriminatory and contradictory policies of the period effectively concurred with the imperial practice of governing colonial subjects in accordance with the threat they posed to the sustenance of imperialism. Thus, while slavery was abolished outright in southeastern Nigeria from the nineteenth century onwards and criminalized throughout the first half of the twentieth century, in the North, the British for cultural, religious, and political reasons transformed it and allowed it to survive until the late 1930s.

One cultural consideration for this was the status of women under concubinage, a special category of slavery that helped in consolidating the Sokoto Caliphate's aristocratic, merchant, and Islamic culture. Concubines were chosen among other female slaves because of their sexual attraction to their masters. They could serve as cultural and political bridges between their community and that of their masters (Nast 2005). Legally, a concubine received redemption "on the death of her masters, as long as she had borne a child and in some instances has shown signs of pregnancy or had miscarried" (Lovejoy

1988, 246). Lovejoy notes that the British allowed sexual exploitation of women through concubinage to continue in order to please the elites and avoid insurgency. However, what impact did the British policy of tolerating slavery and concubinage have on prostitution? The oral history of Kano recalls the story of Mai Kano Agogo, who built the first brothels during the 1920s where fugitive female slaves and concubines worked as prostitutes (Yahuza 1980, 148). He is credited for introducing “professional” prostitution to Kano by inciting concubines and female slaves in general to desert their masters. Britain’s failure to completely abolish slavery produced two mutually-reinforcing outcomes: it intensified the exploitation of women under concubinage; and it paved the way for the rise of prostitution.

Body for sale: domestic and transnational prostitution in colonial Nigeria, 1920s–1950s

Prostitution did not begin to appear prominently in official records until the 1910s. The earliest information generated by the colonial military force (West African Frontier Force, WAFF) attributed the high incidence of VD among African soldiers to their promiscuous relationships with prostitutes.²⁰ The correspondence among medical, military, and civil authorities suggests that prostitution was a well-established socio-sexual practice in the military bases and dates back to the late nineteenth century.²¹ While the civil and military documents represented the official perception of the impact of prostitution on the medical wellness of the soldiers, the so-called “guardians of the empire” archives produced by the Nigerian literate class denounce the impact of adult and underage prostitution on future generations of African mothers.²² Migrant prostitutes were depicted as poor, uneducated women from southern provinces who deserted their husbands in the villages and moved to Lagos to work as prostitutes.²³ Not all adult prostitutes engaged in prostitution voluntarily – some were trafficked and forced to work against their will.²⁴

If most adult prostitutes seemed to be in control of their productive and reproductive capabilities and appeared to have lived successfully on casual sex work, underage girls (mostly below the age of 13) were generally portrayed as victims of the sex trade. “Fact-finding” reports by welfare officers established that girls were lured into prostitution under the pretext of apprenticeship and hawking, as detailed in Table 1. A 20 May 1930 editorial

Table 1. Social Welfare Office report on juvenile delinquency, 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

Source: NAI, COMCOL 1, 2600 Vol. II, Social Welfare, General Questions, Establishment of Social Welfare Department, 1942–1945.

in the *Nigerian Daily Times* lamented “the long standing problem of the girl-hawkers who have become such hopeless prey to traffickers in prostitution”.²⁵ Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, 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 alone, *The Comet* newspaper under such headlines as “Save the Future Mothers” and “Girl Hawkers Morals” added a new note to existing anxiety over the security of underage girls. It noted that not all the girl hawkers were lured into prostitution – some acted independently, selling their “body” but disguising themselves as vendors.²⁶ News of this nature informed reformists of the extent of moral decadence in Lagos as the girls who were “supposed to be in school or learning trade” were “knowing men before their ripe ages”.²⁷ Other dangers associated with street hawking included rape and murder. The *Nigerian Daily Times* and *West African Pilot* gave wide publicity to the rape and murder of ten-year-old Badiaran, whose lifeless body was recovered from the race course on 12 March 1945.²⁸

Although public narratives generally regretted the failure of the state to protect its endangered girls, the larger issues at stake bordered on the changing character of hawking, a traditional method of raising children, supporting the household, and passing skills from generation to generation (George 2011, 837–59.) Hawking probably did not pose a serious danger in precolonial societies where communal parenting and strict observance of moral regulatory codes helped protect girls from assault.²⁹ However, it underwent radical transformation when Lagos metamorphosed from a small coastal community of about 5,000 inhabitants in 1800 to a quarter of a million in 1950 (Mabogunje 1968, 239). The epileptic character of the colonial economy created a cycle of poverty and increased the incorporation of children into the urban workforce as hawkers, movers, and haulers (George 2011, 837–59). If Britain’s Pax Britannica facilitated massive immigration into Lagos, ethnic heterogeneity created anonymity and namelessness, allowing practices that rarely took place under the precolonial setting to flourish. The recruitment of girls into prostitution through hawking was supported and sustained by urban poverty and an underground sub-culture of vice, vagrancy, and delinquency. Lagos of the 1930s and 1940s could not guarantee the safety of adults, to say nothing of defenseless children.

Apprenticeship was not the only ruse adopted for integrating girls into prostitution networks – documented evidence from the 1930s shows that some were taken from their rural communities via fictitious betrothals.³⁰ In precolonial times, betrothal served as a tool for fostering inter- and intra-ethnic friendship. It involved elaborate rituals and ceremonies that were not only procedural but lasted for years until the final marriage ceremony was conducted (Johnson 1921, 113–17; Basden 1966; Fadipe 1970, 65–86). Marriage payments (mostly in agricultural products and cattle) and services were entirely symbolic and representative of the spiritual approval of the gods and goddess. However, the cash economy introduced through colonialism significantly transformed traditional marriage practices – not only in Nigeria but in most parts of Africa – as marriage payments had to be made in cash (Parkin and Nyamwaya 1987). The new era of “commercialization of marriage” compelled some young men to leave for the city and mines – or pawn themselves to the elites, as Ojo demonstrates in the case of the Ekiti region of Yorubaland – to raise marriage payments that varied from 50 to 300 pounds during the 1930s and 1940s.³¹ Commercialization of marriage not only delayed marriage – some potential grooms worked for ten years or more to raise money – but created tension between the junior men (young urban workers) and the senior men (rural patriarchs) who were accused of “bride-price racketeering”.³² By the late 1930s, urban men discovered they could circumvent the marriage rituals and marry “cheaply” by eloping with their

fiancée or sending money to the village and have family members bring their new “wives” to town.³³

However, traffickers seemed to have capitalized on “marriage capitalism” by pretending to help secure husbands for young girls in Lagos. Social welfare reports of the early 1940s indicate that rural parents were giving their daughters in marriage to men they had never met after collecting a lump sum of money as a bride-price. The following cases and many others served as evidence and justification for the criminalization of “marriage by proxy” as the new conjugal practice was labeled:

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.³⁴

It would appear that parents or guardians did not know the fate of their girls once removed from the village. In March 1946 a petitioner from Okitipupa Division pleaded with the CWO to help him return his daughter who was betrothed to an office clerk in 1945 but had been sighted working as a prostitute in Port Novo Market Street, one of the busiest red-light districts in Lagos. The following month one Ogbo Abuyola from the same community wrote a petition to the CWO asking, “if the order was gave [sic] to Madam Ogudu, 41 Taiwo street Lagos to trade with girls”.³⁵ She claimed that Madam Ogudu frequently came to her area to “pack all the girls to Lagos” and that one of them “died of sickness” after being repatriated. Yet in some places, fictitious betrothal followed a well-established pattern – encouraged and supported by the parents and the entire community. After enumerating the approaches for preventing “marriage by proxy” in his jurisdiction, the district officer of Kukuruku Division added the phrase “if I can help it”, which suggests that the situation was beyond his control. He continued:

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 purely their affair. If the case is genuine this can always be managed.³⁶

According to records produced by the NPF, CWO, and various ethnic associations, most Lagos traffickers – both the madams and the male pimps – were from Owerri, Calabar, and Ogoja provinces of southern Nigeria.³⁷ However, this conclusion failed to account for the existence and identity of Hausa prostitutes (*karuwai*) who practiced prostitution (*karuwanci*) in *Sabon gari* (the strangers’ quarter or new town).³⁸ The British introduced the strangers’ quarter system in 1914 to segregate the natives from African foreigners in major cities of the country (Olusanya 1967, 18–24). Throughout the colonial period, child prostitution in *Sabon gari* went unnoticed because the Hausa form of prostitution was different from the “conventional” type practiced by other

Nigerian ethnicities in terms of patronage, method of solicitation, and acceptability. While Hausa prostitutes were largely patronized by Hausa or northern immigrants, non-Hausa prostitutes served diverse groups of Nigerians and non-Nigerians alike.³⁹ Whereas Hausa prostitutes solicited mainly in *Sabon gari* and waited inside or in front of their rooms for men, non-Hausa prostitutes openly engaged in street-walking in the major districts of Lagos Island.⁴⁰ The method of solicitation not only determined the income, risk, and ethnicity of customers, but also the criminal perception of casual sex work. *Karuwanci* did not attract the kind of criminality associated with the “conventional” form of prostitution and was unnoticed by administrators because of its confinement to the strangers’ quarters. Like most aspects of the urban lifestyle, prostitution had a cultural and geographical character.

The personal stories of some of the child prostitutes not only provided evidence for prosecuting their pimps but also helped unmask the identity of men who paid for sex and the entire prostitution sub-culture. After recounting how Madam Alice Etovbodua forced her to have sex with European seamen, Rose Ojenuge, a child prostitute, in a 1946 petition to Welfare Officer Donald Faulkner stated, “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 [as] my virgin fee all £13.0.0d . . .”⁴¹ The last two sentences of her long petition show she was conscious of her identity and rights: “Please sir, ask me and I will tell you how I, a little girl like this will be force[d] to keep three oversea soldiers at a time . . . I am not a slave sir, I cannot go home without my money.”⁴² The story of 12-year-old Joy, another child prostitute, is similar to Alice’s. She was brought to Lagos from Obubra in Ogoja Province under the guise of helping a relative simply identified as Aunty G in her store located in Porto Novo Market Street, one of Lagos’s most famous red-light districts.⁴³ However, she and three other underage girls were prostituted to soldiers in Aunty G’s rented room.⁴⁴

The domestic prostitution discussed above went hand in hand with transnational prostitution – some Nigerian prostitutes in the Gold Coast had previously worked in Lagos, Port Harcourt, and other cities – and vice versa.⁴⁵ It is hard to say in definite terms when Nigerian women from Ogoja, Owerri, and Calabar provinces began to emigrate to the Gold Coast to work as prostitutes. Indeed, the movement of people within the West African region predates the establishment of colonialism, and the creation of nation-states and their corresponding artificial boundaries. Space does not permit a critical appraisal of why Nigerian prostitutes chose the Gold Coast over other countries geographically contiguous to Nigeria. A plausible explanation is that these two British possessions were, during one period in the nineteenth century, brought under one administrative unit. They both witnessed a similar pattern of capitalist penetration exemplified in the creation of colonial cities, mines, and military bases, which provided markets for prostitution (Akyeampong 1997, 157–59). The transfer of money across the border and acculturation was easy because they both had the same currency (pounds sterling) and spoke English in official and unofficial transactions.

It would appear that by 1920 a well-organized prostitution ring connecting southern Nigeria with the Gold Coast had emerged. In 1939, the NYM estimated that 1,200 Nigerian women were practicing prostitution in select locations in the Gold Coast (see Table 2). This estimate only accounts for those who worked in popular brothels and does not include others who worked in rented private rooms. J. R. Dickinson, Gold Coast Chief Inspector of Labor, was the first colonial officer to fully document Nigerian women prostitutes in the Gold Coast as part of his larger survey of labor conditions in the colony in 1938.⁴⁶ Although the Gold Coast government failed to publish his report for political reasons and classified it “confidential”, Dickinson’s findings would later help authorities in

Table 2. Census of Nigerian prostitutes in some Gold Coast cities and towns conducted by the Nigerian Youth Movement, July 1939.

Town/Region	Number of prostitutes
Accra	66
Kodoridua	52
Nsawam & District	89
Sekondi	116
Tekoradi	186
Dunkwa & District	120
Tarkwa & District	338
Axim	2
Cape Coast	71
Winneba	17
Oda	32
Swedru & District	32
Kumasi	58
Konongo	10
Obuasi	17
Total	1206

Source: Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) CSO 15/1/222.

devising legislation against the traffic. The report gave a vivid picture of the ethnic identities of the women, the male customers and the amount they paid for sex. What is more, Dickinson's sketchy information on the earnings of migrant prostitutes returned to their communities established prostitution as an "off the book" item of Nigeria's national income. According to Dickinson, who claimed to have interviewed prostitutes, male customers, and locals for his report, migrant prostitutes were patronized by laborers who paid between one and five shillings per visit. Theo Ashife, one of Dickinson's informants, provided a spiritual perspective on the sex trade:

One week before the departure of the girls to the Gold Coast they have to go to a place called Ono-Ago to a Native Doctor who gives them medicine to drink known as Calabar beans or sash wood. It is the common belief amongst these people that when they drink this medicine, they are immune from the attack of venereal disease. After three or four years' stay in the Gold Coast and after they have had sufficient money and personal effects, they return home to their native land, and before they reunite with their husbands, they go back to the native medicine man who prescribes for them a course of retreat and ablution after which they go back to their husbands when other wives will have to migrate to replace those at home.

As previously mentioned, Prince Eikineh's petition forced the governments of Nigeria and the Gold Coast to formerly investigate prostitution with a view to stopping it. Halting the traffic required new immigration legislation and anti-prostitution laws. Before 1942, the Gold Coast did not have any anti-prostitution law – indeed, anti-prostitution law such as brothel keeping, procuring, and "living on immoral earnings" all appeared first on the criminal code ordinance of that country because of the need to prosecute and repatriate Nigerian migrant prostitutes.⁴⁷ New immigration measures empowered the NPF to search Gold Coast bound vessels and interview underage girls to ascertain if they were victims or potential victims of sexual exploitation. This procedure probably worked. On 23 March 1943, Tiro, a 14-year-old girl, was returned to Obubra Division when one Johnson with whom she was traveling could not provide a tangible explanation of the purpose of their trip to the Gold Coast.⁴⁸

Table 3. Prostitute women and children from Obubra Division found on the Gold Coast.

Town	Number of prostitutes
Afafani	8
Igoni Igoni	1
Ebon	28
Usumutong	37
Afunatam	12
Jagon	1
Ediba	400
Appiapum	1
Abayongo	13
Obubra	1
Abanyum	11
Gbongon	7
Akunakuna	12
Total	532

Source: National Archives Enugu, NAE, OBUBDIST 4.1.71.

Nigeria and the League of Nations Conventions on Traffic in Women and Girls, 1921–1941

Nils Rindgdal has noted in his book on the world history of prostitution that, “never before had so many women supported themselves through prostitution as during the years from 1870–1930” (Ringdal 2004, 313–20). From Calcutta to Buenos Aires, Cape Town to London, the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries ushered in the consolidation of the globalization of sex (Bristow 1982). The internationalization of the Industrial Revolution, railways and steamships, and the new Western imperialism “compressed” the globe and facilitated the massive movement of women who sold sex world-wide (ibid, 314–20). By the 1870s, European and American feminists and abolitionists, leaning towards a host of religious and non-religious ideologies such as eugenics and “civilized morality”, were convinced that women working in brothels across the globe were victims of kidnap and coercion (Jeffreys 1997, 7–34; Glickman 2000; Donovan 2006, 17–56; Limoncelli 2010). If the abolitionists considered “free” adult prostitutes to be enemies of public safety, well-circulated images of child prostitutes and their testimonies of horror of forced prostitution invigorated the “holy war for the safety and purity of womanhood” (Bell 1910, v).

Not until 1904, however, did the world begin to work in concert against global prostitution through the signing of the French-sponsored “International Agreement for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic”.⁴⁹ The signatories to the convention did not establish a common or transnational police force to track down white slave traffickers. However, they believed that collating and sharing information could help ameliorate the situation.⁵⁰ Signatories also agreed to provide shelter and support to victims of the sex trade, establish monitoring agencies, increase surveillance on trans-border prostitution, and help repatriate non-nationals to their home countries.⁵¹ The 1904 agreement reported significant success, which encouraged signatories to revise it. Thus, in 1910, the “International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic” came into force and had wider application in the areas of punishment and extradition of traffickers. Over 130 sovereign states and colonial dependencies, including France, Great Britain, Kenya, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and the Gambia, among others, were signatories.⁵² In 1921, the League of Nations (and later

the United Nations) took over the fight against white slave traffic and sponsored more conventions in 1933, 1947, 1949, and 1950 to accommodate the changing character of the global sex trade.⁵³ Although the provisions of the conventions varied as they were revised, the main aim of sharing information about prostitution, and the rescuing of victims and prosecuting of traffickers did not change.⁵⁴

As popular as these conventions were, Nigeria was not a signatory. It was after the demise of colonial rule (1961 precisely) that the government of Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first prime minister, made the country a signatory. For the authorities, there was no point agreeing to the conventions if Nigeria was not experiencing the problem they sought to tackle. The conventions' annual questionnaires sent out to all governments – regardless of their signatory status – between 1921 and 1950s provide major source material for revealing the falsification of prostitution in the country.⁵⁵ In fact, it does not take much effort to identify the government's false representation of white slave traffic by comparing data presented to the international community with those produced locally. When the League of Nations asked Nigeria's Acting Governor, D. C. Cameron, about prostitution in his jurisdiction in 1921, he claimed that trafficking in women and children "is practically unknown in Nigeria".⁵⁶ He mentioned that his government's major problem was domestic slavery, which existed clandestinely in various parts of the country. Meanwhile, he did not deny the sexual exploitation of girls in his correspondence with Lagos Commissioner of Police in December of the same year.⁵⁷ His response to a 1923 petition by the LWL on the criminality of prostitutes obviously revealed the authorities' official policy of tolerating prostitution as long as it did not threaten imperialism: "Every effort is being made by the Colony police to keep them [prostitutes] within bounds."⁵⁸ He continued, "any prostitute who becomes a nuisance to the general public is recommended to the Town Council for deportation forthwith".⁵⁹

Cameron's correspondences with the League of Nations, the Commissioner of Police and the LWL revealed multiple contradictions concerning prostitution, normalization, and regulation. However, he could not have successfully deceived the international community, which recognized the thin line between "free" prostitutes – that is, adult women who practiced prostitution independently – and girls who were trafficked.⁶⁰ In Lagos, as elsewhere in Europe and North America, critics of legalization of prostitution felt it would legitimize underage prostitution and threaten the future of African womanhood.⁶¹ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the authorities responded "not applicable", "nil", and "none" to all the League of Nations' questions about prostitution, brothel keeping, and trafficking of girls.⁶² Indeed, they continued to parry questions on white slave traffic, but gave information about the abolition of slavery. In the section on sexual exploitation in the 1933 questionnaire, the Inspector General of Police wrote that there was "no case of sexual exploitation of girls".⁶³ However, newspapers, including the *Nigerian Daily Times*, reported that underage girls were frequently exploited sexually.⁶⁴

"Young women native of Nigeria have been sent, or proceed of their own volition, to the Gold Coast": Nigeria, the League of Nations, and the United Nations Conventions on Traffic in Women and Girls, 1941–1955

Two developments during the Second World War compelled authorities to criminalize both domestic and transnational prostitution and report the situation to the League of Nations and United Nations. First, violent crime and VD, two of many vices associated with prostitution, increased unprecedentedly as the war's emergency measures ravaged virtually all spheres of Nigeria's economy.⁶⁵ New and old forms of criminality reached

alarming levels as big cities like Lagos witnessed significant demographic changes that saw tens of thousands of people fleeing to escape rural poverty (Fourchard 2005, 287–316; 2006, 115–37). The incidence of VD – presumed to be conveyed by prostitutes – in the WAFF increased to the point whereby nearly half of the force was at one time or another rendered unfit for active service on account of syphilis and gonorrhoea.⁶⁶ Authorities' anxiety over the future of imperialism in Nigeria intensified as more soldiers were hospitalized and acts of public disorder soared. So serious was the impact of casual sex work during the Second World War that four of the five anti-prostitution laws enacted in a century of colonial presence in Nigeria were passed between 1941 and 1943. These laws included: Unlicensed Guide (Prohibition) Ordinance, (1941); Venereal Disease Ordinance (1943); Children and Young Persons Ordinance (CYPO; 1943); and Chapter 21 of the Criminal Code Ordinance (1944).⁶⁷ The existence of these laws implicated Nigeria, and made it impossible for the authorities to continue to disguise prostitution as slavery or report that girls were not being trafficked. For instance, the CYPO criminalized child prostitution, while Section 222B of the Criminal Code Ordinance punished "whoever, having custody, charge or care of a child or young person . . . allowed that child or young person to reside in or frequent a brothel".⁶⁸

The second development was Prince Eikineh's petition, which was taken up by NYM, the nationalist party that controlled Lagos politics from 1938 (Cole 1975, 158). Nigerian and Gold Coast authorities responded to the NYM petition by asking administrators around the country about sexual exploitation within their areas of jurisdiction. The information collated did not contravene what top officers in Lagos, Calabar, Owerri, and Ogoja already knew: Lagos was the hub of domestic prostitution, and most of the Gold Coast prostitutes were from southern provinces.⁶⁹ However, the new "fact-finding" reports exposed the extent of migratory prostitution and supplied previously unknown data on remission.⁷⁰ In addition, new information about the relationship between the transformation of African marriage and prostitution emerged as administrators resuscitated prejudiced interpretation of Africa's culture.⁷¹ When asked about why women from his jurisdiction emigrated to the Gold Coast, the Resident of Ogoja Province asserted that "people here do not cherish marriage and family".⁷² This monocausal explanation of the motivation for prostitution downplayed the women's realization that prostitution was a profitable profession. In all, correspondence and reports generated between 1939 and early 1941 indicated the readiness of the government to criminalize migratory prostitution in order to reduce the incidence of VD. However, Nigeria continued to deny the existence of white slave traffic in its annual League of Nations' questionnaire.

Just as administrators were planning to criminalize prostitution, Prince Eikineh's petition had reached London and attracted the concern of journalists and critics of white slave traffic, including the International Bureau for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children.⁷³ After interviewing R. K. Floyer, one of the first officers to investigate the traffic, Henry Ormston, a writer for *West Africa* – the most widely circulated magazine about West African affairs both in Britain and Africa – published the first international story about Nigerian and Gold Coast prostitution on 15 March 1941. Appropriately titled, "The Social Question: A Startling Disclosure", Ormston criticized Floyer for "an exceedingly disagreeable public service" but also went on to salute his courage: "Some men in his [Floyer's] position would have shrunk from it, not from deliberate dereliction of duty but appalled by their feeling of helplessness in face of it."⁷⁴ The article lambasted the government for failing to stop sexual exploitation of Nigerian girls, and painted a gloomy picture of the welfare of colonial subjects. Six months later another *West Africa* article, titled "Nigerian Social Question: Pertinent Posers that Demand Official Inquiry", by Mary

Chorlton, criticized colonial officers for not acting against transnational prostitution and demanded that the British Parliament or women's associations institute a commission of enquiry into social decadence in Nigeria.⁷⁵ Like most imperial writers about Africa, Chorlton expressed a noxious stereotype of African sexuality, stating that there was "far less promiscuity" in Britain than in Africa. In addition, her "humanitarian" article reinforced administrative concern that prostitution and VD were capable of hindering Britain's war effort. The *West Africa* articles produced the intended outcome of calling international attention to the ills of imperialism in Nigeria. By November 1941, the Colonial Office in London had received more than 60 petitions from a wide spectrum of reformist groups, including women's associations and Nigerian and Gold Coast students studying in London.⁷⁶

Ormston's and Chorlton's articles embarrassed administrators. Governor B. Bourdillon criticized Floyer for granting an unauthorized interview and divulging information that could jeopardize Britain's 'Win the War' efforts.⁷⁷ Although Floyer would later regret granting the interview, his estimate of 80 trafficked women that he suggested to Ormston was certainly a modest one. It seemed his senior colleagues were angry not so much because of the accuracy of the figure he gave, but rather because the information they had been trying to hide was leaked to the entire world. In a piece of correspondence marked "confidential", the Chief Secretary to the Government, W. Paul, directed Floyer to write a rebuttal – which must be approved by a senior officer – to the editor of *West Africa* to clear the air about the number of Nigerian prostitutes he had suggested to Ormston and to "emphasise rather more strongly" the steps being taken by the government to halt the "traffic".⁷⁸

It became apparent that the authorities could no longer disguise white slave traffic as domestic slavery. However, they came up with their own definition of a "trafficked" person in order not to be held accountable for the criminality of Nigerian prostitutes. Whereas the League of Nations and the United Nations generally treated all women and girls involved in domestic and transnational prostitution as "trafficked" persons, partly because it was difficult to differentiate between "forced" and "free" prostitution in circumstances where brothels and prostitution networks were managed by highly influential and criminally-minded cabals, Nigeria defined trafficking solely as coercion. In a December 1941 questionnaire, the Inspector General of Police responded: "Representations have been made that young woman native [sic] of Nigeria *have been sent, or proceed of their own volition There is no evidence of any traffic in children* [author's emphasis]."⁷⁹ Carefully read, it is evident the Inspector General avoided the term "traffic". The following year he reported: "Some young women of Nigeria travel to the Gold Coast for the purpose of prostitution. They go entirely of their own volition, and *this is not therefore strictly a 'traffic in women'* [author's emphasis]."⁸⁰ In acknowledging the Secretary of State for the Colonies' dispatch on traffic in women and girls, Governor Bourdillon regretted the delay in responding to the annual question and criticized the *West Africa* articles for being "obviously written under some misrepresentation".⁸¹ Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, authorities continued to trivialize prostitution in their correspondence with both the colonial office and the international community.

Explaining the politicization of white slave traffic: colonial security and sexual morality

A 1920 commissioned report on the progress of the civilizing mission in southern Nigeria helps unveil why prostitution was politicized. Authored by W.B. Paul, a colonial officer

who had previously served in India, this report regretted the inability of imperialism to improve the lives of the natives and noted that Nigeria's moral decadence would soon surpass India's, where the authorities blamed colonialism for promoting white slave traffic through unregulated sexual conduct.⁸² The presence of "an army" of "unattached" women practicing prostitution in Lagos, according to Paul, pointed to the failure of colonial policies to uplift the moral life of Nigerians.⁸³ He drew significant parallels between Lagos and top cities in the world where prostitution regulation consistently pitched reformists of different ideologies against one another.

If the authorities disagreed on a number of Paul's recommendations, such as policing of prostitution and establishing schools for girls, they all agreed on the need to ensure that Nigeria did not become another "imperial embarrassment"⁸⁴ like India. By imperial embarrassment, authorities meant feminist campaigns against white slave traffic in India and other British colonies in Asia. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, abolitionists and feminist groups campaigned vigorously against imperialism, which, instead of civilizing the world, promoted white slave traffic through uncontrolled sexuality. The global feminist movement against draconian legislation on VD and white slave traffic was easily drawn into the debate on the welfare and progress of colonial women, contesting the ethical justification for blaming only women for prostitution. The politics of race and white slave traffic in India and Paul's report laid the background of the response Nigeria gave the international community about prostitution. Becoming a signatory to the League of Nations and United Nations Conventions would have implicated Nigeria because doing so acknowledged the existence of white slave traffic, which it did not want to do. It would also have allowed international surveillance, which it also did not want. Indeed, the ferocity of abolitionist agitation against white slave traffic in India scared officers who did not want Nigeria to become another battleground of British feminist mobilization against atrocities of imperial patriarchy.⁸⁵

Although the colonialists probably regretted the fact that imperialism had created the environment under which prostitution flourished, they did not take any action against it because prostitution did not pose a significant threat to colonial security until the outbreak of the Second World War. Even when they began to police it from the early 1940s onwards, it was not an altruistic gesture, but rather the result of a need to check VD and crime, which threatened Britain's war efforts and the furtherance of imperialism in Nigeria. It was relatively easy for them to veil white slave traffic as prostitution because the institution of slavery continued in some parts of Nigeria up until the 1940s.

Conclusion

This article's primary focus is on how and why Nigeria hid trafficking in women and girls from international surveillance between the 1920s and 1950s. Two eras of politicization of prostitution are discernible. From 1921 to 1941, authorities reported to the international community that women were not trafficked for the purposes of prostitution despite accepting the impact of casual sex work on Lagos society in their correspondences with African elite women and law enforcement officers. During this period, they highlighted their relentless efforts to eradicate the remnants of slavery in northern and southeastern Nigeria. From 1941 to 1955, new developments such as an increase in crime rates and VD and Prince Eikineh's petition, compelled administrators to change their earlier stance. They criminalized both domestic and transnational prostitution obviously because of the need to reduce crime rates and VD, which posed security threats. But instead of acknowledging the sex trade, the authorities redefined the meaning of "traffic" by insisting

that prostitution did not involve any form of force or coercion so that they could not be blamed for either supporting immorality or not policing traffickers.

What is the connection between domestic slavery and white slave traffic? Although popular rhetoric about the horror of forced prostitution tended to make abolitionists associate casual sex work with slavery, available evidence does not suggest any connection between the two in southern Nigeria. As we have seen, the girls trafficked to Lagos were acquired mainly under the guise of marriage, apprenticeship, and training from their parents and guardians in the villages. However in the north, run-away slaves and concubines and slaves who had deserted their masters lived and sold sex in brothels in Kano. Yet, the modus operandi of prostitution and domestic slavery varied both in terms of the domains in which they operated and the social production involved.

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Notes

1. National Archives Ibadan (NAI hereafter), CSO, 36005, "Prince Eikineh to President of the Nigerian Youth Movement", 28 June 1939.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra (PRAAD hereafter), CSO 15/1/222, "Nigerian Prostitutes in Secondi, March 1939".
5. NAI, CSO 26, 36005, "Extract from Ogoja Province Annual Report 1938".
6. NAI, CSO 26, 36005, "District Officer of Obubra Division to the Resident of Ogoja Province", 7 February 1941.
7. NAI, CSO 26, 36005, "President Nigerian Youth Movement to the Chief Secretary to the Government, Lagos", 17 November 1939.
8. The Gold Coast Branch of the NYM frequently provided intelligence reports about the movements and activities of migrant prostitutes to the governments of Nigeria and the Gold Coast. See NAI, CSO 26, 36005, "Statement by Prince Eikineh to the Gold Coast Police", 23 November 1939.
9. NAI, Comcol 1, 248/76, "The Honourable Secretary of Urhobo Progress Union to the Colony Welfare Office", 7 August 1943.
10. NAI, Comcol 1, 498, "Lagos Women's League to Hugh Clifford", 24 October 1923; and NAI, Comcol 1, 498, "The Governor to Obasa", 20 December 1923.
11. *Daily Service*, "Representative of Women's Party Interview L.T.C [Lagos Town Council] Secretary", 18 December 1944 and "Women's Party Holds Grand Meeting", 24 August 1944. See also, NAI, Comcol 1, 248/107, "The Women's Welfare Council to the Commissioner of the Colony", 19 January 1943.
12. See *West African Pilot*, "Hotel Girls Suffering from VD Will Be Affected by New Bill", 9 March 1943 and "The V.D. Ordinance, 1943", 5 November 1943. See also the *Eastern Nigerian Guardian*: "Prostitutes Cite Law to Landlord as He Asked Them to Vacate His Premises", 27 March 1944; "Aba Prostitutes Parade the Township and Sing They Will Not Quit their Job", 4 May 1944; "Packing of Prostitutes at Abonnema is Likened to Exodus of the Israelites", 16 May 1944.
13. NAI, Comcol 1, 3007 "Employment of African Ladies in the Government Service", 1944; *Daily Service*, "The Lagos Women's Party Demands Equal Pay for Men and Women", 15 November 1944.
14. *Daily Service*, "Women's Party Meets Police Officer", 18 December 1944; and "Women's Party Meets Police Officer", 18 December 1944; 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".
15. NAI, CSO 26, 03338, Vol. II, "Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Government Administering Nigeria", 28 October 1921.

16. NAI, CSO/26, 278387, "Traffic in Women and Children: Annual Report of".
17. It is a well-known fact that the missionaries were chiefly responsible for disseminating Western education for most of the colonial period.
18. NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "Child Marriage", 14 July 1942.
19. A good book for unlocking Nigerian newspapers for historical research is Coker (1968).
20. NAI, Comcol 1, N 1088/1918, "Venereal Disease in the Nigerian Regiment – The Commandant to the Director of Medical and Sanitary Service, 1918".
21. NAI, Comcol 1, N 1088/1918, "Venereal Disease in the Military, 1918".
22. NAI, Comcol 1, 498, "Olajumoke Obasa to the Chief Secretary to the Government", 26 February 1924.
23. PRAAD, CSO 15/1/222, "Nigerian Women Prostitutes: Investigation into", April 1940.
24. Ibid.
25. *Nigerian Daily Times*, "Problem of the Girl Hawkers", 20 May 1930.
26. See the following stories in the *Daily Comet*: "Save the Future Mothers by Sogidi", 21 September 1935; "Save the Future Mothers by a Muslim", 5 October 1935; "Girl Hawkers' Morals by Kabiboy", 19 October 1935; and "Girl Hawkers' Morals by COO", 26 October 1935.
27. *The Comet*, "Girls' Morals", 5 October 1935.
28. *Nigerian Daily Times*, "Young Girl Found Dead on Race Course", 12 March 1945; *West African Pilot*, "Young Girl Found Dead on Race Course: Foul Play Suspected: Information Requested by Police", 15 March 1945. See other stories on assault, rape, and murder: *West African Pilot*, "Street Hawking by Young Girls", 20 June 1946 and "Eleven Year Old Girl Hawker Found Dead in Public Garden", 20 June 1946; *Daily Service*, "Man Who Assaulted Young Girl Receives 3 Months", 19 August 1941.
29. One is not suggesting that hawking was absolutely safe in precolonial times. Indeed, child hawkers could have been easy prey to kidnappers and even slave raiders. What colonialism did was to increase the rate of hawking and its associated danger.
30. NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "Child Marriage", February 1943.
31. This estimate was derived from newspaper stories and reports on bride-prices published during the 1930s and 1940s. According to Ojo, the "scarcity of women" in Ekiti region as a result of warfare and slavery pushed marriage payment up in the early years of the twentieth century. See Ojo (2010, 151).
32. Debate over marriage payment received adequate publicity in the *Eastern Nigerian Guardian*, *West African Pilot*, and *Southern Nigerian Defender* during the 1940s. See, among others, *Nigerian Spokesman*, "Youth of Awo-Omama Will Boycott Their Girls, Want Bride Price be Reduced", 8 January 1948; and *Daily Comet*, "Bride Price in Iboland", 7 July 1949. See the following items from the *West African Pilot*: "This Dowry Problem", 29 July 1938; "The Dowry System", 21 February 1939; and "Bride-price at Awka", 24 August 1946.
33. Oral interview, Mrs Johnson, Lagos, 19 June 2008.
34. NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "Child Welfare-Prostitution and Child Marriage", May 1943.
35. NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "Ogbo Abuyola to the Colonial Welfare Office", 12 July 1946.
36. NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "District Officer of Kukuruku Division to the Colony Welfare Officer", 6 October 1946.
37. See reports and correspondence in NAI, Comcol 1, 2600, Vol. I, "Social Welfare in Nigeria"; NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "Child Prostitution in Lagos"; NAI, Comcol 1, "Calabar Improvement League"; and NAI, Comcol 1, 248/76, "Urhobo Progress Union".
38. Oral interview, Madam Yusuf, Lagos, 20 June 2008. For the story of *Karuwanci* in Ibadan, see Cohen (1969, 51–70). *Karuwanci* was a traditional institution that dates back to centuries of Hausa civilization. In precolonial times it served as a gateway for reintegrating divorcees into households through courtship, and did not involve the commoditization of sex. However, from around the 1930s or earlier, both women who sold sex in brothels and those who practiced the old *karuwanci* were collectively called *karuwai* (prostitutes). More research is required to historicize the transformation of *karuwanci* since the precolonial times. For more on *karuwanci*, see Barkow (1971, 58–73) and Smith (1959, 293–53).
39. Oral interview, Mr Akanji Olanrewaju, Lagos, 15 June 2008.
40. Oral interview, Madam Hauwa, Lagos, 17 June 2008.
41. NAI, Comcol 1, "Rose Ojenughe to Welfare Officer", 21 November 1946.
42. Ibid.
43. *West African Pilot*, "Red-light-District", 17 December 1937.

44. NAI, Comcol 1, 2844, "Report Against Aunty G".
45. PRAAD, CSO, 15/1/222, "Reports on "Prostitution of Nigerian Women", February 1941.
46. PRAAD, CSO, 15/1/222, "Report on Labor Conditions in the Gold Coast", 1938.
47. PRAAD, CSO, 15/1/222 "Governor of Nigeria to Governor of the Gold Coast", 29 July 1941.
48. National Archives Enugu (NAE hereafter), OBUBDIST 4.1.71, "Tiro's Case, March 23, 1943".
49. The agreement can be found online: http://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=VII-8&chapter=7&lang=en.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. For a full listing of the conventions, their provisions, and signatories, see <http://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDGS/Volume%20I/Chapter%20VII/VII-10.en.pdf>.
53. NAI, CSO 26, 03338, Vol. I, "Traffic in Women and Girls: Conventions on", June 1910.
54. For the full list of conventions, see <http://treaties.un.org/pages/Treaties.aspx?id=7&subid=A&lang=en>.
55. NAI, CSO 26, 278387, "League of Nations: Questionnaire of".
56. NAI, CSO 03338, Vol. II, "The Honourable Winston S. Churchill Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Government Administering Nigeria", 28 October 1921.
57. NAI, CSO 26, 278387, "Girls in Prostitution", 16 December 1921.
58. NAI, Comcol 1, 498, "The Governor to Obasa", 20 December 1923.
59. Ibid.
60. NAI, CSO 26, "League of Nations: Trafficking Report for 1924".
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62. See the correspondence in NAI, CSO 26, 36005, Vols. I and II; and NAI CSO/ 26, 278387, Vols. I and II.
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83. Ibid.
84. NAI, CSO 26, 27837, "Re: Report on Society and People of Lagos", 22 June 1920.
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Notes on contributor

Saheed Aderinto is Assistant Professor of African History at Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina. He is the co-author of *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (University of Rochester Press, 2010), and co-editor of *Emerging Frontiers in Nigerian History* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming).

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