

Transnationalism by Other Means: Nigerians in the Gold Coast Sex Trade in Historical Perspective

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Abstract

The activities of women from the Cross River region of Nigeria in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the late 1930s and the 1940s became a signpost of cross border migrant women as sex workers in a foreign land. This article argues that the transnational movement of peoples (particularly sex workers) across national borders during the colonial period have served as prominent lenses through which the nature of both transnationalism and international sex trade can be critiqued and understood. The Sex trade Industry, as it involved Nigeria during the period under study, is a thriving one that has not attracted enough attention from historians. This industry has witnessed an unprecedented movement of people across national and international borders. It developed a texture and template that remains fascinating and relevant to the contemporary understanding of the oldest trade in the world. By engaging the concept of transnationalism in the analysis of the sex industry, this work is centred on its usefulness as a tool for

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analysing migrants' strong ties across countries and social formations. It relies significantly on findings from archival reports and secondary sources.

Preamble

... there is no denying the fact that prostitution is one of the main problems facing the Native Authorities in Togoland. Until quite recently, most of the unfortunate women so stigmatized in the Colony came from over the border. The establishment of troops in the different parts of the country, generally away from their family, and the influx of persons of other nationalities in recent times have unfortunately increased the ranks of this evil.¹

Introduction

Over the last two centuries, the inter-state system had come to provide the dominant organizational form for cross-border flows. It is this condition that provided dramatic changes in West Africa during colonial rule. The dynamics and processes that became territorialized began to occur on national, regional, and global scales. Several forces encouraged the strengthening of this opening up process. Some of the key actors to benefit from this reality were the women who participated in the international sex trade.² The epigraph above has revealed an aspect of the culture of the international sex trade that prevailed in West Africa during colonial rule.

The interest in the phenomenon of transnational sex work has either shifted significantly to or dwelt on victimhood and human trafficking across nations. Other interests have focused on the role of globalization and transnational sex trade as a social problem.³

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1. GH/PRAAD/CSO 21/12/14 Forced Marriage of African Girls - Prevention, 9.
 2. Sassen, Saskia "Locating Cities on Global Circuits," *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.14, No. 1 April 2002, 13-30.
 3. See Erez, Edna, Peter R. Ibarra and William F. McDonald. "Transnational Sex Trafficking: Issues and Prospects." *International Review of Victimology*, 2004, Vol. 11, 1-9.

The expanding interest in the contemporary period has drawn away interest in the historical development of the phenomenon across time and space. One of the issues that had been pushed into the background is the Gold Coast sex trade involving Nigerians from the Cross River region. Historically, there have been significant occurrences of transnational flows. The creation of diaspora populations in the Gold Coast (Ghana) laid the foundation for a complex interpersonal, intercultural, and diplomatic relationships between the host society, the society of origin, and colonial diplomatic structures/measures of control.⁴

Modern international sex trade and human trafficking in West Africa and indeed Nigeria could be traced to the colonial period. Commercial sex trade and human trafficking across the Colonial West African borders was rife between 1935 and 1945. Given the quantum of the cases of prostitution across West Africa, this essay presents a general survey across West Africa but focuses more on the sex trade links between the Cross-River region of southern Nigeria and the Gold Coast.

The Cross-River Region of Nigeria

The Cross-River region experienced colonial rule, just like any other part of Nigeria. However, the impact of colonial rule on the colonized varied from place to place with significant implications into the future. The people of the area are a Negroid race comprising of the Efik, Qua, Efut, Ejagham, Bahumono, Yakurr, Agbo, Mbembe, Ekajuk, Nkum, Mbube, Yala, Ukele, Yache, Bekwara, Belle_Bendi and several others.⁵

In spite of this diversity, however, there existed a significant degree of political, economic, and socio-cultural relationships amongst the people.

The major economic enterprise of the people included farming, fishing, hunting, and animal husbandry. However, the development

4. Tambiah, Stanley J. "Transnational Movements, Diaspora, and Multiple Movements," *Daedalus*, Vol. 129, No.1, Multiple Modernities (Winter, 2000), 163.

5. Erim, D. Patience and David L. Imbua. "Women in the Colonial Economy of the Cross-River Area of Nigeria, 1900-1950." *Kamla-Raj, J. Social Science*, 30 (2), 2012, 171-181.

of colonial contact opened up other opportunities for the people, and this included trans-border economic and social enterprises with the opening up of borders through mutual colonial experiences and modernity. The impact of British colonial rule on the women of the area was quite interesting and significant.⁶ Before the advent of British colonial rule, the women of the area played significant roles in the religious, cultural, economic, and political lives of the people. However, with colonial rule, women became excluded from the administrative affairs and public life of the people. They retreated to the farms with the active support of their husbands. Men were wary of the consequences of contact with the Europeans for their wives. Things began to change for women with the enactment of different colonial laws and proclamations.

The enactment of the Roads and Creeks (Rivers) Ordinance of 1903 forced men into the carrier system or conscripted them to participate in the construction of Guest Houses, Roads, and bridges. These took men away from home for several seasons.⁷ Women were then forced to begin to participate in public life. They also began to take matters into their own hands. A manifestation of this was the Obubra Women's revolt of 1934 arising from insufficient lands. They had understood what it meant to define their aspirations in the context of the age. Others also began to diverge into other directions, one of which was prostitution.

In this work, prostitution and commercial sex trade are used interchangeably. The questions raised by this article are: How did commercial sex work in the area begin? What were the factors and forces that shaped the movement towards the Gold Coast? What Colonial accounts surrounded these developments, and what steps were taken to address them? What are the narratives surrounding sex trade and human trafficking in the region? These are some of the questions addressed by this socio-historical study designed largely to interrogate transnational movements,

6. For details, see Mba, N. E. *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965*, Lagos: Crucible Publishers, 1997.

7. Afigbo, A.E. "The Warrant Chief System in Eastern Nigeria: Direct or Indirect Rule?" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 1967, 683-700; see also, Afigbo, A.E. *The Warrant Chief: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929*, London: Longman Group Limited, 1972.

commercial sex-trade and their networks, human-trafficking, the sex industry and their consequences for African culture, gender relations, human rights, tradition, and human values.

Colonialism and the Sex Trade in West Africa

Colonial Nigeria, like other parts of West Africa, was confronted with the social menace of prostitution. The period 1900 to 1958 was concisely captured by Aderinto in his book entitled "When sex threatened the state..."⁸ to capture a period when there was a growing concern amongst colonial administrators, traditional chiefs, Native Authorities, and generally the citizens of West Africa over the growing menace of commercial sex trade amongst the citizens of West Africa. Nigerian scholars are unanimous in their submission; however, that colonialism liberalized sex in Africa, as hitherto, marriage was culturally the accepted arena for the expression and the experiencing of sexuality.⁹ Even then, extramarital affairs were not unknown in pre-colonial Nigeria.

Administratively, Nigeria was divided into four divisions; the Colony that was made up of the Island of Lagos, and the Protectorate which was divided into three Provinces into the Northern, Eastern and Western Regions.¹⁰

From the mid-1920s, the Colonial Office was faced with major challenges over the sex trade in two major locations in Nigeria, namely the Cross-River area and Lagos. Of major concern in these locations was the prevalence of both adult and Child prostitution. Ports such as Calabar (Cross-River region), Port Harcourt and Lagos where there were large military camps; the sex trade witnessed a boom.¹¹ Since the 1930s, it was commonplace for persons to lure young girls¹² from the provinces either on the

8. Aderinto, S. *When Sex Threatened the State: Illicit Sexuality, Nationalism, and Politics in Colonial Nigeria, 100-1958*, Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

9. Ikpe, E.B. "Human Sexuality in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective," in No.2 - *Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series*, Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centres ASRC, 2004, 9.

10. NAI/Ondo Prof 1/3, Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate, 117.

11. Ibid, 76.

12. NAI/ComCol I/2844, 'Child Prostitution in Lagos, 1942-46,' 98.

promises of education or on the pretext of employment or early child marriages under cover of native marriage system, and at other times they were employed in brothels.¹³

By the early 1930s, the traditional chiefs of some towns in West Africa, particularly in Ghana, Togo, Sierra Leone and Nigeria expressed concerns to the colonial government when they observed that girls of marriageable ages refused to be married. On this issue, the traditional chiefs took various decisions; one of which was to force the girls to marry within a specified period. The Howusu, Paramount Chief of Ho in the Asogli State of the Gold Coast was said to have issued a Public Order on the 11th of November 1941, enforcing a compulsory marriage rule and sanction to those who refused. He was said to have sent individual small papers to these girls that indicated their native names. On the paper was the message "You must be married" within two months to individual girls. The letter was an indication that she must marry within two months with or without a native marriage. She was expected to go and live with a man. If she did not comply, she or her parents had to pay a fine of £6.¹⁴

According to the Howusu, the case was not just against girls of marriageable age but "against girls who have refused reasonable offers of marriage from their menfolk, and whose subsequent way of living has led the Native Authorities to suspect them of prostitution."¹⁵ The District Officer gave an example of a case "where a girl refused a young man and subsequently took up residence in the colony where for some considerable time the Native Authorities of her home-town had evidence to make them believe that she was prostituting."¹⁶ While the Native Authority claimed their actions were measures adopted to prevent prostitution based on the premise that the only alternative to marriage was prostitution. However, the colonial administrators expressed a counter opinion. They argued that a woman can be self-sustaining by honest means without recourse to prostitution and that, on the contrary, the actions of the

13. NAI/Ondo Prof 1/3, Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate, 145.

14. GH/PRAAD/CSO 21/12/14 Forced Marriage of African Girls - Prevention, 7-9.

15. *Ibid*, 9.

16. *Ibid*.

chiefs could force a girl into prostitution, if she had no means of finding money to offset the fine.

In their relentless pursuit of controlling or eradicating prostitution, Native Authorities in most African countries sought the assistance of the colonial government to establish strong measures that will halt this menace. But, in the first instance, the colonial office downplayed the severity of the sex trade until they were confronted with the spread of Venereal Diseases (VD) by the 1940s when there were reported cases of Venereal Diseases amongst Imperial Military personnel; a situation that led to the passing of the first anti-VD law (Venereal Disease Ordinance VDO) in 1943. The continued patronage of virgins by European seamen heightened the incidence of child prostitutes in Lagos and led to the promulgation of the Children and Young Person's Ordinances of 1943.

A major feature of the Ordinance was the repatriation of girls considered to be in 'Moral Danger' – girls who were abducted or brought to Lagos under the pretence to obtain an education. Girls not obtained within the provision of the laws – and who originally came to Lagos from the rural areas across the Eastern and Western Provinces and exploited as child prostitutes.¹⁷ Prostitutes from other parts of Nigeria, particularly the southern parts of Nigeria like Calabar, were known to have migrated into Lagos to take up menial jobs and to engage in prostitution. A crucial arena to interrogate is the spatial relationship between prostitution and the coast.

The Lagos Coast was at first the major source of concern. The 'red light' districts on the Lagos Island where sex trade enjoyed heavy patronage were; the Marina, Igbosere Road, Broad Street, Balogun Street, Victoria Street, Ereko Street, Racecourse Road, Tinubu Square, Moloney Street, Idumagbo Avenue, Ikoyi Road, Moloney Bridge Street, Force Road, Iddo Road, Denton Causeway, and all streets in Ikoyi.¹⁸ Prostitution along the coast had thrived

17. NAI/ComCol I 2844, Miss Izzett's Report 'Child Prostitution in Lagos' in Child Prostitution in Lagos, 1942-46, 86.

18. NAI/ComCol I/2786. Children and Young Persons Bill of 1943, 189. See also Aderinto, S. *When Sex Threatened the State: Illicit Sexuality, Nationalism, and Politics in Colonial Nigeria, 100-1958*, Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015, 54.

because of the presence of “hundreds of thousands of Europeans and Americans.”¹⁹ Because these men had left their ships “after weeks of abstinence ... , they have multiplied the demand for prostitutes and greatly increased the monetary prices.”²⁰ The presence of these foreigners, thus, promoted sex trade during this period.

The coast became a major attraction for the trade due to the presence of these military personnel. But, the surge of rural dwellers to Lagos; initially deemed as a result of its established identity as “the centres of government activity,”²¹ quickly presented this influx of persons as negative, rather than positive, particularly with the rise in adult and child prostitution perpetrated mostly by these new visitors to Lagos. Moralists blamed the Akunakuna, Calabar, Efik (all from the Cross-River region), Edo and Igbo women as “the pollutants of the moral serenity of Lagos during the 1930s and 1940s.”²² From the 1940s, this group of girls and women moved away from Lagos to the Gold Coast. According to Naanen:

In 1941 a list of some Nigerian prostitutes in the Gold Coast showed that most of them claimed to come from Calabar town. And in 1950 the head chief of Ikot Ekpene, also in Calabar Province, “viewed with seriousness the increase of prostitutes in the native town.”²³

While reasons for the emigration of Cross-River prostitutes to the Gold Coast are not very clear, the availability of a viable clientele in the large presence of military personnel on the Gold Coast and the determination of the colonial administration’s bid to rid Lagos

19. NAI/Ondo Prof 1/3, Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate, 8.

20. Ibid.

21. George, Abosede A. *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labour, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), 93.

22. Aderinto, S. *When Sex Threatened the State: Illicit Sexuality, Nationalism, and Politics in Colonial Nigeria, 100-1958*, Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015, 54.

23. Naanen, B.B.B. "Itinerant Gold Mines: Prostitution in the Cross-River Basin of Nigeria, 1930-1950," *African Studies Review* Vol. 34, No.2 (Sep. 1991), 59.

of prostitutes must have diverted the attention of prostitutes from Lagos to the Gold Coast.

Cross River Women and the Gold Coast Sex Industry

The Cross-River area covers the Obubra Division in the Ogoja Province of the Eastern Region of colonial Nigeria. The Cross-River region is drained by four major rivers, namely, Cross, Calabar, Kwa Iboe, and Imo.²⁴ The Cross-River occupied a very important commercial empire of Europe, where trade on export goods and the distribution of imported foreign luxury articles.²⁵

The Sex trade involving Cross-River women on the Gold Coast was a major cause for concern in colonial times. The incidences of prostitution in the Obubra Division were alarming. Perhaps, this might not be unconnected with the nature of this society, particularly its proximity to the port. Like Lagos and Port Harcourt, the Cross-River area also had the port town of Calabar. Major situations that promoted the sex industry in Colonial Nigeria were the port towns and military camps.²⁶ This is mostly due to the throngs of European and American personnel who arrived on the coast after weeks of abstinence. This group of people "multiplied the demand for prostitutes and greatly increased the monetary prices."²⁷

By the early 1940s, the sex trade in this region became highly profitable and very well organized. The trade was so prevalent that there was hardly a family in the Obubra Division that did not have an interest in it, particularly in the Bahumunu, Afunatam and Bansara areas of the Division.²⁸ The District Officer of the Obubra Division, Captain J. T. Jewell, alleged that families, relatives and even husbands in the Bahumunu Clan subscribed to the trade. Thus, they sponsored women into the sex industry. From the narratives amongst

24. Udoka, I.A. "The Shipping Industry in the Lower Cross River Region, Nigeria: 1865-1955," *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol.24 (1995), 205.

25. Afigbo, A.E. "Trade and Politics on the Cross River, 1895-1905," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol.13, No.1 (June 1972), 26.

26. NAI/OndoProf 1/3, Social Welfare in the Colony and Protectorate, 71.

27. *Ibid*, 8.

28. NAE/OB: 503/22 Cross River Harlots, 1.

the people of Cross-River, the custom of women wandering off was an age-long practice.²⁹ However, women did not wander off to be with other men for money. The Clan heads held the view that the 'white man' was responsible for the exodus of women to the Gold Coast for prostitution.

The narrative began with the deployment of soldiers to the Cross-River region, who subjected the young local men to all sorts of menial and strenuous jobs thereby creating uproar amongst these locals, forcing them to take refuge in the bushes. The direct result of military presence was the creation of a vacuum of eligible men for the surplus of young women, thereby causing these ladies to sway in the direction of the 'white man' as the only available alternative. The liaison between the white men and these women further created an atmosphere for the exchange of money for sexual favours, creating the fertile ground on which prostitution would later thrive.³⁰

On the other hand, the white man's introduction of some semblance of security that was hitherto alien to the locale facilitated free movement for all and dispelled the fear of attacks from neighbours. Thus, the men crept from their hiding places to other countries that the colonialists had already conquered. And therefore, demands for forced labour were minimal. The creation of a colonial factory at the coastal town of Afunatam in Cross-River attracted workers who were natives of Calabar, and other coastal towns witnessed the employment of Cross-River Women as concubines and mistresses. When this factory was later shut down, they returned to their various towns alongside these women.³¹ The women who went with these men notified the women who stayed back of the lucrative nature of the trade. According to the reports received by the District Officer of Obubra from the clan heads of Obubra:

...these women notified their stay-at-home sisters of the joys and plentitude of prostitutions and one by one, our women have departed to obtain their

29. NAE/ OG: 1201/61 Matrimonial Problems at Ediba Town, 13.

30. NAE/OB: 503/6 Prostitutes in Obubra Division, 1.

31. Ibid, 2.

*share of the wages of sin. Thus, is the exodus of our women – the potential mothers of our clan – brought about.*³²

Henceforth, the Cross-River sex industry developed its unique framework. The structure of prostitution among the people of Cross River was very complex as it was made up of a large network of persons designated to facilitate the smooth operations of the trade. Retired prostitutes played the role of the 'oracle.' They provided new entrants with information regarding the modes of operation, clientele, accommodation and transportation.³³ The communities (Ediba, Akunakuna, etc.) that were most adversely affected by this menace, "were responsible for the management of the trade."³⁴ Over eighty percent of the prostitutes who went to the Gold Coast settled in Accra and its environs. While some resided in Kumasi, Sekondi, and other coastal areas, some went as far as Tamale in the Northern region. Nigerian prostitutes became such a menace that citizens of the Gold Coast believed all "Nigerian women were harlots, and that (it) is a recognised custom in Nigeria."³⁵

These communities had representatives in the Gold Coast who received and familiarized the new sex workers with the workings of the trade upon arrival.³⁶ Most often, Cross River women chose people from their families or clans.³⁷ Because of the growing competitive nature of the trade, these women saw it was advantageous that they got their pimps (usually young semi-educated boys), who doubled as their accounts clerks/servants.³⁸ This is a departure from what obtained among sex workers who were citizens of the Gold Coast as their sex industry was devoid of pimps. Instead, they made use of intermediaries like the 'pilot boys'

32. Ibid.

33. NAE/OB: 503/22 Cross River Harlots, 1.

34. Naanen, B.B.B. "Itinerant Gold Mines": Prostitution in the Cross-River Basin of Nigeria, 1930-1950," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 34, No.2 (Sep. 1991), 61.

35. Ibid, 60.

36. Ibid, 61.

37. NAE/OB: 503/22 Cross River Harlots, 1.

38. Ibid.

of Sekondi-Takoradi, who were more like agents who brought prospective clients to prostitutes for a commission.³⁹

The newly recruited women took shelter in the stranger's quarters, usually in the company of other women from the same clan. In their rented apartments, four to six women lived together, and there they received their clients.⁴⁰ Colonial documents attest to the organization and the profitable nature of the industry. At the Gold Coast, their clientele included sailors, military personnel, miners and plantation workers.⁴¹ According to colonial records:

*... the principal point is that all the time she is acting as a member of a properly organized society, and I am told, ... that these societies are now so affluent that they are building special quarters for their members and in addition providing legal assistance when necessary. That it is extremely profitable, there is no doubt at all. I talked with one lady who wished to change eighty pounds in currency notes and she had not been long away, and that by no means represented her total capital.*⁴²

The above, in the words of Stanley Tambiah, is the 'lateral networks between the host society and society of origin.' The lateral networks refers to the interaction between the individual and its community of origin, such as the sending of remittances, the search for investment capital, returning to homeland to marry husbands, sponsoring new migrants, etc. in order to validate the ethnic and cultural identity of their home countries from which they are spatially distanced.⁴³ From colonial documents, there were also evidences that the remittances to family members were also remarkable. The District Officer, Obubra Division stated in 1941 that:

39. Akyeamong, Emmanuel. "Sexuality and Prostitution among the Akan," in *Past and Present*, No. 156 (August 1997), 145.

40. Naanen, 61.

41. NAE/OB: 503/22 Cross River Harlots, 2.

42. NAE/OB: 503/22 Cross River Harlots, 2.

43. Tambiah, Stanley J. "Transnational Movements, Diaspora and Multiple Movements", *Daedalus*, Vol.129, No.1, Multiple Modernities (Winter, 2000), 171.

*The continuous demand for Post Offices in places like Usumutong is almost solely due to the fact the people wants the facilities for keeping in touch with their itinerant gold mines – the whole population battens on them.*⁴⁴

The success of this trade did not go unnoticed in the host community (Gold Coast), hence the exodus of young girls from the villages to the Gold Coast. In the words of Mr. Littlewood, the District Officer to Togoland in the 1940s, “in one case some 50 girls out of one village had left for the Gold Coast for this purpose and that one of the Chiefs wanted to pass Bye-Laws forbidding any girl to cross into the Gold Coast without a permit.”⁴⁵

The assessment of the Native Authority in the Gold Coast was that the transnational movements of these Nigerians negatively affected their society.

To tackle this problem, girls of marriageable age were forced to marry. However, there is a counter-narrative that prostitution in the Gold Coast dates back to the seventeenth century.⁴⁶ According to Akyeampong, European residents and travellers documented the existence of prostitution in the Gold Coast between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. These women were said to be ‘conscripted public women’ who were forced into a social institution that was designed to alleviate sexual pressures among single young men. It was customary for every village in the Gold Coast to maintain two to three prostitutes whom they called *Abakrees*.⁴⁷ Hence, it is worth noting that the concept of prostitution was not alien to the people of the Gold Coast. What was strange was the volume of young women involved in the sex industry in the post-World War Two Gold Coast.

The Native Authorities of the affected territories in Nigeria claimed that the enormity of this trade affected reproduction and

44. NAE/OB: 503/22 Cross River Harlots, 2.

45. GH/PRAAD/CSO 21/12/14 Forced Marriage of African Girls - Prevention, 10.

46. Akyeampong, Emmanuel. "Sexuality and Prostitution among the Akan," 145.

47. Ibid, 146.

had the potential of leading to the possible extinction of the race, as procreation is disregarded at the expense of the trade.⁴⁸ However, some were reported to have stolen, abducted or bought children whom they either married them off to other men to procreate for them or hawk them as child prostitutes. The reason for this was closely related to the desire of successful prostitutes to have a child of their own upon their return. Husbands were also accused of prostituting their wives. It will be important to question whether the husbands of these women subscribed to their trade or simply took it in good fate as an inevitable occurrence, due to its widespread acceptance.⁴⁹

Aside from the fact that this trade was a money spinner, two major effects stifled development. Firstly, almost all the women in the sex trade were barren. This did not just affect the birth rate but kept alive the slave trade due to their indulgence in child trafficking. Secondly, it successfully prevented the recognition of all forms of permanent marriage-ties.

The sex industry was one of the legacies of colonialism. Women who successfully emigrated to the Gold Coast for the sex trade and made money; were envied and respected. This led to the mass movement of more women from the area to the Gold Coast. When the colonial government took a census of women sex workers from the Cross-River area in 1944, five hundred and thirty-two⁵⁰ of the recorded prostitutes in the Gold Coast were from Cross-River. The people of this area attributed this to the advent of the white man who brought in soldiers and imposed forced labour on their young men, thus leading to their flight and surplus of young women. These licentious soldiers introduced these young women into prostitution and concomitantly; the gains of prostitution led to the recruitment of more ladies into the commercial sex trade. Soon the sex workers constructed a framework for a smooth operation of their trade.

48. NAE/OB: 503/6 Prostitutes in Obubra Division, 3.

49. NAE/OB: 503/6 Prostitutes in Obubra Division, 3&4.

50. NAE/OB: 24574 Prostitution and Human Trafficking in Obubra Division, 19.

Conclusion

The women of the Cross-River region and indeed other African women only responded to the budding colonial economy, its integration into the global economy and responses to the instabilities created by colonial social relations occasioned by the needs of Europeans and Americans who required sex in exchange for money. These women, who probably had high libidos and whose male populations had fled from colonial forced labour and recruitments, took advantage of these new opportunities.

While this paper does not originally focus on the sexuality of these women, the discussion of their libido can be seen only as a means of prescribing a possible explanation as regards their sustained engagement in the sex industry. This is because the high involvement of Cross-River women in prostitution raises the question; why the preference of sex trade by these group of women and not the preponderance of the industry by women from other regions? The roots or framework of twenty-first century international sex trade can, however, be traced to the transnational movement of Nigerian women for commercial sex trade which involved Cross River women in the Gold Coast. It could also be inferred that the activities of the Cross-River women prompted the insistence of the Native Authorities of the Gold Coast to insist on the compulsory marriages of girls of marriageable age. The modus operandi and the nature of remittances of the present-day sex industry have not deviated sharply from the colonial structures; while the post offices acted as collection points of remittances, establishments such as Western Union and other Money Transfer agencies are examples of contemporary agencies of such remittances.