

HEART OF BANJUL: THE HISTORY OF BANJUL, THE GAMBIA, 1816 -1965

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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is a history of Banjul (formerly Bathurst), the capital city of The Gambia during the period of colonial rule. It is the first dissertation-length history of the city. “Heart of Banjul” engages with the history of Banjul (formerly Bathurst); the capital city of The Gambia. Based on a close reading of archival and primary sources, including government reports and correspondences, missionary letters, journals, and published accounts, travelers accounts, and autobiographical materials, the dissertation attempts to reconstruct the city and understand how various parts of the city came together out of necessity (though never harmoniously). In the spaces where different kinds of people, shifting power structures, and nonhuman actors came together something which could be called a city emerged. Chapter 1, “Intestines of the State,” covers most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and traces how the proto-colonial state and its interlocutors gradually erected administration over The Gambia. Rather than a teleology of colonial takeover, the chapter presents the creation of the colonial state as a series of stops and starts experienced as conflicts between the Bathurst administration and a number of challengers to its sovereignty including Gambian warrior kings, marabouts, criminals, French authorities, the British administration in Sierra Leone, missionaries, merchants, and disease. Chapter 2, “The Circulatory System,” engages with conflicts between the state, merchants, Gambian kings, and urban dwellers. Through a focus on the circulation of men, materials, debts, lorries, groundnuts, and prisoners in the colony this chapter establishes a fundamental difference between the state and capital. The state attempted to establish a regulated, measured circulation through the city which it could direct towards its own enrichment and growth. Capital, on the other hand, pushed the pace of circulation both in terms of its speed and intensity as well as the area it covered. Merchants attempted to increase their bottom lines by increasing the circulation of capital, the collection of debts, and harvests upriver. Chapter 3, “Dead Meat,” tells the story of the single most neglected residents in African cities: urban animals. The forces which

assailed the bodies of urban animals were many: sanitary regulations, pesticides, commodification of their bodies, the trade in exotic animals, hunting, roundups, and hunger. Despite these challenges urban animals continued to scratch existence (and possibly more) out of the city. This chapter not only takes historians to task for writing urban animals out of African history, but it also shows how the history of urban animals in Africa might contribute to the broader historiography of urban Africans and their engagement/disengagement with the wider urban ecosystem. Chapter 4, "Politics of the Belly" takes up the history of labor in the city. This chapter attempts to focus on the places where labor, the state, and capital met. The state understood its role in this tripartite relationship as the "head" which could rationally mediate between the "hands" (labor) and the "heart" (capital). Chapter 5, "The Excretory System" deals with the waste products of the city and the efforts by the administration to banish them from sight and, more significantly, from smell. Taking up the challenge to privilege senses other than sight, the chapter uses the sense of smell to show how sanitary measures in the city were often based not on sound understandings of germ theory, but old ideas about miasmas arising from bad air (smells). The emergence of an aspiring bourgeois class in the city pushed for sanitary reform to ease their sense of smell while the administration encouraged gardening to ensure that Bathurst "blossomed like the rose." Chapter 6, "The Nervous System," plays off the well documented role Muscular Christianity has played in shaping the lives of youths in the West. The chapter shows how colonial officials wavered between denigrating education based on the (animal) bodies of schoolchildren as "monkey ticks" and criticizing education which ignored young bodies as filling heads full of ideas which had no outlet in the colonial setting.

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## INTRODUCTION: HEART OF BANJUL

O my body, make of me always a man who questions! -Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*

“I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart; I am, I am, I am.” -Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour. -Paul, First Corinthians 12: 14-23

No objects, spaces, or bodies are sacred in themselves; any component can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, the proper code, can be constructed for processing signals in a common language. In particular there is no ground for ontologically opposing the organic, technical, and textual. But neither is there any ground for opposing the *mythical* to the organic, textual and technical. Their convergences are more important than their residual oppositions. -Donna Harraway, “The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies”

The only business of the head in the world is to bow a ceaseless obeisance to the heart. -W.B. Yeats

The Gambia River is located in West Africa between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> parallels of longitude and is contained within the 13<sup>th</sup> latitude.<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1) The river itself is over 200 miles long and it has the unique feature in this region of West Africa of being navigable for most of its length. Ships can easily sail 175 miles up the length of the river to Janjanbureh (Georgetown in the colonial days). The navigability of the river first attracted European visitors in 1455 when the Portuguese Alvise de Cadamosto entered the mouth of the river and was repulsed by poisoned arrows from the soldiers of the kingdom of Niumi.<sup>2</sup> Although de Cadamosto did not know this, he was sailing into a complex ethnic and political reality. Although various kingdoms can be identified as being predominately composed of one ethnic group or another, we cannot talk about the existence of tribes in The Gambia before European colonial and

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<sup>1</sup> Harry A. Gailley. 1965. New York: Frederick A Praeger, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gailley, 18.

missionary ventures decided that they existed. We can talk about Wolof kingdoms in the Sine and Saloum regions which today are predominately across the Senegalese border, but which historically interacted with the Gambia River kingdoms as much as they did with more northerly parts of Senegal. The Mandinka were certainly the dominant group on the river when de Cadamosto arrived and they are still the most numerous group today, though that has much to do with the politics of identity. As one heads further east up the river and passes Bansang, about 200 miles upriver, Fula, rather than Mandinka, becomes the dominant lingua franca. This region has maintained a historical connection to the Fula kingdoms of Futa Jallon and during the reign of the great Fula King Musa Molloh in the late nineteenth century was known as Fuladu. The Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula are the three most numerous groups in The Gambia, but they are far from the only ones. In southern Kombo various Jolla peoples with connections to the Cassamance region of Senegal are the dominant group while there are substantial numbers of Serer peoples on the north bank near the mouth of the river.

Even this picture, impressionistic as it is, is problematic. None of these groups existed in isolation and intermarriage was and continues to be common. Rather than being fixed along lines which could be called ethnic, identity is rather fluid and open to appropriation. The historical salience of Mandinka identity, for example, had much to do with a willingness to be associated with the Mali Empire when de Cadamosto arrived and found people swearing allegiance to the king of Manding. In the twentieth century, Mandinka identity received a further boost from the fact that being Mandinka became associated with progressive Islamic elements in society. In these situations, someone with Wolof, Fula, and Mandinka ancestry may choose to identify as Mandinka primarily by claiming Mandinka as their mother tongue. Identity, therefore, has always been appropriated and performed and has always constituted a linguistic community more so than what we would refer to as an ethnic community. Unfortunately, these realities are often lost to us in the accounts of European travelers and colonial administrators, and we have little recourse but to remind ourselves that when we talk of a Mandinka kingdom we need to remember that term often has a basis on how people of the time self-identified, but it also reflects a more fluid reality than has been recognized.

After being repulsed on his first attempt to enter the river de Cadamosto returned in 1456 and was able to peacefully palaver with the Niumi *mansa* (king). In the wake of de Cadamosto came Diogo Gomez in 1458. Gomez made three total voyages to The Gambia River and after him followed Portuguese traders and missionaries who began settling in the Gambia as *lançados*, or those who had “thrown in” their lot with Gambians through intermarriage and settlement.<sup>3</sup> Although the Portuguese arrived searching for mineral wealth and converts to Christianity they found neither to be forthcoming and quickly transitioned to the slave trade in the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century the power of Portugal declined inversely with the rising power of England. Between 1598 and 1618 the English government began granting concessions to merchants and explorers bound for West Africa.<sup>4</sup> In 1620 Richard Jobson became the first English explorer to travel up the Gambia River making it as far as Baracunda Falls. His accounts of the “golden trade” and the wealth to be found up the Gambia River inspired many to follow in his wake. Although Jobson refused to accept human beings as currency, when his successors found that there was no gold in the Gambian River trade they quickly abandoned such moral scruples. In 1651 the Guinea Company established the first trading station in The Gambia, but it was soon destroyed in 1652 by Prince Rupert who was a royalist in the English Civil War who had turned into a pirate.<sup>5</sup> Following Rupert’s reports of the profits to be made on The Gambia River, Charles II organized the Royal Adventurers with the explicit purpose of acquiring slaves in The Gambia and exchanging them for sugar in the West Indies and the Americas. The Royal Adventurers promptly occupied a fort which had been built and abandoned by the Courlanders on what they called Andrews Island and renamed it James Island. From James Island the Royal Adventures, later the Gambia Adventurers and eventually the Royal African Company, would conduct the trade in slaves under the British flag.<sup>6</sup> Additional British factories than James Fort were needed to sustain the increasing volume of the trade and factories were established at Baracunda Falls, Bintang, Banyon Point and Jufure while the

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Mark. 2002. *“Portuguese” Style and Luso-African Identity: Precolonial Senegambia, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Gailley, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 23.

French established a factory next to Juffure at Albreda. The history of trade, warfare, and privateering between the British and the French on the river will not be discussed here, though it is worth remembering that it often rendered James Island ineffective as a slave factory and sometimes literally left it in ruins. When the trade was operating, as the British factor Francis Moore has recounted, liquor, iron, cloth, and firearms were the most common commodities exchanged for human beings. Local kings and warriors became inured to the trade as their political and economic power became increasingly intertwined with slavery.

The trade in human beings on the river Gambia, as has been documented in detail by many other scholars, was destructive of lives, but productive for the kings and elites who were willing to seize the opportunities it presented. Kings and their elite military commanders became increasingly wealthy through the trade in human beings even as their lives became increasingly precarious due to assassinations by political rivals grasping for the seat of wealth and power. Although forms of slavery existed in Senegambia before the arrival of Europeans, the Atlantic Slave Trade added fuel to the fire by making slavery central to the production and maintenance of wealth and political power in the region. In Senegambia elites preferred to keep many slaves, especially female slaves, rather than sell them. Kingdoms along the river derived as much, and probably more, wealth from charging duties on each foreign ship which passed through their waters as they did from the slave trade. For a slave ship to pass through a king's territory and not pay the required dues could be tantamount to a declaration of war. Although some captains certainly tried to bypass the customary duties, they did not always like the results when they tried. Nevertheless we can talk about an expansion in the rate of enslavement in the region. The slave trade also resulted in the dramatic rise to power of a group of soldiers who were technically slaves, but whose power came to rival that of the kings themselves.<sup>7</sup> These slave warriors, who lacked the traditional political power of kings, relied solely on the process of enslavement for wealth and thus pushed the pace of warfare, raiding, and general enslavement in order to cement their newfound wealth

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Klein, 1968. *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sine-saloum, 1847-1914*. Stanford: Published for the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace by Stanford University Press.

and status.<sup>8</sup> Although these revolutions in political and economic power held by elites certainly did take place we should not accept, as Walter Rodney once claimed, that the slave trade was entirely in the hands of such elites.<sup>9</sup> There is now significant research showing how ordinary people and relatively non-hierarchical societies participated in the trade as well in a strategy of survival and adaptation to the changing realities of warfare, raiding, and enslavement.<sup>10</sup>

It is at this point that we can begin to broach the history of Banjul. The word itself comes from two Mandinka words for bamboo (boŋo) and rope (juloo) which refers to the fact that local peoples visited the island to cut the bamboo that grew there and make rope out of it. There is no record of permanent residence on the island before its purchase from the Kombo *mansa* by the British in 1816. The logic of founding the island, as we shall see was to officially provide a naval base from which to enforce the prohibition on the Atlantic Slave Trade and unofficially to provide merchants with a solid foothold backed on the Gambia River backed by the British flag.

Prior to the 1880s the prospect of a British takeover of the river seemed to be a long shot. Nor was the long term survival of the city definite. When Alexander Grant founded the city it seemed entirely possible that, like James Fort before it, it would be a military and commercial garrison which would be abandoned when its usefulness was finished. What secured the existence of the city was the confluence of economic interests between merchants and Gambians. The opportunity created by the establishment of a trading center at Bathurst drew migrants to the island who established their own “villages” and quickly merged with the European infrastructure and formed a city. Bathurst quickly became a node on the river which provided access to imported goods and cash wages to Africans who came to the city. Even this commerce did not secure the river as a British possession. The Gambia River trade was profitable, but compared to other British spheres of influence it was a fairly marginal line on the accounting sheet. Between 1866 and 1870 the British very nearly handed Bathurst over to the French. Their willingness to

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Roberts. 1980. “Production and Reproduction of Warrior States: Segu Bambara and Segu Tokolor, c. 1712-1890” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*. 13 (3)

<sup>9</sup> Walter Rodney. 1970. *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

<sup>10</sup> See Walter Hawthorne. 2003. *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

do so proved the relative marginality of the river in British eyes. The main hold up was the fact that the French were not willing to provide the British with other territories which they coveted.

Bathurst, however, was not marginal to the people who lived on and around the river. Many of the merchants, residents of the city, and even *seyfos* (chiefs) from the protectorate wrote letters and signed petitions asking the British to retain possession of the city rather than have to compete with the influx of French merchants who would be flooding into the city if it were turned over. By the 1870s the people of the Gambia River had restructured their lives to incorporate the new opportunities and challenges provided by the city, the new cash economy, and the influx of imported goods. Farmers turned peanuts into a virtual monocrop on the river, people made Bathurst a regular part of their migrations, both seasonal and sporadic as events dictated, and some even took up permanent residence in the city.

In the 1880s Bathurst became the base from which the punitive expeditions which established colonial rule over the river were launched. The soninke-marabout wars which began in the 1850s either destroyed the most powerful kings on the river or pushed them into the arms of the British. The remaining villages which were not decimated by war or allied to the British were targeted for destruction in a series of bloody battles organized from Bathurst. Although the scope of the conquest was far short of what other colonies experienced, it was the last gasp of the political independence of the kingdoms along the river. After conquest, a system of indirect rule was established which placed *seyfos* in charge of regions of the river under the authority of the British administration. The rules for the protectorate were established in Bathurst and travelling commissioners established for each river region who would visit at regular intervals to check on the progress of the *seyfo*, the conditions of the road, and, occasionally, to act as a high judge in contentious cases. (Figure 5)

After conquest and the death of independent kingdoms on the river, Bathurst became the lynchpin of The Gambia colony. It quickly developed a legal, administrative core which spit out legislation as quickly as it could in order to place the colony under the rule of law. Enforcing these statutes and ordinances would prove far more difficult, especially since The Gambia is a classic study in “colonialism on the cheap.” Bathurst administrators were never short on proclamations about civilization and



industriousness, but the colonial state did not even begin to provide anything resembling a robust public sector until after the Second World War when development projects began. Instead, colonial rule in the city operated on an *ad hoc* basis. One of the clearest examples of this was the Dutton Scheme. Begun in 1912, the Dutton Scheme was a sanitation regime which produced no overall sanitary directives nor did it plan or engage in large sanitary endeavors. Rather, it identified problems in the city's sanitation long after they developed and attempted to address them as quickly and cheaply as possible. This scheme lasted until the postwar development projects replaced it. Like the Dutton Scheme, other aspects of the city's administration were handled similarly. Authorities waited for a moral panic to develop and then addressed it in the most reactionary way possible. We can see this in the way that the state handled animals in the city, labor negotiations, sanitary workers, lorry drivers, and youths in the city. The state was nearly entirely reactionary in its policies. It did not, however, respond to all panics with equal vigor. The colonial state tended to engage selectively with those panics which allowed it to penetrate more deeply into the personal lives of city dwellers. It responded to a panic over rats and vermin in the city among sanitary inspectors because it gave the state a pretense for entering the homes of its African population. Constant complaints about flooding among African residents which would require significant construction projects, on the other hand, were ignored. Only when an issue threatened to unite the city's African residents against the state did it give ground. Islam, especially before the 1940s, was such a uniting force in the city. Thus when the Imam of Bathurst called for Muslim courts and schools to counter a moral panic of youths in the city, the administration quickly ceded authority to the city's Muslim elders. The last thing administrators wanted was a religious cause which could unite most of the city in protest, especially with the memory of the marabouts so fresh in the minds of administrators. The pleas of individual residents half drowned in their own homes, on the other hand, were routinely ignored.

Residents of the city dealt with these half measures and routine neglect ambiguously. On one hand neglect meant that the state remained aloof from the personal lives of the city's residents. Most African residents of the city had no desire to invite the sanitary inspector, the colonial doctor, the police officer, or the administrator into their homes. On the other hand, neglect had material consequences. Poor

roads and tram lines, chronic flooding, alarmingly high infant mortality, inadequate systems of waste disposal, and meager wages all made material life difficult for city dwellers. Even the middle and upper class Africans and, indeed, the European population of the city was constantly at risk of infestation and disease. As overcrowding increased the material struggles of daily life kept pace with the growing population of the city. Again, residents dealt with these pressures by relying on social support networks which residents cultivated for survival as well as sociability.

The material harshness of life in the city did not stop people from coming there, nor did it stop them from living their lives while in the city. Music, dance, athletics and sport, studies, and scouting all provided outlets for creativity and enjoyment in the city. The youth most obviously indulged in these urban pleasures, but they were hardly alone. Despite the spartan material reality of life in the city, the men and women who lived there carved out their own spaces where they could be social and enjoy the pleasures of urban living as well. For many young people this meant, at the very least, a relief from the physical drudgery of farming and a chance to establish themselves as modern through conspicuous consumption and the cash wages it required. In addition to buying imported commodities, wages could be brought back to rural areas where it could be used for bride wealth, land purchases, and other economic ventures. For many, life in the city became a seasonal one. Even many homeowners returned to rural areas to plant and harvest and lived in the city between the harvest and planting cycles. Over time, this cycle became more and more strained as increasing numbers of people came to enjoy city life and became more and more disconnected from rural life. From the 1940s on increasing numbers of young men in particular were willing to live in the most precarious of situations in order to remain urban. Part of this trend was due to youths being born in the city and having little in the way of rural experience and part was the increasing desirability of urban living and the decline in rural coherence and distinctness.

#### THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BANJUL

The history of the founding of the city will be recounted in detail in chapter one. My purpose in this introduction is to engage more with the historiography of the city. The historiography of Banjul is scant. This is partially because the historiography of The Gambia is slight, but predominately because

certain topics have received the lion's share of attention from historians. The soninke-marabout wars, the history of peanut cultivation, and agrarian history in general have dominated the historiography. Within these works Banjul presents itself here and there as a catalyst for change, but there is no major historical work which can be called a history of the city. The three foundational texts of Gambian history written by Gray, Gailley, and Southorn all tell more or less the same history of the city. The founding of the city is discussed in order to celebrate its role in ending the Transatlantic Slave Trade which endured after its abolition in the British Empire in 1807. Although each author celebrates the role of the city in ending the slave trade, Gray is the most complimentary in celebrating the city as a haven from slavery where slaves could manumit themselves if they were lucky enough to reach its shores.<sup>11</sup> As we shall see, this is hardly true. Each author then goes on to praise Alexander Grant for the modern layout of the city. Again, there is some disagreement. Southorn claims Grant as a modernist town planner well ahead of his times while Gailley claims he was merely a military man who had no vision for the city beyond a garrison town.<sup>12</sup> For our purposes we will merely note that both authors totally ignore the role that Gambians played in building the city and how decidedly "unmodern" the city actually was.

After the founding fables have been told, the narrative quickly turns to travelers' impressions of the city which, generally speaking, are less than complimentary. Southorn devotes an entire chapter to excerpts from travelers' accounts of Bathurst. To her credit she rejects the more apocalyptic accounts and instead tries to find balance among the perspectives.<sup>13</sup> From here it is a logical transition from the impressions of travelers that Bathurst was flooded and unhealthy to the outbreaks of yellow fever and cholera in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which devastated the city's population. After discussing death and disease most authors leave the city for a detailed discussion of peanuts and (not so) holy war. Southorn does include some interesting sections on juvenile delinquency, the horticultural society, and health in the city. Gailley does better with the history of political representation in the city and developments in the Gambianization

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<sup>11</sup> J.M. Gray. 1966. *A History of The Gambia*. London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 318-320.

<sup>12</sup> Lady Southorn. 1952. *The Gambia: The Story of the Groundnut Colony*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 155, Gailley, 62.

<sup>13</sup> Southorn, 155.

of the civil service. Gray also has a few interesting excerpts about influential Gambian and “mulatto” traders and merchants. None of this, even if it were to be cobbled together, approaches anything like a history of the city of Banjul and no other scholar has attempted to outline such a history.

I do not mean to suggest that there is not value in what these authors have written about Banjul. Rather, I am suggesting it is woefully incomplete because it turns a blind eye to the rampant abuses of colonial rule from the founding of the city until independence. The incompleteness is easy to understand. The Gambia has long been overwhelmingly rural even by the standards of African nations. Today there are bustling urban centers in Brikama and Serekunda among other places especially in the Kombos. Yet Banjul remained, for the first half of the twentieth century, the only place in The Gambia which could be called a city. Even Banjul, most observers noted, was tiny. It never experienced the kind of explosive urban growth that we have seen in Lagos, it does not have centuries of history behind it like Mombassa, it is not strikingly “modern” like many South African cities, and it never became an economic powerhouse like Dakar. It seemed logical that if one was to write Gambian history the “real” history must be found in the rural areas where soninke and marabout fought and where peanuts were cultivated. Yet Banjul did, as all cities do, become a node which restructured trade and life along the entire Senegambian coast. Donald Wright’s history of Niumi, a kingdom on the North Bank of the Gambia River, for example, locates the founding of Bathurst as a key moment in Niumi’s history because it gave Niuminkas the opportunity to trade their peanuts for firearms and consumer goods. Wright concludes that this played a role in restructuring the way that peasants saw themselves and their relationship to their political leaders.<sup>14</sup> Its size and prestige relative to other African urban centers speaks very little of its importance to the region. Nor can it disqualify the meaning of the lives of people who came to the city for one reason or another. Whether they came to stay or merely to sojourn for a season or two or even if they never set foot in Banjul, the city had a tremendous impact on the lives of Gambians.

In a sense, the purpose of this dissertation is to flip the script on Gambian historiography. The historiography has been overwhelmingly focused on the rural areas and Banjul has only been mentioned

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<sup>14</sup> Donald Wright. 1997. *The World and a Small Place in Africa*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.

sparingly. In this dissertation, Banjul is the focus of the narrative and topics more germane to rural Gambia will be discussed only to the degree that they impacted the history of the city. This is not so much a repudiation of the importance of the protectorate in Gambian history. Rather, it is a recognition that in order to focus on Banjul as a discreet unit of investigation we cannot also focus on every issue of relevance to the protectorate. This is a practical reality of historical investigation. Indeed, one of the major problems with the narratives of Gailey, Gray, and Southorn is that they attempt to tell the history of the entire river. In order to avoid these pitfalls and recognize that far more of the rural historiography has been fleshed out we will have to retain the city as our primary focus. Key events, like the soninke-marabout wars, will certainly be discussed, but only in the depth required to understand the history of Banjul. For example, the jihad of Maba will be significant primarily because it sent a stream of refugees pouring into the city. I will discuss how many of those refugees, especially the young ones, were immediately forced into apprenticeships in the city which were abusive and proselytizing. Thus I attempt to preserve key elements of the historiography while maintaining Banjul as the main topic of study.

Furthermore, I will attempt to structure this work in such a way as to elucidate the conditions of daily life in the city. Through a close reading of archival sources, which I discuss later in this introduction, I will attempt to paint a picture which reveals some of the facets of daily life in the city. My primary goal is not so much to make broad pronouncements about world systems, nationalism, PanAfricanism, or other metatopics. Like Donald Wright's *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, I attempt to situate Banjul at the center of a world economic system, a system of nation states, a network of nationalist and PanAfricanist thought, and so on without losing a more narrow focus. Also like Wright, my purpose in doing so is to come to a better understanding of what this "very small place" was like for the people who lived there and how the realities of daily life changed (and failed to change) over time. I find that there were significant continuities over time. The struggle for existence endured by residents of the city was, and continues to be, a difficult cycle to eradicate, as does the legacy of authoritarian rule, which Gambians living under the Jammeh "presidency" experience every day. Each chapter focuses on a specific struggle over a clearly defined issue. These topics emerge from the archives as the issues which

brought together Gambians, representatives of the colonial state, and capitalists. It is at these intersections that each chapter attempts to situate itself.

### THEORY: THE CITY IS A BODY

Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, in a seminal article on urbanization in Africa, argues the urbanization is a universal phenomenon and should be treated as such. Although she is aware that cities differ based on the prevailing mode of production, patterns of power and ideology, and the global organization which cities find themselves enmeshed in, Coquery-Vidrovitch nevertheless maintains that it is useful to deal with urbanization as universal while also remaining aware of historical differences between cities.<sup>15</sup> Drawing on the work of the Nigerian geographer Akin Mabogunje, Coquery-Vidrovitch argues that cities are essentially the points of articulation of a given economic system and thus reflect that economic system. The three main factors which make a city possible, then, are economic in nature. A city must rely on a surplus of food production to feed a class of specialists freed from agriculture, there must be a “power class” to maintain authority over the food producers and order in the city, and there must be a class of merchants or traders to satisfy the demand for raw materials in the city.<sup>16</sup> Each city will therefore reflect its historical epoch, mode of production, and type of power and ideology.

Establishing the city as both universal and particular is a start, but in order for the city to materialize we still need a model which satisfies the demands of both universality and particularity while also standing in for the city: The city is a body. For millennia this has been one of the most consistent tenets of Western philosophy. Is there still any point in defending this assertion? The notion of a body politic originates in Plato’s *Republic*, but reverberates throughout the whole of the Western philosophical tradition. In the *Republic*, Socrates describes how cities, states, and bodies die:

Just as a sickly body needs only a slight push from outside to become ill, and sometimes even without any external influence becomes divided by factions within itself, so too doesn't a city that is in the same kind of condition as that body, on a small pretext -- men brought in as allies from outside, from a city under an oligarchy, by the members of one party, from a city under a

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<sup>15</sup> Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch. 1991. “The Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence)” *African Studies Review*. 34 (1), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Coquery-Vidrovitch, 15.

democracy, by members of the other -- fall sick and do battle with itself, and sometimes even without any external influence become divided by faction?<sup>17</sup>

Here Plato is primarily concerned with the establishment of social order which is another way of saying the construction of a body at harmony with itself. Also, in the *Timaeus* Plato expands on the tripartite division of society developed in *The Republic* which is meant to establish and maintain that harmony. The philosopher-king would be the head of the body, the auxiliaries the heart, and the workers, farmers, and peasants the organs of hunger and digestion.<sup>18</sup> Apart from the basic fact that Plato firmly establishes the body as a metaphor for the state and the city (in the minds of Classical Greeks the city-state were one and the same anyway), it is important for us to consider the idealization of the body (social, political, individual) as the core of this tradition. The city and thus the body are imagined as potential utopias if only they could be properly proportioned to maintain harmony and the influences of outsiders could be kept to a minimum. Thus both the body and city are posited as clearly delineated entities with definite boundaries, gates, and checkpoints to keep the barbarians out.

After Plato the notion of a state or city as a body reemerges time and time again. The metaphor recurs in Aristotle's *Politics*, Plutarch's *Philopoemen*, John of Salisbury's *Policratus*, and Hobbes' *Leviathan* to name a few. The influence of Plato on Muslim theologians, through the translation of philosophical texts by Muslim scholars, also leads the great philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazzali to state "the body may be figured as a kingdom, the soul as its king, and the different senses and faculties as constituting an army. Reason may be called the vizier, or prime minister, passion the revenue collector, and anger the police officer."<sup>19</sup> Each new iteration, of course, adds something unique to the canon. Hobbes' *Leviathan*, though figured as a body, is a very different sort of state than is imagined by Plato. His mechanical metaphors imagine the state as a machine-man more than organic man. Hobbes says:

For what is the 'heart' but a 'spring'; and the 'nerves' but so many 'strings'; and the 'joints' but so many 'wheels,' giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the artificer? 'Art'

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<sup>17</sup> Plato. 1968. *The Republic*, Translated by Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 235

<sup>18</sup> Plato. 1973. *The Timaeus of Plato*. Translated by R. D. Archer-Hind, New York: Arno Press, 54-63

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ghazzali, Abu H. 1909. *The Alchemy of Happiness*. Translated by Claud Field. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/tah/>

goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of nature, 'man.' For by art is created that great 'Leviathan' called a 'Commonwealth' or 'State,' in Latin *civitas*, which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended...

Hobbes' machine-man is composed of many diverse parts and yet each part is in proportion to every other and the machine itself functions smoothly so long as they remain in proportion and dedicated to a common purpose. Nicole Oresme, influenced by Aristotle, similarly claims proportionality to be the key to the organization of the body/city/state. Oresme, basing his analysis on the prevalent theory of bodily humors, claims that a disordered society occurs when "the humours flow too freely into one member of it, so that member is often thus inflamed and overgrown while the others are withered and shrunken and the body's due proportions are destroyed and its life shortened; so also is a commonwealth or a kingdom when riches are unduly attracted to it."<sup>20</sup>

It is from this tradition that the figuration of the city as a body emerges. If the state brings together different types of people through association, so too does the city. Aristotle provides perhaps the clearest iteration of the body politic which is segmented and yet whole when he states "A city is composed of different kinds of men; similar people cannot bring a city into existence."<sup>21</sup> We should not be surprised that philosophy allowed city and state to slip so seamlessly into one another. When Plato wrote *The Republic* the *polis* or city-state was the default system of government and the city of Athens, though not coterminous with the Athenian state, was the state for all intents and purposes. Indeed, there is a strong argument to be made that the intimate link between city formation and state formation is not entirely unique to the Greek context. States do not necessarily *require* cities, but the ability of cities to consolidate political, economic, and social capital in one place makes the formation and maintenance of a state all the easier. It is for precisely this reason that colonial powers either appropriated or built cities wherever they went in Africa to serve as nodes of power. Although Freud felt that the city was not a

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<sup>20</sup> Nicole Oresme. 1956. *The De moneta of Nicholas Oresme, and English Mint documents*. Translated by Charles Johnson, London: Nelson.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle. 1998. *Politics*. Translated by , Ernest Barker, and R. F. Stalley. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



perfect metaphor for the human body he nevertheless stated “A more closely related object of comparison (to a city)- the body of an animal or a human being.”<sup>22</sup>

Although it is understood that the city and the state bring together different types of people there are limits to their abilities to do so. At the limits of diversity the human body becomes figured as a martial, masculine body militarized against foreigners. Hobbes’ imposing, sword wielding Leviathan is as much a warning to external threats as it is an idealized figuration of a unified state. In 1470 Francesco di Giorgio Martini, contemplating the appropriate form of a city concluded:

One should shape the city, fortress, and castle in the form of a human body, that the head with the attached members have a proportioned correspondence and that the head be the Rocca (a stronghold at high elevation), the arms its recessed walls that, circling around, link the rest of the whole body, the vast city. And thus it should be considered that just as the body has all its members and parts in perfect measurements and proportions, in the composition of temples, cities, rocche (fortresses), and castles the same principles should be observed.

Martini’s debt to Oresme’s theory of proportions is clear enough. In allowing the slippage between the city, the castle, and the fortress he also imagines the city was a martial entity planned, like the human immune system, to facilitate its own defense. The forts and trade castles which dotted the West African coast during the era of the Atlantic Slave Trade with their high walls, proportioned geometric designs, and easily defensible positions are certainly descendants of this line of city planning.

Over time, as Africa was “pacified” and colonized, the colonial city which encouraged the circulation of capital and African bodies replaced the fortress as a model city. When Fanon discussed changes wrought upon the city of Algiers by colonialism he is taking into account the latter development. Fanon, being a psychiatrist, looked to the human nervous system for a metaphor. “Algiers is no longer the Arab city” he wrote, “but the autonomous area of Algiers, the nervous system of the enemy apparatus.”<sup>23</sup> Fanon is not alone in this metaphor. When Nigerians in the post-colonial era debated the movement of the

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<sup>22</sup> Sigmund Freud. 1962. *Civilization and its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton.

<sup>23</sup> Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press.

capital out of Lagos the city was described as a “nerve center of agitations” in order to justify the selection of a supposedly neutral site for the capital.<sup>24</sup>

If the preceding theoretical introduction strikes the reader as overly Eurocentric or fetishizing the supposedly universal relevance of European philosophers, it is important to remember how intimately the body is linked to power in African societies as well. In *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Jean Comaroff shows how the human body was the single most important symbol for the body politics, the village, and the privileged medium through which Tswana peoples understood their world.<sup>25</sup> Both the socialization of individual bodies into the collective and the layout of the village were fundamentally centered on the experience of the body in the world. Unfortunately, for our purposes, Comaroff has significantly more to say about the spirit of resistance than the body of power. Jean-Francois Bayart’s *Politics of the Belly* does similar work in demonstrating that the human body and formed the central metaphor through which many Africans came to understand political power. In *Intestines of the State* Argenti similarly uses the metaphor of the intestines or bowels to show how tropes of eating connected to “economies of power, desire, and venality” in Cameroon’s grassfields.<sup>26</sup> Ever since slavery, Argenti notes, the trope of eating has stood in for the predatory consumption of people and their labor by witches, cannibals, zombies, and states alike. While Bayart and Argenti use the appetite of the human stomach to explain the systems of patronage and exploitation which have historically shaped African polities, before, during, and after, colonialism, he fails to take the metaphor of the belly further or consider the implications of his organic model.<sup>27</sup> Much like Aesop’s fable “The Belly and the Members,” Bayart seems to accept on its face the notion that the stomach directs and orients the rest of the body. Indeed, this is how the Nigerian novelist Ben Okri explains the origins of human suffering. In *The Famished Road* a stomach met a man on the road who did not have one and joined him. After receiving the stomach the

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<sup>24</sup> Wale Adebani. 2012. “Abuja” in Simon Bekker and Göran Therborn: *Power and Powerlessness: Capital Cities in Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

<sup>25</sup> Jean Comaroff. 1985. *Body of Power Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

<sup>26</sup> Nicolas Argenti. 2007. *The Intestines of the State: Youth, Violence, and Belated Histories in the Cameroon Grassfields*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 110-111.

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Francois Bayart. 2009. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly, Second Edition*. Polity, Cambridge.

man became hungry, weak, and unable to travel as he used to.<sup>28</sup> His mobility, in other word, was crippled when he ceased to merely be a body and had to learn the politics of having a belly.

Evans-Pritchard's seminal *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* depicts the Azande as fundamentally interested in the body as a source of power. Whenever someone died unexpectedly among the Azande they performed a kind of autopsy to check a suspected "witch" and see if the corporeal substance responsible for witchcraft was hiding in their body.<sup>29</sup> Thus Pritchard describes *Mangu* (witchcraft) as fundamentally "organic...part of the human organism" and notes how the autopsy would cut open the belly and pierce the side of the liver or the small intestine to see if the substance would pop out.<sup>30</sup> Even one of his goats was found to have the witchcraft substance in it. The witch is able to use this substance to detach their soul which will travel absent its corporeal shell and eat the organs (or at least the souls of their organs) of its victim.<sup>31</sup> Whatever one feels about the application of the terms "witchcraft" and "magic" to the Azande, it is undeniable that Evans-Pritchard documented the direct link in Azande thought between the body and hidden power and the body-politic. If something was awry in the body politic and people were dying, the answer had to be sought within actual human bodies. After his work among the Azande Evans-Pritchard would largely shift his research interests away from human bodies and towards the sacrifices of animal bodies and the spirits invoked through animals.<sup>32</sup> In any case, the idea that witches consume their victims in secret by feasting on their organs is widespread throughout Africa.

In Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, for example, a den of thieves and robbers who gathered at the Devil's Feast to boast of how they have been eating their fellow countrymen. After noting that in Gikuyu the "heart" can mean soul, spirit, conscience, mind, inner man, essence, etc Ngugi asks "What's a heart?"

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<sup>28</sup> Ben Okri. 1991 *The Famished Road*. London: Jonathan Cape, 80.

<sup>29</sup> E.E. Evans-Pritchard. 1976. *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. Edited by Eva Gilles. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>30</sup> Evans-Pritchard, 1, 2, 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard. 1972. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford University Press, New York, E.E. Evans-Pritchard. 1956. *Nuer Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Where does it reside? Is the heart an organ made of flesh, or is it mere breath?"<sup>33</sup> He then plays on the idea of a heart as organ and heart as soul in the context of a heart transplant. Suppose a rich person who lived a wicked life buys the heart of a poor, moral person before death and transplants it so that the rich man ascends to heaven and the poor goes to hell he posits. Mwaura, upon contemplating this, jokes that he would like to start of business which sells human hearts. "A heart business... no a heart market... no a heart supermarket where hearts can be bought by the highest bidder", he exclaims<sup>34</sup> Muturi and Wangari then sing together: "Two bourgeois women/Ate the flesh of the children of the poor./They could not see the humanity of the children/Because their hearts were empty." Finally, Muturi concluded that "the human heart is flesh and it is not flesh. The heart makes a man and it is made by man. The heart is borne by the body and in turn becomes the body." The organic heart pumps blood and works in concert with the other members of the body while the other heart "is the humanity we fashion with our hands... the product of our work and our actions which are guided by our mind."<sup>35</sup>

What Evans-Pritchard and Argenti show, different though their texts may be, is that speculations on the connection between bodies and power are hardly limited to philosophers and academics contemplating the nature of the state or the city. Popular discourse among common people also critiques economies of power through organic metaphors. As Achille Mbembe has shown, these discourses are widespread throughout the continent and usually focus on the mouth, the penis, and the belly of the state and its representative, the sovereign.<sup>36</sup> The state is, the popular critique goes, the body that eats, drinks, and fucks prodigiously and thus the body that excretes prodigiously. For common people, critiquing the body of the state is a means of mocking it, domesticating it, remaining aloof from its disciplinary project, and refusing to participate in the state worship desired by the sovereign even if it fails to challenge the material basis of rule.

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<sup>33</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o. 1982. *Devil on the Cross*. Translated by the author. Heinemann: Oxford, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Wa Thiong'o, 50.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 52-53.

<sup>36</sup> Achille Mbembe, 1992. "The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarity in the Postcolony." Translated by Janet Roitman. *Public Culture*. 4(2), 9.

Yet showing the significance of bodies in Africa's rural past is not enough. What evidence is there that urban Gambians continued to focus on the body as a model for political, economic, and social thought? In 1935 900 of Bathurst's prominent Muslims met to settle the differences between them and found the Jumhorial Society. The stated goal of the society was "reorganizing the body corporate" for the purposes of unity and good government.<sup>37</sup> The society was supposed to "embody" and be open to all of the Muslims in Bathurst, regulate social and religious affairs, raise funds for community work, and make rules, regulations, and bylaws based on Islamic values. The Imam of Bathurst was appointed the spiritual overseer of the society and an executive council saw to secular matters. Similarly, the El Muminiina Society, which was dedicated to advancing racial harmony within the city, wrote:

Gambians  
Are  
Making  
Bodies  
In  
Africa

What kind of bodies are Gambians making in Africa, they asked? "Promising bodies."<sup>38</sup>

When women first got the vote in The Gambia a female author editorialized in the *Echo*:

...Await your turn in the queue because you wanted to establish yourself and claim your right to citizenship... With a voting card and unity we can decide. Take it into your bosoms and think, think, think about it. Your voting card is your very self. It is as important to you as your health, the blood in your veins... and your cherished life. You can make a paradise with a solid foundation."<sup>39</sup>

There is also significant evidence that the Leviathan model of the state was influential in the erection of a *de facto* single party state in The Gambia. Gabby Hayes, writing to the *Echo* under the *nom de plume* "A Student" gave a familiar Hobbesian defense of the single party state in an editorial titled "The Approach to Sovereignty" arguing that they had to be "building every man, woman, and child in The Gambia into a great family with one personal goal and desire."<sup>40</sup> This is precisely what Jawara called for after he won the election, but instead he got large demonstrations which united the Congress Party and

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<sup>37</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1610 Constitution of the Muhammedan (Jumhorial) Society, September 29, 1935.

<sup>38</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 18, 1952, 7.

<sup>39</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* May 26, 1962, 5.

<sup>40</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 28, 1963, 3.

the United Party in 1963. Jawara asked for the “whole hearted cooperation of all men and women” in the country while the demonstration declared the “whole hearted support of Bathurst” for the United Party.<sup>41</sup> In July 1963, when Jawara rose to speak to the House the entire opposition also rose and walked out of the building and refused to listen to him.<sup>42</sup> Jawara further warned, reflecting Plato and Hobbes’ fear of divisions within the state, that even with a strong one party state there would still be a “danger from small dissenting groups becoming troublesome and troublemakers overt or covert necessitating stringent and repressive measures.”<sup>43</sup> The role of an opposition party, the *Echo* further editorialized, was to put aside differences and strive for unity, otherwise “a house divided will not stand.”<sup>44</sup> If this meant “a desire for a man who will be powerful and pure leading the nation” rather than a multi-party system, then so be it. The “excessive fear of tyranny” associated with single party rule, the *Echo* editors argued, would only lead to oligarchy.<sup>45</sup> This was hardly a uniquely Gambian discourse. As Julius Nyerere once claimed, “The struggle for freedom from foreign domination is a patriotic one which necessarily leaves no room for difference.”

Jawara, of course, managed to become the first president of an independent Gambian nation by uniting the Democratic and Congress parties and the support of the largest labor unions under the PPP banner and his call to unity, only to abandon them after he had secured the election. Once Jawara won the election he wasted no time and sacked seven chiefs. On the one hand, these chiefs were colonial appointees and Jawara was attempting to clean house. On the other, there was no due process or constitutional process which was employed to determine the fate of the chiefs which led some to claim “a rose by any other name would smell the same” implying that Jawara was applying the same undemocratic power as the British had in unilaterally dismissing chiefs while pretending his fertilizer did not stink.<sup>46</sup> He also attempted to sidestep democratic process once his term was coming to an end by proposing a

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<sup>41</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 28, 1963, 2.

<sup>42</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 20, 1963, 2.

<sup>43</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 31, 1964, 2.

<sup>44</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 7, 1964, 4.

<sup>45</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 7, 1964, 4

<sup>46</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* March 29, 1965, 2.

Referendum for a Republican Constitution where Jawara would face a referendum on his government rather than have to face a democratic election with challengers. As opponents pointed out in a referendum the government is “the home-team, the referee, and the Football Association and naturally cannot be expected to lose the match.”<sup>47</sup> The move also caused the PPP to split as Reverend J.C. Faye and his supporters abandoned the party once it became clear what Jawara’s aims were.

#### THE IMMUNE SYSTEM: URBAN AFRICA AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

If it has long been understood that cities bring together what Aristotle called “different kinds of men” it is nevertheless the case that cities are assumed to have essential, clearly identifiable essences. In African history this notion takes the form of a debate over whether or not cities during the colonial period were “African”, “Colonial”, “Creole”, or another term which implies mixture. The salience of the debate, the terms of which are largely set by post-colonialism, is that labelling the city is a political move. “African” cities exist because of the creativity, strength, and hard work of the African residents of those cities. They are places where Africans come into contact with colonial power structures and yet manage to maintain their “Africanness” in the way they build their homes, how they structure their lives, and the return trips they make to their rural homes. The “colonial” city, by contrast, is a place where the colonial nature of the system overcodes both European and African. Colonial power structures, which require both African and European inputs, blur the lines between the two such that the result can only be called colonial. The “colonial” city does not imply equality between African and European elements, but rather their necessary coupling by power. The “creole” city is less concerned with power and more with cultural mixing. Africans and Europeans each bring to the city their own cultural assumptions and the close contact between the two leads to a blending of those cultures.

As Donna Haraway has shown, the human immune system, of all the body’s units, has come to exemplify the tension between the self and the Other. Thus it makes an apt metaphor for colonial situations. What is the city? African? Creole? Colonial? Who belongs? Who does not? Haraway shows how the immune system was originally assumed to be a harmonious system capable of clearly

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<sup>47</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* September 6, 1965, 1.

recognizing what was foreign to the body and managing it, but in the wake of advancements in science and HIV/AIDS virus the immune system now seems to be an “inharmonious heterogeneity” without central direction.<sup>48</sup> Banjul, I argue, resembles the latter much more than the former. While I have no doubt that British administrators of the city attempted to impose central direction on the city and that they passed legislation which impacted the daily lives of city dwellers, their efforts to do so were stymied at every turn not only by the city’s African residents, but by other Europeans who dissembled, stole, and defied the state and, most of all, by nature which, by its very definition, cares nothing for the will of men.

As Luise White has argued, the politics of African authenticity, and the idea that a city can be neatly labeled as “African”, have much more to do with the relationship between the “West” and the “third world” and how African cities are portrayed to the outside world. The result of this quest for African authenticity is that African cities become “third worlded” by outside scholars looking to uphold models of authentic Africa.<sup>49</sup> By calling cities/voices/etc “African” scholars could claim to be portraying Africans views of their own experiences. Even the most effectively controlled space (or the least), White points out, was too contested and compromised to produce a clearly African or European voice. The attempt to separate the two, for White, is to take voices which are tightly interwoven and to render them “*disembodied* and decontextualized” (my emphasis) and thus unrecognizable.<sup>50</sup>

Coquery-Vidrovitch further problematizes the “colonial” and “African” designation of African cities during the period of European colonization. It is not that those cities were under colonial rule, but rather than *all* cities are staging points for imperialism directed at less developed areas and colonial in their relation to their hinterland and to surrounding territories.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, calling a city “African” when it is clearly a nodal point in the articulation of an imperial system could be considered overly reductionist in that it only grasps a part of the city’s reality in relation to global and regional webs of power. By breaking

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<sup>48</sup> Donna Harraway. 1993. “The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Determinations of Self in Immune System Discourse” in Shirley Lendebaum and Margaret Lock eds. *Knowledge, Practice, and Power: The Anthropology of Medicine in Everyday Life*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 366.

<sup>49</sup> Luise White. 2000. *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 50, 91-92.

<sup>50</sup> White, *Speaking with Vampires*, 50.

<sup>51</sup> Coquery-Vidrovitch, 17.



down the relevance of these categories to African cities Coquery-Vidrovitch opens up the city to a more nuanced analysis which takes into account the intimacies of the city and the various flows which traversed it, but which were never confined to it. The problem with separating the colonial from the African in the city is not merely practical, but epistemological as well. Rosalind Shaw's essay on "The Invention of 'African Traditional Religion'" (ATR) will serve as a useful tool for evaluating the claim that a city can be either African or colonial. Shaw describes how ATR, as a historically constructed category, was created by privileging some facets of "religions" while ignoring others. She compares this to butterfly collecting.<sup>52</sup> How shall we classify the butterflies, she asks? Should butterflies be grouped by color to create categories of blue butterflies, yellow butterflies, and so on? Or should they be grouped by size creating categories of small butterflies, big butterflies, etc? In this way, Shaw shows how ATR was created as a category to contain African praxis by lumping it into a "religion", a concept which is rarely found in Africa apart from Islam and Christianity, and defining it in opposition to "World" and "Universal" religions. Originally, this was seen as separating the supposedly rational and therefore universal faiths like Christianity from the ATRs which were constituted by African mumbo jumbo and could not possibly entice others outside of their local contexts. More recently, ATR has been reevaluated in a more positive light as authentic African antidotes to Western Christianity.

Whether to value ATR negatively or positively is hardly the point. What matters for our purposes is that ATR as a category is not indigenous, but created through an epistemological sleight of hand where the scholar defines the categories and then announces their existence *a priori* to the definition as if the categories merely reflect reality on the ground. This is done more so by occlusion than inclusion. The scholar looking to define a religion (or city) as authentically African excludes from the category those realities which are too messy to be contained. In the case of a city this would mean dismissing institutions which are clearly not African in nature such as bourgeois notions of private property, courts of law, prisons, international merchant capital, and so on. Similarly, declaring a city to be colonial would necessarily involve the denial of African independence within the city. The spaces where Africans were

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<sup>52</sup> Rosalind Shaw. 1990. "The Invention of 'African Traditional Religion'" *Religion*. 20(4).

able to maintain their own social, personal, and even kinds of judicial independence within the city would have to be occluded to maintain the colonial typology. The key, as Peel shows with religion, is to avoid assuming that a set of practices constitutes a coherent system which exists in a relationship of alterity to other systems.<sup>53</sup> Paul Landau similarly portrays the African encounter with Christianity. Rather than experiencing Christianity as a system, Landau argues, Africans experienced it in bits and pieces which they accepted, rejected, and modified. They only “learned” Christianity was a full-fledged system when Europeans “explained” to them that it was a self-sufficient religion which supposedly needed no additions or changes.<sup>54</sup> As Landau shows, the establishment of a Christian “Realm of the Word” among the Tswana has everything to do with intimate power relations and very little to do with two systems opposing each other. Peel further describes the history of religion as “a multi-colored woolen cord, with component fibers of different lengths- Yoruba, colonial, Christian, and other- that give it structure by pulling both together and against one another.”<sup>55</sup> It’s a wonderful image and an apt metaphor for how to read this dissertation. It is in opposition to the tendency to view these mixtures as impure, heretical, or chimerical and the associated search for an imagined past authenticity which silences difference in the name of a political project of purity.

This dissertation will make no contribution to this debate other than to argue that to assign a single identity to a city is an essentialist and overly reductionist project. Yet it is one thing to reject simplistic typologies and another thing to say something meaningful and intelligible about the city without those typologies to structure our utterances. To do so we need to ask better questions about the city. In what spaces did colonial power operate most effectively? In what spaces was it most ineffective? Where and when were Africans able to maintain the most independence from the state? What were the areas of cultural overlap between the cities African and European elements? These types of questions address many of the same issues as the debate over the identity of the city. They get at questions of power

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<sup>53</sup> J.D.Y. Peel. 2000. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 89.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Stuart Landau. 1995. *The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender, and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom*. Heinemann, Portsmouth.

<sup>55</sup>Peel, 9.

and powerlessness, cultural overlap and cultural difference, independence and dependency, life and death, and so on. These questions, in other words, foreground a more nuanced understanding of the city and recognize that when we pay more attention to specific spaces, times, people, and institutions we develop a more nuanced understanding of the city.

The body, again, serves as a model. Modern science no longer understands the body as Plato, Aristotle, or Hobbes did. The human body, it turns out, is profoundly inhuman. Only about 10% of the cells in the human body are genetically human. The other 90% are bacterium which, are not only inhuman, but also organisms in their own right. There are as many bacteria on the surface of our skin as there are “human” cells in the entirety of our bodies.<sup>56</sup> The implication of this fact is that if 90% of our bodies weren't inhuman, we couldn't possibly be human. It seems obvious to us that something which can be called human beings exist, but how that can be so when we are only 10% human? Certainly most would find the argument that since we are 90% bacterium, that we are merely a walking talking microbe unconvincing. It suggests, seemingly paradoxically, that only a body open to and pervaded by multiplicities can sustain itself as a subject. Achille Mbembe's description of the postcolony is apt: “a chaotic plurality yet it has nonetheless an internal coherence.”<sup>57</sup> Mariama Bâ, through the character of Aissatou puts it thusly, “Man is one: greatness and animal fused together. None of his acts is pure charity. None is pure bestiality.”<sup>58</sup>

Although African authors sometimes reify binary categories they are also often more cognizant what they obscure than Western scholars have been. Ken Saro Wiwa, for example, titles one of his more famous novels *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English*. He explains:

Sozaboy's language is what I call 'rotten English,' a mixture of Nigerian pidgin English, broken English and occasional flashes of good, even idiomatic English. This language is disordered and disorderly. Born of a mediocre education and severely limited opportunities, it borrows words, patterns and images freely from the mother-tongue and finds expression in a very limited English vocabulary. To its speakers, it has the advantage of having no rules and no syntax. It thrives on

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<sup>56</sup> Donna Haraway (2007) *When Species Meet*. Univ of Minnesota Press.

<sup>57</sup> Mbembe. “Banality of Power”, 1.

<sup>58</sup> Mariama Bâ. 1989. *So Long a Letter*. Translated by Modupé Bodé-Thomas. Heinemann: Oxford, 32.

lawlessness, and is part of the dislocated and discordant society in which Sozaboy must live, move, and have not his being.<sup>59</sup>

Through his use of “rotten” English Wiwa takes what he needs from different linguistic cultures and sets them in motion together. Compared to the politics of Ngugi who famously asserted that Africans must write in their own languages to truly express themselves<sup>60</sup>, Wiwa argues, on the contrary, that only by reflecting the complexity of the situation he finds himself in can he truly critique the forces which are confronting him: war, death, famine, and chaos. Yet we should be careful of drawing too stark a distinction between Ken Saro Wiwa and Ngugi wa Thiong’o. Dipesh Chakrabarty renders the distance between the two more manageable. “One of the ironies of attempting to know any kind of language in depth” Chakrabarty notes “is that the unity of the language is sundered in the process” and “One becomes aware of how plural a language invariably is, and how it cannot ever be its own rich self except as a hybrid formation of many ‘other’ languages.”<sup>61</sup> After all, the Gikuyu which Ngugi wrote in is only one of many possible Gikuyus.<sup>62</sup> This does not make his project any less important or meaningful nor does it invalidate Wiwa’s use of (rotten) English.

The question inevitably arises: of what value is this metaphor in helping us to understand urban history? Hobbes begins to answer when he says “Words may be called metaphorical, bodies and motion cannot.”<sup>63</sup> Hobbes’ point, is that calling a society (or city) a body is not a figure of speech, but an actual description of a set of flows which coalesce in, but also exit and enter, a given place. The city and the state attract and repel certain flows. It is in their ability to alter these flows which individually would be random and directionless that the city and state become bodies. Will Self, explaining an airport, poses the problem as a question of scale. “Looked down on from a mile up in the sky - the holding pattern of a god - this air terminal is a body, the living tissue of which is bored into by bacterium planes, subterranean

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<sup>59</sup> Ken Saro Wiwa. 1994. *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English*. Longman: New York.

<sup>60</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong’o. 1986. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. James Curry: Oxford.

<sup>61</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2000, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Derek Peterson. 2004. *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Hobbes. 1986. *Leviathan*. Translated by C. B. Macpherson, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 32.

trains and hissing buses. Humans swarm through its concourses, virions with credit cards.<sup>64</sup> The airport is a body because it is a place around which a number of flows coalesce out of sheer necessity and circumstance. Like the city or the state, its existence is based on the ability to maintain these flows which involves both processes of excretion and inhalation/consumption. It must allow what is foreign to it in in order to survive just as it has to excrete.

Deleuze and Guattari put it thusly: “a *body* is... the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness...the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential.”<sup>65</sup> Flows of men, machines, animals, capital, disease, commodities, etc. The questions are: how fast/slow are they moving? With what intensity? Through which conduits? What is the potential affect of these flows? Their ability to be affected? These questions are more productive than whether or not the city is European, colonial, African, or creole. What was the speed at which commodities flowed through the city and what affect did they produce in the residents of the city? Consider Luise White’s differentiation between rumor and gossip. What separated rumor from gossip or legend was the speed and intensity with which the former spread.<sup>66</sup> Gossip is intimate speech rooted in an imagined community where the speakers and spoken about are known to each other and subject to reproach. Rumor travels. As it moves it gathers to it seemingly contradictory elements and binds them together, making of them a world which makes sense to those who hear it.<sup>67</sup> It is this ability to contain diverse elements which makes rumors strong and durable. Even the most “homogenous” audience will find that rumors speak to different factions within the audience differently. Rumors are collective endeavors, but each contributor to the collective remains anonymous. It is the rumor which grows in fame and prestige, not the contributors. This is also how Armah critiques the

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<sup>64</sup> Will Self. 2009. *Liver: A Fictional Organ with a Surface Anatomy of Four Lobes*. New York: Bloomsbury, 235-236.

<sup>65</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 260.

<sup>66</sup> White, *Speaking with Vampires*, 56.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

changes which wracked Ghana in the colonial and postcolonial years. While noting it is childish to expect change to cease, he nevertheless claims

the wondering and the shaking and the vomiting horror is not all from the inward sickness of the individual soul. Here we have a kind of movement that should make even good stomachs go sick. What is painful to the thinking mind is not the movement itself, but the dizzying speed of it. It is that which has been horrible.<sup>68</sup>

It is not that colonialism introduced much which was totally unknown, but rather that it rerouted existing flows, enlarged them, and sped them up in the service of certain colonial projects. The arrival of European merchants on the Gambia River did not bring with them the very first commodities, but they did create new flows between Europe and the river, they greatly enlarged the availability of imported commodities, and they attempted, whenever they could, to ensure that these commodities circulated and were consumed with as much rapidity as possible.

To call a city a body is to perform a kind of autopsy and open it up to a gaze which purports to describe its flows. As Will Self describes it “At once the city is torn open for the culture’s gaze: a mass of viscid interiority, with its vital organs of governance and commerce, its sinews and arteries of communication, its intestinal retail courses and media glands, and surrounding them all its myriad cells of human habitation.”<sup>69</sup> There is, of course, reason to give one pause about this kind of inquiry. As Fanon said, the gaze turns a subject into the object of another. Whether the gaze refers to the white male gaze, the colonial gaze, the imperial gaze, or the post-colonial gaze, the person or persons being viewed are aware of this gaze and begin to see themselves as objects of the gaze. Women are taught to see themselves through the eyes of men and colonized through the eyes of the colonist.

One option is to disavow visuality and the visual metaphor entirely. This is the argument made by Oyeronke Oyewumi in *The Invention of Women*. According to Oyewumi, the modern West developed an entire cultural system by elevating the visual and the power/pleasure of the gaze above all else while

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<sup>68</sup> Armah, 62.

<sup>69</sup> Self, 195.

African culture is based on the auditory sensation of spoken language.<sup>70</sup> If Oyewumi is correct, then the visual (and the visual metaphor) needs to be attacked and displaced. There is certainly evidence that colonial authorities in The Gambia placed a great deal of emphasis on how things looked. When designing hygiene propaganda, for example, they noted that effective propaganda should be directed at the eye rather than the ear.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps, however, Oyewumi is partially correct. Asserting that modern Western culture is visual and African culture is auditory may actually flatten both and thus distort them beyond recognition. Certainly the visual should not be privileged above other senses, but perhaps it is possible to work out a tenuous balance between the senses, which privileges those most often neglected while maintaining the relevance of visual inquiry.

This is the line of thought adopted by Donna Haraway in “Situated Knowledges.” Haraway begins her discussion of vision by noting that it is much maligned in feminist discourse, just as it is in Oyewumi’s.<sup>72</sup> In both instances vision signifies the gaze and the gaze signifies Male and White. After showing why this gaze cannot possibly be as all-seeing and all-knowing as it claims to be, nor can it be a gaze which is situated in no particular place, Haraway nevertheless concludes that there are situated ways of seeing which need to be made explicit in order to privilege marginalized visions.<sup>73</sup> This does not mean appropriating the view-points of the powerless and claiming to speak for them. Instead, Haraway advocates for making clear what viewpoints are being used and how, at whose expense are we viewing, through which lens? She posits a number of questions which hint at how vision might not only be redeemed, but positioned alongside other senses: “How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinded? Who wears blinders? Who interprets the visual field? *What other sensory powers do we wish to cultivate*

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<sup>70</sup> Oyeronke Oyewumi. 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 15.

<sup>71</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2929 Medical and Health Services Revised Development Plan, 1947.

<sup>72</sup> Donna Haraway. 1988. “Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” *Feminist Studies*. 14(3), 581.

<sup>73</sup> Haraway, 583.

*besides vision?*” (my italics)<sup>74</sup> These questions, rather than building hierarchies of sense and excluding some or deifying others, lead to a more nuanced understanding of history and even allow for the use of the colonial gaze, so long as it is situated as the exploitative vision that it is. Consider the following: from a human being’s viewpoint you might say that you are stationary in a particular location reading this dissertation and from that viewpoint you would be correct. The view from space, however, says that you are travelling at 16,000 miles per hour in an elliptical orbit around the sun and are thus never stationary or in the same place from any given second to the next. Both points of view, despite seeming contradictory, are clearly true relative to the context from which they are expressed. The fact that any given actor may not perceive their celestial motion does not mean it does not exist anymore than the rotation of the Earth overcodes our own experiences of motion and rest.

#### THE CITY AND ITS CIRCULATORY SYSTEM: CYCLICAL FLOWS

In the seventeenth century William Harvey became the first person to correctly describe the human circulatory system in *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus* (Concerning the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals). Following this discovery, in the eighteenth century, urban development began to privilege the circulation of individuals throughout the city as a kind of freedom opposed to communal spaces.<sup>75</sup> (Figure 11) Bathurst is very much an inheritor of this tradition though it was never able implement the architecture or administration that could reify private property and turn the streets into arteries to channel traffic rather than places for people to congregate.

As James Ferguson has pointed out, European models of urban modernity and mobility are inadequate when applied to actual cities (or villages for that matter) and they tend to assume a teleological narrative in which the city progresses neatly towards modernity. In fact, Ferguson argues, the flows of urbanization are more cyclical than linear.<sup>76</sup> Not only does Ferguson have in mind the cyclical migration between urban and rural areas which defined life in many African cities, but also the cyclical nature of

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<sup>74</sup> Harraway, 587.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Sennett. 1994. *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*. W.W. Norton and Company: New York and London, 23.

<sup>76</sup> James Ferguson. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.



investment in and divestment from cities. Indeed, an ouroboros is a more effective motif for conveying the history of Bathurst than a straight line.

The cyclical nature of these flows in African cities frustrate modernizers and blunt the hopes for progress which figure centrally in the modernist dream. Among African writers B. Kojó Laing is unique in his portrayal of Accra as a circulatory system mapped out by the cyclical mobility of individuals. In *Search Sweet Country*, Laing describes the wanderings of one of the novel's protagonists, Loww, through Accra as his beard pushed the city itself to the side and reorganized urban space around him rather than himself orienting to the architecture of the city.<sup>77</sup> Yet he also recognizes that Loww's wanderings have their limitations:

As he walked he seemed to be binding the parts of the city together with his clumsy broad feet: the old iron-sheets of Nima shouted their rust back to the Ringway, where the cars pulled and stretched the yawn of the old dual roads between two exhausted Circles, Liberation and Redemption.<sup>78</sup>

Loww's freedom to construct his own city through his wanderings comes with limitations. He is free to walk as an individual where he pleases and yet Liberation and Redemption remained locked into exhausted circulation without progress. We can also see this in Laing's description of Dr. Boadi, a politician who is primarily constituted by "flow" and whose monologues on Revolution remind Pol of the revolution of a ceiling fan: "both fan and idea moved in hopeless circles."<sup>79</sup> Even the mobility of Adwoa Adde, a witch who flies above the city, is unable to turn her motion into progress. Her flight cuts Accra into "varying intensities of light and dark, good and bad" but leaves her unable to distinguish between the parts of the city which are good and which are bad. Entering into an intimate relationship with the entirety of the city allows her to describe what she felt and saw, but the intensity of this kind of motion makes her unable to imagine progress towards the "good."<sup>80</sup>

Not only does Laing resist the modernist teleology of urban progress by focusing on the movement of his human characters, but he is also cognizant of another circulation occurring in the

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<sup>77</sup> Laing, 166.

<sup>78</sup> B. Kojó Laing. 1986. *Search Sweet Country*. New York, Beech Tree Books, 157

<sup>79</sup> Laing, 121.

<sup>80</sup> Laing, 39.

shadows. Describing the rats that inhabit a church, Laing shows how the circulation of the rodents throughout the church seemingly alters the orientation of the architecture itself:

The tail of the church rat bisecting the middle of the pews made the biggest cross; the dame tail gathered shadows, sudden shafts of light, and all other linear things, and dragged them in rodent holiness toward the circular altar. God's word crawled. The rat was now the center of the empty church, and was shifting this center as if the church were moveable, as if other walls, other beams, other windows could instantly appear and retain the rat at the center wherever it went. Silence bred a new architecture. The church was dizzy with this movement... As he (Osofo) prayed by the outside walls his words scattered into the church, moving the rat out with their force. Words prowled around the running rat.<sup>81</sup>

Laing similarly describes urban flies as “commas” because they only paused and never stopped on any glass they landed and he wondered how urban horses, accidentally set loose in the city, will square with the law.<sup>82</sup> The cries of urban goats, Laing further notes, shape not only the concrete of a bank building, but also Loww's own sense of being.<sup>83</sup>

The circulation of these flows of human and nonhuman animals, commodities, capital, and so on is a primary concern of this dissertation. Much like Laing I see these flows as fundamental to the lived experience of the city, but also creating little which resembles progress. I am not suggesting that no progress occurred or that daily peoples struggles amounted to “sound and fury, signifying nothing.” Rather, I understand it in the sense that people are frustrated in their attempts to achieve revolutionary progress (as Marx understands it) and often have to settle for revolutionary progress (as the ceiling fan understands it). Gambians struggled for daily survival, for equality, for political and economic rights, for family wages, benefits, workmen's compensation, pensions, and so on. In doing so they did indeed make progress. And yet Gambians today still struggle for survival, wages, etc under the yoke of a repressive, totalitarian sovereign. As Donald Wright has noted, a bag of rice is just as dear today as it was in the worst of times.

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<sup>81</sup> Laing, 187.

<sup>82</sup> Laing, 246.

<sup>83</sup> Laing, 157.

## ON THE HEART OF A CITY

In *Moby Dick* Melville describes the whiteness of the whale as “vague, nameless horror”, appalling, enhancing beauty, imparting special virtue, conjuring white racial dominance, embodying the sacred and pure, striking panic in the soul, and the beauty of nature. It is this sense I intend to describe “The Heart of Banjul”. The title obviously conjures Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (the horror the horror).<sup>84</sup> Conrad invokes racism precisely to show the horrors of European colonialism, not to perpetuate racist stereotypes about “darkest Africa.” Indeed, much of this dissertation is devoted to showing the folly of colonialism through the history of the city. The discourse of progress and human rights flowing from the mouths of colonial officials was a cynical one.

Jean Comaroff details how European medical and colonial discourse focused on “The Diseased Heart of Africa” equated African bodies with suffering and degeneracy.<sup>85</sup> The colonial penetration of Africa, Comaroff argues, was mirrored by the penetration of the biomedical sciences into human bodies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Black bodies, flayed, dissected, and displayed came not only to signify the racial other, but a model of disease, degeneracy, and disorder which contrasted supposedly “European” civilization. Thus metaphors of bodily healing became the justification for supposedly humane imperialism which purported to be saving Africans by civilizing them. Missionaries were at the forefront of these efforts though they gave way in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to newly minted departments of public health and sanitation.<sup>86</sup>

The heart of the city, also speaks to the love and affection that urban dwellers develop towards “their city” even, it seems, in dire circumstances. Heart of Banjul is also about those who came for more than survival. It is also about urban dwellers who found pleasure in the food, dance, song, and cinema of the city, laborers who fashioned themselves as both modern and African, and women who became

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<sup>84</sup> Relative to Conrad’s master work I agree with Edward Said’s reading in *Culture and Imperialism* rather than Chinua Achebe’s. Said’s reading of *Heart of Darkness* is more nuanced and convincing than Achebe who denounces it as a racist screed. See Edward Said. 1975. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York : Knopf, 1993. Chinua Achebe : "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" Lecture at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

<sup>85</sup> Jean Comaroff. 1993. “The Diseased Heart of Africa” in Shirley Lendebaum and Margaret Lock eds. *Knowledge, Practice, and Power: The Anthropology of Medicine in Everyday Life*. University of California Press: Berkeley.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 306.

property owners. Nationalists and Pan Africanists came to the city to develop anti-colonial networks and make contacts. Literate men, women, and children found joy in the printed word and a life of letters. This is the double meaning of Heart of Banjul, but it is not unique to Banjul or, indeed, to Africa. Although in the factual details of the dissertation I hope to convey the history of a unique city I also hope to situate this history within broad economic, social, cultural, and intellectual currents that link it to other times and places. Banjul is not uniquely double in this sense, but it does have its own unique history of doubleness.

Laing's *Search Sweet Country* explains, far better than I can, what I mean when I talk about the Heart of Banjul. Describing the relationship between Kojo Pol and his house Laing says: "He reached the gate, and stood there scrutinizing the beat of his own heart... The heart of the house seemed to be slower than he knew it some weeks before."<sup>87</sup> Here Laing portrays an inextricable link between the built architecture of the city and the organic processes of its human residents. Kojo Pol is as cognizant of the heartbeat of his house as he is of his own. Similarly, as Kofi Loww cleans and rearranges his house Laing wonders if "Perhaps it was his own heart he was tidying and rearranging, since the room did not need it." When Loww finishes "his heart had moved to other parts of his chest, with a different beat."<sup>88</sup> Residents of the city do try to alter their urban environments as a means to alter the self, but they are limited in their ability to do so. Kofi can rearrange his house to reflect the changing position and beat of his heart, but much of the built infrastructure of the city is more difficult to change. For this reason Laing warns, "Accra could harm the hearts of beings hundreds of feet up in the sky. Accra be sweet-ooooo; only avoid the history, avoid the gutters."<sup>89</sup>

The city matters because it never fails to touch the bodies and souls of its inhabitants, even witches flying hundreds of feet over the city, for better and for worse. The city shows its residents their power (to move freely, to consume, to love, to be creative) and their powerlessness (to go anywhere, to not afford consumption, to relieve alienation, and to create change). Agyemang, the manager of a BP petrol station, laughs at the prospect of his impending death from high BP (blood pressure) and the

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<sup>87</sup> Laing, 237.

<sup>88</sup> Laing, 214.

<sup>89</sup> Laing, 186.

buildup of “BP petrol in my heart!”<sup>90</sup> The city’s market is built from the fat of the women who sold there, Loww has a market in his head, and as Loww walks through the market the cynical sounds of commerce eat at his heart.<sup>91</sup> Why didn’t people bathe their streets, buildings, and latrines as often as they bathed their bodies, Loww wonders.

Compare the visceral, immediate relationship between the city and Kofi Loww with the way Laing describes his more abstract relationship with the nation state. “The richness of his own country was a fine pattern outside, but not inside him. The problem was how to faithfully wear the *kente* inside his inner shoulders, or how to eat *akrantsi* with his inner mouth. Then he threw Ghana out of his head...”<sup>92</sup> Ayi Kwei Armah similarly portrays the *kente* as an outward sign nationalism hiding the small minority who profited in the postcolony. A wealthy timber contractor, for example, is described as a “belly swathed in *kente* cloth” with a “wolf mouth” full of aggressive teeth that seemed to speak on their own behalf.<sup>93</sup> Both authors, of course, are mocking Nkrumah’s wearing of *kente* in office while overseeing a government in which the principles it was founded on have become a cynical joke. In postcolonial Ghana, Armah states, “Many had tried the rotten ways and found them filled with the sweetness of life. The rest were waiting their turn.”<sup>94</sup>

The city, in contrast to the nation, was too immediate, too visceral to be a mocked and set aside. Accra is *inside* Loww whether he likes it or not because of the inescapable way that it pervades him. Indeed, he likes it and he does not. Its smells invade his nostrils, its hardness and softness register on his skin, the food he eats there, divorced from its origins in the soil, nourish or inflict his insides, and when his feet hit the pavement, the pavement hits back. The nation, by contrast, has failed to touch his soul because it fails to penetrate his body. The city, far more than the nation, shapes his inner world for better and for worse. The nation could be easily cast out of his head. The city, by contrast, was impossible to be rid of. “Tell us, what has Nairobi done to you to make your heart so heavy?” Ngugi has Muturi ask

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<sup>90</sup> Laing, 175.

<sup>91</sup> Laing, 162.

<sup>92</sup> Laing, 212.

<sup>93</sup> Armah, 27-28.

<sup>94</sup> Armah, 145.

Wangari in *Devil on the Cross*. Wangari replies with a list of “unspeakable horrors.”<sup>95</sup> Again, Armah’s pessimism locates the city at the death of Rama Krishna, a Ghanaian who avoided corruption and turned to vegetarianism and yoga. Krishna dies young of consumption with his body being more decayed than any other living body. The disease ate his lungs and “where his heart ought to have been there was only a living lot of worms gathered together tightly in the shape of a heart.”<sup>96</sup>

It is not only novelists who have noted the impact that African cities can have on the bodies of their inhabitants. In *A Dying Colonialism* Fanon describes the process of colonization through its effects on Muslim women’s bodies. According to Fanon, the Muslim woman, veiled in purdah, suffered when colonialism thrust her body out into the “limitless horizon of avenues, of unfolded sidewalks, of houses, of people dodged or bumped into” and gave it a mobility she had not yet known.<sup>97</sup> She has a sensation of

being cut up into bits, put adrift; the limbs seem to lengthen indefinitely. When the Algerian woman has to cross a street, for a long time she commits errors of judgment as to the exact distance to be negotiated. The unveiled body seems to escape, to dissolve. She has an impression of being improperly dressed, even of being naked. She experiences a sense of nakedness with great intensity. She has the anxious feeling that something is unfinished, and along with this a frightful sensation of disintegrating. The absence of the veil distorts the Algerian woman’s corporal pattern. She quickly has to invent new dimensions for her body, new means of muscular control... The Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion. This new dialectic of body and of the world is primary in the case of one revolutionary woman.<sup>98</sup>

Once the female body becomes reworked in revolutionary fashion the slimming down of the body initiated by colonialism and the loss of the veil is reversed and replaced by a swelling which makes it “shapeless, even ridiculous” in order to conceal weapons and materials from the colonizer.

Fanon deals more with the male physiological response to colonialism in *Black Skin White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth*. In the former Fanon discusses the racial discourse of colonization as the second step in the colonial process after economic domination and the “epidermalization of inferiority” in which the slightest white gaze makes black men “feel their melanin.”<sup>99</sup> In *Wretched of the Earth* the

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<sup>95</sup> Ngugi, 41.

<sup>96</sup> Armah, 48-49.

<sup>97</sup> Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 49.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

<sup>99</sup> Frantz Fanon. 1967. *Black Skin White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, XV, 128.

“rigid” male body resisting the enquiries of Western medicine becomes the muscular body coiled and ready to lash out in defense of itself. Here Fanon is less concerned with a discourse of racial inferiority than the violence of the colonial system and how the various stresses of living under colonialism manifest themselves in the bodies of the colonized. Fanon describes, in detail, the various tortures used by the Algerian security state including beatings, water torture, electricity, etc in order to show the psychosomatic effect these tortures have on the colonized. The patients Fanon treats display stomach ulcers, colic, alterations in menstrual patterns, accelerated signs of aging and hear rate, and general muscular stiffness.<sup>100</sup> Of these Fanon devotes the most attention to the muscles. Coiled muscles which scream “get ready to attack”, toned muscles eager to take the colonizers place, muscles incapable of relaxation, the atrophied muscles of starving men forced to labor, and muscles striving towards freedom. Fanon intends his focuses on the muscles not as a celebration of black physiology, but to demonstrate the degree to which colonization has alienated the colonized from those other muscles: their brains and their hearts.<sup>101</sup>

#### HEART OF BANJUL: WHAT’S IN A NAME

The Heart of Banjul painting on Grant Street is one of the more noticeable ones in the city. (Figure 41) Buses, cars, and taxis leaving the city and seeking to avoid the traffic on Independence Drive often cross Grant Street where the small raised concrete walls have been painted. The walls are part of a drainage system constructed in the late 1940s to provide a main drainage artery for the city which would carry flood waters out to the swampy area around Crab Island. Whatever its effectiveness during the colonial period (evidence suggests it frequently failed) it has ceased to function and has instead become a reservoir of standing water. A common joke among young children when they see a tourist pass by is to claim that they see crocodiles swimming through the mucky waters. In any case, frequently passing by the Heart of Banjul made me curious as to who had painted it and why. I was, after all, researching a dissertation and, even in the early phases, I knew that the body was going to play a large role in the

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<sup>100</sup> Frantz Fanon. 1965. *Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 291-292.

<sup>101</sup> Fanon. *Wretched*. 192.

theoretical frame. A few quick inquiries put me in touch with a member of the Heart of Banjul Youth Association who explained to me that they had painted it to represent their youth group who operated in that part of the city. The heart of the association was a football club who played matches against the city's other sides. Friendlies were played at the Gambia High School fields and league matches at King George V (no longer referred to with its royal moniker and simply known as KG V) field. A few years before the administration of the city had made a significant capital outlay to line KG V with modern AstroTurf for football matches. The field, they realized, was an important outlet for the energies of young urban dwellers and worth the expenditure necessary to create a modern pitch. To ensure order at least two police officers in body armor and riot gear patrol in front of the entrance to the field wielding batons and often a tear gas launcher.

For many of the young male members of the association, football and the prospects of winning the Banjul championships provide a common goal to strive towards. Yet football hardly encompasses the many roles the organization plays in the lives of its members. Supporters of the association spend a great deal of time together brewing attaya, chatting, watching international football matches, eating communal meals, surfing the web, and so on. A Heart of Banjul Facebook page lets the members check up on the latest goings on in case they are away from the city and out of earshot as well as posting photos of their exploits on and off the pitch. The association also boasts a large number of female members who do not participate as actively in the football aspect of the association, but take advantage of other perks of membership. The association helps to pay for school fees and medical benefits for its members when it can. It relies on the connections that certain members have in other countries to secure a great deal of funding in addition to what they can muster in country.

I am not merely providing another explanation for the title of the dissertation. I felt it was important to recognize of the generosity with which the Heart of Banjul Youth Association members extended to me. After our initial introduction on Grant Street I spent a good deal of my time in the city with the Heart of Banjul members who kindly showed me around the city, fed me, brewed attaya, chatted with me about



this and that, fed me, invited me to their football matches, introduced me to their families, and fed me again. My experience with these young urban men was at the heart of my experience in Banjul.

## METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is based on documentary evidence gathered primarily in the National Records Office of The Gambia in Banjul during two research trips. The criticism of the archive as a supposedly neutral repository of authoritative knowledge reached its zenith in the early 1990s with Natalie Zemon Davis' *Fiction in the Archives*, Roberto Echevarría's *Myth and Archive*, Thomas Richards' *Imperial Archive*, Sonia Coomb's *Archive Interdites*, and Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever*.<sup>102</sup> It is hardly surprising that the skepticism of grand narratives inherent in postmodernist and post-colonialist projects found its outlet in the criticism of the archive as the source of that flawed narrative. The most extreme criticisms of the Archive mirrored the most vigorous postmodern critiques of history: that it was nothing more than a fiction set to a certain "epistemological master pattern", which served to reproduce colonial forms of inequality and power through the enunciation of the official colonial narrative.

The key is to balance between seeing the Archives as a *source* of knowledge and as a *subject* of knowledge.<sup>103</sup> There is no doubt that archives are sources of knowledge. Yet they have also been shaped by social, political, and economic forces which necessitated their creation. Prostitution, for example, often goes undocumented until the colonial state makes its policing into a social engineering project and all of a sudden evidence on prostitutes, their whereabouts, and activities is miraculated into being. The same could be said of a myriad of other topics. One thing this dissertation hopes to do, in reading the Archive, is to show how the contents of the archives are shaped by the projects of the colonial state. Why is it, for

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<sup>102</sup> See Natalie Z. Davis. 1987. *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press. R. González Echevarría. 1990. *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Thomas Richards. 1993. *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*. London: Verso. Sonia Combe. 1994. *Archives Interdites: Les Peurs Françaises Face À L'histoire Contemporaine*. Paris: A. Michel. Jacques Derrida. 1996. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. As Cited in Ann Laura Stoler. 2002. "Colonial Archives and Acts of Governance" *Archival Science*. 2 (1-2).

<sup>103</sup> Ann Laura Stoler. 2002. "Colonial Archives and Acts of Governance" *Archival Science*. 2 (1-2).

example, that criminality seems to be nonexistent during one decade, rampant in the next, and then disappears as a major topic of the archive for some time?

The politics of the Archive, however, do not adequately cover its richness. The notion of the all-powerful censor masterfully shaping what goes into the archive and what gets left out of the colonial archive is long dead. There is no doubt that colonial regimes censored certain things. David Anderson, for example, had to fight to recover the secret files on Mau Mau that the British had smuggled out of Kenya in 1963 to keep the records of torture and abuse out of the archives.<sup>104</sup> Yet, few topics are censored in this way. If you are writing about the banalities of urban life, as this dissertation does, overt censorship is not often a problem. There are undoubtedly silences in the archive, but documents which were meant as part of larger colonial engineering projects are also pregnant with their opposites. The old trope of reading archives “against the grain” fails to capture the scope the Archive or that colonial records are often evidence of colonial domination whether they are read with or against the grain. Documents often record the cupidity, parsimony, cruelty, and ignorance of the representatives of the state when they are read with the grain, against the grain, from below, from above, or any other way. Sometimes colonial officials are even explicit in their condemnation of other officials who they believe to have acted poorly. Just as the Archive is far from a perfectly constructed narrative (as if such a narrative could ever exist), the state is far from a solitary actor and disputes among various state actors, as well as non-state interlocutors, sometimes make it into the Archive. A health official might criticize an engineer or even a rival health official, a postmaster might get caught forging stamps, and so on.

It is in this dual spirit that I attempt to use the archives both as an ambivalent *source* of knowledge and as a partially constituted *subject* of knowledge. At every turn I use a strong theoretical frame to ensure that my use of the documents does not passively replicate colonial ways of knowing without at least problematizing. If, in the course of this dissertation, it appears that I have accepted

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<sup>104</sup> David Anderson . 2005. *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*. New York: W.W. Norton.

documents too casually it is a failing of attention on my part rather than a theoretical misunderstanding of how to use the Archive.

## OUTLINE

Chapter 1, “Intestines of the State,” covers most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and traces how the proto-colonial state and its interlocutors gradually erected administration over The Gambia. Rather than a teleology of colonial takeover the chapter presents the creation of the colonial state as a series of stops and starts experienced as conflicts between the Bathurst administration and a number of challengers to its sovereignty including Gambian warrior kings, marabouts, criminals, French authorities, the British administration in Sierra Leone, missionaries, merchants, and diseases. The long series of conflicts, coupled with the high rate of European death and sickness in Bathurst paradoxically weaken the resolve of the administration to keep the city and strengthen it because, having emerged on the other side of these conflicts towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British are, in their own minds, too deep to cut and run. The chapter attempts to show how the long history of life and death on the river inured The Gambia in British minds.

Chapter 2, “The Circulatory System,” engages with conflicts between the state, merchants, Gambian kings, and urban dwellers. Through a focus on the circulation of men, materials, debts, lorries, groundnuts, and prisoners in the colony this chapter establishes a fundamental difference between the state and capital. The state attempted to establish a regulated, measured circulation through the city which it could direct towards its own enrichment and growth. Capital, on the other hand, pushed the pace of circulation both in terms of its speed and intensity as well as the area it covered. Merchants attempted to increase their bottom lines by increasing the circulation of capital, the collection of debts, and harvests upriver. In order to do this they generally avoided sinking money into infrastructure or materials and relied on Africans to pick up the slack and go into debt as a prerequisite for entering trade. Africans, for their part, attempted to navigate between Charybdis and Scylla without wrecking on either. When the regulations of the state became oppressive they aided and abetted the illegal trade activities of capital

including smuggling and the ongoing slave trade. When debt threatened to overwhelm them, they turned to the state to keep them from imprisonment and the militant arm of capital.

Chapter 3, “Dead Meat,” tells the story of the single most neglected residents in African cities: urban animals. The forces which assailed the bodies of urban animals were many: sanitary regulations, pesticides, the commodification of their bodies, the trade in exotic animals, hunting, roundups, and hunger. Despite these challenges urban animals continued to scratch existence (and possibly more) out of the city. This chapter not only takes historians to task for writing urban animals out of African history, but it also shows how the history of urban animals in Africa might contribute to the broader historiography of urban Africans and their engagement/disengagement with the wider urban ecosystem.

Chapter 4, “Politics of the Belly,” takes up the history of labor in the city. This chapter attempts to focus on the places where labor, the state, and capital met. The state understood its role in this tripartite relationship as the “head” which could rationally mediate between the “hands” (labor) and the “heart” (capital). At first the state was slow to insert itself between labor and capital, but over time it came to see itself as a natural mediator between the two. In order to determine what was appropriate to labor the state relied on a number of organic and animal metaphors to distinguish between what laborers needed to reproduce their animal (laboring) bodies without falling below a certain level which actually made them feel like animals. Efforts by the state to control labor, in particular, often verged on those used to contain or domesticate animals, even in the minds of colonial officials. Laborers, on the other hand, met the colonial state on its own terms and adopted the language of universal human rights and demanded the modernity promised to them by the colonial narrative. They leveraged international connections and demanded to be treated like British workers with full compensation and benefits.

Chapter 5, “The Excretory System” deals with the waste products of the city and the efforts by the administration to banish them from sight and, more significantly, from smell. Taking up the challenge to privilege senses other than sight, the chapter uses the sense of smell to show how sanitary measures in the city were often based not on sound understandings of germ theory, but old ideas about miasmas arising from bad air (smells). The emergence of an aspiring bourgeois class in the city pushed for sanitary

reform to ease their sense of smell while the administration encouraged gardening to ensure that Bathurst “blossomed like the rose.” (Figure 37) Thus Shakespeare’s old saying “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet” could apply to Bathurst as well. Against this cultural and intellectual history of smell the chapter attempts to balance the acknowledgement that sanitary measures in the city really did have problems to contend with that threatened the health and lives of urban dwellers.

Chapter 6, “The Nervous System,” plays off the well-documented fear of juvenile delinquency in Africa as well as the West. The chapter shows how colonial officials wavered between denigrating education based on the (animal) bodies of schoolchildren as “monkey ticks” and criticizing education which ignored young bodies as filling heads full of ideas which had no outlet in the colonial setting. These two ideas (that education in Bathurst ignored the minds of children and that it ignored their bodies) seem contradictory, but only in the Cartesian minds of colonial officials which separated the two as distinct spheres. Fears over the failure of education in the city eventually gave way to a discourse of juvenile delinquency despite a noticeable lack of what could be termed juvenile delinquency in the city. Colonial officials were joined by a chorus of African adults fearful that the young were being influenced by new music, films, and dance which were corrupting the youths with the vices of civilization. Young people were consistently undeterred by these discourses as they sought out new avenues for the exercise of their bodies and minds, appropriated new responsibilities which were denied to them by white and black patriarchs, and carved out spaces for themselves from the urban landscape. (Figure 7)

CHAPTER 1: INTESTINES OF THE STATE: LIFE, DEATH AND SOVEREIGNTY ON THE  
GAMBIA 1815-1890

And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. Ezekiel 2:9- 3:3

Whatever commandment the prisoner breaks is written on his body by the machine. He does not read it, He'll learn it on his body. Franz Kafka "In the Penal Colony"

I appear before you this evening as a thief and a robber. I stole this head, these limbs, this body from my master and ran off with them. Frederick Douglass

Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down its tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through its nose or pierce its jaw with a hook? Will it keep begging you for mercy? Will it speak to you with gentle words? Will it make an agreement with you for you to take it as your slave for life? Can you make a pet of it like a bird or put it on a leash for the young women in your house? Will traders barter for it? Will they divide it up among the merchants? Can you fill its hide with harpoons or its head with fishing spears? If you lay a hand on it, you will remember the struggle and never do it again! Any hope of subduing it is false; the mere sight of it is overpowering. No one is fierce enough to rouse it. Who then is able to stand against me? Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me. Job 41: 1-11

Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" takes place in an unnamed prison in an unnamed part of the world which might as well be any colony. The prison and its defining feature, a mechanical apparatus which punishes infractions by marking prisoners' bodies until their lifeless husks are cast aside, were designed by "the commandant." By virtue of his position in the colony, whatever the commandment the commandant issued became law such that the law flowed forth from his mouth. "Did he combine everything in himself, then? Was he soldier, judge, mechanic, chemist, and draughtsman?" asked a traveler visiting the prison.<sup>105</sup> Here Kafka is establishing the connections between the commandant of the colony and the God of the Old Testament. The being above the law who, since he is above it, can take the form of The Law itself: at once completely inaccessible and immanent.<sup>106</sup> (Figure 6)

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<sup>105</sup> Franz Kafka. 1948. *The Penal Colony: Stories and Short Pieces*. Translated by Willa Muir, and Edwin Muir New York: Schocken Books.

<sup>106</sup> Derrida, Jacques. 2009. *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

The God of the Old Testament, not incidentally, is also the model on which Hobbes imagines his Leviathan. Hobbes did not doubt that the commandments came from God, but he also recognized that the Israelites were prevented from approaching the mountain to hear the law for themselves. His conclusion was that the task of pronouncing the law fell to the sovereign who issued the law from their own mouth in the absence of the *vox dei*. One can challenge a given sovereign or law, but never sovereignty or The Law, since neither are accessible to lowly mortals. Again, Kafka drives home this point in his parable of the man before The Law from *The Trial*, in which a lowly man from the country side attempts to gain entrance to The Law itself, but dies without ever being able to gain the slightest glimpse of it.<sup>107</sup> Even the guardians to the room where The Law is kept are not powerful enough to bare even the briefest glimpse of it. This is what Hobbes means when he talks about The Law and sovereignty.

The resulting state is the Leviathan. A state modeled on the body of a human being. This prosthetic man, what Derrida calls the prosthstate, operates with *protego ergo obligo* as its *raison d'être*. I protect you, therefore I oblige you. The rationale of protection provides the basis on which sovereignty is founded and thus its ability to declare The Law. Derrida cites this Hobbesian moment, when the state becomes modeled on the human body and under the mantra that it will protect the bodies of its subjects from dissolution and death, as the origins of biopower in the West.<sup>108</sup> The state, as prosthetic man, is free to seize the very bodies it has been composed of since sovereignty is both above the law and the form of the law itself. A sovereign may die or be killed, but sovereignty cannot die unless civil war dismembers the body of the state. In order to endure, sovereignty, according to Hobbes, must remain undivided. Of course, we know that sovereignty is inherently divided. Even the most absolute of monarchs finds it necessary to delegate and to divide their power. Within even the most “coherent” of nations (whatever that means) there are fragments within the nation.<sup>109</sup> Ethnic minorities who desire a separate nation, radicals on the right or left who question the legitimacy of commonwealth, and regional or state

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<sup>107</sup> Franz Kafka. 1957. *The Trial*. New York: Knopf.

<sup>108</sup> Derrida, *Beast*, 331

<sup>109</sup> Partha Chatterjee. 1993. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

governments who appropriate for themselves powers claimed by the sovereign all point to the inherently fractured nature of sovereignty in any state. Sovereignty, in other words, reproduces itself through the myth of indivisibility. Fragments within the nation become abominations to be blotted out. The realpolitik of power sharing can remain in place so long as the commandment is headed: you shall have no other states before me.

The origins of the British state, as we shall see, are more closely related to a Hobbesian model of sovereignty than one based on Enlightenment conceptions of the social contract as a foundational principle of sovereignty. The British, having established themselves as sovereign over the city of Bathurst (Banjul) and slowly upriver thereafter, erected a state based on *protégé ergo obligo*. The founding of the city in order to stop the Atlantic Slave Trade was justified in precisely this way. Later, the specter of death and famine upriver caused by civil war between Muslims and animists made life “nasty, brutish, and short” enough for the British to justify annexing The Gambia colony to the crown. Both the founding myth of the city and the subsequent colonial takeover recast the *protego* as international humanism and humane imperialism.

Crawford Young has claimed that the colonial state “as a species” lacked the traditional aspects of sovereignty as defined in the classical model and thus we would have to look for “a genus that has additional chromosomes.”<sup>110</sup> Yet if we recognize the classical model of sovereignty was always founded upon myths of purity and wholeness which obscured the fractured reality of all sovereignty, then Young’s critique of the colonial state as a mere “dependent appendage” incorporated into the wider system of nation states seems less like a difference of species than one of degrees. The Linnaean classification system employed by Young veers too closely to the “butterfly collecting” that Rosalind Shaw warns us against in our classification of world religions as distinct types by arbitrarily deciding which facets of these religions to foreground.<sup>111</sup> Mamdani’s *Citizen and Subject* runs aground amid similar problems.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Crawford Young. 1994. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 10.

<sup>111</sup> Rosalind Shaw. 1990. “The Invention of ‘African Traditional Religion’” *Religion*. 20(4).



In taking the classical model of the nation state, which grants the governed citizenship through the social contract, at face value Mamdani posits the colonial state, which grants the governed only subjecthood as a different species from the modern nation state. In both cases Young and Mamdani accept, largely without question, the founding fictions of the nation state in order to show how the colonial state lacked these features.

Consider the effects of contemporary globalization. Multinational corporations and transnational flows of people, ideas, technologies, and capital have led some to declare that the end of the nation state was at hand. Yet there seems to be very little evidence to substantiate these claims. Instead of quietly shuffling off the historical scene nation states have retained much of their power despite the fact that corporations can seemingly cross their borders with impunity. The reason for this is quite simple: if we accept that the nation has always been fractured and traversed by flows which exceeded its ability to control, we find that we are more concerned with the death of certain fictions of national purity and wholeness than the reality of the nation state. Similarly, nation states grant rights to their own citizens only partially and contingently. There is no state which has not suspended the rights of its citizens “for their own good.” In other words, *protego ergo obligo* is the primal reason for the existence of the state and it never lies far underneath the surface of “the nation of laws” and the “social contract.”

No doubt there is evidence to support some of Young’s classification when we look at the early history of Banjul. The city was, in fact, governed as a part of British West Africa and dependent on the administration in Sierra Leone between 1821 and 1843. Yet the struggle of Gambian administrators to free themselves from the yoke of Sierra Leone was often framed in such a way that forced the metropole to recognize the sovereignty of The Gambia and free up the mouth of the administrator to pronounce the law. Once freed, the message which emanated was clear: *protego ergo obligo*. Many Gambian kings, of course, recognized the message as an attempt to usurp their sovereignty. Others, afraid of being overwhelmed by jihadi armies, offered up their lands to the altar of the British sovereign as a sweet

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<sup>112</sup> Mahmood Mamdani. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

savour in exchange for their protection. Merchants, traders, and missionaries were equally likely to play this gambit. When it suited them traders flouted the administrator's law and when they needed it they demanded the state protect them. Missionaries were not shy of stepping on the toes of the state and also demanding the state recognize them as central to the operation of the state and thus in need of protection.

The implication of *protego ergo obligo* is that the state has the right to decide who lives and who dies, with The Law as inaccessible arbiter. The violence perpetrated can be judicial or extra-judicial. It hardly matters. Achille Mbembe calls this Necropolitics and argues that it is the ultimate expression of sovereignty which retains for itself a monopoly over life and death.<sup>113</sup> This power, Mbembe points out, is the ultimate expression of biopower. The state, on the other hand, becomes the one for whom death does not exist. It does this not by running from death, but by wielding it against its enemies for whom the prohibition "thou shalt not kill" does not apply.<sup>114</sup> "Savage life," Mbembe says, is equated with "animal life" and thus becomes fair game.<sup>115</sup> Necropolitics is, in part, a reaction against a turn by new imperial scholars away from the narrative of colonial conquest and towards the limitations of the colonial state. What Mbembe reminds us of is that all colonial states are founded on some kind of violent conquest which they leveraged to establish sovereignty over the colony. This threat of recurring violence, rather than being a vestige of the remote past, lingers on from this original sin into the postcolony. Whatever the weaknesses of the colonial state, the violent conquest which announced its birth set the rules for the colonial game and thus limited the assertion of African political will independent of colonialism. This or that law could be challenged, but not the state itself. Mbembe calls this the "permanent remembrance of a torn body hewn in a thousand pieces and never the self-same."<sup>116</sup>

Yet there are clearly limits to explanatory power of Mbembe's Necropolitics. Life is as powerful an idea as death. Megan Vaughn has focused on various state and non-state actors such as scientists, medical practitioners, and missionaries who were not always a part of, yet were linked inextricably to, the

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<sup>113</sup> Achille Mbembe. 2003. "Necropolitics" Translated by Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture*. 15(1), 11.

<sup>114</sup> Mbembe, "Necropolitics", 16.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

colonial state. These actors introduced powerful new discourses of health and healing which have changed the way that many Africans see their bodies, hygiene and cleanliness, life and death. The state, and other non-state actors intimately connected to the colonial project, did not merely assert biopower through the threat of imminent death, but also through the promise of life. Doctors and scientists claimed to eradicate disease, treat illness, and prolong productive lives while missionaries purported to heal the sin-sick body politic as well as promising life everlasting. The promise of life and the threat of death are the two sides of the immortal Janus faced state.

Europeans also had as much difficulty stopping their own bodies from revolting on the river as they did commanding from the center. Although the introduction of quinine and more modern medicine regimes improved conditions on the river, as late as 1885 the mercantile community of Bathurst was still complaining that they were suffering from rampant fever and a “derangement of the digestive organs” associated with life in West Africa.<sup>117</sup> The records kept by the early proto-state show this preoccupation with death in the city and on the river. Autopsies which describe broken bodies and distended organs in all their grisly details were recorded as texts and circulated throughout the colonial community as reminders of bare life in the colony.<sup>118</sup>

This chapter will engage specifically with the establishment of sovereignty by the proto-colonial state in Bathurst between the founding of the city and the beginnings of the colonial period proper. As such the chapter will avoid advancing a simplistic notion of holistic sovereignty and will instead attempt to show how the state engaged with a variety of non-state actors who both reinforced and challenged the authority of the state. The state, missionaries, merchants, Gambian warrior kings and jihadis were all engaged in the struggle over bodies and thus the conditions of life on the river.

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<sup>117</sup> NRO: CSO 1/76 William Allan, Colonial Surgeon, to the Administrator, January 13, 1885.

<sup>118</sup>, Giorgio Agamben. 1998. *Homo Sacer*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

RENDER UNTO CAESAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE CAESAR'S, AND UNTO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD'S: 1816 -1833

Through the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which abolished the slave trade in the British Empire and the establishment of the West Africa Squadron to police the West African Coast in 1808, Britain hoped to put an end to the trade in slaves across the Atlantic. The Treaty of Versailles in 1783, which declared the River Gambia to be a British possession, made it incumbent on the British to stop the slave trade on the river itself.<sup>119</sup> The British were soon faced with the difficulties inherent in policing the coast in West Africa and the need for a strong position on land from which to base the West Africa Squadron. Slave ships, especially American ships sailing under other flags, continued to evade British slave catching patrols. Or so goes the story. In reality the desire of the merchant community to establish a base from which to conduct a “legitimate” trade in agricultural products which could replace their profits from the slave trade was as significant a motivation to found a city on the river as ending the slave trade. In 1815 Charles MacCarthy wrote to Earl Bathurst, the Secretary of State, recommending that the British reoccupy James Island, the infamous island directly connected to the slave trade on the Gambia River, for the purpose of suppressing the slave trade. MacCarthy’s request was approved and he dispatched Captain Alexander Grant from Goree with soldiers from the African Corps to occupy James Island or another, more suitable, spot. It is not surprising that Grant chose not to reoccupy James Island. The island was tiny and lacked its own water supply, it was difficult to maintain or defend, and since the Courlanders first built a fort on the island in 1651 it had been in ruins as often as it had been operational.<sup>120</sup>

Instead Grant purchased the island of Banjul which commanded the south bank of the mouth of the Gambia River from the Kombo *mansa*.<sup>121</sup> (Figures 1 and 2) The island was sold for the price of one hundred and three bars annual payment to the Kombo Mansa and renamed St. Mary’s Island. The city Grant built on the island was named Bathurst for the Secretary of State in 1816. By 1818 the buildings in Bathurst consisted of a village of thatch huts which supported merchants and the members of the Royal

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<sup>119</sup> Southorn, 153.

<sup>120</sup> Winnifred Galloway. 1978. *James Island: A Background with Historical Notes on Juffure, Albreda, San Domingo, and Dog Island*, Banjul.

<sup>121</sup> Southorn, 154.

African Corps who maintained themselves by charging duties on imports.<sup>122</sup> By 1817 the civil population had grown to over 700 and a push began for the construction of public buildings. The progress was slow given the lack of income for the settlement, the absence of artisans and skilled stone masons and builders, and the fact that stone had to be quarried and transported from Dog Island further upriver. By 1821 a smattering of public buildings had sprung up, including a government house, barracks, officers' quarters and mess, a hospital, a three-gun-battery, and the first gaol in The Gambia.<sup>123</sup>

The administrative core of Bathurst took shape with wide streets and an open, green space at the administrative center of the city called MacCarthy Square, around which several public buildings, including the gaol, were built.<sup>124</sup> The “modern” design of the city, with its wide streets and wide open spaces came from the idealized military camp model prevalent in the nineteenth century that Grant, as a military man, would have been familiar with.<sup>125</sup> In the mind of Southorn, Grant was a master town planner well ahead of his time, while Gailley claims he was merely a military man who had no plans for the city to survive its goal of ending the slave trade, but the difference between these two positions is negligible and both are incorrect.<sup>126</sup> Rather than a modern city distinct from the country side, Grant imagined that most of the city would become farm land and the city would be self-subsistent through the food they grew. The small European contingent in the city had to wear many hats in order to keep the day to day tasks of administration going. In fact, as Gray and Gailey note, Bathurst developed less as a militarized camp or centrally planned, unified city and more as a coalition of “villages” with their own *alkalos* (Muslim judges) and social structure.

Wealthy traders and merchants settled in Portuguese Town, the military establishment in Soldier Town, artisans and servants in Melville Town, which later was renamed Jolof Town for its predominantly Wolof population, and poor Africans in Mocam Town which later became Half Die after a devastating

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<sup>122</sup>Gray. 306.

<sup>123</sup> An archaic spelling of jail which I preserve in this text.

<sup>124</sup> Southorn, 159.

<sup>125</sup> Michel Foucault, 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books, 208.

<sup>126</sup> Southorn, 155, Gailley, 62.

epidemic which killed half the inhabitants and left the rest “half dead.”<sup>127</sup> (Figure 3) As the population of these “villages” increased the open land between them receded and vacant spaces were settled instead of the agricultural growth envisioned by Grant’s city plan. In 1848 only eight acres of Bathurst were being tilled and it was proposed to build a modern market on this land instead to employ the large number of Bathurst’s residents who had no “on the book” employment or source of income.<sup>128</sup> The goal of a self-sufficient city growing its own crops was clearly at odds with the soil of Bathurst as well as a majority of the city’s residents. Gambians did not come from the village to the city to remain farmers, nor did merchants and business people come to till the land.

The administration did have some control over the layout of the city. Mocam Town, which housed the poorest African immigrants to the city, was relegated by law to one of the swampiest parts of Bathurst by the administration.<sup>129</sup> While it is true that before 1854, when housing ordinances prohibited the construction of housing that was not consistent with the fire code,<sup>130</sup> residents of Bathurst were free to build their abodes how they wanted to. The control of land by the Bathurst administration forced the most vulnerable residents onto the unhealthiest land despite the availability of open land which was not nearly as swampy or prone to the worst seasonal flooding. If the administration could not control how residents built their houses, they nevertheless exerted their authority to restrict where those houses could be built. This put the residents of Mocam Town further from the centers of administrative power and thus gave them more freedom to evade the colonial gaze, but also placed them on a more tenuous perch on their mortal coils.

The first military establishment on Bathurst was composed largely of soldiers of the Royal African Corps who were press ganged into service having been convicted of offences in their previous units or recruited from the convict hulks in England.<sup>131</sup> For the European soldiers, service in Bathurst was

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<sup>127</sup> Gray, 319.

<sup>128</sup> NRO: CSO 1/76 Reports Exhibiting the Past and Present State of Her Majesty’s Colonial Possessions 1849, 218.

<sup>129</sup> Macbriar, 208.

<sup>130</sup>NR): CSO 1/76 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor O’Connor to the Right Honorable Lord John Russell 1854, 193.

<sup>131</sup> Gray, 308.

akin to a death sentence and they knew it. In 1825, 199 soldiers of the African Corps arrived during the rainy season. By September, 87 out of the 108 who actually landed alive in Bathurst were dead and by December 73 more had died, leaving only 39 alive out of the original 199.<sup>132</sup> The following year 200 more European troops were landed in The Gambia from Sierra Leone where the Governor was looking to phase out white soldiers. The results were nearly identical to the year before with the troops arriving in the rainy season and 276 out of 399 white soldiers expiring.<sup>133</sup> According to Southorn, these soldiers played an integral role in ending the slave trade and in so doing redeemed themselves before succumbing to drink and disease. Gray, on the other hand, portrays them as totally corrupt and irredeemable from the start.<sup>134</sup> Whether they were redeemed or not we cannot say, but the discourse of redemption through mission in Africa is as old as the colonial movement itself which portrayed colonialism as a redemptive exercise to free Europe from its slave trading sins. The extreme mortality of the soldiers also introduced into the minds of Europeans in The Gambia the constant and pervasive fear that death's scythe loomed over them and might strike at any instant.

White troops were quickly phased out from service in The Gambia following these incidents and replaced by troops from Sierra Leone, but the Governor of Sierra Leone took advantage of this situation by shipping some of their convicts to Gambia as well. These ex-convicts from Sierra Leone quickly became the earliest scapegoats of the city and the beginnings of a discourse which associated Sierra Leoneans with lawlessness and criminality. In June 1826 the only persons tried in Bathurst courts were convicts from Sierra Leone.<sup>135</sup> An attempt was made to exile some Sierra Leoneans who were not freed slaves and were finding themselves routinely imprisoned, but many defied exile and returned to Bathurst permanently.

Establishing "law and order" in the city was the first step towards sovereignty. The second was limiting the influence of outside authorities over Bathurst. The British did not want to deploy the

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 308.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 309.

<sup>134</sup> Southorn, 156, Gray, 308.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 316.

resources necessary to establish a fully functional and self-sufficient administration in The Gambia. Instead, Bathurst had to adopt the laws and codes of Sierra Leone as well as running potential legislation and important criminal cases by Sierra Leone first. In the late 1830s and 1840s, however, a series of incidents involving the judicial apparatus of Bathurst provoked the separation of The Gambia. Since serious cases could not be tried without a magistrate from Sierra Leone present witnesses had to wait for months on end in Bathurst for one to arrive. Many witnesses could not afford to remain idle in Bathurst waiting for a trial or became ill while they were waiting. In 1839 a prisoner was held 11 months on murder charges without trial. On more than one occasion witnesses had to leave upriver areas to come to Bathurst for several months to accommodate the Chief Justice's schedule. This was quite a burden for witnesses who had no employment or means of sustaining themselves in the city.<sup>136</sup> The final straw fell in 1842 when a man suspected of murder during a powder explosion had to wait two years before trial. Before a magistrate arrived from Sierra Leone the only witness fell ill and returned to England, causing all charges to be dropped. In 1843 Gambia separated from Sierra Leone and on June 24<sup>th</sup> Gambia was declared a separate colony with its own Governor, Legislative Council, and Executive Council.<sup>137</sup>

The creation of a judiciary and legislative apparatus in Bathurst certainly did seem to have an effect on the number of felonies prosecuted in Bathurst courts and imprisonments. Moreover, the fact that the vast majority of prisoners were tried for misdemeanors was not affected by the new legislative apparatus. Between 1840 and 1849 the vast majority of misdemeanors tried were not brought before a court, but tried in front of a magistrate who pronounced a sentence without the formality of a trial.<sup>138</sup> Even after Bathurst was separated from Sierra Leone the majority of crimes tried were still misdemeanors and they were still tried before a magistrate.<sup>139</sup> The establishment of an independent judiciary did increase the number of felonies tried per annum, but misdemeanors as a percentage of total crimes

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 376.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 378.

<sup>138</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1840 - 1849.

<sup>139</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1845 - 1846.



remained high and continued to be tried outside of court by magistrates who might have little to no legal background. Magistrates rarely demanded evidence beyond the word of “reliable” witnesses to convict.

The Bathurst gaol serves as a good case study for understanding public institutions in the city in general during this early period. The gaol was run by the sheriff of Bathurst who was appointed by and answerable to the governor. The sheriff, however, did not live in the gaol and a gaoler was appointed to live in the building and oversee daily affairs.<sup>140</sup> Between 1828 and 1839 the gaoler was the only resident of the prison. He was also one of the only members of the Bathurst establishment that held only one position.<sup>141</sup> At night only the gaoler (and the principal turnkey after 1853) remained in the gaol while the constables or turnkeys returned home.<sup>142</sup> During the day the prisoners were employed in hard labor either in or outside the prison.

The gaol itself was hardly in line with the modern prison reform movement. Before 1853 the top floor of the gaol consisted of individual cells which were slowly expanded from eleven to sixteen and the bottom floor contained association cells which were expanded from twenty to thirty-three and, in 1848, thirty-six.<sup>143</sup> The gaol plans, first made available first in 1845 and again in 1851, show a building which was indistinguishable from other buildings in the city and hardly shaped by the demands of modern penology. In Britain, the penal reform movement based on the separation of prisoners into cells was well under way, but the British did not bring this model with them to Africa.<sup>144</sup> Nor were prisoners in Bathurst classified by their offences with the exception of debtors who were confined on the second floor in individual cells rather than in the association wards.

Instead of discipline and punishment, the gaol was set up ideally for the spread of disease among the association wards. Epidemics easily swept through the prison given the close quarters and unsanitary conditions. The highest number of prisoners treated for illness occurred in 1835 with 160 of the 298

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<sup>140</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1828.

<sup>141</sup> Appendix to the Report from the Select Committee on Colonial Accounts 1848.

<sup>142</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1853.

<sup>143</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1828-1848.

<sup>144</sup> Florence Bernault. 2003. “The Politics of Enclosure in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa” in Florence Bernault ed. *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*. Trans. Janet Roitman. Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2003.

prisoners falling ill.<sup>145</sup> Following this, the number of sicknesses fluctuated between forty-eight and twenty until 1853 when numbers flirted with 100 for half a decade until returning to lower levels in 1857 and spiking again to almost seventy in 1868.<sup>146</sup> The spike in 1868 was due to the cholera outbreak of that year. Deaths in the gaol itself were rarer and between 1828 and 1845 there were either one or no deaths in the gaol with the lone exception being 1829 when there were two deaths.<sup>147</sup> In 1846 the trend towards increasing deaths in the gaol began with six that year and between two and nine deaths per year from 1847 to 1870, with 1867 being the only year that only one death occurred.<sup>148</sup> If these seem like small numbers it is important to remember that the average sentences of prisoners were extremely short, often averaging only a few months. Rather than a march of sanitary progress, the gaol became progressively worse as the nineteenth century wore on despite brief periods of improvement. This was most likely due to an increasing number of incarcerations which outpaced expansion to the gaol without any substantive reforms to penal practice.

After the 1880s it also becomes difficult to tease out the impact the gaol was having on the health of its inmates. In 1884 Sir William Harcourt, an influential British lawyer and MP, sent out a circular which establish the precedent that “a prison is a place of penal discipline... not under ordinary circumstances the proper scene for a death bed... a hospital for incurables.”<sup>149</sup> Harcourt preferred to release prisoners who were seriously ill which can be seen as an act of mercy, but it also obscures the impact that the gaol had on prisoners’ lives because the gaoler was not required to record deaths which occurred outside of the gaol walls. Thus the terminally ill could be sent out of the gaol and the death rate would remain arbitrarily low. It is not clear how systematically this rule was enforced after Harcourt which makes all statistics thereafter suspect.

Like the gaol, the other public institutions in the city were weak and slow to develop. Missionaries and merchants took up the task intervening of in Gambians’ lives with far more zeal.

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<sup>145</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1835, 2.

<sup>146</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1836-1868.

<sup>147</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1828-1845.

<sup>148</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1847-1870.

<sup>149</sup> NRO: CSO 3/223 Revisions of Sentences of Long Term Prisoners 1A.

Christianity was introduced to the Gambia by the first Portuguese sailors on the river in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, but the first missionaries did not arrive until Wesleyan Methodists John Baker and John Morgan arrived in 1821. Although Sister Anne Marie Javouhey and two other Catholic sisters also arrived in 1821, the first permanent Catholic missions would not be established until two decades later. Missionaries arriving to the city perceived it to be rife with criminality and vice. They believed they could effect dramatic reforms by penetrating the African body politic and reconstituting values from the inside-out. Missionary memoirs abound with these sorts of metaphors. They also regularly conflated urban dwelling Africans with an inherent criminality. Reverend William Fox, for example, considered the crowds that gathered around the actual believers who attended his sermons in Bathurst to be composed primarily of “harlots, drunkards, Sabbath-breakers, and thieves.”<sup>150</sup> William Singleton, a Quaker missionary visiting Gambia, believed all Wolofs to be jealous liars and thieves with little interest in trade and Mandinkas to be inured to theft and deception.<sup>151</sup> Reverend John Morgan also wrote in a letter that he believed “we are surrounded by thieves.”<sup>152</sup>

In 1822 the Wesleyan missionaries’ house in Mandinaree was broken into and robbed by several unknown men.<sup>153</sup> In his journals Morgan asserts that the robbers, all allegedly Mandinka men from Mandinaree, asked a village elder to help them rob the mission house. Instead this elder, an old, Muslim man by the name of Ansomani,<sup>154</sup> dutifully reported the crime and identified one of the perpetrators to Morgan after the fact.<sup>155</sup> That is how the story went in Morgan’s journals. Decades later, in his memoirs, Morgan described Ansomani as a detective seemingly on par with Sherlock Holmes though he explained his cleverness not through rationality, but African peculiarity. Ansomani, he claimed, discovered the footprints of the robbers and “by an extraordinary quickness peculiar to the savage...where European

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<sup>150</sup> Fox, 281.

<sup>151</sup> William Singleton. 1822. *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*. London: British Periodicals, 331.

<sup>152</sup> John Morgan 1824. “Correspondence to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee” 1824.

<sup>153</sup> Morgan “Correspondence” Feb 6, 1822

<sup>154</sup> Likely Ansumana

<sup>155</sup> Morgan “Correspondence” 1824.

eyes could see no impression, tracked the thief to his own house.”<sup>156</sup> Morgan’s account clearly plays on the notion that Africans possessed a unique ability to discover the esoteric and see that which is hidden as well as a likening of the peculiarities of the African “savage” to the heightened sensory perceptions of certain other members of the animal kingdom.

Although several similar instances had happened and been ignored, Morgan appealed to the commandant of Bathurst to send a constable to Mandinaree to seize the guilty party. He received a warrant for the arrest of the suspected thief and the aid of a retired constable.<sup>157</sup> Following the directions of Ansomani, Morgan was led to the village of the suspected robber where a palaver was held with the villagers who decided to hand the suspect over to Morgan and the constable. Upon hearing of this the alkalo, who was not a part of the palaver, demanded proof of the crime. In his journal Morgan makes no mention of the proceedings, but in his memoirs he described how Ansomani laid out the evidence by describing the footprints of the accused that he was able to track to a man named in Morgan’s memoirs as Mo-Job. Morgan and the constable began to lead Mo-Job away, but the alkalo and other village men who were not satisfied with the decision chased after them.

After a heated argument over the fate of Mo-Job one of the alkalo’s men tried to take him from the constable’s grasp. The constable responded by clubbing the man over the head with his walking staff. Several of the villagers ran back to the village to get their weapons, but not before the old constable drew his sword and swung it in an attempt to cut open the alkalo’s stomach.<sup>158</sup> Morgan quickly realized that the situation had become dire and attempted to intercede by holding a private palaver with the alkalo and evoking the authority of the Mandinaree Mansa who had given Morgan permission to build the mission house. In the end, the alkalo and Morgan came to terms and Mo-Job was taken to Bathurst gaol where he was given fifty lashes and a brief term of imprisonment.<sup>159</sup> Eventually the Wesleyan missionaries decided to abandon the house in Mandinaree due, in no small part, to the fact that after this original incident the

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<sup>156</sup> Rev. John Morgan. 1864. *Reminiscences of the Founding of a Christian Mission on The Gambia*” London: Wesleyan Mission House, 46.

<sup>157</sup> Morgan, *Reminiscences*, 47.

<sup>158</sup> Morgan, “Correspondences”, 1822.

<sup>159</sup> Morgan, *Reminiscences*, 47.

mission house was robbed and its holdings broken several more times. The local population had very little tolerance for the presence of the Wesleyans and, other than Ansomani who served as a witness for Morgan on other occasions, had no desire to help the missionaries catch suspected criminals. Morgan would later write that in the case of Mo-Job he “appealed unto Caesar beyond Caesar’s jurisdiction” and that he almost immediately regretted the incident as an error on his part.<sup>160</sup> The missionary impulse guiding Morgan to bring to the light of day what he considered the hidden iniquities of vice and sin and to roust the unknown “criminals” from their hiding places only worked when there was sufficient state power behind him. The Mandinaree Mansa could keep Morgan from being killed, but he had no interest in attempting to reform and discipline his subjects in the name of Christianity. Morgan took the hint and relocated to Bathurst where he founded the first boys high school in the city. Incidentally, the Bathurst administration felt similarly. Although administrators saw religion as a positive civilizing force in theory, they were often disturbed by the zealotry with which missionaries could pursue conversions, especially by Muslims, in the city. The administration would protect the lives and property of missionaries in the city, but it was not willing to expend its limited capital disturbing the overwhelmingly Muslim population of the city.

Despite the lukewarm support for missionaries shown by both the administration and local chiefs, missionaries continued to believe they could reform Africans primarily by targeting Muslims as was done elsewhere in West Africa.<sup>161</sup> The inability to do so was often explained as the result of “Muslim hearts” not being sufficiently impressed as to their own sinfulness. As Reverend Fox explained, Muslims washed their legs, feet, hands, and arms while performing ablutions before prayer, but they fail to wash their hearts.<sup>162</sup> To Fox this was evidence that Muslims practiced “a destitution of that religion which takes its seat in the heart” because “they are earthly, sensual devils” who only cared about their external bodies.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Morgan, *Reminiscences*, 47.

<sup>161</sup> Barbara Cooper. 2006. *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel*. Indiana University Press.

<sup>162</sup> Cooper, 282.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 363.

John Cupidon, one of the first African converts to become a preacher, also hoped that the word of God would reach “the hearts of their hearers” and turn them away from sin.<sup>164</sup>

The materials to bring electric lighting to Bathurst were first ordered in 1918 and arrived in 1920. They were installed on select streets with the instruction to only power them until 11 PM.<sup>165</sup> For decades lighting made slow and unequal progress. In 1936 the Bathurst Advisory Town Council suggested that the electric streets lights which were going up in parts of the city might be extended throughout the entire city. A new electric plant was being built and it would be wise, they thought, to ask the other residents if they would like electric light.<sup>166</sup> The 1937 *Echo* editorialized for the extension of electric lighting so that “this little island” would become a “glory of lights” while only upper New Street was lighted to expectations.<sup>167</sup> In 1945 the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority further requested electrification because thieves descended upon the town once the lights went off between 7:30 PM and 12:30 AM.<sup>168</sup> By 1945 there were 327 street lights in Bathurst operating ten hours per night at a yearly cost of £1,500. The government paid for 17 of the lights and the remaining 310 were paid by the Bathurst authority which collected dues from rate payers. Ten years later, only twenty street lights had been added. In 1945, after the introduction of a new power plant, it was necessary to reevaluate the rates paid for electricity. An Electric Light Amendment was proposed to introduce a graduated rate for electricity with the first 300 units consumed costing 1 ½ d. per unit, the second 300 units costing 3d. per unit, and any additional units costing 6d. per unit. Instead, the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority insisted on a 5d. per unit flat rate which could only have benefitted the heaviest users.<sup>169</sup> Getting around the rates, however, was not difficult since private meters did not exist and consumers had to connect to the street lights. Many connected to the lights without paying and removed their connection upon sight of the electricity inspector. Privatizing meters, it was believed, would force consumers to economize and pay for their share.<sup>170</sup> Government officers were the first to get meters, but at the reduced rate of 1 ½ d. per unit.

Perhaps the most common missionary trope deployed to explain their efforts to convert locals was revealing the “hidden evils” of the belief in *greegrees*. *Greegrees*, as Brenner has pointed out, worked through the ability to tap into hidden powers which require the esoteric knowledge of a specialist to unlock.<sup>171</sup> Marabouts produced the *greegrees* by placing paper with Arabic writing in leather pouches. Their efficacy was thus intimately bound to their ability to remain in plain sight and yet hidden. If the contents of a charm were revealed, it was believed, it would cease to be powerful. For missionaries looking to discredit Islam, charms provided a perfect metaphor for “native superstition” and a chance to

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<sup>164</sup> William Moister. 1850. *Memorials of Missionary Labours in Western Africa and the West Indies*. London: John Mason, 116.

<sup>165</sup> NRO: CSO 2/283 Electric Light Installation, Colonial Secretary to the Acting Colonial Engineer, October 13, 1920.

<sup>166</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1596 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council held on June 30, 1936.

<sup>167</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 9, 1937, 2.

<sup>168</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2168 Minutes of the Meeting of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority, August 8, 1945.

<sup>169</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3433 Electric Light and Power Undertaking.

<sup>170</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3433 Public Utilities Department April 3, 1948.

<sup>171</sup> Louis Brenner. 2001. *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

bring this “superstition” to the light of day. When one man bragged to Reverend Morgan that he possessed a charm which rendered him immune to stab wounds Morgan stabbed him in a vein and watched as blood spurted out in order to prove he was wrong.<sup>172</sup> The degree of emphasis put on abandoning charms for Christ, in fact, helped to frame the discourse of conversion. Reverend William Swallow recalled that one convert declared to him, “Jesus Christ my *greegree*. He my charm,” as he threw his charms to the ground and joined the mission school.<sup>173</sup> What the convert meant by that statement and Swallow’s interpretation of it are certainly not the same. Though missionaries wanted to gain converts they were less than eager to make room for the idea of Jesus Christ as a *greegree* within their theological worldview. The issue was so contentious that in 1822 Morgan’s house in Jolof town was burnt to the ground because he destroyed the charms of local schoolchildren.<sup>174</sup> Morgan was frequently frustrated by the fact that after preaching many people approached him and asked him to produce charms for them or to interpret their dreams. He did not want to be treated like a marabout, but statements such as “Jesus Christ my *greegree*” and requests that missionaries produce *greegrees* suggest that locals wanted to fit the missionaries into the esoteric economy in which they already believed.<sup>175</sup> Missionaries, on the other hand, wanted to transform the local belief systems. As Morgan put it, “We take the children, harlots and drunkards, Sabbath breakers, and thieves and put bibles in their hands.”<sup>176</sup>

Missionaries in the city further attempted to counter resistance to conversion by apprenticing African children to their schools. Both Morgan and Baker, for example, spent a great deal of time (mostly in vain) trying to convince parents to send their children to mission schools and frequently lamented that no one was willing.<sup>177</sup> Fox declared that when Mandinka parents began sending their children to mission

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<sup>172</sup> Morgan, *Reminiscences*, 18.

<sup>173</sup> William Swallow. 1883. “Memorial Sketch of the Rev. William Swallow with extracts from his Journals” *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*. London: British Periodicals, 245.

<sup>174</sup> Extracts from the Journal of John Morgan October 9, 1822.

<sup>175</sup> Martha T. Fredericks. 2003. *We Have Toiled All Night: Christianity in The Gambia 1456-2000*. Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 195.

<sup>176</sup> Extracts from Morgan’s Journal, March 12 1823.

<sup>177</sup> John Baker. 1821. “Comparative Statement of Advantages between Tendebar and Mandineree as a Mission Station 1821”, 2.

school it “will be lying (sic) the foundation-stone for the superstructure of our holy religion.”<sup>178</sup> This was not merely idle talk. Missionaries like Morgan frequently removed members from their societies, denied them the sacraments, asked them to leave meetings, and expelled them from mission schools if they were considered to have backslid. Morgan himself remarked that “the number of church members might have been greatly increased” had he not “acted upon the determination that not the smallest compromise should be made with the evil customs or superstitions of the natives.”<sup>179</sup> In his journal Morgan chastised more liberal Catholic priests who baptized Africans without examination of their true “inner” conversion.<sup>180</sup>

The missionary impulse to reform did not extend to the state. If missionaries wanted to bring what was done in the darkness to the light the state was primarily interested in establishing the rule of law. The intersection of the two impulses in the prison will again serve as a useful case study. Although Reverend Fox believed missionary schools would discipline pupils he held out no such hope for the prison which, instead, punished by inflicting pain and deprivation. Rather than reform from the inside out, the prison marked bodies by whipping them, restraining them, and setting them in motion to labor. In order to do this the state needed the law to justify the seizure and constraint of bodies. As Morgan had put it, they would need to appeal to Caesar.

The hours of hard labor and prison diet remained relatively constant between 1828 and 1868. The hours of labor fluctuated between nine and ten hours on public works a day while break time increased from one to two hours. Between 1828 and 1834 the hours of labor were from six to nine AM, followed by a one hour break for breakfast and then labor from ten to four.<sup>181</sup> In 1835 an extra hour was added to the end of the day and labor ended at five for a total of ten hours of labor per day. Between 1836 and 1838 the hours of labor fluctuated between six to ten or eleven and twelve to five or six. Finally in 1839 the hours were set at six to ten and twelve to five with a two hour break in between until 1858 when the break was

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<sup>178</sup> Fox, 395.

<sup>179</sup> Morgan, *Reminiscences*, 60.

<sup>180</sup> Extracts from Morgan’s Journal, June 1824.

<sup>181</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1828-1834.



reduced to one hour.<sup>182</sup> The regularization of the schedule and the elimination of free time down to a bare minimum was key to the state's program of "reform" in the prison.

Prisoner hours of labor, in turn, raised the question of the reproduction of the prisoners' bodies. Given the hours of labor prisoners were ordered to work the amount of food which would allow them to rebuild their bodies and be ready for more work the next day became more than an academic question. Between 1828 and 1840 prisoners received 10.5 pounds of rice and four ounces of salt per week. In 1841 the only change was to add an additional three ounces of salt per week.<sup>183</sup> Finally, in 1844, meat was introduced into the diet and prisoners received 10.5 pounds of rice, seven ounces of salt, and 3.5 pounds of beef a week. This was briefly improved to seven pounds rice, seven pounds bread, 3.5 pounds beef, seven ounces salt per week in 1865, but it was reduced thereafter.<sup>184</sup> These official numbers, paltry though they may be, are called into question by the corrupt nature of the gaol itself. In 1880 it was discovered that a significant amount of beef and rice claimed in the official report was never delivered to prisoners and instead was divvied up by Mr. Travers, the gaoler, and a few coconspirators including the meat seller who resold the food on the market.<sup>185</sup> This incident, and many others like it where gaolers and other prison staff victimized prisoners, and the lack of oversight in general at the gaol raise the possibility that far more systemic issues existed.

A surgeon was officially appointed to the gaol to oversee the bodily health of the prisoners and a colonial chaplain, who was usually an Anglican, was appointed to administer to the souls of the prison population. He was expected to at least hold a Christian mass on Sundays which the prisoners were required to attend or be flogged. Between 1828 and 1844 there were at least ten years when no chaplain visited the gaol and no religious services were held.<sup>186</sup> Even when the gaol finally regularized the presence of the chaplain the institution was hardly effective, given the fact that most of the prisoners were not Christian. As late as the 1870s it was noted by E.C. Wines, the Secretary of the National Prison

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<sup>182</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1836-1858.

<sup>183</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1828-1841.

<sup>184</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1844-1865.

<sup>185</sup> NRO: CSO 1/60 Meeting of the Legislative Council, December 18, 1880.

<sup>186</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1828-1844.

Association of the United States who visited Bathurst, that the gaol lacked any features which he considered reformatory except for the chaplain who was, he thought, rather ineffective.<sup>187</sup>

Missionaries based in the city may have perceived the administration to be insufficiently, committed to the Christianization of the local population but had to compromise in return for the support of the state. Reverend Morgan, for example, believed that without the administration the missionaries would be massacred by the marabouts.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, it is not necessarily a given that missionaries opposed the court or prison system itself. Reverend William Moister, who served as chaplain of the gaol for a short period, left no record of his experience there in his journals or writings. If the Wesleyans were disturbed by the conditions of the gaol they have left no evidence of their opposition to it. Morgan also served on the Court of Common Appeals and, though he found it to be inconvenient because it took him from his duties as preacher, he never critiqued its morality. In fact, he found it to be “consistent with the almighty God in executing his judgment on Earth.”<sup>189</sup> In 1837 the first ever execution was held at the gaol for a soldier from McCarthy Island convicted of murder. Much like floggings, executions were carried out in public to create a spectacle and warn onlookers of the costs of crime. On the Sunday of the execution, Reverend William Fox preached in the prison courtyard to the assembled prisoners, Europeans, and African onlookers. Although reminding the crowd of the thief crucified at Calvary next to Christ, Fox concluded that the death sentence was “just and consistent” and read from Romans 6: 23 which reminded the crowd that “the wages of sin is death” and exhorted them to become slaves of righteousness instead of slaves of lawlessness.<sup>190</sup> Fox described the scene as awful, but considered it a triumph because the convicted man shouted, according to him, “Glory to God! Glory to God!” before he was hanged by the neck until dead in the prison courtyard.<sup>191</sup> Fox further claims that the condemned quoted Romans 6 and stated that he was “not under the law, but under grace.” What is certainly true is that executions in

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<sup>187</sup> E.C. Wines. 1880. *The State of Prisons and of Child-Saving Institutions in the Civilized World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 286.

<sup>188</sup> Extracts from Morgan’s Journal , March 12 1823.

<sup>189</sup> Extracts from Morgan’s Journal, March 12 1823.

<sup>190</sup> Fox, 423.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 426.

Bathurst led to the “salvation” of some individuals. Rather than Bathurst officials dirty their own hands performing the executions, the custom was to have one of the convicts stand in as executioner in exchange for his freedom once the sentence was carried out.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, there is something biblical about the state’s capital punishment policy. The state washes its hands of the execution as soon as it orders it and one prisoner is set free in exchange for another who is condemned to death.

Fox may very well have supported capital punishment, but the degree to which the need for protection secured the silence of missionaries on The Gambia becomes more obvious when contrasted with the perspectives of outsiders. Thomas Eyre Poole, the garrison chaplain of Sierra Leone who visited the Bathurst gaol in the 1840s, remarked that the gaol “could not be praised.”<sup>193</sup> Since Poole was based in Sierra Leone he had no need of the protection of the Bathurst administration and was thus free to criticize the conditions he found without repercussions. He wondered how human beings could tolerate such a place for the confinement of rational beings with its lack of ventilation, inadequate yard for exercise, wretched debtor’s accommodations, and no classification system to separate types of criminals or the guilty from those awaiting trial. The penal code of a Christian nation, he argued, should eliminate the harshness of the gaol in order to suppress vice and crime, reform licentiousness, correct instead of irritating, reform instead of driving to desperation, and improve instead of hardening by “injudicious association.”<sup>194</sup> The only thing he found to be worse than the Bathurst gaol was in the two-room office of the commandant of MacCarthy Island where one room contained handcuff and chains and the other a kitchen.<sup>195</sup> Imagine, Poole asked the reader in his memoir, “the complex idea of gaol and kitchen under one roof” where “you may hear at the same time the grumblings of the captive and the frizzling and spitting of the steaks together with their harmonious sounds.”<sup>196</sup> This slippage, between the conditions of human beings and cooking meat, speaks volumes. Annual reports were equally derisive of the situation

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<sup>192</sup> NRO: PUB 14/1 Minutes of the Meetings of Legislative Council 1888-1902.

<sup>193</sup> Thomas Eyre Pool. 1850. *Life, Scenery, and Customs in Sierra Leone and The Gambia: Volume Two*. London: Richard Bentley, 85.

<sup>194</sup> Poole *Volume Two*, 86.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, 136-137.

on McCarthy Island, noting that prisoners were sometimes confined in the hollow of a baobab tree or a “mud fort.”<sup>197</sup>

The account of Reverend Robert Maxwell Macbriar, a linguist employed by the Fula mission in The Gambia, is all the more important because he exposed the inner working of Bathurst with an unflinching criticism despite being based in The Gambia. Macbriar broke with the missionary tradition of seeing all Africans as potential criminals and placed the stigma of criminality squarely on the administration. Although slavery was illegal in British territory the demand for cheap labor in general and skilled artisans in particular caused many in the administration to turn a blind eye to certain realities. The Lieutenant-Governor George Rendall, who administered from 1830 -1837, ignored the importation of skilled slave laborers from Goree.<sup>198</sup> In return for sending the skilled workers that Bathurst lacked, Rendall gave an assurance that the workers would not be manumitted upon their arrival in Bathurst and that they would return to their masters in Goree when their labor was done in Bathurst. This agreement also led to the immigration of a number of signoras from Goree and Saint Louis who had remained worried about the possibility that they would not be able to hold onto their slaves in British territory.<sup>199</sup> (Figure 19) In one instance a pensioner resident in Bathurst fathered three daughters with the governor’s “concubine” who was also a slave of a Goree master. Since this made his daughters technically the property of the slave master in Goree all three were seized and sent to Goree as property.<sup>200</sup> Eventually the Governor of Goree released the daughters after a British man-of-war demanded she be returned to her father in Bathurst.<sup>201</sup> There were limits to the continuation of slavery, but numerous other instances such as this occurred with the freedom of the individuals in question usually being procured by purchasing

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<sup>197</sup> Blue Books 1836.

<sup>198</sup> R. Maxwell MacBriar. 1839. *Sketches of a Missionary’s Travels in Egypt, Syria, and Western Africa*. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co, 211.

<sup>199</sup> Gray, 309.

<sup>200</sup> Macbriar, 215.

<sup>201</sup> Gray, 317.

them from their “master” in Goree. Pierre Salla, who would become a Wesleyan preacher, was only liberated when the mission raised enough money to buy his freedom.<sup>202</sup>

Macbriar further brings to light the arbitrary way that power was wielded by the Bathurst administration. In its early days Bathurst was always on shaky financial footing given the fact that it had no legislative apparatus capable of raising funds and relied solely on import and export duties.<sup>203</sup> Cheap labor was thus always at a premium and the administration took advantage of this by attempting to force men and women to labor against their will. In one instance the sheriff of Bathurst and a magistrate ordered the wife of a Christian convert to forced labor in the bush chopping wood.<sup>204</sup> When they resisted several men seized the woman in question, took her to the bush, and beat her husband. When he went to government house to resolve the situation the husband was told the chief magistrate could do nothing without the authority of the governor. When he went to the governor he was told that his wife was in the bush and the bush was out of his jurisdiction.<sup>205</sup> Upon returning from labor the woman was only able to free herself by running away to the mission house where she was given sanctuary. In another instance, an employer was taking advantage of the labor of a young man and refusing to pay him his wages. Once it became clear that he would not be paid the young man decided to desert his employer. The employer responded by declaring the young man to be in his debt and took him to the Court of Common Pleas where the Colonial Secretary, a man with no legal training whatsoever, sentenced the young man to prison as a debtor.<sup>206</sup> According to Macbriar, the arbitrariness and corruption of the entire system was so severe that it would almost be preferable if no criminals were tried at all. Without Macbriar these stories would not have come to light which suggests, despite a lack of documentation, that labor exploitation was far more common than the records indicate.

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 319.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 319

<sup>204</sup> Reverend Maxwell Macbriar, 1837. *A Grammer of the Mandingo Language: with Vocabularies*. London: Printed for the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society, 213.

<sup>205</sup> Macbriar, 213.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 218.

For Macbriar, his honesty and willingness to criticize the administration had consequences. A telling incident occurred on MacCarthy Island when the governor of the island decided to take land promised to John Cupidon, the liberated African turned Wesleyan preacher under the guidance of Macbriar.<sup>207</sup> The governor gathered a number of Akus, plied them with plenty of rum, armed them, and employed overseers with whips behind them to ensure they carried out their duty. The mob arrived at Cupidon's house and destroyed it. Macbriar and Cupidon brought the case before the Lieutenant-Governor in Bathurst who refused to listen to them and then to the Colonial Secretary who refused to issue a warrant.<sup>208</sup> Only when the case left the jurisdiction of Bathurst and reached the desk of the Secretary of State was a warrant of arrest issued. The final judgment came, in the opinion of Macbriar, when the "finger of God" burnt down the administrator's storehouse on MacCarthy Island as punishment.<sup>209</sup>

The state was hardly the only party responsible for these abuses. The importance of merchants in the early administration of Bathurst ensured that a blind eye would be turned towards domestic slavery and labor coercion. As Lovejoy and Hogendorn found in Northern Nigeria, slavery was publicly denounced by the British in Gambia while the de facto policies of administrators ensured that de facto slavery would continue.<sup>210</sup> It was certainly the case that before the late nineteenth century the British did not have the means to interfere with domestic slavery outside of Bathurst and its immediate environs. This, however, does not explain the continuance of slavery and other forms of oppression and coercion which continued in Bathurst itself. Histories of The Gambia by Gailey, Gray, and Southorn have conveniently omitted much of the evidence of slavery and coercion. This is not surprising given the fact that most contemporary observers also tended to censor their accounts. Even the Wesleyan missionary William Fox, who took up the cause of anti-slavery and stood up against the Bathurst administration,

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 275.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 277.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 283.

<sup>210</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn. 1993. *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

omitted from his now famous history of the Wesleyan missions in Western Africa the evidence of slavery in Bathurst.<sup>211</sup>

#### THE VICES OF CIVILIZATION: 1857-1880

In 1850, when groundnuts were exported at record levels, they were credited with creating a demand for steady, settled labor in the city. Supply and demand would regulate, it was believed, the population of Bathurst.<sup>212</sup> In 1856 Governor O'Connor, contrary to the missionary discourse of sin, theft, and vice, found the residents of Bathurst to be industrious and orderly with very little criminality.<sup>213</sup> Indeed, there is little evidence since the founding of the city that the administrators considered criminality to be a major concern. So long as city dwellers rendered unto Caesar what belonged to him, the state was not terribly interested in moral evangelism. In 1857-58, however, a monetary crisis shook Bathurst followed by a failure of the groundnut crop in 1859 that left the Bathurst merchants with imports in their possession that they could not sell.<sup>214</sup> On top of that, an epidemic broke out which killed a great number of the European merchants. White merchants were increasingly wary of doing business on the Gambia after this. Maba's jihad, which had been gaining strength throughout the 1850s, had also greatly stifled the groundnut trade on the north bank of the river and created refugees who fled to Bathurst. Around the same time an epidemic of pulmonary cattle disease killed thousands of cattle. It is not surprising that in 1861 it became a problem that Africans were coming to Bathurst to be merchants and not to labor or farm.<sup>215</sup> In fact, between 1851 and 1869 the agricultural and manufacturing economy of Bathurst completely collapsed, so that in 1869 not a soul was employed in either.<sup>216</sup> Richard Francis Burton, a jack-of-all-trades who visited Bathurst in the early 1860s, described his relief at leaving the city. To Burton the rural areas of Gambia "illustrated on a small scale how much better is the heart of Africa (the

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<sup>211</sup> William Fox. 1851. *A Brief History of the Wesleyan Missions on the Western Coast of Africa*. London: Aylott and Jones.

<sup>212</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor MacDonnell to the Right Honorable Sir John S. Pakington, Bart, 1852, 97.

<sup>213</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor O'Connor to the Right Honorable H. Labouchere, M.P. 1856, 187.

<sup>214</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D'Arcy to his Grace The Duke of Newcastle 1859, 10.

<sup>215</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D'Arcy to his Grace the Duke of Newcastle, 1861, 28.

<sup>216</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1851-1869.

rural areas) than its epidermis (the city).”<sup>217</sup> Indeed, in 1862 the administration also became concerned that trash was being buried at an alarming rate in the city. Near the market the trash burial site included tons of cow horns, rotting hides, snake heads, and other debris.<sup>218</sup> One could argue that this image of the trash burial, burgeoning with animal parts and other desiderata, mirrored the way that many administrators began to see the intestines of the city itself as the 1860s dragged on.

In the late 1850s, labor discipline was posited as the cure to this situation. This can be said both for prison labor and “free” labor though the difference between the two was, as we shall see, often blurred. In 1859 Governor D’Arcy declared prison labor on public works to be infinitely superior to the use of the shot drill or treadwheel, preferred by the previous governor, O’Connor, because it showed the prisoners what their hands could do, instilled in them the dignity of labor, and taught them the “regularity” and the “temperance” of the soldier.<sup>219</sup> (Figures 8-10, 12-13) Governor D’Arcy believed that “the African is a good laborer, submissive, easily controlled by a strong mind, but impulsive and passionate”<sup>220</sup> In order to control these “passions” he also oversaw a dramatic increase in whippings as punishment in the gaol in 1865 and 1866 as the use of the treadwheel declined.<sup>221</sup> Since D’Arcy believed that after one night in the gaol many African prisoners suffered a broken heart due to the dislocation they suffered from society, he attempted to restore their dignity by demonstrating what bodies put to labor can achieve and punish disobedience by flogging bodies.<sup>222</sup> This is one of the first instances when an administrator of Bathurst considered the disciplinary possibilities of prison labor, though few prison reformers of the time would have found D’Arcy enlightened. Convict labor was at the heart of a renewed effort to build roads, reclaim swamp, clear bush from a European cemetery, and clean up the trash which was causing such consternation.<sup>223</sup> A junction road built by prison labor which ran from Clifton road to

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<sup>217</sup> Richard Francis Burton. 1863. *Wanderings in West Africa: From Liverpool to Fernando Po*. London: Tinsely Brothers and Catherine St. Strand, 163.

<sup>218</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D’Arcy to his Grace The Duke of Newcastle 1861, 23.

<sup>219</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D’Arcy to his Grace The Duke of Newcastle 1859, 12.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>221</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1865-66.

<sup>222</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D’Arcy to his Grace The Duke of Newcastle 1862, 29.

<sup>223</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D’Arcy to his Grace The Duke of Newcastle 1859, 12.



the beach in Bathurst was described as a “functioning lung” for the city.<sup>224</sup> Additional roads were built including one which led straight to Sabiji, the marabout town that had revolted in 1852, in order to ensure that it was not reoccupied by marabouts.

To deal with the need increased demand for cheap labor and the disappearance of merchant work in the face of declining groundnut exports, the Apprentices Act of 1862 was passed which was meant to create a pool of skilled labor in Bathurst. The act had immediate effect and destitute parents began apprenticing their children almost immediately with 100 children being apprenticed in a single day in 1862. In 1863, when refugees from the jihad of Maba Diakhou, including 200 children, arrived in Bathurst they were immediately apprenticed to tradesmen.<sup>225</sup> This program was seen as a civilizing one, especially in the context of failing groundnut exports, disease, and war. Governor D’Arcy was quite enthusiastic about the apprenticeship program and its potential to civilize and improve the residents of Bathurst through labor. Apprenticeships were especially enticing to Akus who, having arrived from Sierra Leone, had little to no family or connections in the city. Liberated Africans were seen by D’Arcy as containing all the elements demanded by Adam Smith of a commercial people.<sup>226</sup>

In 1866 Charles Patey became administrator of The Gambia. He was the first Gambian administrator to perceive criminality as a problem in Bathurst.<sup>227</sup> Although he noted that there were “sober and industrious” residents of Bathurst, he warned of “the vices of civilization” such as a lack of industry, carelessness, improvidence, lying, thieving, and addiction to intemperance which he saw as rampant in the city.<sup>228</sup> In subsequent years the African residents of Bathurst were increasingly cast by Patey as thieves, liars, and habitual criminals addicted to the gaol. By 1868 Patey was convinced that the

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>225</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D’Arcy to the Right Honorable Edward Cardwell, M.P., 1863, 36.

<sup>226</sup> NO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor Blackall to the Right Honorable The Earl of Carnarvon 1865, 16.

<sup>227</sup> Though, one could argue, Patey sounds more like an earlier traveler or merchant who frequently likened Senegambians to thieves. Adanson, for example, called Senegambians “the most artful thieves and beggars in the world” and Moore did not significantly differ in his opinion. See M. Adanson. 1759. *A Voyage to Senegal, the Island of Goree, and the River Gambia*. London: J. Norse and W. Johnston, 75 and Moore (already cited).

<sup>228</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor A.E. Kennedy, C.B. to his Grace the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos 1867, 17.

gaol was not sufficiently deterring crime because Gambians preferred the gaol, where they were guaranteed food, to life on the outside.<sup>229</sup> Patey's reasoning was that the number of repeat offenders sentenced to the gaol, a statistic which was kept briefly in the 1840s and only consistently after 1857, proved that the gaol needed to do a better job of deterrence so "prisoners would not be so fond of repeating their visits."<sup>230</sup> Since the treadmill and shot drill were the most despised aspects of the gaol Patey decided to make them mandatory for an hour each day while deemphasizing the public works projects favored by D'Arcy. The use of the treadmill did not last long after a prisoner died while being forced to run the wheel despite being ill. A formal inquest into the matter reached the ears of the colonial home office which dovetailed with other reports of abuses in colonial prisons in West Africa.

The increased scrutiny into the state of the gaol following Patey served to reveal a number of abuses which previously would have gone unrecorded, but it hardly eliminated them. In 1871 a woman sentenced to two days in prison for refusing to speak English in court had her head forcibly shaved on the order of the Chief Magistrate, Mr. Jackson.<sup>231</sup> Although long-term prisoners had their heads shaved under the pretense of health issues, Marie Susan, the woman in question, did not need to have her head shaved by anyone's logic but the gaolers. Elizabeth Gray, the matron of the gaol, testified that she tried to resist the gaolers order by pointing out the fact that it was a two day sentence, but she was told to "hold her tongue" and forced her to shave Marie's head.<sup>232</sup> Marie's lawyer described the incident as "an indignity, nay a cruelty she had to submit to being in the power of the gaol authorities" and further added that charges would be filed for false imprisonment and "gross assault to the person."<sup>233</sup> In the course of the investigation it was also discovered that another woman in the prison kept her child with her in her cell.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1868.

<sup>230</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1841-48, 1857-1900, Dispatch from Governor A.E. Kennedy, C.B. to The Earl Granville, K.G. 1868, 18.

<sup>231</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 Kimberly to the Officer Administering the Government of the West African Settlements August 14, 1871.

<sup>232</sup> NRO: CSO 1/29 Elizabeth Gray to Governor Anton June 21, 1871.

<sup>233</sup> NRO: CSO 1/29 W. Chase Walcott, Advocate Attorney to Anton March 15, 1871.

<sup>234</sup> NRO: CSO 1/29 Thomas W. Jackson to Mr. Fowler March 16,

In 1873 Mr. Hanson, the gaoler, found a prisoner who had smuggled snuff into the gaol. It was extremely common for prisoners to bring snuff into the gaol despite rules against it. If they were in danger of being caught prisoners would swallow the snuff rather than face the punishment which could be flogging or solitary confinement.<sup>235</sup> In this case, however, Hanson caught a prisoner red handed. In order to make an example of him he rubbed snuff all over the convict's lips and forced him to drink all of the snuff with water. The prisoner was found lying down in the courtyard covered in bloody vomit.<sup>236</sup> The medical officer had to treat him for three days for the effects of tobacco poisoning and, based on the amount of snuff he swallowed, he reckoned that "he must have greatly suffered."<sup>237</sup> Since the gaoler was a young man with a "good education" it was decided that he had learnt his lesson and he was allowed to resign from the gaol and hold other offices in the colony.

In 1873 the superintendent of police, Henry Fowler, began investigating numerous allegations including that the administrator, Cornelius Kortwright, raped a servant girl and then dismissed her when she became pregnant and that the chief magistrate, Mr. Jackson, was accused of "prostituting" young girls and abusing prisoners.<sup>238</sup> The first accusations against Jackson came from two young girls 12 and 13 or 14 years old respectively, when Jackson dragged one of the girls into his room despite her cries and raped her.<sup>239</sup> According to Jackson, a woman of 17 came to his room of her own accord attempting to engage in prostitution and he rejected her offer. In any case, he noted, the girls were "of a class little given to truth" and influenced by Jackson's enemies inciting them against him.<sup>240</sup> Jackson remained the Chief Magistrate of Bathurst until 1876 when it was determined that "enlargement of his liver and spleen caused by malaria and a slight insufficiency of the mitral valve of the heart" meant he had to leave The Gambia for good.<sup>241</sup> The condition of the gaol hardly improved over time. In 1890 the gaoler, Mr. Sherrington, had to resign due to the disgraceful condition of the gaol.

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<sup>235</sup> NRO: CSO 1/36 H.T.M. Cooper to Administrator in Charge Sierra Leone, July 30, 1873.

<sup>236</sup> NRO: CSO 1/36 H.T.M. Cooper to Administrator in Charge Sierra Leone, July 30, 1873.

<sup>237</sup> NRO: CSO 1/36 H.T.M. Cooper to Administrator in Charge Sierra Leone, July 30, 1873.

<sup>238</sup> NRO: CSO 1/36 Cornelius H. Kortwright Administrator to the Governor in Charge, December 16, 1873.

<sup>239</sup> NRO: CSO 1/36 Cornelius H. Kortwright Administrator to the Governor in Charge, December 16, 1873.

<sup>240</sup> NRO: CSO 1/36 Thomas W. Jackson to the Governor in Charge, December 18, 1873.

<sup>241</sup> NRO: CSO 1/43 D. Thane, M.D., Medical Report, September 21, 1876.

## LIFE AND DEATH IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA: 1869-1880S

In late May and June of 1869 the greatest threat to Bathurst turned out not to be criminals or marabouts, but bacteria. Although Bathurst had always struggled with the quality of its water and the health of its inhabitants, the 1869 outbreak of cholera proved to be devastating on a scale which shook the administration. Estimates of the deaths range from one quarter to one half of the city's population. According to Patey, during the early outbreak the city's marabouts attempted to convince other city dwellers to reject the entrance of sanitary inspectors into their homes. Funeral rites for the dead were abandoned in efforts to avoid the contagion and the dead died alone.<sup>242</sup> "Dead bodies gnawed by flooding... lie about in all directions presenting a spectacle too horrible... and around each corpse are the traces in the sand of the fearful midnight struggle of the poor creatures."<sup>243</sup> He further claimed that those who were not sick had begun to give up on life and had turned to liquor such that it was difficult to tell the dead from the intoxicated. Patey estimated that 2,000 out of the city's 4,000 residents were dead and although the poor were dying disproportionately, no sector of the city was untouched. Patey and Mr. Fowler, the colonial surgeon, buried many of the bodies which had been abandoned with their own hands. High wages were also approved to pay laborers to bury the dead rather than to enforce strict quarantine laws. The laborers were paid based on the number of dead bodies they had buried at the end of each day. In the end, these efforts were insufficient and a massive funeral pyre was created which burnt 1,059 bodies in a night.

The Merchants of Bathurst blamed Patey for the outbreak. In a petition signed by every British and French merchant in the city to the colonial office they claimed that 78 people were dying daily in the city and proper quarantine measures were not being put in place by Patey or the colonial surgeon.<sup>244</sup> According to the merchants, Patey should have seen the outbreak coming and could have mitigated its effects if he had enforced house to house inspections under the authority of the military. Instead, a sanitary commission was convened which conducted inspections, but had no real authority being a

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<sup>242</sup> NRO: CSO 1/14 Admiral Patey to the Right Honorable Earl Launiele, February 16, 1869.

<sup>243</sup> NRO: CSO 1/19 Admiral Patey to A.E. Kennedy, June 5, 1869.

<sup>244</sup> NRO: CSO 1/18 Merchants of The Gambia to A.E. Kennedy, June 22, 1869.

“constituted body without self-sufficient legal powers.”<sup>245</sup> Lacking these powers efforts to aid the sick were ad hoc and uncoordinated resulting in personal, rather than coordinated, institutional, efforts. The merchants also criticized the fact that infected individuals were being sent to the general hospital instead of a quarantine hospital, but this betrays more of an ignorance of how cholera is spread than anything else. From the perspective of Governor Patey the actions of the merchant community amounted to nothing less than a mutiny. By June 25<sup>th</sup> the cholera epidemic finally broke, but well into the 1900s the merchant community complained to the administration of the alarmingly high mortality rates they faced. African traders and members of the Chamber of Commerce working for the European firms cited constant fevers and pneumonia from insect vectors and standing water and unprecedented levels of infant mortality.<sup>246</sup> The duties and taxes they paid to prop up the state, they argued, should have been used to alleviate their living conditions had the state lived up to its end of the bargain.

#### GOD MADE ME A WARRIOR: THE DEATH OF GAMBIAN POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE: 1850 - 1900

With the outbreak of the soninke-marabout wars in the 1950s the discourse of criminality was applied to the task of governing commerce on the river Gambia and expanding Bathurst’s sphere of influence. In the 1850s Bathurst found itself surrounded (and often outmatched) by *mansolu* who ruled over kingdoms over varying size and power. Each had the potential to make life difficult for the Bathurst administration if they chose. Administrators recognized this and attempted to maintain cordial relationships with the *mansolu* based on trade and a recognition of the sovereignty of the *mansolu* over their kingdoms. *Mansolu* who disrupted commerce and trade through warfare, however, were often cast as criminals breaking the laws of commerce by the administration. As Governor MacDonnell put it the “great obstacle to civilization” was the “intestine wars and feuds” between Gambian kings. Indeed, the great warrior and king Fodey Kaabah made the distinction between himself and a common criminal. “God made me a warrior, and I can only be so,” he wrote to the governor of Bathurst, “but I never steal.”<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> NRO: CSO 1/18 Merchants of The Gambia to A.E. Kennedy, June 22, 1869.

<sup>246</sup> NRO: CSO 1/18 Minutes of a Meeting Held at Government House, March 2, 1923.

<sup>247</sup> NRO: CSO 23/1 Fodey Kabba.

Kaabah, an astute reader of the thrust of British foreign policy, clearly understood the distinction in British minds between the “legitimate” exploits of the military and the illegitimacy of challenges to (British) law and order. The reign of the warrior kings would only end, it was believed, when commerce instilled desires in individual hearts for a modern regime of industry and consumption.

Nevertheless, the outbreak of the first Soninke-Marabout wars in the 1850s, which threatened to destabilize the region, profoundly disquieted Bathurst. These conflicts, which raged between animist soninkes and Islamic marabouts, took place with a scope and brutality that threatened to plunge the entire river into bloody conflict. The marabouts’ great strength, which allowed them to emerge victorious in many of the conflicts, was their ability to summon large numbers of fighters in a short time and move quickly throughout the country. Soninke kings and British observers alike described the speed with which marabout forces were able to appear with large numbers, seemingly from nowhere, and attack. The Soninke kings, by contrast, were grounded in particular territories which they claimed the right to rule through familial descent. It is not that marabouts did not aspire to control land, but rather that they could draw on wider regional networks established through trade and teaching to recruit warriors. Traditionally these conflicts have been interpreted as a religious conflict between the animist Soninkes and Muslim marabouts. Although it is true that religion provided an organizational principle behind which the two sides could define themselves, the marabouts were more than willing to fight alongside hard-drinking, animist mercenaries to gain power. Behind the ideology the soninkes and marabouts shared much the common ideology known in Mandinka as *nyanchoya*. Although animism and hard drinking were components of *nyanchoya* and thus could not be part of the marabouts’ ideology, *nyanchoyas*’ insistence on survival without farming was adopted by the marabouts.<sup>248</sup> A *nyancho* survived by taking what they wanted and did not dirty their hands digging in the dirt. They were inured to raiding and warfare and hundreds of years of slave trading lent significant support to the *nyancho* lifestyle. The marabouts could call to their side warriors from disparate territories united, if not by Islam, then by a desire for plunder and

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<sup>248</sup> Bakari Sidibe in Donald Wright. 1979. *Oral Traditions from the Gambia*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, Africa Program.

a chance to live the *nyancho* lifestyle because the slave trade had laid the foundations for economically rewarding violence. The marabouts began to develop the same love of plunder and to detest equally manual labor to grow crops which typified the *nyancho* lifestyle. This ideology set the marabouts on a path of unending warfare. This confluence of ideology and concrete economic rewards for violence created a widening gyre which threatened to cast the entire river into violence.

In 1850 Maba Diakhou returned to Badibu from his sojourn in Futa Toro and established an Islamic school there. Soon thereafter he was visited by the jihadi Sheikh Umar Tal and Maba quickly became the leader of a jihad in Senegambia, though he focused more of his efforts in what is today Senegal. From his base in Rip, Maba succeeded in conquering Saluum though he was less successful in other areas. The civil war which began in Badibu by his son was not resolved as quickly. In Badibu civil war between Saitte Matti, the son of Maba Diakhou, and the mansa, Mahmood Derry Bah, was tearing the country apart. In order to win Bah leaned heavily on Beram Ceesay, an old general of MaBa's. Ceesay not only fought against Saite Matti, but he also revolted against Bah and became the de facto king of Badibu. The British were cautiously optimistic about Ceesay because he claimed to want good relations with traders and to increase the circulation of goods to his country. Bah tried to enlist British support by offering his country, including Badibu and Saluum, to the British who would establish order, restore him to his position as *mansa*, and make the land part of the British protectorate. The British declined the offer.

Some of the earliest marabout successes happened in 1851 to the south of Maba in the Kombos where marabouts based in Gunjur pressed the Kombo Mansa relentlessly. Suling Jatta, the son-in-law of Kombo *Mansa*, and the marabouts based primarily in Gunjur as well as Sukuta and Brufut fought a series of battles over the better part of a year.<sup>249</sup> The proximity of Kombo to Bathurst presented a serious threat to the city. A policy of neutrality was proposed by governor MacDonnell in 1852, but the close relationship between Bathurst and Suling Jatta, who had ceded parts of northern Kombo to the administration, drew MacDonnell into the conflict. A treaty was negotiated between Suling Jatta and the marabouts, but it proved insufficient to end the hostilities. MacDonnell ordered Colonel O'Conner to

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<sup>249</sup> Gray, 388.

attack the marabouts at their stronghold in Sabiji.<sup>250</sup> The marabouts of Sabiji, although willing to make peace, were not willing to surrender the village and O'Connor attacked with the H.M.S. *Teazer*, the West India Regiments stationed in Bathurst, the Gambia Militia, and some pensioners. The marabouts in charge of the city were taken prisoner and shipped off to Bathurst gaol.<sup>251</sup> As soon as O'Conner withdrew, Sabiji was re-occupied by marabout forces and MacDonnell had to call on the Commandant of Goree for reinforcements.<sup>252</sup> The combined British-French force razed Sabiji and the marabouts fled to Gunjur where they reinforced Fodey Kaabah who would spend decades frustrating the British. The British were not overly eager to attack Gunjur and the marabouts, weakened by an arms embargo against them, decided to sign a peace treaty in 1856.<sup>253</sup>

For the Sabiji marabouts sent to Bathurst gaol the experience was meant to teach them a lesson about British power. The unusually high rate of punishments meted out in the gaol in 1852 suggests unrest in the gaol.<sup>254</sup> During 1852, eighteen men were whipped, five confined to solitary confinement, fifteen were placed in irons, and twenty-four were subjected to "other" punishments which no doubt included reduced diet.<sup>255</sup> This is a sharp increase from the previous year. Furthermore, these rates of punishment continued for the next two years before dropping off sharply in 1855 after twenty-four whippings in 1854.<sup>256</sup> This suggests that the marabouts were given significant prison sentences of more than two years imprisonment and that their presence in the gaol likely inspired a degree of popular resistance within the gaol leading to the unusually high levels of physical punishment. One can imagine that the marabouts, who had called for jihad in Sabiji, had quite an impact on the rest of the prison population. Indeed, the administration seems to have learned a lesson from this incident.

News of Maba's success in Saloum spread and in 1862, when the Niumi mansa died, a local marabout called on Maba to help him start jihad in Niumi. The marabouts had initial success, but the

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 391.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 391.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 394.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid, 396.

<sup>254</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1852, 191.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid, 192

<sup>256</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1852-1855.



support of the British for the Niimi Mansa allowed him to retake the throne in 1863 and maintain Niimi as a Soninke state. Maba's tactics were revolutionary in their brutality and his willingness to adopt total war as a battle tactic. He destroyed whole villages and gave the inhabitants the choice of shaving their heads and converting to Islam or facing death. When confronted by a British emissary with the fact that his tactics were causing massive death and famine, he responded, "God is our Father, and he has brought this war. We are in his hands."<sup>257</sup>

Intervening in Kombo and Niimi, however, did not mean the British were ready to begin policing upriver areas. Bathurst occasionally made "displays of strength" designed to keep the wolf from the door, but administrators of the city were very well aware that their power was limited and the treaties they signed with Gambian kings were virtually ignored except for the provision which guaranteed the annual tributes to be paid to the kings.<sup>258</sup> Bathurst intervened in Kombo and Niimi because they were buffers between the city and the marabouts and the fall of either would have allowed the city itself to be directly invaded, but they declined to intervene in Badibu which was further upriver and of little strategic importance to a city concerned with brute survival. *Mansolu*, of course, recognized this fact and referred to administrators and governors of Bathurst as the "Banjul *Mansa*" or King of Banjul (Bathurst).<sup>259</sup> As with any other *mansa*, they believed the power of the Banjul *mansa* did not extend much beyond his territory.

The looming threat of an army of marabouts appearing at Bathurst's doorstep also prompted the military establishment of Bathurst to begin calling for the militarization of the city. In 1852 Major Luke Smyth O'Connor of the 1<sup>st</sup> West India Regiment and the Governor and Commander in Chief of Sierra Leone and Gambia denounced the weakness of Bathurst. Although O'Connor praised its houses and stores for their architectural and aesthetic qualities, he found the barracks to be "confined and paltry".<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Quoted in Martin Klein, 1968. *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sine-saloum, 1847-1914*. Stanford: Published for the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace by Stanford University Press, 73.

<sup>258</sup> Reports Exhibiting the Past and Present State of Her Majesty's Colonial Possessions 1848, 324.

<sup>259</sup> Excerpts from John Morgan's Journal March 12, 1823.

<sup>260</sup> Luke Smyth O'Connor. 1852. "Three Weeks in Gambia" *Colburn's United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal*. 11 (London: Henry Colburn, 413).

According to O'Connor there was not sufficient room in the barracks to house five of the officers and 45 of the enlisted men, so accommodation had to be rented outside the barracks, resulting in "a very unnecessary trial of military discipline, entailing a heavy annual expenditure."<sup>261</sup> O'Connor, as an officer and governor, was certainly in a position to judge the effectiveness of the military. He was also quite troubled by the inability of Bathurst to project power and called The Gambia the most important settlement held by the British on the West African coast. Calling for a dramatic increase in the garrison in Bathurst from 180 to 400 men, O'Connor cited the fact that Bathurst was "surrounded by warlike, intelligent, and powerful nations, fearless of the 'White Man's War' able and too often willing to close the roads, stop the traders, paralyze our commercial intercourse with the interior, and entail heavy losses, tantamount to ruin, upon our merchants."<sup>262</sup> O'Connor continued to prescribe the creation of a "Gambia Rifles" corps with distinct uniforms, disciplined until they were "like eels accustomed to skinning," and trained in bush warfare. In fact, Governor O'Connor did attempt to modernize the police force in Bathurst. Before 1852 a first class constable made the same as a day laborer and a fourth class constable made starvation wages. O'Connor increased the size of the force and raised the salary for a first class constable to £25 per year and provided each man with a blue uniform to distinguish them. O'Connor considered this a great success and praised the trustworthiness of the constables.<sup>263</sup>

The internecine conflict between the Soninkes and Marabouts continued on and off over the course of fifty years. The wars were brutal and devastating to Gambians as well as their political institutions. We should certainly be careful with these accounts. Historically, Hobbesian descriptions of Africans living nasty, short, and brutish lives have often been used to justify colonization and extreme examples of racialized violence and oppression. There is evidence, however, that these descriptions were often not linked to a wider colonial plot on the part of those who reported them. Rarely did Gambian administrators advocate for increased British involvement in the conflict between the Soninkes and Marabouts, and the few who did received very little support from the metropole for their actions. One

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<sup>261</sup> O'Connor, 420.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, 421.

<sup>263</sup> Copy of a Dispatch from Governor O'Connor to the Duke of Newcastle, 1852, 204.

reason for skepticism of increased British involvement was the notion that it was impossible to forge agreements with local kings and expect them to live up to “strict international obligations” because they were “savages and barbarians.”<sup>264</sup> Governor D’Arcy was a notable exception to this rule when he signed agreements with the kings of Brikama and Yundum, both in Kombo, that the British would come to their aid if attacked. It turns out that the British were the ones incapable of meeting their international obligations.

In the early 1870s the conflicts between soninkes and marabouts seemed to take a dire turn. In 1870 the soninkes of Kasang murdered a prominent marabout and mounted his head on a spike. In response marabouts sacked Yanimaroo, leaving dead bodies piled up all around the village. Conflicts broke out throughout the river which crippled the trade and cultivation upriver. In 1870 Henry Fowler described the upper stretches of the river as totally decimated by war which disrupted both agriculture and trade so that children were being sold for bags of rice.<sup>265</sup> Similarly, when two marabouts were beheaded in Kombo in 1872 the marabouts of Gunjur rose up again against the kings of Brikama and Yundum. The kings of Brikama and Yundum produced the treaty signed by Governor D’Arcy offering them assistance, but Administrator Callaghan refused to honor the agreement and intervene.<sup>266</sup> H. Simpson described the situation on the river in 1872 as “general lawlessness” caused by the marabouts who were “eager for plunder and despising labor.”<sup>267</sup> Reports of large dugout canoes smuggling weapons upriver began to circulate and the administration began inspecting canoes and seizing contraband. These seizures caused a great deal of local backlash without preventing wars upriver. When the police raided a group of fishermen in Niumi it led to a wave of arson and the constable in charge of the raid was assaulted and stabbed by Niuminkas.<sup>268</sup> In 1872 Governor Callaghan wrote to Mahmood Darry Bah, the king of Kombo, urging him not to wage war with the marabouts of Gunjur and warning him that the country was being spoilt by warfare. A similar letter written to a leader of the marabouts, urging them not to attack Kombo and

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<sup>264</sup> NRO: CSO 1/30 Mr. Walcott to Mr. Fowler, April 30, 1872.

<sup>265</sup> NRO: CSO 1/25 Henry Fowler to Governor Bravo, February 23, 1870.

<sup>266</sup> NRO: CSO 1/32 Minutes of an Interview between the Administrator and the King of Brekama, August 3, 1872.

<sup>267</sup> NRO: CSO 1/32 Mr. H. Simpson to the Administrator in Chief, July 5, 1872.

<sup>268</sup> NRO: CSO 1/32 H.J.M. Cooper to J. Pope Hennessy November 5, 1872.

assuring the marabouts that the British were their friends.<sup>269</sup> This “friendship” aside, the marabouts of Gunjur continued to press their advantage in Kombo including attempting to retake Sabiji.

In the long run the ongoing warfare without resolution weakened both sides and strengthened the position of the British on the river. In 1883 the Walley Jammeh, the Niumi Mansa, was wanted for a murder arising out of a personal conflict over his wife. Despite the arrest warrant he came to Bathurst despite the fact that he had been personally warned by Governor Carter that he would be arrested once he was under British jurisdiction.<sup>270</sup> According to Carter, he was very unpopular among his own people who told him that the trouble caused by the murder was his alone and they left him as soon as he was arrested. Once he was in police custody he was escorted to the police station lockup where he was placed in a cell with the door left open to give him air. After noises were heard coming from the cell Spillsbury, the colonial surgeon, found Jammeh lying on his back in a pool of blood with a penknife next to him and the “principle arteries” of his neck severed by a cut which reached his windpipe through his muscle, arteries, veins, and nerves. Jammeh’s large and small intestines were protruding from a five inch wound in his abdomen. According to the coroner’s report Jammeh, having been “moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil” and “not having the fear of God before his eyes” had killed himself.<sup>271</sup> A further autopsy opened Jammeh’s thorax and found a bit of undigested food in his stomach. Eight years later the independence of Niumi came to an end.

In *Can the Subaltern Speak* Spivak discusses the case of the suicide of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri who waited until she was menstruating to kill herself to show that she was not killing herself because of an illegitimate pregnancy, but for political reasons.<sup>272</sup> As Spivak argues, Bhaduri waited until she was menstruating specifically to render her body “graphematic” or turn her body into a text on which could be read the realities of the political situation in which she found herself. Similarly, the suicide of the Niumi *mansa* can be read as an attempt to turn his body into a text on which could be read the impacts of the

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<sup>269</sup> NRO: CSO 1/32 The British Governor to Anna Fall, June 22, 1872.

<sup>270</sup> NRO: CSO 1/67 G.T. Carter to F.F. Pinket, Administrator in Charge of Sierra Leone, June 14, 1883.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. 2010. *Can the Subaltern Speak. Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York: Columbia University Press.

proximity of the state of Niumi to Bathurst. What Jammeh realized, before it actually came to pass, is that the existence of Niumi as a sovereign entity had ceased to be a reality. Bathurst had spent most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century displacing the authority of the Niumi mansa over commerce at the mouth of the river and the lure of groundnuts had shifted the energies of Niumi's farmers away from their *mansa* and towards the traders in the city. Jammeh entered the city of Bathurst knowing that he would be arrested and smuggled a penknife into his cell determined to commit suicide. He opened his stomach and spilled the intestines of the state before cutting through the arteries in his neck to render his body a graphematic representation of the realities of his state which had been stripped of its organs long before the official annexation of Niumi by the British.

Soon thereafter Musa Molloh, the great Fula king, also effectively ceded his power to the British. Molloh accepted that his kingdom would become part of a British protectorate as long as he was provided with a £500 per year stipend and allowed to maintain a degree of sovereignty by presiding over his own "native courts." In return he promised to abolish slavery in his land. For Molloh the main point of contention with the British was over his wives. In the 1880s the British started to contemplate the abolition of slavery on the river and Musa Molloh was infamous for keeping a large number of wives. When wives that Molloh purchased ran away to McCarthy Island the British refused to hand them over. Molloh asked the British to return his runaways brides, claiming that he earned the women through his own labor and paid for the "head of a woman" in goods. Molloh compared the British allowing the women to stay in British territory to a mouth where the teeth and tongue fought each other.<sup>273</sup> The British refused to return the women to Molloh. The British were less concerned about Molloh's alleged activities in French controlled Cassamance where he was accused of burning villages, theft, and murder. So long as the British relied on Molloh to stabilize the protectorate, even in 1908, they were willing to turn a blind eye to his activities across the border. As one British official put it, in an impressive display of sophistry, the accusations against Molloh in Cassamance might very well be "proved," but that hardly made them

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<sup>273</sup> NRO: CSO 1/91 Proceedings of an Interview at Boraber with Musa Molloh, March 29, 1885.

“true.”<sup>274</sup> In the end, it would be Molloh’s maintenance of a harem of wives which would, in 1919, get him deported to Sierra Leone. Molloh was allowed to reenter The Gambia in 1923 so that he could die on his native soil, but in the meantime his kingdom was gone and had officially become British property. Events in other parts of the river made Musa Molloh’s squabble over his wives look fairly insignificant. In the Kombos, Foday Sillah’s marabout army was ambushed and dismantled by a Jolah force who utilized their knowledge of the terrain. Sillah’s soldiers, having surrendered, were executed one by one by the Jolahs.

The situation in Kombo seemed more pressing. By 1888, despite the defeat of Fodey Sillah’s army and the acceptance by Sillah of a stipend in exchange for laying down his arms, Kombo seemed on the verge of collapse and Brimah N’Jie, the Kombo Mansa, was ready to cede his land to the British in exchange for protection from marabouts allied to Fodey Kaabah. Some of the alkalos of Kombo had already offered their towns to the British who had refused to take them. Guns could be heard from Bathurst on a daily basis and rumors of a marabout invasion seemed more real than ever. As late as 1892 the British were still worried about Fodey Kaabah and the possibility that he might incite a more general conflict. Firsthand accounts of his camp cite war drums and uncountable “moving bodies of men” in the dark portending war to come.<sup>275</sup>

Fodey Kaabah’s sister provides an explanation for her brother’s continued pursuit of the warrior way of life. As conflicts over slaves and cattle flared up between Kaabah and Musa Molloh in the late 1880s the British asked both sides to lay down their weapons and renounce slavery. Kaabah’s sister jumped up and asked incredulously how they were supposed to live without war and slavery.<sup>276</sup> Kings addicted to the slave trade by hundreds of years of profitable slavery were not about to renounce their primary form of income and thus cede their sovereignty to the British. Local chiefs and alkalos, on the other hand, were doing just that. In 1888 Musa Jalang, the alkalo of Berefet, begged the British to raise their flag in his town and others in Fogni to ward off the dissolution of his town by warfare. J.R. Griffith

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<sup>274</sup> NRO: CSO 1/142 The Governor to R.L. Antrobus May, 1908.

<sup>275</sup> NRO: CSO 1/112 Lieutenant Trasker to Commander Royle, January 6, 1892.

<sup>276</sup> NRO: CSO 1/106 Acting Administrator to the Governor in Charge, February 20, 1888.

recommended taking control of Brefet because Brimah N’Jie, the Kombo Mansa, was using it as a slave depot. Coley Bah Sabally, king of Cataba on the North Bank, also offered his lands and people to the British in exchange for protection from the marabouts in the same year. In a letter to the governor Sabally wrote, “our belief is in the cultivation of the ground... I and my people would agree to any law that the English put in our country. We know that they hate slavery. We are ready to forsake all that is disagreeable to the English Queen.”<sup>277</sup>

The transition to English rule did not proceed smoothly, nor were all local rulers equally intent on seeking the protection of the British. In Fula Kunda in Sothern Kombo four constables were ambushed by a party of “Joloffs” who fired guns from the bushes. John G. Cole received a cut on his forehead which chipped off a part of his skull without damaging the brain, a bullet through his left elbow joint lodged beneath his muscles, a bullet which penetrated downward on his left leg chipping off a piece of his tibia, a bullet wound on his left ankle which penetrated deeply and divided all the “soft parts” and a large portion of the os calcis (heel bone), two bullet wounds to the left side of his body, a wound through the left nipple below the ribs which passed through the cardiac end of the stomach, out of the duodenum (small intestine), through the edge of the liver and gall bladder, and another through the mid-axillary line slightly above the crest of the illium (hip) which passed through the descending colon and the psoas muscle (lumbar region of the vertebral column) and embedded itself in the spinal column.<sup>278</sup>

Acts of resistance such as killing constables, however, were not enough to change the basic realities of war and peace on The Gambia. In 1889 the British began to draft stock forms for treaties proclaiming the annexation of territory and the establishment of a British protectorate to be signed by Gambian kings and chiefs. As warfare continued on the river the British became increasingly at ease with the prospect of British control of The Gambia. By 1889 the last major threat to British control was Fodey Kaaba. The British demanded that Kaabah stop raiding for slaves in a series of letters back and forth between Kaabah and the governor, but Kaabah, like his sister, was entirely dependent on slavery for his

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<sup>277</sup> NRO: CSO 1/107 Statement of Coley bah Sabally, King of Cataba, May 24, 1888.

<sup>278</sup> NRO: CSO 1/110 Percy John Randall, Colonial Surgeon, December 2, 1889.

wealth and power. In 1888 Fodey Kaabah still referred to G.J. Carter, the Governor of Bathurst, as the “father of the poor and common people.”<sup>279</sup> In fact, he found the imposition of British power as such a reversal of historical trends that “in the country the mouse is catching the cats and the cow eating the lion daily” and lamented the reversal of the long held maxim that the British were sovereign on the Gambia River, but had no power over the land itself.<sup>280</sup> In 1894 Fodey Kaabah was killed.

As the 1890s wore on overt military resistance was crushed by punitive expeditions. The British began to implement a system of indirect rule backed by local chiefs and reliant on the collection of hut taxes. Taxes, in turn, were backed by local courts run by *seyfos* or headmen who had the authority to impose fines and other punishments for failure to pay taxes and other infractions. Industrious head men often saw the courts as personal cash cows and utilized them to raise funds by assigning harsh fines to all sorts of minor infractions. Even the British considered the courts to be too severe and attempted to mollify them with protectorate ordinances meant to reign in the courts. These ordinances were aimed more at the scope of punishment than the reality of punishment by reducing the quantity of fines while preserving the “certainty of punish” (sic) which was meant to deter infractions.<sup>281</sup> To ensure the certainty of punishment *seyfos* and headmen were allowed to employ their own private police force of “badge messengers” to ensure law and order was maintained in their territory. The badge messengers consisted of young men presented with enameled iron badges with Union Jacks on them who had the same authority in the protectorate as a police officer would in the city. Many local leaders promoted their young relatives to badge messengers in an attempt to further extend their power over their districts. Bribes of money or gin quickly became routine ways of deciding court cases.

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<sup>279</sup> Gambia National Records Office (NRO) CSO 23/1 Fodey Kabba.

<sup>280</sup> NRO CSO23/1 Fodey Kabba

<sup>281</sup> NRO: CSO 1/147 Report on Crime in the Colony and Protectorate of The Gambia for the Year 1905.



According to the colonial surgeon, Thomas Pilgrim was a “criminal lunatic” possessed by God, a devil, or both. In 1875 he hit Susan Bookema in the head with a hatchet. He was sentenced to the gaol where he “never slept, only prayed, cursed, sweated, asked for medicine of opium, arsenic, fresh blood, castor oil and oranges,” presumably to purge his bodily impurities. He bit a jailor, tried to kill the colonial surgeon with a razor, ate his own bowel movements, drank his own urine, and heard the Holy Ghost. When asked why he did what he did he declared himself to be “the rampant lion of The Gambia” who would “tear the devils out of bosoms of the people” of The Gambia if he had to “tear their heart and bowels out with them.”

NRO: CSO 1/41 Lunacy of Thomas Pilgrim, T.H. Heney Acting Colonial Surgeon to Captain Cooper, October 9, 1875.

### THE BIRTH OF THE ARCHIVE: 1870S-1900

As the threat from warriors subsided in the late nineteenth century it was accompanied by a dramatic shift in state, merchant, and missionary attitudes. Up to the 1860s Roman Catholic missionaries remained optimistic of the possibility of converting Gambians to Christianity, but in the 1870s this optimism began to degenerate into pessimism and skepticism about their ability to convert Muslims.<sup>282</sup> The gaol, incidentally, finally provided a shed for Muslim ablutions in 1869. Wesleyan missionaries drew no such conclusions and increasingly devoted themselves to conversion and education. If the prospects of securing fewer converts did not discourage the Wesleyans, neither did it cause them to loosen their tight control over membership. Benjamin Tregaskis, who was Chairman and General Superintendent for Sierra Leone District and the Gambia, was well known for actively “weeding” membership.<sup>283</sup> He explained his actions through the trope of criminality. Like any good corrections officer he kept a list of members’ names and the reasons why they were expelled from the mission including violence, adultery, sexual immorality, or conversion to a rival form of Christianity. Not incidentally, he referred to the list as his “crime book.”<sup>284</sup> Even the burning of Wesleyan chapels by Fodey Kaabah and his followers did not dissuade the missionaries who attempted to convert Muslims well into the colonial period.

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<sup>282</sup> Fredericks, 228.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid, 244.

<sup>284</sup> Barbara Pricket. 1969. *Island Base: A History of the Methodist Church of The Gambia, 1821-1969*. Bo (Sierra Leone): Methodist Church Gambia, 112.

The Wesleyan mission also tightened its grip on Gambian ministers. A number of Gambian ministers were dismissed with the most common reason cited being a lack of education, lack of discipline, and improper record keeping while many ministers disappeared from the Wesleyan minutes entirely with no explanation.<sup>285</sup> In 1868 York Clement was ordered to abandon his mission on MacCarthy Island to be re-educated at St. Mary's, John Samuel Joiner was embroiled in a controversy because of the idiosyncratic way he kept accounts and was dismissed in 1890, the willingness of Jeremiah Dalton Johnson to work was questioned and he disappeared from the minutes after 1887, and on and on.<sup>286</sup> In case after case the record number of ministers appointed under the "three-self formula" for increasing the number of Africa ministers were recalled as the church increasingly insisted that the work of the church was indissociable from bureaucratic organization. In the past preachers had been allowed to work independently by a mission that trusted them to minister to local populations. The "three-self" model was designed to create indigenous churches by allowing self-propagating, self-governing, self-supporting individuals to minister among their own people. It is a distinctly Pauline model based on the importance of faith rather than more legalistic interpretations of Christianity. It was believed that the natural charisma of these African preachers would secure the converts the Wesleyans were seeking. In the late 1870s the missions were also subjected to dues imposed by the state in exchange for the privilege of operating in The Gambia. The Catholic mission attempted to evade paying their dues by explaining "our body is composed primarily of natives, not Europeans," but the state insisted that this did not exempt them from their share of the tax burden.<sup>287</sup>

Increasingly, the Wesleyans attempted to routinize the charisma of "native ministers" who were subjected to a bureaucratic regime which attempted to discipline them by privileging record keeping, paperwork, and handing-over-notes. Gambian ministers, it seems, did not see the value of this particular iron cage, but they were not alone. Europeans in the city had also grown accustomed to the freedoms of living in Africa and many resented the imposition of new bureaucratic reforms. In 1883, when a new

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<sup>285</sup> Fredericks, 259.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid, 253-265.

<sup>287</sup> NRO: CSO 1/79 A. Meyer to the Administrator of Bathurst, March 9, 1885.

order book was issued to all police officers, many were upset that the off-the-book privileges claimed by the police had officially been outlawed. Captain Roche refused to follow the order book calling it an “unworthy artifice” and claimed he interpreted the book as an “ordinary liquefaction,” implying he thought the rules to be more fluid than solid.<sup>288</sup>

The missionary case is only one example of an officializing culture which developed as colonialism proper became the law of the land. The charisma of the individual would have to be replaced by the “invention of tradition” backed by an administrative/bureaucratic culture. As Bernard Cohn has pointed out, officializing was based on the definition of space as public or private, the recording of transactions, births, deaths, etc, the licensing of certain activities, the creation of public schools and other civilizing institutions, and the ritualization of procedures which served to reinforce the sovereignty of the nation state.<sup>289</sup> The charisma of any one person, who was subject to death and dishonor, was replaced by a body of documents, institutions, rituals, and discourses which lived on in the form of the nation state regardless of the death which surrounded them. In 1890 the judiciary system of the city, which had existed on a primarily ad hoc basis, decided that a large supply of law books was needed to supply the “necessary machinery” for the proper functioning of the courts. The same year, members of the legislative council were complaining that there were so many records that they had no place to keep them and additional office space would have to be secured to store them.<sup>290</sup> Thus “the archive” was born.

This increasing bureaucratization is also evident in the dealings of the colonial state with Gambian kings, seyfos, and headmen, though efforts were often resisted. In order to pay for public initiatives as groundnut exports dwindled in the 1860s, Governor D’Arcy enforced an excise tax on groundnut farmers in British Kombo in 1863. He was resisted in these efforts and often had to resort to threatening to revoke land leases for farmers who tried to avoid the tax.<sup>291</sup> Gambian peasants would have no problem paying the tax, he reasoned, because they had paid tribute to their kings and queens in the

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<sup>288</sup> NRO: CSO 1/65 T. Carter to the Administrator in Charge of Sierra Leone, May 7, 1883.

<sup>289</sup> Bernard S. Cohn. 1996. *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1.

<sup>290</sup> NRO: PUB 14/11 Minutes of the Legislative Council, 1888-1902, July 18, 1890.

<sup>291</sup> Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D’Arcy to his Grace The Duke of Newcastle 1862, 29.

past. This was an error because local kings demanded tribute in the form of food crops and thatching grass, but not groundnuts.<sup>292</sup> Accordingly, the efforts of Bathurst to impose new taxes on farmers who had never been taxed on their groundnut crop before were resisted. In 1871 an ordinance called for a census of all British subjects in The Gambia which, according to the administration in Bathurst included northern Kombo. The chief and residents of Bakau chased census takers away and refused to be enumerated or listed as British subjects.<sup>293</sup> To agree to have been counted would have been tantamount to becoming subjects. Another instance occurred in 1872 when a man from Bakau drowned and was taken back to Bakau to be buried. When the colonial surgeon backed by a constable demanded the body be exhumed for an autopsy, the alkalo of Bakau informed them that he would not have the Queen's law in Bakau nor would he allow the body to be exhumed and inspected. With one hundred armed men from the community behind him the alkalo taunted that Bathurst was full of women as the constable was forced to retreat.<sup>294</sup> In the end the alkalo of Bakau was arrested when constables carrying carbines and laborers with rocket tubes descended on the village at 2 AM and extracted him under the cover of darkness. A decade after this incident a bill was passed restricting the freedom of coroners to perform autopsies at will. The 1884 legislation mandated that a coroner needed to convene a jury of five in order to view a body or perform an autopsy.<sup>295</sup> The difficulty of convening five jurors from the approved jury list limited the number of autopsies conducted in the colony and quieted down the unrest caused by the penetration of biomedicine into the mortuary politics of Gambians. Only in cases where murder was suspected were autopsies routinely performed until the law was repealed in 1940.

In the city, this new regime of knowledge manifested itself as titles for private property. A process was set up for the claiming of "vacant" lands. Bathurst, the authorities estimated, was filled with vacant lands where no title or dubious titles were held. "The evil" of untitled land, the administration

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<sup>292</sup> Wright, *The World*, 155.

<sup>293</sup> NRO: CSO 1/28 E.A.M. Smith to Henry Fowler, 1871.

<sup>294</sup> NRO: CSO 1/32 Captain Kendall to the Acting Administrator, November 16, 1872.

<sup>295</sup> NRO: CSO 3/311 Memo on prepared changes in the law relating to coroners, 1940.

believed had taken over the cities spaces.<sup>296</sup> This became especially troubling in the case of deaths without legal documents to prove ownership and pass down property. The result was that “primitive ideas” about legal matters allowed “irregularity and uncertainty” to creep into the legal machinery. “Squatters” who had moved onto land and erected houses without titles suddenly became problematic. The chief magistrate suggested that instead of an inquisition, which would call up residents and demand proof of title, the state should first build a case against residents by establishing a *prima facie* basis for removing them from the land by showing occupancy, a lack of rates paid, or unknown ownership.<sup>297</sup> The colonial secretary, however, disagreed with the magistrate and argued that nonpayment of rates was not *prima facie* evidence of a lack of claim to the land. Instead, he argued that the state should look to the promise of future regularity of occupancy and payments once the new terms of occupation had been explained and to respect moral claims to the land in lieu of legal claims. A stronger push for titling was made in 1912 under the aegis of the sanitary authority. The numbering of houses and compounds, it was argued, was necessary for sanitary inspectors to record imperfections in houses, aid the fight against mosquitoes, and identify possible plague spots.<sup>298</sup> In 1917 the administration was still complaining of the unchecked erection of houses, illegal subdivisions, and a lack of control over the city’s living spaces. This trend was exacerbated by the tendency of the large commercial firms to buy up large lots and push out former inhabitants. The firms then pursued reclamation projects which dispossessed the poor and made room for wealthier rate payers forcing them to relocate to vacant lands and erect houses without titles.<sup>299</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Over the greater part of a century Bathurst slowly conquered the Gambia River. Only within the last two decades of the nineteenth century did it become clear to administrators that this would happen. The city was founded partly to combat the slave trade, but primarily to ensure merchants a foothold from which they could conduct their business up the river. Throughout the 1800s, most administrators saw

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<sup>296</sup> NRO: CSO 2/34 Vacant Lands Ordinance 1903.

<sup>297</sup> NRO: CSO Chief Magistrate May 26, 1903.

<sup>298</sup> NRO: CSO 2/181 Bathurst Numbering of Lots and Removal of Encroachments, January 10, 1912.

<sup>299</sup> NRO: CSO 2/237 Extension of Land in Bathurst, Medical Officer of Health to the Land Office, July 10, 1917.

these as their exclusive goals and were primarily interested in perpetuating the life of the city rather than any kind of colonial takeover. Sovereignty, once established, seeks to perpetuate itself first and foremost. And Bathurst did have a kind of sovereignty which it struggled to establish over the course of the century. This sovereignty was based on The Law which it proclaimed within its jurisdiction and the control of bodies therein. Indeed, the earliest conflicts over the control of the city were centered on The Law. The domination of the city's legal apparatus by Sierra Leone and by the merchant class were two main threats to sovereignty in the minds of the earliest administrators.

Another was the grim sovereignty of death. In the beginning, this took the form of the inevitability of death or disease for Europeans on the river. The earliest experiments with white soldiers on the river produced mortality rates so horrific that the entire idea was quickly abandoned, but for the European community which remained, death was never far from their minds. They were reminded constantly of their tenuous lives by their mutinous bodies and distended organs. In the 1850s disease was joined by war and famine. The soninke-marabout wars which began in the 1850s and continued intermittently until the 1880s ravaged whole regions of the river and sent refugees fleeing for their lives. In the city, residents constantly expected an army of marabouts to arrive at their doorstep and wipe them out at any moment. Eventually, autopsies and experimentation led to malaria prophylaxis in the form of quinine which alleviated the impact of disease, though it never eliminated it. The marabouts, on the other hand, were their own worst enemies. The zealotry with which they pursued conquest alienated their neighbors who, looking for a way to safeguard their own lives, began to offer up their territory to the British. Powerful *seyyfos* like Musa Molloh calculated that it was better to live under British rule than continue fighting bloody internecine conflicts which had produced nothing but death for decades. By the 1880s, when the British were ready to contemplate colonial takeover, there was little in the way of effective opposition to them. The most powerful *seyyfos* had either allied with the British or had been ruined by warfare. "Punitive expeditions" against villages which resisted British overrule were relatively one-sided and the conclusion foregone.

As the twentieth century neared, the British finally turned The Gambia into “a nation of laws.” A bureaucratic machine was founded which multiplied with a speed that overwhelmed its opponents. Statutes, codes, and ordinances were pressed down on the newly minted “Gambian people.” The control of the state over life and death, of course, was not relinquished. Rather, it took a step back behind The Law so that the administrator could hide behind the rule of law. Critics of the nation in Africa who are amazed at how durable nation states have been in post-independence Africa despite their “artificiality” have not considered this move nearly enough. Any administrator, dictator, or commandant may be challenged or overthrown, but the rule of law and the sovereignty of the state must, by definition, endure because once they are created we no longer have access to them. To stop believing in them, at this point, seems to be the most terrible option of all. In order to do so, one would have to dethrone life and death as the metric by which we judge political units.

## CHAPTER 2: THE CIRCULATORY SYSTEM: STATE AND CAPITAL 1870S -1930S

In the beginning there was a river. The river became a road and the road branched out to the whole world. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry... The road was endless. One road led to a thousand others, which in turn fed into paths, which fed into dirt tracks, which became streets, which ended in avenues and cul-de-sacs... All the roads seemed to me to have a cruel and infinite imagination. All the roads multiplied, reproducing themselves, subdividing themselves, turning in on themselves, like snakes, tails in their mouths, twisting themselves into labyrinths. The road was the worst hallucination of them all, leading towards home and then away from it, without end, with too many signs, and no directions. Ben Okri *The Famished Road*

The Gambia is only a highway. C.R.M. O'Brien, Acting Governor of The Gambia

Improvements' of towns which accompany the increase of wealth, such as the demolition of badly built districts, the erection of palaces to house banks, warehouses etc., the widening of streets for business traffic, for luxury carriages, for the introduction of tramways, obviously drive the poor away into even worse and more crowded corners.... The antagonistic character of capitalist accumulation, and thus of capitalist property-relations in general, is here so evident.... This evil makes such progress alongside the development of industry, the accumulation of capital and the growth and 'improvement' of towns. -Karl Marx *Capital*

O ye who believe! Devour not usury, doubled and multiplied; but fear God; that ye may (truly) prosper. Quran 3:130

### ARTERIES, CAPILLARIES, AND POWER: AN INTRODUCTION

Foucault's theorization of "capillary power" has inspired mixed reactions among Africanists. By capillary power he referred to that which, like the capillaries of the human circulatory system, penetrated deeply into the body politic. Capillary power works by being unremarkable such that people will discipline themselves and support efforts to discipline others without being cognizant of the fact that discipline is working through them. But is capillary power relevant in colonial Africa? Fanon certainly believed that colonial rule deeply touched the psyches of Africans by forcing them to internalize racial and cultural dichotomies which underpinned a Manichean colonial world. According to Fanon, capillary power in Africa was and was not effective. He argues that colonized peoples internalized notions of their inferiority and inhumanity relative to the colonizer, and yet they clearly knew that they were neither inferior nor less than human.<sup>300</sup> Fanon, the psychiatrist, is able to maintain these two positions, that the

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<sup>300</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth*



psyche of the colonized is ruined by the capillary power of the colonial gaze which pervades their bodies and that they also rejected the full implications of this gaze at the same time.

Fanon is not alone in tracing the ability of the colonial state to touch the deepest recesses of African bodies and souls. More recently, Megan Vaughn, while accepting that colonial states have largely failed to discipline Africans through formal institutions, nevertheless argued that something like capillary power operated through actors such as scientists, medical practitioners, and missionaries who were not a part of, yet were linked inextricably to, the colonial state.<sup>301</sup> These actors introduced powerful new discourses of health and healing which have changed the way that many Africans see their bodies, hygiene and cleanliness, life and death.

Fred Cooper, among others, has challenged the relevance of the capillary notion of power in colonial Africa. Unlike the West, Cooper claimed, capillary power has not worked in Africa because Africans have long recognized colonial attempts to discipline them as illegitimate and thus have not taken the task of disciplining themselves to heart. Instead of capillary power, Cooper suggested that arterial power was the norm. Colonial powers exercised power through well-defined arteries of the law, the courts, the military, and so on. When this power encountered a “blockage” in the form of resistant populations, an “artificial pump” of coercive force was required to keep it flowing.

The Comaroffs have found a more limited use for Foucault. Focusing on “nonconformist” missionaries among the Tswana, the Comaroffs argued that missionaries brought with them a kind of capillary power which introduced key elements of an alien cultural system which they identify as modernity. Seemingly small interventions into the everyday lives of the Tswana people which introduced them to European conceptions of cleanliness, health, architecture (right angles), and so on, allowed modernity to become an unquestioned part of the cultural fabric of the Tswana community. The Comaroffs, however, stopped short of fully endorsing Foucault because they objected to his notion of diffuse power whereby power operates primarily through discourse. Instead, the Comaroffs filtered

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<sup>301</sup> Megan Vaughn. 1991. *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Foucault through Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which accepted that power often operates without overt, coercive force, but insisted that power nevertheless resides with an imperial ruling class who mask their rule through a dominant ideology: in this case, modernity. The Comaroffs favor Gramsci's end game over Foucault's here because Gramsci posits that if the dominant ideology could be clearly identified to the oppressed they would be able to reject it and revolution could become a possibility, whereas Foucault is more skeptical of the possibility that modernity could be unthought and minds decolonized because notions of freedom and revolution are themselves deeply embedded in modernist discourse. For Foucault, there is not necessarily a division between a false consciousness and a true one so much as what *can* be said within a given discourse and what *cannot* be said.

The choice between arterial and capillary power, as the Comaroffs seem to suggest, is a false and impoverishing one. Colonialism did have capillary effects on the everyday habits of Africans throughout the continent and it did, in some ways, reshape world views while also being rejected in some of its forms. Bruno Latour's conception of modernity as the fantasy of modernists is useful here. Unlike the Comaroffs, who seem to take modernity as a measurable thing if only we could count all the right angles, Latour shows how human societies are dense palimpsests consisting of hybrids and chimeras despite the claims of modernity made by colonial reformers and upwardly mobile colonized.<sup>302</sup> Nor are these hybrids the mixture of two pure forms: the African and the European, the traditional and the modern, the savage and the civilized, and so on. Latour, however, also takes issue with postmodernists who see hybrids as floating freely in networks or merely the creation of linguistic play. Instead, Latour sees these hybrids as collective and connected, in a constant circulation which defies classifications, but not political struggle. In other words, the complexity of circulation inherent in modernity and postmodernity is not an invitation to relativism or the abandonment of politics, but the embrace of politics as a collective struggle which includes all.

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<sup>302</sup> Bruno Latour. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

At the intersection of Cooper and Foucault, then, lies the possibility of another way. What Cooper and Foucault both accept, regardless of their differences, is the human circulatory system as a model for power. Reframed in this way, the problem is not choosing arterial or capillary power, but understanding how the two work together to maintain the body politic. There is no body which can be maintained without both arterial and capillary flows. The result of a failure of either arteries or capillaries is the death of the organism. Power not only needs to be pumped out to the body, but it needs to return in order to continue circulating or the organism dies.

Marx's theory of money, it seems, is worth returning to. In the *Grundrisse* Marx discusses "consumptive production" as a model for the ways that producers and consumers become embedded within the same system of flows regardless of their intentions. He likened this to the human body taking in food (consumption) and thus simultaneously producing itself (production).<sup>303</sup> Indeed, Marx described the entire cycle of production, consumption, distribution, and exchange as "circulation." What Marx understood was that power needs to fully circulate in order to renew itself and be born again. Consumption which does not renew production is not consumption at all and vice versa. Contrary to classical economics, Marx posits consumption not as the afterthought of production, but as immediately production itself. While production creates the material to be consumed, consumption simultaneously produces the subject without which production would have no meaning. Production, on the other hand, does not only produce the material to be consumed, but the manner in which it will be consumed. Hunger, Marx argues, "gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail, and tooth." In other words production creates both a material (knives and forks) and a need for the material at the same time. The knives and forks in turn, if we are to accept Marx's insight into commodity fetishism, grow their own brains and emerge as actors and quasi-subjects in society.<sup>304</sup> Whether referring to the human body or society Marx argued that the *process* of circulation itself is the key.

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<sup>303</sup> Karl Marx. *Grundrisse*. Marxists.org.

<sup>304</sup> Marx, *Capital*

In this chapter I will discuss numerous forms of circulation through which, I argue, colonial Gambia was produced. Rather than posit a general, speculative circulation, however, I look at how various circulatory processes were contested. Although it was generally accepted that circulation was necessary, conflict arose as to the relative nature of the circulation. Would it follow well-worn, regulated arterial roads or unleash an unregulated, capillary flow across the city? The state favored the former and capital the latter. Time and time again the state attempted to regulate the flows, to code them, to manage them, and to direct them. Yet the state needed capital to maintain these flows and attempted to walk the line between regulating the flows and alienating capital. Capital, on the other hand, wanted to deregulate the flows and divert them from arterial control. Yet merchants recognized that they needed coercive force in order to do so. They relied on the military, the police, the courts, the gaol, the chiefs, and other state institutions to protect them while they increased the speed of the flows.

#### THE LAWS OF ECONOMICS: MERCHANTS IN THE CITY 1816-1900

European and African merchants, including many from Goree, saw opportunity in Bathurst. British merchants who left Goree in 1814 to live under a British flag included William Waterman; Edward Lloyd, who commanded the Royal Gambia Militia; Charles Johnson, a businessman; Charles Grant, the first commandant of Bathurst; William Forster, of the leading business house Forster and Smith; and Thomas Chown, who passed his business down several generations.<sup>305</sup> A number of African merchants and agents also settled in Bathurst including Thomas Joiner, a Mandinka griot who was enslaved in America, purchased his freedom, and returned to trade first at Goree and later at Bathurst. Joiner became quite wealthy and purchased one of the largest houses in Bathurst.<sup>306</sup> Additionally, a number of signoras from Goree and Saint Louis who had been married to British men left to settle at Bathurst in what became known as “Portuguese Town.” By the nineteenth century on the Senegambian coast “Portuguese” had become a synonym for the offspring of European and African parents and often

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<sup>305</sup> Gray, 309.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid, 310

for occupation as a merchant.<sup>307</sup> Rounding out Bathurst were a small number of liberated Africans and Wesleyan missionaries who preached to them. By the 1870s there were six major British and French firms trading on the Gambia, including Maurel Freres, Maurel and Prom, Bathurst Trading Company Ltd., La Compagnie Francaise de l’Afrique Occidentale, Messrs L. Vezia and Co., Palmine Ltd., and African and Eastern Trading Co. Ltd. Others, like the United Africa Company would arrive later as would a Syrian and Lebanese diaspora following the establishment of the French Mandate of Syria after the First World War. Wealthy African traders such as Henry Richmond Carrol and Messrs Horton Jones and Co. Ltd. did business alongside the European firms.

Since there was no administrative apparatus to speak of shortly after the city was founded, merchants had to serve as sheriffs and magistrates.<sup>308</sup> Between 1816 and 1821 Bathurst was a territory under the control of the Committee of Merchants trading in Africa. The merchants, however, had a great deal more interest and expertise in trade than administration. A *de facto* military commandant ran Bathurst under the orders of Sierra Leone until 1818 when Charles MacCarthy made way for civil government.<sup>309</sup> MacCarthy created a Court of Police and Equity for the trial of minor offences and petty debtors and a Settlement Court that dealt with appeals and held quarter sessions for criminal cases.<sup>310</sup> The Settlement Court was composed of merchants and the chairman was given the title of Mayor. In 1821 an act of Parliament divested the merchants of power and gave administrative authority over The Gambia to Sierra Leone under the British Crown. The Bathurst local courts and administration were abolished and Sierra Leone was placed in charge of the administration of justice. In 1822 and 1824 a Court of Common Pleas and a bench of local justices of the peace were established. Criminal cases, however, could not be tried unless a magistrate from Sierra Leone was present. It was also impossible for Bathurst officials to pass legislation.

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<sup>307</sup> Mark, 105.

<sup>308</sup> Gray, 310.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 316.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid, 321.

In 1829 Major Alexander Findlay became the first Lieutenant Governor of The Gambia and attempted to pass new legislation and alter existing legislation without consultation.<sup>311</sup> Findlay's attempts to carve out a sphere of independence for Bathurst was quickly annulled leaving Bathurst under the control of Sierra Leone. Between 1834 and 1842 local merchants presented numerous petitions, memorials, and presentments to the grand jury at quarter sessions which urged separation from Sierra Leone.<sup>312</sup> The merchants found the issue of justice especially vexing. Bathurst could not appoint judicial or legal officers, and while petty civil and criminal cases could be tried, serious cases waited for the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone to arrive in Bathurst. In 1834 the merchants sent a memorial through Lieutenant Governor Randall asking for a separate judiciary. Given that most cases before the courts involved charges of theft, larceny, or indebtedness, the merchants had a vested interest in an efficient judiciary. The chief justice at Sierra Leone, however, called the request inexpedient. In 1835 the chief justice was informed that there was a full calendar of prisoners, many awaiting trial for months. By the time the chief justice arrived some prisoners had been held for ten months without charges.<sup>313</sup>

In 1830 a few hundred baskets of groundnuts were exported from Bathurst. Not much was made of this new export and it disappeared as an export crop until 1834 when 213 baskets were exported; in 1835 47 tons left Bathurst.<sup>314</sup> (Figure 18) Gambian peasants, responding to a market for the nuts which had first developed in French Senegal, began to produce them en masse and transport them to wharf towns on donkey carts. At the wharf towns groundnuts were kept in small hills where they were bagged and loaded onto cutters which took the nuts to Bathurst.<sup>315</sup> As Donald Wright has shown, the groundnut trade was the beginning of a revolution for states like Niumi which grew and exported peanuts in exchange for firearms and other new commodities which became available to them for the first time.<sup>316</sup> Southorn has also noted that Gambians were highly desirous of the new commodities which became

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<sup>311</sup> Southorn, 159.

<sup>312</sup> Gray 373.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid, 375.

<sup>314</sup> Gray, 380.

<sup>315</sup> Southorn, 187.

<sup>316</sup> Wright, *The World*, 155.

available due to groundnut revenues.<sup>317</sup> Niumi's proximity to Bathurst ensured a great deal of conflict between the Niumi *mansa* and British authorities, but it also meant intimate commercial ties between the peasants of Niumi and the merchants of Bathurst.

After 1835 groundnuts became the primary crop in what was increasingly a monocrop economy in the colony. Rural life became structured around the groundnut cycle. From May to June and July farmers weeded their lands and cleared farms in time for the first rains. From August to October the rains nurtured the newly planted seeds until November when the harvest began. Immediately after the harvest farmers loaded their crops onto the backs of donkeys and marched them to the nearest *secco* or depot in a wharf town where nuts would be bought by Gambian middlemen in order to sell to the merchants in bulk. The trade season lasted between November and April as the *seccos* turned into groundnut pyramids until the last of the donkeys arrived and unloaded their nuts. (Figure 15) In good years the commerce was easy and farmers, middlemen, and merchants made handy profits. In hard times, however, low prices meant that farmers resisted selling to middlemen and middlemen threatened to withhold from the merchants in order to scrape together profits or break even. Dawda Jawara, the first president of The Gambia, remembers this as primarily an aural experience. Each donkey had two bells attached to its neck and these bells, attached to the hundreds of donkeys which descended on the *seccos*, formed "part of the chorale of the opening trade season" and let everyone know that the hungry season was over.<sup>318</sup> Young children played games to see who was brave enough to run up to a donkey and touch their ears.

The unexpected boom in groundnut exports provided a huge boost to Bathurst which was relying on extremely limited funds to maintain the few meager public institutions that existed. Not surprisingly, the profitability of the groundnut trade and the massive amount of nuts exported each year also corresponded to a rise in imprisonment in the gaol. In 1835, 298 prisoners, by far the highest total in the history of the prison, were sentenced to the gaol with 242 being sentenced for misdemeanors.<sup>319</sup> The unprecedented scale of the increase in the nut trade ensured that the unguarded mountains of nuts would

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<sup>317</sup> Southorn, 187.

<sup>318</sup> Dawda K. Jawara. 2009. *Kairaba*. West Sussex: Domtom Publishing Ltd., 24.

<sup>319</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1835, 162.

be tempting. Small farmers and traders, moreover, relied on the quick transit and sale of the nuts and had little interest in storing nuts in guarded warehouses. After 1835 imprisonment rates dropped to between 40 and 75 imprisoned per year until 1840, when between 100 and 190 were imprisoned each year until 1850.<sup>320</sup>

What is surprising, however, is that these rising imprisonment figures did not correspond to the perception that criminality was becoming more widespread. Between 1835 and 1857 there was virtually no reference to crime or criminality by the administrators of Bathurst. As Governor MacDonnell claimed in 1850, the merchant and the trader were the “true pioneers of civilization” who would “penetrate the remotest districts” with their commerce.<sup>321</sup> MacDonnell’s successor, O’Connor, also believed that groundnut exports would civilize Gambia. Governor O’Connor believed that commerce would replace “bloodshed, plunder, and slavery” by teaching Gambians the value of a modern consumption regime.<sup>322</sup> It was also recognized that missionary efforts and those of merchants could be mutually reinforcing. In 1848 Governor MacDonnell praised the Wesleyan mission schools for producing “an increased spirit of order, cleanliness, and subordination amongst the natives” even if it often failed to produce what he considered “educated” pupils.<sup>323</sup> The Church, administrator Berkeley would later claim, had a role to play as the “world’s greatest civilizer and educator.”<sup>324</sup> The administration, in other words, wanted to see disciplined and subordinated Africans without actually creating disciplinary institutions. They also recognized that merchants were desperate to find Africans who could keep accounts and write, but had to rely on the mission schools to produce literate factors, clerks, and traders.<sup>325</sup> In 1856 governor O’Connor cited a consistently improving morality and lauded the lack of serious crimes in the city.<sup>326</sup> A new faith in commerce following the appearance of the groundnut on the scene created the optimism (and profits)

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<sup>320</sup> Gambia Blue Books 1835-1850.

<sup>321</sup> NRO: CSO 1/58 Reports Exhibiting the Past and Present State of Her Majesty’s Colonial Possessions 1850, 201.

<sup>322</sup> NRO: CSO 1/58 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor O’Connor to the Right Honorable Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, Bart 1857, 187.

<sup>323</sup> NRO: CSO 1/58 Reports Exhibiting the Past and Present State of Her Majesty’s Colonial Possessions 1849, 222.

<sup>324</sup> NRO: CSO 1/58 Acting Administrator to the Administrator in charge of Sierra Leone, September 9, 1880.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid, 224.

<sup>326</sup> NRO: CSO 1/58 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor O’Connor to the Right Honorable H. Labouchere, M.P. 1856, 187.



required. Although the administration was often at odds with merchants who avoided paying duties and who pushed their commerce too far upriver, the state nevertheless became convinced that commerce would bring “civilization” to the river with minimal institution building on the part of the state. Civilization would come, O’Connor argued, as “self-interested speculation” created the desire for Western consumer goods and paved the way for missionaries.<sup>327</sup>

Faith in commerce on the part of the state was tied to the expectation that the merchant community would pay their share in the form of duties and taxes. In order to legitimize their commerce, civilizing though it was considered to be, the merchants had to wash their filthy lucre of its corrupting potential by tithing to the state. While praising the merchants, the state simultaneously focused on Bathurst and the volumes of goods which were entering the city without paying customs. The government was specifically concerned about the number of traders from French Senegal who were bypassing Bathurst via Jinnak Creek which runs through Niumi in the North Bank and thus bypasses the mouth of the river controlled by Bathurst. “Bathurst is a creature of statute,” it was noted, “maintained by the requirement that all vessels must enter there inward and outward.”<sup>328</sup> Since the state had never built a wharf, private firms provided their own wharves where they landed their own goods and attempted to avoid the collection of customs. Administrator Gouldsbury decided to build a government wharf where customs could be systematically collected and trade could be regulated.<sup>329</sup> The way that the government built the wharf, however, infuriated the merchants. The state contracted to build the wharf without consulting the Gambian merchant community. In particular, the Gambian unelected members of the Legislative Council, Goddard and Forster, who were both merchants, resented not being consulted before paying for the wharf. The state, they argued, was wasting money “on worthless buildings and expenditure.”<sup>330</sup> The administration’s rejoinder that there were laws to be followed had little effect on merchants complaining about the pace of circulation at the wharf.

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<sup>327</sup> Macbrair, 201.

<sup>328</sup> NRO: CSO 1/145 Anglo-French Convention October 20, 1904.

<sup>329</sup> NRO: CSO 1/48 V. Skipton Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, August 1, 1877.

<sup>330</sup> NRO: PUB 14/1 Minutes of the Legislative Council 1888-1902, May 1986.

In 1879 there was a marked increase in the number and frequency of mail and merchant steamers arriving in Bathurst.<sup>331</sup> The steamers, of course, sided with the merchants and complained of the delays caused by the efforts of customs workers to accurately inventory their ships and impose the proper customs.<sup>332</sup> According to the administration, ships were delayed no more than fifteen minutes while the whole process took place, but some steamers like the British and African Steam Navigation Company protested by not delivering the mail.<sup>333</sup> The problem was that steamers had become accustomed to pay according to the size of the ship and not the amount of cargo it carried so that, in the estimation of customs agents, “no proportion exists between the amounts paid and the quantity of cargo collected or discharged at the port.”<sup>334</sup> To get around customs and duties a market for counterfeit stamps and documents sprang up. The state responded by criminalizing counterfeiting and attaching a six month jail sentence to it. This did not stop counterfeiters and in 1909 it was discovered that none other than the postmaster general of Bathurst was behind the illicit trade in counterfeit stamps in the city.<sup>335</sup>

In 1878 Governor Gouldsbury instructed the merchants to stop complaining and be thankful that they did not have to pay the higher customs charged in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Gold Coast.<sup>336</sup> Indeed, cities like Lagos were supported by large customs duties on imported goods including liquor.<sup>337</sup> The state hoped that a regularized tariff would stimulate local industry which would be able to better compete with more expensive imports. This was exactly what the merchants feared and the reason they protested the Customs and Tariffs Ordinance of 1896 which imposed the most comprehensive duties to date in the city. By 1897 large amounts of merchant goods, especially alcohol, were being held in bond in a government warehouse until the import duties on them were paid.<sup>338</sup> In order to avoid paying a custom on beer the merchants argued that beer was the “food of the poor” and thus a necessity which should not be taxed

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<sup>331</sup> NRO:CSO 1/54 M.A. Berkeley to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone January 31, 1879.

<sup>332</sup> NRO: CSO 1/61 The Administrator to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, July 18, 1881.

<sup>333</sup> NRO: CSO 1/61 The Administrator to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, July 25, 1881.

<sup>334</sup> NRO: CSO 1/91 British and Africa Company Shipping, 8.

<sup>335</sup> NRO: CSO 1/152 William Ward to the Earl of Craven, February 16, 1909.

<sup>336</sup> NRO: CSO 1/52 V. Skipton Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone July 18, 1878.

<sup>337</sup> Laurent Forchard. 2012. “Lagos” in Simon Bekker and Göran Therborn eds.: *Power and Powerlessness: Capital Cities in Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

<sup>338</sup> NRO: PUB 14/11 Minutes of the Legislative Council, 1888-1902, May, 1896.

rather than a luxury good.<sup>339</sup> Gouldsbury was unconvinced. If the poor wanted alcohol, he argued, they could go and drink palm wine which was much cheaper than beer and produced locally rather than imported. Indeed, he rightly noted that the merchants surrendered any pretense of caring for the poor when they supported a tax on local palm wine, but opposed it on imported beer, gin, and rum.<sup>340</sup> Palm wine was taxed for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but in 1898 the duty was abolished.<sup>341</sup> In general, authorities found drunkenness to be a minor problem in the city and considered the 450 gallons of palm wine coming into the city daily a boon for the economy. It causes, they argued, a constant circulation of cash through the city's economy as Bathurst women bought the palm wine from the Jolahs who crossed the Denton Bridge and resold it.<sup>342</sup> The police, for their part, did not make arrests for public intoxication unless it was accompanied by disorderly conduct and they did not interfere with the grog shops in the city.<sup>343</sup> By 1917, when liquor was seen as interfering with the productivity of labor in the city Governor Archer wanted to restrict legal palm wine selling to the market. Archer cited sale in the streets at all hours of the night, sale of palm wine in the main business streets of Wellington and Russel with the laborers and mechanics partaking "immoderately" during work hours, and the "unseemly" behavior of men towards the women who sold the wine.<sup>344</sup> He restricted palm wine sellers to the Albert Market and chased them out of Russell and Wellington Streets where they were "hawking" in the main thoroughfares.<sup>345</sup> Archer was unsuccessful and future administrators tended to agree that palm wine sellers should not be disturbed because it constituted local industry. "Local industry," however, is never merely an economic term in the mouth of the state. By "local industry" administrators meant the civilizing project. The "so called poor" of Bathurst, Gouldsbury argued, were much better off than the poor in civilized countries because anyone willing to farm could eat. In his eyes, life was *too* easy for the poor and taxation was the key to

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<sup>339</sup> NRO: CSO 1/51 V. Skipton Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone March 9, 1878.

<sup>340</sup> NRO: CSO 1/53 V. Skipton Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone April 5, 1878.

<sup>341</sup> NRO: CSO 2/225 Palm Wine Selling Outside the Market.

<sup>342</sup> NRO: CSO 2/225 Palm Wine Selling Outside the Market.

<sup>343</sup> NRO: CSO 2/225 Palm Wine Selling Outside the Market.

<sup>344</sup> NRO: CSO 2/225 Palm Wine Selling Outside the Market.

<sup>345</sup> NRO: CSO 2/225 Palm Wine Selling Outside the Market

combatting “laziness and intoxication” paid for by the “hard working, earnest English taxpayer.”<sup>346</sup> The merchants were primarily useful in the eyes of the state because they provided a means of keeping the local population laboring productively in addition to the taxes they paid. “Local industry,” in turn, was useful because it turned Gambians into property owners and thus rate payers who supported the city.

#### VICIOUS CYCLES AND REVOLVING DOORS: DEBT AND IMPRISONMENT IN BATHURST

As Sandra Berry has argued capitalism in Africa has altered, but not necessarily replaced local systems of exchange and borrowing. Even in the city this is true. In many African cultures debt is not something to be quickly repaid, but is often accumulated as a guarantee of later dependency. Accumulating debt and accumulating dependents were one and the same strategy. In times of need dependents could be called upon to lend their labor or material goods. Social and cultural norms prevented one from abusing indebtedness as a strategy to impoverish one’s neighbors or acquire their land and belongings. For many Africans who came to the city this system persisted. Urban dwellers established relationships with vendors and shopkeepers as well as neighbors which allowed them to incur debt without fear that the debt would be collected mercilessly or, at the very least, they developed strategies for avoiding the most zealous debt collectors. We can see this in the way wealth was described in local idioms. In Mandinka the word for wealth or possessions is *naafuloo* which literally translates as “come twice.” The implication being that wealth comes and wealth also goes; therefore one should moderate their expectations of accumulating wealth or rush to collect debts. Furthermore, the Mandinka word for debt, *juloo*, is also the word for rope and entanglement. The implication being that a debt was a connection or entanglement between people rather than a purely economic relation to be collected as soon as possible. Of course, this conception of debt was severely tested during the era of the Atlantic slave trade as indebtedness quickly became one of the key tributaries feeding enslavement, but the slave trade was primarily in indigenous hands rather than alien institutions such as the courts.

Rather than relying exclusively on the state, the city’s poor also resisted debt collection through other means outside of the political, juridico-legislative system. While “a certain class” of Gambians

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<sup>346</sup> NRO: CSO 1/53 V. Skipton Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone April 5, 1878.

began to trust the court system and bring debtors in front of the magistrates, the poor rarely resolved debts by bringing the debtor to court because they had far less at stake. While the colonial officials read this as local support for crime it was fully consistent with a Gambian ethic of punishment. Gambians would prosecute, it was noted, in cases of larceny where physical property could be returned to them, but almost never for incidents of violence where they would receive no restitution and the only verdict was imprisonment for the offender.<sup>347</sup>

There is a reason the debt collector is among the most reviled figures in African literature. It is the same reason Ramatoulaye of *So Long a Letter* uses the concept of *mirasse* (a fusion of Islamic and Wolof jurisprudence and culture) where someone's assets and debts are counted after their death to assess their liability, in order to reveal her husband's litany of moral transgressions.<sup>348</sup> Although *mirasse* is meant as an economic instrument, Bâ turns it into a moral accounting sheet in what Uzo Esonwanne calls a hybrid product of Islam cross-bred with alien formats.<sup>349</sup> Rather than personal assets and debts, Bâ shows how Modou's debts (and secrets) are part of a complex social web of reproductive, economic, political, and social relations.<sup>350</sup> This invocation of *mirasse* is all the more significant since it represents the appropriation, by a woman, of legal, economic, and moral avenues which were traditionally closed to women. It is in this broader, more encompassing notion of a debt and the roles that gender, ideology, and economy play in reckoning a debt that this section of the chapter will be discussed.

The development of monetary economy and an urban petite bourgeoisie in the city in the nineteenth century, however, did create a class of merchants and traders which was increasingly comfortable with using the colonial legal system to collect debts. For the merchants this was part of a strategy to increase the circulation of money through the economy. The merchants had little use for indebted dependents since they were already buying labor power at near starvation wages. Debt, from a

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<sup>347</sup> NRO: CSO 1/31 J.W. Jackson, Chief Magistrate, Report on Crime in Bathurst, 1872.

<sup>348</sup> Bâ, 9.

<sup>349</sup> Uzo Esonwanne 2007. "Enlightenment Epistemology and 'Aesthetic Cognition': Mariam Bâ's *So Long a Letter*" in Obioma Nnameka ed. *The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity, and Resistance in African Literature*. Routledge: New York, 6.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid, 6.

merchant's perspective, was a blockage of the circulation of the economy. Africans in the city deployed a number of strategies to counter debt collection, especially by refusing to use the courts to collect debt and avoiding debt collection by remaining invisible and anonymous to debt collectors. In the late nineteenth century they also found a ready ally in the colonial state which, by the 1860s, was becoming increasingly wary of the tendency of The Gambia's merchants to act as a destabilizing force in the city and on the river.

In 1869 the English Debtors' Act banned imprisonment for debt except in the case of debtors who could afford, but refused, to pay. Even in these cases, imprisonment was limited to six weeks. In 1873 an indebted prisoner in Bathurst wrote a letter to the *African Times* asking why Bathurst merchants were selling goods for inflated prices and filling the gaol with debtors. He advocated for the extension of the English Debtors' Act to Bathurst. Following this letter to the *Times* Gambian administrators and judicial officials began the process of abolishing imprisonment for debt in the city.<sup>351</sup> Their motives were not entirely altruistic. Prison officials joined in advocating for the abolition of imprisonment for debt because they were concerned with the overcrowded state of the gaol as much as the injustice done to debtors.<sup>352</sup> The lack of space in the prison ensured a "revolving door" system of short sentences which kept the prison population in constant circulation. According to one prison official upon release ex-convicts secured "some Ju-Ju hoping not to be caught the second time...which doesn't always come off and back to prison they go."<sup>353</sup> To prison officials this was hardly conducive of a regime of disciplinary labor aimed at the reformation of African bodies. Additionally, the state was hardly interested in subsidizing the merchants' bottom line and incurring the cost of feeding debtors in the gaol. The chief magistrate of The Gambia also held the opinion that imprisonment for debt was an anachronism which had no place in Bathurst and, with the support of the administration, passed a Debtor's Ordinance which banned imprisonment for debt in The Gambia in 1873.

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<sup>351</sup> NRO: CSO 1/36 Ordinance for the Abolition of Imprisonment for Debt and for the Punishment of Fraudulent Debtors 1873.

<sup>352</sup> NRO: CSO 1/63 Lord Carnavon to Governor Berkely, April 10, 1874.

<sup>353</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report, 1946, 3.

Merchants began their attempts to repeal the Debtors Ordinance almost immediately, but were unsuccessful throughout the 1870s. They petitioned the state directly, complaining that Gambians were incurring debts with impunity, but the state was unconvinced. In the 1880s the merchants recalibrated their efforts and adopted a more insurgent strategy. In 1882 persons unknown obtained a copy of the Debtors Ordinance, amended it without permission to allow for the imprisonment of debtors again, sent the forgery to England to be printed, had the copies forwarded to Bathurst, and distributed them as if they were the law.<sup>354</sup> The ruse was quickly discovered once the amended copies were circulated, but nevertheless it provided the push the merchants needed to coalesce efforts against the debtors ordinance. The simulacra of a bill seemed to be enough to muddle the clarity of the law for long enough to allow the merchants to seize on the chaos and re-impose their will over the courts. By 1883 the Chief magistrate warned Governor Gouldsbury that debtors were regularly being convicted in the courts again. Since the ordinance allowed for imprisonment if the defendant had the ability to pay and refused, merchants shifted their efforts to proving that debtors could pay, but were dissimulating. In fact, according to the Chief Magistrate, when the poor were brought before the court they were often convicted, while so-called “respectable” debtors were often acquitted by juries of other “respectable” citizens.<sup>355</sup> Precisely those who had the least ability to repay their debts were being imprisoned. The juries, composed primarily of traders and clerks due to restrictive regulations which limited jury service to rate paying property owners, were controlling the outcomes of the courts. Despite the ongoing *de facto* conviction of debtors, the merchants continued to petition for the repeal of the debtors ordinance, claiming it seriously hampered trade and created “a class of loafers.”<sup>356</sup> This, of course, was a direct appeal to the state using its own language about the supposed laziness and indolence of Africans in the city. The merchants attempted to position themselves as allies of the state in the disciplinary project of setting African bodies to labor.

The zealotry of debt collection by the merchants in the 1870s and 80s had an especially acute impact on the large population of female property owners in the city. In 1883 property owning residents

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<sup>354</sup> NRO: NRO: CSO 1/63 Mr. Smith Chief Magistrate to V. Skipton Gouldsbury, August 12, 1882.

<sup>355</sup> NRO: CSO 1/63 Mr. Smith Chief Magistrate to V. Skipton Gouldsbury, June 2, 1883.

<sup>356</sup> NRO: CSO 1/105 Chase Walcott Barrister at Law to The Right Honorable Sir J.J. Holland January 19, 1888.

of Bathurst, mostly women, petitioned the administrator asking for a bill to protect women's property from being usurped by merchants in order to collect their husbands' debts.<sup>357</sup> The demand for an ordinance to protect the property of women was, in the language of the petition, due to the fact that "many women here, through industry and thrift, have property, but are at the mercy of their 'reckless and dissipated' husbands."<sup>358</sup> According to the petitioners, men in Bathurst were deeply involved in what Sasha Newell has recently termed "the modernity bluff": the acquisition of imported consumer goods to present oneself as modern in order to attract actual opportunities.<sup>359</sup> When the modernity bluff failed the burden of the debt fell on wives and merchants had no qualms about seizing property belonging to women to recover the debts of their husbands.

The petition which Bathurst property owners sent to Governor Gouldsbury used the language of the state by claiming that the women were industrious and thrifty while lambasting men as lazy spendthrifts and thus calling upon the state to recognize its own logic and come to the aid of female property owners. In the past Gouldsbury had consistently praised women as the backbone of the economy. His resistance to the palm wine tax was largely because he believed it would hurt Jolah women who were the chief sellers of palm wine and Bathurst women who acted as middlemen.<sup>360</sup> Women, he noted, also did much of the loading and unloading of nuts at Bathurst's wharves and were generally "the most hardworking and thrifty" people in the city.<sup>361</sup> Unlike men living in the city, who often refused to sell their labor, many women had come specifically to earn capital, either to become property owners in the city or bring wealth back to their rural families. Many women also adopted strategies to limit the circulation of debt by investing in cloth which, unlike money, could be held as an investment rather than reentering the market.<sup>362</sup> Indeed, Gouldsbury frequently complained that he could not force men in the city to work while praising the industrial qualities of Bathurst women who consistently set their bodies in

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<sup>357</sup> NRO: CSO 1/65 Residents of Bathurst Petition to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, January 27, 1883.

<sup>358</sup> NRO: CSO 1/65 Residents of Bathurst Petition to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, January 27, 1883.

<sup>359</sup> Sasha Newell. 2012. *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte D'Ivoire*.

<sup>360</sup> NRO: CSO 1/53 V.S. Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, April 5, 1878.

<sup>361</sup> NRO: CSO 1/56 V.S. Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, November 17, 1879.

<sup>362</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2608 Meals for Workers



industrial motion. He was especially frustrated by skilled laborers in general and masons in particular whose labor was in great demand, but whose salaries allowed them to refuse their labor if they wanted.<sup>363</sup> Young men wanted wages to supplement the patriarchal privileges they already enjoyed vis-à-vis women, but they did not want to become obedient workers. Women, on the other hand, had to battle a lack of capital as well as patriarchy, which necessitated more labor on their part if they were to become independent property owners or businesspeople.

Since Gouldsbury supported the women's property bill he appointed the chief magistrate of the colony to write the legislation, but the merchants put up every roadblock possible to these proposals and the women's property bill languished for years before any action was taken on it. By 1884 Gouldsbury had left the Gambia. His successor, Governor Moloney, and his Queen's Advocate, J. Ronner Maxwell, revived the bill claiming it would equalize the status of all adult women and "do justice to a large industrial class."<sup>364</sup> Maxwell criticized the judiciary system in Bathurst as "calculated to bring about a defeasance of justice and equity" due to the fact that it was under the control of the merchants and traders.<sup>365</sup> In a direct criticism of the merchant influence over the courts Maxwell argued that he would like to be remembered as the justice who "found law dear and left it cheap; found it a sealed book, left it an open letter; found it in the patrimony of the rich, left it the inheritance of the poor; found it the two edged sword of craft and oppression, left it the staff of honesty and the shield of innocence."<sup>366</sup> Here Maxwell deliberately conflates the long history of the battle for judiciary independence in England, where the judicial system was slowly decoupled from the direct control of the crown and moneyed interests over time, with the realities of liberating Bathurst's judiciary from merchant control.

In 1885 the antagonism between the judiciary and the merchants was joined by the churches. Since the property bill revolved around the issue of marriage and the rights of men and women within the institution of marriage, members of the Christian denominations were invited to comment on the bill and

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<sup>363</sup> NRO: CSO 1/64 V.S. Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, December 4, 1882.

<sup>364</sup> NRO: CSO 1/80 J. Ronner Maxwell Queen's Advocate to the Administrator, July 21, 1885.

<sup>365</sup> NRO: CSO 1/72 J. Ronner Maxwell Queen's Advocate to A. Maloney Administrator, September 30, 1884.

<sup>366</sup> NRO: CSO 1/72 J. Ronner Maxwell Queen's Advocate to A. Maloney Administrator, September 30, 1884

its implications for marriage in the colony. Representatives of the churches were all opposed to the bill. The Wesleyans claimed it was unnecessary, the Catholics that it would do no good for women, and the Anglicans that it would promote immorality among the city's women.<sup>367</sup> Women, the Anglican Chaplain argued, were more than happy to pay for their husbands' debts to the merchants. The real problem, he posited, was that women were taking advantage of their husbands by sinning with white merchants who pay their rents in exchange for sex.<sup>368</sup> Thus, these women were really looking to protect their property legally so they could engage in all manner of sinful behaviors without fear of losing it.

Despite the objections of the churches and merchants the bill was written in 1885. It included provisions for the legal equality of single and married women, the right to keep separate earnings and hold separate property for married women, the right to seek civil remedy against a spendthrift husband, and guidelines for dual responsibility for shared property and children.<sup>369</sup> Finally, after three more years of foot dragging, the bill was passed in 1888. The success of the bill has a lot to do with its early date. After the establishment of colonialism proper in The Gambia, the administration handed over the jurisdiction of property within marriage to "customary" law. As Tabitha Kanogo has shown, once customary law was established the colonial state became highly resistant to interference in matters which were under the jurisdiction of "native" courts or "Mohammedan" tribunals even if some administrators resented "tribal" restrictions on individual liberties.<sup>370</sup>

#### REVOLUTION, DISCIPLINE, AND PUNISHMENT: THE GAOL 1857-1900

Gambians, like most Africans, believe in imprisonment as a means of reform. Prisons, of course, are not designed to provide any kind of restitution to the victims of crime. Although the poor were the most indebted and the most likely to be imprisoned they were the least likely to bring someone else before the courts in order to recover a debt. The working class poor of the city simply wanted to be modern, urban people who consumed modern consumer goods. In order to ensure that those who were convicted

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<sup>367</sup> NRO: CSO 1/80 Administrator to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, July 18, 1885.

<sup>368</sup> NRO: CSO 1/80 G. Nicol Chaplain to Administrator Maloney, July 14, 1885.

<sup>369</sup> NRO: CSO 1/82 An Ordinance to Amend the Law Relating to the Property of Married Women 1885.

<sup>370</sup> Tabitha Kanogo. 2005. *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950*. James Curry: Oxford 16.

of crimes were forced to “turn inwards” inside the prison, O’Conner asked for a treadwheel to be sent to the prison in 1857 so that the “regular, constant exertion in private” on the wheel would reform prisoners.<sup>371</sup>

The treadwheel has a long history in Western society. It was first introduced to harness the power of Greek and Roman slaves, but it disappeared as an institution until it reemerged in plantation colonies such as Jamaica and in 1818 Sir William Cubbit reintroduced it to the prisons of England.<sup>372</sup> Karl Marx wrote of the treadwheel’s widespread reintroduction that it meant the return of barbarism within civilization. He further compared the use of the treadwheel in prisons to the general devaluation of labor itself under the capitalist mode of production.<sup>373</sup> Both the treadwheel and the factory, for Marx, “deadens both mind and body” with repetitive, endless drudgery until the human body gives out.<sup>374</sup> The state, however, believed the opposite. That the sustained, regular exertion of the wheel would reform bodies and minds by putting them into circulation and forcing Gambians to reinvent their selves as disciplined citizens. In other words, to make an African body into an ouroboros who, through circular motion, devours himself and, in the process, undergoes a rebirth. This rebirth is the birth of the modern, industrious, individualized, private, bourgeois, subject of history resurrected from the death of social man defined by his ties to a community.

The key was the circularity of the labor. In the Bathurst gaol it took 15 men or so to set the wheel into circulation, at which point the prisoners had to run on the wheel for 7 ½ minutes or until they fell off. Unlike hard labor on public works, there seemed to be no productive benefit to the labor, but what prison officials were hoping to produce was reformed bodies used to regular, routinized exertion. On the treadwheel, of course, one exerted oneself without actual motion in space or any notion of external

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<sup>371</sup> NRO: CSO 1/82 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor O’Connor to the Right Honorable Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, Bart 1857, 182.

<sup>372</sup> John Bellamy Foster. 2005. “The Treadmill of Accumulation : Schnaiberg’s Environment and Marxian Political Economy” *Organization Environment* 18, (7).

<sup>373</sup> Karl Marx. 1974. *Early Writings*. New York: Vintage.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

progress. It was the circulation of the wheel itself which was the goal of the labor and which was meant to reform the prisoner. The progress was meant to be internal and invisible rather than external.

After O'Connor the treadmill fell out of favor among Bathurst administrators who did not see the necessity of such an unpopular punishment until the late 1860s when the administration feared that prisoners in the gaol were not being punished sufficiently to deter them. The state had become increasingly concerned about the working class poor of the city and critical of their inactivity, criminality, and indebtedness. The prison became conceived of as a place to teach them the "regularity and temperance of the soldier." In 1866 Charles Patey became administrator of The Gambia. Although he noted that there were "sober and industrious" residents of Bathurst he warned of "the vices of civilization" such as a lack of industry, indebtedness, carelessness, improvidence, lying, thieving, and "addiction to intemperance" which he saw as rampant in the city.<sup>375</sup> In 1868 the Administrator in Chief of the West African Settlements wrote to Patey to ask why the treadmill was no longer being operated in the gaol.<sup>376</sup> Patey reintroduced the treadmill and shot drill, which were being used only as punishments, and applied them indiscriminately for two half hour intervals each day from 9:30 to 10 and 4:30 to 5.<sup>377</sup> Patey was especially impressed by the treadmill.

Patey's rule of the gaol was seen as so brutal that even the Bathurst merchants opposed it. Prisoners resisted the treadmill by hanging from the top rail so that their legs and feet were hit and badly bruised until they were admitted to the sick ward for a few days and thus excused from labor.<sup>378</sup> In 1869, after a prisoner died shortly after treadmill exercise, the colonial Secretary received a petition from the merchants and inhabitants of Bathurst calling for an end to Patey's cruel treatment of the African prisoners.<sup>379</sup> The evidence given by the gaoler, the head turnkey, and the colonial surgeon supported the

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<sup>375</sup> NRO: CSO 1/15 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor A.E. Kennedy, C.B. to his Grace the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos 1867, 17.

<sup>376</sup> NRO: CSO 1/15 Administrator in Chief of the West African Settlements to the Governor of The Gambia, January 30, 1868.

<sup>377</sup> NRO: CSO 1/15 Charles Patey to Sir. Arthur Kennedy, July 2, 1869.

<sup>378</sup> NRO: CSO 1/15 Copy of a Dispatch from Officer Administering the Government to Sir Arthur E. Kennedy, C.B. 1870, 66.

<sup>379</sup> "Gambia: Prisoners in Bathurst Gaol Observations" *HC Deb* 198 (1869), 1048.

claims of the petition. The evidence provided by the colonial surgeon and gaoler are worth quoting at length:

Admiral Patey regulated the hard labour without reference to the sheriff or the visiting justices... The prisoners had two meals in the day, namely, some boiled rice at ten o'clock, and a very small allowance of bread and meat at five o'clock. But the food was stated by the surgeons to be insufficient, and was far below that given to prisoners in any well-managed gaol. However, they had their second meal at five o'clock, and were then locked up in their cells. At about half-past five the next morning they were woke up, and went to work. They were at hard labour from that time until they came in at half past nine, having then been 16½- hours without food, and even then they were not allowed to go to their breakfast, but were put to shot drill for half-an-hour... It was done in a circle. The men were marched round, at each four paces putting down and taking up a ball and carrying it. The shot was a 24-pounder. At first," said the gaoler, "we had only 18-pounders, but Admiral Patey said they were too light, and caused us to get 24-pounders. The prisoners marched round, putting down and taking up the balls continuously during the drill... After the shot drill was over the men were at length allowed to go to their breakfast of plain boiled rice. They were then sent to work again until half-past four, and were then put upon the treadmill, and the gaoler said there is no board on our treadmill on which a prisoner can rest if tired, and if he relaxes he would fall down... Sometimes they do fall down. This happens frequently. When some drop down I put on others... On the treadmill the prisoners fall down sweating, appearing very much tired. All prisoners sentenced to hard labour are put to shot drill and treadmill without distinction and without reference to their offences. The cook and hospital attendant have to go. My orders are to put any prisoners sentenced to hard labour to shot drill and treadmill. If a prisoner is sentenced to seven days hard labour in default of payment or a fine, he is treated the same as a felon. The prisoners are put to hard labour as I have described it without any examination of their physical fitness."<sup>380</sup>

When Patey left Bathurst, the gaoler and surgeon discontinued the use of shot drill and the treadwheel, but upon his return they were reinstated along with hard labor. Wheel or shot labor, as opposed to public works, could be directly supervised by the administrator's gaze to ensure the regular and constant circulation of the prisoner's body. Public works, on the other hand, could be resisted by work slowdowns, refusal to work, feigning illness, and so on. Indeed, many of the public works drivers allowed prisoners to disappear and visit their friends and family on the outside when they were supposed to be laboring.

The Colonial Office, upon investigation of Patey, concluded that he had not introduced any unorthodox or improper punishments, as the shot drill and treadwheel were widely accepted in England at the time, but that Patey had failed to account for the tropical climate of Bathurst and the conditions of individual prisoners before subjecting them to labor.<sup>381</sup> Not only that, but Patey was praised for his

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid, 1050.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid, 1052.

conduct during the outbreak of cholera in the late 1860s. During the outbreak Admiral Patey buried the dead with his own hands and “went about among the suffering, and did all that lay in their power to relieve them.” Surely, it was concluded, Patey could not be the inhuman character his detractors in the gaol alleged him to be.<sup>382</sup> In the end, the Under Secretary William Monsell concluded that the conditions at the gaol were the unavoidable result of holding settlements on the West African Coast. It would be better, he argued, to abandon the British settlements on the coast, which were no longer necessary to suppress the slave trade. The settlements, he argued, would not suffer if the British left and the British would also free themselves of situations which were “far more to barbarize the Europeans than it was to civilize the natives.”<sup>383</sup> The Honorable Andrew Johnston argued that “we should not give up our protection and our influence over the native races, and in doing so abandon some of the most glorious traditions of the British Empire” because of a scandal.<sup>384</sup> The colonial surgeon who reported Patey, on the other hand, was scolded for directly criticizing Patey when there were so few whites in the colony because the “savage and semi-savage” Africans might get the wrong ideas about the authority of white men if they criticized each other in public.<sup>385</sup>

Alexander Bravo, the administrator after Patey, believed that the shot drill and treadmill should be abandoned except as punishment and that prisoners should be put to work on public works projects which desperately needed completing instead.<sup>386</sup> In fact, Bravo attempted to eliminate the use of the shot and tread from the gaol, but when officials in the metropole learned of this decision the Earl of Granville demanded that he reinstitute them.<sup>387</sup> Bravo felt that since the cost of keeping prisoners in the gaol had, by this time, outstripped the ability of the state to pay for them and free labor on public works could have helped to recoup losses.<sup>388</sup> The response was that the English Prisons Act of 1865 made it clear that all

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> NRO: CSO 1/24 Copy of a Dispatch from Officer Administering the Government to Sir Arthur E. Kennedy, C.B. 1870, 66.

<sup>386</sup> NRO: CSO 1/15 Alexander Bravo to Sir Arthur Kennedy, January 15, 1870.

<sup>387</sup> NRO: CSO 1/24 The Administrator to Sir Arthur Kennedy, Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, July 20, 1870.

<sup>388</sup> NRO: CSO 1/24 Henry Anton to Sir Arthur Kennedy, Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, October 11, 1870.

English gaols should be as uniform as possible and not subject to the whims of local administrators. The Prison Act of 1865 strongly deemphasized the redemptive role of work and religion in the gaol and replaced it with non-productive penal labor like the treadmill and shot drill to create disciplined subjects. Although the treadmill became a political impossibility after Patey, the shot drill remained at the core of the prison's disciplinary project well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1880s prisoners were subjected to two hours of shot drill labor every day and by 1904 shot drill had increased to three hours.<sup>389</sup> The labor itself is inherently non-productive and regulated. It also removed any distinctions of rank or ability among the imprisoned. A skilled laborer and casual laborer had to perform the same repetitive tasks over and over again. It was a reminder that regardless of one's status on the outside a prisoner was a prisoner in the eyes of the state. A heavy stone or ball is carried, picked up, put down, and often ends where it began. All the while a warder will observe the prisoners to ensure they carry the ball when they are supposed to, do not drop it prematurely, and do not deviate from the ordered stations or the time schedule. At least six types of shot drill labor were practiced in the gaol. (See ) Depending on the difficulty desired by the gaoler more or less strenuous options were available. The drill, like the treadmill, was meant to teach prisoners the value of routine, repetition, constant exertion along a strictly defined, usually circular path, under the authority of the warders to oversee and direct labor. By the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century contradictory processes were taking place in the gaol. On one hand, shot drill was consuming three hours per day of prison labor. On the other, the preconditions for shifting labor outside of the gaol onto public works were laid as the requirements for working outside were reduced from prisoners who had served 2/3 of their sentences to anyone sentenced to more than 14 days.<sup>390</sup> Not until the early 1930s, when prison labor on public works began in earnest, was the shot drill formally abolished.

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<sup>389</sup> NRO: CSO 1.70 Valerius Skipton Gouldsbury to the Administrator in Charge of Sierra Leone, February 25, 1884. NRO: CSO 1/146 Joseph Brown, Inspector of Prisons to the Secretary of State, June 19, 1904.

<sup>390</sup> NRO: CSO 1/146 Joseph Brown, Inspector of Prisons to the Secretary of State, June 19, 1904.

## WARRIOR KINGS AND CAPITAL

In the 1870s merchants were increasingly frustrated by the losses they incurred when their goods were seized upriver. They petitioned the state constantly for protection. Although administrators shared a negative view of warrior kings upriver, they had no desire to expend the men and money they did not have to protect upriver trade. The state, they argued, had done more than enough by establishing control of the river between Bathurst and McCarthy Island. Any trader who went above McCarthy, the state warned, did so at their own risk. Warnings were posted prominently around the city that any trader working upriver took the risk upon themselves and should not expect help or protection from the state. (figure 14) Merchants, however, continued sending traders upriver and reacting with horror when their goods were seized. The merchants calculated that if they continued to push upriver the state would eventually have to accede and back their endeavors militarily. Despite repeated warnings that the state would not protect or seek remuneration for trade above McCarthy Island, traders continued to push the circulation of trade as far as they could. Not only did the merchants want protection, they wanted the state to provide subsidies for the most powerful headmen and kings so that merchants would no longer have to give presents to headmen in exchange for the permission to trade.<sup>391</sup> In 1876, when the Badibu mansa began demanding payments from each ship passing through his territory, as had been the custom before yearly subsidies were paid to kings by the state, the merchants simply asked that the administration increase the size of his subsidy so they would not have to incur the costs of their trade upriver.

It was not only that the state recognized its own weakness and the tenuousness of its hold in Bathurst. As much as the actions of Gambian warrior kings troubled the state, administrators also surmised that very few traders upriver were not dealing in slaves decades after the Atlantic Slave Trade had been abolished.<sup>392</sup> Though acting on behalf of the big firms, traders upriver were essentially in charge of their own commerce. In order to pay back the merchants for the goods they had been advanced traders needed to maximize their profits and the trade in slaves was as highly profitable a trade as any on the

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<sup>391</sup> NRO: CSO 1/42 H.T.M. Cooper to Samuel Rowe Lieutenant Governor of Sierra Leone, February 2, 1876.

<sup>392</sup> NRO: CSO 1/42 H.T.M. Cooper to Samuel Rowe Lieutenant Governor of Sierra Leone, February 2, 1876.



river. When traders were brought to court on charges of slave dealing most were dismissed due to “want of jurisdiction” because the British had never agreed to protect Africans who were not “British subjects.” Intervening on behalf of the traders without first abolishing the slave trade would place the British government in the awkward position of militarily supporting the trade. In 1834 Kemintang, the Tendebe *mansa*, accused the Bathurst merchant Salim Jobati of carrying off several of his people as slaves.<sup>393</sup> Jobati escaped, but Kemintang seized the schooner of Bathurst merchant William Goddard and held it until Jobati was captured and delivered to Kemintang. The colonial secretary had to intervene and called for the surrender of Jobati. He also warned Bathurst merchants not to continue conducting the slave trade upriver, though he had little power to enforce his interdiction. The merchants were incensed by this and they convinced Lieutenant-Governor Rendall to ask two naval officers for assistance. Both refused. In their place he sent an officer of Bathurst upriver to demand restitution from Kemintang who likewise refused. To defuse the situation and avoid war Rendall and the merchants agreed that all merchants would withdraw from the upper river for their own safety and declared a trade embargo for any location above MacCarthy Island.<sup>394</sup> After the Wuli *mansa* declared war on Kemintang, he finally decided to send messengers to Bathurst to offer restitution in order to seek British aid in the conflict, but no terms were reached.

Instead, Rendall decided the time was right to launch an expedition against Kemintang to teach him a lesson. The expedition was, however, a poorly managed and executed disaster. The African Corps and MacCarthy Island militia were unable to make a fifteen mile inland march from a small creek where they were forced to abandon their boats. Before reaching Kemintang’s stockade at Dungassen they aborted the mission and left two cannons behind which Kemintang seized and mounted on his fortress as symbols of his prestige.<sup>395</sup> Kemintang was not cowed. In 1841 he waged war on nearby Kataba. Lieutenant-Governor Huntley wanted to intervene to help protect Kataba who had asked for British assistance and signed a treaty of commerce with them. The Colonial Office, however, quickly reduced the

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<sup>393</sup> Gray, 354.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid, 355.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid, 356.

scope of Bathurst's action by prohibiting any treaty or agreement which would force Britain to provide military aid to any African chief or assume the right of sovereignty or protection over any African soil or waterways.<sup>396</sup>

Military aid to Kataba was withdrawn and several other treaties were cancelled before completion. Fodey Kaabah was one such king for whom the possibility of violent retribution failed to stop his aspirations for empire building. In 1872 he targeted traders at Fattatenda and seized their property much to the dismay of the merchants. Also in 1872 the people of Jaroonka attacked the merchant community seizing their goods. They told the collector of customs that "they did not live on British ground and did not care a straw for the British government, that they did not recognize or respect that rag (the Union Jack) in the least."<sup>397</sup> The merchants were slightly less outraged the next year when the Bathurst administration imposed a new tax on shipping "without ordinance or law," arrested a ship captain, and seized his property.

In the 1870s, as power shifted decisively to the marabouts in Kombo and upriver, the merchants felt increasingly vulnerable. Although they reckoned that most marabouts would not disturb trade because they also wanted access to commercial markets, the merchants feared that the political goals of the marabouts might trump their economic ones. Indeed, there were prominent marabouts who refused the usual presents from merchants in exchange for acquiescence to their presence on the river.<sup>398</sup> In 1888 the Acting Administrator of The Gambia visited the new alkalo of Albreda to impress upon him the "advantages arising from labour and cultivation, the necessity for obedience to properly constituted authority, and the success which invariably attended a wise and just exercise of power."<sup>399</sup> The merchants were also unconvinced that treaties with the new marabout kings would be effective and increasingly pushed for punitive expeditions after the fact as the only redress for offences against traders upriver. In fact, the administration was able to sign a peace treaty with the marabouts of Gunjur which ensured the

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid, 371.

<sup>397</sup> NRO: CSO 1/33 J.J. Kendall, Collector of Customs to H.J.M. Cooper, December 14, 1872.

<sup>398</sup> NRO: CSO 1/31 B. Tanner to the Administrator, April 11, 1872.

<sup>399</sup> NRO: CSO 1/105 Acting Administrator to the Governor in Charge, January 26, 1888.

protection of British subjects and prevented open war between Bathurst and Gunjur, but it contained no provisions for “keeping the roads safe and free for general trade” and circulation.<sup>400</sup>

Some kings even began speaking the language of capital in order to justify their conquests. Bakary Sando, the Bondou Mansa, justified a plan to attack Kassalang by claiming that it would be “in the interest of general trade” because he and his people loved British goods and would ensure the safety of British traders in the upper river such that “No British trader should be molested not one tobacco leaf stolen.”<sup>401</sup> By 1880 even Fodey Kaabah was speaking the same language. After years of plundering merchant stores Kaabah redefined his mission as a holy one and claimed that he was determined to convert the Jolahs to Islam, but he would not touch any white man’s property in the process.

For the state the limits of order were always linked to the control of a demarcated territory. For the merchants, circulation transcended territorial limits. When the Fattatenda Mansa flogged traders, charged high tariffs, and refused to protect merchant stores, the state saw it as outside of their jurisdiction. The merchants did not agree. Thus the merchants continually appealed to the state to become the militarized arm of capital. The state was rightfully fearful of the *marabout* armies which were sweeping the country and which, they recognized, could easily sweep them out of Bathurst. Merchants tried to allay these fears by stressing the civilizing power of trade and the benefits that would accrue to the metropole. “With moderate assistance and protection,” one merchant wrote, “the merchants and traders in their endeavor to keep the river open a great highway could be developed to central Africa forming an important outlet for British manufacturers.”<sup>402</sup> When these arguments failed to convince the administration merchants began asking for permission to arm their trade vessels, build forts upriver with the permission of local authorities, and maintain a mercenary force of armed fighting men at their own expense.<sup>403</sup> This, not incidentally, would have been a virtual return to the conditions which fostered the slave trade when merchants on the river armed and maintained factories. The merchants believed that

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<sup>400</sup> NRO: CSO 1/42 V. Skipton Gouldsbury to Samuel Row, the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, October 30, 1877.

<sup>401</sup> NRO: CSO 1/58 V.S. Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, January 1, 1880.

<sup>402</sup> NRO: CSO 1/50 Lintoth Spink to Earl Carnavon March 17, 1877.

<sup>403</sup> NRO: CSO 1/52 V. Skipton Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone July 18, 1878.

maintaining such a force would allow them to deter attacks on their goods in the same way that the justice system deterred crime. The Chamber of Commerce, representing the merchants, argued “the only way to deal with the small African chiefs is to punish them and for them to expect punishment every time they go marauding.”<sup>404</sup> The similarity to Foucault’s description of modern penology is striking. Penal reformers believed that “punishment is to present itself to the mind as soon as one thinks of committing a crime, as immediate a link as possible must be made between the two.”<sup>405</sup>

#### THE MEASURE OF COMMERCE: NUTS AND CURRENCY 1870S- 1930S

By the 1870s merchants had grown tired of the “bushel” system of measuring groundnuts which was based on local bushel baskets. (Figure 20) The problem was that the contents of one basket could vary from the next depending on how it was packed and how the nuts were sitting. Instead the merchants introduced groundnut measures and scales. Groundnut sellers realized that this put them at a disadvantage. Previously they had controlled the bushel measure and now the scale measure belonged to the merchant who could easily manipulate the scales in his favor. It was not long before sellers began smashing scales and refusing to sell except by the bushel.<sup>406</sup> The merchants appealed to the state to enforce the use of scales, but again the state was unwilling to intervene. The merchants tried to push a bill through the legislative assembly which would extend the weights and measurements ordinance in force in the colony to the protectorate. They succeeded, but it was quickly repealed once the administrator realized it would “criminalize acts done outside the territorial limits of the colony.”<sup>407</sup>

In 1885 merchants attempted to use the shock of a global depression in lieu of state power to push through changes in the groundnut trade and increasing tariffs in Europe to change the terms of the bushel system. The merchants first proposed to pay for 70lbs. of nuts what they had paid for 50lbs. in the past and when that was rejected they proposed to replace the 2/- bushel basket with a 1/- bushel basket. When this was also rejected the merchants decided to suspend the river trade and in 1886 only the Gambia River

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<sup>404</sup> NRO: CSO 1/105 Bathurst Chamber of Commerce to the Right Honorable Sir H.J. Holland, January 28, 1888.

<sup>405</sup> Foucault, 104.

<sup>406</sup> NRO: CSO 1/41 Bathurst Merchants to H.T.M. Cooper, March 13, 1875.

<sup>407</sup> NRO: CSO 1/43 Carnavon to Samuel Rowe Lieutenant Governor of Sierra Leone February 20, 1876.

Trading Company, operating under the aegis of the state, sent its ships upriver to purchase groundnuts.<sup>408</sup> The merchants asked the state to step in and explain the situation to the most important kings.<sup>409</sup> The administrator of Bathurst sent representatives to interview Musa Molloh, one of the most powerful kings in the upper river. In the interview Molloh declared that the Fulas have declared a *tong* (refusal to sell) due to the 1/- bushel and that they would “keep the nuts till they spoil and make soap of them.”<sup>410</sup>

After the onset of colonialism and the establishment of the protectorate, effective opposition to the merchants did not disappear, but it dissipated over time. In 1901 the credit system was supposed to be abolished and replaced with a cash-in-hand system where merchants paid farmers directly for their nuts.<sup>411</sup> When traders attempted to sidestep the cash system by offering goods for nuts instead, growers in Niamina, Jarra, and Kinag all declared *tongs* and refused to sell their nuts without cash-in-hand. Although the merchants petitioned the state to intervene against the *tong* the state was still in the process of erecting an administrative system in the protectorate and was unwilling to expend its administrative capital and resources by getting in between growers, the resources, and merchant capital.

1918 marked a turning point. Between 1918 and 1920 merchants reaped windfall profits which led them to greatly increase investments on the river. There were only five firms in 1913; after 1920 there were nine. Somewhere between 100% and 150% more capital had also been invested.<sup>412</sup> Competition became severe as investments doubled, but the value of the nut crop only increased by about 33%. In a strange turn of events it was the state who criticized the merchants for establishing a “fixed participation ring” in the protectorate rather than a true free market.<sup>413</sup> By 1923, however, the boom years had come to an end and traders were faced with a *tong* at the wharf town of Kaur when merchants refused to pay more than 2/6 for a bushel. Kaur was an especially important wharf town because it was one of the last wharf towns with water deep enough to support ocean going vessels and thus became a major node in the

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<sup>408</sup> NRO: CSO 1/88 Carter to Sam Rowe Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, January 22, 1886.

<sup>409</sup> NRO: CSO 1/86 Depression in the Groundnut Trade December 24, 1885.

<sup>410</sup> NRO: CSO 1/90 Proceedings of an Interview at Boraber with Musa Molloh March 29, 1885.

<sup>411</sup> NRO: CSO 1/142 Governor Denton to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, May 12, 1903.

<sup>412</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Confidential Memo on Overcapitalization in The Gambia, August 18, 1924.

<sup>413</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Confidential Memo on Overcapitalization in The Gambia, August 18, 1924.

groundnut trade from the river. According to the travelling commissioner, Gambians had become increasingly frustrated with the merchants and the perceived belief that “the Gambia and its inhabitants were created for their sole use and profit.”<sup>414</sup> In 1922 the governor stripped chiefs of the ability to declare a *tong* and enforce it by coercion, but voluntary refusal to sell was still an option for Gambian growers. The voluntary *tong* was settled without intervention as many traders began buying nuts at 2/9 in order to recoup at least some of their debts.<sup>415</sup>

In the protectorate, both growers and traders also became victims of the merchants. When a trader provided goods upriver they counted on being paid back. When debts were not paid they attempted to petition the state to help them resolve the debt, but the answer given was always, “No, take out a summons.”<sup>416</sup> Rather than support their traders merchants began blacklisting them if they failed to pay their debts on time.<sup>417</sup> Many traders began buying nuts above the maximum price of 2/9 in order to recoup at least some of their debts, but it was not enough and the merchants only blamed them for paying too much.<sup>418</sup> Other traders, at the end of a bad trade season, faked robberies in order to claim insurance protection and cover their losses.<sup>419</sup> On the other hand, merchants ensured that growers would be forever in their debt by forcing seed on them before the start of the growing season. Chiefs understood this, resented the fact that they were being “pauperized”, and began to start their own seed stores and cut merchants out of the seed business.<sup>420</sup> The state also shared with the chiefs the opinion that the merchants were providing them with poor quality seed and that they were sending it too late in the season, which was harming the crop.<sup>421</sup> The representatives for Palmine Ltd., of course, denied the allegations that they provided poor seeds and blamed the bad harvests of the early 1920s on circumstance.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> NRO: CSO 2/556 Travelling Commissioner McCarthy Island Province to the Acting Colonial Secretary, December 27, 1923.

<sup>415</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 North Bank Province Annual Report 1924.

<sup>416</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 North Bank Province Annual Report 1921-22.

<sup>417</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Kombo and Foni Annual Report 1924-25.

<sup>418</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 North Bank Province Annual Report 1924.

<sup>419</sup> NRO: CSO 2/533 Reports on Theft in the Protectorate, 6.

<sup>420</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 Kombo and Foni Annual Report

<sup>421</sup> NRO: CSO 2/556 Minutes of a Meeting Held at Government House, 1A

<sup>422</sup> NRO: CSO 2/556 Minutes of a Meeting Held at Government House, 6.

In fact, the state had contributed to the problem by ensuring a shortage of currency. In the late 1890s the merchants applied for coins from the Bank of England, but were rejected.<sup>423</sup> The state, worried about inflation, restricted the availability of English silver coins, but the merchants, lacking enough coin on the river to increase the circulation of their goods, instead applied to the Bank of France, and introduced French silver coins onto the river. The administration considered “repatriating” the French silver coins, but decided that it was too expensive and difficult to stop.<sup>424</sup> Although the administration appreciated the fact that the French coins were, at the moment, necessary for commerce they still lamented the fact that the coins were not consistent or standardized and that they were not stamped with the Queen’s head.<sup>425</sup> Not surprisingly the symbol of authority given to chiefs which marked them as “father of the people” was a large silver medallion with the portrait of the British sovereign.<sup>426</sup> The lack of coins remained a constant problem throughout the colonial period and, when times got tough, girls even had to part with the silver coins they wore in their hair to pay the taxes.<sup>427</sup> Instead of making more coins available the state demonetized 90,000 dollar coins to force their exchange. Gambians resented the move and feared it was an attempt to count their coins and force debt payments.<sup>428</sup>

After 1921, however, the administration became more convinced that they needed to remove the five franc coin from the colony, having already done so in Sierra Leone. In response Sierra Leonean businesspeople began selling their goods in Gambia where they could get better exchange rates using French currency. The five franc piece had a much higher value on the River Gambia than it did elsewhere, so the river became a magnet for the currency. This was the final straw for the administration. Gambians were given six weeks notice that they had to exchange their French currency for British coins or their money would become worthless and illegal. For many farmers, traders, and middlemen who had relied on the French currency, the withdrawal of the five franc piece ruined their business due to the low exchange

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<sup>423</sup> NRO: CSO 1/136 J. Chamberlain to Llewelyn, May 30, 1899.

<sup>424</sup> NRO: CSO 1/136 J. Chamberlain to Llewelyn, May 30, 1899.

<sup>425</sup> NRO: CSO 1/141 Report of the West African Currency Committee, March 4, 1900.

<sup>426</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 C.H. Armitage to the Secretary of State, March 28, 1922.

<sup>427</sup> NRO: CSO 1/157 Kombo and Foni Annual Report 1914-1915, July 16, 1915.

<sup>428</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 Upper River Province Annual Report 1921-22.

rate they were given by the administration or their inability to exchange their coins in time.<sup>429</sup> Many Gambian farmers, in turn, smuggled their donkey loads across the border to Senegal where they could receive better exchange rates in French currency rather than sell at the Gambian *seccos*. Farmers unable to get their crops to Senegal often had to make due with breaking even or going into debt at the end of the season. To make up for the lack of silver coins in circulation Gambians substituted brass or copper coins, but they never stopped petitioning for English silver dollars.<sup>430</sup> Similarly, attempts to introduce paper currency failed for years because it was simply not durable enough to survive when passed constantly from hand to hand.<sup>431</sup>

In 1924, complaints over nuts clumped with dirt led to the mandatory passing of all nuts through screens which cleaned them.<sup>432</sup> (Figure 18) These screens, however, were only available at major wharf towns which put a tremendous strain on local farmers who lived at a distance from the towns. To counter this the merchants provided lorries for the protectorate in 1924. The lorry had been introduced to Bathurst in 1909 when it was decided the colony would bear the expense of buying the first motor car. The lorry took off quickly in Bathurst, but spread more slowly in the protectorate. In 1924, however, lorries were introduced in large numbers. Gambians were so impressed that they drove their donkeys away. In 1925, when the merchants withdrew their lorries from the protectorate in an effort to force farmers to purchase their own lorries widespread hardship and indebtedness spread throughout the river.<sup>433</sup> Not only did the merchants stop running lorries, they also stopped providing growers with bags which they could use to transport the nuts, and they finally forced the introduction of scales to weigh groundnuts and replace the bushel system.<sup>434</sup>

These conflicts over the price of nuts prompted some of the earliest nationalist organizing in the history of the colony. In 1917 E.F. Small, then a clergyman in the Methodist Mission, was sent to

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<sup>429</sup> Jawara, 29.

<sup>430</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 North Bank Province Annual Report 1921-22.

<sup>431</sup> NRO: CSO 1/162 Kombo and Foni Annual Report 1919-20.

<sup>432</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Kombo and Foni Annual Report 1924-25.

<sup>433</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Kombo and Foni Annual Report 1924-25

<sup>434</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Kombo and Foni Annual Report 1924-25



Ballanghar, where every major firm was operating. Small created the Gambia Farmers' Cooperative and Marketing Association which helped them organize against scale fixing and demand higher prices for their produce. In 1918, however, a fist fight between Small and European trader James Walker in Ballanghar led to Small's dismissal and removal from the town.<sup>435</sup> It was not long before complaints were made to the travelling commissioners to gain state sympathy. According to Governor Armitage, Gambians were complaining that the merchants were "cutting their throats" by manipulating the scales."<sup>436</sup> Even Armitage believed that the scales were being used for "swindling the natives."<sup>437</sup> The merchants argued that they were experiencing heavy losses and had to implement the measures, but Armitage believed they were lying and feared that strange farmers would stop coming to The Gambia, leading to a collapse of the nut economy altogether. Not satisfied with their gains so far, the merchants pressed the state to end the export duty on nuts which had been in place since nuts were first exported in the 1860s.<sup>438</sup> In 1926 they were all saved by the return of the lorries. By this time the growers had also learned roughly what to expect from the nut scales and had come to terms with the demand that nuts be weighed.<sup>439</sup> By 1930 the lack of lorries was once again acute and the growers responded by declaring a *tong* until the merchants provided them with the means of transport.<sup>440</sup> Donkeys, the British believed, might have to return to save the economy.

The state was not, however, willing to intervene. By the late 1930s both coos and rice had become cash crops. Growers eager to obtain cash to pay taxes and purchase consumer goods began to sell their staple crops, but when food became short they were forced to buy them back at higher prices than they were sold for in the first place. All the commissioners agreed that the traders were exploiting the protectorate growers, but differed on what to do about it. Although some travelling commissioners favored price fixing by the government to stop the abuse of the protectorate farmers by the traders, there

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<sup>435</sup> Dawda Fall *Gambia Daily Observer* "The Road to Independence"

<http://observer.gm/africa/gambia/article/2008/2/15/the-road-to-independence> Accessed 9/16/2014

<sup>436</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Cecil Armitage to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 9, 1925.

<sup>437</sup> NRO: CSO 2/556

<sup>438</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Cecil Armitage to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 9, 1925.

<sup>439</sup> NRO: CSO 1/168 Kombo and Foni Province Annual Report 1926.

<sup>440</sup> NRO: CSO 1/171 South Bank Province Annual Report 1931.

was also a substantial argument against “laws imposed from above.”<sup>441</sup> Referring to the sale of coos, the commissioner for the South Bank Province argued that if growers were willing to sell for bad prices they should “suffer the consequences of their stupidity.”<sup>442</sup> The economy of The Gambia, he argued, must be based on “the free will of the people” rather than “paternalism, however enlightened” or Gambians would learn nothing.<sup>443</sup> Freedom, of course, meant the “free market,” and by the 1930s the merchants had clearly triumphed in their long battle to control the terms of the trade on the river.

#### THE SHAPE OF THE CITY: ROADS, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND URBAN CIRCULATION, 1870S-1950S

In Bathurst even projects which the state and merchants agreed on were difficult to complete. Merchants had long desired a bridge across Oyster Creek which separated Bathurst from the kingdom of Kombo in the South Bank. Construction had started in the early 1870s, but by 1879 construction was still ongoing and the merchants were refusing to loan or advance any capital to the state in order to complete the bridge, which would facilitate their trade with Kombo.<sup>444</sup> In 1882 it was revealed that, although the piles for the bridge had been driven, the girders and anchor screws had been waiting for three years to be installed.<sup>445</sup> The anchor screws were necessary to regulate the side-to-side movement of the bridge while the girders prevented back-and-forth movement.

In the city, the state believed the merchants should pay to provide a fleet of hand trucks and horse carts to city dwellers which would allow them to carry six to eight bags of nuts per trip instead of relying on head loads, but the merchants were unwilling to provide the capital.<sup>446</sup> Instead of carts, another solution seemed more promising. With increased trade coming into the ports, the merchants found themselves unable to move goods quickly enough, so they partnered with the state to build a Decauville tramway system down the city’s major streets to help pushcarts move quickly and easily through the

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<sup>441</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1102 Commissioner of the South Bank Province to the Colonial Secretary, October 24, 1938.

<sup>442</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1102 Commissioner of the South Bank Province to the Colonial Secretary, October 24, 1938.

<sup>443</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1102 Commissioner of the South Bank Province to the Colonial Secretary, October 24, 1938.

<sup>444</sup> NRO: CSO 1/54. M.A. Berkeley Acting Administrator to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone February 23, 1879.

<sup>445</sup> NRO: CSO 1/63 J. Bauer Colonial Engineer to V. Skipton Gouldsbury, May 10, 1882.

<sup>446</sup> NRO: CSO 1/142 Governor Denton to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 18, 1903.

streets. (Figure 16) For the merchants the tramway would speed up the transfer of goods and for the state the tramway would regulate the flow of pushcarts throughout the city by restricting them to approved tramlines. The merchants and state agreed to split the bill 50/50.<sup>447</sup> In 1907 tramlines were laid down Wellington Street which ran along the coast where the merchant wharves were located. By 1908, however, the merchants decided to withdraw from funding the upkeep of the tram and suggested the government pay for upkeep by taxing its use which the state did with a 1908 Tramway Ordinance.<sup>448</sup> At first it was estimated that £900 would be required to set the lines, with £70 per year after that to maintain them, but after one year of laying lines the administration was calling for an additional £1,200 to finish the job. Without merchant capital the tramway struggled to raise money and construction slowed to a crawl. Lacking funding, the engineers attempted to cut corners by laying the rails raised in the streets instead of setting them in concrete. In the long run this exposed the rails to far more wear and tear, but the state lacked the money it would have taken to finish setting rails sunken into concrete.<sup>449</sup> The introduction of the lorry to Bathurst in 1909 solidified the merchants' decision to abandon the tramway. Although an improvement on a system of handcarts and headloads, the tramway was no match for the speed and efficiency of the lorries. The tramway system would continue to exist into the late 1930s, though the conditions of the lines never improved.

In the 1930s Bathurst was also recast as chaotic in comparison with the well-ordered protectorate run by reliable chiefs who kept the roads clear and their villages well regulated. The focus was again on the tramway. In 1938 the tramway was found to be in "deplorable condition" and broken in many places, but the state lacked the capital to build new, heavier lines to accommodate the volume of goods coming into the city.<sup>450</sup> Even the acting director of public works wanted to abolish the lines and to replace the Decauville trucks with lorries.<sup>451</sup> The collector of customs, however, recognized that this would make his

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<sup>447</sup> NRO: PUB 14/2 NRO: Minutes of the Legislative Council 1902-1911, December 1907.

<sup>448</sup> NRO: PUB 14/2 NRO: Minutes of the Legislative Council 1902-1911, June 1908.

<sup>449</sup> NRO: PUB 14/2 NRO: Minutes of the Legislative Council 1902-1911, May 1909.

<sup>450</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1679 Tramway Lines in Bathurst, 40.

<sup>451</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1679 Tramway Lines in Bathurst, Acting Director of Public Works to the Colonial Secretary, June 11, 1938.

task of duty collection impossible. He countered with a vision of anarchy. Without the tram lines traders would take their handcarts in every direction, porters and pedestrians would wander the streets, merchandise would “go astray”, goods would escape customs, and thefts would rise.<sup>452</sup> Fearing such chaos the state decided to keep the tramway lines and to raise additional money by registering and inspecting trucks.

This was backed by a flurry of new legislation designed to regulate the flows and people and machines through the city. Certainly merchants enjoyed the freedom given to them by the lorries in Bathurst, but for the state the cars represented yet another flow to be regulated. Driving too fast led to accidents; cars loitered at key intersections and blocked roads or, if unsalvageable, were abandoned.<sup>453</sup> In 1925 the police were given total control over traffic in any street, square, or public place, including the authority to close any space, divert traffic, and publish rules governing regulations and fines without state approval.<sup>454</sup> In 1928 standardized license plates, compulsory insurance, increased fees for heavy vehicles to pay for road maintenance, mandatory mirrors, inspections of passenger cars, and stiff penalties for driving while intoxicated were all introduced, based on Kenyan statutes.<sup>455</sup> Proposals to restrict all lorries to ten miles per hour were rejected, but a twenty mile per hour speed limit was accepted in 1951. They were behind the commissioners in the protectorate who had already asked for the twelve to fifteen mile per hour speed limit to be doubled because it was too slow for commerce.<sup>456</sup>

In 1939 bicycles were also recast as a public menace due to their interference with the lorry economy. There was no legislation to make cyclists obey police signs and bicycles were often shared by two or more people.<sup>457</sup> The Traffic Regulations of 1939 imposed a fine of £2 or 14 days imprisonment for cyclists failing to obey signs or signals or for more than one person on a cycle.<sup>458</sup> The police also began

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<sup>452</sup> NRO: CSO 2/ NRO: CSO 2/1679 Tramway Lines in Bathurst, Collector of Customs to the Colonial Secretary, September 6, 1938.

<sup>453</sup> NRO: CSO 2/648 Control of Traffic Over Denton Bridge, 48A.

<sup>454</sup> NRO: CSO 2/667 An Ordinance to Amend the Police Ordinance of 1916.

<sup>455</sup> NRO: CSO 2/788 Report on Motor Traffic, 7, 20, 41.

<sup>456</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2615 Motor Traffic Regulations, South Bank Commissioner to the Colonial Secretary, September 3, 1938.

<sup>457</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1802 Legislation for the Control of Pedal Cyclists, 3.

<sup>458</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1802 Legislation for the Control of Pedal Cyclists, 5.

closing roads to the public. With the decline of the tramway system vehicles and pedestrians alike began cutting through the secretariat instead of taking the longer path around McCarthy Square. The workers at the secretariat complained of the noise caused by vehicles, “Dongo boys” playing outside the windows, and women “loudly talking about their domestic affairs.”<sup>459</sup> The shortcut was closed between the hours of 8 AM and 4 PM. In the mid-1950s the Town Council suggested that taxing foreigners and bicycles in the city would be a good revenue source. The measure was rejected. It is not clear if the opposition was on behalf of the foreigners or the bicycles. Bicycles, like immigrants, moved around frequently and often changed hands. The police did not want to expend the energy of tracking them down. Hand carts, on the other hand, were more easily taxed and in 1952 by-laws set their standard length, width, weight, and diameter and affixed metal disks to them to prove registration at 10/- per year. Police authorities hoped to combat these nuisances by limiting the contact that police officers had with city dwellers while on duty. Officers walking the beat were supposed to look for “evil disposed persons” and to circumambulate the same route, but to vary the order they walked each street so as to be unpredictable. They were instructed to not loiter or gossip, to move “smartly,” to be quiet and discreet, to avoid business, trade, sitting, smoking, sleeping, and intoxication, and to maintain secrecy except from superiors.<sup>460</sup>

The main complaint by the city’s African population, however, was that there were not enough lorries carrying passengers nor a bus depot to make catching a lorry easier.<sup>461</sup> The residents of the city very much enjoyed the ease of mobility that lorries brought to their lives and hoped for the extension of their availability. For the overwhelmingly young men who drove the lorries this meant big business and handy profits. The administration, however, was fearful of increasing accidents associated with the increased lorry traffic. In 1942 one-way streets were introduced to Bathurst on all sides of MacCarthy Square, south Roosevelt St., north on Buckle Street to MacCarthy Square, and Wellington Street from MacCarthy Square to Half Die.<sup>462</sup> Police were posted at all one-way streets to ensure that the new traffic

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<sup>459</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1810 Traffic Order of 1939, 4.

<sup>460</sup> NRO: CSO 2/113 General Orders and Regulations Relative to the Gambia Police, 1907.

<sup>461</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* March 16, 1942, 2.

<sup>462</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2667 Introduction of One Way Traffic in Bathurst.

patterns and speed limits were being followed. Over time the police became less zealous about enforcement and lorries could sometimes be found doing as much as 45 miles per hour down the largest city streets.<sup>463</sup>

The first licenses were issued under the Control of Motor Traffic Regulations Ordinance of 1943 which included a designated route for the driver to follow.<sup>464</sup> Although there were lorries on the road the administration felt that the city and its environs were not effectively linked as a unit due to the lack of an organized transport service. During the Second World War, wartime measures gave the administration control over motor vehicles in the colony, but after the war all controls were ended. A.S.B. Saho of the Bathurst Town Council proposed to start a colony-wide bus service which would include southern Kombo for £3,000 in 1950, but instead the administration was only willing to consider a city-wide system. A Bus and Taxi Committee was created to plan routes and assess feasibility of the project. A number of discoveries militated against its implementation. It turns out that drivers preferred to avoid Bathurst entirely and drive between Serekunda and northern Kombo rather than vie for space on city roads with the merchant and government lorries. Additionally, the public did not seem to have many problems with the current system of private ownership outside of the civil servants who complained of having to crowd into lorries with common laborers.<sup>465</sup> Many city dwellers also took private taxis or jumped onto the backs of open trucks without much problem. The main complaint was that taxis waited until they were full to leave, but regulating departure times would have resulted in mostly empty taxis and drive buses off the road. The administration was not eager to interfere with the existing system. The administration was also worried that increases in the number of lorries would lead to rate wars among drivers and a decline in the safety and comfort standards of the lorries. Additionally, they worried that lower rates would make it more difficult for wealthier Africans to get rides since lorries would become available to a greater portion of the population.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2771 Speed Limit, Financial Secretary to the Commissioner of Police, November 13, 1957.

<sup>464</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2620 Control of Motor Traffic Regulations Ordinance of 1943.

<sup>465</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2725 Bus and Taxi Services Committee, E.A. Monday to Mr. Jagne, September 19, 1950.

<sup>466</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2638 Motor Traffic Legislation

## QUEUING UP: WARTIME REGULATIONS AND THE CIRCULATION OF GOODS

During World War II the shortage of goods brought on by wartime rationing only served to heighten tensions in the city. The scarcity of basic necessities in shops meant that if Bathurst residents wanted to purchase goods they had to line up at the shops early when they received shipments. Large crowds of residents hoping to buy commodities and middle men hoping to buy and resell in bulk swarmed the shops. The state saw nothing but chaos and disorder. Members of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council told harrowing tales of unruly mobs and mothers with children on their backs being pushed out of the way.<sup>467</sup> The solution was an organized system of single line queues. The commissioner of the Island of St. Mary envisioned well-ordered queues with concrete barriers to funnel crowds and large penalties for breaking the queue.<sup>468</sup> Many state officials placed the blame on the police. The BATC argued that the existing police force was incapable of proper policing and needed European supervision. The controller of supplies agreed, claiming that with just one London policeman he would turn the crowds into “a queue of mutes.”<sup>469</sup> The controller of supplies even claimed that he once witnessed seven police officers attempt and fail to control a crowd trying to buy sugar at the CFAO building which resulted in the shop having to close. The colonial secretary added that he had not seen “one crowd without policemen pushing to buy their own purchases.”<sup>470</sup> The superintendent of police took exception to the claims calling them “grossly exaggerated.” Since there were no brawls, traffic was not being blocked, and no accidents had occurred, he argued that the crowds were “orderly, but vociferous” and did not require extreme measures.<sup>471</sup> If the state wanted to pass queue legislation, he warned, he would fill the courts with queue cases. Lacking

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<sup>467</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2002 Queue System in Shops, Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, September 22, 1942.

<sup>468</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2002 Queue System in Shops, Commissioner of the Island of St. Mary to the Controller of Supplies, January 11, 1943.

<sup>469</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2002 Queue System in Shops, Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, September 22, 1942, Controller of Supplies to the Colonial Secretary, December 22, 1943.

<sup>470</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2002 Queue System in Shops, Colonial Secretary, October 26, 1942.

<sup>471</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2002 Queue System in Shops, Superintendent of Police to the Colonial Secretary December 22, 1943.

legislation the police would continue to exert passive control by being present and preventing the break out of a more serious disturbance, but not regulate queues.

Queues, however, were far from the only problem. The need for wartime labor which came along with the war led to an overcrowded city with a growing homeless population. The public latrines provided by the state along with the warm climate for most of the year made life on the streets possible for those who could not afford or find housing. To the authorities this represented a chaotic and unregulated circulation of bodies which needed to be contained. Indeed, the police began rounding up and deporting the homeless back to the protectorate. Of course, they did not stay in the protectorate long and returned to Bathurst if they could afford it. The crowds were turning commercial thoroughfares of Russell and Wellington Streets into boulevards where social gatherings, informal markets, and all manner of business took place.<sup>472</sup> The Bathurst Town Council agreed that new bylaws were urgent to remove “nuisances and obstructions” from the main thoroughfares so that the pace of circulation could be maintained.<sup>473</sup> Selling in the street was so prevalent that the administration decided to turn a blind eye rather than take up the daunting task of enforcing the market as the only legal place to trade and sell. The market, in the meantime, declined as a place of business. Sellers who saw the opportunity to conduct business without paying market dues gladly did so and the market went from a bad to a worse condition.<sup>474</sup>

The editors of the *Gambia Echo* called for amelioration of the situation in explicitly racial terms, blaming profiteering primarily on “Syrian” traders.<sup>475</sup> As elsewhere in Africa, “Syrian” was a blanket term referring to traders of Syrian or Lebanese origin, and other persons of Middle Eastern descent. “Syrians” began arriving in The Gambia in noticeable numbers in the early to mid-1920s and developed a deal of control of the trade in kola nuts as well as starting businesses and working as laborers. Not all “Syrians” came with money. Some were paupers when they came.<sup>476</sup> In 1956 the Gambia Traders Union wrote to Governor Percy Wynn-Harris complaining that Syrian and Lebanese traders were running them

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<sup>472</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2168 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority January 16, 1945.

<sup>473</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Town Council, February 26, 1947.

<sup>474</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2619 Minutes of Meeting of the Bathurst Town Council, February 26, 1947.

<sup>475</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 15, 1942, 2.

<sup>476</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Governor Armitage to the Secretary of State, February 25, 1925.



out of business and seizing control of the groundnut trade by purchasing wholesale and reselling to African traders. The governor replied that he would not discriminate against anyone who was lawfully resident in The Gambia.<sup>477</sup>

In 1936 Lenri Peters, the ward for Portuguese Town, described the living conditions of his poor constituents. They eat, he lamented, “poor food, irregular food, inadequate food, and... on chance.”<sup>478</sup> After the Second World War conditions had hardly changed. In the early years of the war, wartime rationing of goods led to profiteering and the rapid increase of prices. Middle men began buying commodities in bulk, raising the prices, and reselling for a profit.<sup>479</sup> In 1942, as the early war boom in employment transitioned to late war stagnation, the administration finally admitted that labor was “at the mercy of capital” and appointed Lieutenant Simpson as the first labor officer in The Gambia to “get to the bottom of it.”<sup>480</sup> Simpson began by enforcing war time price limits on imports by actively directing the police to arrest profiteering traders who were attempting to “wriggle their camel loads of ill-gotten wealth through the needles eye of the law.”<sup>481</sup>

Simpson’s efforts were far from unproblematic. In order stop traders from profiteering, he also banned all “petty trade” in the colony and protectorate. This, of course, did more to hurt Bathurst’s “hawkers” and “basket women,” who lived in Bathurst but engaged in petty trade upriver, than it did to curtail the worst profiteers.<sup>482</sup> Basket women went to the protectorate with goods that were not readily available to rural Gambians, such as dried and smoked fish, dried oysters, and palm oil, which they exchanged for staples such as rice, millet, sorghum, and other cereals and returned on board steamers. Many basket women plied a profitable trade in this way. The Bathurst Advisory Town Council supported the policy, arguing that if “basket women” were allowed to go upriver, Gambians in the protectorate would exchange their food for goods and be left starving during wartime when food was already being

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<sup>477</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3644 K.G.S. Smith, Colonial Secretary to The Gambia Traders Union, September 19, 1956.

<sup>478</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1596 Minutes of Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, September 29, 1936.

<sup>479</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942.

<sup>480</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 6, 1941, 3.

<sup>481</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 5, 1942, 2.

<sup>482</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 15, 1942, 2.

rationed and none could be spared.<sup>483</sup> Indeed, food shortages in Bathurst were causing laborers to take their excess wages to the protectorate to find food in exchange for currency or goods.<sup>484</sup>

If the war had brought profiteering, at least it had also provided ample employment opportunities at relatively high wages. With the end of rationing and state control of commodity supply and prices as well as the end of lucrative war work, city residents found themselves plunged back into the prewar economy. Only this time the city was far more populated and more extreme forms of profiteering had established a foothold in the city. “Our poor basket women suffer while the Jula and Syrians profiteer” the *Echo* editorialized.<sup>485</sup> War time rationing had, in fact, meant that a few wealthy firms and individuals were able to use their capital to consolidate their positions in the colony by inserting themselves between the state run economy and the people while pushing out the developing middle class. The state, attempting to manage the economy, preferred to simplify its complexities by doing business with fewer, larger entities who were easily identifiable. Government officials were not interested in the complexities of haggling with an army of middle men all looking to carve out their own niche within the economy. Debts mounted as smaller traders and businessmen scraped to try and replace a relative prosperity which they had known before the war, but depressed prices for groundnuts did not help.

#### BACK TO THE LAND: INDUSTRY AND CIVILIZATION

After decades of worrying about the vices of Bathurst spreading to the protectorate in the 1930s, administrators began talking about the opposite. All of a sudden, it was Bathurst which was being pauperized by its relationship with the protectorate rather than the protectorate being pauperized by Bathurst merchants. D.W.H. Howells’ report on Bathurst went as far as to call it a “parasite capital port” feeding on the protectorate.<sup>486</sup> Tax revenues collected from the protectorate directly in the form of yard or hut tax and export taxes on nuts had been footing the bill for social services in Bathurst and suddenly

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<sup>483</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 2, 1941.

<sup>484</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942.

<sup>485</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* November 9, 1942, 5.

<sup>486</sup> NRO: CSO 3/348 D.W.H. Howells Report on Cape St. Mary, 25.

Governor H.R. Palmer discovered the city had become “pauperized and lazy.”<sup>487</sup> The recent amalgamation of the merchant firms in response to the overcapitalization crises of the 1920s did not help either. When the firms proliferated employment was easy to come by, but as firms merged the entire class of Gambian traders seems to have virtually collapsed.<sup>488</sup> Palmer was also writing, it must be remembered, not long after the dramatic general strike of 1929 which the state believed was the work of a cabal of Aku “ne’er-do-wells” who had too much education and no employment.<sup>489</sup> Additionally, the striking workers were blamed for bad conditions in the protectorate. Their wages, they were told, were impoverishing the growers in the protectorate and they were warned that “you can’t get milk and beef from the same cow.”<sup>490</sup> When it was suggested to re-impose taxation on Bathurst in order to help pay for the city’s roads, drains, and lights, however, the idea was abandoned when it was realized that the tax would probably drive away the city’s floating population which the merchants depended on for labor.<sup>491</sup> The city’s nomadic population, in any case, did not maintain permanent residence long enough to count and was thus extremely difficult to tax. The merchants, in any case, depended on this unorganized flow of bodies.

In the mind of Palmer, not only had they become “lazy” through a reliance on protectorate “handouts,” but the population of Bathurst had come to resent the protectorate people as “bushmen” and “natives.”<sup>492</sup> Bathurst people, he argued, had become greedy and willing to exploit the hard work of the protectorate while reaping the benefits. Indeed, there is some truth to the matter. In 1933 some citizens of Bathurst petitioned the administration to rewrite the laws to define a “native” as an African who was not from Bathurst.<sup>493</sup> As British subjects, the petitioners argued, they should be given the same rights as Europeans or Syrians and thus be exempt from native tribunals if they traveled upriver.<sup>494</sup> From the signatures of the petitioners it is clear that the majority of them were Akus based on their patronyms.

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<sup>487</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 10, 1933.

<sup>488</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, February 28, 1933.

<sup>489</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 10, 1933.

<sup>490</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union 1929, Union Delegates Interview with the Governor, 120.

<sup>491</sup> NRO: CSO 2/943 Reimposition of Taxation on the People of Bathurst 1929.

<sup>492</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, February 28, 1933.

<sup>493</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, February 28, 1933.

<sup>494</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 The Humble Petition of the Loyal Residents of His Majesty’s Ancient and Loyal Colony of The Gambia 1933.

Palmer's solution was a "back to the land" policy which would encourage Bathurst residents, especially the unemployed or partially employed, to return to the protectorate and farm during the rainy season. The policy, which ironically has been tried by so many postcolonial African leaders, was meant to bridge the urban/rural divide and reduce population pressure in Bathurst. The administration, however, was decidedly against the petition and told Bathurst residents that if they travelled upriver they would become subject to the authority of native tribunals until such a time as all Gambians could be united under a common law.<sup>495</sup>

The citizens of Bathurst responded in another petition of "rate payers, workers, and citizens." An invitation to the mass meeting that drafted the petition was "circulated to representative bodies and sections of the general community" in the hopes of establishing a Rate payers Association as an "effective organ" of the rate paying community.<sup>496</sup> Palmer proposed a different solution: pay up or get out. While he accepted a lower rate of tax for the poor, Palmer suggested that those who could not pay the rate should leave the city as British citizens in London would do. Again, Palmer blamed the inability of Gambians to comprehend economics. International competition, he argued, had pushed Gambians against a wall in a "competition where economic laws are inexorable, and show no mercy to a community that, through ignorance or sloth, will not compete."<sup>497</sup> While the chiefs in the protectorate were "standing on their own feet," Bathurst was being subjected to the "incubus of indebtedness."<sup>498</sup> Palmer even dressed his liberalism in biblical vestments. "God helps those who help themselves" he argued and, playing with Paul's letter to the Romans 6, added "the wages of inactivity in April, May, and June is sickness and possibly death in July, August, September, or October."<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 R.S. Randall to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, February 24, 1933.

<sup>496</sup> NRO: CSO 1/171 Mass Meeting of Rate payers, Workers, and Citizens Demonstrate Against Proposed Introduction of Criminal Procedure and Penal Codes 1933.

<sup>497</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1289 Address by His Excellency, The Governor, to the Members of the Legislative Council, 1933, 30.

<sup>498</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1289 Address by His Excellency, The Governor, to the Members of the Legislative Council, 1933, 31.

<sup>499</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1289 Address by His Excellency, The Governor, to the Members of the Legislative Council, 1933, 31.

Bathurst residents were quick to respond to Palmer's provocations by writing letters to the legislative council. Baye J. Cisse asked, in a letter, how Gambians were supposed to work when none of the merchants were hiring and government competition was pricing the merchants out of employment.<sup>500</sup> Cisse also responded directly to Palmer's insistence that those who could not pay should leave by asking whether or not the poor were rounded up and deported from London and asked "Cannot rich and poor live together?" in the city.<sup>501</sup> Samba Ba added that many Bathurst residents listened to Palmer when he told them to go "back to the land," but they lost a good deal of money in the process and were now more in debt than ever. What were they to do when they worked hard, but were stricken down by the low price of groundnuts, he wondered.<sup>502</sup> Sallieu Gassane argued that Bathurst deserved to be taken care of by the protectorate because it was Bathurst that saved the protectorate from marauding warrior kings and "made all property safe."<sup>503</sup> This, he argued, made Bathurst the father and mother of the country and the protectorate had to take care of its "father."

In the end Palmer was forced to put into practice the same practices he derided as "paternalist." He instituted a quota system to limit foreign imports believed to be hurting local manufactures, gave incentives for increased planting of food stuffs like rice and coos, and fixed a "nut season" in the calendar which prevented traders from buying nuts at starvation prices during the "hungry season" and reselling them at higher prices later.<sup>504</sup> Instead of placing blame on the supposed economic "facts," he performed a 180 degree turn and insisted that cultivators in the protectorate were being victimized and deserved "the best price for his labor."<sup>505</sup> In the end it was Gambians who gave the governor a lecture in economic reality.

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<sup>500</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1363 Medical and Sanitary report for the Year 1932, Baye J. Cisse to Mr. Councilor G.M. N'Jie and Friends, April 19, 1933.

<sup>501</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1363 Medical and Sanitary report for the Year 1932, Baye J. Cisse to Mr. Councilor G.M. N'Jie and Friends, April 19, 1933.

<sup>502</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1363 Medical and Sanitary report for the Year 1932, Samba Ba to Mr. Councilor G.M. N'Jie and Friends, April 20, 1933.

<sup>503</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1363 Medical and Sanitary report for the Year 1932, Sallieu Gassane to Mr. Councilor G.M. N'Jie and Friends, April 20, 1933

<sup>504</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1500 Governor's Address to the Legislative Council, 1934, 4.

<sup>505</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1500 Governor's Address to the Legislative Council, 1934, 6.

Some commissioners upriver continued to invite city dwellers to return to the land, but for those with no extant ties to the rural areas, the results were always mixed. The commissioner of the South Bank urged “Bathurst people” to come where the people of the protectorate would teach them how to “put their backs into it.”<sup>506</sup> The commissioner of the North Bank also called for the “prodigal sons” who went to Bathurst to come home to the land of their fathers. Bathurst people, they argued, could come and live as strangers, farm, and return to Bathurst after the harvest. Again, Bathurst residents expressed their frustration with the lack of infrastructure to make their trip back to the land turn a profit. Mr. Koto-Richards, one of the members of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, argued that Bathurst people were not treated well in the protectorate.<sup>507</sup> Even the commissioner of the South Bank worried that Bathurst people had been subject to “detrribalization and urbanization” for too long. J. Davis, a Bathurst resident who went back to the land after hearing the governor talk about itwrote a letter to the governor about his experiences. After being unemployed for two years Davis tried to go back to the land, but he failed to integrate into a host community. Instead, he petitioned the governor for money to help him pay for a fence to keep animals off his land, his own personal well, and a hut to watch for thieves and animals.<sup>508</sup> Appealing to the state to help them reintegrate into protectorate society was not a winning strategy.

## CONCLUSION

The question is not arterial or capillary. It is a question of speed and intensity. To quote Armah again, “What is painful to the thinking mind is not the movement itself, but the dizzying speed of it. It is that which has been horrible.”<sup>509</sup> Perhaps what is “modern” about modernity is not so much right angles and a new set of habits, but a certain degree of speed and intensity above and beyond pre-capitalist circulation. There is no reason to believe that capitalism introduced the commodity form to Africa,<sup>510</sup> but

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<sup>506</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1864 Residents of Bathurst Desirous for Farming in the Protectorate, Commissioner of the South Bank Province to the Colonial Secretary, September 3, 1940.

<sup>507</sup> NRO: CSO Minutes of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, 50.

<sup>508</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1864 Residents of Bathurst Desirous for Farming in the Protectorate, J. Davis to the Governor and Lady of the Colony of The Gambia, October 20, 1940.

<sup>509</sup> Armah, 62.

<sup>510</sup> Igor Kopytoff. 1986. “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process” in Arjun Appadurai. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

there is significant evidence that it pushed to speed and intensity of the process of commodification to new extremes. The state believed that it was necessary to increase the pace of circulation in Africa in order to counter what it saw as “native sloth and indolence” which resulted in idle hands becoming the devil’s play things. It was also wary of the speed and intensity that capitalists were willing to push circulation to pad profit margins. The state attempted, here and there, to mollify the pace of circulation which threatened to pull the social fabric of the colony apart. This was hardly an altruistic effort on the behalf of Gambians. It was, in the end, primarily to ensure that the production of capital not endanger the reproduction of the state.

We see this basic process developing in all of the case studies discussed in this chapter: wrangling over the limits of commerce upriver prior to colonial takeover, the politics of debt and imprisonment for indebtedness, the struggles over weights, measures, and currency, the politics of wartime queuing, the development of the city’s infrastructure, and the back to the land movement. In each case the state encouraged the civilizing aspects of commerce, but attempted to regulate the flows unleashed by capital when it perceived them to be disruptive. Gambians, for their part, attempted to navigate between Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand they came to desire the merchant’s wares. Not that they were free to choose, but, as Marx pointed out, production has a means of creating its consumption and it is incredibly difficult to maintain an archaic consumption regime once a new regime has been established. The entire cash economy was created through arterial power (conquest and taxation), but also through capillary power (the conquest of desire). Here resistance and collaboration were not opposites, but two sides of the same coin which every Gambian carried. Economic interest and desire the two forces vying for the souls of every Gambian and the state and capital on either side beckoning.

CHAPTER 3: DEAD MEAT: SANITATION, SEGREGATION, AND SLAUGHTER IN BATHURST  
C. 1900-1950S

‘In the name of the law,’ he shouted, ‘in the name of the law, what language do these animals speak? Are they Twi speaking horses?’ Kojo Laing *Search Sweet Country*

“There’s a poem I read in which the rat became a unit of currency. Yes, that would be interesting. Yeah, that would impact the world economy. The name alone would be better than the dong or the kwacha. The name says everything. Yes, the rat... Yes, the rat closed lower today against the Euro. Yes, there was growing concern that the Russian rat would be devalued. White rats! Think about that! Yes, pregnant rats. Major sell-off of pregnant Russian rats. Britain converts to the rat. Joins trans-universal currency. Yes, US establishes rat standard. Is every US dollar redeemable for rat? Damn rats. Yes, stockpiling of dead rats cause global health menace.” Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis*

“Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite article ("the Animal" and not "animals"), as in a virgin forest, a zoo, a hunting or fishing ground, a paddock or an abattoir, a space of domestication, are *all the living things* that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers. And that is so in spite of the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog...” Jacques Derrida “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)”

Aunty Nabou acknowledged man’s vulnerability in the face of the eternity of nature. By its very duration, nature defies time and takes its revenge on man.” Mariama Bâ *So Long a Letter*

The first time I set foot in the streets of Banjul, the capital city of The Gambia, I was quickly brushed aside by a herd of cattle marching down the street. Admittedly, this is a rare phenomenon these days, but still there they were. Often, when I walk through the city, I pass by packs of urban dogs, many of which are emaciated and fly-bitten, donkeys pulling heavy loads, and caged chickens. As feast times near, sheep and goats are tied to the roofs of cars and whisked away to destinations unknown. You would scarcely know these animals exist based on the scholarly literature. The familiar dyads: culture/nature, urban/rural, modern/traditional, and human/animal all serve to erase animals from urban landscapes. The modern, human Prometheus lives only in the “urban jungle.”<sup>511</sup> “The animal” (always in the singular and never as a multiplicity<sup>512</sup>) remains in the rural areas, still belonging to “nature.” Perhaps human animals in

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<sup>511</sup> Marshall Berman. 1982. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

<sup>512</sup> Jacques Derrida. 2008. *The Animal that Therefore I am*. Trans. Marie-Louise Mallet. New York: Fordham University Press.



the city sometimes act “bestly”, but the city itself remains a fundamentally human space, distinguished from nature by culture.<sup>513</sup>

This chapter will attempt to move beyond these dyads and consider the history of urban animals in Bathurst. Human/animal interaction in the city, and all the ambiguities it raised, defined what urban space was and how modern, urban life should be lived. Contestation over what should be done with animal remains and excrement, how to treat and slaughter animals humanely while respecting Islamic food prohibitions, and the spaces that animals could properly occupy fundamentally shaped the city and the lives of its human and nonhuman inhabitants. The history of non-human animals in the city will help to conceptualize the history of human animals as well. Studying urban animals also allow us to glimpse racial and class divides in the city as well as the logic of the colonial state. The colonial administration tolerated the presence of certain animals in the city, while excluding or executing others and imposing regulations on still others. It is important, as Derrida has noted, that we not erect a monolithic animal against which we can measure the human any more than we should define the self in contrast to a universal “Other.”<sup>514</sup> For this reason this chapter is broken down thematically by animal so that the specificity of the politics surrounding each can be investigated. There are threads which connect each thematic section: commodification, slaughter, health and sanitation, and religion. There are also specificities which need to be disentangled by species and by chronology.

The rising demand for meat in the city, the desire among residents to keep watchdogs, and Islamic prescriptions to slaughter a ram (or goat if unable to afford a ram) were all considered by the administration when they formulated policy towards animals in the city. Fish were bred to combat mosquito larvae in wells, pigs, goats, sheep, and chickens were kept for food, dogs were kept for companionship or neglected on street corners, and cattle were brought to the slaughterhouse. Many of the city’s urban residents saw no contradictions in the keeping of urban animals and they actively petitioned the colonial administration when they believed their rights to keep animals were being infringed. Colonial

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<sup>513</sup> Charles Baudelaire. 1983. “Evening Twilight” in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: David R. Godine.

<sup>514</sup> Derrida, “The Animal.”

officials, in turn, were forced to spend a great deal of time trying to control urban animals. Police officers spent as much time chasing stray dogs and pigs around the city as they did investigating crime. A special investigator of public nuisances was appointed to deal with the “animal threat” to the city caused by “uncivilized” and “noxious beasts.” (Figure 26) Monthly roundups and executions of stray animals were conducted to cull animal populations. Residents were enticed to conduct rat killing campaigns by offering a reward for rat tails delivered to the police. Over time, as all animals became seen as public health threats, the colonial state became increasingly interventionist and bent on segregation or extermination.

This chapter seeks to engage with both the environmental and urban history of Africa. The study of urban Africa emerged with the Manchester School of Anthropology and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI). The Manchester School and the RLI were responses to decades of anthropological research in Africa which accepted the bounded village as the site of “authentic” knowledge about Africa. Relations between human beings and their totems gave way to class relations, the bounded village was problematized by the existence of massive labor migrations, rural identity gave way to urban identity, and tribal identities to detribalization and retribalization.<sup>515</sup> There is no doubt that this conceptual shift was necessary. The bounded village with its fixed tribal identities, imagined to be devoid of class relations and untouched by colonialism, was a figment of the Western imagination which desperately needed to be deconstructed. The RLI established that Africans were capable of participating in the modern world despite those who continued to portray Africans as “tribal,” “primitive,” or “backwards.” This move, however, was itself a thoroughly modernist one which failed to interrogate the meaning of modernity and its roots in Euro-normative thought.<sup>516</sup> The result is that in order to portray Africans as “modern” scholars imbibed the dyads of modernity which asserted that animals belong to the traditional village that

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<sup>515</sup> Monica Hunter Wilson, and Archie Mafeje. 1963. *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. Charles van Onselen. 1976. *Chibaro: African Mine Labor in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933*. London: Pluto Press. Ellen Hellman. 1948. *Rooiyard: A Sociological Survey of an Urban Native Slum* Cape Town: Oxford University Press. Kenneth Lindsay Little. 1957. *The Role of Voluntary Associations in West African Urbanization*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. Abner Cohen. 1969. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>516</sup> Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch. 2005. *The History of African Cities South of the Sahara: From Origins to Colonization*. Trans. Mary Baker. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers.

RLI scholars were trying to think beyond. In order to present images of modern, urban Africa “the animal” was symbolically sacrificed on the altar of modernity. This perspective was not limited to Western researchers but was shared by African nationalists and modernist *avante gardes*.<sup>517</sup> As Fanon put it, the project was the *re-humanization* of Africa, which meant that the animals, totems, djinns, and zombie ancestors had to go to make room for the modern African.<sup>518</sup> Gluckman suggested precisely this in his analysis of the building of a bridge in South Africa. The Chief Native Commissioner declared that in order to build the bridge a beast would have to be slaughtered and its gall poured over the bridge for good luck and the safety of those crossing the bridge.<sup>519</sup> According to Gluckman the Zulu laughed and clapped when they heard the CNC declare the necessity of a sacrifice. The modern construction project could not proceed without the sacrifice of the animal.

There have, of course, been challenges to the trope of the “modern city”. Partha Chatterjee’s critique of British colonialism in Indian cities shows how power is embedded in “urban censuses and maps, new systems of piped water supply, underground sewers, garbage removal and disposal of the dead, public libraries, and public supervised school systems, avenues, and parks, street lighting and public transport, and elected municipal government.”<sup>520</sup> Chatterjee is clearly correct and his insights apply to many other colonial cities, but there is nary an animal to be found in the narrative of the creation of the colonial city. Chatterjee talks about cities full of snake charmers who flout modernity, but never the snakes!<sup>521</sup> Nor do other historians of colonial cities who have made many of the same critiques. Historians of urban Africa have come a long way in critiquing the modernist project in African urban centers including debunking myths about labor and Africans being unwilling to work, challenging the separation

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<sup>517</sup> Steve Baker. 2000. *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books.

<sup>518</sup> Frantz Fanon. *Wretched of the Earth*.

<sup>519</sup> Max Gluckman. 1958. *An Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand*. Rhodes-Livingston Papers No. 28, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>520</sup> Partha Chatterjee. 2012. *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 225.

<sup>521</sup> Chatterjee, *The Black Hole*, 94.

of work and sex work in the city, showing the importance of “leisure” activities in the city, and so on, but the animals remain taboo.<sup>522</sup>

There have also been a number of important studies of animals in African history, but none have situated animals in urban contexts. *Canis Africanis: A Dog History of South Africa* takes up the challenge of writing dogs into South Africa’s history, but not in South Africa’s urban centers.<sup>523</sup> Similarly, Sandra Swart’s “horsestory,” Jacob Tropp’s tale of dogs and poison in the Transkei, Beinart’s restitution of livestock to the heart of the Cape economy, and Jacobs’ harrowing tale of a donkey massacre in the Kalahari thornveld have all added significantly to our knowledge of animals in African history, as have many other studies.<sup>524</sup> For all of the work that has been done to show how important animals are to African history, however, there is still no major study of animals in an African urban center.

In fact, in order to find urban animals represented as a part of Africa’s urban past we need to look to film and fiction. Usman Sembène’s *Borom Sarret* revolves around a man, his donkey cart, and his struggles to earn a living in urban Dakar. Sembène uses the character of the donkey to show how colonial urban zoning restrictions separate the urban areas that permit animals (the black, poor parts) from the French quarter which has banned all donkey carts.<sup>525</sup> Sembène, however, is less interested in the donkey itself than in how the donkey traces the Manichean world of the colonial city. In the end the donkey cart is revealed as a delusion. The man’s wife decides her foolish husband and his donkey are no models for how to live in the modern metropolis and she takes matters into her own hands. Sembène constructs the donkey as an anachronism stuck in a modern world primarily to lament the similar fate of his protagonist and, by implication, African men in general. If we contrast Sembène’s view of the donkey with Jawara’s

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<sup>522</sup> Frederick Cooper. 1987. *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa*. (New Haven: Yale University Press. Luise White. 1990. *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press Phyllis Martin. 1995. *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>523</sup> Sandra Swart and Lance van Sittert. 2008. *Canis Africanis: A Dog History of South Africa*. Leiden: Brill.

<sup>524</sup> Sandra S. Swart. 2010. *Riding High: Horses, Humans and History in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, Jacob A. Tropp. 2002. "Dogs, Poison and the Meaning of Colonial Intervention in the Transkei, South Africa." *The Journal of African History*. 43.(3), William Beinart. 2003. *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment 1770-1950*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, Nancy J. Jacobs. 2003. *Environment, Power, and Injustice: A South African History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

<sup>525</sup> Ousmane Sembène. 2005. *Black Girl, Borrom Sarret*. New York: New Yorker Video.

we can see the difference. Although Jawara loved to hear the sounds of the donkeys' bells announcing the arrival of the trade season in The Gambia, he nevertheless lamented:

I did not envy the life of donkeys... They seemed so saintly and patient, rows and rows of them, their eyes obedient, their mouths quietly frothing. They complained to no one and held up, with a brave calm, the regular bite of the switch that flew in the hands of the drivers who whipped them. The only time they would have their say was when they brayed and heaved with all their power in their lungs, so that their cry was heard all over the village and beyond. I wonder what I would have done if it had been my chore to carry such heavy loads.<sup>526</sup>

Here Jawara's account of the use (bordering on abuse) of donkeys mirrors another film, Robert Bresson's *Au Hussard Balthazar*. In this film Bresson does indeed cast Balthazar the donkey as a kind of anachronism trapped within modern France, but he, like Jawara, is more attuned to the "saintly" quality of Balthazar and the meaning of his suffering and sacrifice than Sembène. Jawara, ever the veterinarian at heart, is careful to note the complexities of an African associating himself with animals. In Glasgow, while training to be a veterinarian, Jawara earned the nickname "Zoo" from a good friend because he constantly placed first on Zoology exams. He was glad the nickname did not stick because he was worried that small minded people would associate it with well-worn racist tropes associating Africans with animals.<sup>527</sup>

Indeed, it is important to remember that when discussing animals in the context of African history the discussion will carry a unique weight due to the legacy of scientific racism on the continent. Images of European doctors dissecting Africans to prove their proximity to "lower" forms of animal life and thus establish Europeans at the top of the evolutionary chain of being are unavoidable as are more prosaic slurs which equate Africans with animals. Though the ideology which equates Africans and animals lingers on to this day, the scientific basis of these claims has, by now, been thoroughly discredited. Scientists no longer believe that there are human "races" which exist objectively and which can be placed on the rungs of an evolutionary ladder. There is no scientific basis to the category of race. Instead of racism being created by the existence of different races, we understand that races are created by racism.

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<sup>526</sup> Jawara, 25.

<sup>527</sup> Jawara, 163.

Class, however, can be as important a determinant of how animals are connected to human beings in the city as race. Consider Vendredi the goat from Sembène's *God's Bits of Wood*. Vendredi is cast by Sembène as a bloated, greedy bourgeois and a menace to Dakar's urban women. When he invades Ramatoulaye's kitchen and eats the last of her food she cuts Vendredi's throat and serves him up to the community to ease the suffering caused by the general strike.<sup>528</sup> What is so interesting about this treatment is the way that Sembène's characters again and again disavow violence against the representatives of the railroad company and only resort to violence in self-defense when attacked by the police. Why should this be so? It can be convincingly argued that the owners of the railroad company were growing fat from the labor of the workers in the same way that Vendredi the goat grew fat by eating their food. A comparison with Richard Darnton's study of the "cat massacre" of rue Saint-Severin, Paris in the 1730s may be illuminating. When the workers of rue Saint-Severin had finally had enough of their abusive, exploitative employers they directed their violent attention not towards their employers, but towards their employers' cats.<sup>529</sup> The workers beat cats, now recast as the bourgeoisie, half to death and broke their spines, gathered them in a sack, dumped them in a courtyard, held a kangaroo court trial, and then began hanging cats. Sembène, like these workers, runs into the central tenet of liberal humanism. *Human* life is sacred. Animal life is not. Even the bourgeois, the exploiter of labor, is human and thus Sembène cannot write bloody revolution into his novel. Instead, the animal must be sacrificed. In doing so Sembène accepts what Derrida calls the "sacrificial structure" for the "non-criminal putting to death" of the animal.<sup>530</sup> When, after all, has "thou shalt not kill" been applied to animals? Instead of violent retribution against the bourgeoisie, the nonhuman other is marked as the scapegoat and sacrificed. Sembène even justifies the killing of Vendredi not out of necessity, but in reference to the law. "Didn't he (Vendredi) commit an offense against the law" asks one of the women.<sup>531</sup> Didn't the bourgeois?

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<sup>528</sup> Ousman Sembène. 1995. *God's Bits of Wood*. Translated by Francis Price. (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 67.

<sup>529</sup> Robert Darnton. 2009. *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Events in French Cultural History*. (New York: Basic Books.

<sup>530</sup> Jacques Derrida. 1991. "Eating Well or the Calculation of the subject" in *Who Comes After the Subject*. Edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy. New York: Routledge.

<sup>531</sup> Sembène, *God's Bits of Wood*, 111

In the opening scene of Djibril Diop Mambéty's *Touki Bouki* a young boy rides a bullock through the countryside. Soon thereafter the animal is slaughtered and the skull is mounted on a motorbike which speeds through urban Dakar.<sup>532</sup> Later in the movie the same skull is mounted on a sign which reads “Modern Africa.” The animal has been slaughtered and modern, urban life can begin. *Touki Bouki* translates as “Journey of the Hyena”. Mory, the main character, may act like a hyena in the city, but there is little room for actual nonhuman animals in the city. If the point was not clear enough Mambéty drives it home with an extended shot of actual footage from a slaughterhouse. The camera lingers as the throats of live cattle are cut and their blood spurts onto the slaughterhouse floor. The verdict for the urban animal is sacrifice and, lest we forget, not all sacrifices are symbolic. There is no doubt that urbanization and slaughter have historically walked hand in hand, but it is not the whole story.

Sembene shares Mambéty's insistence that the machine must replace the animal. When the railway workers go on strike and stop the machines in *God's Bits of Wood*, they suddenly become aware of how dependent they are on them. Sembène contrasts the labor of a horse with “meagre flanks” whinnying pitifully with foam like glue dripping from its mouth while its master beats it and spurs it on with the ease with which a worker can guide a machine where he wants it to go such that “I don't even know any longer whether it is my heart that is beating to the rhythm of the engine or the engine to the rhythm of my heart.”<sup>533</sup> Ngugi concludes similarly that only human beings have been able to “trap and yoke the wind, water, lightning, and steam.”<sup>534</sup> The terms “trap and yoke” which are often applied to animals are not accidental. Ngugi continues to explain how animals lay themselves low before nature while human beings wrestle with and try to command it through manual labor aided by the power of machinery. What Ngugi fears most, as do all humanists, is that the equation might be reversed and men might be turned into beasts prostrate before nature and their fellow man.

Modernity did not invent the sacrifice of “the animal,” but it did magnify it. Meat used to be a luxury. Now the consumption of meat is inseparable from a “modern” dietary regime. Nor is it merely a

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<sup>532</sup> Djibril Diop Mambéty. 1973. *Touki Bouki*. Kino Video.

<sup>533</sup> Sembene, *God's Bits of Wood*, 46-47, 210 .

<sup>534</sup> Wa' Thiong'o, 52.

Western phenomenon anymore. In fact, 60% of factory farms are located in what is often called the “third world.” Although the factory farming of animals for meat has spread more quickly in South America, it is poised to explode in Africa. International corporations are buying hundreds of thousands of acres of land in Africa which will be turned into factory farms and local entrepreneurs are following suit. The Pharos Micro Agriculture Fund has purchased 300,000 hectares in Tanzania to begin farming beef and poultry, in South Africa the majority of beef is produced in factory farms, in Nigeria and Egypt vast poultry farms are as adept at spreading avian flu and killing birds as they are at producing poultry, and the list goes on. Scholars not inclined to consider the implications of factory farming for animals at least need to begin considering the implications of turning hundreds of thousands of acres of productive farm land over to growing grain for factory farmed beef and poultry instead of human consumption.

Might modernity also be used to challenge this trend? Dipesh Chakrabarty asks us to call collective violence the “in-humanity” of human beings because the inhuman is nowhere but in us.<sup>535</sup> Recognizing the “other” in the self seems like a promising move and one that is possible within modernity. Chakrabarty’s solution, culled primarily from Emmanuel Lévinas, is to recognize the *face* of the other and come face-to face (*tête-à-tête*) with them. For Lévinas the face-to-face encounter carries with it a moral imperative to recognize the *other as human* and the commandment “Though shalt not kill.”<sup>536</sup> The problem, for our purposes, is twofold: Lévinas’ ethics are grounded in the relationship between one *human* face staring into another and the ethical imperative/commandment “thou shalt not kill” creates as many problems as solutions when it is raised in regards to animals. If it is not exactly possible to have a *tête-à-tête* with a goat, it is near impossible to stare into a proboscis and compound eyes. What of rats, bats, mosquitoes and those animals we primarily identify as swarms rather than by individual faces? How do we conceive of those animals commonly labeled as “pests” or “vermin?” We could argue that we have more of an ethical responsibility towards animals which are more like us. Then again, we would not sound very different from Hegelian justifications for colonialism which judged the

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<sup>535</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty. 2002. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 142.

<sup>536</sup> Lévinas, Emmanuel, and Philippe Nemo. 1985. *Ethics and infinity*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press



value of other civilizations based on their participation in the “world spirit” or their deviance from the European norm. The more like “us,” the greater the need for protection. There is no doubt that a connection exists between colonizing those peoples who do not participate in the spirit and slaughtering those animals who are least like us.

This is precisely why arguing within modernity is insufficient to deal with the “question of the animal.” Attempts to extend the guarantees of liberal humanism to animals seek to simplify the situation by positing the existence of “the animal,” which Derrida warns us against.<sup>537</sup> When we finally recognize the overwhelming heterogeneity of animal life we must also realize the futility of any single ethical imperative commandment towards the abstraction of “the animal.” This cannot, however, mean relativism. The deconstruction of the familiar dyads (man/animal, traditional/modern, urban/rural) is a start, but deconstruction is not, in and of itself, the goal. Instead, let us follow the second wave of postmodernism in search of the postmodern animal<sup>538</sup> in an entirely serious act of reconstruction,<sup>539</sup> but one which refuses to resurrect the boundary between human animals and non-human animals.<sup>540</sup> Animals and human beings, in other words, need to be seen as differing in degree rather than in kind. The boundary between the city and “nature” seems less certain than ever.<sup>541</sup> It is from this perspective that Yann Martel declares, “If you took the city of Tokyo and turned it upside down and shook it you would be amazed at the animals that fall out: badgers, wolves, boa constrictors, crocodiles, ostriches, baboons, capybaras, wild boars, leopards, manatees, ruminants, in untold numbers. There is no doubt in my mind that feral giraffes and feral hippos have been living in Tokyo for generations without seeing a soul.”<sup>542</sup> It is a hyperbolic statement, but it is a place to start from.

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<sup>537</sup> Derrida, “The Animal”

<sup>538</sup> Baker, 2000.

<sup>539</sup> Wendy Wheeler. 1999. *A New Modernity? Change in Science, Literature and Politics*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.

<sup>540</sup> Donna Haraway. 2000. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books.

<sup>541</sup> William Cronon. 1991. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton.

<sup>542</sup> Yann Martel. 2001. *Life of Pi: A Novel*. New York: Harcourt.

## MOSQUITOES, GANGSTERS, AND WARRIOR KINGS

In *The Dual Mandate* Lord Lugard described a phenomenon which he found to be common to “Indian or African gentleman” who did not understand “mosquito theories” of malaria. One Muslim deputation said to Lugard, “God made the mosquito larvae... for God’s sake let the larvae live,” in response to colonial plans to wage chemical warfare against mosquito breeding grounds.<sup>543</sup> Gambians expressed similar opinions about tsetse flies. According to protectorate medical officers, the fly was called a “visitation from God” and there was intense skepticism about fighting them, likening the task to “attempting to drain the ocean.”<sup>544</sup> The most common European explanations for local resistance to eradication campaigns were “native ignorance” and “fatalism.” An alternative position is that colonized and soon to be colonized peoples perceived the campaigns to be part and parcel of the project of colonization. There is good evidence that Europeans, despite their protestations that mosquito eradication was merely in the interest of the health of locals, were also motivated by the toll that disease has historically wrought on Europeans in Africa and the difficulties which this imposed on their ability to maintain colonial administrations on the continent. The scientific control of nature, in other words, was seen as the final front in the battle for Africa against the most determined of all enemies. Upon learning that malaria was spread by mosquitos, British historian William Winwood Reade said “Disease will be extirpated...Immortality will be invented...Finally men will master the forces of nature, they will become themselves architects of systems, manufacturers of worlds.”<sup>545</sup> (Figure 21) Perhaps Fanon put it best. “That is why we must put the DDT which destroys parasites, the bearers of disease,” he wrote, “on the same level as the Christian religion which wages war on embryonic heresies and instincts, and on evil as

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<sup>543</sup> Lord Frederick J.D. Lugard. 1965. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. New York: Routledge, 150.

<sup>544</sup> NRO: CSO 1/153 H.H. Read Senior Medical Officer and E. Hopkinson Protectorate Medical Officer, September 22, 1911.

<sup>545</sup> Cited in Gordon Harrison. 1978. *Mosquitoes, Malaria, and Man: A History of the Hostilities Since 1880*. E.P. Dutton: New York.

yet unborn.”<sup>546</sup> “The recession of yellow fever and the advance of evangelization,” he concluded, “form part of the same balance sheet.”<sup>547</sup>

The linkage between colonial conquest, conversion, and the conquest of nature in discourse is not merely a European one. In *Natures of Colonial Change*, for example, Jacob Tropp describes how some of the most powerful stories Mfengu residents of the Gqoqora area of the Transkei in South Africa tell about colonial conquest are about a missionary who killed a great snake in order to build his church.<sup>548</sup> The snake and other wild animals like it which Europeans routinely hunted and killed with firearms were often symbols of the community associated with ancestral spirits and the initiation of young members into the community. Europeans not only killed these animals and forcibly established churches, potent symbols of colonialism if ever there was one, but they appropriated their power for their own inscrutable purposes.<sup>549</sup> In other words, locals closely associated the ability of Europeans to kill animals and dominate nature with their ability to extend colonial domination into their communal and private lives by disrupting their religious and social institutions.

Following the end of the soninke-marabout wars and the few “punitive expeditions” of the late nineteenth century the British felt quite comfortable with their hold on The Gambia. In the protectorate a system of *seyfolu* (chiefs) was established in which villages elected their own *seyfos* and headmen who administered a system of “native tribunals” enforced by “badge messengers” who acted as the protectorate police force. The travelling commissioners who began visiting the protectorate to oversee the system returned optimistic reports of a well-ordered system being more or less efficiently run despite some abuses. The most common complaint was that “native tribunals” often punished infractions with too much zeal. Occasionally a chief was removed when his people lodged complaints against him, but generally the administration was comfortable with the organization of the protectorate. There was, of course, a great deal that the travelling commissioners missed because they were absent for most of the

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<sup>546</sup> Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 42.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

<sup>548</sup> Jacob A. Tropp. 2006. *Natures of Colonial Change: Environmental Relations in the Making of the Transkei*. Ohio University Press: Athens.

<sup>549</sup> Tropp, 157.

year. For our purposes it is essential merely to understand how the British perception that the colony was running smoothly shaped their administrative policies.

As the threat from warrior kings subsided a new menace emerged to take its place: the wild animal. One of the key goals of the pacification campaign waged before colonial takeover of the protectorate was to impound guns and powder. British led troops went hut to hut seizing whatever weapons they could, but in doing so they rendered local communities unable to hunt or defend themselves from wild animals.

We all realize that our civilization and our protection has done everything for the country, but this civilization helps little...any individual cow against a hyena or a leopard, or any individual farm against the onslaught of an army of baboons. As we cannot civilize the beasts we must do our best to aid the people against them.<sup>550</sup>

The comparisons between animals and enemy troops did not end there. One official expressed fears that there was “some danger that the baboons and pigs were taking over the administration of the protectorate from the colonial service.”<sup>551</sup> These types of metaphors were used to justify the wanton destruction of animals in rural areas by offering rewards for baboon tails. Once their tails were removed some dead baboons were fed to hungry crocodiles. The slaughter was so prolific that officials began to worry about the “chimera industry” of forging baboon tails as well as individuals cutting off the tails of live baboons.<sup>552</sup>

If officials in the protectorate were worried about baboons and wild pigs, the Bathurst administration was worried about threats both smaller and larger. On April 18, the British administration passed the Public Nuisance Ordinance of 1870 which gave justices of the peace and appointed constables the right to identify and control “nuisances” in the city. Although originally meant to target the way that the city’s human animals disposed of their trash, it also began to structure the way that the sanitary administration controlled the city’s non-human animals. In Bathurst mosquitos became “public enemy number one” under the nuisances ordinance.

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<sup>550</sup> NRO: CSO 2/524 Dr. E. Hopkinson, Notes on the Gambia Protectorate Laws.

<sup>551</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3208 Destruction of Noxious Beasts.

<sup>552</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3208 Destruction of Noxious Beasts.

In the late nineteenth century the malarial parasite remained a mystery. Some colonial officials in Gambia still espoused the miasma theory of malaria (indeed the term malaria derives from the Old Italian for bad air) and called for increased sporting and physical activity, a healthy public spirit, and temperance and prophylactics long after those these views were well out of the mainstream.<sup>553</sup> Alphonse Laveran, a researcher in Algeria, had demonstrated conclusively by 1880 that malaria was caused by a protozoan known as plasmodium.<sup>554</sup> Yet questions remained about how it enters the body, its demands for “extra-corporeal propagation,” and the biological requirements of the “malarial animal.”<sup>555</sup> Finally, in 1898 Ronald Ross proved that the malarial parasite gestated in mosquitos and his findings were confirmed in 1900. The colonial state wasted no time in implementing these findings. By 1903 the inspector of nuisances in Bathurst was inspecting gardens, yards, and compounds for mosquito larvae and citing property owners who failed to manage standing water on their property for nuisances.<sup>556</sup> By 1906 the anti-malaria campaign was being run by the Inspector of Nuisances, an Assistant Sanitary Inspector, and 10 sanitary workers who targeted stagnant water for filling, emptying, or treatment with kerosene as well as distributing anti-malaria propaganda pamphlets.<sup>557</sup> To measure their progress the state began measuring the spleens of school children and compiling a “splenic index.” It would not be long before residents of the city developed spleen of their own in the way that Baudelaire used the term.

The burden of administering to the whole city with a small group quickly became apparent and sanitary authorities looked to property owners to take care of their own wells by stocking them with fish that ate mosquito larvae.<sup>558</sup> It was discovered that if the fish were not fed they became hungry and began to eat mosquito larvae. Pits were even dug at the bottom of wells to shelter the fish from egrets and kingfishers who had adapted to the presence of fish in wells and began hunting throughout the city.<sup>559</sup> Shifting the burden of anti-mosquito measures onto city residents also meant an increase in prosecutions for

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<sup>553</sup> NRO: CSO 1/134 Dr. Manson to the Colonial Office, December 4, 1897.

<sup>554</sup> Harrison, 12.

<sup>555</sup> NRO: CSO 1/134 Dr. Manson to the Under Secretary of State, December 4, 1897.

<sup>556</sup> NRO: CSO 1/146 Annual Medical Report for The Gambia for the Year 1903, 13.

<sup>557</sup> NRO: CSO 1/148 R.M. Forde Senior Medical Officer to Governor Denton July 16, 1906.

<sup>558</sup> NRO CSO 1/155 Annual Sanitary Report for The Gambia for the Year 1913.

<sup>559</sup> NRO: CSO 1/157 Medical and Sanitary Report for The Gambia for the Year 1915.

failing to follow sanitary regulations. Indeed, the sanitary inspector began to urge all cases in which mosquito larvae were found to be prosecuted without exception.<sup>560</sup> Residents often resented the summary convictions for violating sanitary orders which was only amplified by the fact that the nuisance inspectors were virtually all Akus in an overwhelmingly Muslim city.<sup>561</sup> In 1912 only nine people were charged with nuisances for mosquito larvae. In 1913 and 1914 prosecutions rose to 164 and 198 respectively before ballooning in 1915 to 407 prosecutions.<sup>562</sup> To make matters worse, the mosquito infestation was not getting noticeably better. The sanitary state was merely prosecuting an increasingly zealous campaign against “nuisances.”

Nevertheless they persisted and by 1916 sanitary authorities finally seemed to have the mosquito population under control. Larval indexes seemed to back up their claim.

Table 1: Larval Index for Bathurst 1913-1918

	Larvae Found <sup>563</sup>
1913	957
1914	1,036
1915	622
1916	265
1917	238
1918	149

1917 was an especially optimistic year because pipe-borne water was introduced to the city and wells abolished which allowed the administration to condemn and close 97 cesspits and 76 wells throughout the city.<sup>564</sup> In 1923, however, enthusiasm began to fade as the administration realized that mosquitos were as prevalent as ever in the city. Cases of malaria treated in the hospital went from 118 in 1918 to 498 in

<sup>560</sup> NRO: CSO 1/157 Medical and Sanitary Report for The Gambia for the Year 1915.

<sup>561</sup> NRO: CSO 1/162 Medical and Sanitary Report for The Gambia for the Year 1918.

<sup>562</sup> NRO: CSO 1/157 Medical and Sanitary Report for The Gambia for the Year 1915.

<sup>563</sup> Annual Report for the Colony of The Gambia 1916.

<sup>564</sup> Annual Report for the Colony of The Gambia, 1917.

1923.<sup>565</sup> The African inspector of nuisances and sanitary workers were blamed and called unqualified. Hygiene lectures for teachers and sanitary workers were instituted to try and exercise more control over sanitary workers. By 1931, however, the administration was still talking about “constant warfare against insect pests” and lamenting the fact that pesticides were too expensive to put into widespread use.<sup>566</sup> Even crabs were blamed for the mosquito population. Mosquitos, it was argued, bred prolifically in the holes dug by small crabs which were extremely difficult for sanitary authorities to find. Cases of malaria treated at the hospital were only increasing. Although it is impossible to say whether cases were actually increasing or the population was increasingly comfortable with seeking treatment at the hospital, it is clear that the administration perceived the cases to be increasing.

Table 2: Cases of Malaria Treated in Bathurst 1918-1934

	Cases of Malaria Treated
1918	118
1923	498
1929	333
1932	632
1933	811
1934	934

Frustration over attempts to control mosquito populations boiled over in 1924 when yellow fever, a disease carried by the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito, broke out in Bathurst.<sup>567</sup> Since many of the larger trees of The Gambia have hollows which hold water and the administration believed they were the primary breeding places of the *Aedes* mosquito, in 1935 the administration chopped down every silk cotton,

<sup>565</sup> Annual Report for the Colony of The Gambia 1918 and 1923.

<sup>566</sup> Annual Report for the Colony of The Gambia 1931.

<sup>567</sup> Annual Report for the Colony of The Gambia 1934.

baobab, mahogany, and other “flamboyant trees” in the city to reduce the breeding places of mosquitos.<sup>568</sup> (Figure 25) In some areas like Buckle Street, where it bordered Half Die, the trees were so numerous that they constituted a “virtual forest” within the urban jungle that residents valued for the copious shade it provided.<sup>569</sup> Thousands of trees were cut down. Many locals saw the tree cutting as an affront to the *jinnolu* of the trees and feared retribution from the spirit world. In their place the administration planted “ornamental trees” that were less conducive to breeding mosquitos and in line with the modern, bourgeois aesthetic the British and African rate paying class were trying to inculcate in the city. The Horticultural Society, or what the Senior Agricultural Superintendent called “men of the trees,” was the most prominent organization dedicated to the campaign to plant ornamental trees. The Agricultural Superintendent’s remarks show that even the administration was critical of the city’s upper class and their attempts to push tree planting programs ahead. Among poorer city dwellers the “ornamental” trees were extremely unpopular. They allowed their animals to graze on ornamental trees and occasionally uprooted ornamental trees as protest despite warnings from the Town Council that repressive measures might have to be used to stop the practice.<sup>570</sup> When the administration came to the conclusion that it lacked the labor power and capital to engage in the Sisyphean task of replanting trees, the Horticultural Society suggested that prison labor be exploited instead.<sup>571</sup> When Lady Southorn declared the Horticultural Society was creating “a love for flowers... which bind all classes and all races together” through gardening she may have been exaggerating.<sup>572</sup> In fact, many gardens were hidden behind krinting fences in the homes of the city’s European and upwardly mobile class of African residents. Among the city’s upwardly mobile, maintaining a garden behind one’s fence became a sign of bourgeois respectability for the guests invited beyond the gates. Under Governor Percy and his wife Lady Wyn-Harris, an annual Horticultural Show

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<sup>568</sup> NRO: CSO 3/348 Dr. J.A.A. Duncan, A Report on the Sanitary Condition of Bathurst February 1935.

<sup>569</sup> Jawara, 14.

<sup>570</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, October 19, 1964, 2.

<sup>571</sup> NRO: CSO 3/353 Trees Between Bathurst and Cape St. Mary, Senior Agricultural Superintendent to the Colonial Secretary December 8, 1938.

<sup>572</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 30, 1937, 5.



did, indeed, become popular with some urban dwellers.<sup>573</sup> Prizes were offered for the best flowers, fruits, and vegetables. When describing the effect that his garden had on him, Jawara specifically cited the refreshing breezes and feelings of clean freshness he got from the decorative trees and gardens of his home.

Attempts to “bring out the talent for gardening in every British heart and to make the sandy soil of Bathurst blossom as the rose,” however, were unconvincing to Gambians whose goats and sheep were being removed from the city for flowers.<sup>574</sup> The history of attempting to train Gambians to appreciate the virtues of gardening actually dates back to the late 1890s. In 1896 it was suggested to send “West African lads” to train at the Botanical Gardens in Jamaica and the Royal Gardens at Kew, but just as later efforts, little seems to have come of it.<sup>575</sup> Subsequent efforts to build Botanical Stations in The Gambia were equally tendentious. In 1894 buildings meant to support a botanical garden at Kotu were shoddily erected without following building plans and the entire endeavor collapsed only to be revived a few short years later. In 1901, however, the station at Kotu was found to be in a similar state with £3,463 being spent and nothing to show for it.<sup>576</sup>

The tree cutting campaign seems to have reduced *Aedes* mosquito populations responsible for yellow fever, but not *Anopheles*, malarial mosquitos, and in 1938 the sanitary administration decided to resort to chemical warfare. The mosquito patrols began spraying homes, streets, businesses, and standing water with sulfur dioxide or paris green. Although initial efforts were encouraging, over time the mosquitos developed immunity to these toxic substances so that neither one was estimated to be more than 58% effective.<sup>577</sup> In the 1950s Gammaxene (also known as Lindane), a neurotoxic insecticide, was first used. The rate paying public, however, was unhappy about the way that it stained the walls and floors of their houses, so DDT was substituted.<sup>578</sup> Invented during World War II and used to delouse soldiers at

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<sup>573</sup> Jawara, 170.

<sup>574</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* March 7, 1938, 5.

<sup>575</sup> NRO: CSO 1/130 Minute Paper June 6, 1896.

<sup>576</sup> NRO: CSO 1/142 W.T. Thiselton-Dyer to Antrodus, December 23, 1901.

<sup>577</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1721 Medical and Sanitary Report for The Gambia for the Year 1938.

<sup>578</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, May 31, 1954, 1.

the front, DDT was the cheapest, most effective pesticide in history, and it did not damage the interior of homes. In 1959 the administration began “fogging” DDT or dispersing the liquid chemical into the air.<sup>579</sup> The toll that spraying these toxic substances took on the city’s animals, human and non-human, is unknown. It certainly did not eradicate the mosquito population. The only clue we have is that the insecticide sprayed on groundnuts shipped to Bathurst was causing laborers at the Denton Bridge Mill who sorted the nuts to have sudden fits of illness in which they fell down convulsing and foaming at the mouth.<sup>580</sup> Rumors circulated that the Oyster Creek jinn was demanding the sacrifice of a calf as was done when the Denton Bridge was first built.<sup>581</sup> Given the importance of groundnuts to the economy and the stress that the state put on anti-mosquito sanitation in the city, no investigations were ever held into insecticides, jinns, or other invisible killers. It is now widely known that DDT has been linked to cancer, brain damage, and liver failure in human beings.

All of these efforts, of course, failed. Although DDT has worked quite well in some temperate zones, it has never succeeded in denting malaria in tropical regions of the earth where malarial mosquitos are hyperendemic. In propaganda that played on the popularity of American gangster films mosquitos began to be portrayed as criminals outside of the law. In an article in the *Echo* titled “The Gangsters Among the Insects,” malarial mosquitoes were said to “cover the whole world in great numbers” and to play on human life.<sup>582</sup> “When the G-Men attacked the American gangsters they were backed up by the law,” the editorial reckoned, but the sanitary inspectors had to fight “billions and billions of enemies” who recognized no human law rather than a few gangsters.<sup>583</sup> In the standard organized crime story (real or fictional) the central character is always the boss. The police have a Don Corleone, a Pablo Escobar, or an Al Capone who is the linchpin holding together the crime syndicate. In The Gambia the British had their warrior kings, Fodey Kaabah, Fodey Silla, and Musa Molloh. When the great warrior kings were defeated the colony was largely pacified. Mosquitos do not follow hierarchical organization. They swarm

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<sup>579</sup> Annual Report for the Colony of The Gambia 1959.

<sup>580</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 12, 1959, 4.

<sup>581</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, January 12, 1959, 4.

<sup>582</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* May 6, 1940, 1.

<sup>583</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* May 6, 1940, 1.

and exploit every vector available to them.<sup>584</sup> They are a vast multiplicity and there is nothing the British understood less than that. This is precisely the point Pontecorvo makes in *The Battle of Algiers*. The French treat the FLN as they do any other crime syndicate, striking at its officers one by one until they reach its leader, Jafar.<sup>585</sup> Believing themselves to have stamped out the rebellion they are shocked when Algerians swarm the streets in great numbers and win their independence.

In retrospect the failure of the administration to eradicate mosquitos in an environment where they were hyperendemic is no more surprising than the inability of the colonial state to perpetuate itself. If efforts to eradicate mosquitos had killed off all but one female, that mosquito would have gone on to lay about ten clutches of eggs in her lifetime with an average of 200 and as many as 500 eggs per clutch. Within five generations, assuming 200 eggs per clutch and an average number of females capable of reproduction born per clutch, the population would be restored to twenty million.<sup>586</sup> This is precisely the strength of mosquitoes. They survive not due to qualities of any one individual, but through their ability to quickly adapt and multiply. They abandon inhospitable environmental niches as quickly as they occupy new ones. When Timothy Mitchell likens mosquitos to capitalists and colonialists exploiting vectors and spreading to new lands, it is also important to remember that colonialists first compared “natives” to mosquitos in order to justify colonization and eradication.<sup>587</sup>

“Civilized modes of life” have increased the prevalence of a disease known as cancer. The cells of the human body constantly die and are replaced, but cancer cells “break the law” and “multiply beyond the requirement for replacement.” These extra cells are called tumors. They invade nearby organs and cells choking them with their “diabolic capacity for multiplication.”

Gambia Echo May 31, 1954, 2

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<sup>584</sup> Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>585</sup> Gillo Pontecorvo. 1966. *The Battle of Algiers*. La Vergne: Ingram Video.

<sup>586</sup> Harrison, 142.

<sup>587</sup> Mitchell, 31.

## PARIAH DOGS

Although mosquitos received the most and the earliest attention from sanitary inspectors as the state increasingly desired to modernize the city other nonhuman animals also became targets. The administration's policy towards mosquitos was always extermination, but goats and sheep were considered property and primarily dealt with through segregation. For dogs it was a mix of both. Licensed and registered dogs were protected property while unlicensed, unregistered dogs were increasingly arrested and executed by sanitary authorities. Dogs were among the first animals to be singled out as public “nuisances.” In 1890 and 1901 dog license ordinances were passed to regulate the city’s canine population. Also, in 1890, an Ordinance to Impose a Duty on Dogs was passed, intended to “suppress the nuisance caused by stray dogs” who roamed the street and howled at night, keeping the city’s human animals awake.<sup>588</sup> During the debate over the ordinance Samuel Forster, one of the two African unofficial members of the Legislative Council, protested that the fee of 5/- was too high. The poorer residents of the city, especially of Half Die, kept dogs in order to keep thieves at bay and could not afford the fee.<sup>589</sup> Forster recognized that the dog duty would force the poor to give up ownership of their dogs. Although modern people tend to assume that pet ownership is a bourgeois phenomenon, it only became so in Bathurst when the administration taxed it out of the reach of the poor. There is no evidence that the ordinance helped to control the animal population and much evidence that it hurt the city’s poor, who were the most numerous dog owners. Unlike modern, bourgeois notions of domestication and pet ownership, Bathurst’s poor considered their dogs to be working members of the household who performed an essential purpose in keeping the home safe. In the end the duty was imposed and Forster fell in line with the European members of the council. Not that it mattered. The African members of the legislative council were not voting members anyway.

It soon became clear that imposing duties and licenses on dogs was not an effective policy unless unlicensed dogs were rounded up. Since it was impossible to distinguish a licensed dog from an

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<sup>588</sup> NRO: PUB 14/1 Minutes of the Legislative Council 1888-1902, 1980.

<sup>589</sup> NRO: PUB 14/1 Minutes of the Legislative Council 1888-1902, 1980.

unlicensed one roundups were difficult in practice. Although the license ordinance of 1901 was still in effect the administration wanted stronger legislation which would give it more freedom and place more restrictions on dog owners. A 1913 ordinance required that all dogs wear a “suitable collar” with the license attached to it instead of the owner keeping a license separate from the dog.<sup>590</sup> The collar ordinance allowed sanitary workers to identify and round up collarless street dogs without the fear that their owners would complain and come to reclaim their “property.” In 1913, 82 dogs were caught by the police which was the highest total in the history of the city.<sup>591</sup> In the case that dogs were seized owners were given three days to claim their seized dogs before the dogs would be executed. Licensed, collared dogs, on the other hand, would be chased out of the market or other public places, but not arrested. In 1914, 60 more stray dogs were captured and a stray dog ordinance was suggested which would take the power to award dog licenses out of the hands of the administration and put it directly under police control.<sup>592</sup>

Licenses and registrations, however, failed to ameliorate the situation. By the 1920s the police were more exasperated with urban dogs than ever. In 1923 police reports described streets full of “obviously unowned or neglected mongrels” wandering the streets and suffering from mange or other diseases.<sup>593</sup> The report also referred to the dogs as pie-dogs, a reference to the pariah or pye-dogs the British encountered in India. The pie-dogs of India were semi-domesticated and continued to maintain an existence somewhere between urban and rural life. For the British the pie-dog represented an anomaly in the taxonomy of things. It frequented urban haunts without becoming domesticated and thus existed in the liminal zone between the city and countryside, the domesticated animal and the wild. The name pariah or pie/pye dogs conjured the pariah<sup>594</sup> caste of some Indian localities as well as its biblical use which implied leprosy and status as an outcast or nonperson. The police requested that new legislation be passed which would allow them to kill such dogs on sight regardless of whether or not they were licensed. In 1924 this legislation was undertaken by the administration and it was passed in 1925. The police were given the

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<sup>590</sup> NRO: CSO 2/164 Dog License Ordinance of 1913.

<sup>591</sup> NRO: CSO 1/155 RO: CSO1/48 Police Force Annual Report 1913.

<sup>592</sup> NRO: CSO 1/156 RO: CSO1/48 Police Force Annual Report 1914.

<sup>593</sup> The Gambia Police Force Annual Report 1923, 5.

<sup>594</sup> An Anglicized form of the word Paraiyar or Parayar originating from Tamil Nadu and Kerela, India.

authority to execute dogs in the streets whether they were licensed or not based solely on the opinion of the officer.<sup>595</sup> In response dog owners stopped licensing their dogs. It made little sense if the police had the authority to kill dogs without discretion. In 1924, 108 dogs were licensed, but by 1928 the number was only 36.<sup>596</sup>

After 1925 and throughout the 1930s the police no longer wrote much about dogs. The problem seemed to have abated, but by the late 1940s dogs were wandering the streets as freely as ever, roaming the market and even visiting the slaughterhouse to feast on offal.<sup>597</sup> They were joined by young boys who visited the slaughterhouse to obtain animal bladders that could be inflated and used as balloons.<sup>598</sup> In 1947 the dogs were still in the market. The Bathurst Town Council lamented that “children’s bread” was being distributed not to children, but to the starving dogs living on the streets of the market.<sup>599</sup> After criticizing the practice of feeding street dogs the council immediately moved on to the topic of employment and declared that jobs meant for “citizens” of the colony should not be given to “aliens” though they admitted it would be nearly impossible to distinguish between the two. After that they moved on to whether or not the working class should be chased from their homes so they could be demolished and new housing established for them. It was considered too contentious an issue to delve into seriously.<sup>600</sup> Not incidentally, all three of these ordinances revolved around the identification of the “Other” and the separation of the citizen and the alien, the classes, and the human from the non-human animals.

In the 1950s health officials were still calling for roundups of stray dogs. In 1950, 200 dogs were rounded up, forty were claimed, and 160 were executed.<sup>601</sup> Although it is unclear when it was built, by this time the health department was employing a “lethal chamber” specifically for the execution of unclaimed dogs. The increasing roundups and executions were justified by anti-rabies propaganda and a rabies certificate became a necessity in order to obtain a dog license. The increasing slaughter of dogs was

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<sup>595</sup> The Gambia Police Force Annual Report 1924 and 1925.

<sup>596</sup> The Gambia Police Force Annual Report 1928.

<sup>597</sup> Raw offal can actually transfer Echinococcus parasites to dogs which can be fatal.

<sup>598</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Bathurst Town Council Minutes of Meetings 14 April 1948.

<sup>599</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Bathurst Town Council Minutes of Meetings 16 April 1947.

<sup>600</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Bathurst Town Council Minutes of Meetings 16 April 1947.

<sup>601</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2920 Report on the Medical and Health Services for the Years 1949-52.

justified through appeals to public health despite a lack of evidence that rabies was significantly advanced in the city. What the administration specifically feared was dogs “wandering the public streets or in the public places suffering from infectious diseases,” and “curs in a pitiful state wandering around the streets” falling down dead in public places.<sup>602</sup> One official likened the situation to the famous dog population of Constantinople in both their numbers and condition. Mark Twain once wrote of the dogs of Constantinople half-humorously and wholly in sympathy:

I never saw such utterly wretched, starving, sad-visaged, broken-hearted looking curs in my life. It seemed a grim satire to accuse such brutes as these of taking things by force of arms. They hardly seemed to have strength enough or ambition enough to walk across the street--I do not know that I have seen one walk that far yet. They are mangy and bruised and mutilated, and often you see one with the hair singed off him... They are the sorriest beasts that breathe--the most abject--the most pitiful. In their faces is a settled expression of melancholy, an air of hopeless despondency...I saw a dog of this kind start to nibble at a flea--a fly attracted his attention, and he made a snatch at him; the flea called for him once more, and that forever unsettled him; he looked sadly at his flea-pasture, then sadly looked at his bald spot. Then he heaved a sigh and dropped his head resignedly upon his paws. He was not equal to the situation.<sup>603</sup>

There were some in Bathurst who expressed similar sentiments. An editorial in the *Gambia Echo* asked why children and sometimes elders threw stones at dogs and cats in the street. The author lamented “the mournful cries of kittens left near incinerators to perish” and other “dumb creatures” suffering in the streets.<sup>604</sup> Another contributor to the *Echo's* “Children’s Corner” described dead cats, fowls, and even dogs being discarded into dustbins and the stench which resulted when the bins were not emptied.<sup>605</sup> These animals, the first contributor claimed, often show more love and friendship than human friends and suggested forming a “Lovers of Animals Society.” In another editorial entitled “Cruelty to Animals” someone under the pen name “A Gambian” fully supported the roundups and executions of dogs by the government in order to control the threat of rabies, but he took exception to the way the workers of the Medical and Health Services handled dogs. “The African population is gravely concerned about the treatment of dogs,” he wrote, and “some of us care very much about our pets and we have been moved to tears to see our beloved creatures almost strangled to death before our eyes by ignorant men who gloat

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<sup>602</sup> NRO: CSO 2/164 Dog License Ordinance of 1913.

<sup>603</sup> Mark Twain. 2007. *The Innocents Abroad*. New York: Signet Classics, 188.

<sup>604</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* 22 September 1952, 8.

<sup>605</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* 1 November 1954, 11.

over their catch.”<sup>606</sup> The solution he proposed was removing the reward paid to workers for each dog caught and devising a less inhumane method of catching dogs. When dogs were seen as public health hazards, in other words, residents were willing to accept their slaughter.

Executions, however, were not linked to rabies tests. Nor did the administration ever consider providing veterinary care for the vast majority of dogs which might be impoverished or mangy, but not infected with rabies. Although there do appear to be cases of rabid dogs reported in the *Gambia Echo*, the number of rabid dogs found and the number of dogs executed are incommensurable. These sorts of massive dog killings were common in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1879 Paris, for example, the “Great Dog Massacres” led to thousands of dogs being indiscriminately killed.<sup>607</sup> By 1885, however, Louis Pasteur had firmly established that his rabies vaccine worked in animals and would soon thereafter demonstrate its effectiveness in human beings. Over time the veterinary services in Europe ceased the massacres and began treating rabies with veterinary care and vaccination. Which is not to say that stray dogs were no longer put down, but that the wide scale massacres ceased. When the dog killings began in Bathurst, in other words, it was more than half a century after the riddle of rabies had been solved. Colonial powers were simply not interested in bringing modern veterinary techniques to Africa.

#### TAME LAMBS, MARAUDERS, AND MUSLIMS

During a debate over public health ordinances in 1892 and 1912 it was argued that goats and sheep in the city were “nuisances,” but not a public health concern. If the purpose of public health was to eliminate all “nuisances,” an official argued, he would “immediately preach a crusade against goats and church bells.”<sup>608</sup> It is striking that just as public health officials are beginning campaigns against rats, mosquitos, and dogs in earnest they see little reason to prosecute urban goats and sheep. The likening of goats to church bells as an annoyance rather than a public health risk is striking. Nor were sheep and goats executed by the state like dogs. They were seen as inherently valuable and explicitly linked to petty

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<sup>606</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* 30 March 1953, 8.

<sup>607</sup> Bill Wasik and Monica Murphy. 2012. *Rabid: A Cultural History of the World's Most Diabolical Virus*. Penguin Book: New York, 100.

<sup>608</sup> NRO: CSO 2/165 Public Health Ordinance of 1912.



cash by the British. When they were arrested and unclaimed the state could always find a buyer for them. Which is not to say that they were not destined for the knife, but rather that they were not put to death by the state under sanitary regulations.

Since registration alone proved ineffective, roundups became a central tenet of city management policy. As with dogs, police found themselves spending as much time chasing sheep and goats through the streets as suspected criminals. In 1904, 119 animals (not including dogs) were arrested and 158 criminals were prosecuted. By 1905, with only 18 police officers walking beats, 424 animals were arrested compared to 146 criminal prosecutions.<sup>609</sup> The police were not terribly fond of spending more time chasing animals around the city than walking beats and deterring crime. For goats and sheep this most likely meant owners would have to pay a fine to reclaim them. In 1905, 386 of the 424 animals seized were reclaimed by their owners and 38 were sold at auction. Any unclaimed dogs, on the other hand, were executed after three days and anti-pig legislation barring pigs from the city meant that they were executed without any hope of being reclaimed.<sup>610</sup>

Enthusiasm for the increased roundups did not last long and efforts waned until the 1920s, as officials became concerned with fostering a modern, bourgeois aesthetic in the city and sheep and goats became the targets of increasing state attention. In 1919, officials were again calling for an ordinance to control goats and sheep in the city, over concerns about the destruction of property. In particular the Chair of the Board of Health cited a “flock of goats about fifty strong (that) grazes on the government land between the Marine Parade and Clifton Road,” which made it impossible to maintain a garden or ornamental shade trees.<sup>611</sup> “It is impossible for anybody but a cowboy on horseback to arrest these marauders with a lasso,” he further lamented. Impounding stray animals and charging the owners was touted as the answer to the problem. By the 1920s the situation had become even more acute. In just one month of 1921, 23 horses, six asses, 82 sheep, 55 goats, nine cows, and one pig were arrested for a total

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<sup>609</sup> NRO: CSO1/48 Police Force Annual Report 1905.

<sup>610</sup> NRO: CSO1/48 Police Force Annual Report 1905.

<sup>611</sup> NRO: CSO 2/319 Board of Health Chair to the Colonial Secretary 16 November 1919.

of 176 animals.<sup>612</sup> “Periodic raids” designed to round up stray animals were instituted, but little progress was realized. The governor of Bathurst continued to demand that monthly roundups of stray animals be increased.<sup>613</sup> His primary complaint was that stray horses, sheep, and goats were roaming the streets and eating the grass which the administration had tried to cultivate in order to make the city aesthetically modern. It was a waste of time planting trees in Bathurst, the governor noted, until the urban sheep and goats stopped destroying them.<sup>614</sup> Unlike pigs which had already been pushed out of the city, sheep and goats were allowed to remain under the condition that they were tethered or kept inside compound walls.

In practice, of course, animals were often left to wander the streets and destroy aesthetic trees and gardens. Even monkeys got in on the act. In 1933 a new urban animal menace reared its head: the “monkey problem.” The global trade in “exotic” animals meant to satisfy collectors, zookeepers, and *avante garde* animal lovers brought traders into Bathurst with monkeys to meet overseas demand. (Figure 29 A) When the traders failed to sell the monkeys they became another “nuisance” for the administration. Monkeys began roaming the streets “at large” causing damage to buildings and destroying flowers.<sup>615</sup> The monkey menace threw a serious wrench into the governor’s attempts to beautify the town. Since there was no law dealing specifically with monkeys the police refused at first to kill them fearing that the owners would take them to court over damages.<sup>616</sup> This soon changed as some urban residents began paying locals to catch and kill monkeys. When no retribution was sought the police began daily executions of any monkeys found about town. The condition of monkeys who did not escape was not much better. The Senior Medical Officer found them “packed and huddled together in a state of terror and devoid of food, water, and ordinary attention.”<sup>617</sup> Forty or so monkeys were kept in wire netting without cleaning so that they quickly became covered in excrement.<sup>618</sup> The solution proposed by the Urban

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<sup>612</sup> NRO: CSO 2/447 Bathurst Improvements, 76.

<sup>613</sup> NRO: CSO 2/447 Bathurst Improvements, 3.

<sup>614</sup> NRO: CSO 2/447 Bathurst Improvements, 71.

<sup>615</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1342 Bathurst Urban District Council Minutes of Meetings held on 12 September 1933.

<sup>616</sup> NRO CSO 2/1393 Monkeys Owned by Residents in Bathurst 1933.

<sup>617</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1342 Bathurst Urban District Council Minutes of Meetings held on 12 September 1933.

<sup>618</sup> NRO CSO 2/1393 Monkeys Owned by Residents in Bathurst 1933.

District Council was to round up the monkeys and drive them across the Denton Bridge where they could return to the land.

Goats and sheep were more problematic. Police began to arrest any stray goat or sheep they found and residents faced increasingly steep fines to redeem them. In 1932 residents of Bathurst pushed back again under the name of Islam. During the Islamic festival of Eid al Adha (known locally as Tabaski) the head of a household was expected to sacrifice a ram. Muslims, Jews, and Christians should all be familiar with the story of Tabaski when God told Abraham, who was ready to sacrifice his son to God, that he should sacrifice a ram in the place of a human sacrifice. In Bathurst, as with the rest of Muslim West Africa, the ability to sacrifice a handsome ram and to distribute meat to neighbors was a powerful marker of social respectability, class status, and Islamic piety. In response to the seizure of stray sheep and goats the Imam of Bathurst penned a letter to the governor asking for permission to allow sacrificial rams to wander the streets as an exception. The Imam alleged that an old woman was deprived of her “tame lambs” and was reduced to begging in the streets in order to redeem them from sanitary inspectors.<sup>619</sup> The administration replied that all animals, sacred and profane, had to be tethered and failure to tether would result in the seizure of the animals by the police; a second seizure would result in a fine. Civic regulations, the governor argued, trumped religious prescriptions.<sup>620</sup> The Imam requested that the state make provision for pastures which were remote from the main thoroughfares and a relaxation of the rules two months before Tabaski, but no such accommodations were made. The Bathurst Advisory Town Council (BATC), which was composed of and represented the city’s wealthier rate paying residents, put the blame squarely on the “Narrs” (Mauritanians) who sold sheep in the city and suggested if they were prohibited from owning animals the problem would disappear.<sup>621</sup>

The administration hoped that tighter enforcement of tethering restrictions would teach urban dwellers to keep their animals off the streets. To comply with regulations residents did begin to build

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<sup>619</sup> NRO: CSO 2/447 Imam Omar Sowe to the Colonial Secretary, 1932.

<sup>620</sup> NRO: CSO 2/447 Bathurst Improvements, 164.

<sup>621</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Bathurst Advisory Town Council Minutes of Meetings 27 September 1938.

sheds in their compounds to keep goats and sheep.<sup>622</sup> The problem, however, did not abate and in 1935 sheep and goats were still roaming the streets.<sup>623</sup> Finally, the administration had enough. In 1938 the Medical Officer of Health argued that keeping sheep and goats from roaming the street was no longer a sufficient measure to control the animals. Their very presence in compounds was recast as a health hazard because they “fouled the ground,” bred flies, and were the cause of infantile diarrhea and mortality.<sup>624</sup> One quarter of infantile deaths, he argued, were from tetanus spread through animal feces. Residents pushed back against these claims, arguing that while medical reform was welcomed outright prohibition of animals was not. Goat’s milk, they claimed, was beneficial to infant health because without it even more infants would die from starvation and malnutrition.<sup>625</sup> The BATC argued, once again, that health violations were only created by lower class residents of the city and “Nars” and that rate payers should be allowed to keep their animals. It was a losing argument, and the Public Health Regulations of 1938 banned all animals west of the general cemetery without written permission from the health officer.

Not until 1951 was the ban relaxed and sheep were allowed in the city four weeks before Tabaski. Even then the administration complained of disruptions to traffic, decreased sanitary standards, and an increase in the numbers of flies in the city.<sup>626</sup> The Imam of Bathurst and Muslim elders also expressed their dissatisfaction because allowing the sheep in the city for only four weeks meant that sheep sellers moved into the city with their herds and charged exorbitant prices to urban dwellers who had limited time to purchase their sacrificial rams. Rams worth 30/- or 40/- were selling at 70, 90, or 100/-. “Humanly speaking,” S.B. Gaye quipped, the community was willing to follow the sanitation laws, but they needed three or four months to fulfill their religious obligations.<sup>627</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1201 Report on the Cattle, Sheep, and Goats Industry in The Gambia 1932.

<sup>623</sup> NRO: CSO 2/816 A Report on the Sanitary Condition of Bathurst 1935.

<sup>624</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Bathurst Advisory Town Council Minutes of Meetings 28 June 1938.

<sup>625</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1708 Sheep and Goats, Councilor Jolof Town North Ward to the Chairman of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council September 8, 1938.

<sup>626</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2927 Public Health Regulations, The Control of Animals Regulations of 1950.

<sup>627</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3018 Visit to Government House by Almami and Muslim Elders 1952.

## HUMANE KILLING: CATTLE AND THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

In Reverend R. Maxwell MacBriar's 1839 Mandinka Grammar the word for butcher is *ninsefarla* (*niinsifaala* in contemporary Mandinka) which literally translates to cow killer. Niinsifaala like jelis or griots, blacksmiths, leather workers, and other ritual specialists were said to be *naamakala* with protection from *naama*, the spiritual properties of their trades. Not anyone could be *niinsifaala*. Nor could anyone simply butcher a cow without social sanction. While cows were slaughtered on important feast days, weddings, and so on, to kill a cow without permission was a serious crime against the entire society. Cattle were the premier form of long-term wealth and necessary for bride price. To decrease that wealth was seen as a selfish act. Gambians who kept cows had close relationships with them, giving them praise names and even playing games with them such as one of the more amusing contests I've heard of in which a young man would rub salt all over his body and run from his herd who chased him, attempting to lick it off. Jawara recounts his decision to become a veterinarian because "the health of the livestock was of paramount importance to rural economy and to the health and well-being of the people and... I was happy saving livestock that kept the human body, soul, and society together."<sup>628</sup> Consequently, herders who drove their cattle to market in order to sell them for meat were exceptionally rare. Herders did indeed drive their cattle from pasture to pasture, but they monetized this travel by selling milk and ghee butter rather than driving their cattle to a terminus where they would be turned into meat.<sup>629</sup> Although herders from the protectorate and outside of the colony were unwilling to sell for decades, Bathurst residents began keeping cattle in the protectorate while living in the city themselves and brought in the cattle to ensure their supply of meat was uninterrupted.<sup>630</sup>

Today *niinsifaala* is an archaic term referring to a profession which has undergone dramatic changes over time. The name for slaughterhouse, for example, is still *niinsifaaduula*, literally cow killing place, while a butcher is now called *busewo* from the verb *busee* (to flay). While the killing of the animal

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<sup>628</sup> Jawara, 169.

<sup>629</sup> Jawara, 45.

<sup>630</sup> NRO: CSO 2/134 Cattle belonging to residents of Bathurst, Acting Colonial Secretary Public Notice, April 14, 1909.

is still expressed in the term for slaughterhouse the cultural shift which rendered butchering a respectable profession is evident. *Busewo* conjures the image of an expert butcher skillfully flaying the hide from a beast and preparing it for sale rather than the actual throat cutting and killing. (Figure 27) It emphasizes the commoditization of the cow rather than its life/death. This change, as we shall see, occurred slowly over 150 years of urbanization. In order to understand cows in the city and how they arrived there, we need to begin with the history of colonial intervention into the protectorate.

After the British took control of the protectorate and the soninke-marabout wars abated, Gambians returned to the business of rearing cattle and planting crops. Indeed, since the fertilizer from cattle was absolutely necessary to keep the land from losing fertility the two endeavors were inextricably linked. The British viewed increasing numbers of cattle with alarm because they feared outbreaks and cattle disease and regularly pleaded with cattle owners to vaccinate cattle, destock, and sell their cattle to butchers to decrease the likelihood of an epidemic.<sup>631</sup> Many owners were unwilling to vaccinate not only due to unfamiliarity but because the British routinely botched vaccinations in the early days of the colony including incidents where children were injected with vaccines that had expired and developed the same diseases the vaccines were meant to protect against.<sup>632</sup> As the Medical Officer of Health put it, “Bad vaccination is far more serious than none at all.”<sup>633</sup> These types of incidents, coupled with the lack of explanation given to rural peoples, led to a fear of vaccination. Jawara describes his inoculation against smallpox as follows:

It was impossible... to escape the group of strange men who appeared in long narrow khaki trousers, about six of them in white knee-length coats. We were chased half-naked and caught and taken to line up before them. The men in the white coats dabbed our upper arms with wet cotton swabs before planting long needles in our flesh. We screamed and cried and made a rebellious racket. I even remember boys and girls my age and older rolling in the sand before anyone could hold them down to take the injections.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> NRO: CSO 1/142 Memorandum on the Colonial Defense Committee 1902.

<sup>632</sup> NRO: CSO 1/42 Governor Denton to Secretary of State for the Colonies 1903.

<sup>633</sup> NRO: CSO 2/784 Vaccinations in the Protectorate, Medical Officer of Health to the Bathurst Board of Health, 1927.

<sup>634</sup> Jawara, 46.

In 1933 the governor agreed to approve rinderpest vaccination experiments on cattle with compensation guaranteed for cattle that died. (Figure 22) In fact, mortality among the “serum production beasts” who were inoculated was heavy. Local methods of inoculation were practiced, but veterinary officers likened them to the belief that devils killed cattle and discouraged local knowledge of diseases and vaccination.<sup>635</sup> Owners were equally opposed to destocking because cattle formed a kind of savings and hedge against bad times and the entire agricultural economy of the protectorate relied on manure being plentiful. The British, realizing that any moves against cattle would cause mass rebellion, continued to warn cattle owners but took no coercive steps to enforce destocking or vaccination.

Unfortunately, in the case of cattle, the British proved to be prescient. In 1914-15 and 1917 rinderpest and possibly also bovine pleuropneumonia struck The Gambia killing 80 - 90% of all cattle. Cattle displayed high fever, difficulty breathing, frothy discharge from the eyes, nose, and mouth, diarrhea, loss of appetite and pussy discharge from the anus.<sup>636</sup> The solution, the British argued, was to begin killing cattle, whether they were sick or not, without testing, but cattle owners still refused to slaughter healthy cattle. The travelling commissioners likened the way that cattle owners handled the epizootic to the way Job responded to the death of his cattle and family members, when they said “Allah la mu; a kitta-le” (It was God’s will, it was fated).<sup>637</sup> In other words, even after the epizootics struck, cattle owners were not willing to begin slaughtering cattle wholesale. Nor were they willing to deliver up their sons for slaughter. During World War I the British appealed to the protectorate, where most of the population was, to send their young men to fight. Travelling Commissioner Hopkinson compared it to two bulls fighting with horns locked and neither being able to defeat the other. He added the caveat, “Suppose another bull comes and helps... behind the English is a great big one, a black one, which at the time has been doing nothing but fill (sic) his belly... We know that bull is useless for war because he is fat and untrained, but let him get trained and then come in. The fight will be finished at once.”<sup>638</sup> Not

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<sup>635</sup> NRO: CSO 2/963 W.V. Earnshaw, Veterinary Officer of Nigeria to Governor Edward Denham, August 19, 1929.

<sup>636</sup> NRO: CSO 1/160 E. Hopkinson Travelling Commissioner, The Cattle Plague in the South Bank 1917.

<sup>637</sup> NRO: CSO 1/160 E. Hopkinson Travelling Commissioner, The Cattle Plague in the South Bank 1917.

<sup>638</sup> NRO: CSO 1/159 Report on the South Bank Province for the Year 1916-17.

surprisingly, absent British coercive force, protectorate chiefs and headmen were no more willing to encourage “destocking” young men than they were cattle.

Over time, the vaccination of cattle did become more popular and proved a welcome alternative to destocking. The creation of a veterinary department with trained African veterinarians did a great deal to explain to herders the potential of vaccination and to assuage their fears. The veterinary services, however, only had access to the Formalized Spleen Vaccine (FSV) for decades. (Figure 23) The FSV worked by injecting young calves with the disease, slaughtering them, harvesting their spleens, and treating them with formalin to weaken the virus before making the vaccine. It killed about five percent of the animals injected with it.<sup>639</sup> It was far more effective than local methods of using the untreated spleens from cattle which had died from rinderpest and feeding them to healthy cattle, but the five percent death rate was high by the standards of most vaccines. In 1955 a new technique of vaccinating cattle called the Lapinised Rinderpest Virus (LRV) became available. Developed by Dr. Walter Plowright, a veterinarian from Lincolnshire who worked in Nigeria and Kenya, the technique was created in Kenya which in turn sent dried modules of the LRV to The Gambia. LRV could be injected into hundreds of rabbits that the veterinary services kept in hutches and harvested when the time to inoculate cattle was near. This reduced the need for refrigeration of the vaccine and prevented bad inoculations.<sup>640</sup> In 1956 Plowright moved to Kenya and created a further improvement over the LRV, the Tissue Culture Rinderpest Vaccine, which was highly effective and eliminated the need for rabbits, but necessitated constant refrigeration from creation to inoculation.

As herders in the protectorate became more comfortable with selling their cattle they were driven to the Bathurst slaughterhouse. According to the Chairman of the Board of Health the slaughterhouse was “not fit for a latrine.”<sup>641</sup> By 1901 conditions had not improved. The drain installed to prevent blood and offal from running onto the sand turned out to be worse than what it intended to fix.<sup>642</sup> The engineers did

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<sup>639</sup> Jawara, 175.

<sup>640</sup> Jawara, 173.

<sup>641</sup> NRO: CSO 2/816 New Slaughterhouse

<sup>642</sup> NRO: CSO 1/141 G.C. Denton to Chamberlain 1901.



not account for the rising tide which deposited sand daily into the drain eventually blocking it. The result was a backup of blood and guts which smelled “far worse than that exhaled from the sand in the old days.”<sup>643</sup> Blood and offal clogging the pipes, staining the sand, and blowing all over the market are all powerful metaphors for things we prefer not to dwell on when thinking about urban areas.

As the city grew and a class of firmly urbanized, upwardly mobile merchants, traders, and civil servants emerged so did the demand for meat.<sup>644</sup> While the city’s Aku population did demand pork, beef was by far the most popular meat in the city, which placed demands on the slaughterhouse, cattle dealers, and butchers. While the British never questioned slaughter itself, they did become concerned when the increasing demand for meat created problematic conditions for cattle. Sanitary and health officials as well as court justices who saw themselves as animal rights advocates called for “humane” slaughter and drew attention to the conditions of the cattle before they were slaughtered.

In 1910 Arthur Foster, the veterinary officer, found the treatment of animals in the slaughterhouse to be “inhumane.” He found that animals were not stunned before their throats were cut, the Bathurst piggeries were being poorly run, and the European pigs not sufficiently fed.<sup>645</sup> In 1925 these findings were finally acted upon. Following an inquiry by the Judge of the Supreme Court into inhumane practices in the colony, the acting chairman of the board of health interviewed Bathurst’s butchers and convinced them to adopt a “humane killer” (a Greener’s Gun for cattle and a Cash’s Captive Bolt gun for sheep and calves) which fired a bolt into the animal’s brain so that it would not feel pain when its throat was cut.<sup>646</sup> Recommendations were made, but in 1928 it was found that the butchers were not using the “humane killer.”

Finally, the government stepped in and negotiated with the butchers to begin the use of the “humane killer,” but upon its adoption the community protested. The Honorable Ousman Jeng, unofficial member of the legislative council, wrote a letter on behalf of the Imam of Bathurst and the city’s Muslims

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<sup>643</sup> RO: CSO 1/141 G.C. Denton to Chamberlain 1901.

<sup>644</sup> NRO: CSO 2/447 Bathurst Improvements, 76A.

<sup>645</sup> NRO: 1/154 Arthur N. Foster Veterinary Report of The Gambia for the Year 1910-1911.

<sup>646</sup> NRO: CSO 2/691 Use of a Human Killer at the Slaughterhouse, 25.

claiming that they would not accept the “humane killer” as it rendered the meat *haram* and therefore not consumable by Muslims.<sup>647</sup> When informed by the administration that the “humane killer” was being used by Muslim communities in Accra and Kumasi, Jeng replied that in Bathurst the Muslims were orthodox Tijannis and the Quran allowed only cutting the throat of animals. A demonstration of the “humane killer” did nothing to convince the city’s Muslim notables who worried that the killer might actually kill instead of stunning the animals. Before the end of 1928 the “humane killer” was abandoned. Which is not to say that all within the administration gave up. In 1935 the sanitary superintendent once again suggested that “humane slaughter” through the use of a bolt gun be revisited. He recognized that religious objections would be raised, but proposed to proceed anyway.<sup>648</sup> No such thing was done.

Frustrated by their inability to implement a “humane killer,” critics of the methods being used in slaughter turned to the conditions of cattle before the slaughter. Before Gambian cattle owners in the protectorate were willing to sell cattle to the butchers in large numbers, the cattle trade was dominated by primarily Mauritanian herders in northern Senegal. This meant that in order to have meat in Bathurst cattle had to be marched overland from Senegal to Niimi where they could cross the Gambia River. For many cattle this could mean a twelve hour journey and cattle dealers looking to profit on their herds provided the cattle with barely enough feed and water to keep them alive. Lacking large watercraft that could comfortably transport cattle, the herders tied all four legs of the cattle and then they were “heaved into a canoe” with loads strapped to them and water rising inside of the canoe.<sup>649</sup> When they landed in Bathurst eight out of forty cattle observed by the agricultural superintendent had severe rope galls, bruises, and difficulty walking while two were completely lame and unable to walk. Almost all the cattle that made the long overland journey from Senegal were described as “impoverished.”<sup>650</sup> It is difficult to gauge the accuracy of these sources absent other information. On one hand, the allegations that African herders impoverished and abused their cattle seems to be the stock colonial description of “native

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<sup>647</sup> NRO. CSO 2/691 Hon. Ousman Jeng to Acting Colonial Secretary, 1928.

<sup>648</sup> NRO CSO 2/816 A Report on the Sanitary Condition of Bathurst 1935.

<sup>649</sup> NRO: CSO 2/816 Agricultural Superintendent to Colonial Secretary 1936.

<sup>650</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1974 Livestock of The Gambia.

ignorance” of how to treat animals. On the other hand, the commodification of animals throughout the world has indeed tended to break precapitalist ethics of care for animals and replace them with the profit motive. Even the most cursory investigation into meat industries throughout the world shows this to be true. It would be, on some level, strange if Senegambian herders did not respond to the profit motive and begin treating cows a bit more as chattel and a bit less as cattle.

In any case, sanitary regulations stated that cattle were to be driven across the Denton Bridge to the Two Mile Mark on Cape Road, to a large kraal where the central prison named Mile II would later be built. Under the public health ordinance of 1912 the cattle had to wait until 3:00 - 6:30 AM when they would be allowed to enter the city and driven to the slaughterhouse. The problem was that there was no limit on the number of cattle that could enter the city at that time nor on how long they could stay once they entered.<sup>651</sup> Since butchers often lacked the money to buy entire herds, the cattle took up residence in the streets until a butcher could buy them. Again, cattle sellers were less than willing to keep their cattle well fed and watered and eat into profit margins that were already shrinking by the day. As late as 1947 cattle were still frequently seen wandering the streets.<sup>652</sup> To make matters worse the cattle had to walk down the street with a log tied between their legs that frightened them. Occasionally urban dwellers chased them, shouting, and even throwing stones at them.<sup>653</sup> The chairman of the Urban District Council recounted one anecdote in 1916 (18 years before his testimony) that he was chased down the street by a bull at 6:30 AM and narrowly escaped by diving to the side of the bull.<sup>654</sup> The solution to this problem put forth by members of Bathurst’s Urban Council seems to have been to secure wooden hobbles which would prevent the cattle from running while in the city, but none were ever ordered. The conditions followed the cattle to the slaughterhouse where no drinking water was provided. Finally, the cattle were slaughtered, but due to lack of materials the butcher often used a large “table knife” to cut their throats. Afterwards the “congealed blood, hides, and carcasses” gathered on the floor without any standing water

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<sup>651</sup> NRO: CSO 2/447 Bathurst Improvements, 33.

<sup>652</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Bathurst Town Council Minutes of Meetings 1 July 1947.

<sup>653</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1342 Bathurst Urban District Council Minutes of Meeting 13 March 1934.

<sup>654</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1342 Bathurst Urban District Council Minutes of Meeting 13 March 1934.

pipes to clean the floor.<sup>655</sup> In 1935 new market regulations demanded that no animals should suffer from thirst or other “hurtful influence” while awaiting slaughter.

The increasing demand for meat also tested the infrastructure of the colony and created gruesome conditions at the wharf towns where cattle were held before they could be shipped to Bathurst. As the protectorate began selling cows to Bathurst animal mortality began to increase appreciably. At Kaur, one of the most important wharf towns, the demand for beef led cattle sellers to overgraze their cows. Unlike herders who drove their cattle to new pastures when grass was depleted, cattle sellers kept their herds in the wharf town, hoping to sell them down the river and cows began dying off before they could be shipped to Bathurst. At M’Bollet, another wharf town, the increased demand for beef led to high levels of sheep mortality as herders looking for more profits neglected their sheep herds in order to feed their cattle.<sup>656</sup>

The butchers, however, were far from interested in debates over animal cruelty, religious prohibitions, and sanitary regulation. Far more important was the price of cattle and meat which reached crisis proportions in the 1950s after wartime prosperity brought on by rationing. During the Second World War the state regulated the meat trade under emergency rationing ordinances and prevented cattle sellers from raising their prices. After the war the state gave up control of the meat industry and sellers began to raise prices. The result was that butchers began running deficits. A downward spiral of undercapitalization meant that butchers did not have enough capital to buy up whole herds which arrived. Cattle sellers then had to stay longer and feed their animals which resulted in increasing prices for the unsold animals and an increasing inability on the part of the butchers to buy the cattle. One response was to change the content of the meat by including increasing amounts of offal, bone, and tripe with standard cuts of meat. This led to public complaints, the meat trade being declared a “regular racket” in the *Gambia Echo*, and the arrest of the Albert Market food controller for profiteering, but the butchers could

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<sup>655</sup> NRO: CSO 2/816 Agricultural Superintendent to Colonial Secretary 1936.

<sup>656</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2065 G. Norman Hall Chief Veterinary Officer to the Colonial Secretary July 4, 1943.

not be compelled to alter their meat content.<sup>657</sup> It was “enough to make one’s heart ache” one respondent told the *Echo*. In 1950 the butchers of Bathurst attempted to revive a butcher’s guild which had been tried before and abandoned, for the purpose of collective buying and to fight private buyers who drove prices up.<sup>658</sup>

Collective buying, the butchers argued, would allow them to purchase entire herds at wholesale prices and sell at a profit.<sup>659</sup> The price of membership, however, was prohibitive. A £100 entrance fee and 1/- per week were required to join the guild. Purchases were made by only two of the guild members at once who served six day rotations and shared the profits.<sup>660</sup> From the beginning, the administration and cattle sellers disfavored the guild. The government wanted a meat marketing board to take over prices for sellers and butchers. Herders, on the other hand, resented collective buying and refused to sell to the guild, creating shortages in meat. In the end the butchers proved to be their own worst enemies. During the first ten days of the collective buying scheme the butchers posted a loss every day.<sup>661</sup> What was actually happening was that the two guild members in charge of purchasing for the guild were acting as agents for the cattle sellers which the administration described as a “pincers movement” and “adept psychological warfare” against their fellow butchers.<sup>662</sup> Instead of collective buying, the butchers ended up £130 in debt to their two representative buyers, Dauda Sowe and Samba Gaye.

In 1954 Bathurst seemed on the brink of a serious meat shortage. Butchers were refusing to purchase cattle at the prices offered by cattle dealers or the Veterinary Department due to their inability to sell at a profit. The Bathurst Town Council argued that the butchers had a duty to provide for the city’s demand for meat and that they should “think of their duty to the community or be driven out of the market.”<sup>663</sup> One wonders if they would have been driven out like cattle. The representative of the butchers, Bye Drammeh, argued in response that the butchers were already buying cattle on credit and

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<sup>657</sup> NRO: Gambia Echo 26 January 1942, 2.

<sup>658</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2721 Bathurst Butchers Guild.

<sup>659</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2721 Bathurst Butchers Guild.

<sup>660</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2721 Bathurst Butchers Guild Minutes of the First General Meeting 31 January 1950

<sup>661</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2721 Bathurst Butchers Guild Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting 15 March 1950.

<sup>662</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2721 Bathurst Butchers Guild.

<sup>663</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2171 Bathurst Town Council Minutes of Meetings 19 June 1954.

selling meat for a loss. The unsteady supply of meat gave cattle sellers an advantage over butchers struggling to find meat and allowed them to raise prices while Bathurst residents were not capable of paying higher prices for their meat. Although cattle herders in the protectorate had finally begun selling to Bathurst butchers it was not in large enough numbers to significantly drive down the price of live cattle while the price of meat remained relatively low.<sup>664</sup> Eventually the state stepped in and raised the price of meat and provided a deep freezer free of charge or rent which allowed butchers to keep meat frozen while it awaited a customer. It also allowed butchers to hold out for higher prices or manipulate the market without fearing that the meat would go bad.

The administration also purchased an electric oven to safely cook pork infected with *cysticerous* cellulosa (tapeworms which gestate in pigs and can infect humans through pork) and allowed the butchers to use it free of charge as well.<sup>665</sup> This created a situation similar to the cattle problem in the city. Since pigs were only slaughtered by non-Muslim, itinerant butchers from Cassamance they often spent as much as several weeks waiting in the market to be slaughtered.<sup>666</sup> In one case a pig apparently gave birth to seven piglets while being held in the market before being slaughtered.<sup>667</sup> Both the pigs and their butchers were often cast in the same light: as undesirables who contributed little to the city, but who were financially exploitable. Nevertheless, the government was able to increase the profit margins of the pig butchers. The administration was less successful in increasing the profitability of hides. Despite repeated demonstrations on the use of the specialized knives, “proper” (symmetrical) flaying, and drying (in the shade and off the sand) the butchers realized that the price for a “first class hide” was not significantly more than for a bad one and continued to flay hides in their own way.

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<sup>664</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2171 Bathurst Town Council Minutes of Meetings 19 June 1954.

<sup>665</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1231 Meat Preservation Facilities in Bathurst Market, 1932.

<sup>666</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Bathurst Advisory Town Council Minutes of Meetings 28 June 1938.

<sup>667</sup> NRO: Gambia Echo 17 May 1937, 3.

## RAT-MEN

Myron Echenberg's *Black Death, White Medicine* details the numerous outbreaks of bubonic plague in Senegal's colonial urban centers.<sup>668</sup> Indeed, rats have been among the rare exceptions of animals which have been studied in relation to their residence in urban centers. Hans Zinnser's influential *Rats, Lice, and History* is among the most famous historical works to treat the relationship between animals and disease. Indeed, according to *Nature*, as much as 60% of the diseases which afflict humans are zoonotic in origin. There is, however, new scientific research which suggests that rats, fleas, and lice were only one link in the transmission of plague.. As Barney Sloane has pointed out, it is highly unlikely that the old explanation of rats and fleas/lice explains the plague.<sup>669</sup> In addition to the lack of rat bones which should have been present if rats were the primary vector of the disease, Sloane found that the dental records of plague victims prove that the disease was spread from person to person through the air. Human beings, not rats, were the primary vectors of the bubonic plague. This goes a long way towards explaining why rat killing campaigns were so ineffective at stopping the plague in Senegal or elsewhere. To find the primary vector for the plague people had only to look in the mirror. Once plague arrived nothing done after the fact significantly altered its course.

British officials in The Gambia were very much aware of the outbreaks in Senegal and afraid that the plague would come to Bathurst. In colonial Senegal the French adopted the "sanitation syndrome" and used the fear of the plague to segregate the city while in Sierra Leone it was fears over black bodies attracting malaria, but in Bathurst a lack of space and capital made segregation more difficult.<sup>670</sup> Instead, the city's sanitary administration pursued increasingly zealous anti-rat campaigns. The Public Health Ordinance of 1912 declared rat holes in homes to be a menace, but in 1913 the sanitary officer began to focus his attention on the "rat problem." In order to address the "rat problem" sanitary officials understood that they needed to change local perceptions of what rats were and the appropriate way to

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<sup>668</sup> Myron Echenberg. 2002. *Black Plague, White Medicine. Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1945*. Portsmouth: Heinemann,.

<sup>669</sup> Barney Sloane. 2011. *The Black Death in London*. The History Press.

<sup>670</sup> Maynard M. Swanson. 1977. "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909" *The Journal of African History*. 18, (3).

react to them. The *Echo* became a part of this campaign by republishing stories about experiments on rats conducted in Europe and America. Rats were good for experimentation, articles argued, because they ate anything and bred quickly.<sup>671</sup> Additionally, sanitary officials suggested that the administration begin paying for dead rats delivered to the town warden's office in order to "systematize and regularize" the extermination of rats.<sup>672</sup> The price would be set low enough so that residents would not develop a "rat culture." By rat culture, officials were referring to a phenomenon that the British had encountered in other colonies where locals began keeping and breeding a critical mass of rats in order to trade them in for profits. The result of this "rat culture" was to increase rather than decrease rat populations. If, in fact, "rat culture" was being practiced in Bathurst there is no evidence of it in the records.

In the 1920s and 1930s anti-rat campaigns intensified to new levels. In 1924 it became compulsory to inform sanitary authorities when rats were sighted and in 1925 rat guards were appointed to inspect any ship arriving in the harbor for rat infestation.<sup>673</sup> In 1936 rewards were first offered for dead rats and in 1940, amid the Second World War, the state coordinated the first "rat week."<sup>674</sup> (Figure 28) The public was prepared for the week long rat pogrom through government propaganda lectures on "the dangers and habits of the rat."<sup>675</sup> Instead of the one penny per rat bounty suggested by the sanitary officer in 1913, the medical officer of health suggested two dollars per rat "dead or alive."<sup>676</sup> Four weeks prior to "rat week" 478 dead rats were turned in, during "rat week" the number was 779, and the following week it was 462. Apart from propaganda and weeks dedicated to mass rat killings various officials suggested appointing African "rat-men," a "rat headman," "rat guards," and a "rat gang" to fight the "campaign against rats." The rat gang consisted of a headman and three young boys who killed about ninety rats per week.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 5, 1940, 5.

<sup>672</sup> NRO: CSO: 1/155 Dr. H. Kennan, Senior Sanitary Officer, Annual Sanitary Report for 1913

<sup>673</sup> Annual Report for the Colony of The Gambia 1924 and 1925.

<sup>674</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 6, 1940, 3.

<sup>675</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* 28 October 1940, 1.

<sup>676</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1104 Campaign Against Rats.

<sup>677</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1104 Campaign Against Rats.



Rather than a decrease health authorities saw a marked increase in the city's rat population which they partially blamed on the architecture which had not improved since 1912. Nor were the homes of Europeans exempt from infestation. In a 1938 survey of eleven European homes in the city eight were found to have rat infestations, half also had silverfish, bats, cockroaches, or pigeons, and the only three without infestations were declared to be inevitable sites of future infestations.<sup>678</sup> Following this survey the administration attempted to crack down on the city's architecture by requiring that no new buildings be erected without permission from the sanitary and health officers. Once World War II broke out, however, the administration desperately needed laborers to come into the city to complete war work for the defense of the colony in case of invasion from Vichy Senegal. Throughout the war building codes were completely ignored in order to pack the city full of laborers. By the 1950s the results were clear and residences were being compared to "savannah lands...with grasses, shrubs, mosquitos, and reptiles."<sup>679</sup> In 1952 Albion School on Lancaster Street was found to have pools of stagnant water and residents such as "tadpoles and larvae, future frogs, and mosquitos...human pests in the heart of the metropolis."<sup>680</sup>

Although the attention of the administration to the problem of architecture came and went, the gaol received constant attention due to the sensitive nature of its function. It thus serves as a poignant case study. In 1892 the gaol was condemned as unfit for human habitation, but in 1900 prison officials were still wondering when a new prison would be built.<sup>681</sup> The very next year, however, the annual report for the gaol declared that a new prison was not an urgent necessity and called it one of the best institutions the colonial administration had built in The Gambia.<sup>682</sup> The issue was revisited nearly a decade later in 1909 when an outbreak of Beriberi once again prompted consideration of moving to a new prison.<sup>683</sup> By 1924 the problem of space had become acute with fumigation chambers being turned into cells for

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<sup>678</sup> NRO: CSO 3/345 Housing Conditions in Bathurst 1938, 1B.

<sup>679</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, November 1, 1954, 11.

<sup>680</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, August 8, 1952, 1.

<sup>681</sup> NRO: CSO 1/138 Minute Paper for June 12, 1900.

<sup>682</sup> NRO: CSO 1/141 Report on the Prison for the Year 1900.

<sup>683</sup> NRO: CSO 1/152 Beriberi in the Prison January 14, 1909.

solitary confinement to hold “criminal lunatics” and violent inmates by breaking holes for windows.<sup>684</sup> Calls for a new building continued, though the gaol was found to be in “good condition” except for the fact that it was infested with flies, mosquitos, and bedbugs.<sup>685</sup> In 1936 calls for a new building continued; the main problem was that the male association cells were found to be “too liable to harbor vermin” and that the walls were infested with bed bugs.<sup>686</sup> In 1938 the cells were still infested with bugs which were called “ineradicable,” the latrines and washing facilities were found to be deficient, the prisoners were not being weighed or given proper medical inspections, and the infirmary mattresses were also infested with bed bugs.<sup>687</sup> In 1935 prisoners were so exasperated that they attempted to draw attention to their plight by damaging mosquito gauze on the prison windows.<sup>688</sup> Prison officials fixed the gauze but made no other changes so the prisoners once again damaged it. Finally, prison officials warned the prisoners that if they damaged the gauze again they would not fix it. Even in the prison, a building which received more scrutiny than any other in the city, the administration was unwilling to expend the capital necessary to deal with a rampant infestation. Undoubtedly the prisoners suffered.

Rather than dwell on their own policies which aided the growth of the rat population, however, administration officials were much more likely to blame African culture for the city’s rat problem. They believed the two most important factors to be the belief among the African residents of the city that rats were “an evil which has existed for generations” and had to be lived with,<sup>689</sup> and a fear that if people brought in dead rats the government would record their addresses, intervene in their private lives, and fumigate their houses by force.<sup>690</sup> There is probably some truth to both of these assertions. Speaking of flies instead of rats, one resident wrote to the *Gambia Echo*, “I had to smile when our medical man wrote ‘boil water for ten minutes, then cover it to keep off flies.’ I can’t keep off flies. I live with them!”<sup>691</sup> The

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<sup>684</sup> NRO: CSO 2/631 Inspector of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary May 22, 1924.

<sup>685</sup> NRO: CSO 2/631 Inspector of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary May 22, 1924.

<sup>686</sup> NRO: CSO 2/631. Prison Visiting Committee July 4, 1936, CSO 2/1019 Prison Visiting Committee March 21, 1936.

<sup>687</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1710 Improvements to the Prison, Acting Senior Medical Officer April 20, 1938.

<sup>688</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1019 Report by the Prison Visiting Committee June 15, 1935.

<sup>689</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1104 Campaign Against Rats.

<sup>690</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1342 Bathurst Urban District Council Minutes of Meetings held on 13 March, 1934.

<sup>691</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* March 30, 1942, 6.

medical officer also admitted that residents turning in rats were asked where they caught them “with a mind to fumigation.”<sup>692</sup> In other words, the administration intended to use addresses to intrude into homes under the authority of the sanitary inspector.

Moral questions connected to rat slaughter were raised only briefly. Within colonialism there has always been a current of conservationism which sought to protect certain animals from slaughter. The question of slaughter was raised in regards to rats only once and was quickly put down by governor Southorn who argued, “The slaughter of vermin will not disturb the equilibrium of nature and thereby inflict any serious result on the ecological community involved.”<sup>693</sup> By 1950 medical officers were estimating that around 9,000 rats were being destroyed per year due to the rat campaigns and the use of zinc phosphide poison traps.<sup>694</sup> By 1954, however, the traps had been discontinued because they were unsafe for children and pets.<sup>695</sup>

Despite all the venom directed at rats in the city, there is a fair chance that the brown rats found in The Gambia helped to spare Bathurst from the bubonic plague epidemics which broke out in Senegal virtually every year between 1914 and 1945.<sup>696</sup> Senegal, as a French colony, had a more intimate connection with French North Africa. North Africa is the southernmost domain of the black rat or *Rattus rattus* which was a primary vector of bubonic plague. After that the black rat is not to be found further south until Sierra Leone. As French colonies Senegal would have had more intense commercial relations with North Africa which would have brought greater numbers of plague-susceptible rats into the country leading to bubonic plague becoming one of the most persistent major diseases in colonial Senegal. It is widely known that the greatest plague outbreak of the fourteenth century reached North Africa, but it is also believed that the Sahara desert provided an effective barrier to its further transmission. Colonial commerce between North Africa and Senegal most likely served to breach this barrier and introduce the plague.

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<sup>692</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1342 Bathurst Urban District Council Minutes of Meetings held on 13 March, 1934.

<sup>693</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1594 Flora and Fauna of Africa, W.T. Southorn to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1939.

<sup>694</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2920 Report on the Medical and Health Services for the Years 1949-52.

<sup>695</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2921 Report on the Medical and Health Services for the Years 1953-54.

<sup>696</sup> Echenberg, 15.

The Gambia, by contrast, had a much smaller exposure. Although there are *Rattus rattus* in Sierra Leone, it does not have nearly the same historical connection to bubonic plague. Smaller numbers of black rats travelling on board ships from Sierra Leone to The Gambia could have been effectively fended off by the larger and well entrenched brown rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) already present. In a sense, Gambian brown rats might have played a role in safeguarding the city from plague by keeping black rats from gaining a foothold in the city and thus shielding it from plague outbreaks.

#### FOWL TYPHOID: THE ORIGINS OF FACTORY FARMING

The origins of factory farming in The Gambia, and indeed in Africa, trace to the development schemes of the late Second World War and early post-war period. In The Gambia the Colonial Development Corporation (CDC) applied for and was granted a loan to develop a poultry and egg farm at Yundum in Northern Kombo. Factory farming techniques had been implemented for the very first time in Britain only a few years earlier. From the beginning the CDC plans demonstrated an extravagance and a determination to rely on imported supplies rather than local Gambian practices or know-how. Indeed, this was probably necessary. Gambians most certainly did not factory farm animals in the quantities that the CDC was looking to achieve. Mr. J. Phillips of the CDC informed the administration that 75 -100 Europeans and 40 -50 “Bahamian blacks” would be arriving in The Gambia. They proposed to take over abandoned RAF hangars at Yundum so long as they could bring a “jook organ” with them. They estimated they would need 300 tons of grain and over 20,000 acres in Kombo. The CDC was given an advance of £810,000 to develop their poultry farm which would, one official estimated, produce millions of eggs a year for Britain. One CDC official predicted that they would be producing 20 million eggs per year which would go primarily to feed English citizens.<sup>697</sup>The CDC imported two Ford light pickup trucks, kitchen utensils, six refrigerators, two electric stoves, one electric oven, one ice cream maker, two drinking fountains, and a large quantity of imported food and drink.<sup>698</sup> Local officials were perplexed about the large food imports and especially the request for a veritable ocean of whiskey. They felt it was

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<sup>697</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2217 Colonial Development Corporation Project for the Production of Poultry and Eggs in The Gambia.

<sup>698</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2513 CDC Supplies.

“unlikely that whiskey will be available in that quantity” and privately questioned the outlandish demands of the CDC.<sup>699</sup>

At first, despite the large demands, the operation seemed poised to succeed. Out of 10,000 eggs brought to Yundum only 33 were destroyed in the process and 73% of the eggs hatched which was considered well above average. None of the young hatchlings succumbed to disease while only 1% fell victim to mongoose attack with an additional 1% becoming food for “starving, domestic African dogs.”<sup>700</sup> Vultures seemed more problematic. Under the Wild Animals Preservation Ordinance it was illegal to kill a vulture for any reason, but once they were spotted eating young chicks on the CDC farm the manager of the CDC proposed to slaughter every vulture within two miles of the farm.<sup>701</sup> It is unclear how the administration replied to this request, though the Colonial Secretary went on the record as supporting the slaughter.<sup>702</sup> The CDC also made some efforts to start factory farming of pork, but the scheme seems to have been downplayed because the “pigmen,” presumably Akus given the aversion of Muslims to handling pigs, could not be trusted and needed to be closely watched.<sup>703</sup>

After one full year of operation the farm had failed to produce a single egg for export. In 1947 and 1948 the CDC spent £82,000 and £61,000 respectively, but no produce seemed to come out of it.<sup>704</sup> In 1949 things turned for the worse and the chickens seemed to be getting ill. Researchers began monitoring the chickens and studying their rates of development, egg output, and mortality under various environmental conditions.<sup>705</sup> Questions of “pests...tiny ones and large” all of a sudden came to the fore.<sup>706</sup> The mystery illness turned out to be fowl typhoid caused by *Salmonella enterica* which proceeded to decimate the chicken population.<sup>707</sup> Modern factory farms pump their chickens full of antibiotics to

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<sup>699</sup> Ibid.

<sup>700</sup> NRO: CSO 11/57 CDC Poultry and Egg Production.

<sup>701</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2319 Wild Animals Preservation Ordinance, Colonial Secretary to the Manager of the CDC in Yundum.

<sup>702</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2319 Wild Animals Preservation Ordinance.

<sup>703</sup> NRO: CSO 10/372 Yundum Experimental Farm- Irregularities.

<sup>704</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2217 Colonial Development Corporation Project for the Production of Poultry and Eggs in The Gambia, May 18, 1948.

<sup>705</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3210 Report of the Pest Infestation research Board.

<sup>706</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3210 Report of the Pest Infestation research Board.

<sup>707</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2920 Report on the Medical and Health Services for the Year 1949-1952.

prevent these kinds of infections. In any case, when the minister of agriculture was asked if he did not consider this to be disappointing he replied that “I think a lot of things, not all of them for publication.”<sup>708</sup> Another commentator wondered, if the CDC was draining the Gambian soil and producing hens with vitamin deficiencies, why it would not be better to simply produce the eggs in Britain. Finally, the whole endeavor was admitted to be an abysmal failure. After the failure of the scheme it was proposed to turn the abandoned European housing into a school or college if possible, and if not a prison, a borstal, or a leper colony.<sup>709</sup> Southorn, in her history of The Gambia, refers to the CDC repeatedly as one of the largest and most costly blunders in the history of the colony’s finances. She may very well be accurate.

#### GERMANS AND COLONIES OF BATS

If one building could serve as a metaphor for the way that the administration treated animals in particular and for the colonial project in The Gambia in general it is undoubtedly government house which early observers described as resembling a gaol more than a seat of governmental authority. As early as the 1880s the administration attempted to turn government house into a structure which resembled “something like order,” which meant being “both ornamental and productive.”<sup>710</sup> At government house, despite the prison labor which was being used to clear the “rank grass” so that a garden would be possible, the grounds were infested with “snakes and other noxious reptiles” including, in one incident, a small alligator.<sup>711</sup> The grounds created “unpleasant reflections” in the imaginations of European officials. Unless laborers were constantly employed the ground quickly reverted to what the administration considered to be disorder. To alleviate the conditions the administration purchased a mechanical mower, but editorialists in the *Echo* complained that it was a menace which replaced rather than enhanced manual labor power and exacerbated the social menace of low wages.<sup>712</sup> (Figure 24)

In 1942, in the middle of World War II, government house was “invaded” and “colonized” not by Germans, but bats. The governor declared, “I am being invaded again” (presumably bats had invaded the

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<sup>708</sup> Ibid.

<sup>709</sup> NRO: CSO 10/174 CDC Egg and Poultry Production October 12, 1951.

<sup>710</sup> NRO: CSO 1/104 G.T. Carter to the Administrator in Charge October 15, 1888.

<sup>711</sup> NRO: CSO 1/104 G.T. Carter to the Administrator in Charge October 15, 1888.

<sup>712</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 29, 1938, 7.

government house before) and asked for quick action to be taken.<sup>713</sup> Quick action was, indeed, taken, battle plans drawn up, and a chemical spray attack was launched on the bats. It proved ineffective because the architecture of the building itself sheltered the bats in the interstices between the corrugate and the boardings of the roof. A number of alternative solutions were suggested, including opening the roof and chasing out the bats and building windows to let in light, but instead another chemical attack was carried out. This time instead of chemical sprays sulfur gas was burnt. The result was the same. The bats were sheltered by the building's architecture. The Medical Officer of Health was at a loss as he did not believe he could make the sulfur gas any more concentrated.<sup>714</sup> Whole "colonies of bats," he reckoned, were living safely in the interstices of the roof. Although it is not recorded, somehow the Medical Officer must have figured out how to make the gas more effective because another gas attack seems to have worked. The governor's reward was twofold: the stench of decaying bats which were being held in the interstices of the roof and the stench of an "equally distasteful" sulfur dioxide concentration in the building itself. The governor's bedroom apparently smelled of death and sulfur for some time. It is not clear whether or not anyone involved in the incident made the connection between their gas attack on the colony of bats and the years which they had spent propagandizing in Bathurst about the possibility of a German gas attack on their little colony. Not incidentally 1942 was also the year that the administration of The Gambia finally recognized that the possibility of a German gas attack on such as small and insignificant colony was remote and that it was not worth it to provide respirators for the population.<sup>715</sup> Following the "good" war, where the obvious evil of Nazi Germany had been defeated, more energy could be devoted to "the question of pests...tiny ones and large" which seemed to have erupted all of a sudden.<sup>716</sup> The Pest Infestation Research Board (PIRB) set about discovering methods of tackling the post-war-push to control "pests" in the city. In order to do this the enemy would have to be studied, so the

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<sup>713</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3427 Maintenance of Government House 1943.

<sup>714</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3427 Maintenance of Government House 1943.

<sup>715</sup> NRO: CSO 4/325 Anti-Gas Precautions, 294.

<sup>716</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3210 Report of the Pest Infestation Research Board, 1949.

PIRB suggested that life histories of the pests be compiled detailing rates of development throughout the life cycle, reproduction and egg output, and mortality rates under various circumstances.<sup>717</sup>

## CONCLUSION

It is important not forget how often the meeting of species is marked by slaughter. In Sue Coe's *Dead Meat* the boundary between the city and the animals is traversed, but only by meat, death, and gross consumption.<sup>718</sup> For Coe the question is primarily one of animal suffering, but there is also the question of what happens to human beings when they begin to slaughter rats daily and when they accept the round-up and slaughter of dogs by their police force. Hannah Arendt called this daily violence the "banality of evil" and perhaps historians of Africa might learn something about post-colonial violence by studying the "banality of evil" introduced by rat campaigns, animal roundups, and the massive slaughter of non-human others instituted by colonial regimes. As Norman O. Brown put it, man has taken the lessons he learned from subduing nature and applied them to his fellow man.<sup>719</sup>

It is no coincidence that where we find the mass slaughter of human beings we often find Jewish "rats," Tutsi "cockroaches," Australian aboriginal "sparrows," and Herero "baboons."<sup>720</sup> What do we make of the fact that during the Rwandan genocide an effort to extend the slaughter of Tutsi *inyenzi* (cockroaches) to northwest and southwest Rwanda was named "Operation Insecticide"? When we begin to interrogate the sacrifice of the animal, symbolically or actual "non-criminal putting to death," we also open the door for the persecution of the human "other." One doesn't have to "like" rats in order to understand that organizing the systematic slaughter of rats introduces a banal evil which can be called upon as a blueprint for the mass slaughter of human "others" as well. While the slaughter of rats or other

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<sup>717</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3210 Report of the Pest Infestation Research Board, 1949.

<sup>718</sup> Sue Coe. 1995. *Dead Meat*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows.

<sup>719</sup> Norman O. Brown. 1959. *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

<sup>720</sup> Rowan Savage. 2006. "'Vermin to be Cleared off the Face of the Earth' Perpetrator Representations of Genocide Victims as Animals" in *Genocide Perspectives III: Essays on the Holocaust and Other Genocides*. Edited by Colin Tatz, Peter Arnold, and Sandra Tatz. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger with the Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.



“vermin” does not cause wholesale human slaughter it does help to shape a worldview in which organized, systematic violence against “the other” is possible.

In Timothy Mitchell’s “Can the Mosquito Speak?” he likens blood sucking capitalists to malarial mosquitoes and suggests that the spread of capitalism might perhaps be halted or reversed if the vectors through which capital spreads were annihilated.<sup>721</sup> He may very well be right, but that does not mean the politics of the mosquito cannot be turned on its head. The logic of extermination, once accepted, is far too slippery to be controlled by the left. The propensity of colonial powers to view Africans as insurgent insects who multiplied far beyond what was appropriate is only one example. Another comes from contemporary Gambia where the current “president,” Yahya Jameh, justified his support for discriminatory legislation aimed at homosexuals in the following way:

We will fight these vermins called homosexuals or gays the same way we are fighting malaria causing mosquitoes, if not more aggressively. We will therefore not accept any friendship, aid or any other gesture that is conditional on accepting homosexuals or LGBT as they are now baptized by the powers that promote them. As far as I am concerned, LGBT can only stand for Leprosy, Gonorrhoea, Bacteria and Tuberculosis; all of which are detrimental to human existence.<sup>722</sup>

This is precisely why we need to focus on those animals which elicit the least sympathy; those animals that we identify not by the face, but by the swarm, the pack, and the multiplicity.<sup>723</sup> Great work has been done on the slaughter of great apes, rhinos, elephants, lions, and so on. It is important work and by no means uncomplicated or free from controversy. We need, however, to view the “urban jungles” for what they are. They teem with life. Human and non-human animals, for better and worse, live cheek to jowl in cities. Recognizing our cities as the chimeras they are is the first step towards a new pragmatism.<sup>724</sup>

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<sup>721</sup> Timothy Mitchell. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>722</sup> The Independent. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/gambian-president-says-gay-people-are-vermin-and-should-be-tackled-like-malaria-causing-mosquitoes-9139119.html>. Accessed 7/17/2014.

<sup>723</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*.

<sup>724</sup> Cary Wolfe. 2003. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jalaman Touray, a “criminal lunatic”, showed signs of mental illness before committing murder. After returning from a stay in Bathurst his uncle noticed that Jalaman seemed disturbed and had stopped speaking. He hobbled him with a stick between his legs in his hut until local healers cured him of his affliction. Soon thereafter Jalaman was allowed to tend the family cattle herd again and given his uncle’s machete in case he had to slaughter a cow while watching the herd. Instead he took the machete and killed a young boy in the bush because he believed that people were coming to kill him.<sup>725</sup> He then went to Chaku Diba, the boy’s father, and told him what he had done. “You have spoilt my world” the father told him. “I have spoilt it properly” he replied. The body was found with a seven inch wound in the right side of the jaw, the lower mandible severed and the blood vessels of the face burst, another five inch wound in the cheek, a six inch wound severing the bridge of the nose, a deep incised wound on the forehead to the frontal bone, a slicing wound on the scalp and wounds on the left hand, left elbow, and upper arm. The cause of death was found to be a deep wound on the back of the neck which cut the spinal cord in half between the sixth and seventh vertebrae.<sup>726</sup> When Chaku Dibba found his son dead in the bush he held him and shook him. “There are no wild beasts about in Konkoling” he cried.<sup>727</sup> Upon investigation Jalaman Touray was declared criminally insane and committed to an asylum.

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<sup>725</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2768 Court Records of Case of Regina vs. Jalaman Touray, Arfang Jowla Kay Testifies.

<sup>726</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2768 Medical Officer in Charge of Royal Victoria Hospital Autopsy Report.

<sup>727</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2768 Court Records of Case of Regina vs. Jalaman Touray, Chaku Dibba Testifies.

#### CHAPTER 4: POLITICS OF THE BELLY: “FREE” AND UNFREE LABOR, 1870S-1950S

God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. -Laurence Stern *A Sentimental Journey*

It is true that we have our trade, but it does not bring us what it should. We are being robbed. Our wages are so low that there is no longer any difference between ourselves and animals. -Ousmane Sembene *God's Bits of Wood*

It is not such a usual thing to see the shitman coming at this hour of the morning. The shitman is a man of the night and the very early morning... And it is not such a usual thing to see a latrine man up close. *The last shall be the first. Indeed, it is even so.* -Ayi Kwei Armah *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*

As Fred Cooper has argued, labor played a large role in decolonizing Africa. Through strikes at critical economic choke points some laborers were able to briefly challenge the wages and conditions which were forced on them.<sup>728</sup> Although the ultimate goals of strikes were inevitably defeated, workers often did secure raises in wages and improvements in the hours and conditions of labor. In doing so they greatly advanced the pace of decolonization by raising the economic, moral, and political costs of holding onto colonies. If the state was going to hold onto its colonies under the logic of *protego ergo oblige*, workers could demand that it live up to their expectations by sheltering them from economic forces which threatened their livelihood.

Other than the monumental strike of 1929, organized labor in The Gambia primarily struggled for small increases in wages and working conditions to keep up with rises in the cost of living until the 1960s. After the 1929 strike labor unrest tended to be loosely organized and ad hoc rather than general. Often these demands were framed through the trope of the male “breadwinner” who had to care for his family while women continued to prop up families through trade and cooking. Gambians appealed to the paternalist state on behalf of the African patriarch looking to secure his status as head of the family. Workers were, of course, responding to a discourse originally framed by colonial administrators who fancied themselves as “fathers of the people.” In the realm of economics the state enacted this paternalist role by attempting to negotiate between capital and labor. Fritz Lang provides perhaps the clearest

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<sup>728</sup> Frederick Cooper. 1996. *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in British and French Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

immortalization of this idealized relationship in *Metropolis* where the state represents the caring heart which mediated between labor (the hands) and capital (the head). Lang later came to regret this metaphor and decry it as a fairy tale which was so easily appropriated by fascist regimes positioning themselves as the caretakers of the people.<sup>729</sup>

There is also a sizeable literature on the attempt to create a stable working class in Africa in the late colonial period.<sup>730</sup> This literature comes primarily but not exclusively from mining compounds and other situations where employers had more control over labor.<sup>731</sup> In Bathurst efforts to create a regularized, disciplined labor force were far more sporadic and meager. Instead, the state attempted to impose discipline on laborers over which it had the most control: the civil service and prisoners. In the late colonial period the state attempted to turn its civil service into a progressive force for order in the colony especially through the creation of modern police and prison services.

While recognizing that the discourse of the male laborer did shape lives, it is also important to remember that the figure of the universal male laborer also occludes other forms of labor. The labor of women and children is often overlooked and, although I will attempt to integrate them into this chapter, reliance on the archives renders these accounts fairly flat. Another often overlooked form of labor is prison labor. Although labor coercion in Africa is well documented, very little has been said about the connection between prison labor and “free” labor. In fact, studying prison labor in tandem with “free” labor shows the two to be inextricably linked. Prison labor is almost always dealt with as if the prison is a separate institution unconnected to the wider colonial society.<sup>732</sup> This, ironically, is precisely how colonial states wanted the prison to be seen as a space which was entirely separated by a moral distinction between

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<sup>729</sup> Peter Bogdanovich Interview with Fritz Lang. 1998 *WhoThe Devil Made It: Conversations with Legendary Film Directors*, New York: Knopf.

<sup>730</sup> Frederick Cooper. 1987. *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa*. London: Yale University Press.

<sup>731</sup> William H. Worger. 1987. *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberly, 1867-1895*. Yale University Press, New Haven . James Ferguson. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>732</sup> Florence Bernault ed. 2003. *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*. Trans. Janet Roitman. Portsmouth, Heinemann. Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown. 2007. *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Konate, Dior. 2006. *A History of the Penal State in Senegal: Repressive Architecture and the Life of Prison Detainees from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present*, PhD Diss. University of Wisconsin-Madison.

the law-abiding subject and the immoral criminal. Thus the literature on prisons in Africa (there is not much of it) tends to accept that the prison should be studied as an island. Prison labor was used to do, so the narrative goes, what “free” labor ought to have done so that colonialism could continue on the cheap. While I have no doubt that prison labor was exploited throughout the history of Bathurst, there is much to be learned by viewing prison labor as connected to the broader labor market. Unlike in Senegal, where the state consistently and brutally attempted to exploit prisoners as a captive labor force without the pretense of reform the history of prison labor in Bathurst is more nuanced.<sup>733</sup> In Bathurst the British were insistent that prison labor be tied to trends in penology in the metropole. In the pre-colonial and early colonial periods, for example, prison officers were discouraged from using prisoners as a captive labor force by metropolitan authorities who saw the prison as a place of punishment and discipline.

In the final analysis, labor did push the pace of decolonization, but so did the prison system. Increasing prison populations demanding welfare societies, trade schools within the prison, and other programs of uplift and reform weighed as heavily on the state as laborers demands for wages that would allow them to raise families and prosper. When the state sought to implement modern penology and when it sought to produce a class of stabilized, respectable laborers it essentially set the course of its own dissolution. These reforms and efforts by the state to modernize were both accepted and resisted by city dwellers. Whether imprisoned by the law of the state or of the market laborers both demanded the alleviation of their situations and resisted attempts to discipline them which attempted to permeate their bodies.

#### WOMEN AT WORK: LATE 19<sup>TH</sup>-EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

According to Governor Valerius Skipton Gouldsbury female laborers were the backbone of the city’s economy in the late 1800s. In 1878 he resisted a tax on palm wine because it would hurt Jolah women who predominately controlled the palm wine trade and whom he considered to be the hardest

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<sup>733</sup> Ibra Sene. 2010. “Crime and Punishment, and Colonization: A History of the Prison of Saint-Louis and the Development of the Penitentiary System in Senegal, ca. 1830-1940.” PhD Dissertation, Michigan State University.

workers in the city.<sup>734</sup> Jolah women, he noted, did much of the loading and unloading of ground nuts at Bathurst's wharves and were generally "the most hardworking and thrifty" people in the city.<sup>735</sup> Unlike male laborers living in the city who more frequently refused to sell their labor, Jolah women had come specifically to earn capital either to become property owners in the city or bring wages back to their rural families. Gouldsbury frequently complained that he could not force men in the colony to work. He was especially frustrated by skilled laborers in general and masons in particular whose labor was in great demand, but whose wages allowed them to refuse to sell their labor if they so chose.<sup>736</sup> Thrifty and industrious women were often compared to their "wasteful" husbands who incurred debt rather than working.<sup>737</sup> Even when men in the city launched their own business ventures, however, debt was never far behind. The police force founded its own cooperative canteen, which they stocked through the United Africa Company, to provide for their constables. The UAC had as little tolerance for the debts of the police as it did for any other worker and in 1947 the canteen had to close due to excessive debt. With the closure of the canteen police officers had to rely on local shopkeepers for their necessities and it was not long thereafter that shopkeepers began taking police officers before the courts to recover their debts.<sup>738</sup>

It is not clear exactly when labor was masculinized and, indeed, it is probably doubtful that there was a single moment to point to as opposed to an informal process. In any case, in the early colonial period women were pushed out of the formal labor force by an alliance between African men, the colonial state, and employers. For the state the masculinization of labor was seen as a means to create stable families in the city with breadwinning husbands who could be counted on to sell their labor regularly in order to provide for their families. Private employers, who had been happy to employ female laborers throughout the nineteenth century, likewise saw the move as creating a class of young men who would have to sell their labor though they showed less interest in whether or not these men developed idealized nuclear family units. The cyclical nature of labor, linked to the groundnut season, meant that unlike the

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<sup>734</sup> NRO: CSO 1/53 V.S. Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, April 5, 1878.

<sup>735</sup> NRO: CSO 1/56 V.S. Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, November 17, 1879.

<sup>736</sup> NRO: CSO 1/64 V.S. Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, December 4, 1882.

<sup>737</sup> NRO: CSO 1/65 Residents of Bathurst Petition to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, January 27, 1883.

<sup>738</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2693 Police Cooperative Shop, October 27, 1948.

state's regulated, constant model of labor, private employers relied on shorter, more intense bursts of frenetic labor followed by longer periods of low intensity labor. For young men the displacement of women from wage labor meant the hopes of becoming modern and securing wages which would support modern regimes of consumption. Indeed, consumption was the key. Employers in Bathurst quickly learned that in order to maintain a labor force they had to provide rations in addition to monthly wages, otherwise workers who had spent their wages would come back to employers asking for more when they were wanting for food.<sup>739</sup> As we shall see, however, employers and laborers understood consumption in very different ways.

The rise of the Public Works Department (PWD) as the biggest and most consistent employer of labor in the city certainly helped to masculinize labor. The PWD put men to work building roads, repairing drains, and building housing, but they had no positions for women. They drew from a pool of casual male laborers by offering higher wages than private employers.<sup>740</sup> Although they tried to encourage the development of a steady labor force by building housing for their laborers, it was unpopular and occupied only sporadically. Instead, daily wage labor without contracts was the norm.<sup>741</sup> The PWD rarely had trouble securing casual laborers, but skilled laborers were far more problematic. There were never enough skilled laborers in the first place and after 1921, when the Wesleyan Technical School, which had been producing much of the colony's skilled labor force, closed, the PWD began to feel the pinch. Seeing an opportunity to fill the labor gap, many apprentices left their positions before finishing their apprenticeships, declared themselves to be skilled laborers, and began working for the state.<sup>742</sup>

In addition to skilled and manual labor employed by the firms and PWD, there was also demand for clerks and civil servants to keep the wheels of the bureaucracy turning. Literacy, although always in high demand, became even more so around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the colonial state solidified its rule through statute after statute and ordinance after ordinance. A new class of literate clerks would be

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<sup>739</sup> NRO: CSO 1/140 John Fred Bourne to the Under Secretary for the Colonies, March 25, 1899.

<sup>740</sup> NRO: CSO 2/712 Memorandum on Labor, 3.

<sup>741</sup> NRO: CSO 2/712 Memorandum on Labor, 8.

<sup>742</sup> NRO: CSO 2/712 Memorandum on Labor, 15.

needed as well as a new professionalized civil service to carry out ordinances. African police officers, sanitary inspectors, medical officers, prison guards, and so on would all be needed to ensure the day-to-day affairs of the colonial state ran as scheduled. When wages were discussed they tended to be quite low compared to the cost of living, especially if workers had a family. Employers attempted to compensate for low wages by giving workers rations on top of their salaries, but rations were meant to reproduce the worker, not their family.<sup>743</sup> The state did take very minor steps to protect public works employees. Men working on public works who were “invalided,” for example, were supposed to receive no more than one month’s salary for “compassionate allowance” while those who died should receive funeral expenses and possibly a gratuity to their widow if there was one.<sup>744</sup>

#### SHEARING THE LAMB: 1900-1929

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century low wages, low rations, and poor working conditions led to a number of strikes and protests against both state and private employers. Among the earliest strikes to receive serious state attention was in 1904 when members of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) protested low wages by deserting their posts, holding demonstrations, and refusing to work.<sup>745</sup> With the colony largely “pacified” the WAFF had other things on their minds than punitive expeditions. Other than the white officers there was no effective chain of command in place. This encouraged African officers to identify with the enlisted men rather than their white superiors. Discipline was restored by incentivizing the African officers to associate with a “better class” rather than seeing themselves as allied with the enlisted men.<sup>746</sup> After the strike African non-commissioned officers were given additional authority to discipline their subalterns which turned the force into a more hierarchical body than a horizontal one. Responding to their new responsibilities, the African officers began to implement a chain of command; those who continued to resist were fined, sacked, or imprisoned. As police regulations also put it, a “chain of

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<sup>743</sup> NRO: CSO 1/140 John Fred Bourne to the Undersecretary for the Colonies, March 25, 1899.

<sup>744</sup> NRO: CSO 1/140 Chamberlain to Llewlyn, April 3, 1900.

<sup>745</sup> NRO: CSO 1/146 Report of the Inspector General, West Africa Frontier Force of the Gambia Company, 1904.

<sup>746</sup> NRO: CSO 1/147 Annual Report, Gambia Company West African Frontier Force, 1905.



responsibility” creates order and regularity, and “discipline is the obedience and respect to lawful authority which distinguishes an organized body from a rabble.”<sup>747</sup>

Most of the labor troubles, however, came from the private sector. The second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was bad in general for the groundnut trade with the interruption of World War I, depressions in the price of groundnuts, and a relatively low volume of the trade. Early profits at the end of the nineteenth and in the first decade of the twentieth centuries had led the merchants to increase capital investments in the colony. Once nut prices dropped and the trade withered firms found themselves unable to pay for the investments they made and looked to recoup losses by cutting wages. Beginning in 1919, in the key wharf town of Kuntaur, direct actions by labor challenged this policy. Gambian groundnut growers upriver could not yet rely on lorries to take their crop to Bathurst so they took their nuts to wharf towns on the river which were then loaded onto cutters and sent downriver. This placed dock workers in Kuntaur at a key choke point in the economy which allowed them to choke off the groundnut supply to Bathurst. The strike, called a “riot” by the administration, was blamed on the laborers who had been infected by the “Bathurst mentality” and the “accompaniments of civilization.”<sup>748</sup> In the wake of the strike the Bathurst administration moved to assert more central authority over the wharf towns and remove them from the jurisdiction of protectorate chiefs in order to ensure that strikes would not recur. Police and badge messenger presence in the wharf towns grew as the commerce on the river became more stressed.

Blaming the strike on the vices of civilization was a key rhetorical strategy which allowed the state to put its support behind capital. It is informative to compare this strike to the *tongs* which have historically been declared by Gambian mansolu. The *tong* is substantively similar to a strike, but it carried the weight of “tradition” and was thus seen in a more positive light by the administration for a longer time. Gambian leaders had the authority to declare a *tong* which meant that no one was to sell their crop until demands were met. In 1885, for example, Musa Molloh declared a *tong* in response to merchant attempts to enforce the 1/- bushel. Molloh forbade the trade of groundnuts and was willing to “keep the

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<sup>747</sup> NRO: CSO 2/113 General Orders and Regulations Relative to the Gambia Police, 1907.

<sup>748</sup> NRO: CSO 1/162 Annual Report for the South Bank Province 1919-1920, 35.

nuts till they spoil and make soap of them” rather than sell them.<sup>749</sup> In fact, the state often admitted that Gambian leaders had legitimate grievances against the merchants and, until 1922, Gambian *mansolu* and *seyfos* were legally allowed to enforce a *tong* among their people. Even after 1923, when a *tong* was declared at Kuntaur, four years after the strike there, the travelling commissioner for McCarthy Island District supported the *tong* because he believed that the merchants considered “the Gambia and its inhabitants were created for their sole use and profit.”<sup>750</sup> The *tong* was resolved without state intervention. Thus a strike at Kuntaur was seen as a riot and the corruption of Gambians by civilization while a *tong* in the very same town four years later was a legitimate exercise of the rights of Gambians granted to them by timeless tradition, even though both were responses to the same merchant cupidity. The ability of a *seyfo* to organize his people behind the *tong* conjured for the administration the specter of rural rebellion and forced the administration to urge merchant concessions. A strike led by young men, on the other hand, could be more easily dismissed because it lacked a power base which threatened the state. It not only lacked the authority of “tradition,” but it also failed to unite whole villages in opposition to the merchants. If a *tong* was not entirely supported by the state it was generally accepted as stemming from the legitimate complaints of “old heads,” while the colonial state was far less interested in considering the demands of young men to earn wages which would afford them opportunities for upward mobility and modern consumption regimes.

In Bathurst the most common tactic of labor resistance was, at the individual level, to refuse to sell one’s labor if the price was too low or the conditions intolerable. Instead, many laborers relied on support from family and friends in the city or in rural homes to provide them with food and shelter until conditions were more favorable. Both the state and private employers lamented the ability of laborers to sustain themselves without being forced to sell their labor, but they could do little to stop the practice. Instead, the main question was how to deal with the collective actions which began appearing in the city in the 1920s. The strikes which gained the attention of the state were typically those involving workers at

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<sup>749</sup> NRO: CSO 1/90 Proceedings of an Interview at Boraber with Musa Molloh March 29, 1885.

<sup>750</sup> NRO: CSO 2/556 Travelling Commissioner McCarthy Island Province to the Acting Colonial Secretary, December 27, 1923.

key choke points of the city's economy. To the state this meant skilled laborers who were in short supply and essential to productivity in the city. A mechanics strike in Bathurst in 1921, for example, was successful in securing higher wages. The state intervened by reviewing the cost of living in the city and mediated between capital and labor to secure wage increases for the striking mechanics.<sup>751</sup> This intervention, however, created expectations amongst laborers of all stripes that the mechanics had won a victory for all and that wages would be closely tied to future increases in the costs of living while the state and capital treated the increase as a *fait accompli* which had settled the "labor question" for some time.

These divergent expectations came to a head in 1928 with the creation of the city's first trade unions. The labor leaders who emerged in the 1920s explicitly mixed anticolonial politics, Pan Africanism, and socialism. In 1921 Edward Francis Small organized the creation of a local branch of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), an anticolonialist, Pan Africanist organization, in Bathurst. Small was an Aku born in Bathurst and educated in Freetown from 1910 to 1915 before returning to The Gambia. The state did everything it could to discredit the NCBWA movement. In 1921 the NCBWA held a mass meeting at Box Bar to protest "taxation without representation."<sup>752</sup> The captain of police estimated that the meeting was attended by 300 people and described them derisively as being comprised of "20% half naked Jolof and Mandingo children from five to ten years old." He continued to deride Mr. J.P. Joof, the former interpreter to the Governor, who "half fuddled with drink, tried to make a speech, and got rather mixed in what he wanted to say, and was told to sit down."<sup>753</sup> In addition to portraying the meeting as filled with drunkards and children, the administration attempted to paint them as overly educated, Christian agitators aloof from the city's Muslim majority. They never missed a chance to point out that neither the Imam nor the Alkalo of Bathurst attended NCBWA meetings as if the two

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<sup>751</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, November 1929, General Secretary of the Bathurst Trade Union to the Colonial Secretary, October 8, 1929.

<sup>752</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 G. Greig Captain of the Police to the Acting Colonial Secretary, July 6, 1921.

<sup>753</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 G. Greig Captain of the Police to the Acting Colonial Secretary, July 6, 1921.

spoke for all Muslims in the city.<sup>754</sup> The police further ensured this by keeping the anticolonial protests of the NCBWA away from the Bathurst mosque “like Bolsheviks away from a church.”<sup>755</sup>

In 1922 Small founded *The Gambia Outlook and Senegambia Reporter*, the first newspaper in the colony, to give voice to the issues raised by the NCBWA. The administration dismissed the newspaper as having a tiny circulation, again because its readership was primarily Aku and Christian. Small’s newspaper, Palmer argued, had such a tiny circulation that it barely registered in the word of mouth in Bathurst and that Small was “his own caucus” in all matters.<sup>756</sup> Keeping the Muslim community of The Gambia away from Small’s anticolonial politics was a primary concern of the authorities who took whatever chances they could to discredit him, his newspaper, and his union as Christian elitists who did not understand the Muslim community of Bathurst.

In 1928, Small took a step further and founded the Bathurst Trade Union (BTU); the first union in The Gambia. One year later, reeling from an economic downturn, leading firms in the city attempted to preserve profit margins by slashing the wages of laborers. Backed by the Chamber of Commerce, Bathurst firms decided to reduce the wages of artisans from 6/- to 5/- per diem, which laborers complained would create severe hardships due to the rising cost of living in the colony.<sup>757</sup> The newly formed BTU asked the government to intervene and review the cost of living as it had in 1921 to resolve the mechanics strike.<sup>758</sup> The administration, however, argued that the cost of living had decreased since 1921 and refused to intervene or supplement wages with rice or fish money. During the negotiations the union cited the rising cost of a bag of rice from £1 6/- to £1 10/- while Governor Denham argued that prices of essential foodstuffs fluctuated and that sugar and other basic commodities had actually decreased in price.<sup>759</sup> The governor no doubt understood how central rice was to the diet of many Gambians, but seemed to display a selective ignorance by quoting the price of sugar as an example of

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<sup>754</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 G. Greig Captain of the Police to the Acting Colonial Secretary, July 6, 1921.

<sup>755</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Confidential Letter, Governor Armitage to the Secretary of State, December 11, 1924.

<sup>756</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 10, 1933

<sup>757</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, November 1929, 3.

<sup>758</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, November 1929, General Secretary of the Bathurst Trade Union to the Colonial Secretary, October 8, 1929.

<sup>759</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, Union Delegates Interview with the Governor.

decreased costs of living. The Governor further deployed a dubious rhetorical strategy by scolding what he perceived to be urban labor's insensitivity towards the protectorate and blamed urban wages for impoverishing rural Gambians. The strike, he argued, was trying to "get milk and beef from the same cow (the protectorate)." <sup>760</sup>

On October 18, 1929, in response to the stonewalling by the administration and the major firms, 400 workers went on strike in Bathurst. Immediately, the Chamber of Commerce asked the state to protect them by prohibiting picket lines in the city and the administration agreed to use the Conspiracy and Protection of Privacy Act of 1875 to ban picketing. <sup>761</sup> Unable to picket, labor leaders like E.F. Small worked to secure solidarity among the workers which would reduce the need for picket lines to keep laborers from returning to work. The administration was finally forced to take E.F. Small seriously when he emerged as a *de facto* leader of the strike. Small proposed a 25 day sit-down strike and worked to ensure that hungry sailors would be supported so they could not be forced to return to work. It was a successful effort and the sailors refused to work, though Small was less successful among other essential skilled workers. <sup>762</sup> Engineers, mechanics, painters, steam and motor boat workers, and blacksmiths were all considered essential and had already reached agreements with employers independent of the union. Thus, they were generally unsupportive of the union in general and the strike in particular. Small gained the majority of his followers from the ranks of the shipwrights, masons, carpenters, and sailors who were not able to negotiate effectively with their employers without a union. <sup>763</sup> Even these laborers, it must be pointed out, were skilled laborers and Small's primary goal was to have their salaries match those of the engineers. The firms categorically refused to raise workers' wages, citing economic woes and sagging profit margins. The workers were unmoved and letters came pouring in from organized labor leaders in England urging them to stand firm and expressing their solidarity with the strike.

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<sup>760</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, Union Delegates Interview with the Governor.

<sup>761</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, November 1929, Secretary Treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce to the Colonial Secretary, October 29, 1929.

<sup>762</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, Acting Commissioner of Police to the Colonial Secretary, November 5, 1929.

<sup>763</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, Acting Commissioner of Police to the Colonial Secretary, November 5, 1929.

Nearly a week into the strike nerves were beginning to fray. On November 6<sup>th</sup> the police had to be called in to disperse a crowd of 100 strikers. They were able to convince the crowd to disperse without incident, but on November 10<sup>th</sup> the workers were no longer willing to be dispersed. The strikers, angered by the fact that so many laborers were still working, identified the lorry drivers as their target. Lorry drivers were renowned for their ability to resist control by the state, capital, and organized labor since the lorries in the city were almost entirely owned by Africans. Lorry owners and drivers were necessarily among the most successful at securing wages because they set their own fares and could increase or decrease the cost of transport as they pleased. On November 10<sup>th</sup> a crowd of strikers marched to the Compagnie Francais at 11 AM and attempted to prevent a lorry from offloading.<sup>764</sup> Police officer Momoh Camarra, who had been following the crowd of about 40 or so strikers, ordered them to disperse and they did without incident. At 3 PM, however, another crowd gathered at the firm of Maurel and Prom where they again tried to stop a lorry driver from offloading goods. The shopkeeper blew a whistle to summon the police, but one of the three lorry operators was pulled from the car, thrown down in the street, and beaten by the crowd.<sup>765</sup> By 3:30 the crowd had been dispersed, but they marched toward Picton Street and the United Africa Company (UAC) where they attempted to seize a lorry. Fifty police officers came to disperse the crowd, but more workers came, surrounded the police, and convinced them to retreat. The commissioner of police called every officer in the city to assemble at the police station and informed the governor. By this time the crowd of strikers was multiplying, blocking traffic, and shutting down the main commercial avenues. Estimates of the crowd size ranged between 200 and 300. Finally, the crowd decided to break into the UAC garage where they believed a driver loyal to the firm was hiding. A police force confronted the strikers and sticks and stones were allegedly thrown at the police. At this point the commissioner of police organized 75 men and armed half of them with rifles with fixed bayonets and the other half with batons.

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<sup>764</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, 139A.

<sup>765</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, Acting Commissioner of Police to the Colonial Secretary, November 5, 1929, 139A.

According to the commissioner, his goal was to disperse the crowd peacefully and, failing that, to summon a Justice of the Peace to read the Riot Act to the crowd. As the police force approached the strikers, according to the commissioner, stones were thrown at the lorry they believed to be harboring the UAC driver.<sup>766</sup> At this point the commissioner ordered a bayonet charge through the streets and the crowd of strikers scattered. Though later he denied it, it was reported that the police captain, Norman Samuel Flint, ran through the streets yelling, "I am not out to play. I have come to teach these black monkeys a lesson."<sup>767</sup> The police argued afterwards that the bayonets were not used as offensive weapons but only to ward off attack. The lack of bayonet wounds treated at the hospital seems to confirm this for the most part, though strikers with minor bayonet wounds would have been more likely to conceal them and stay out of the hospital. The best we can say is that bayonets were probably not used with an overt intent to kill. Throughout the night the police continued to raid the town looking for strikers.<sup>768</sup> Two police officers and one striker were sent to the hospital and the strike was broken. The West African Frontier Force was called in to patrol the town to prevent the reoccurrence of violence. The application of martial law in the city made the continuance of the strike impossible without armed conflict.

In the aftermath of the strike, Governor Palmer described Small as being discredited in the eyes of his fellow Gambians. To Palmer, Small had attempted to "be like one of those mahdis who appear here from time to time, but now he is a discredited bastard" leading a small number of "discredited and hostile ne'er-do-wells."<sup>769</sup> To prevent these types of men from popping up from time to time Palmer suggested that a "self-reliant and self-respecting community" be nurtured which would trust that the wind would be "tempered by government to the shorn lamb."<sup>770</sup> In other words, Palmer argued that most residents of Bathurst felt that the colonial state remained their best protector and were thus unwilling to listen to Small's agitation for independence and the universal rights of workers. At the same time, however,

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<sup>766</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, 1929, 139A.

<sup>767</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, Cross Examination of Police Captain N.S. Flint.

<sup>768</sup> NRO: CSO 3/146 Strike by Trade Union, 1929, 139A.

<sup>769</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 10, 1933.

<sup>770</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 10, 1933.

Palmer did worry that the education system in Bathurst, which produced educated Gambians who entered an economy without opportunities, would produce many more Mr. Smalls.

After the strike was over it did force the administration to begin taking the rights of workers more seriously. In 1930, one year after the strike, workmen's compensation was discussed for the first time. It was unanimously criticized by the administration. The legal adviser of the colony and Governor Palmer both argued that there was no need for workmen's comp in The Gambia because there were few injuries and no clear waged class to protect in Bathurst.<sup>771</sup> The first of these claims could not have been true and the second is a bit of clever sophistry playing on the idea that because Gambians in the city were not entirely proletarianized they could not possibly be recognized as wage laborers. Since the PWD was the largest employer in the colony, Governor Palmer also worried that the state would be subjected to endless lawsuits. The Chamber of Commerce agreed and argued that they would be weighted down under endless litigation by "careless workers."<sup>772</sup> Additionally, verbiage disputing who can be considered a workman, wife, or dependent was deployed to slow the passage of the bill. The discussion, however, would continue through the next decade and a workmen's compensation act was finally passed in 1940 based on English law.

It's not that financial remunerations after deaths and accidents were unknown in the colony, but they were often conceived of as a one-time lump sum payment or short term remuneration. Since the turn of the century the state had been giving out small amounts of compensation to widows whose husbands had worked for the state. In 1906, the wife of a laborer who died working construction on a Bathurst jetty, for example, was given 4/- a week for the first year with an additional 1/- for each child under fourteen which would not exceed £10.<sup>773</sup> When Ms. Manley, the wife of the deceased Assistant Dispenser of the Medical Department, wrote to request her husband's pension she was granted it for only two months. In 1907 the widow of the Master and Engineer of Government Vessels was granted £150 while the widow of a five year veteran of the police force was awarded £9.10.1. Generally speaking, it was believed that

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<sup>771</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1054 Workmen's Compensation and Employer Liability, 4.

<sup>772</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1054 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 13, 1931.

<sup>773</sup> NRO: PUB 14/11 Minutes of the Legislative Council, 1888-1902, November 19, 1906.



benefits should have a cap and should diminish over time rather than providing a steady pension.

Remunerations for African pensioners, when they were given, were always meager compared to what European workers received.

In 1931 the employment practices of the Public Works Department also came into question. The dispute centered around the increasing popularity of “piecework” labor whereby a specific wage would be negotiated for a specific job rather than daily wages. The state argued that this system was necessary because Gambian foremen left laborers on the employment rolls after projects had finished in order to establish themselves as patrons of labor by ensuring steady paychecks for the men they recruited.<sup>774</sup> The state had relied on the headmen because they knew so little about their workers, who they were, where they lived, how to effectively recruit them, and how to hold them accountable. Piecework prevented foremen from keeping workers on the payroll, but left them in charge of recruiting. In the wake of the strike, according to E.F. Small, the PWD also began instructing foremen to blackball any workers who had been involved in the strike. Although the foremen were Gambians they were also keenly aware that trade unions potentially replaced them as recruiters of and advocates for labor.<sup>775</sup> The head of the PWD, of course, denied blackballing workers and argued that the workers had locked themselves out by refusing piecework labor and continuing to advocate for daily wages. Only nonproductive workers, he argued, did not like piecework.

Trade Unions in the city also received some recognition, but they were actually weaker for it. The Trade Union Ordinance of 1931 did recognize that Gambians had the right to form trade unions, but the unions became increasingly irrelevant to Gambian laborers. E. Parry, surveying the state of the Unions in 1943 found that they had degenerated into recruitment tools to help the employers attract labor.<sup>776</sup> The Bathurst Trade Union only negotiated wages for artisans, the Gambia Labor Union only took up individual labor complaints, and the Gambia River Traders and Commercial Workers Union was almost

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<sup>774</sup> NRO: CSO 4/36 Director of Public Works to the Colonial Secretary, November 25, 1929.

<sup>775</sup> NRO: CSO 4/36 Victimization of Trade Union Workers at the Public Works Department, 5.

<sup>776</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1125 E. Parry, Secret Dispatch, June 23, 1943, 2.

inactive.<sup>777</sup> Individual contracts handed out by small contractors made the consolidation of unions virtually impossible. Additionally, trade union law in the colony allowed any seven or more individuals the right to start a trade union without even a simple majority of the workers' votes. All they needed to do was file the paperwork and pay the appropriate fees. Firms began to co-opt the existing unions by gaining control of them or creating their own unions which, in reality, never had the workers interests at heart.<sup>778</sup> The workers, in turn, became apathetic towards the unions and the union organizers. Union leaders who actually attempted to forge a union that effectively represented large numbers of workers in the city were described as manic-depressives alternating between depression and bursts of manic energy in their union organizing activities.<sup>779</sup> The Bathurst Trade Union, which had been founded by E.F. Small before the strike, was barely functioning and had never once succeeded in negotiating wages or contracts with an employer after the strike. Small, now with the Gambia Labor Union (GLU) rather than the BTU, even admitted his former union was handicapped in its ability to represent workers.<sup>780</sup>

In 1937 when two strikes broke out they were not through union channels. The first was in January when day laborers working for the government struck. Workers receiving between 1/- and 1/6 per day argued that they simply could not keep up with the cost of living.<sup>781</sup> The strike received public sympathy due to the low wages being paid by the government. How could the government spend £32,000 per year on sanitation and not afford to pay laborers, the strikers asked.<sup>782</sup> They argued public health in the city would be better improved if laborers were paid good wages than by the grandest hospital.<sup>783</sup> The second strike of 1937 was conducted by 67 sanitary night workers under the public health department. The strikers, known locally as “scavengers”, had the unpleasant tasks of going from house to house and latrine to latrine disposing of “night soil” (human excrement) and “rubbish” (anything from dead animals

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<sup>777</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2866 Report on the Progress of Trade Unions in The Gambia, 1945.

<sup>778</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Memorandum on the Casual Labor Commission of 1941, 6.

<sup>779</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2077 E. Parry, Report on Trade Unions.

<sup>780</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1125 E. Parry, Secret Dispatch, June 23, 1943, 3.

<sup>781</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 1, 1937.

<sup>782</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 8, 1937

<sup>783</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, February 1, 1937, 1.

to plant materials and everything in between) and cleaning latrines.<sup>784</sup> They brought the refuse they collected by horse or lorry to Malfa Creek in the south of the city and dumped it into the water.<sup>785</sup> Later, incinerators were built to dispose of solid waste. (Figure 35) These were unskilled workers, but they were essential to the functioning of the city because without them the residents would literally be wading in their own excrement. The Medical Officer of Health argued that the workers should be given a raise due to the “offensive” nature of their work. They not only had to deal with refuse and excrement, but the smoke of the incinerators, and the cuts on their feet which they received wheeling refuse over broken glass and tins in the street.<sup>786</sup> Workers who were willing to replace the striking laborers were difficult to find because Gambians would not do work “of a revolting nature.”<sup>787</sup> Only Bambaras, Mande speakers originating from Mali and living as strangers in The Gambia, were willing to take the jobs. To be a “scavenger” carried with it a heavy stigma, but as strangers Bambaras could manage it through a corporate identity which functioned like a union. In the end the workers did secure a rise in the minimum wage to 1/3 per day, but the number of workers under the government payroll was reduced to cover the higher wages.

#### UNFREE LABOR 1920S-1940S

In the 1930s prison labor for the Public Works Department became a major topic of interest within the city. As we have already seen, prison labor on public works was actively discouraged since the administration of Patey in the late 1860s and the attempt by Bravo to initiate a public works program was directly rejected by the metropole. By the 1920s shot drill labor, though still technically legal, had become rare and most prison labor was put to work inside the prison walls doing tasks which were required for the daily maintenance of the prison itself including clerical work, cooking, cleaning the latrines and yard, tending the prison garden, and washing laundry. Some prisoners did work outside the prison cutting wood, making and transporting PWD cement, and watering government gardens, but prison

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<sup>784</sup> NRO: CSO 3/312 Labour Disputes in Government Departments, 19B.

<sup>785</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1363 Medical and Sanitary Report for 1932, 18.

<sup>786</sup> NRO: CSO 3/312 Labour Disputes in Government Departments, Medical Officer of Health to the Senior Medical Officer, March 4, 1937.

<sup>787</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3941 Bathurst Sewage Disposal.

labor was not yet primarily seen as a captive labor force for the state to exploit.<sup>788</sup> By the 1920s prisoners were also being compensated for their labor, but the records are erratic and unreliable. Annual prison reports contain the estimated wages paid to all prison labor for the year, but no information exists on wages per hour or hours worked. The primary reason for recording the wages was to demonstrate to metropolitan authorities merely that the prisoners were being used to produce value for the prison and the colony rather than linking wages and labor to the reform of the prisoners themselves.

In the 1930s prison labor was increasingly utilized by the PWD and a more systematic program for prison labor was devised. In the aftermath of the strike of 1929 and the unpopularity of the “piecework” labor programs which began in the early 1930s, PWD officials saw potential in replacing “free” labor with prison labor. Gangs of laborers, under the supervision of warders, were now being utilized to support public works projects in the city. 1931 was the first year that the general heading “PWD” appeared in the prison labor reports. It constituted a majority of the prison labor employed and accounted for nearly half of all the labor value produced by prisoners.<sup>789</sup> By 1932 work for the PWD exceeded half the total value of all prison labor and labor was being “utilized as far as possible on works of a public nature.”<sup>790</sup> “Unproductive” labor was also officially ended in 1932 when the shot drill was officially abolished. “Labor of irksome character” such as stone breaking or bone crushing were now only to be used as a punishment for offences committed in the prison.<sup>791</sup> Prison labor played a large role in the reclamation schemes of the 1930s by carrying thousands of cubic yards of sand to places like Lasso Wharf where the state was trying to reclaim land. In 1937-38 the gaol stopped collecting specific statistics on labor and merely noted that prisoners were being employed both inside and outside the gaol and that the average prisoner earned 9d. per week.<sup>792</sup>

The only class of laborers that the state was able to effectively engage during war time were those who had the least freedom and mobility in the city. During the Second World War, the new desire to

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<sup>788</sup> Annual Report for the Prisons Department, 1924, 6.

<sup>789</sup> Annual Report for the Prisons Department, 1931, 7.

<sup>790</sup> Annual Report for the Prisons Department, 1932, 6.

<sup>791</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1323 Abolition of Shot Drill in Bathurst Prison, 1932.

<sup>792</sup> Annual Report for the Prisons Department, 1937-38

control and regulate labor collided with currents of prison reform to produce a disciplinary regime for prison labor. A prison labor camp was built at Jeshwang in Northern Kombo in 1953 to harness the new trend of productive, penal labor. The camp gave first time offenders the option to avoid incarceration in the gaol in exchange for their captive labor. The camp was especially designed to produce agricultural products, but it was founded in a poorly chosen site.<sup>793</sup> The low fertility of the land at Jeshwang meant that any efforts to turn the camp into a successful endeavor were doomed from the start. Early efforts to invite relatives of prisoners to the camp, prisoners versus officers football matches, and invitations to notable citizens of the city to showcase its progressive nature all faded over time as the camp failed to produce anything of value. Three years after it was approved the camp was described as a monument to “vanished agricultural enthusiasm” which looked “barren” and “sad” except for some fruit trees and a herd of goats which were supposed to be tended but roamed the prison freely.<sup>794</sup>

In the prison, the first real wage scheme for prisoners began in 1942. Prisoners serving six months to three years received 4d. per week, three to five years receiving 5d. per week, and prisoners serving more than five years making 6d. per week.<sup>795</sup> Soon thereafter wages were increased to 9d. per week and by 1951 to 1/- a week.<sup>796</sup> Prisoners’ earnings were credited to them in savings books kept by the post office. Some thrifty prisoners even began sending wages home for their families.<sup>797</sup> The productive capacity of prisoners also became a key component of their incarceration. In addition to sanitary and manual labor tasks prisoners were also turning out mats, rugs, hand bags, baskets, brooms, rope, fishing nets, soap, salt, lime, tailoring, laundry, dried fish, garden produce, and farm produce.<sup>798</sup> In 1942 this produced a £444 profit and in 1943 a profit of £749.13.3. Prisoners were alienated from the profits of their manufactures, but they did at least receive some training in manufacturing. In 1945, a boot and shoe repair shop was added to the prison under the supervision of a discharged army officer who was hired as a

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<sup>793</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2630 Conference of the Heads of Prison Departments in West Africa, 1946.

<sup>794</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2730 Establishment of Prison Camps,

<sup>795</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report, 1942, 8.

<sup>796</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2649 Remuneration to Prisoners, 6.

<sup>797</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2630 Conference of the Heads of Prison Departments of West Africa, 1946.

<sup>798</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report, 1943, 9.

warder.<sup>799</sup> Female received no such training because African women were not considered to be the “type” who could benefit from industrial training.<sup>800</sup> In reality, most men incarcerated in the prison never really received industrial training or any kind of education either despite administration propaganda.

In order to increase the efficiency of prison labor a three stage system and a three mark system were developed. Arm bands separated the mark system. Prisoners with black spotted arm bands or the “spot class” were between 17 and 21 years old. The “star class” had red stars on their arm bands and represented men with minor convictions. Finally, the “red band class” had red bands and represented Class II prisoners considered to be trustworthy.<sup>801</sup> Furthermore, prisoners were divided into three stages. Stage I prisoners were considered to be good workers over a period of six months and twelve weeks. They received one 30 minute visit, one letter every six months, and one book a month. To make stage two they had to work an additional sixteen weeks with good reports. Then, they would be eligible to receive one letter every three months, two books a month, and were eligible to take classes in the prison. After an additional twelve weeks prisoners could qualify for stage three which earned them 15 extra minutes for visitors and three books per month.<sup>802</sup> After three years of labor prisoners could qualify for a “special stage” which received one hour visits, one letter per month, and 2/- per month pay on top of their wages.<sup>803</sup>

Once they left prison, however, rejoining the labor force was a problem. In 1946 the first statistics were kept on the occupations of prisoners prior to conviction. This does not necessarily mean that the prisoners were employed when convicted, but it does show how prisoners chose to self-identify.<sup>804</sup>

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<sup>799</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report, 1945, 7.

<sup>800</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2648 Report on the Conference of the Heads of Prison Departments in West Africa, 1944.

<sup>801</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2649 Remuneration of Prisoners.

<sup>802</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2649 Remuneration of Prisoners.

<sup>803</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2649 Remuneration of Prisoners.

<sup>804</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report, 1946, 3.

Table 3: Employment of Prisoners Prior to Incarceration, 1946.

Motor Drivers	112	House Boys	23	Farmers	220	Cooks	33	Gold Smiths	4
Petty Traders	39	Laborers	120	Stone Mason	18	Wireless Operator	1	Housewife	4
Telephone Operator	2	Clerks	14	Tailors	12	Fishermen	12	Electricians	3
Policemen	3	Fitters	24	Messengers	2	Carpenters	25	Butchers	2
Painters	1	Ship Wrights	2	Seamen	3	Shoe Makers	1	Watchmen	4
Bakers	3	Sailors	2	Blacksmiths	2	Shopkeepers	2		

Laborers, farmers, and drivers were amongst the most common professions reported by inmates, but skilled laborers were by no means absent from the prison. This should not be surprising given the struggles of skilled laborers during this period. More significant, for our purposes, is to consider the impact imprisonment would have had on these workers. Governor Palmer, who oversaw the abolition of the shot drill in Bathurst gaol, was an early advocate for a Prisoners Aid Society. Penal labor, he argued, had to be “productive of something.”<sup>805</sup> The rehabilitation of prisoners through an Aid Society was also seen as a necessary precondition for making prisoners into productive citizens. Though social stigma among Africans in the city rarely seemed to accompany imprisonment, employers routinely discriminated against ex-convicts which prevented them from securing employment after their release from prison.<sup>806</sup> A “revolving door” of crime was described where previous convictions led to a denial of future employment which forced the ex-convict to return to crime in order to feed themselves.<sup>807</sup> A circulation of “habitual criminals”, it was argued, could be avoided with an Aid Society which could help them reintegrate into

<sup>805</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1323 Abolition of Shot Drill in Bathurst Prison, 1932, 6.

<sup>806</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1628 Prisoner’s Aid Society, 1.

<sup>807</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1628 Prisoners Aid Society, 1.

society. In 1943 the Prisoner's Welfare Society was founded by citizens of Bathurst. All the founders were Gambians except for the Reverend R.N. Coote.<sup>808</sup> The society, which only worked with first offenders, visited prisoners in their homes and inspected their living quarters, gave them counseling and assistance, and helped them to find employment.<sup>809</sup> The society, however, still faced hostile employers and visited many more ex-convicts than it found employment for. In 1944, the Royal Air Force began taking up the slack and hiring ex-convicts placed by the society. Unfortunately, the welfare society remained frustrated in its goal of helping ex-convicts and other attempts to do the same often suffered the same fate.

#### LABOR AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The small wage increases secured by most laborers in the 1920s and 1930s failed to remedy what the *Gambia Echo* called the "cradle-to-grave indebtedness" of the Bathurst worker.<sup>810</sup> In the 1940s, the *Echo* became a vocal editorialist for wage increases, though it primarily framed its analysis of the wage situation in terms of the needs of the middle class. One of its major complaints was that the cost of living index was calculated based on what the city's working class would need to reproduce themselves which harmed the ability of the middle class to maintain its intermediate status in the city.<sup>811</sup> The *Echo* managed to tap into a very real fear among the middle class that they were on their way down, after enjoying relative prosperity in the past, to join the city's working poor. As we shall see, the *Echo* was hardly alone in this regard. Nor were there fears unfounded given the relatively meager savings of the city's middle class relative to their expenses. Nothing manifested this anxiety more clearly than the colonial cemetery. The cemetery in Bathurst, like most cemeteries, made class relationships visible through its headstones and burial plots (or lack thereof). Although Muslims originally favored simple grave sites, the influence of European funerary aesthetics had led the city's upwardly mobile Muslims to adjust their tastes for more opulent burial sites accordingly. It had become full over the years and bodies of the poor began piling up

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<sup>808</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report, 1943, 9.

<sup>809</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report, 1943, 9.

<sup>810</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, October 21, 1940.

<sup>811</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, October 21, 1940



at the Victoria Hospital waiting for doctors to approve their shipment to the cemetery. It got so bad that the cemetery laborers requested to be exempted from the burial of paupers because they had been decomposing for two or three days in the morgue before burial.<sup>812</sup> To deal with the lack of space all new entries into the cemetery were interred in a common burial pit regardless of their ability to buy a burial plot which, according to the Bathurst Advisory Town Council (BATC) “pauperized a class of citizens against their will.”<sup>813</sup> The BATC, speaking for the city’s rate paying class, argued old remains should be dug up and reinterred in the common pit creating room for the middle class to distinguish their burial plots from those of the poor in the common grave. The Town Council decided to take up the cost of burying Christian paupers, but not Muslims. The idea of corpses being pauperized shows the limitations of the idea that death is the great equalizer. True enough, all people at some time must dance the *danse macabre*, but the living rarely allow the dead to actually become equal.

The BATC also declared that the poor should make room on public works projects for the employment of the rate payers.<sup>814</sup> Employers, they insisted, should adopt a policy of hiring rate payers before the working poor since the former paid their own way in the city and the latter did not pay taxes. Instead, in 1940, new legislation made it easier for the state to secure prison labor for the PWD. Under the Prison Extra Manual Employment Regulations of 1940 any first offenders sentenced to less than three months or having an outstanding debt of not more than £5 could choose to live at home and work six hours a day on public works for the duration of their sentence without setting foot in the gaol<sup>815</sup> This type of labor, many argued, stole work from the unemployed, put poorly skilled laborers to work building infrastructure, undermined wage labor throughout the city, and, in the minds of employers, would lead to paid laborers also calling for a six rather than eight hour work day.<sup>816</sup> According to the BATC the residents of the city resented prison labor.<sup>817</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Minutes of the Meeting of the Bathurst Town Council, December 2, 1947.

<sup>813</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1596 Minutes of Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, June 27, 1939.

<sup>814</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1596 Minutes of Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, June 28, 1939.

<sup>815</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1849 Prison Extra Manual Employment Regulations of 1940, 1.

<sup>816</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1849 Prison Extra Manual Employment Regulations of 1940, 3.

<sup>817</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, September 10, 1941.

These conditions were temporarily eased by the employment boom of the Second World War. A state of emergency was declared in The Gambia due to its proximity to Vichy Senegal which meant that the colony had to prepare for attack. Indeed, The Gambia became a base for the Free French opposition including De Gaulle himself who stayed at 21 Lemman Street for a time.<sup>818</sup> Marshall Henri-Philippe Petain of Vichy Senegal explicitly warned that he would bomb Bathurst for this very reason. To make matters worse, in 1940 de Gaulle attempted to convince the French forces in Dakar to mutiny in sync with an allied invasion of the city meant to wrest Senegal away from Nazi control. The attack on Dakar proved abortive and militarily inconsequential, but it left the British fearing Vichy retribution on Bathurst.

Young men streamed into Bathurst to take up war time jobs under the defense department, but also to flee the protectorate where chiefs were forcibly conscripting young men into the army to fulfil recruitment quotas. Chiefs and head men were even conscripting strange farmers who came to their villages to work, but were not residents of The Gambia. The anonymity of Bathurst provided a shield against conscription which led many young men to endure life on the street rather than returning to rural homes where they could be conscripted. This influx of young men was matched by an influx of foreign soldiers from Europe and other parts of Africa and some Bathurst men made a living showing soldiers how to enjoy the city life and taking them to the bars at night.<sup>819</sup>

War time preparations in the colony including building barracks for British forces, constructing boat bases, bomb shelters, trenches, and preparing runways for the RAF which was primarily stationed in Bathurst and Bakau. Gambians from the protectorate, and from Senegal when war time immigration measures were eased, came to Bathurst looking for work. Clifton Road became a field of tents housing the Royal West Africa Frontier Force and Royal Air Force. At Half Die large steel beam hangars were built to house RAF planes and many residences were destroyed in Half Die to make room for the large diesel, kerosene, and petrol tanks which had become necessary to fuel the influx of new vehicles.<sup>820</sup> In

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<sup>818</sup> Jawara, 104.

<sup>819</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>820</sup> Jawara, 129.

1941 labor officials reported full employment in the city among skilled and unskilled laborers alike.<sup>821</sup> The work force rose to as high as 20,000 men while the wartime projects were active.<sup>822</sup> The problem, however, was that “the work had patriotic value, but not capital value” and did not add to the productive capacity of the Gambian economy.<sup>823</sup> After the war, the WAFF and RAF camps and hangars were pulled down without fanfare and much of what was built during the war ceased to serve a purpose after it was finished with the exception of oil drums in Half Die which were purchased by Shell and still provide the city with its petrol supply. Most of the structures erected during the war were turned into scrap. Bathurst had no more of an industrial base after the war than it did before it.

A labor camp at Yundum, in northern Kombo, was built in anticipation of the arrival of war work for the service department. The engineer who designed the camp copied a local village and designed 84 groups of huts with 12 huts per group for a total of “2,000 souls.”<sup>824</sup> It was a failed project and, as one critic put it, the engineer primarily succeeded in building a “swallow’s nest to house thrushes.” Apparently, birds would gladly occupy it, but Africans would not because they had “reason to guide them as well as (animal) instinct.”<sup>825</sup> Since laborers were allowed a short free stay in the camp before paying rent, those that came to the camp often left as soon as they had to pay or as quickly as they could establish a connection in the city. Rural Senegambians did not come to the city to live in the simulacrum of a village which they mocked by calling it “Peanut Paris.”<sup>826</sup> Women were not welcome in the camp for fear that it would become an actual, functioning village rather than a place to shelter male, laboring bodies. Labor, it was assumed, would come in male forms and the presence of women would overly complicate matters where “mixed sexes and tribes” would live “cheek by jowl” with no privacy in communal huts.” This mimics the mining camp model prevalent in southern Africa, but it was neither as organized nor as

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<sup>821</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Report on the Labor Department, 1939-43.

<sup>822</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports of the Labor Department, 1939-1943, 24.

<sup>823</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports of the Labor Department, 1939-1943, 24.

<sup>824</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2025 Labor for Service Department, 123.

<sup>825</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2025 Labor for Service Department, 123.

<sup>826</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2025 Labor for Service Department, 124.

effective.<sup>827</sup> The lack of control the state had over the housing camp can be seen by the fact that firsthand accounts from the camp cited women moving into the camp and using their huts as kitchens from which they sold food to the men.<sup>828</sup> A labor officer even complained of bare breasted women colonizing the camp and refusing to leave. When faced with criticisms of the camp administrators were remarkably honest. The camp, they admitted, was never meant to attract labor. It was meant to control laborers by concentrating them in one place and to reduce the number of people sleeping in the streets.<sup>829</sup>

The influx of male laborers during the war was accompanied by an equally important, but largely ignored, influx of women and young persons into the city. Although women were essential to the functioning of the city these women tended not to sell their labor directly to the so-called formal sector consisting of state or private employers and thus there are not many records of them. Nestled in labor reports there are hints here and there of a rising “class of women in Bathurst specializing in housework and cooking” with a “reputation for virtuous integrity.”<sup>830</sup> One labor adviser thought the women to be so virtuous that employers should consider hiring them instead of men, but that does not seem to have been a widespread sentiment. The discourse of virtue among women working in the home is not unique to Bathurst, but part of a wider patriarchal evaluation of “domestic virtue.” Women who worked in the private enclave of the home, it was thought, contributed to the erection of the bourgeois sphere and the nuclear, property owning family while market women contributed to the promiscuous proliferation of unregulated commerce and unaccountable bodies on the streets.<sup>831</sup> As Jacklyn Cock has shown in apartheid South Africa, the discourse of domestic virtue disappears quickly once the actual relationships between employers and domestic workers are broached.<sup>832</sup> Indeed, in Bathurst we find that employers often dismissed their employees without following the registration laws meant to protect domestic workers.

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<sup>827</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2025 Labor for Service Department, 124.

<sup>828</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2025 Labor for Service Department, 124.

<sup>829</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2875 Labor Camp in Bathurst, Minutes for 3/8/45.

<sup>830</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1960 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942

<sup>831</sup> Grace Bantebya and Marjorie Keniston McIntosh. 2006. *Women, Work, and Domestic Virtue in Uganda*. James Curry: Oxford, 65.

<sup>832</sup> See Jacklyn Cock. 1980. *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation*. Raven Press: Johannesburg.

Many of the women and young girls who came to Bathurst from its hinterland became domestic servants in married houses where they worked in order to buy property or bring wealth back to their rural homes. To save on rent groups of girls and women would often stay together with an established Bathurst woman who would provide them with housing and help them find employment in exchange for rent payments.<sup>833</sup> In order to ensure the “virtuous integrity” of the influx of domestic servants the administration strained to apply the Domesticity Licensing Act of 1922 to the new wartime circumstances. The act required all domestic servants be licensed and registered with the state in order to secure employment. The licensing was supposed to be mutually beneficial for servants and employers because servants with clean employment records would be able to find employment and would also be protected from dismissal by employers without reason.<sup>834</sup> During the war there were too many domestic servants in the city to keep track of and the ordinance was not being followed. As a result the 1922 Licensing Act was repealed in 1947. The Commissioner of The Gambia Colony believed that employers were largely to blame for the situation. Many servants, he argued, were proud of their registration cards which they had held for years and the repeal of the Licensing Act would lower expert domestic servants to the level of “ex-criminals and apprentices” by erasing that record.<sup>835</sup> Others, however, argued that licensing domestic servants was discriminatory. Why should servants have to be licensed while other laborers did not? Domestic servants, just as other laborers, could establish their reputation and experience by giving a list of references to potential employers.<sup>836</sup> In any case, removing the requirement for registration led to a boom for domestic service employment. In 1951 there were four times as many domestic servants as there were in 1944 and having a servant increasingly became seen as a marker of bourgeois respectability.<sup>837</sup>

In contrast to female domestic servants, male domestic workers preferred to live on the street and work unregistered. The threat of conscription, which women did not have to face, may have been a significant factor influencing male domestic servants to remain aloof from registration schemes which

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<sup>833</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1960 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942.

<sup>834</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2600 Registration and Licensing of Domestic Servants, 35.

<sup>835</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2600 Commissioner of the Colony to the Colonial Secretary, August 16, 1948.

<sup>836</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2600 Acting Governor to the Colonial Secretary January 18, 1949.

<sup>837</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2996 Census of Bathurst, Report of the Census Commissioner.

required them to list their names and addresses on their registration cards. This anonymity gave young men more freedom to resist state control, but it also, as we shall see, rendered them more vulnerable.

For the middle and upper class European and Gambian women in the colony the war was also a chance to volunteer. Lady Southorn, the wife of Governor Southorn, organized the Gambian Women War Workers and the Busy Bees Girls Club at the start of the war. (Figure 30) The women ran a dry canteen and mobile canteen for soldiers and laborers, knitted and sewed, taught classes for Navy cooks, provided a changing room for recreation at McCarthy Square, and visited leper camps. The work was continued under the wife of H.R.R. Blood, the next governor.<sup>838</sup> For other women not blessed with the leisure time to volunteer the war and the influx of young male workers and soldiers provided ample opportunities for women willing to engage in sex work. Bathurst was one center of prostitution in the colony. Another was Bakau where the RAF was stationed.

For many women the employment boom also created business opportunities in trade and cooking. It is difficult to speak about female street hawkers from archival sources. During the war female traders took to the streets as highly mobile street sellers. The records attesting to their presence come primarily from BATC records which saw them as menaces and sought to control them.<sup>839</sup> From the attention devoted to them it is fair to surmise that the city's ever growing population relied on "hawkers" to provide them with basic commodities. Women who sold on the streets did so in defiance of the authorities and thus had to remain mobile and fluid. They did not keep records or register themselves. Nor did they pay taxes, licenses, or duties on their trade. They circulated throughout the city when they had to and congregated on the main thoroughfares when they could.

More is known about the role women played in the reproduction of the male labor force through cooking. Most male laborers did not want to cook themselves nor were they keen on relying on their employers for food. To have done so would have surrendered control over the quality of their food to employers as well as to different ideas as to what constituted culturally appropriate foods. If laborers were

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<sup>838</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2055 Press Cuttings.

<sup>839</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council March 26, 1940.

married their wife would, in all likelihood, cook their meals. If not, the wife of a coworker could be paid to cook for them. For women this was good business and they could make as much as 20/- per month for every laborer they fed.<sup>840</sup> Since many women cooked for a group of men they could make significantly more per month than an unskilled laborer and possibly as much as a skilled laborer.

During meal time workers preferred to leave the job site and walk to the location where their meals were cooked where they would eat with fellow workers who patronized the same cook. Some skilled laborers who could act as breadwinners and maintain wives at home tended to enact class distinctions during meal time by returning home to eat, bathe, and perform ablutions in privacy rather than eating with unskilled laborers.<sup>841</sup> Unskilled workers tended to see this as aping the habits of white men.<sup>842</sup> Employers considered the entire system to be wasteful, inefficient, and a missed opportunity to turn a profit by surrendering mealtime mobility to their labor force. Schemes were devised to keep workers on the job site during meal times by mandating company provided meals. One proposed scheme elected a worker to go and buy food with a pool of money from the workers, bring it back to the work site, and cook it under foreman supervision.<sup>843</sup> Not only did workers not prefer to eat a fellow workman's cooking, but foremen who would strictly enforce the system were hard to find. Another scheme involved the employer stocking a canteen of uncooked food and requiring proof of employment in order to buy. Again, employees did not favor this scheme and it also raised issues of creditor/debtor relationships when employees came to the canteen without cash in hand asking for food advances.<sup>844</sup> Companies quickly realized that a canteen would give laborers an opportunity to make new demands on employers to provide them with food on credit or in addition to wages. Employees also disliked the canteen system because they feared it could become a form of debt slavery whereby the company could keep them indebted and dependent on their employment for food. A third suggestion was to license select food hawkers and allow them to come to the worksite so that the laborers would not have to leave, but many hawkers were less

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<sup>840</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2068 Meals for Workers, 15.

<sup>841</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2068 Meals for Workers, 20.

<sup>842</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2068 Meals for Workers, 20.

<sup>843</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2068 Meals for Workers, 6.

<sup>844</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2068 Meals for Workers, 11.

than eager to be registered for fear of being controlled. Nor did they want to travel further afield to work sites when they had no problem finding customers on the main thoroughfares.

Possibly the most important factor mitigating control of the labor force was the high demand for labor during the early war period which meant laborers did not fear being sacked since they could easily find a new job. Employers often had to compete to attract labor. In the early years of the war, all employers agreed to a ceiling for wages, but some offered greater overtime pay or food/transport money to attract labor. The Army was well known for offering the best overtime pay and thus secured the best and most numerous laborers.<sup>845</sup> By 1942, the wage agreements had broken down and employers began raising wages to compete. Laborers also attempted to turn their newfound power into gains by launching frequent strikes throughout the war aimed at securing higher wages.<sup>846</sup> There was not, however, a general strike which united disparate groups of laborers and PWD work was able to continue despite the ongoing strikes. Trade unionists often blamed the lack of solidarity on immigrants who planned to return home rather than stay in the city once they had secured enough wages. The labor office also placated some potential strikers when they began acting as a labor exchange issuing tallies to employers to provide their workers with and acting as an arbitrator in disputes between workers and employers.<sup>847</sup> Not only had the state taken the role traditionally administered by the trade unions, but it was even suggested, half tongue-in-cheek and half seriously, that the state drop all pretenses and run the unions themselves.<sup>848</sup>

Gains for laborers tended to be circumstantial and based on profession. Porters refused to work longer than five hour days and to carry more than 114 pound loads.<sup>849</sup> Workers for Shell Petroleum, which had come during the war to fuel British boats and planes, threw down their tools and demanded the same 2/- per day that other war workers were getting.<sup>850</sup> In this case, Shell was able to defeat the strike.

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<sup>845</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942.

<sup>846</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports on the Labor Department, 1939-43.

<sup>847</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2088 Half Yearly Report on the Labor Department for 1943.

<sup>848</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2077 R.C. Wilkinson Minute Papers June 29, 1943.

<sup>849</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports of the Labor Department, 1939-1943, 10.

<sup>850</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports of the Labor Department, 1939-1943, 45.



Even Roman Catholic teachers struck for better wages.<sup>851</sup> Additionally, many laborers used the chaotic conditions to their advantage. Newly arrived workers often claimed to be skilled laborers and since there was no way to track them or verify their credentials they were hired for jobs which they may not have been qualified for. Many unskilled laborers also used bribery or nepotism to encourage employers to look the other way when they could not prove their pedigree.<sup>852</sup>

These conditions were unsettling to established labor hierarchies. Skilled laborers who had completed long apprenticeships and invested their capital in purchasing and maintaining the tools needed for their professions called for a grading system of labor or the establishment of guilds to distinguish themselves from the unskilled laborers masquerading as artisans.<sup>853</sup> There were a number of other factors which damaged the position of skilled labor in the city. Although the employment boom of the war years reversed the dismal 1930s depression economy, when the war work ceased to be primarily construction and became more maintenance and upkeep the demand for skilled labor dropped and skilled laborers found themselves unemployed.<sup>854</sup> Additionally, lorries had cut into ship traffic on the river which helped mechanics, but hurt many sailors and other skilled laborers who fixed the cutters that used to have a monopoly on moving groundnuts to Bathurst. Even clerks, who were traditionally almost guaranteed employment due to the relative rarity of literacy in the city, were being fired by traders who could no longer afford to pay them.<sup>855</sup> Some skilled workers like carpenters could transition to making furniture, but many had specialized skills which were not easily transferrable from one job to another. Nor could floundering trade unions effectively fight the prevailing headwinds on behalf of skilled laborers.

As early as 1940 the city's rate payers were editorializing in the *Echo* that their jobs were being stolen by "loafers", a new class of urban unemployed and French citizens.<sup>856</sup> As long as labor was needed the administration did not back the rate payers, but from 1942 on, as the demand for labor fell, the

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<sup>851</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1960 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942.

<sup>852</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports of the Labor Department, 1939-1943, 25.

<sup>853</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports of the Labor Department, 1939-1943, 60.

<sup>854</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1960 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942

<sup>855</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1850 Register of Unemployed People in Bathurst, 5.

<sup>856</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 1, 1940, 3.

administration began to crack down on perceived disorder in the city. As the war continued it became increasingly clear that the Axis powers were losing their hold in Africa and war was not coming to Bathurst. Defense projects no longer made sense, but laborers continued to come to the city looking for work. In 1942, only a year after labor officials were boasting of full employment in the city, the legislative council described a situation in which unemployed men “throng the streets” of Bathurst day and night, working only when they want to, having no fixed abode, and often sleeping in the streets.<sup>857</sup> Governor Palmer insisted that the poor should leave the city and there was widespread fear among the labor force that the poor would be driven across the Denton Bridge to Kombo disorganizing social life and breaking up families.<sup>858</sup> After all, when the administration tired of cattle, goats and sheep in the city they drove them across the Denton Bridge to Kombo as well. The chairman of the BATC had to promise the city’s residents that no such plan would be implemented without the governor presenting a scheme first.

In 1942, the police began rounding up everyone sleeping on the street in order to deport them and ease the problem of people sleeping on the streets. Reports listed these people as “homeless”, but this seems a dubious designation because many of them likely had rural homes to return to and were sleeping on the streets as a temporary arrangement in order to maximize profits. In September of 1942, the number of people sleeping on the street was estimated at 1,500.<sup>859</sup> Not unsurprisingly health officials began citing increasing rates of disease, infant mortality, and vitamin deficiency in the city. On November 17, 1942 between 4AM and 7AM, 800 men were caught sleeping on the streets. 117 men were “enlisted” in the army, many others fled the city or were deported, and over 400 were forcibly moved to the laborers camp at Yundum.<sup>860</sup> Police officers took care to separate the old and the sick for deportation from younger men who could stay and labor.<sup>861</sup> The Labor Department Report used the term “directed” to describe how the

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<sup>857</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2000 Compulsory Service Ordinance 1942, 15.

<sup>858</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, July 11, 1939.

<sup>859</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2028 Health of the Native Population of Bathurst, 3.

<sup>860</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports of the Labor Department, 1939-1943, 40.

<sup>861</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2023 Persons Sleeping in the Streets, Superintendent of Police to the Colonial Secretary, November 18, 1942.

117 young men were enrolled in the army, but shanghaied is a more honest term<sup>862</sup> Prison was not an option since the state had no room or desire to feed them. By the end of December the homeless population had decreased to about 276.

There was also a group which was, in fact, driven across the Denton Bridge. Along with the men who were swept up in the night time raid a large number of “house boys” were found sleeping on the streets without proof of employment or registration.<sup>863</sup> How exactly the administration distinguished between the boys and the men is not clear. The boys, though working as domestic servants, did not have the same living arrangements that young women did with local Bathurst women and slept on the streets instead. Employers who had lost their “houseboys” had to go across the Denton Bridge to identify and claim them. It must be pointed out that this was the same procedure for Bathurst residents who allowed their goats and sheep to wander the streets implemented just before the war began. Many of those who were rounded up were deported from the city, but ultimately they returned. Since it was November cold weather, the labor officer hoped, would at least keep them away for a time.<sup>864</sup>

The roundups, deportations, and shanghaiing of men into the military led to a temporary collapse of labor in the city. Between the November 14<sup>th</sup> raid and November 30<sup>th</sup> service department employers suddenly found themselves lacking labor as the work force was more than cut in half.<sup>865</sup> It turns out the men on the streets who were assumed to be unemployed were actually working after all. The governor defended the roundups against service department criticism on the grounds that without proper housing, food, and social amenities employers would have to deal with a lack of labor in the long run. After the roundup, however, the Half Die labor supply was 1/3 the number needed. The fear that workers would be recruited into the army, prevalent after the round ups, was cited as a major factor keeping workers from returning to service department projects.<sup>866</sup> There were jobs available and laborers to do them, but the fear of identification and conscription kept workers away from job sites. Many women stepped up and

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<sup>862</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2875 Annual Report for the Labor Department 1944.

<sup>863</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2023 Persons Sleeping in the Streets, 7.

<sup>864</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2023 Persons Sleeping in the Streets, Labor Officer November 11, 1942.

<sup>865</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2025 Labor for Service Department, 30.

<sup>866</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2025 Wing Commander to the Area Commander of The Gambia, December 20, 1942.

supported men in resisting work through trade and cooking while at the Victoria Embankment and on Wellington Street cutters, canoes, and motorboats were rusting.<sup>867</sup> Out of 437 port laborers under contract with the Ministry of War Transportation only 175 or so showed up daily for labor and workers had to be called up from the streets without contracts in order to fill the shortfall. Port authorities attempted to deport 250 of the laborers under contract who consistently did not show up while simultaneously requesting that more laborers be procured from the protectorate.<sup>868</sup>

Table 4: Employment Change in Bathurst, November 14-30, 1942.

	Employed on Nov. 14	Employed on Nov. 30
Half Die	201	75
Marina	55	30
Jeshwang	69	47
Yundum	588	276
Total	913	428

The director of the PWD suggested that the unemployment problem could be solved if the residents of Half Die could be employed to finally “harness the powers of nature to the service of mankind” by fighting the flooding which has always plagued the city.<sup>869</sup> (Figures 33, 34) The state was not willing to pay for this. Instead they implemented the Compulsory Service Ordinance (CSO) of 1942 which was added to the National Service Ordinance (NSO) of 1940. While the NSO had provided for conscription for military service, the CSO allowed for civil conscription of African and European men and European women on labor projects.<sup>870</sup> It is not clear that the ordinance was effectively implemented as the controversial nature of conscription mediated against record keeping.

<sup>867</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 22, 1940,3.

<sup>868</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1982 Labor for Port, Ministry of War Transportation to the Colonial Secretary, June 18, 1942.

<sup>869</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1269 Drainage of Half Die, 56.

<sup>870</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2000 Compulsory Service Ordinance of 1942.

In addition to conscription, the state tried other ways of maintaining and verifying a labor force that was a sizeable 7,000. 7,000 workers were selected, given permission to stay in the city, and handed work tallies in the form of metal discs. Free passage upriver to rural homes was offered for those without tallies.<sup>871</sup> Almost as soon as they were handed out, the tallies were being sold at the market while laborers who sold theirs claimed that their tallies were either lost or stolen.<sup>872</sup> In order to be effective markers of identity the tallies were supposed to be held and not circulated. The registration of all Bathurst residents by a comprehensive census was considered, but in a time of war it was greatly feared by city residents that registration would lead to conscription and thus proved impossible.<sup>873</sup> The city's seasonal, fluctuating population also mediated against the possibility of securing an accurate census. A thumb print identification database was discussed, but the technology to quickly verify finger prints was lacking and the work of the finger print photographer was considered to be poor. Thumb prints were in use in Freetown at the time, but not widely in Bathurst. Identity cards necessary to purchase rice were also rejected because employers could use them to equate sacking a worker with starvation and thus enslave the labor force.<sup>874</sup> Sealed wire bracelets for laborers which could not be easily removed without cutting them off were considered and rejected because the state did not want laborers to feel "like so many inoculated cattle."<sup>875</sup>

In 1943, Axis forces left Africa for good and overpopulation became as acute as ever as the ban on Senegalese immigration to The Gambia was lifted and many residents of Senegal came to Bathurst looking for employment. Massive overcrowding resulted. When jobs were not plentiful many returned to rural areas to plant crops and overcrowding was temporarily relieved, but as employment returned so did laborers in force. A quick survey in 1943 found residences at 6 Cameron Street, 6 Picton Street, 78

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<sup>871</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1914 Annual Reports of the Labor Department, 1939-1943, 52.

<sup>872</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1960 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942.

<sup>873</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 23, 1941.

<sup>874</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2012 Registration of Males in Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary, 4.

<sup>875</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2012 Registration of Males in Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary, 10.

Dobson Street, and across from 44 Allen Street were all founded to be overflowing with residents.<sup>876</sup> In order to cope with the influx of people landlords began housing them in the goat and sheep sheds which they had built to shelter their livestock, but which were now free after the 1938 ordinance banning all sheep and goats from the city.<sup>877</sup> Administration and public health officials presented a dire picture of the city with the unemployed wandering the streets asking for charity or stealing. “Wretched” and “dirty” looking men were described sitting idly in the streets.<sup>878</sup> It was suggested to build another labor camp at Box Bar, but this time the state had learned its lesson from the Yundum labor camp and rejected the plan.<sup>879</sup> The return of many Senegalese to Senegal after the end of the war did more to solve the problem of overcrowding than anything else.<sup>880</sup> By 1951, however, the number of persons sleeping in the street was double that of 1944.<sup>881</sup> Too many had acquired a taste for urban living and wage labor during the war to put the genie back in the bottle. Firms like the United Africa Company and Maurel and Freres took advantage of the high supply and lower demand for labor in the early 1950s by extending working hours and refusing Saturday leisure time to their workers while threatening dismissal if workers complained.<sup>882</sup>

#### LEAN STOMACHS AND BRIDLED TONGUES: THE COST OF LIVING, 1936-1947

In 1936 Lenri Peters, the ward for Portuguese Town, described the living conditions of his poor constituents. They eat, he lamented, “poor food, irregular food, inadequate food, and... on chance.”<sup>883</sup> After the Second World War conditions had hardly changed. In the early years of the war, wartime rationing of goods led to profiteering and the rapid increase of prices. Middle men began buying commodities in bulk, raising the prices, and reselling for a profit.<sup>884</sup> In 1942, as the early war boom in employment transitioned to late war stagnation, the administration finally admitted that labor was “at the

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<sup>876</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2042 Overcrowding in Bathurst, Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 21, 1943.

<sup>877</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2042 Overcrowding in Bathurst, Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 21, 1943.

<sup>878</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2042 Notes on the Report of the Sub Committee on Overcrowding in Bathurst.

<sup>879</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2168 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority November 14, 1945.

<sup>880</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2168 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority May 8, 1946.

<sup>881</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2996 Census of Bathurst, Report of the Census Commissioner.

<sup>882</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 8, 1952, 9.

<sup>883</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1596 Minutes of Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, September 29, 1936.

<sup>884</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942.

mercy of capital” and appointed Lieutenant Simpson as the first labor officer in history of The Gambia to “get to the bottom of it.”<sup>885</sup> Simpson began by enforcing war time price limits on imports by actively directing the police to arrest profiteering traders who were attempting to “wriggle their camel loads of ill-gotten wealth through the needles eye of the law.”<sup>886</sup> The editors of the *Gambia Echo* called for the amelioration of the situation in explicitly racial terms blaming profiteering on primarily on “Syrian” traders.<sup>887</sup> As elsewhere in West Africa “Syrian” was a blanket term referring to traders of Syrian or Lebanese origin, and other persons of Middle Eastern decent conducting business on the continent. “Syrians” began arriving in The Gambia in noticeable numbers in the early to mid-1920s and developed a deal of control of the trade in kola nuts as well as starting businesses and working as laborers. Not all “Syrians” came with money. Some were paupers when they came.<sup>888</sup>

In any case, Simpson’s efforts were far from unproblematic. In order stop traders from profiteering, he also banned all “petty trade” in the colony and protectorate. Only if all trade was regulated, he reasoned, could profiteering be verifiably eliminated. This, of course, did more to hurt Bathurst’s “hawkers” and “basket women” who lived in Bathurst and engaged in petty trade upriver, than it did to curtail the worst profiteers.<sup>889</sup> The BATC, never sympathetic to women traders, supported the policy arguing that if “basket women” were allowed to go upriver, Gambians in the protectorate would exchange their food for goods and be left starving during wartime when food was already being rationed and none could be spared.<sup>890</sup> The *Gambia Echo* was more even handed. It celebrated the appointment of Lieutenant Simpson in the hopes that he would side with labor against capital and boost low wages while also criticizing how his policies had begun to hurt basket women,

If the war had brought profiteering, at least it had also provided ample employment opportunities at relatively high wages. With the end of rationing and state control of commodity supplies, however,

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<sup>885</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 6, 1941, 3.

<sup>886</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 5, 1942, 2.

<sup>887</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 15, 1942, 2.

<sup>888</sup> NRO: CSO 1/166 Governor Armitage to the Secretary of State, February 25, 1925.

<sup>889</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 15, 1942, 2.

<sup>890</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 2, 1941.

residents found themselves plunged back into the prewar economy. Only this time the city was far more populated and more extreme forms of profiteering had established a foothold in the city. Monthly wage earners were making 24/- per month while an average casual laborer made as little as 9d. per day (22/6 per month in a 30 day month). Some casual laborers made as little as 20/- per month without rations to feed themselves and their families.<sup>891</sup> The *Echo* suggested a minimum wage of 1/6 per day to any “person or body of persons” regardless of skill or type of labor. The prevailing low wages, they argued, were due to employers who were likened to “blood-suckers” who “suck like vermin we have among us” and were “draining every last ounce of energy from the workmen.”<sup>892</sup> In order to discover how much Bathurst’s workers needed, a labor commission surveyed workers to discover their wages to determine their daily expenses. Many casual workers surveyed were being paid as little as 1/- for a day’s labor and were either not having daily fish or going into debt in order to acquire it. 1/- per day, the commission noted, is not even enough to “fill one’s stomach”, let alone pay rent or buy other necessities.<sup>893</sup> Carrying head loads of groundnuts onto ships was among the most lucrative employment in the city paying 1d. per headload. 20 headloads could earn a laborer 1/8 and some men earned as much as 4/- a day.<sup>894</sup> These types of wages, however, were only available during the groundnut season when merchants had to load their nuts quickly. Normally, the firms did what they could to avoid paying by the headload.

Individual workers were also surveyed to detail their living expenses. Satini Camara, for example, was making 1/3 per and spending 1/6 per day. This left him stuck in a never ending cycle of debt for just his basic food, rent, and wood/charcoal requirements without taking any other commodities into consideration.<sup>895</sup> Other laborers like Bakari N’Jie were making 1/3 and not eating daily fish or meat at all.<sup>896</sup> Most of the estimates for the daily requirement of labor failed to take into account social obligations to extended families, clothing and other necessary commodities, and extraordinary

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<sup>891</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 6, 1941, 3.

<sup>892</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 17, 1941, 3.

<sup>893</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Memorandum on the Casual Labor Commission of 1941, 3.

<sup>894</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Memorandum on the Casual Labor Commission of 1941, 2.

<sup>895</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Daily Budget of Laborer Santini Camara.

<sup>896</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Daily Budget of Laborer Bakari N’Jie.



requirements such as money for feast days and religious obligations. Even the commission admitted that “living is not mere feeding, but includes such necessities as shelter, clothing, and social necessities.”<sup>897</sup> In other words, laborers were working to do more than reproduce their bodies. They also wanted to produce themselves as modern urban dwellers as well as meeting social and familial obligations. Instead they were struggling to make what could be called living wages. This reality tended to “ruin the workers physique” as well as victimizing the social whole.<sup>898</sup>

The commission recommended implementing minimum wage laws which were based on the working class family rather than the individual. While recommendations were made for labor conditions such as no manual labor shifts longer than five hours and no loads heavier than 114 pounds, the primary goal of the investigation was to discover “the physiological minimum required for obtaining food, clothing, light, heat, and housing sufficient... to keep an average working class family in health and efficiency for work when all reasonable economy has been practiced.”<sup>899</sup> In other words, the basic reproduction of the body of the worker and *his* family. This raised questions of what exactly constituted a family. The committee agreed that the size of a family should be limited to three: the holy trinity of father, mother, and child. Otherwise companies would have to care for actual families which, from their perspective, were far too large. As one of the European officials in Sembene’s *God’s Bits of Wood*, warns: “Give family allowances to these people? The minute they have some money they go out and buy themselves another wife, and the children multiply like flies!”<sup>900</sup> The requirements of the family would be determined by assigning a coefficient to each family member with the male worker being assigned a 1.0 and the other family members relative to the man.<sup>901</sup>

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<sup>897</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Memorandum on the Casual Labor Commission of 1941, 3.

<sup>898</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Memorandum on the Casual Labor Commission of 1941, 4.

<sup>899</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Memo on the Constitution and Functions of the Labor Advisory Board, 190.

<sup>900</sup> Sembene, 29.

<sup>901</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Memo on the Constitution and Functions of the Labor Advisory Board, 201.

Table 5: Family Requirements According to the Labor Advisory Board, 1941

Man	Wife	Child 12-13	Child 10-11	Child 8-9	Child 6-7	Child 4-5	Child 2-3	Child 1-2
1.0	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2

Since the daily requirements for a man were set at 5 ounces of fish or meat, the daily requirements for other family members would be discovered by multiplying that amount by the coefficient. Thus a woman would get four ounces of meat for every five her husband needed and so on.

Table 6: Daily Food Requirements According to the Labor Advisory Board, 1941

	Man	Man and Wife	Man, Wife, Two Children (9 and 6)
Dried Fish	2	3.6	5.8
Beans	4	7.2	11.6
Rice	20	36	58
Palm Oil	2	3.6	5.8

Additional solutions put forth by the commission were the adoption of the international workday, the shift system, new trade union ordinances requiring 70-75% worker support in order to avoid pirate unions being formed by companies, a minimum wage of either 1/6, or 1/9 per eight hour work day, 3 pence per hour of overtime, and the compiling of an unemployment register to place out of work laborers in available positions.<sup>902</sup> The employers had to accept the issue of wages, but managed to avoid most of the other recommendations and prolong the implementation of overtime pay for years.<sup>903</sup>

<sup>902</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1808 Memorandum on the Casual Labor Commission of 1941, 6.

<sup>903</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1913 Half Yearly Report on Labor Conditions in The Gambia for 1942.

A.S.B. Saho, newly elected to the Bathurst Town Council in 1947, described the conditions of both the rate payers and the working class after the implementation of the new minimum wage. The former, he argued, were “groaning under the iron grip of your ever increasing and somewhat draconic taxations” leaving them in penury.<sup>904</sup> Although Saho noted the increase in the minimum wage he also pointed out that commodity prices had risen significantly, dashing the hopes of many for upward mobility. 80% of the working class, he claimed, were starving because they made less than £12 a month while a single bag of rice cost £5 10/-. For a family to survive they would need more than one bag of rice a month and that did not yet include rent, school fees, doctor’s bills, clothing, and savings for the future.<sup>905</sup> Playing on the American Declaration of Independence Saho asked, “How can you, with a lean stomach and bridled tongue, pursue happiness?”<sup>906</sup> Liberty for laborers, he continued, was between Scylla and Charybdis. Any laborer who inclined too much to one side hazarded their life. Saho was careful to select his prose so that it could not be construed as seditious, but it is clear what his solution was to the problem of labor in the colony: the emancipation of The Gambia from colonial rule since the colonial state was not truly willing to stand behind labor. Laborers tended to agree with Saho. When the last Axis forces in Africa surrendered in 1943 a number of laborers cut down a palm tree at Barra Point, turned it into a staff, and presented it to the administration. The governor thanked the workers saying that he greatly valued their gift.<sup>907</sup> What he did not know, however, was that according to local legend when that particular tree was cut, it would signal that the time for the British to leave The Gambia had arrived.<sup>908</sup> Instead, the administration believed that the end of the war with Germany meant that the war of “law and order against the criminal” could continue and declared the very first Police Day in the city.<sup>909</sup>

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<sup>904</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Minutes of Meeting of the Bathurst Town Council, December 2, 1947.

<sup>905</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Minutes of Meeting of the Bathurst Town Council, December 2, 1947.

<sup>906</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2169 Minutes of Meeting of the Bathurst Town Council, December 2, 1947.

<sup>907</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2071 Staff Made by Gambian Workmen, 2.

<sup>908</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2071 *African World*, July 3, 1943.

<sup>909</sup> NRO: CSO Inauguration and Celebration of Police Day

## HEALTHY MINDS IN HEALTHY BODIES: THE POLICE AND PRISONS SERVICE IN THE LATE COLONIAL PERIOD

Following the Second World War the state became increasingly concerned with the creation of a stable, progressive civil service. Faced with the reality that decades of colonial rule had created no industrial infrastructure in the city which was capable of creating employment, private industry could not be counted on to produce stability in the colony. Many businesses would not spend the money necessary to improve their premises which, according to the editors of the *Echo*, showed “the regard these business bodies have for their employees and their country.”<sup>910</sup> Instead of investing in industrial infrastructure, employers were more likely to invest in machines which replaced labor rather than augmented it. As the *Gambia Echo* put it, Gambians wanted machines which enhanced the productivity of workers, but what they often got were machines meant to replace manual laborers which exacerbated the “social menace” of decreasing real wages.<sup>911</sup> The state decided to double down on what it could control in the hopes that propping up a class of highly educated civil servants would ensure the survival of the state.

Since clerical workers were already fairly professionalized, the state looked towards other public employees. For police officers this meant that all officers, from the superintendent of police to constables, were required to take an oath to the king. Constables had to sign five year papers upon employment, with the first year being a probationary period, and faced mandatory retirement at the age of fifty followed by employment as a pensioner in the reserve until sixty.<sup>912</sup>

If the civil service was to survive the civil servants had to be “a healthy mind” in the “healthy body” of the state.<sup>913</sup> An African wrestling committee which had been founded in 1936 grew to 160 members (90 male and 70 female) by 1941 and was busy planning wrestling contests at KG V field to “develop the manhood of the town.”<sup>914</sup> The police were especially interested in demonstrating what their bodies could do. The inaugural Police Day celebration was held to showcase the martial, masculine

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<sup>910</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 1, 1955, 5.

<sup>911</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 29, 1938, 7.

<sup>912</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2704 Police Ordinance of 1949.

<sup>913</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 1, 1955, 5.

<sup>914</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 29, 1941, 4.

virtues of the policeman's body. In 1946 martial displays and a wrestling tournament were meant to show the skills which police had gained during wartime that would apply to the war on crime. In 1947 the general population was included in the festivities including a pole jump, infant race, foot race for men and women, sack race for women, musical chairs, relay race, donkey race, quick dress competition for the police, four-legged race for men, carrying water in buckets for women, tug-of-war, a pillow fight, and a walking race between the police, prisons staff, and fire fighters.<sup>915</sup> In 1949 at 9:30 AM the police in full uniform were inspected by the Governor, between 5:15 and 6:15 PM a football match was held which pitted the police against the rest of Bathurst, and between 10:30 and 11 PM the police attended a concert at the Secretariat in their best dress and ribbons.<sup>916</sup> The competition was meant to impress the public, but also to discipline the police through sport. Young men, it was believed, would give in to temptations and "dissipate their energy unnecessarily" if they were not presented with alternative uses of their energy and bodies.<sup>917</sup>

The masculine body of the police, however, would soon be found wanting. When the police force began employing women in the 1950s P.N. Badjan wrote an editorial claiming that the government had a responsibility to provide work for the city's unemployed men before it did anything for women.<sup>918</sup> There were, however, supporters of women's employment in the formal sector and, indeed, the police force was the first employer to actively recruit women. One editorial titled "Crime Busters in Skirts" described the rationale for hiring female police officers. It claimed that female police officers were peerless as preventers of juvenile crime, which was feared to be rising during this period, and as competent as any man at walking a beat due to their ties in the neighborhood.<sup>919</sup> The police force was not the only branch of the civil service which began to incorporate women during this period, but it was probably the most successful. "Experiments" with "Lady Justices" in the court systems in the 1940s seem to have failed

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<sup>915</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* Inaugural Police Day Celebration, 1947.

<sup>916</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2638 Inauguration and Celebration of Police Day, March 5, 1949.

<sup>917</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2757 Off Duty Arrangements of the Police Force, Superintendent of Police, July 15, 1952.

<sup>918</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 1, 1960, 7.

<sup>919</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 3, 1960, 2.

because men refused to respect the judgments of female justices. Bathurst reverted to a 100% male judiciary after 1944.<sup>920</sup>

In addition to shifts in the police force the prison administration got its first major makeover in decades. Prison officials also became increasingly cognizant of the staff of their prisons. In 1933 prison warders and police officers were still used interchangeably. As a result there was no such thing as a professional prison staff trained in modern penology.<sup>921</sup> An inquiry into the state of the prison found that the interchangeability of the police and prison staff made it impossible to adequately discipline prison warders.<sup>922</sup> The inquiry argued that the warders were the single largest problem in the prison and, as the 1930s wore on, the warders were increasingly the targets of a disciplinary regime. Since the wages offered were low the administration could not attract more qualified warders and attempted to enforce professionalism through the close supervision of officers and threats to sack, fine, or demote them. 1938 was the first year the prison began recording the number of offences committed by prison staff. In 1939 prisoners were caught committing 38 offences while the prison staff were found guilty of 40.<sup>923</sup> Most of these offences consisted of neglect of duty, sleeping on duty, drunk on duty, and inappropriately dressed or dirty on duty.<sup>924</sup> For many years the ratio of prisoner to prison staff offences was comparable, but over time the prison began to look like a place for reforming warders as much as prisoners. In 1945, 37 prisoner offences were matched by 104 staff offences.<sup>925</sup>

The small number of warders needed to run the prison was cited as an impediment because there were not enough of them to warrant their own training establishment and, as a result, the warders received little training outside of a short period of drill at police headquarters.<sup>926</sup> In addition, the small prison staff had to work long hours which were hardly conducive to alertness and discipline on the job. The 10 ½ by

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<sup>920</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2665 Report on Crime by the Judicial Department, 1943-47.

<sup>921</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2677 Prisons Department Miscellaneous and Staff Matters.

<sup>922</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2715 Committee Appointed to Investigate and Report on the Administration of the Prisons in The Gambia.

<sup>923</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1939

<sup>924</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1939

<sup>925</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1945

<sup>926</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1944

10 foot quarters with one small window provided to warders meant that those with families left at night when they were supposed to be sleeping in the prison.<sup>927</sup>The warders' illiteracy was also an issue of official concern primarily because prison officials believed it united the warders and prisoners while creating a barrier between literate officers and rank and file warders. Illiterate warders, they believed, would be more likely to fraternize with the prisoners rather than prison officials and would thus have little motivation to climb the ranks and become officers themselves.<sup>928</sup> Bad and out of date uniforms were also cited as dissuading professionalism among the warders.

In 1950 a committee appointed to investigate the conditions of the prison returned a scathing report. The prison staff was found to be insufficient in number to provide anything resembling supervision of the prisoners and, to compensate for the lack of staff, warders were working eleven hour shifts.<sup>929</sup> One result of this was an increase in the number of escapes among prisoners working on under supervised labor gangs outside of the prison. Numerous suggestions were made including separating the prison staff from the police, the construction of a prison labor camp, and the abolition of outside work gangs or providing labor gang supervisors with slow firing Greener's Police shotguns.<sup>930</sup>

In 1951 the prisons department and the police were finally separated and the Superintendent of Police was replaced as head of the prison with a full time Superintendent of Prisons trained in penology who could establish a "modern penal training system".<sup>931</sup> Pressure from Gambians to alleviate conditions in the prison, provide redemptive training for prisoners, and to form prisoners aid societies were all drivers of this move towards reform. This included architectural improvements such as the construction of a new security wall at the central prison to stop escapes, the building of a new prisoners' vegetable garden, the classification of a new earning scheme and system of privileges for prisoners, the re-

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<sup>927</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2715 Committee Appointed to Investigate and Report on the Administration of the Prisons in The Gambia.

<sup>928</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1947

<sup>929</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2715 Committee Appointed to Investigate and Report on the Administration of the Prisons in The Gambia, 1950.

<sup>930</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2715 Committee Appointed to Investigate and Report on the Administration of the Prisons in The Gambia, 1950.

<sup>931</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1950, 1952

organization of the prison staff with a clearly defined hierarchy and pay scale, and the introduction of new uniforms for prison staff.<sup>932</sup> Young, literate men were targeted as ideal prison staff members. Older prison staff, it was noted, were far more resistant to professionalization and showed little interest in the instructional talks and lectures which were meant to “stimulate the interest of the officer in his profession.”<sup>933</sup>

Older members of the prison staff were increasingly pressured to retire by reports which cited their poor eyesight and judgment. Perhaps the most poetic report was of John Taylor, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Officer whose old age had blurred his vision to the point that it was “impossible for him to distinguish between an officer and a prisoner.”<sup>934</sup> Rank and file prison staff were also far more difficult to discipline than the officers. In the 1940s prison staff were primarily recruited from the ranks of the police force and the Gambia Company of the West Africa Frontier Force (WAFF) because it was believed they would be amenable to discipline. In fact, after the war many warders were sacked in order to free up positions for military veterans. In the unstructured environment of the prison where hierarchy was often amorphous, however, discipline was certainly short of the WAFF standard. Prison officials attempted to rectify this by establishing a clear hierarchy within the prison. New uniforms were ordered for subordinate officers which distinguished them from their superiors.<sup>935</sup> This move was considered successful because wearing a uniform in public was a significant source of social capital for young men which, the administration believed, would make them more amenable to discipline and motivated to maintain their positions as warders. In 1946 the first literacy classes for warders were also instituted under the supervision of the chief warder. Captain R.L. Hill, who retired after the war noted the marked increase in the training and discipline in warders over his many years in the prison administration.<sup>936</sup> Wages were also increased across the board so that by the 1950s, depending on experience, 3<sup>rd</sup> class warders could make between £50 and £108, 2<sup>nd</sup> class between £100 and £148, 1<sup>st</sup> class between £130 and £172, and chief warders

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<sup>932</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1952

<sup>933</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1952

<sup>934</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2677 Superintendent of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary.

<sup>935</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1952

<sup>936</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report, 1946, 1.



between £230 and £300 per year.<sup>937</sup> Gambian prison officers who saw their profession as a career proved to be the most enthusiastic about professionalization and occasionally traveled as far as Nigeria to attend training courses.<sup>938</sup> In 1951 it was even suggested by the superintendent of police and the social welfare officers to produce a propaganda film about prison life to show modern penology with its focus on reform and the production of law abiding citizens in action.<sup>939</sup> As one can imagine the idea was rejected.

In 1947 subordinate prison officers worked an average of seventy hours per week. By 1959 this had been reduced to forty-two hours per week.<sup>940</sup> Reworked shift schedules also ensured that a first class officer would be on duty for every shift who would, in turn, be supervised by a Chief Officer and a Principal Officer. The primary task of the first class officer was not towards the prisoners, but to manage their subalterns. Indeed, a high rate of staff offences were detected in the early to mid -1950s. In 1943 only 28 offences by prison staff were reported. That number rose dramatically over the course of a decade to 109 in 1952, 119 in 1953, and 169 in 1955.<sup>941</sup> There was also a noticeable shift in punishment of staff offences. In 1945 60.6% (63/104) offences were punished and in 1952 76.1% (83/109) offences were punished, but beginning in 1953 every offence committed by the staff received an official reprimand or punishment. Prison staff found guilty of offences were subject to written reprimands at first and escalating fines, reduction in rank, extra duties assigned, or firing thereafter. For decades before this shift discipline had remained limited to fines and termination with terminations comprising a far greater percentage of punishments imposed. The new regime of punishments was meant to keep staff employed, but to teach them that discipline was rewarded with promotions and indiscipline with demotions. Prisoner offences, on the other hand, were not even recorded in prison reports during much of the 1950s. Instead vague passages about improving prisoner discipline with no quantitative accompaniment began to

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<sup>937</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2732 Training of Prison Warders, Colonial Secretary's Office June 15, 1951.

<sup>938</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1954

<sup>939</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2738 Proposal to Make a Film of Prison Life, Colony Commissioner and Social Welfare Officer to the Colonial Secretary of State, July 18, 1951.

<sup>940</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1947, 1959.

<sup>941</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1952, 1953, 1955

appear in annual reports. A disciplined prison, authorities now believed, meant disciplining the prison staff.

Table 7: Staff and Prisoner Offences Recorded in the Prison, 1938 -1955

	1938	1939	1945	1952	1953	1955
Staff Offences	22	40	104	109	119	169
Prisoner Offences	23	38	37	Not Recorded	Not Recorded	Not Recorded

The number of staff offences detected and punished in the prison, however, reflects the inability of prison supervisors to discipline their subordinates. Theoretically, in a prison system with well-disciplined warders, there would be fewer, rather than more offences recorded. Minor offences including lateness for work, sleeping or drunk on duty, dirty uniforms, and, by far the most common, neglect of duty, and major offences including trafficking illicit goods for the prisoners, failing to supervise the prisoners, leaving their post without relief, and even allowing the escape of prisoners continued to be rampant as warders resisted efforts to discipline them.<sup>942</sup> Surveys of the prison staff conducted throughout the 1950s featured numerous examples of indiscipline among the staff including warders being accused of using jujus against the superintendent of prisons, the superintendent ignoring the illnesses of warders, elderly warders too old to do their jobs, “sulky and indifferent” officers, warders forging documents and smuggling marijuana, cigarettes, and kola into the prison, as well as the usual complaints.<sup>943</sup> In one incident a subordinate officer was dismissed when it was alleged that he struck his superior, a 1<sup>st</sup> class officer. Robert Ceesay, the dismissed subaltern, claimed that he only grabbed his superior’s collar because his superior officer frequently called him a “DOG” and had a habit of “whistling at me as one does a young puppy.”<sup>944</sup> Above all, the old scheme in which warders appropriated property held by prisoners on the outside continued to

<sup>942</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1952, 1958.

<sup>943</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2677 Prisons Department Miscellaneous and Staff Matters.

<sup>944</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2677 Prisons Department

be prominent into the 1950s.<sup>945</sup> Prisoners who knew they were being schemed often decided to go along in exchange for a cut of the profits from selling their property because they felt helpless to stop it and feared retaliation. One prisoner, named only as Gaye, told prison officer Muhammad Yullah where his property was so it could be sold. In return, Yullah promised to buy him some sundries. When asked why he went along with the scheme Gaye said “as a prisoner I have no power.”<sup>946</sup> Upon discovery of these plots officers would be investigated after which, one report claimed, they defended themselves like “méchants animaux” (wicked animals) against the efforts to sack them.<sup>947</sup>

There are, then, two layers to this phenomenon. The first is that prison warders never accepted that they should constantly display time-work discipline and undoubtedly used this to obtain a shorter work week. Even then, however, offences by the staff show a continued resistance to work discipline. The second aspect this elucidates is the tacit understanding between the warders and prisoners that order was maintained in the prison so long as the warders made concessions to the prisoners. That is, the warders agreed to traffic goods for the prisoners and slacken their gaze in exchange for the basic minimum cooperation required from the prisoners to keep the prison running.

Yet these abuses were accepted for a long time in Bathurst, probably since the founding of the gaol. Only in the 1950s did the administration make a point of publicly going after prison officers. The motivation has as much to do with the expansion of the social safety net in the city after the Second World War as with the new focus on a disciplined class of warders. Many of the officers who were fired were experienced and were looking forward to being able to retire on a pension. Two well-known examples were Mamanding Damfa, who was sacked after nine years and ten months of service having reached third class officer, and Buba Leigh, who had served several years at McCarthy Island and Bathurst. Damfa wrote to the Gambia Weekly News to plead his case in the court of public opinion. He effaced himself as a “dark, unsophisticated, illiterate of a rustic” who shared “Peter’s last moment’s

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<sup>945</sup> NRO: CSO 10/268 Prison Officer Buba Leigh.

<sup>946</sup> NRO: CSO 10/270 Prison Officer Muhammad Yullah.

<sup>947</sup> NRO: CSO 10/268 Prison Officer Buba Leigh.

weakness” and was now being denied the “hope and paradise of all pensionable employees.”<sup>948</sup> It is not clear if this appeal succeeded or if Damfa found “paradise.”

## CONCLUSION

The 1960s were marked by renewed strike activity on the eve of independence. In 1961 daily wage workers demanded a 90% increase in wages as well as an end to racial discrimination which paid European supervisors £125 a month and African supervisors £20 per month.<sup>949</sup> When daily wage workers struck, office workers and some traders struck in sympathy with them. The strike was over wages, but also over the fact that the government gave out advances of between 8 ½ and 10 percent salary to civil servants while refusing advances to daily wage workers. An enquiry into the strike recommended a 25 percent increase in the wages of daily wage labor, well short of the 90 percent they were asking for.<sup>950</sup> The *Echo* editorialized in favor of the strike, but only on the side of increasing supervisor pay. Why did a European make £125 per month while an African supervisor who worked harder and better could not earn more than £25, they asked.<sup>951</sup> The demands of the day laborers, on the other hand, were dismissed by *The Echo* as unreasonable.

The history of labor in Bathurst is about strikes, wages, pensions, and the harsh realities of economics in a country with meager resources that has become over reliant on a monoculture and in a subservient position relative to more industrialized nations. On the local level, it also reflects the politics of class, race, gender, and even species. It’s not just that the state positioned itself as a shepherd easing the wind to its shorn lambs. The question of what, precisely, is due to human beings is never far from wage negotiations and strikes. At what level of wages and pensions can a human being constitute himself as fully human? This was a question asked incessantly by the workers, the state, and capital.

The question of what it means to be human and animal animated labor struggles in the city, but it never foreclosed other distinctions. Struggles between Gambians in the city coexisted with the struggle

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<sup>948</sup> NRO: CSO Prison Officer Mamanding Damfa, Magazine Editor of the Gambia Weekly News to the Colonial Secretary, June 18, 1956.

<sup>949</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 30, 1961, 2.

<sup>950</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 30, 1961, 2.

<sup>951</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 30, 1961, 2.

between labor and capital as the middle class sought to maintain its position first and foremost. Age and gender also played roles in shaping contestations over labor in the city. Even the 1929 general strike proved ineffective at uniting the disparate residents of the city since it was primarily organized to the benefit of skilled workers who had been excluded from the privileges enjoyed by other skilled workers with better negotiating positions. The state responded to this, and other strikes, by increasing wages and benefits gradually for state employees, but along with higher wages came increasing demands for professionalism. Merchants in the city had virtually no expectations of professionalism from the vast majority of their workers, but they were also content to take labor as they found it so long as they could pay starvation wages to “unskilled” laborers.

The union movement did provide the best, most effective vehicle for organizing labor until its *de facto* dissolution after the unions were coopted post 1929, yet union workers could also demonize prisoners and accept the logic of criminality as a justification for opposing prison labor. In the end, the labor movement of Bathurst had successes and failures. It succeeded in laying the foundation for the notion of workers’ rights, workmen’s compensation, pensions, and family wages even if what was gained was meager. Progress was real and it meant something to the men and women who secured it through their struggle even if they sometimes struggled against each other. Each gain in wages and benefits, however inadequate to meet the needs of laborers, was also a victory against a perverse valuation of what is due to Africans and against the foundational tenets of colonialism.

## CHAPTER 5: THE EXCRETORY SYSTEM: THE POLITICS OF SANITATION, 1900 -1950S

Sometimes it is understandable that people spit so much, when all around decaying things push inward and mix all the body's juices with the taste of rot. Sometimes it is understandable, the doomed attempt to purify the self by adding to the disease outside. Hot smell of caked shit split by afternoon's baking sun, now touched by still evaporating dew. The nostrils, incredibly, are joined in a way that is most horrifying direct to the throat itself and to the entrails right through to their end... Yet out of the decay and dung there is always a new flowering. Perhaps it helps to know that. Perhaps it clears the suffering brain, though down in the heart and within the guts below, the ache and sinking fear are never soothed.

Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*.

Unclean! Unclean! –Leviticus 13:45, Bram Stoker *Dracula*

Behold this compost! behold it well... It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions.  
Walt Whitman "This Compost"

Even our purest and holiest beliefs can be traced to the crudest origins. It is painful - there is no denying it - to interpret radiant things from the shadow side, and thus in a measure reduce them to their origins in dreary filth. But it seems to me to be an imperfection in things of beauty, and a weakness in man, if an explanation from the shadow side has a destructive effect.

C.G. Jung *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*

Nietzsche claimed himself to be the first philosopher to philosophize with his nose. "I am gifted with a sense of cleanliness," he claimed, "so much so that I can ascertain physiologically—that is to say smell—the proximity, nay the innermost core, the 'entrails' of every human soul."<sup>952</sup> In response to a philosophical tradition which claimed the nose to be the least sensitive of the sense organs, Nietzsche believed that his sense of smell was a gift possessed by every animal including *la bête philosophe* (the philosophical beast), or the human animal. Every animal, according to Nietzsche, is equipped with "a refined sense of smell that is loftier than all reason."<sup>953</sup> For most thinkers of the past 200 years or so, however, an advanced sense of smell has been associated with animality and barbarism. In Darwin's *Descent of Man*, for example, the naturalist claims that "the sense of smell is of extremely slight service, if any, even to savages, in whom it is generally more highly developed than in the civilized (sic) races. It does not warn them of danger, nor guide them to their food; nor does it prevent the Esquimaux (sic) from

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<sup>952</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. 2007. *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>953</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. 1967. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books.

sleeping in the most fetid atmosphere, nor many savages from eating half-putrid meat.”<sup>954</sup> Not only does Darwin consider the sense of smell to be fairly useless (in “civilized” peoples), but he associates it pejoratively with the colonized peoples of the world through his own peculiar brand of racial pseudo-science.

African intellectuals, on the other hand, have tended to agree with Nietzsche. There is hardly a novel of urban Africa which does not deploy the smells of the city in general and the smell of excrement in particular in order to provide a diagnosis of city life. Meja Mwangi’s *Down River Road* or Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* are exemplary, but by no means unique, examples. These novels are difficult to read at times. They go a long way towards challenging Roland Barthes’ claim that “when written, shit does not smell.”<sup>955</sup> The prose virtually succeeds in conjuring the smell of excrement from its pages as one reads. The purpose of excrement in the African postcolonial novel, of course, is never far from politics. It is a counter to colonial and postcolonial narratives of progress and modernity; a recognition of the conditions faced by urban dwellers on a daily basis, and a call for the alleviation of these conditions. Ayi Kwei Armah, for example, links the smell of money to rot and corruption, but also the pleasure that comes with money. A man who has just taken a bribe “rolled up the cedi and deliberately, deeply smelled it...Fascinated, he breathed it slowly into his lungs. It was a most unexpected smell for something so new to have: it was a very old smell, very strong, and so very rotten that the stench itself came with a curious, satisfying pleasure.”<sup>956</sup>

Although there is strong reason to suspect that shit has always been political, colonialism amplified its affect by creating urban centers with burgeoning population with no means of waste disposal. While the “sanitary syndrome”<sup>957</sup> paradigm prevalent in the literature emphasizes the use of sanitation by the colonial state to achieve segregation and control, the historical record is more mixed. As we shall see, Bathurst administrators spent more time lamenting their inability to segregate the city than

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<sup>954</sup> Charles Darwin. 1981. *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex.* , London: John Murray, 18.

<sup>955</sup> Roland Barthes. 1971. *Sade, Fourier, Loyola.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>956</sup> Armah, 3.

<sup>957</sup> Maynard W. Swanson. 1977. “The Sanitary Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909” *The Journal of African History.* 18(3).

they did implementing actual sanitary regulations. Yet, there is no doubt the state was obsessed with sanitation. Jonathan Swift once brutally satirized the sanitary state claiming it intended to employ:

philosophers and statesmen, who will be able, from the taste, smell, tincture, and substance of the issue of our bodies natural, to guess at the constitution of the body politic, and to inform and warn government of all plots, design'd revolutions, and intestine grumblings of restless and aspiring men.<sup>958</sup>

It is an amusing critique, but it also ignores the fact that much of the concern over excrement was voiced by urban dwellers as well as the state. Residents of the city both protested and supported the measures of the sanitary state in ways that were essential to its successes and failures. For the city's rate paying class, for example, the privatization of their shit and was a means of separating themselves from the poor who shit in the public latrine. The poor, on the other hand, petitioned the state for a convenient system of public latrines and water standpipes as a public good.

This chapter will engage with the sanitation of Bathurst and its impact on institutions, ideas, and the lives of ordinary people. As the title of the chapter suggests much of it will focus on excrement, but not exclusively so. Excrement is ever present in the archival record and it elicited some of the most poignant civic protests and participation by African residents of the city, but it was not the only sanitary matter which shaped the city. Animals in the city, having already been covered, will not be treated thoroughly here as they deserve their own chapter. This chapter will attempt to tell the history of sanitation in the city without shying away from these topics which are unpleasant. It is not from a pessimistic perspective but a productivist one.

Excrement is, in reality, a threat to human health and well-being when it enters the water supply. It causes diseases which can be destructive of human life such as cholera and dysentery. The British were aware of this and did make efforts following the cholera outbreak of 1864 to clean up the water supply for the city. Thus we should not ally ourselves totally with a constructivist stance which ignores the very real effects of living with excrement on health in the city. On the other hand, we need to question British motives for the efforts of the sanitary state in Bathurst to determine if their motivations were actually

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<sup>958</sup> Cited in Dominique Laporte. 1993. *History of Shit*. Translated by Nadia Benabid and Rodolphe el-Khoury. Cambridge: MIT Press, 63.



based on a scientific knowledge of disease or by cultural understandings of disease which equated it with certain races and classes of people. Finally, above all, we need to remember the pervasive parsimony of British colonialism and the degree to which the British were willing to avoid costly, but potentially life-saving sanitary measures in the city.

The colonial state often bowed to pressure from rate payers complaining about bad smells before they considered remedying the terribly unhealthy conditions the poor were living in. Colonial officials and the upwardly mobile African residents of Bathurst frequently complained of the smell of the city as much as anything else. Although both recognized that excrement posed real health threats to an urban population they tended to express that threat in the most unscientific of terms by describing the miasmatic properties of the smell of excrement. They also refused to expend the money necessary to build modern sanitation in the city which would have alleviated the excrement problem. Excrement, like dirt, is embedded in symbolic systems of purity and pollution.<sup>959</sup> It is also a real and scientifically measurable index of health in a city. We need not choose between the two.

The political efficacy of excrement, apart from its deleterious impact on health, stems from the fact that it is one of modernity's Others. As Freud poignantly pointed out, the relationship between Westerners and excrement has only changed within the last century and a half. Contrasting with flowers, open spaces, and fresh air in "modern" cities and towns, Freud notes:

We do not think highly of the cultural level of an English country town in Shakespeare's time when we read that there was a big dung-heap in front of his father's house in Stratford... Dirtiness of any kind seems to us incompatible with civilization. We extend our demand for cleanliness to the human body too. We are astonished to learn of the objectionable smell which emanated from the *Roi Soleil*; and we shake our heads on the Isola Bella when we are shown the tiny wash-basin in which Napoleon made his morning toilet.<sup>960</sup>

Only in the mid - nineteenth century, in other words, did the relationship between human beings in urban areas and their excrement decisively change. Napoleon, after all, loved Josephine more the less she showered and instructed her to neither bathe nor use perfume. Modern, waterborne sanitation

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<sup>959</sup> Mary Douglass. 1966. *Purity and Pollution: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Ark Paperbacks.

<sup>960</sup> Freud. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. .

fundamentally altered the conditions of existence in the cities where it was implemented. It also, in turn, fundamentally changed the relationship between modern noses and the products of their own bodies which, at first, seem to be neither productive nor reproductive. Consider, for example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* in which the "wizard" takes an entire military base hostage and secures his release from prison with a bucket of his own shit. The entire military and state apparatus is so frightened by the bucket, by the reminder of this impurity within, that they capitulate to his demands and beg him to leave and never return.<sup>961</sup> In exchange for his freedom, the "wizard" is asked to surrender his bucket so that it can be purified by the state and never spoken of again. The military, and by extension the state, must maintain its status as that which is pure and civilized. It cannot afford to have even the slightest stain or the illusion would disappear. In the end, however, Ngugi tells us that no amount of perfume is able to remove the stench of shit from the base which lingers long after the "wizard" has left.<sup>962</sup>

In an influential article, Terrence Ranger points to a relationship between epidemics and ideas.<sup>963</sup> Simply put, the paradigm states that an epidemic changes the way that human actors see their world and may invigorate calls for reform or even revolution. The epidemic seems to signify something fundamentally wrong with the world. There is good reason to accept this paradigm. Epidemics can be sudden and devastating. They can shake an actor's world to the core. Bathurst's cholera epidemic of 1864 certainly fits the epidemics and ideas model. The usefulness of this model is that it shows how something destructive can also be productive of dramatic social and intellectual changes in a society. What it elides, however, is that less dramatic activities, like the banality of the daily "pail parade" where latrine-men carry excrement in buckets to the dumping grounds, can be just as significant in rousing calls for reform or revolt and have just as profound an impact on how actors see their city. Buckets of shit, in other words,

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<sup>961</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o. 2006. *Wizard of the Crow*. New York: Pantheon Books, 388

<sup>962</sup> wa Thiong'o, 392

<sup>963</sup> Terrence Ranger. 1996. "Plagues of Beast and Men: Prophetic Responses to Epidemics in Eastern and Southern Africa" in Terrence Ranger and Paul Slack eds. *Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the Historical Perception of Pestilence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

are not just rhetorical flourishes in the hands of novelists, but the actual, material conditions of life which the poor can use to rally against the state.

This has not always been the case. For some early socialists such as Pieree Leroux writing in the 1850s, excrement was the key to alleviating urban poverty. Looking at the unemployed in urban areas Leroux declared that if they would only find a plot of land and fertilize it with their own excrement they would be able to feed themselves. He further described excrement as part of the great cycle of production and consumption:

If men were believers, experts, priests, instead of laughing as they do at the expense of socialism, they would speak of the doctrine of circulus with respect and veneration. Each and everyone would religiously collect their own waste and hand it over to the State, that is to say the tax inspector, in lieu of a tax or personal contribution. Agricultural production would immediately double, and destitution would disappear from the face of the earth...nature has established a circle that is half production and half consumption; neither of these halves could exist without the other, and each is equal to the other. This circle constitutes the physiological existence of each being, and even of each organ inside each being: Nutrition and Secretion.<sup>964</sup>

Early agricultural socialists aside, the left moved decidedly against the excrementation with Marx and Engels. Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* lambasted the squalor endured by England's working class in cities like Manchester and Liverpool where laborers were dropping dead at alarming rates.<sup>965</sup> Urban, industrial squalor and poverty, Engels wrote, would be the jumping off point for future workers movements. Marx, though he wrote far less on the subject, was famous for criticizing the River Thames as the latrine of London. Both Marx and Engels recognized the squalor of the cities as a source of revolutionary potential, but they also had no illusions about returning to the "isolation of rural life."<sup>966</sup>

We have to agree with Marx and Engels that forcing urban dwellers "back to the land" is no kind of solution. We also need, I think, to return to the early Engels and his willingness to delve into the

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<sup>964</sup>Cited in Laporte, 127.

<sup>965</sup> Friedrich. Engels. 1968 *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

<sup>966</sup> In the *Communist Manifesto* this is often translated as the "idiocy" of rural life, but Marx meant to critique isolated rural life which was incapable of supporting mass based politics. He did not mean that all rural people were idiots.

gutters in order to discover the condition of the city. For many, to contemplate shit seems to be to dwell on that which cannot be digested and thus contributes nothing to productive capacity. Better to put it out of sight and out of mind. At first look focusing on excrement also seems to be pessimistic towards urbanization and its possibility in Africa. This is certainly the case in Mike Davis' *Planet of Slums* where a section entitled "Living in Shit" details urban areas wracked by unregulated growth and wading through unhealthy torrents of excrement.<sup>967</sup> Davis' pessimism is a thoroughgoing one with seemingly no solutions to the many problems he finds in urban centers of the "third world." The health problems he details due to inability to process excrement are real, but his inability to see processes of change which might arise out of those conditions are serious problems with his analysis. His assumption, for example, that growth rates in African cities will continue to be exponentially high into the foreseeable future is already proving to be false in many cases.<sup>968</sup> The corresponding notion, that African urban dwellers are condemned to wade through their own excrement for the foreseeable future, may also turn out to be overly pessimistic. From excrement a new synthesis may yet be able to flower. The highest forms of consciousness may, in fact, be linked to the basest of human products.<sup>969</sup>

In the end the reason for focusing on excrement is simple: it mattered to the residents of the city. The ways in which it mattered were not universal, but mediated by class and race, and yet it touched the lives of every inhabitant of the city though unequally. The realities of sanitation in the city meant that it was directly linked to sanitary regimes and African laborers. The pervasiveness of its smell was a constant reminder to Gambians of their condition in the city as well as the hollowness of the sanitary promises of the colonial regime. There is no doubt it smelled bad. That did not stop Gambians from coming to the city. There is no doubt they would have preferred modern sanitation and yet they were not deterred by its lack. To focus on excrement is not to adopt a pessimistic stance towards urbanization in Africa nor is it esoterica removed from the lives of urban dwellers. It reveals important facets of urban life, labor, politics, and health.

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<sup>967</sup> Mike Davis. 2007. *Planet of Slums*. New York: Verso.

<sup>968</sup> Garth Myers. 2011. *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice*. London: Zed Books, 8.

<sup>969</sup> Laporte, VIII

## CLOACA MAXIMA: ORIGINS OF THE SANITARY STATE, LATE 19<sup>TH</sup>- EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

In a Mandinka village, as in many other African cultures, latrines were dug on the edge of the village, beyond the fields, and near to the bush. This kept excrement at a distance from the village but also ensured that village dwellers had an irrevocable relationship with their excrement. Visiting the latrines meant being reminded daily. If disease did begin to overtake a village, as it no doubt did from time to time, the village would typically be moved to another site, new structures erected, new latrines dug, and so on. There is significant archeological evidence to suggest, contrary to oral histories which project villages back into antiquity, that villages were abandoned frequently.<sup>970</sup> Indeed, abandoning a village may have been one of the most important ways of dealing with excrement in pre-colonial Gambia. When Gambians came to Bathurst they continued to perform excretory functions in the creeks and waterways on the edge of the island town. Two of the prominent areas would later be named Malfa Creek in the southwest of the island and Lasso Wharf on the eastern shore. Later, as population areas expanded and land was reclaimed new sites were needed. Unlike pre-colonial villages, the colonial city could not and would not move so easily.

Before the 1850s there had certainly been British efforts to change the sanitary system of the city, but they had been piecemeal and largely driven by the will power of individuals rather than systemic efforts. In the 1840s, for example, Governor Fitzgerald attempted to construct a lock at Amer Fah Creek to address the drainage of the city. He ended up with anxiety attacks and failing health without making any progress on the construction.<sup>971</sup> The 1864 yellow fever epidemic in Bathurst, which killed about half of the population of Mocam Town, earning it the name Half Die, caused the British to rethink sanitation as a product of the whims of individual governors rather than a priority of the administration. Only five years later the cholera epidemic of 1869 killed a quarter to a half of the entire city. These two deadly outbreaks ensured that sanitation would be the foremost priority of the state for some time to come. Following these tragedies, the state began paying serious attention to the living conditions of Africans in

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<sup>970</sup> Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place*.

<sup>971</sup> NRO: CSO 1/140 John Fred Bourne to His Majesty's Under Secretary for the Colonies, March 25, 1899.

the city. Half Die, it was noted in 1872, was a “marshy, malarious district inhabited chiefly by the poor... a laboring class who live in miserable huts crowded together and ill ventilated.”<sup>972</sup> Instead of using the excrement of human beings and urban animals as manure to enrich the city’s soil, as Alexander Grant imagined, Governor Carter complained that it was dumped in the river or in the streets where it became “matter in the wrong place” for the city to “exhale.”<sup>973</sup> On the heels of a cholera epidemic Carter was certainly correct to recognize the problem of dumping excrement, but by couching his criticisms in the language of miasma theory and the exhalation of malodorous vapors he made little contribution to any discourse which could have remedied the situation. In fact, the link between cholera and contaminated drinking water was made by John Snow in 1854, over twenty years before Carter made his statement. These early accounts, rather than supporting good science, justified the creation of an interventionist state which occasionally performed some useful sanitary functions, but often by chance. Behind many of the sanitary projects launched by the state were attempts to segregate the city, to evict the poor and destroy their homes, and to exclude “undesirables” and “aliens” from the island. Bourgeois notions of how the city should look and smell were often as influential as scientific data about how to improve the actual health of the city’s residents.

It should be noted that not all members of the colonial administration perpetuated alarmist pictures of the city. In 1879, when James Sawyer criticized Bathurst, the governor, Valerius Skipton Gouldsbury, replied that the town was not flooded, the Half Die sluices were working, Gambians were not “dropping off like flies,” nor were they being drowned.<sup>974</sup> The “dead fowls and fishes he (Sawyer) speaks of as lying rotting in the drains” Gouldsbury claimed, “are offspring of his own imagination.”<sup>975</sup> The state was never a unitary actor nor did it always exert itself as a muscular sanitary state. Instead, most administrators in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were willing to allow local methods of waste disposal to continue, which led to the “amphibious” portions of the town such as Half Die becoming what Governor Maloney

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<sup>972</sup> NRO: CSO 1/36 Captain H.T.M. Cooper to J. Pope Hennessey Administrator in Charge of Sierra Leone, January 4, 1873.

<sup>973</sup> NRO: CSO 1/100 G.T. Carter to the Administrator in Charge, January 21, 1887.

<sup>974</sup> NRO: CSO 1/55 Administrator to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, October 31, 1879.

<sup>975</sup> NRO: CSO 1/64 V.S. Gouldsbury to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, December 9, 1882.

called the “cloaca magna” of the city and the front beach the “cloaca parva.”<sup>976</sup> The former is a reference to the Cloaca Maxima (Great Sewer) of ancient Rome which, as any good English school boy knew, was the height of achievement of the civilized Roman state. The cloaca, of course, is the posterior orifice of many animals which unites the intestinal, urinary, and reproductive tracts by eliminating their waste. It also, for many reptiles, birds, and amphibians, contains their scent-marking glands.

Wealthier urban dwellers were not necessarily insulated from the urban health problems that plagued the poor. Rate payers had access to private wells, latrines, and other sanitary amenities, but they still suffered from the same diseases as the poor. The mercantile community, it was noted in 1885, suffered from fever and “derangement of the digestive organs” just like the poor did.<sup>977</sup> The private wells of rate payers were tainted with excrement as much as public wells were.<sup>978</sup> The lack of a system for removing excrement meant that it was typically taken to the river and dumped or it was dumped in the streets where it entered the water supply.<sup>979</sup> In the late 1870s the administration finally began testing the city’s water for excrement contamination. Virtually all the city’s water was tainted, but the 5,000 gallons of water consumed daily in the city meant that there was no means of replacing the system of wells which would be able to meet the daily demand for water in the city. The administration attempted to dig new, deeper wells which would remain unsullied by contamination from the surface. In 1901, forty years after the cholera epidemic, old wells were finally sealed and new, deeper wells were dug, but testing showed that the excrement contamination in the water continued.<sup>980</sup> The water table in Bathurst is very high which means that any excrement on the surface is always dangerously close to subterranean water and frequently infects the latter. Frequent flooding during the rainy season, which could carry excrement from one part of the city to another or return excrement dumped into creeks and waterways, made it virtually impossible to maintain contagion free wells. It would take another decade before the British were willing to invest the time and money necessary to ensure a water supply which was not contaminated.

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<sup>976</sup> NRO: CSO 1/71 Governor Maloney to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, July 28, 1884.

<sup>977</sup> NRO: CSO 1/76 William Allen Colonial Surgeon to the Administrator, January 13, 1885.

<sup>978</sup> NRO: CSO 1/54 Colonial Engineer to the Acting Administrator of The Gambia, November 16, 1878.

<sup>979</sup> NRO: CSO 1/102 G.T. Carter to the Administrator in Charge of Sierra Leone, January 21, 1887.

<sup>980</sup> NRO: CSO 1/141 G.C. Denton to Chamberlain, June 20, 1901.

These health problems gave weight to early efforts to remove the poor from the city despite the fact that the sanitary condition of the city was far from a problem which was exclusively caused by the poor. The Royal Victoria Hospital, for example, was cited by the administration as among the worst polluters in the city which used toilets as water closets, dumped sewage into the sea, built latrines on the beach, maintained cesspools near wells, and sold “poisons” to anyone who requested them.<sup>981</sup> Nevertheless, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the state began to impose strict title and building regulations for houses in an attempt to criminalize the dwellings of the poor. When Momodou Jahumpa applied to build a house in Half Die at 67 Hagan Street he paid £5 and agreed to building codes which meant he would pay taxes, erect and maintain a good fence, maintain his property at six inches above water level during the spring tide, submit plans to an engineer, erect a house to the satisfaction of the engineer, not erect a thatched roof, build no subdivisions without consent, and conduct no dangerous trade or public nuisance on the property.<sup>982</sup> Wealthier residents were willing to meet these strict requirements in exchange for the security of title and status that it gave them, but the city’s poor continued to build without title or approval where and whenever they could. In fact, despite building regulations, even wealthier residents and some of the merchant firms built structures which overstepped the boundaries of their plots and began to encroach on the roads.<sup>983</sup> The undermanned state lacked the ability to stop poorer residents from building in the city as well as wealthy merchants from expanding their properties into the streets. Additionally, merchants relied on the labor of the poor which mitigated against housing policies that would chase them from the city.

One of the first major development projects for the city began in 1912 when it was suggested that the only solution for the drainage of the city was to build a drain which would discharge above high tide. £200,000 was spent installing the drain, but it was built below high tide and proved to be ineffectual.<sup>984</sup> On the heels of this massively expensive project the administration pulled back from large development

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<sup>981</sup> NRO: CSO 1/115 Knutsford to G.T. Carter, April 30, 1890.

<sup>982</sup> NRO: CSO 2/19 Indenture made by Governor Sir Edward John Cameron to Momadou Jahumpa on 67 Hagan Street, 1906.

<sup>983</sup> NRO: CSO 2/181 Bathurst Numbering of Lots and Removal of Encroachments, 1912.

<sup>984</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3156 Development Program for Bathurst Town.



projects until the 1940s. Instead, they pivoted to ad hoc work on sanitary projects which were easier and cheaper fixes. This was called the “Dutton Scheme,” named for the pathologist of tropical medicine who discovered that *Trypanosoma gambiense* caused sleeping sickness. The Dutton Scheme began in 1912 after the abysmal failure of the drainage project.<sup>985</sup> Although a “scheme” implies a systematized effort at sanitation the Dutton Scheme was, in fact, the name given to an ad hoc system of filling and draining often without a central directive. Sanitary authority was vested in the “man on the spot” and teams of African laborers who filled compounds and roads as they could and constructed drains after it became clear that they were needed.

The Dutton Scheme continued to be the *de facto* method of dealing with the problems of flooding and sanitation in the city until 1941 when large development projects were introduced to the city. There were certainly small scale efforts before then, but they often failed to change the basic realities of life in Bathurst. In addition to the daily work of maintenance of drains and streets there were a few technological fixes implemented which inevitably failed. In 1925, for example, a dredger was purchased to help raise up portions of the city, only to find that the dredger had a sand suction pump when a mud pump was needed. The cost of replacing the pump was too great and it largely went unused. Additionally, no one seemed to be capable of competently operating the machine.<sup>986</sup> In 1931 the project was officially abandoned at a loss of £20,000. Low tech schemes for raising the city tended to fail as well. Early attempts raise up Half Die attempted to use the “rubbish and filth” to the advantage of the sanitary authorities. Rubbish would be piled on top of rubbish in hopes that it would hold and form a “nucleus” when grass grew over it and piece by piece, or what the administration called “tidework”, the land would be raised.<sup>987</sup> Although this scheme was a creative use of the city’s rubbish, it was not an effectual method of raising Half Die.

For many of the European residents of the city the main problem with the Dutton Scheme was that it failed to accomplish the racial segregation they were hoping to achieve through sanitary efforts.

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<sup>985</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3516 Development Program, Bathurst Town, 45.

<sup>986</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3516 Development Program, Bathurst Town, 64.

<sup>987</sup> NRO: CSO 1/140 Josh Fred Bourne to the Under Secretary for the Colonies, March 25, 1899.

The degree of segregation accomplished in Bathurst was very much in line with what the British achieved in Lagos,<sup>988</sup> but this did not sit well with some European residents of the city who demanded strict racial segregation. This is not to say that segregation based on class did not exist in the city, but it did mean that European officials often lived next to their wealthier African counterparts. Advocates for segregation, including the director of public works and the senior medical officer, criticized what they called a “ridiculous parody of segregation.” They rallied behind the prospect of building a suburban European housing community in the suburbs of Kombo St. Mary and turning the main road into a highway so they could commute to and from the administrative center of the city without passing through African housing.<sup>989</sup> Governor Edward Cameron, however, called critics of the existing housing scheme “idealists” and defended European housing in the city itself.<sup>990</sup> European bungalows were built on the Marine Parade in the city, but they remained within the city proper and were used for a “change of air” and convalescence rather than permanent residences.<sup>991</sup> In 1919 L.S. Amery had approved European only dwellings in the city, but they were situated in the Bathurst marina and the “native town” which meant that while the housing was reserved for Europeans they lived in close proximity with African residents of the city.<sup>992</sup> There was open space for settlement at Box Bar, but it was being used as a recreation place by African residents of the city and was described as being a “lung” for the city, referring to Hyde Park which had been called the Lungs of London. The idea of open green spaces constituting a “lung” derives from the Garden City model, established by Ebenezer Howard in 1898, which posited that open parks in a city should be maintained in order to halt the encroachment of the unhealthy sprawl of housing and industry. The administration was not willing to lose the “lung” at Box Bar and thus did not entertain proposals for a European only community there. A proposed European enclave at Kombo St. Mary would have also required much more than housing. Reliable roads and transportation would be needed for the

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<sup>988</sup> Kristin Mann. 2010. *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

<sup>989</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3516 Development Program, Bathurst Town, 57.

<sup>990</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3516 Development Program, Bathurst Town, 59.

<sup>991</sup> NRO: CSO 2/182 Kennan-Sims Report on the PWD Dutton Scheme, 1915.

<sup>992</sup> NRO: CSO 3/347 D.W.H Howells Report on Cape St. Mary, 12.

daily commute, telegraph lines and later electrical lines would have to be built, and so on. Only after the outbreak of yellow fever in 1934 were European houses constructed at Cape St. Mary in Fajara.

Europeans, however, were not alone in this and wealthy Africans also began building in Kombo and taking advantage of better roads and lorry services which allowed them to commute into the city daily.<sup>993</sup>

The inability of the state to achieve a level of segregation which satisfied some residents of the city did not mean that the sanitary state did not impact the lives of African urban dwellers. In 1913 Africans were removed from Clifton Road in order to build exclusively European houses and again in 1917 land adjacent to Clifton Road was taken by the government with compensation being paid to the rate payers whose houses were destroyed in the process. Non-rate payers without clear titles were not compensated. Residents whose homes were destroyed were promised the right to rebuild their homes elsewhere, but they found the land virtually uninhabitable.<sup>994</sup> The residents had also been promised sand from the seashore to raise up their new homes, but nearly six years later the government had done nothing to make good on its promise. When it rained, streets and homes flooded to their knees. Residents began to write letters complaining that during the rains they lose many of their children and infants to disease while they suffer from pneumonia, fever, mosquito-borne ailments, and the stench of stagnant water and excrement.<sup>995</sup> As rate payers who supported government services they demanded to be relocated to high grounds which did not flood. Filling compounds and streets was simply not going to work for them. Literate rate payers were able to write letters and petition the state, but the conditions they describe, including infant mortality, were also the banal realities of the city's working poor. One of the more successful of these projects was a reclamation project initiated by Governor Armitage in 1929 on a swampy, mostly unoccupied plot of land in the south of Half Die bordered on the north by Blanc Street, on the east by Dobson Street, on the south by Cotton Street, and on the west by a water basin. Residents who did have their houses destroyed in the reclamation were given compensation according to the

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<sup>993</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3516 Development Program, Bathurst Town

<sup>994</sup> NRO: CSO 2/995 Humble Petition of the residents of Primet, Rankin, Lancaster, Perseverance, Gloucester, Albion, and Spalding Streets, 1923.

<sup>995</sup> NRO: CSO 2/995 Humble Petition of the residents of Primet, Rankin, Lancaster, Perseverance, Gloucester, Albion, and Spalding Streets, 1923.

assessed value of their property.<sup>996</sup> The project was meant to create new space for a growing population as well as reducing the congestion of the existing population by mandating wide streets, rectangular layouts, and model houses.

In the 1910s the discourse on sanitation married with the beginnings of a focus on infant mortality in the city. Gambian midwives were blamed for a significant portion of the deaths due to the prevalence of babies being born stillborn. In 1912 the first classes were arranged to teach midwives modern sanitary practices and in 1913 pamphlets were produced and translated into Wolof and Mandinka. The pamphlets produced some problems because there were no words in either language for “germs” and the technical language required was beyond the skill of translators. This was partly overcome by working with experienced midwives and native speakers to translate the pamphlets and eventually a version was also produced in Arabic which could be read at the mosque or bantaba.<sup>997</sup> The pamphlet included instructions on how to wash sheets, clothes, attendants, and the mother, how to cut and tie the umbilical cord, and how to clean the child after birth. In all of the translations, however, there was no attempt to translate the word “germs”. Instead it was merely placed in quotation marks to explain that boiling implements would kill germs. This was a significant issue given that local understandings of sickness and health were not rooted in the paradigm of “germ theory”. As one editorialist in the *Gambia Echo* put it, many local people would “doubt your sanity if you tell them about germs.”<sup>998</sup> (Figure 36)

These efforts seemed to be working as mortality fell between 1910 and 1917, but the flu epidemic which followed World War I had a devastating impact on the city’s young and over the decade infant mortality rose from 30.85% in 1910 to 38.88% in 1919.<sup>999</sup> The fact that still births increased throughout the decade led health officials to increase their campaign against African midwives.

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<sup>996</sup> NRO: CSO 2/995 Use of Half Die Reclaimed Area 1929.

<sup>997</sup> NRO: CSO 2/202 Mortality of Infants in Bathurst.

<sup>998</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, March 29, 1937.

<sup>999</sup> NRO: CSO 2/381 Annual Medical and Sanitary Report for 1919.

Table 8: Child Mortality in Bathurst, 1910 -1919

Year	Registered Births	1-5 years	1 day-1 week	Under 24hrs.	Stillborn	% Infant Mortality
1910	363	40	34	11	27	30.85
1911	306	29	15	1	28	23.86
1912	203	42	6	0	26	35.92
1913	254	20	22	3	29	29.13
1914	304	27	16	5	27	24.67
1915	279	40	18	1	30	31.90
1916	314	46	10	3	22	25.80
1917	337	22	9	0	30	18.10
1918	263	39	17	0	50	40.30
1919	234	30	18	4	39	38.88

#### THE POLITICS OF SHIT

Running parallel with attempts to fix the problem of standing water in the city were initiatives designed to reform the disposal of waste. Private latrines had long existed for those who could afford to pay laborers for a “pail service,” but not public ones in the city free of charge. Owners of private latrines would pay for the pails to be taken to Malfa Creek and dumped into the creek until the advent of cement tanks. There were a few public latrines built over the water at the behest of the commercial firms on the shore for their laborers to use, but none throughout the city. Unfortunately, for those who lived near dumping zones, the tides around the island returned whatever was dumped back to the shore.<sup>1000</sup> Not long after dumping in Malfa Creek began, complaints of the smell began. After the installation of the cement tanks, residents complained of the smell of the passing lorries which hauled the excrement and the cement

<sup>1000</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3442 Bathurst and Kombo Development, Drainage of Bathurst.

tanks, though it was admitted that it was better than dumping into the creek.<sup>1001</sup> The first serious suggestions for public latrines came in the late 1890s. Wellington Street, where the commercial firms were located along the eastern shore of the island, would be the first testing ground for a public latrine system. Since the merchants employed over 1,000 laborers at peak periods who often relieved themselves on Wellington Street it was decided to build the first latrines there.<sup>1002</sup> The other obvious location was at the market and so test latrines were built at Wellington and near the market to see how the public would react to them.

The administration also began to take steps to improve the water quality and eliminate fecal contamination. In 1913 construction started on a piped water supply from Abuko to Bathurst which was finished in 1916.<sup>1003</sup> Owners of private wells resisted pressure to close them until the 1930s when wells were formally abolished after a survey of wells found only three out of 78 wells in the city were being kept properly.<sup>1004</sup> The privatization of their water and their shit, the rate paying class recognized, set them apart from the working class. An additional impetus was the fact that in the 1930s the pipes built between 1913 and 1916 were old, “tuberculated,” and inadequate to meet the needs of a growing population. In the late 1800s 5,000 gallons of water were being consumed daily, but by the 1930s about 47,601,000 gallons of water were being consumed by metered sources, while unmetered sources like hospitals and clinics, government house, market standpipes, police and board of health lines, and government workshops were consuming even more water.<sup>1005</sup> In 1934 a 10” cast iron pipe and chlorinating plant were built to meet this growing demand, but by 1936 the administration was already calling for a 7” main running to the Marina, McCarthy Square, Russell Street, and Wellington Street and a 5” main for the rest of the town with public standpipes every 400 yards.<sup>1006</sup> The chlorination plant was a source of consternation for some city residents because the process was never explained to them and the

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<sup>1001</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2168 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority, October 18, 1944.

<sup>1002</sup> NRO: CSO 1/137 Superintendent of the Police to the Administrator, March 15, 1898.

<sup>1003</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1507 Bathurst Water Supply, 9A.

<sup>1004</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1479 Acting Colonial Secretary to Sir Samuel Forster, January 7, 1935.

<sup>1005</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1507 Bathurst Water Supply 1935.

<sup>1006</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1507 Minutes of the Meeting of the Interim Advisory Committee, January 7, 1936.

water from the plant returned discolored.<sup>1007</sup> City dwellers began protesting to the Bathurst Advisory Town Council and demanding they be given an explanation for the discolored water coming from the pipes. The administration attempted to allay fears by taking the members of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council on a tour of the treatment plant and assuring them that the water was taken to England and tested by experts.<sup>1008</sup> Water which looks clear, they explained, might be full of contaminants while discolored water might be perfectly potable. The city's residents quickly adjusted to the new piped water and frequented the new standpipes.

The attempt to explain the new water system to urban dwellers was not always matched in other sanitary endeavors. From the beginnings of the sanitary state residents of the city complained that the administration failed to make sanitation a participatory endeavor or to properly inform city residents about the rationale for certain sanitary decisions versus others. In 1914 the administration replied to these demands by creating a board of health to act as a buffer between complaining citizens and the state. Indeed, after the creation of the board a deputation of prominent Muslims complained to Governor Cameron that the board of health never met and the senior medical officer continued to act like a dictator.<sup>1009</sup> Residents wanted a board that would represent them and make sanitation participatory, but Cameron and future governors saw its purpose more as absorbing criticism, deflecting complaints, and discouraging protests. In essence, they wanted a board which would serve the function of creating a sanitary state under the logic of indirect rule. The government would appoint members to the board or allow elections, but give it no real power. Administration officials would always be in the majority on the board ensuring it would not be a "cantankerous" or "obstructionist" body and it would absorb criticism which would normally be directed at the policy architects of the sanitary regime.<sup>1010</sup>

More community involvement was practiced in the 1930s as public latrines were installed, but it often broke down due to the recalcitrance of the rate payers who resisted being lumped into a public

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<sup>1007</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1596 Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 29, 1936.

<sup>1008</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1596 Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 29, 1936.

<sup>1009</sup> NRO: CSO 1/155 E.J. Cameron to the Secretary of State, October 28, 1914.

<sup>1010</sup> NRO: CSO 1/155 E.J. Cameron to the Secretary of State, October 28, 1914.

system with the city's working poor. Despite the initial experiments with public latrines on Wellington Street and in the market, well into the 1930s there was no public latrine system for residential areas. In August 1937 a proposal to create such a system prompted a mass meeting of the rate payers. It was enough to get the attention of the administration and further latrine plans were abandoned for a time. Instead, elected councilors would decide where public latrines would be placed and sanitary authorities proposed to ask ward heads where public latrines should go so the communities would be involved.<sup>1011</sup> They had learned from previous sanitary boondoggles that seeking the input of rate payers would be important for the success of the project, even if they ignored what they found. The rate payer protest against the building of public latrines in their neighborhoods is not much different from the way that pollutants in cities throughout the world have been placed in poor rather than wealthy or middle class neighborhoods. In cities with heavy industry, chemical processing plants, slaughterhouses, and so on the poor have always disproportionately borne the burden of living close to these facilities. Bathurst had no such industry to speak of other than a slaughterhouse, but the arguments which the wealthy have made in other cities were essentially the same as the anti-latrine protests. Latrines were seen as social and moral pollutants which would bring with them noxious smells, cacophonous noises, and the poorer classes as well.<sup>1012</sup> They were seen as making bourgeois respectability impossible and even though the limited space of cities made complete segregation of these pollutants impossible, it did not stop the effort to keep them in the poorest neighborhoods.

Frustrated by the attempts of rate payers to keep public toilets as far away as possible, however, sanitary authorities drew up a proposal for latrines despite rate payer protest. Latrines were planned at Lasso Wharf, Louwell Square, at the corner of Fitzgerald and Grant Streets, 14<sup>th</sup> and Perseverance Streets, Clarkson and Albion Streets, 36 Wellington and Cotton Streets, Griffith and Goddard Streets, Dobson and Picton Streets, Angelesa and Hagan Streets, Hill and Leman Streets, 74 Leman Street, 29 Dobson Street,

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<sup>1011</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1510 Sanitary Sites in Bathurst, 16.

<sup>1012</sup> Andrew Hurley. 1995. *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 6.



and 19 Denton Street.<sup>1013</sup> The criteria were that the space be big enough for two latrines and one dust bin, a minimum of 200 yards from a residential compound, and in noncommercial, high foot-traffic areas.<sup>1014</sup> The problem was that in many areas there were no such spaces for latrines and warrants would be needed for the appropriation of private property. At first, the warrants were opposed by many of the prominent members of the Legislative council, including Sheikh Omar Fye, Samuel Forster, W. Davidson Carrol, and C.S. Faulkner, but after they realized that ninety percent of the proposed sites would require a warrant they backed warrants to seize property after consulting ward heads to see who would be “disturbed least” by the appropriation of their property.<sup>1015</sup>

This stirred up rate payers who resisted the new latrines by citing the conditions of the latrines in the main thoroughfares. Abel Rivers, a member of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, was worried by the rumors that a latrine would be built behind his house so he wrote to the colonial secretary claiming that he would either have to “run away” or not host friends at his house due to the shame of having his guests smell a public latrine. Rate payers needed to smell trees and flowers, not “stinking latrines” he argued.<sup>1016</sup> A latrine on Picton Street was cited as rarely being emptied and thus crawling with maggots.<sup>1017</sup> On Hagan Street latrines were described as containing uncovered buckets seething with fly larvae and waiting to spread dysentery.<sup>1018</sup> The rate payers passed a joint resolution arguing that “very few of us use or want the public latrines. They are unhealthy and used by those who migrate and contribute nothing to the colony” and they drive down property values.<sup>1019</sup> The smell was by far the most common complaint and the rate payers were not at all interested when sanitary officials told them that the

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<sup>1013</sup> NRO: CSO 3/293 Public Latrines, 52.

<sup>1014</sup> NRO: CSO 3/293 Public Latrines, 52.

<sup>1015</sup> NRO: CSO 3/293 Public Latrines, Acting Colonial Secretary to S.J. Forster, Sheikh Omar Fye, W. Davidson Carrol, C.S. Faulkner, April 21, 1937.

<sup>1016</sup> NRO: CSO 3/293 Public Latrines, Abel Rivers to the Colonial Secretary, July 6, 1937.

<sup>1017</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1510 Senior Medical Officer to the Colonial Secretary, August 11, 1937.

<sup>1018</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1510 Record of Discussion Between the Acting Colonial Secretary, Senior Medical Officer, Medical Officer of Health, and Bathurst Town Advisory Council, August 24, 1937.

<sup>1019</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1510 Rate payers and Citizens of Bathurst Resolution, August 16, 1937.

smell did not carry disease. They complained constantly of the smells which wafted from the latrines to their homes as well as the working class poor who “invaded” their neighborhoods to use them.<sup>1020</sup>

The association of the public latrines with migrants was an obvious attempt to discredit those who relied on them by marking them as alien to the city and not Gambian citizens. “These people,” presumably the poor, migrants, and laboring classes, were portrayed as an enemy army ready to “invade the public latrines.”<sup>1021</sup> The councilor of Jolof Town North, whose constituents were about 9/10<sup>th</sup> Christians and 1/10<sup>th</sup> wealthy Muslims, wrote that his constituents universally opposed latrines in their ward.<sup>1022</sup> They were especially disturbed by the prospect of building a latrine directly across from the Roman Catholic Church on the corner of Picton and Leman streets. The prospect of odious odors and miasmatic gasses reaching the doors of the church was too much for the city’s Catholics. The editor of the *Gambia Outlook* further complained that the latrines were anti-democratic, damaging to the property values of rate payers, and that they smelled horrible.<sup>1023</sup> The government “acts like a parent and us as children” one Gambian editorialized in the *Echo*.<sup>1024</sup> The only things the latrines did, many argued, was to attract “itinerants and casual laborers” to the rate payers’ neighborhoods. Maybe Jolof Town South and Half Die (two of the poorest wards) needed latrines, residents of Jolof Town North argued, but they were not welcome in their neighborhood.<sup>1025</sup> In particular the latrines at the intersections of Angelesa /Hagan and Leman/Picton streets were criticized as benefitting no one, attracting “non-rate payers” and “non-citizens,” and smelling bad.<sup>1026</sup> Rate payers, of course, maintained their own private latrines which they paid to have emptied on a regular basis, but apparently their shit did not stink.

The administration realized that the rate payers did not speak for the working poor and defended the public latrine system as being both sanitary and superior to the private latrine system.<sup>1027</sup> In fact, there

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<sup>1020</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 20, 1938.

<sup>1021</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, August 23, 1937, 2.

<sup>1022</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1510 Councilor, Jolof Town North Ward to the Chairman of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, August 23, 1937.

<sup>1023</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1510 Managing Editor *Gambia Outlook* to the Acting Colonial Secretary, September 22, 1937.

<sup>1024</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, August 9, 1937, 2.

<sup>1025</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, August 9, 1937, 3.

<sup>1026</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, August 9, 1937, 4.

<sup>1027</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1510 Comments on the Minutes of the Mass Meeting of Rate payers.

was no objection whatsoever in Half Die to the erection of public latrines because the residents could not afford to build or maintain their own. If the state was going to build a residential latrine system for the public it would have to do so against the will of the rate payers. Which it eventually did. In 1936 16 latrines were erected and 17 more in 1937. The colonial secretary noted that the great majority of compounds in the city had no latrines and therefore continued to use the shore and the outskirts of the town as a latrine. Public latrines, he argued, would also let the state close down poorly kept private latrines which were barely maintained by rate payers and firms.<sup>1028</sup>

Many rate payers demanded, in place of the latrines, flush toilets or at least modern septic tanks. “For goodness sake,” one rate payer wrote, “let us have septic tanks” to eradicate the “pan parade” carried out by the latrine-men which caused by the latrines which smelled bad and was “redolent with typhus germs.”<sup>1029</sup> There were some septic tanks built in the city, but apparently the one built in Half Die at the intersection of Wilberforce Street and the Victoria embankment was built so poorly that it failed to contain the odor and was making the agonized residents “who are half dead to die completely.”<sup>1030</sup> A septic tank built at the hospital, on the other hand, seems to have been done properly and was in working order. A system of “proper water closets” was ruled out because the governor did not believe the “rustic methods of our primitives” would work in modern toilets which would become clogged with sticks, rags, and other materials.<sup>1031</sup> The colonial secretary argued that since residents defecated on the floor of the public latrines, stole electric light bulbs from them, and removed doors from the latrines that modern water closets and septic tanks were out of the question. Attempts were made to put thick glass over the light bulbs, but the glass was smashed and the bulbs stolen again.<sup>1032</sup> A modern waterborne sewage system continued to be contemplated into the 1950s, but unavoidable problems remained. Since the city was flat it had no natural drainage and thus deep reservoirs with pumps would be needed to send

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<sup>1028</sup> NRO: CSO 3/293 Public Latrines, 107.

<sup>1029</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, August 9, 1937, 6.

<sup>1030</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, September 2, 1940, 6.

<sup>1031</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, August, 23, 1937, 6.

<sup>1032</sup> NRO: CSO 3/293 Public Latrines, 107.

excrement to the sea. Once it arrived there the tides, which tended to bring whatever was dumped back to the shore, would have to be overcome.<sup>1033</sup>

### THE FLOOD: 1930S

The 1930s were marked by a more intense relationship between the sanitary state and the residents of the city. During this period the sanitary state increasingly came under fire by rate payers, labor leaders, and the working poor for failing to deliver a modern city that made healthy, productive lives possible. Following the failure of the 1929 general strike and the force with which the state put it down, this engagement primarily took the form of pressuring the state by making claims on it. Residents of the city began writing to the *Echo* calling for the state to live up to its promises and to take ownership for the health of the city. They also organized letter writing campaigns directed at sanitary officials and governors who seemed to do little more than criticize urban dwellers.

In the 1930s the flooding of the city prompted a crisis. The street drains were described as “grassy earthpits” where crabs “honeycomb with mosquito nurseries.”<sup>1034</sup> The sanitary authorities placed the blame on Gambians who danced and drummed all night, abused latrines, and would not sanitize anything.<sup>1035</sup> In 1933 Governor Palmer joined the chorus when he gave an address calling for compounds to be filled and chastising Bathurst’s residents for their “inactivity.” It was time, he argued, to begin filling compounds. Playing on Paul’s letter to the Romans he warned, “the wages of inactivity in April, May, and June is sickness and possibly death in July, August, September, or October.”<sup>1036</sup> God helps those who help themselves, he told residents. The tone of the letter was a thoroughly paternalist. The goal was to have residents embark on a campaign of filling or “raising up,” in which they raised the level of their compounds before the rains arrived by dumping sand in the compound and thus, theoretically, avoiding floods and stagnant pools of water which bred mosquitoes and disease.

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<sup>1033</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3442 Bathurst and Kombo Development, Drainage of Bathurst, 245.

<sup>1034</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1089 Annual Medical and Sanitary Report 1930-31.

<sup>1035</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1089 Annual Medical and Sanitary Report 1930-31.

<sup>1036</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1289 Address by His Excellency, The Governor, to the Members of the Legislative Council, 1933, 31.

To accomplish this goal, school boys were even given a one week holiday from school during which they were supposed to collect sand and use it to fill in compounds. This “sand week” was done without any substantive communication or discussion with residents. The administration apparently expected that young boys would line up to do their duty without coercion. It was a complete failure and young boys used the holiday to play with their mates rather than engage in the drudgery of carrying sand.<sup>1037</sup> Although it does not appear that there was a central directive to do so, sanitary authorities on the spot began attempting to coerce youths into collecting sand. There were even reports of students who were flogged by sanitary officials for refusing to carry sand.<sup>1038</sup> Ward heads, elders, and even the Imam of Bathurst were outraged and protested that school children were in the process of getting an education and should never be conscripted into manual labor. (Figures 39) Parents were not paying school fees for their children so they could spend their time carrying sand for the sanitary authorities.

There was also, however, a response from the city’s poorer residents. People who had to sell their labor to secure a hand-to-mouth existence did not have time or productive energies to spare filling their yards with sand.<sup>1039</sup> Many residents argued that it was the role of the government to help the poor fill their compounds and warned not to chastise them for something which was out of their control. Several residents began writing letters to Governor Palmer. Some attempted to flatter the governor in a bid to win support. Ibrahima Chaim wrote “anything the white man advises us to do is for our own good,” but in hard times the state needed to bring sand to the people in lorries.<sup>1040</sup> Momodou Janney more bitingly wrote, “If the Governor is the master of Gambia and Bathurst” as he claimed, he ought to fix it with the help of the people instead of criticizing residents while doing nothing.<sup>1041</sup> Baye Cisse added some rather inconvenient historical facts which Palmer seemed to have forgotten. When the scheme of compound filling was inaugurated between 1900 and 1902 it was widely believed that the tramway lines being built in Bathurst would be used to convey sand to compounds. Not only did this service never materialize due

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<sup>1037</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1364 Minute Papers 1933, 3.

<sup>1038</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1364 Committee of Citizens to the Acting Colonial secretary for Bathurst, May 15, 1933.

<sup>1039</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1364 Minute Papers 1933, 7.

<sup>1040</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1364 Ibrahima Chaim to Mr. Councilor G.M. N’Jie and Friends, April 19, 1933.

<sup>1041</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1364 Momodou Janney to Mr. Councilor G.M. N’Jie and Friends, April 19, 1933.

to the general failure of the tram lines, but the administration outlawed sand removal from the beach making it impossible for anyone without a lorry to procure sand legally without walking across half the city.<sup>1042</sup> In other words, before the 1930s compound owners *were* filling their own compounds before the state made it impracticable by outlawing sand removal from the beach, defaulting on the promise of an efficient tramway system, and failing to provide lorries. When residents requested that government lorries help deliver sand, the administration claimed that they did not have the lorries to spare. By turning Palmer's claims to be the "father" of Bathurst against him residents were able to turn his paternalistic tone against him and demand that he start acting like a protector of the people if he was going to claim to be one. While some letters chose the route of flattery, many openly mocked the governor and scolded his shortsightedness and arrogance.

Unable to raise their compounds, some residents took matters into their own hands. The results were not always ameliorative. In one case a road filling on Blanc Street prevented water from draining from residents' yards.<sup>1043</sup> The residents pleaded with sanitary authorities for the fill to be removed so the water could drain and they could raise up their yards. When no intervention came property owners took matters into their own hands by breaking a hole in a concrete wall to let the water drain.<sup>1044</sup> Although the water drained it also created erosion which lowered the levels of their yards and made them more vulnerable to future flooding. On Hagan Street a similar problem persisted. Before metalled roads were built in the area flooding used to reach 10 inches. After metalled roads it regularly flooded to 18 or 20 inches.<sup>1045</sup> Residents had to roll their pants up to their thighs to enter their houses. It was thus somewhat disingenuous when the Acting Director of Public Works said "Anyone who goes to Half Die should expect a swamp. It has always been one."<sup>1046</sup> He was more accurate in assessing the limitations of his

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<sup>1042</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1364 Baye J. Cisse to Mr. Councilor G.M. N'Jie and Friends, April 19, 1933.

<sup>1043</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1269 Drainage of Half Die, Residents of Blanc Street to the Colonial Secretary.

<sup>1044</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1269 Drainage of Half Die, Extract of Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council. March 26, 1940.

<sup>1045</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1269 Drainage of Half Die, Extract of Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council. March 26, 1940.

<sup>1046</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1269 Drainage of Half Die, Extract of Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council. March 26, 1940.

capabilities. A civil engineer, he noted, was trained to “harness the powers of nature to the service of mankind” but he could not “make water run uphill or keep it from the easiest path.”<sup>1047</sup>

In addition to putting the onus of sand collection on property owners, in the 1930s the state attempted to force property owners to clean up rubbish in the streets. Although it was illegal to throw rubbish in the streets few people were ever caught due to a lack of sanitary personnel to enforce statutes and the practice of late night dumping. In 1936 it was proposed to fine property owners for any rubbish found in front of their property regardless of who put it there rather than attempting to police public areas.<sup>1048</sup> Rate payers were incensed and quickly began expressing their dissatisfaction with the new regulations. As one put it in the *Echo* “If a horse leaves its dung by one’s boundary fence or a wounded cat or chicken makes one’s gate its dying place overnight” it is not the fault of the property owner and the “scavengers” (sanitation workers) should pick it up.<sup>1049</sup> The author further likened it to the biblical story of Joseph’s cup being discovered in Benjamin’s sack. Another editorialist echoed this sentiment; “People sit in front of my house throwing nut shells and fruit skins,” he lamented. The blame, he argued, rested on the inability of the police to control “lazy” citizens and of the sanitary department to clean up the streets.<sup>1050</sup> In each case citizens argued that a well maintained and regulated sanitary authority would be able to clean up the streets without blaming its residents. “To each his own shit” seemed to be the state’s interpretation of the burden of private property.<sup>1051</sup> In other words, the burden of private property and of establishing bourgeois respectability was no concern of the states.

Indeed, throughout the 1930s many residents of the city editorialized in to the *Echo* demanding the sanitary authorities do their jobs. One rate payer described the streets and drains as an “unholy thing that meets the eye” and lamented, “The foul caves of some classic monsters are hygienic compared to

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<sup>1047</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1269 Drainage of Half Die, Extract of Minutes of a Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council. March 26, 1940.

<sup>1048</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1565 A Bill to Amend the Public Health Ordinance of 1935.

<sup>1049</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, January 27, 1936, 5.

<sup>1050</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, March 16, 1936.

<sup>1051</sup> Laporte, *History of Shit*.

what greets the eyes and nostrils in the stagnant corruption.”<sup>1052</sup> Others decried the “slime and slush” of the city which plagued man and beast with mosquitoes. According to the Bathurst Advisory Town Council (BATC), the streets were sometimes filled with “morbid persons” who “expectorated germs” wherever they went.<sup>1053</sup> The solution to these problems, many rate payers claimed, was a large-scale, capital intensive reclamation of the city, demolishing of substandard housing of the poor, proper town planning, and sanitation. The implications of these demands for the poor were obvious. Although many residents of the city wanted better sanitation a class divide erupted over reclamation. When Governor Armitage enacted the first reclamation of Half Die in 1929 some residents were compensated and the reclaimed land was mostly unoccupied, but many were worried that the reclamation projects proposed in the 1930s would leave many of the poorest residents of the city homeless. Residents who built their homes before the 1931 Town of Bathurst Building Regulations were especially vulnerable because any new houses would need the consent of the Director of Public Works and many city residents could not afford to build houses which would meet the new standards of the public works department let alone pay for the site plans and blueprints required to be drawn up.<sup>1054</sup> One worker wrote in to rebuke the editor of the *Echo* who had been advocating for reclamation. The working poor, he claimed, did not want a reclamation which would destroy their homes. Instead, the state could reclaim unoccupied lands at Lasso Wharf which would not destroy the homes of the poor. Alternatively, they could create a system of modern drainage which would make reclamation unnecessary.<sup>1055</sup>

Labor leaders also began to pressure sanitary authorities for what they saw as wastefulness. They argued that the sanitary state was throwing away money which could be used to ensure good wages for laborers and raise workers out of poverty rather than wasting it on sanitation projects which were either ineffective or never finished.<sup>1056</sup> In 1934 yellow fever broke out in Bathurst and the sanitary authorities acted immediately and without consulting city residents to implement quarantine regulations backed by

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<sup>1052</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, March 23, 1936, 4.

<sup>1053</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Minutes of the Meeting of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 20, 1938.

<sup>1054</sup> NRO: CSO 2/ Town of Bathurst Building Regulations, 1931.

<sup>1055</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, December 14, 1936, 1.

<sup>1056</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, February 8, 1937, 1.



martial law in the city. All Europeans in the city were evacuated to Kombo St. Mary while African residents remained in the city under curfew, pass regulations, and restrictions on worship which were implemented to stem a wider outbreak of the disease.<sup>1057</sup> No European was allowed to return to the city without a certificate of vaccination. In the end, the restrictions were successful in stopping the spread of the disease. E.F. Small, the labor leader, nevertheless led a group of citizens to protest the quarantine. The quarantine, Small argued, was unnecessary and an infringement of personal liberties.<sup>1058</sup> Small declared that no department should be able to wield this kind of unilateral power and that an African head of sanitation was needed to manage the health of Africans. For Small, who was generally dismissive of the wastefulness of the sanitary state, sanitary politics gave him an opportunity to critique the technocratic arrogance and racial exclusivity of the sanitary authorities.

Other urban dwellers also responded to the quarantine with calls for reforms. In a petition by citizens to Governor Richards, residents argued that they very much wanted to comply with sanitary restrictions without destroying their domestic arrangements or their homes.<sup>1059</sup> They pressured sanitary authorities to be more sensitive about the ways that sanitation deeply affected the ability of the poor to live in the city. Councilor Joof of the BATC also questioned the ability of the quarantine authorities to impose quarantine without so much as consulting the council. He recounted the story of a police officer who could not speak Wolof who prevented a Wolof resident of the city from leaving their house to use the toilet at night without being able to explain why.<sup>1060</sup> For Joof, like Small, this was clear evidence that African sanitary inspectors were absolutely indispensable if sanitation in the city was going to be a success. In response to the yellow fever outbreak sanitary authorities bulked up the size of the sanitary laborers force, reinstated a medical officer of health (after the position had been eliminated in 1929), built more latrines, and cut down every large tree in the city in an attempt to destroy *Aedes Aegypti*

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<sup>1057</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1504 Evacuation of Bathurst on Account of Yellow Fever.

<sup>1058</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1495 E.F. Small and S.E.J. Thomas Committee of Citizens Statement, November 14, 1934.

<sup>1059</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1495 Citizens of Bathurst to A.F. Richards, Governor, December 29, 1934.

<sup>1060</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1596 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, December 29, 1936.

mosquitoes which was cited as a vector for yellow fever.<sup>1061</sup> Reforms to the sanitary state were much slower in coming and the usual top down modernization approaches continued to be the *modus operandi* of the sanitary authorities.

Following the quarantine Small and other labor leaders continued to use sanitation as a talking point for workers' rights. In 1937 two strikes broke out. The first was in January when day laborers working for the government struck. Workers receiving between 1/- and 1/6 per day argued that they simply could not keep up with the cost of living.<sup>1062</sup> The strike received public sympathy due to the low wages being paid by the government. How could the government spend £32,000 per year on sanitation and not afford to pay labor a living wage, the strikers asked.<sup>1063</sup> The second strike of 1937 was conducted by 67 night workers under the public health department. The strikers, known locally as "scavengers," had the unpleasant tasks of going from house to house and latrine to latrine disposing of "night soil" (human excrement), "rubbish" (anything from dead animals to plant materials and everything in between), and cleaning latrines.<sup>1064</sup> They brought the refuse they collected by horse or lorry to incinerators located around the city or to Malfa Creek in the south of the city and dumped it into the water.<sup>1065</sup> (Figure 35) These were unskilled workers, but they were essential to the functioning of the city because without them there was no means of eliminating excrement from houses. As Fred Cooper has argued, workers at the strategic choke points of colonies, such as ports or railroads, were able to have disproportionate effects on the colony when they struck.<sup>1066</sup> Waste removal was certainly a choke point of the city, though it has generally not been analyzed side by side with other more "productive" occupations. Sanitary workers literally had the ability to let residents of the city choke on their own shit if they so chose. The Medical Officer of Health argued that the workers should be given a raise due to the "offensive" nature of their work. They not only had to deal with refuse and excrement, but the smoke of the incinerators, and the cuts

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<sup>1061</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3156 Development Program, Bathurst Town, 86.

<sup>1062</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 1, 1937.

<sup>1063</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 8, 1937

<sup>1064</sup> NRO: CSO 3/312 Labour Disputes in Government Departments, 19B.

<sup>1065</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1363 Medical and Sanitary Report for 1932, 18.

<sup>1066</sup> Frederick Cooper. 1996. *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

on their feet which they received wheeling refuse over broken glass and tins in the street.<sup>1067</sup> Workers who were willing to replace the striking laborers were difficult to find because Gambians would not do work “of a revolting nature.”<sup>1068</sup> Only Bambaras were willing to take the jobs which stigmatized them as outcasts in the city, but also ensured a corporate identity which functioned as a *de facto* union. In the end the workers did secure a rise in the minimum wage to 1/3 per day, but the number of workers under the government payroll was reduced.

Rather than address many of these issues head on, the state continued to suggest solutions which placed the burden on the population. One proposed solution was to educate the poor about modern sanitation and germ theory. Throughout the 1930s Health Weeks became increasingly more common and religious authorities were eager to join in. Catholic churches in Bathurst celebrated Saint Luke’s Day after the evangelist and patron saint of physicians, and invited “sin sick souls” to join the church.<sup>1069</sup> Churches trotted out the old maxim that “cleanliness is next to Godliness” and even referenced the laws of Moses and the sanitary taboos of the Israelites as proof.<sup>1070</sup> “Ministers of religion would do well to remember,” the editor of the *Echo* wrote “that souls of men can only be reached through their body.”<sup>1071</sup> Sheikh Omar Fye also spoke to Muslims of the city, extolling them to remember the prophet Muhammad who taught the importance of ablutions and cleanliness as a prerequisite for godliness and who stressed the importance of physical exercise. Fye argued that Muslims should “dye ourselves in the attributes of God, then in the image of God, man would become a reality.”<sup>1072</sup> He also told Muslims to reject the “traditional” arguments by which some Gambians resisted changes to diet and hygiene regimes. Instead, he argued, Gambians should learn the history of Muslim surgeons and conform to modern notions of cleanliness and hygiene.

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<sup>1067</sup> NRO: CSO 3/312 Labour Disputes in Government Departments, Medical Officer of Health to the Senior Medical Officer, March 4, 1937.

<sup>1068</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3941 Bathurst Sewage Disposal.

<sup>1069</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, October 25, 1937, 2.

<sup>1070</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, October 8, 1938, 6.

<sup>1071</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, October 8, 1938, 6.

<sup>1072</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1408 Health Week, 1933, 13.

Some rate payers similarly passed the buck onto another category of vulnerable citizen: women. Following the state's lead, they began to call for women's education in the city in order to make "modern" wives of young girls. For the city's Christian rate paying elites maintaining proper hygiene around the home was key to presenting a bourgeois aesthetic which demonstrated a comprehension of modern sanitary regulations. Having a modern, domesticated wife to tend to home and garden thus became the linchpin of bourgeois respectability. In the 1930s male rate payers began to complain about the lack of education amongst their wives and their unwillingness to adopt these new sanitary standards. Modern education for women was necessary, a contributor to the *Gambia Echo* argued, not to give women the opportunity to engage in careers, but to teach them the "responsibilities of the modern housewife."<sup>1073</sup> Otherwise wives would not sufficiently keep the home clean because they failed to understand modern germ theory and would "doubt your sanity if you tell them about germs."<sup>1074</sup> (Figure 36) The fact that Muslims were educating their sons and not their daughters, Christian notables argued, was leading to backwardness in the home. An educated wife was a "valuable asset at home," another contributor wrote, otherwise she would not understand economic or sanitary matters and would accuse her husband of "parroting the 'white man's humbug'" when he insisted the home needed to be cleaned in certain ways.<sup>1075</sup>

#### THE COLONIAL SLUM: LATE 1930 -1950S

In 1936 Professor Warrington Yorke of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine visited Bathurst to survey the city. The answer to the city's sanitation woes, he argued, was a massive reclamation project which included demolishing any and all houses in the way and replacing them with modern urban planning.<sup>1076</sup> In his report Yorke called Bathurst a "water logged sponge floating in a sea of its own excreta."<sup>1077</sup> Following Yorke several prominent figures echoed these sentiments. Three years later, Governor Hillary Blood also called Bathurst a slum filled with "horrors" and "amphibious

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<sup>1073</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, March 29, 1937.

<sup>1074</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, March 29, 1937.

<sup>1075</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, March 24, 1937.

<sup>1076</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, April 12, 1937, 5.

<sup>1077</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3516 Development Program, Bathurst Town, 127.

Gambians wading about in their own excreta.”<sup>1078</sup> Rate payers blamed the conditions on the city’s poor. One rate payer, writing into the *Echo*, agreed with the notion of Bathurst as one big slum and blamed the cheapness and availability of krinting (bamboo) and plaster, which allowed the poor to build houses that they never repaired except with plastic bags.<sup>1079</sup> If only the poor could be priced out of the city, he implied, sanitation in the city would improve.

Not everyone accepted the notion of Bathurst as slum. Lady Southorn, the wife of the former Governor Southorn, opined that not only was Bathurst not a slum, it was better than many English industrial towns.<sup>1080</sup> Lady Southorn, who was deeply invested in Bathurst and would go on to write a history of The Gambia, resented outside intellectuals like Yorke who came in and judged the city without getting to know its people. It was Southorn, after all, who organized the Women War Workers and the Busy Bees Girls Club at the start of World War II to provide essential services to the sick including visits to Gambian lepers.<sup>1081</sup> She was not nearly as frightened by disease as other colonial officials. Hers was the other side of the Christian coin. *West Africa* newspaper added, in response to Yorke, that “the real slum is the colonial slum” and the sooner Gambia exited it the better.<sup>1082</sup>

After the Yorke report, the influx of migrants to Bathurst during the Second World War in response to the availability of high paying jobs working for the defense administration led to conditions of overcrowding. The fact that the floating boat base, airfields, and oil tanks built to support the RAF and other war workers reduced the habitable area of the island by about 8% did not help matters. Much to the dismay of the sanitary authorities the system of public latrines and standpipes built in the 1930s made it possible for the city to support a homeless population living on the streets by providing them with free public amenities.<sup>1083</sup> Overcrowding only served to bring into greater relief Bathurst’s sanitation problems in general and the conditions of the latrines in particular. To deal with overstressed latrines, a compost

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<sup>1078</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2055 Press Cuttings, 39.

<sup>1079</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, January 21, 1952, 4.

<sup>1080</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2055 Press Cuttings, *The Scotsman*, April 29, 1944.

<sup>1081</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2055 Press Cuttings, 28

<sup>1082</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2055 Press Cuttings, *West Africa*, February 3, 1945.

<sup>1083</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2033 Vagrancy Bill, 87.

dump was built at Malfa Creek on the western side of the city where lorries brought the night soil to be stored in cement tanks. Although it was better than the old system of dumping directly into the creek, the residents still complained of the smell.<sup>1084</sup> Relief only came when dumping was moved to the more unoccupied area at Lasso Wharf on Allen Street. This move raised fears of its own that if the rains came the sewage from Lasso would rise up with the tide and the repressed would return to “the very gates of the rate payers.”<sup>1085</sup>

Additionally, overcrowding brought into greater relief the issue of street vendors and “hawkers” who did not use the main market in order to avoid market fees. The Bathurst Advisory Town Council began calling for legislation to control these “hawkers,” many of whom were women, who were blamed for congesting street traffic and leaving rubbish in their wake.<sup>1086</sup> This is the same BATC that campaigned for sheep and goats to be allowed back into the city after they were excluded in the late 1930s. Economically and religiously, they argued, banning animals hurt the interests of the rate payers.<sup>1087</sup> The waste left by these animals and the connection between them and disease seemed less convincing to the rate payers than the rubbish left by street “hawkers.”

As the police began to crack down on street traders they found that they were too mobile to control and too numerous to stop. Instead, attention shifted to more permanent “Nar” (Mauritanian) shops which were selling fresh food, but could not evade police due to the fixed structures they erected. The shops were criticized as exposing the food and sugar to flies and rubbish and selling bread from the ground or in porous baskets exposed to flies. A.S.B. Saho of the Bathurst Town Council campaigned on behalf of the shopkeepers, but the Medical Officer of Health dismissed his arguments since many of the shops never applied for fresh food licenses.<sup>1088</sup> In 1950 the Medical Officer of Health argued that unlicensed shops in general, and Mauritanian shops in particular, were too dirty to be allowed to sell food and that they tended to adopt the unsanitary practice of having their bedrooms “communicate” with their

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<sup>1084</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2168 Minutes of the Meeting of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority, October 18, 1944.

<sup>1085</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, July 4, 1938, 7.

<sup>1086</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council March 26, 1940.

<sup>1087</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, September 27, 1938.

<sup>1088</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2170 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Town Council, November 22, 1950.

shops.<sup>1089</sup> Most shop owners were unable to expand their shops and comply with the regulations. J. Coker, the owner of a breadshop, wrote to the Colonial Secretary that he wanted to expand, but needed a loan to do it and no help was forthcoming. If the government could spend money it did not have, he questioned, why couldn't he?<sup>1090</sup>

During the war, the state began to lay the groundwork for the large reclamation projects which would follow. In the meantime, the administration attempted to alleviate population problems by rounding up the homeless and deporting them or shanghaiing them into the army. After the war a new space opened up for renewed sanitary efforts. Natural fluctuations in rainfall made the issue more pressing. The floods of 1942 and 1947 were decisive events which spurred the reclamation projects of the late 1940s and 50s. In 1942 much of the city was flooded knee deep for three whole days.<sup>1091</sup> Houses were flooded and destroyed and the administration was served a wakeup call. By all accounts the flood of 1947 was worse. The residents of Bathurst were literally forced to paddle about the city in canoes. There were calls to move the city off the island entirely and reconstitute it in the Kombos, but entirely too much capital was already invested in Bathurst.

The 1936 Yorke report was dusted off and provided the impetus for large new reclamation projects in the city. In 1941, Dr. G.W.M. Findlay of the Wellcome Institute visited Bathurst. Findlay, who had experience in Lagos, declared that while Lagos was overcrowded it was nowhere near as bad as Bathurst which was one of the worst “tropical slums in Africa” and a “disgrace to the colonial empire.”<sup>1092</sup> Sanitary failures were finally recast as the result of bad government policy. The piecemeal solutions of the Dutton Scheme, which had been the *de facto* policy for decades, were blamed for the state of the city rather than the actions of the local population in response to the Dutton Scheme. Essentially, the report made the case that the chaotic conditions of the city were due to the *ad hoc* chaos created by the Dutton Scheme rather than some kind of inherent African aversion to sanitation. In 1935 Governor Arthur

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<sup>1089</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2927 Public Health Regulations, 1950.

<sup>1090</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2928 Public Health Regulations, J. Coker to the Colonial Secretary, January 10, 1959.

<sup>1091</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, September 7, 1942, 1.

<sup>1092</sup> NRO: CSO: 2/3156 Development Program Bathurst Town, 201.

Richards had made precisely this argument, but there was no support or funding for large development projects. In 1941 the Dutton Scheme came to an end with the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act.<sup>1093</sup> The development schemes which followed attempted to attack many of the sanitary problems which the Dutton Scheme had failed over the years to address. A large scale reclamation project, it was believed, would address problems with sanitation, disease, insect vectors, and rats.<sup>1094</sup>

Table 9: Development Projects Implemented Under the Bathurst Town Development Program

Development Project <sup>1095</sup>	Years	Cost (Approx.)
Victoria Hospital	1949 - 54	£170,000
Drains and Roads	1948 - 55	248,600
Public Latrines	1948 - 51	20,000
Government Wharf	1950 - 51	75,400
Water Supply	1950 - 55	40,000
Schools	1951 - 53	60,000
Electricity	1951 - 53	180,000
Reclamation	1951 - 57	540,000
Crab Island Layout	1951 - 53	80,0000

Following the wartime population boom the water pipes also desperately needed replacing. In order to provide for the city's growing population, including the homeless population, the existing water infrastructure had to be used "excessively and indifferently." The main pipe at Abuko was 25 years old and the two others 17 years old each.<sup>1096</sup> The goal was not to make the water supply profitable because the poor could not afford to pay for water and depended on the free public standpipes.<sup>1097</sup> Since Bathurst was surrounded by salt and swamp water, fresh water had to be pumped from further away. "Cutaneal"

<sup>1093</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3516 Development Program, Bathurst Town, 115.

<sup>1094</sup> NRO: CSO 3/288 Reclamation of Bathurst, 16.

<sup>1095</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3797 Development Council Quarterly Report.

<sup>1096</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3429 Bathurst Water Supply, 5.

<sup>1097</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3429 Bathurst Water Supply, T.B. Williamson to Waddell, September 24, 1952.



readings were done on the soil in several locations and geological surveys conducted as to the state of the soil. At 1,106 feet below the surface 4,200 gallons of “artesian” water per hour could be obtained.<sup>1098</sup> In 1952 the Abuko pipe was still in use and was about forty years old before it was finally replaced by submersible electric pumps. £40,000 was spent to create a new pump system which would bring fresh water to the city.

The segregation of the city’s European population was also revisited. Once again a new housing scheme was suggested to finally allow Europeans to move to a racially segregated community in the suburbs. The Senior Medical Officer noted that segregation had been approved by every government in West Africa except in The Gambia and decried Europeans living “cheek by jowl with the most fruitful reservoirs of most of the transmissible tropical diseases.”<sup>1099</sup> Segregation was justified with the claim that it was a matter of “culture, not colour.”<sup>1100</sup> In a 1938 survey of eleven European homes in the city eight were found to have rat infestations, half also had silverfish, bats, cockroaches, or pigeons, and the only three without infestations were declared to be inevitable sites of future infestations.<sup>1101</sup> While it was not exactly true that segregation was nonexistent in the city, it was not by any means effective segregation.

Not all colonial officials supported segregation. The architect of a planned African community in Kombo objected to the use of the term “African” in connection with the housing. He found it “strange and inapplicable” because he believed the houses were for Africans and Europeans alike.<sup>1102</sup> Indeed, Europeans were not the only ones contemplating a move to the suburbs. One official suggested that an African Women’s Housing Committee should be formed to help Gambians looking to move out to the suburbs maintain a close-knit community despite leaving the bosom of the city.<sup>1103</sup> Surveys were distributed to home owners of Bathurst asking them what kind of house they lived in, what they would like to live in, and how much they would be willing to pay for a home in Kombo. The surveys

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<sup>1098</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3429 Bathurst Water Supply, PWD Borehole in Bathurst, May 12, 1954.

<sup>1099</sup> NRO: CSO 3/345 Housing Condition in Bathurst, 1938.

<sup>1100</sup> NRO: CSO 3/420 Segregation, 2A.

<sup>1101</sup> NRO: CSO 3/345 Housing Conditions in Bathurst 1938, 1B.

<sup>1102</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3340 Bathurst and Kombo Development- African Housing in Kombo.

<sup>1103</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3340 Bathurst and Kombo Development- African Housing in Kombo.

demonstrated that some residents were willing to contemplate the move to the suburbs, but many residents preferred city life and had no interest in leaving Bathurst.<sup>1104</sup> Those who did contemplate the move made clear demands that mud or cement block houses which could stand up to the elements were essential and that the prevailing compound system of a house with a yard and outhouse should be continued. A “new-fangled township” was not what residents were looking for, though it was thought that young men would probably enjoy it.<sup>1105</sup> The overwhelming consensus was that any new scheme should not be segregated racially or religiously. As the chairman of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority put it, there was “no need whatever for different types of communities” and residents wanted the “corporate spirit” of Bathurst to transfer over to Kombo.<sup>1106</sup>

Instead of the capital intensive solution of planning and developing a connected suburb, the administration began to consider developing building regulations which would drive out “undesirables” from the city.<sup>1107</sup> Once Africans owned property in the city, a report on the sanitary conditions of the city concluded, it was very difficult to get them to leave. In fact, the administration had attempted to enforce strict building codes, but the necessity of attracting cheap labor during the Second World War led officials to ignore building codes entirely. The administration was well aware that “unofficial” housing was proliferating, but they reckoned that labor was needed. War time rationing also made materials so scarce as to be nearly impossible to acquire, so officials they allowed the building of thatched roof and krinting houses to continue unchecked.<sup>1108</sup>

As development funds became available, the lion’s share of the funds was allotted for the reclamation of the city, rather than the building up of the suburbs. Analyses of the drains in the city revealed that drains at Leman, Dobson, Hurts, Williams, Charles, and Buckles Streets were all overgrown

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<sup>1104</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3340 Bathurst and Kombo Development- African Housing in Kombo, Local News, April 28, 1945.

<sup>1105</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3340 Bathurst and Kombo Development- African Housing in Kombo, Commissioner of the Kombo St. Mary Division to the Colonial Secretary, March 17, 1945.

<sup>1106</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3340 NRO: CSO 2/3340 Bathurst and Kombo Development- African Housing in Kombo, Chairman of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority to the Acting Colonial Secretary, May 5, 1945

<sup>1107</sup> NRO: CSO 3/348 D.W.H. Howells Report on Cape St. Mary, 34.

<sup>1108</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2044 Erection of Thatched Roofs in Bathurst.

and barely functioning. Rather than attempting to reclaim Half Die yet again the state realized that would be far too much trouble, so they spent most of their energy reclaiming the land around Malfa Creek in the southwest corner of the island known locally as Crab Island. There were Gambians farming on Crab Island, but it was too swampy to live in before the reclamation. Farmers were notified they would not be compensated for the loss of their farmland, which was procured without title, once construction started.<sup>1109</sup>

Crab Island was designed with 58 plots, streets, and electricity according to modern standards, but C.O. Vander Plaas, the United Nations development expert who helped plan the layout, also hoped to tap “tradition.” Van der Plaas touted new, model houses designed especially for the poor which would take into account the number of people who shared rooms in poor households. He suggested 35 -50 houses with room for 200 families which Bathurst residents could build themselves with available materials. Van der Plaas also wanted to plan streets with open spaces which could act as *bantabas*, or meeting spaces used by elders, and cul-de-sacs planned “exactly as they are in Mandinka and Wolof villages.”<sup>1110</sup> The purpose of the layout would be to encourage customary panopticism, which he believed operated in the traditional village, whereby everyone would be under the eye of everyone else and “if a child sins (defecates) an elder hastens to clean it up.”<sup>1111</sup> This, he believed, would combine the best features of modern city planning with a traditional do-it-yourself ethos and customary control of sanitation which would lead to clean streets, compounds, and alleys. He also argued that if latrines were not being used properly they should be redesigned to make them easier to use rather than complaining about the city’s residents.

Indeed, development funding was also used to reform the latrine system. By 1952, there were 834 pails in use in Bathurst. 542 were private, paid for at a rate of 5/- per month, 103 in government offices, 46 in schools, 53 in government quarters, and 229 in public.<sup>1112</sup> The pails were worked by 82 sanitary staff

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<sup>1109</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2418 Bathurst Schools Development Project 1951.

<sup>1110</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3472 Layout of Crab Island, 1955.

<sup>1111</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3472 Layout of Crab Island, 1955.

<sup>1112</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2170 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Town Council, March 10, 1952.

including 51 pail carriers who carried an average of 15 pails per day. Soon thereafter, the number of pails expanded to 1,076, with each pail supposed to be cleaned daily and the most popular ones twice a day.<sup>1113</sup> Some of the increase was made up by private subscribers who paid for government services or hired their own sanitary laborers independent of the state. The state owned a refuse lorry but after it was in an accident there was no lorry support for the sanitary workers with the lorries of commercial firms too busy to carry waste. Not surprisingly, in 1952 the sanitary workers walked out on a wildcat strike and no one could be found to do their jobs. The workers demanded a 50% pay increase to go with the increasing number of pails they had to attend to. They were given a salary of £9 per month which was still extremely low.<sup>1114</sup> The workers countered by taking their pails to the public standpipes and washing them there in order to save time.<sup>1115</sup> This, of course, created a public health concern as a few were caught in the act and officials considered turning off the standpipes between midnight and 5AM. Instead, they tightened surveillance of the sanitary workers and in 1955 caught numerous sanitary workers at the standpipes.<sup>1116</sup> After the workers were disciplined and one was sacked the problem seemed to diminish.

Additionally, a £170,000 investment in the Royal Victoria Hospital coincided with a sustained movement to criminalize “traditional” medicine and African midwives. Regulations were passed which required midwives to be registered, trained, and licensed before they could practice and “traditional” surgeries were outlawed. Matters came to a head in 1941 in the trial of Momodou Jagne who had performed surgery on the neck of ten year old Elizabeth Slyva.<sup>1117</sup> There was a good deal of confusion, despite the autopsy on Elizabeth, as to what exactly happened. It was alleged, in the beginning of the trial, that Jagne had removed the cervicle glands in Elizabeth’s neck and her mother confirmed that she had asked Jagne to remove the glands as it was, according to her, custom to do so in Bathurst. Nevertheless, upon autopsy examination, Elizabeth’s glands were still in her neck. In any case, Elizabeth was brought to the hospital with two incisions in her neck below the jaw which had become infected with tetanus.

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<sup>1113</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3441 Bathurst Development- Bathurst Sewage Disposal.

<sup>1114</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2170 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Town Council, March 10, 1952.

<sup>1115</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2170 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Town Council, August 18, 1954.

<sup>1116</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2170 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Town Council, April 20, 1955.

<sup>1117</sup> NRO: CSO 2 In the Supreme Court of the colony of The Gambia, The King vs. Momodu Jagne, 1941.

According to the colonial surgeon this type of surgery was not at all rare in the colony. During the trial Veronica Sylva, the mother, testified that her daughter became infected after the surgery and complained of her neck before her father took her to the hospital where she died. Elizabeth's father, a church going dockworker, confirmed his wife's story. "To err is human," he lamented.<sup>1118</sup>

Jagne's written statement, which he had given to the police despite being warned about self-incrimination, actually saved him. He recounted that the surgery was not to remove neck glands, but to remove stones in the neck. Jagne claimed that he had been performing the surgery for over twenty years and touted the modern methods he was currently employing. The procedure involved Jagne making incisions in a patient's neck, lancing the stone with a needle, and cutting it away from the surrounding tissue. Prior to the operation he rubbed a leaf on the skin to sterilize it, mixed medicine into the form of a pill, and placed the pill on the skin with paste and held by cotton wool.<sup>1119</sup> Jagne went on to describe the length of the cotton he used, its source and cleanliness, and the tin he used to keep the cotton clean. He claimed to have performed the same procedure on eight other children that day and over 100 total since he began implementing it. Jagne further claimed that he was so famous the Bathurst youths called him "Daddy Bump" with bump being slang for the neck stones he removed. In contrast, he never removed the cervicle glands or *Burom Bupot*.<sup>1120</sup> Equally interesting is the admission of one Dr. Carroll, who was consulted to testify as to his medical opinion. Carroll argued that the practices employed by Jagne did constitute a kind of sterilization and that many "native" practitioners did employ such methods to successful ends. Furthermore, he added that he also knew of cases in which operations done under "European methods" also resulted in tetanus infections which were always blamed on the patients improperly caring for their wounds.<sup>1121</sup> Dr. Manson, who was also consulted, agreed with Dr. Carroll that he saw few cases of infection due to the methods of "native doctors." In the end it was found that Jagne was not criminally negligent in his procedure nor was he found guilty of manslaughter by a jury which

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<sup>1118</sup> NRO: CSO 2 In the Supreme Court of the colony of The Gambia, The King vs. Momodu Jagne, 1941

<sup>1119</sup> NRO: CSO 2 In the Supreme Court of the colony of The Gambia, The King vs. Momodu Jagne, 1941

<sup>1120</sup> NRO: CSO 2 In the Supreme Court of the colony of The Gambia, The King vs. Momodu Jagne, 1941

<sup>1121</sup> NRO: CSO 2 In the Supreme Court of the colony of The Gambia, The King vs. Momodu Jagne, 1941

deliberated only ten minutes before returning the verdict. Jagne was allowed to continue performing therapeutics and minor surgeries as a registered “native doctor” under the Medical Practitioners and Dentists Ordinance. This was due, in no small part, to the fact that there simply were not enough doctors to treat the local population.

Authorities were not nearly as impressed by the skills of Gambian midwives as the issue of infant mortality returned to the fore in the 1930s as part of a moral panic in the British Empire. This was part of a more widespread effort by the late British colonial state throughout Africa to root out abortion and infanticide.<sup>1122</sup> Missionaries and colonial administrators occluded the social, economic, and religious groundings of these practices among African women and, in doing so, opened up the homes and bodies of African women to the colonial gaze. The number of stillbirths in the 1930 medical and sanitary reports led to the call for training and registration of midwives.<sup>1123</sup> The report cited that out of 54 births attended to by African midwives 23, or 43.4%, resulted in stillbirths versus 7.4% of stillbirths at a clinic. A 1935 survey found that out of 1,000 births 276 succumbed to infant mortality,<sup>1124</sup> still a troubling number, but perhaps a more reasonable estimate given the dramatically expanded scale of the study. The criminalization of unlicensed midwives did little to give poor Gambians an alternative. Without access to midwives that were both affordable and legal Gambians continued to use unlicensed midwives, but were forced to abandon stillborn babies for fear of arrest. Additionally, in cases of teenage pregnancy outside of marriage, where inviting outsiders in could create a scandal, mothers often had little recourse to alternatives. In a few high profile cases published in the newspapers much to the scandal of some city dwellers, the dead bodies of stillborns were abandoned rather than buried for fear that midwives, usually relatives, would be discovered and arrested. These stories, though representing a small number of cases helped to fuel a moral panic that justified further state intervention. Wealthier Gambians were shocked by a few high profile cases in which newborns were found abandoned in sluice gates and drains. On May 24, 1937 a baby was found dead at the Half Die sluice gate. The mother and midwife were arrested by the

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<sup>1122</sup> Kanogo, 165.

<sup>1123</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1089 Annual Medical and Sanitary Report 1930-31.

<sup>1124</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1545 Medical and Sanitary Report 1935.

police and charged with infanticide.<sup>1125</sup> In 1941 another stillborn child was found. It had been born to a teenage girl and the mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother were identified and brought to court to testify. It was concluded that they had kept the pregnancy a secret and the mother of the teen was convicted of acting illegally as a midwife. The decomposed state of the corpse made it impossible to perform a post-mortem and thus the mother avoided charges of infanticide.<sup>1126</sup> Although these cases were rare they pointed to a very sad reality which was that the law was forcing an increasing number of families to abandon infants without burials for fear of arrest without providing widely available and affordable healthcare to help bring infant mortality down.

In 1938 the city's sheep and goats, having been banned from the city, were blamed for as much as ¼ of infant deaths in the city due to the fact that their dung made the soil in the city redolent with tetanus.<sup>1127</sup> Though it is difficult to assert monocausality, the banning of goats and sheep may have had a beneficial effect on infant mortality. In 1939 the rate was down to 157 out of 1000 or 15.7%.<sup>1128</sup> In 1940, however, infant mortality remained at 158 out of 1,000 and medical authorities began to link the high rate of deaths to the increasing number of Bathurst residents coming to clinics to be treated for venereal disease.<sup>1129</sup> By 1942, when overcrowding was at its wartime peak, medical officers reported infant mortality and general mortality to be on the rise again.<sup>1130</sup> The prescribed solution set forth in the medical and health development plan was to reduce venereal disease with the “hearty use of soap and water” after sex.<sup>1131</sup> It was suggested to start using the police to begin checking prostitutes and raiding brothels, since they were well known to everyone despite no action being taken to regulate them.<sup>1132</sup> To their credit, medical officers did warn against the “Nazi-like measures of mass segregation, examination, and treatment” of those suffering from VD having just emerged from World War II. Another possible

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<sup>1125</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, May 24, 1937, 6.

<sup>1126</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 17, 1941, 5.

<sup>1127</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, June 28, 1938.

<sup>1128</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1801 Medical and Sanitary Report for 1939.

<sup>1129</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1929 Medical and Sanitary Report for 1940.

<sup>1130</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2028 Health of the Native Population of Bathurst.

<sup>1131</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2929 Medical and Health Services Revised Development Plan, 1947.

<sup>1132</sup> NRO: CSO 10/87 Venereal Disease Policy, 13.

explanation is that the widespread use of pesticides, begun in the late 1930s, may have contributed to infant mortality in the city, though this possibility was never studied. It is now well documented that exposure to pesticides in the first trimester of pregnancy can increase the rates of stillbirth significantly.<sup>1133</sup> There were clear political motives for placing the blame on the “ignorance” of local women and urban animals because both justified the entry of the state deeper into the lives of urban dwellers. Pesticides, on the other hand, were a cornerstone of state policy in the fight against insects and vermin.

## CONCLUSION

Concerns over sanitation continued up to Independence Day even as the discussion of independence and political matters dominated the newspapers in the 1950s and 1960s the way that sanitation dominated in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1952 one editorialist was shocked by the condition of Albion School on Lancaster Street where he found a nine month old stagnant pool inhabited by “tadpoles and larvae, future frogs and mosquitoes” that constituted “human pests in the heart of the metropolis.”<sup>1134</sup> Soon, he worried, school children would be returning to school where these pests would swarm them. The criticism continued, surprisingly, in the Children’s Corner, a weekly feature of the *Gambia Echo* started in 1954. The Corner was run by “Auntie Maria” a fictional character created by the male editors of the *Echo* to convince children to write in to the paper.<sup>1135</sup> At first, the names of children who wrote to the *Echo* were always included in the published versions of their letters, but in the mid-1950s names were replaced with membership numbers. For example, in 1954, #028, an 18 year old from Soldier Town Ward, described his part of the city as poor people suffering in floorless houses described as “savannah lands” with grasses, shrubs, mosquitoes, and reptiles.<sup>1136</sup> #028 went on to describe dustbins stuffed with dead animals and called for modern flush latrines. #038, a 16 year old, also agreed that modern latrines

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<sup>1133</sup> L M Pastore, I Hertz-Picciotto, and J J Beaumont. 1997. “Risk of Stillbirth from Occupational and Residential Exposures.” *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. 54 (7).

<sup>1134</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, August 8, 1952, 1.

<sup>1135</sup> Kenda Mutongi has documented a similar phenomenon in *Drum*. See Kenda Mutongi. 2009. “Dear Dolly’s” Advice: Representations of Youth, Courtship, and Sexualities in Africa, 1960-1980 in Jennifer Cole and Lynn M. Thomas eds. *Love in Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>1136</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, November 1, 1954, 11.



were necessary for a hygienic city, more lorries should be hired to haul dirt, water standpipes should be built, and compounds should be cleaned to improve the “health of the populace.”<sup>1137</sup>

A number of important themes emerge from this chapter. Sanitation, it turns out, was deeply influenced by class, gender, and race. White officials campaigned, with limited success, for greater degrees of separation from their African neighbors. Rate payers consistently used their literacy and influence as the most educated and “progressive” members of the city to steer sanitary projects in directions which would maintain the class divide between them and their poorer neighbors. The state, while recognizing that Africans had a role to play in health care and even minor surgeries, came down along gender lines. Male “traditional” doctors were allowed to continue practicing under the rubrics of both custom and modern sanitary rules. Midwives were every bit as necessary as “traditional” doctors, but they were criminalized and *a priori* assumed to be criminally negligent whenever they assisted a birth.

The health problems of city life were very much real. The notion that a rational state did everything it could to apply germ theory and modern sanitation while Africans failed to understand or engage with modernity was not. Very often, the state pursued policies which were far from rational and the city’s African residents did their best they could to implement sanitary practices on their own. The failure of the state to recognize the real efforts made by Africans living in the city and to support them by providing infrastructure and investment was one of the primary forces which led Africans to challenge colonialism, especially from the 1930s onwards, through a combination of demands for reform and nationalist politics. Despite all these realities Gambians continued to come to the city and to build lives there.

As the 1950s and 1960s dragged on politics proper and discussions of independence replaced the sanitation debates both in local papers and in administrative discourse. Of course, sanitation never disappeared. Indeed, it is useful to think of the 1930s as the beginning of the period when Gambians began to intensify their demands on the state. Sanitation was the major issue around which many of these demands coalesced. The politics of sanitation and of independence were intricately intertwined. Both

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<sup>1137</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, November 8, 1954, 10.

made the same kinds of demands on the state and asserted the rights of Africans to a state which was responsive to their demands. Both were also plagued by divisions within the African community which led to internal struggles marked by class, ethnicity, and gender. In the end, the politics of sanitation is as complicated as nationalist politics would soon become. It was, however, productive of something.

CHAPTER 6: THE NERVOUS SYSTEM: MORAL PANIC AND THE CITY'S YOUTHS, 1880S-1950S

The child is the father of the man. -William Wordsworth "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold"

I'm progressing beyond my letter-writing days, there is no longer an alphabet in my blood...I looked at a biology book and it seems to be cedi (Ghanaian currency) plasma I'm collecting! -B. Kojo Laing *Search Sweet Country*

It is a well-established truism that pre-colonial African societies were gerontocratic.

Unfortunately, however, African gerontocracy is often filtered through the lens of functionalism which sanitizes past struggles between elders and juniors. Senior men, and less commonly senior women, are often portrayed as wielding absolute authority over juniors. The usual proverbs about the wisdom of the elders are trotted out and this elderly authority is credited with creating a society in equilibrium. The traditional society in a state of equilibrium due to expert management and rational planning is certainly the cornerstone of functionalism. Conflicts between elders and juniors are assumed to be tied to colonialism or catastrophe rather than to a constant source of tension within society. While I have no doubt that gerontocracy existed in pre-colonial Gambia I also question the degree to which scholars continue to sanitize the past by perpetuating functionalist tales of societies in equilibrium. The insights of Justin Willis into East Africa are every bit as relevant to West Africa. While Willis understands that crisis precipitated more generational upheaval, he is also an exceptionally keen observer of the daily ways in which young people subvert the authority of elders and introduce into society forces of disequilibrium which could be destructive or creative. Young people drink too much, or drink when they are not supposed to, they seduce the wives of their elders, young men and women create life which has not been socially sanctioned, they run away, they raid cattle when they are not supposed to, and they may even visit violence (physical or spiritual) upon elders.<sup>1138</sup> Surely it is possible to understand that gerontocracy was real and that the power of elders had profound influence over juniors without continuing to promulgate myths about societies in equilibrium.

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<sup>1138</sup> Justin Willis. 2002. *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850-1999*. Oxford: James Curry.

Rejecting this functionalism allows us to see that colonialism did profoundly alter generational power dynamics, but that it did so by heightening tensions which already existed in African societies. Colonialism in general and capitalism in particular, everyone agrees, empowered youths relative to their elders. Some young men and women were able to escape the rule of elders in rural areas by coming to the city. Others engaged in rural cash cropping or wage labor and, if successful, accumulated money and property to give them greater independence. Some converted to Christianity or Islam or sought out modern education. These youths were essential to the functioning of the colonial state, but they also emerged as some of the first nationalists and Pan-Africanists. Many African intellectuals were especially insistent about the role these youths would play in decolonization. Whether this took the form of urban labor strikes or rural insurrections like Mau Mau, African intellectuals put a great deal of faith in the ability of youths to restore African dignity and chase out colonial regimes.

Since independence a more pessimistic literature has emerged focusing on semi-militarized urban youth gangs and child soldiers who have emerged to fill the spaces abandoned by weak and failing states. South African “Tsotsis” and Nigerian “Area Boys” evoke images of urban collapse, while child soldiers stand in for the collapse of the state as a whole. Taken together, the proliferation of youth gang and child soldier literature represents both the perceived and actual struggles faced by young Africans in the late colonial and postcolonial periods when states began to fail.

The reality is that Gambian youths in the colonial period existed all over the urban spectrum. They advocated for, and seized when they could, opportunities for education while also struggling against colonial paternalism in the very halls of their schools. They seized opportunities to take charge in their communities and participate in civic life even as the state restricted their opportunities to do so. They fought for living wages and independence even as both were portioned out in slim rations. They created cultural and aesthetic hybrids of music, fashion, dance, and sport with reckless abandon. In doing so they had to frequently combat a colonial paternalism which told them their time had not yet come. “The European frequently gives offence unintentionally,” a member of the Colonial Office wrote, “by this tendency to treat all Africans as schoolboys.” “A European will be closer to the desired goal,” he

continued, “if he feels he can learn from the Africans as well as the reverse.”<sup>1139</sup> Young men in Bathurst believed they had much to teach.

Against these social changes many Gambian elders had conflicted feelings. Some blamed the colonial state for the decline in the power of elders and their inability to control modern youths. As one elder put it to a recruiting officer trying to enlist Gambians for the First World War, “Since you white men have come and taken us over we have come to look on ourselves as women.”<sup>1140</sup> The native courts were especially blamed for the supposed feminization of Gambian men. As one travelling commissioner put it, “The old Mandingos are astonished at how women and children act these days and that they take men to the courts.”<sup>1141</sup> One of the most poignant examples of this was a 1922 case in which sons killed their father in order to rob his store. In this case of parricide, a father was described in Shakespearean terms as “fouly murdered...shot in the back” by his sons.<sup>1142</sup> C.G. Goddard, a prominent Gambian rice trader, had put his son Alfred in charge of his store. Alfred pilfered the store at will, but apparently that was not enough for him, so he colluded with his brothers to buy cotton smocks they believed would make them invisible and shot their father. The British were shocked at the murder because the sons were “lettered (literate) Africans” and they knew that “the law is tantamount” but decided to break it anyway.<sup>1143</sup> News of the incident spread widely and supposedly a common remark among the community was that it was “folly to marry and bear children if they grew up to murder their parents.”<sup>1144</sup> The fact that the young men were literate only added to the condemnation of social changes brought about by colonialism and the shocking nature of the story fueled the moral panic among elders.

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<sup>1139</sup> NRO: CSO 10/167 Race Relations, Colonial Office to the Governor, December 29, 1947.

<sup>1140</sup> NRO: CSO 1/159 Annual Report on the Upper River Region 1917.

<sup>1141</sup> NRO: CSO 1/162 Kombo and Foni Annual Report for the Years 1919-20.

<sup>1142</sup> NRO: CSO 1/162 Confidential Dispatch, C.H. Armitage to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 4, 1922.

<sup>1143</sup> NRO: CSO 1/162 Confidential Dispatch, C.H. Armitage to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 4, 1922.

<sup>1144</sup> NRO: CSO 1/162 Confidential Dispatch, C.H. Armitage to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 4, 1922.

In 1960 many Gambians were talking about another case of patricide. The editors of the *Echo* editorialized for leniency to be shown towards a son who killed his father. Why would such a crime be committed, they asked? Surely the answer lay in “the history of his relations with *dear father*” (emphasis in original). The father, they argued, had persecuted the son since his birth which had given him a “heavy and embittered heart.” One day, while the son was away, the father killed one of his cocks. When the son returned home he asked the father why he had done it, but the father refused to answer and threatened to beat his son instead. The *Echo* wondered if the father intended to send the boy to join his cock in the afterlife. Instead, the boy grabbed an axe and knocked his father to the ground and then he stabbed him to death with a knife. Although the editors wondered if the knife was necessary, they pleaded with the Governor to hold the scale of justice wisely and “not make a mockery of mercy.”

NRO: *Gambia Echo* November 14, 1960, 1.

In the protectorate the colonial state allayed the fears of elders through the invention of tradition. New traditions, of course, were not invented from whole cloth, but through the mediation of elder men. The state sanctified this relationship through titles such as “father of the people” for seyfos, “his excellency” and the “most honorable” for justices, badges for police officers and badge messengers, and medallions with portraits of the monarch for chiefs.<sup>1145</sup> In the rural areas, seyfos and their badge messengers were given significant latitude to deal with their own people, particularly youths. In the city, the state was incapable of replicating the power of the seyfos in the protectorate. This lack of control, coupled with the new opportunities for youths in the city, created an atmosphere which could be incredibly creative and productive given the right conditions, but could just as easily spiral out of control.

#### ORIGINAL AND UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES: FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION IN THE CITY: LATE 1800S-1917

Throughout the 1800s the missionary establishment of Bathurst attempted to build an education system which would produce the literate African converts to Christianity. Mission schools were funded by grants from the metropole, but maintained their religious character and were controlled by the heads of the religious denominations. They provided the first and only opportunities for young people to receive

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<sup>1145</sup> NRO: CSO 1/162 C.H. Armitage to the Secretary of State, March 28, 1922.

Western education in the city, but there was widespread resistance to the schools among Muslim parents who feared that they were fronts for efforts to convert their children to Christianity. Indeed, education and other public works in Africa by missions have always been linked to conversion.<sup>1146</sup> Missionaries made no bones about the fact that they educated in order to convert. Both Morgan and Baker, for example, spent a great deal of time (mostly in vain) trying to convince parents to “apprentice” their children to mission schools and frequently lamented that no one was willing.<sup>1147</sup> In exchange for the “civilizing” force of Christian education the missionaries promised to teach young men and women the skills they would need to succeed in the new colonial economy. When Mandinka parents began sending their children to mission school Reverend Fox declared it “will be lying (sic) the foundation-stone for the superstructure of our holy religion.”<sup>1148</sup>

For most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the state was willing to adopt a hands-off approach to education, but by the 1860s the state was ready to begin dealing with the question of youth. At first, it did so by building on the missionary template. Instead of the redemptive power of Christianity and classroom education, the earliest efforts by the state hoped to redeem youths in the city through labor. The Apprentices Act of 1862 apprenticed orphans and the children of destitute parents to tradesmen who were supposed to teach them skills and thus provide the foundations for a future core of skilled labor in the city. The act had immediate effect. Parents began apprenticing their children and young orphans were directed into the program. 100 youths were apprenticed in a single day in 1862. Since young Akus newly arrived from Sierra Leone had no ties in The Gambia, they composed many of those apprenticed. Governor D’Arcy believed that this would inure young Akus to the colonial state and develop in them all the elements demanded by Adam Smith of a commercial people.<sup>1149</sup> Akus, however, were not the only youths apprenticed. In 1863, when

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<sup>1146</sup> See Barbara Cooper. 2006. *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel*. Indian University Press, Bloomington.

<sup>1147</sup> John Baker 1821. “Comparative Statement of Advantages between Tendebar and Mandineree as a Mission Station 1821”, 2.

<sup>1148</sup> Fox, 395.

<sup>1149</sup> NRO: CSO 1/67 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor Blackall to the Right Honorable The Earl of Carnavon 1865, 16.

over 200 young refugees from the jihad of Maba Diakhou fled to Bathurst, they were immediately apprenticed to tradesmen.<sup>1150</sup>

It soon became clear that the program was being severely abused. Some tradesmen took their apprentices out of the colony illegally or abused the children, and a majority taught their apprentices next to nothing and forced them into menial labor.<sup>1151</sup> The most noticeable achievement of the act seems to have been forcing the young apprentices to be baptized and take Christian names, whether or not they already identified as Muslim.<sup>1152</sup> When apprentices dared to resist the tradesmen they were often taken to the courts which, packed full of traders and shopkeepers, almost always ruled in favor of the tradesmen and sentenced apprentices to caning with a birch rod. The apprentices would understand what it meant to be young by inscribing it on their bodies. The caning was carried out first at the police barracks but was moved to the gaol in order to systematize and regularize it.<sup>1153</sup> When the floggings were moved to the gaol the gaoler became legally obligated to record them and the resulting spike in the amount of recorded corporal punishment in the colony caught the eye of the governor who demanded an explanation. Administrator Maloney ordered the gaoler to stop flogging juveniles immediately, but only to ensure that court ordered floggings were administered “out of sight of unauthorized persons.”<sup>1154</sup> Floggings were moved back out of the gaol where youth could be disciplined without an audience. Spare the rod and spoil the child very much remained in play.

Controversy surrounding the Apprentice Act and protests by Muslims in the city led to its repeal and replacement by the Alien Children’s Act of 1884. The new act, however, like the apprentice ordinance, also seemed to force children to convert to Christianity.<sup>1155</sup> Administrators were opposed to baptizing youths unless they had no “prior religious identity,” but the tradesmen did not always feel the same way. Of course “prior religious identity” was a synonym for Islam, as no colonial official seemed to

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<sup>1150</sup> NRO: CSO 1/67 Copy of a Dispatch from Governor D’Arcy to the Right Honorable Edward Cardwell, M.P., 1863, 36.

<sup>1151</sup> NRO: CSO 1/67 G.T. Carter to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, June 2, 1883.

<sup>1152</sup> NRO: CSO 1/73 Alien African Children’s Act, 1884.

<sup>1153</sup> NRO: CSO 1/71 Francis Smith, Chief Magistrate to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, July 9, 1884.

<sup>1154</sup> NRO: CSO 1/73 Administrator Maloney to the Governor in Charge of Sierra Leone, August 18, 1884.

<sup>1155</sup> NRO: CSO 1/73 Alien African Children’s Act, 1884.



respect Gambian religious traditions as carrying religious identities. In the end, these sorts of programs led many in the city to hide the births of their children for fear that the state had plans to take them and convert them if parents fell on rough times. It also reinforced the suspicion of parents that schools and state programs alike were alien cultural institutions seeking to replace them as *paterfamilias*.

In 1885, as the administration began to understand that it would soon be ruling over a nation of Muslims, administrators finally began to push for secular standards of education. Rather than making investments in public education, the state began by surveying and critiquing the curricula which were being practiced in the city by the various religious schools. The primary impetus for the inquiry was the fact that no “industrial education” was available which could create a pool of skilled labor in the colony. Rather than focus on the “industrial” education favored by the state, however, education inspectors had priorities of their own. The 1885 General Report on Elementary Schools criticized the rote nature of the learning taking place in the established mission schools which was failing to produce higher level thinking. History and geography texts, it was argued, encouraged “parroting” facts without understanding them.<sup>1156</sup> Reading, arithmetic, and grammar were similarly critiqued for emphasizing “a series of monkey ticks” rather than learning with practical implications. African students, the report argued, needed to develop “reason” instead of “mechanical” learning based on sight and sound.<sup>1157</sup>

Another report on the state of schools in the colony in 1886 drew similar conclusions. It found that 54% of the registered students in Bathurst spent their time on the streets instead of in schools and that the training of girls was geared towards domestic training in needlework, hygiene, cooking, laundry, handicrafts, nursing, first aid, and infant care rather than academic subjects.<sup>1158</sup> Basic sewing took up more of their time than any other subject. The report blamed the “backwardness of the girls” instead of the curriculum and lack of staff or materials. In general, reading and arithmetic instruction were called “mechanical,” writing was criticized as lacking “proper forms” without proper “posture and arrangement” of the letters, counting was criticized as done on a slate or fingers and toes rather than with more abstract

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<sup>1156</sup> NRO: CSO 1/77 General Report on Elementary Schools in the Gambia Colony, 1885, 2.

<sup>1157</sup> NRO: CSO 1/77 General Report on Elementary Schools in the Gambia Colony, 1885, 5.

<sup>1158</sup> NRO: CSO 1/94 M.J. Marke, Subinspector of Schools, Report on The Gambia Schools, 1886.

arithmetic tables, and the local pronunciation of English words was denounced.<sup>1159</sup> The ideas that children could read fairly well, but could not understand the “hang” of the sentence, that they could not translate back and forth between written and spoken language, and that their pronunciation was improper all had long shelf lives in The Gambia. Less commonly critiqued before the late colonial period was the fact that schools were understaffed or that instructors came and went instead of establishing long term relationships with students.<sup>1160</sup>

The proposed solution was patience and perseverance for constant, regulated repetition and “training of the eyes and ears” which would teach children the “good results of labor.”<sup>1161</sup> In fact, the exam scores from the colonial church’s master exam paint a different picture. When students saw value in subjects such as reading, writing, and composition they did quite well, but when they did not they failed.<sup>1162</sup> The fact that seven out of seven students failed the history exam has more to do with the fact that Gambian students saw little value in learning the history of the kings and queens of England than any deficiency in their ability to learn. Indeed, if we compare the language curriculum to history a clear difference emerges. Students were encouraged to write about “things around them, their ordinary doings, local places,” even if these topics could not be tested with an exam, in order to develop a connection between their written words and their meanings.<sup>1163</sup>

Table 10: Results of an Exam Given to Gambian Schoolchildren, 1905.

Subject	Reading	Writing/Spelling	Composition	Arithmetic	Grammar	Geography	History
Failures	1	0	1	5	4	3	7

Colonial linguists were also excited about the possibility of creating a class of literate Gambians who could begin the work of transcribing local languages. Local grammars are important, they argued, so that “scientific European linguists” could examine African “linguistic fossils,” which supposedly

<sup>1159</sup> NRO: CSO 1/94 M.J. Marke, Subinspector of Schools, Report on The Gambia Schools, 1886.

<sup>1160</sup> NRO: CSO 1/151 Report on the Affiliated Elementary Schools of The Gambia, 1907.

<sup>1161</sup> NRO: CSO 1/94 M.J. Marke, Subinspector of Schools, Report on The Gambia Schools, 1886.

<sup>1162</sup> NRO: CSO 1/77 General Report on Elementary Schools in the Gambia Colony, 1885, 7.

<sup>1163</sup> NRO: CSO 1/148 Report on the Bathurst Schools for the year 1905.

preserved an earlier stage of human evolution. The “Philological Science of Comparative Grammar” could then “bring before the civilized world” the history of The Gambian peoples and discover the relationship between “tribal thought” and “natural life” as well as the “original and universal principles” of all languages.<sup>1164</sup> Arabic had to be the only way to transcribe local languages, it was assumed, because Gambians supposedly could not understand the “power of created symbols...cooked for them by an alien race.”<sup>1165</sup> The initiative lays bare the racist foundations of humanist philology at the core of the early colonial education project. Rather than successfully subjecting Gambian languages to the anthropological gaze, however, experts were stymied by their chimerical character. When it comes to spoken language, they noted, any Pidgin which got the meaning across was accepted while “a standardized spelling of a native tongue employs the energy of a thousand pundits.”<sup>1166</sup> Linguistic anthropologists had as much success disciplining Gambian linguistics as the state had disciplining young Gambian bodies.

The codification of these so called linguistic fossils was very much a part of the ideological justification for colonization. Gambian forms of knowledge, fluid as they might be, needed to be made into British objects to be studied as fixed bodies of knowledge. Difference had to be erased to record the “official” versions of languages no matter what the “pundits” wanted. The reality, of course, was that Gambians played the key roles in transcribing these languages, but colonial discourse rarely reflected this fact. This was not merely an epistemological move which turned the British into the keepers of the vast colonial museum which had preserved for once and all time the “fossils” of the colonized world.<sup>1167</sup> Nor is it exclusively evidence of the evolutionary racism which classified Europeans as subjects of history and colonized people as objects, stuck in an evolutionary past to be placed in the grand colonial museum. The project of shining the light on the languages and knowledge systems of Africa was a project of creating familiarity. Tropes about “darkest Africa” aside, colonial officials often expressed their familiarity, rather

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<sup>1164</sup> NRO: CSO 1/77 General Report on Elementary Schools in the Gambia Colony, 1885.

<sup>1165</sup> NRO: CSO 1/77 General Report on Elementary Schools in the Gambia Colony, 1885.

<sup>1166</sup> NRO: CSO 2/947 Government Minute April 4, 1929.

<sup>1167</sup> Cohn, 48.

than puzzlement, with Africans and their forms of knowledge.<sup>1168</sup> Once the languages had been formalized and objectified, the project of writing the laws and official documents in local languages could begin.

The colonial implications of linguistics did not end there. Indeed, since the early days of the protectorate, interpreters sent upriver were asked to document everything they could about the provinces. The official instructions sent to interpreters travelling upriver called for them to visit every town in the province and collect hut taxes, make lists of everyone occupying the land, survey all trading stations and be on look-out for persons trading without a grant, watch for cutting timber without a license, count the number of animals kept by the herders, note the presence of rifles and guns, check the weights and measures for accuracy, make sure the chiefs are arresting persons who use illegal foreign currency, check the roads, inform the chiefs that their people must work hard, make sure no new towns are being founded without permission, survey the court records from the native tribunals, record cases of leprosy and sleeping sickness, determine where strange farmers come from, and enforce anti-fire building codes around trading stations.<sup>1169</sup> Quite a list of duties for an interpreter. While it shows the degrees to which the state was willing to extend its gaze into the affairs of Gambians in the protectorate, it also indicates that the state was profoundly ignorant of the basic facts of the protectorate and who lived where. These details had, for practical reasons, been left up to the *seyfos*. One of the more interesting suggestions put to interpreters was that they should seek out the elders of upriver villages, interview them about the history of the town, and record the histories. Unfortunately, there is no record of these interviews being conducted or recorded. Although Gambians certainly deployed a number of strategies to hide from the gaze of the interpreter, the most overt resistance came when interpreters tried to count animals. Interpreters frequently returned reports that under no circumstances were they permitted to assess the number of animals held in the villages they visited for fears of forced destocking and vaccination.

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<sup>1168</sup> Cohn, 78.

<sup>1169</sup> NRO: CSO 2/485 Instructions to Interpreters of the Upper River Province, August 15, 1921 NRO: CSO 2/486 Instructions to Interpreters of the North Bank Province, June, 8, 1921.

Unable to make much progress on issues of linguistics and frustrating student test scores, the administration attempted to improve the quality of education in Bathurst by making education secular and more widely available. The most significant move towards a secular curriculum enshrined in the religious schools came in 1885 when the state suggested ending their funding of religious schools based on lump sum grants and linking funding to attendance and exam results as well as founding a non-denominational government school. Much like the attempts to build a non-denominational church five years earlier as a “breakwater against the tide of denominational antagonism” prevalent in the city, attempts to build a non-denominational school would run aground amid entrenched opposition. Catholic missionaries led by Father Gleeson operated some of the oldest and most highly regarded schools in the colony. They were the most adamantly opposed to a non-denominational government school on the grounds that it would be precisely what the Gambian “heathens” (presumably meant to signify Muslims) wanted and a *de facto* atheist school.<sup>1170</sup> Catholic schools countered that the reason they were not as successful as the state would like is because they were underfunded. Gleeson believed they deserved more funding because of the “self-denying efforts” of their educators who took in “orphan and heathen children” and contributed to the “rise in the Seale (sic) of Humanity and civilization” of Gambians.<sup>1171</sup>

Rather than increasing funding to the mission schools, the state instead looked to educational reforms which linked school funding to student progress on standardized exams. The state admitted that the shift to a system of funding determined by exams and attendance would never equal the amounts doled out by the previous lump funding scheme, but believed it would provide a “healthy stimulus” to force reform in education by doing away with extravagances.<sup>1172</sup> In the end, the Catholic churches spent more than any other denomination trying to conform to the new standards, but still lost significant amounts of funding. Schools began implementing incentive schemes which handed out prizes such as fountain pens, Scout uniforms, subscriptions to Empire Annual, Qurans (at the Muslim school), cash,

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<sup>1170</sup> NRO: CSO 1/77 General Report on Elementary Schools in the Gambia Colony, 1885.

<sup>1171</sup> NRO: CSO 1/77 General Report on Elementary Schools in the Gambia Colony, 1885.

<sup>1172</sup> NRO: CSO 1/108 G.T. Carter to the Governor of Sierra Leone, July 17, 1888.

copies of Shakespeare's plays, and copies of *With Stanley on the Congo* to students with high attendance rates and grades.<sup>1173</sup> These programs were completely ineffective.

Around this time the Soninke-Marabout wars ended and the pacification campaign which followed ensured that independent Muslim political power in The Gambia was in shambles. Some Muslim elders, perceiving the reality of unfolding colonial rule, began to soften their stance to the state. In Bathurst the city's Muslim elders found common interests with the colonial state by tapping into a shared nervousness over the proverbial youth gone wild. In 1899 the petition for an independent Muslim court in Bathurst was justified in order to control lascivious young men and protect vulnerable young women. Amarr Gaye, the Imam of Bathurst, wrote to the governor claiming that "the youths have no fear of God anymore" and that young men were having premarital sex with young women with impunity.<sup>1174</sup> A "Muhammedan tribunal" was suggested in order to discipline young men and "protect the chastity" of young women. Elder Muslim men blamed the urban conditions of Bathurst for their lack of control over the youth and attempted to use the law to reassert patriarchy. Once established the Muslim Court had priority over domestic matters such as rights of succession, marriage, dowry, divorce, and the guardianship of children. It thus became the *de facto* organ in the city by which elder Muslim men sought to control the city's Muslim youths. Of course, once created, the complications of daily realities in the city rendered its ability to control youths (and women) far more problematic than the elder men who founded it imagined.<sup>1175</sup> Women and young people used the courts to protect themselves from abusive men as well. The administration also attempted to further cultivate the relations with Muslim notables by "associating leading Muslims with the administration of justice" and appointing Omar Sowe (the Imam of Bathurst), Cherno Jagne, and Momodou Khaii as Justices of the Peace.<sup>1176</sup>

A state backed and funded Muslim school soon followed the Muslim courts and so long as neither institution clashed with certain precepts of English law or curricula the arrangement resulted in a hands-

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<sup>1173</sup> NRO: CSO 2/826 Prizes for Elementary School Children.

<sup>1174</sup> NRO: CSO 1/108 Amarr Gaye, Imam of Bathurst to the Governor of The Gambia, August 30, 1899.

<sup>1175</sup> See Bala S.k. Saho. 2012. "Islam, Gender, and Colonialism: Social and Religious Transformations in the Muslim Court of The Gambia, 1905-1970" PhD Dissertation, Michigan State University.

<sup>1176</sup> NRO: CSO 1/172 H.R. Palmer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 10, 1933.

off approach by the state. It was so hands-off that in 1907, much to the chagrin of the educational officer, half of the education taking place in the Muslim school was not in English.<sup>1177</sup> These issues, however, were resolved over time and the school began to compete on an equal footing with the city's Christian schools. The school even featured a Christian principal alongside Muslim instructors. The spirit of ecumenicism was clearly light years ahead of the Christian denominations who feared the possibility that Muslims might actually teach in a non-denominational school.

The colonial state needed the authority of the Muslim elders in order to consolidate its power in the city while prominent Muslims began to see the state as a means towards their own ends and their advancement within colonial society. It was far easier to pacify the city's Muslim elite than to build broad institutions to uplift its burgeoning population of young people. During the First World War this strategy came to light when a number of up-and-coming young, Muslim men took on the moniker of the "Young Muslims" modeling themselves on the Young Turks movement led by Mustafa Kemal Attaturk in Turkey. Indeed, during the war, Gambians seem to have been very curious about Kemal driving the British and their allies from Gallipoli.<sup>1178</sup> The Young Muslims of Bathurst, however, were far less militant than the Young Turks. As previously discussed, attempts to recruit young Gambians into the war effort were a virtual nonstarter. Muslim elders were willing to make pronouncements in support of the war effort, and young men were willing to imagine themselves as the next Attaturk, but few were interested in participating in a war half a world away for their colonial masters.

#### MUSCULAR ISLAM 1920S-WORLD WAR II

Once the educational system of the colony was established, fears of rambunctious youths also began to be expressed in the need for clubs and organizations outside of school. The criticisms of the "rote" nature of the curriculum remained in place. They were also joined by a new emphasis on the training of the body, not as a series of "monkey tics," but as a project of discipline. These new concerns with disciplining young bodies through physical activity emerged out of the context of emerging youth

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<sup>1177</sup> NRO: CSO 1/151 Report on the Affiliated Elementary Schools of The Gambia, 1907.

<sup>1178</sup> NRO: CSO 1/157 Kombo and Foni Annual Report 1914-15.

radicalism in the 1920s. Between the 1919 strike at Kuntaur and the 1929 Bathurst general strike the state was stunned by the increasing militancy of young men and their willingness to take direct action. Throughout the 1920s the state was also keenly aware that the mass meetings and anti-colonial political rallies held by men like E.F. Small were also primarily attracting young men who were themselves becoming advocates for decolonization, workers' rights, and racial equality.<sup>1179</sup> The fact that Muslim notables were not attending the protests was seen as fortuitous. The leaders of the strike, it seemed, had heads full of the same book learning and abstract notions about human rights that Western education supposedly disseminates. Educated heads without disciplined bodies, they concluded, were dangerous things. By 1958 critics of Western education lamented that fathers used to be able to shield their children from school for fear that "book learning will make them uncontrollable... but now, unconsciously, they have learned everything."<sup>1180</sup> Additionally, they worried that it was creating a rift between literate Gambians in the city and illiterate ones in the protectorate.

For the young, not yet old enough to be coopted into the system, sports and other physical activities were posited as disciplining factors. Physical activity in schools, it was believed, would discipline young bodies. Instructions to educators began to emphasize the importance of games, drill, gardening, carpentry, and other handiworks.<sup>1181</sup> This policy extended not only to the city but the rural areas as well. The ideal characteristics of a teacher in a Mandinka village, for example, would be that he was a Mandinka, keen and cheerful but disciplined, having a "good physiognomy and character," physically strong and ready to play any game, and between the ages of 19 and 26.<sup>1182</sup> It was explicitly stated that he need not be a scholar so long as he had the proper character and physical conditioning. As the *Gambia Echo* editorialized, youths needed recreation, not just book learning, where "members of the

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<sup>1179</sup> NRO: CSO 1/163 C. Greig, Captain of Police to the Acting Colonial Secretary, July 6, 1921.

<sup>1180</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>1181</sup> NRO: CSO 2/947 Governors Minute to Mr. Hamlyn, August 4, 1929.

<sup>1182</sup> NRO: CSO 2/947 Governors Minute to Mr. Hamlyn, August 4, 1929.



body are called into play” through movement, form, and music.<sup>1183</sup> This program was aimed at boys rather than girls and emphasized games, drill, and gardening if possible.

Perhaps the strangest notion of all was the perceived need to teach Gambian children the virtues of “fresh air and sunlight.” Education officials in the 1920s and 1930s often complained that young boys ran around in coats and sun (pith) helmets and needed to be taught how to enjoy the outdoors.<sup>1184</sup> This was part of a larger phenomenon officials began noticing in the 1920s, that parents wanted to dress their children in “European” clothes.<sup>1185</sup> Local children, it was argued, were “ashamed of sunlight on their skins” which ran directly contrary to the opinion of medical inspectors that “Africans need abundant sunlight for normal, healthy life.”<sup>1186</sup> In fact, throughout the 1920s colonial officials began to notice that mothers with the means to afford it wanted to dress their children in European clothes.<sup>1187</sup> Apparently the tropes of African children running about naked, which had titillated Westerners for centuries, and the old trope of the Europeans in Africa who never took off their pith helmets had somehow collapsed into each other as Gambians displayed their ability to appropriate European fashions. As Timothy Burke has pointed out, there was a widespread discourse accompanying colonialism which posited civilization as an ugly addition to natural African beauty.<sup>1188</sup> Africans who kept in “their place” were praised for maintaining the unity of Africans with the “natural world” associated with nakedness or animal skins. The pith helmet and Western clothes, by contrast were seen as appropriate to Englishmen by virtue of their civilization which separated them from nature. Thus African bodies, like nature, could be simultaneously seen as a pristine Eden and an uncivilized *terra incognita* desperately awaiting civilization.<sup>1189</sup>

The state also hoped the Scout movement would settle ambitious youths down. According to one official there was an “almost frightening responsibility placed on the movement” to promote “peace and

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<sup>1183</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 21, 1940, 5.

<sup>1184</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1721 Medical and Sanitary Report for 1938.

<sup>1185</sup> NRO: CSO 2/945 Foreign Goods in Demand by Natives, Governor E. Denham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 9, 1929.

<sup>1186</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1801 Medical and Sanitary Report 1939.

<sup>1187</sup> NRO: CSO 2/945 Foreign Goods in Demand by Natives, Edward Denham, Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 9, 1929.

<sup>1188</sup> Timothy Burke. 1996. *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*. Duke University Press: Durham, 22.

<sup>1189</sup> Burke, 22-23., Cohn, 111.

harmony...fraternity of empire” in the colonies.<sup>1190</sup> Once again the issue of clothing thrust itself onto the stage. Parents had to pay for Boy Scout and Girl Guide uniforms which made it difficult for many to join given the financial condition of most Bathurst residents. The Scout uniform was the most prestigious symbol of membership and no child would join without the symbolic capital bestowed on them by the new attire. Wealthier children of Aku parents were the most likely to join and the least likely to be offended by the Christian bent of the Scouts. When the Scout master of Bathurst suggested paying for Scouts to take a free tour on a government steamer upriver, for example, it was because many of the Scouts were Aku and had never been up the Gambia River.<sup>1191</sup>

It is true that one of the most poignant of invented traditions has always been uniforms. Photographs of African police officers in particular show the pride with which some officers wore the uniform as a symbol of their progress. (Figure 31) For men too young to join the police force a Boy Scout uniform was the next best thing. On Armistice Day, marking the end of World War I, the Boy Scouts in full uniform and Bathurst Police formed a cordon around the entire Victoria Recreation Ground (McCarthy Square), the flag was saluted, and each Scout and police officer was inspected by the Governor.<sup>1192</sup> Colonial officials believed the uniform would help to discipline youths. It was generally agreed that a stock of Scout uniforms should be kept in reserve in order to meet any sudden demand.<sup>1193</sup> Even Winston Churchill himself argued that “just as reserves of police and military uniforms... are maintained by colonial governments... so the government should maintain definite stocks of the approved Boy Scout uniforms.”<sup>1194</sup> The Scouts also enjoyed the prestige of badges. Before leaving for a Scout jamboree in London the Bathurst police lent the Scouts six police badges to wear about London. On their return the Scouts wanted to keep the badges and the commissioner of police had to write a series of letters

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<sup>1190</sup> NRO: CSO 2/542 Boy Scout Movement, A.D. Rickford Commissioner for Overseas Scouts to C.H. Armitage October 19, 1922.

<sup>1191</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1023 Boy Scout Movement, Group Scout Master to Major Lewey. March 20, 1930.

<sup>1192</sup> NRO: CSO 2/542 Report on the Scout Movement in Bathurst, 1922.

<sup>1193</sup> NRO: CSO 2/473 C.H. Armitage to the Secretary of State, April 14, 1922.

<sup>1194</sup> NRO: CSO 2/473 Suggestion for Facilitating the Boy Scout Movement, 1922.

threatening legal action in order to get them back.<sup>1195</sup> Finally a warrant had to be issued for the arrest of the Scout master. In fact, the uniforms served to embolden the Scouts in unforeseen ways as much as it disciplined them. The Boy Scouts developed a habit of showing up in full Scout uniform to public ceremonies where they were not invited, much to the displeasure of the administration who were worried that were getting out of hand.<sup>1196</sup> On one hand, this shows how uniforms served to incorporate the Scouts into colonial culture and how scouts presented themselves for public inspection in their uniforms. On the other hand, the way that they did so when they were explicitly not wanted rattled the nerves of colonial officials by raising the specter of young African men ready to seize their own places in society.

In April of 1922 the 1<sup>st</sup> Gambia Company of the Girl Guides was formed by the wives of British administrators and local Gambian women. The 1<sup>st</sup> Company was broken into three patrols with a fourth patrol being planned under Mrs. S. de Wilte Matryn and two lieutenants. There were equal measures of enthusiasm and pessimism around the Girl Guides. Some officials found that the girls had a “great aptitude” for the Guides and hoped that a second company would be founded soon.<sup>1197</sup> The organizing commissioner, however, was troubled by the “disinterested adults” who did not seem to be enthusiastic about sending their daughters to the Guides.<sup>1198</sup> Additionally, she believed that Brownie troops would be necessary because younger girls were the most enthusiastic and older ones tended to be less responsive. An African girl of 14, she argued, would be “too set both in body and habits” to make a good, disciplined guide.<sup>1199</sup> Martyn attempted to organize a Girl Guides committee to make the organization more democratic and raise enthusiasm among the community, but the effort seemed to fail amid “mixed results” from parents. By the 1930s the Girl Guides had ceased to exist. In 1937 some ex-guides looked to Lady Southorn to revive the movement and “lead young womanhood” in the city.<sup>1200</sup> One contributor to the *Echo*, writing as “Eve,” however, claimed that while there were currently more European women in

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<sup>1195</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1023 Boy Scout Movement, Commissioner of the Police to the Acting Colonial Secretary, April 7, 1930.

<sup>1196</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1023 Commissioner of the Police to the Acting Colonial Secretary, February 18, 1930.

<sup>1197</sup> NRO: CSO 2/593 Report on the Girl Guide Movement by Mrs. Sawrey-Cookson.

<sup>1198</sup> NRO: CSO 5/293 Mrs. Sawrey-Cookson, May 15, 1923.

<sup>1199</sup> NRO: CSO 5/293 Mrs. Sawrey-Cookson, May 15, 1923.

<sup>1200</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 18, 1937, 5.

the city than when the Girl Guides began they were “not really friendly with the African girls” and thus unable to sustain a functioning troop.<sup>1201</sup> “Eve” was clearly not ready to contemplate the possibility that African women might lead. Despite the efforts of Lady Southorn the Guides fell inactive again by 1943 due to a lack of adult leadership until they were revived again in 1946 by Mrs. Rosamund Fowls.

The Boy Scouts were more successful and a more substantial headache for colonial authorities. As one officer described the ideal training of Boy Scout and Wolf Cub officers, it was a “busy life” of lectures, demonstrations, and practices, all of which had to be recorded in a notebook and subject to inspection by scout authorities. Living the “busy life” meant that there were supposed to be no idle moments so that “if you are a member of the Cuckoo patrol” you must be constantly engaged in toil “no matter what the Owls and Woodpigeons may do.”<sup>1202</sup> Scout masters also hoped to counter the perceived perils of urban life and the “vices of civilization” through wilderness education. One Scout master went on to describe how the Scouts would make proper woodsmen of young, urban boys.

Praise and criticism of the Scouts came in equal measures. Some Gambian critics of the Scouts worried about its paramilitary organization arguing that the scouts were trying to “harden the boys to the soldier’s art” and convince them to risk their lives for the white man’s country by going off to war.<sup>1203</sup> Indeed, when the scouts from all over Africa and the world arrived in London for the first international scout jamboree in 1920 they were separated into divisions, lined up in military formation, and inspected. There was, in fact, a suggestion to start a military school for boys in Bathurst, but the proposal never gained traction.<sup>1204</sup> The *Gambia Echo* put a more positive spin on the military metaphor, claiming the discipline and zeal with which the scouts comported themselves rivaled the West African Frontier Force troops and put the “clumsy” Bathurst police to shame.<sup>1205</sup> Others criticized the lingering inequality which confronted the scouts as they travelled to London “third class” for international jamborees. It was also the case, however, that scouts from many parts of British Africa had the opportunity to meet each other and

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<sup>1201</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, December 7, 1936, 5.

<sup>1202</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1023 Boy Scout Movement, 45.

<sup>1203</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1023 Boy Scout Movement, Dispatch of Gambia Scouts, July 1929.

<sup>1204</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2828 Military School for Boys

<sup>1205</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 13, 1937, 1.

scout jamborees were often suffused with an atmosphere of Pan-Africanism instead of the attachment to empire the organizers hoped to cultivate.<sup>1206</sup> No amount of lining up scouts in military formation translated to a faith in the British empire.

In Bathurst the Scouts also began creating problems for colonial authorities by taking their scouting oaths seriously. In addition to the scout oath's mandate to maintain a healthy, disciplined, and morally straight body, the oath also obligates one to help neighbors in need. The Boy Scouts took this last part rather seriously. Rather than becoming woodsmen, as some had hoped, the scouts assumed more responsibilities as urban citizens through direct action in their communities. Scouts took it upon themselves to become first responders when fires broke out in Bathurst. Prior to the Defense and Fire Prevention Regulations of 1941, passed during the Second World War due to fear of incendiary bombs, there was no professional fire department in Bathurst.<sup>1207</sup> Instead, police officers were expected to respond to fire alarms even when off duty. There are a number of incidents in which major fires broke out in the city, such as the fire which broke out in 1912 at Maurel and Prom's, which showed the police to be ineffectual at best and absent at worst when fires broke out. When a fire broke out the police, who were scattered about the town in their homes, arrived at different times from different locations. According to the superintendent of police, this made it "difficult to use their services as a united body."<sup>1208</sup> Additionally, the lack of authority police had while fighting fires sometimes manifested itself in civilians resisting police attempts to pump water from their private water supplies in order to fight the fire.

Is it possible that the young Scouts were more capable at fighting fires than the police? When fires broke out in the city, the Scouts took to the street blowing their bugles to alert local residents. They seemed to be far more effective at getting into the streets and to fires than the police were. Authorities complained that the Boy Scouts were attracting crowds and getting in their way, but provided little in the way of an alternative. The commissioner of police understood that the Scouts were following the tenets

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<sup>1206</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2948 Boy Scout Movement, 13.

<sup>1207</sup> NRO: CSO 2/723 Protection Against Fire in Bathurst, 1941.

<sup>1208</sup> NRO: CSO 1/155 Extract from the Superintendent of Police Report on Maurel and Prom's Fire of May 13, 1912.

laid down by their founders by helping to fight fires, but claimed in a colonial setting these tenets caused more harm than good. He threatened to dissolve the Scouts, as the Nigerian colonial state had already done when they were unable to deal with the militancy of their Scouts.<sup>1209</sup> Indeed, it does seem that sometime after 1931 the Scout movement was abolished and was not revived until 1939.<sup>1210</sup>

It is worth contrasting the reaction of the state to Scouts and the firefighters. The superintendent of police described the heroic efforts of firefighting as follows:

The basic principles of firefighting require that the firemen should approach as close as humanly possible to the heart or root of the fire, the hottest part of it, and attack it with courage and determination. To do so he must be well protected from heat and enabled to the poisonous and oxygen starved atmosphere.<sup>1211</sup>

This statement, however, seems to apply to men sanctioned by the state only. Coincidentally, after the Scouts were revived in 1939 a series of devastating fires broke out in the city and the firefighters were nowhere to be found. According to the BATC the Boy Scouts and the public were the only ones fighting the fires.<sup>1212</sup> Some blamed the lack of modern equipment, but this did not seem to stop the Scouts. The Scouts became so famous for fighting fires that when the Chief Scout of the British empire visited the Gambia in 1947 one of the demonstrations Gambian Scouts made for him, in addition to building campfires and singing in Wolof and English, was to show him the “hair raising feats” Gambian Scouts attempted while fighting fires.<sup>1213</sup> The Chief Scout was more impressed with the way these young Gambians were taking on adult responsibilities than local officials were. The administration preferred the Bathurst Scouts to tend gardens and take care of the ornamental trees which they had planted around the city, but could not maintain.

The inability of the police to show up and fight fires coupled with the images of young scouts doing what the police could not did not reflect well on the police force. Police officials blamed the indiscipline of police officers while off duty. It was believed that many of the young male members of the

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<sup>1209</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1023 Boy Scout Movement, Commissioner of Police to the Acting Colonial Secretary, February 18, 1930.

<sup>1210</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1023 Boy Scout Movement, 54.

<sup>1211</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2755 Proposals by the Superintendent of Police for Improving the Fire Fighting Services, 1950.

<sup>1212</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1616 Minutes of the Meetings of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council, March 28, 1939.

<sup>1213</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2974 Boy Scout Movement, 1947.

police force spent their time indulging in the vices of urban life while off duty which rendered them incapable of responding to fire alarms. Police officials increasingly tried to discipline officers by controlling where they slept, issuing them leisure passes as a reward for good behavior, and encouraging them to participate in disciplined bodily activities like football by forming leagues and organizing competitions rather than leaving their leisure time to them.<sup>1214</sup> The administration considered this a “rational” use of the leisure time of young men which would allow them to “make the most of their time” while also learning respect for the abstract division of time into the halves and quarters of a measured game.<sup>1215</sup> The administration also attempted to take advantage of the interest of the city in sport by staging a yearly Empire Day. At first it featured a variety of athletic competitions, but it soon became dominated by football. Empire Day, it was argued, would “make our young feel like one great body” and “engraft the day into young hearts.”<sup>1216</sup>

Once again, youths took control of Empire Day and changed the lyrics to the Empire Day song, prompting a debate in the local papers. The purpose of Empire Day was to “remind children that they formed part of the British Empire, and that they might think with others in lands across the sea, what it meant to be sons and daughters of such a glorious Empire,” and that “The strength of the Empire depended upon them, and they must never forget it.”<sup>1217</sup> Youths of the Gambia changed the first verse of the Empire Day song to emphasize their own role in the colony so that it read: “Unfurl the flag and raise the song/of generous gifts and friendship strong/of children here to play their part/with unity of hand and heart.”<sup>1218</sup> Not all youths supported the change. One who called himself “Boiling Schoolboy” criticized the change on the grounds that it was a song common to British West Africa written by an African and thus should be preserved lest Gambia seem like an uneducated backwater. Another Gambian wrote into the *Echo* under the pen name “An Adult” arguing that the opinions of schoolchildren were trifling and the

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<sup>1214</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2757 Off Duty Arrangements for the Police Force, 1952.

<sup>1215</sup> Laura Fair. 2001. *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Zanzibar, 1890-1945*, 229.

<sup>1216</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 2, 1941, 2.

<sup>1217</sup> Ben Johnson “Empire Day” [www.historic-uk.com](http://www.historic-uk.com) Accessed 7/8/14

<sup>1218</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 9, 1952, 7.

wording of official songs should be left to adults.<sup>1219</sup> Another contributor appealed to tradition by quoting a Mandinka saying “suseo bica tama siloba kang”<sup>1220</sup> which translates as “a chicken never walks on the big road” and thus children should stay out of the affairs of adults.<sup>1221</sup> The argument over the song also opened the floodgates of anticolonial sentiment and the *Echo* also began to editorialize for abolishing Empire Day and replacing it with a communal celebration which did not “teach children that they need the whites or their tools.”<sup>1222</sup>

Italy, my country, dear and noble land where my father and mother were born and buried... I love you my sacred homeland... I shall be an honest and industrious citizen, intent always on improving myself to make myself worthy of you, so that I may use my modest powers to work for a day when poverty, ignorance, injustice, and crime may be banished from your borders and you will be able to live and expand, calm in the majesty of your right and strength. I swear that I shall serve you as best I can, with head, hands, and heart, humbly and boldly; and that if a day comes when I must give my blood and life for you, I shall give my blood and I shall die crying to the heavens your holy name and offering my last kiss to your blessed flag.

Edmondo De Amicis “Prayer to Italy” in *The Heart of a Boy*. First published in 1886, but extremely popular in Benito Mussolini’s Italy.

Empire Day also brought to light the reality that there were few organized sports available for most Gambians into the early 1940s. Gambians used the day to demand that organized sports leagues and associations be created in the city.<sup>1223</sup> It also cast a spotlight on the fact that the organized sports in the city which did exist were highly segregated. On the city’s tennis courts, for example, Africans and Europeans played in separate clubs and for decades on separate courts. The administration privileged tiny European clubs with as few as three members by reserving courts for them over African clubs which had been growing in popularity among the middle class since the late 1920s. Bathurst youths had seemingly the least respect for the courts and they were constantly cited by authorities as damaging the courts and

<sup>1219</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 2, 1952, 5.

<sup>1220</sup> Sisewo buka tama siloo baa kang in contemporary Mandinka.

<sup>1221</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 9, 1952, 3.

<sup>1222</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 25, 1952, 4.

<sup>1223</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 2, 1941, 2.



grounds.<sup>1224</sup> The best side may have ruled on the pitch or the tennis court, but access to the playing surface is another matter.

In order to assure that children had opportunities to engage their bodies in sport urban planners refocused their efforts on providing playing fields for urban dwellers so they could express themselves within the boundaries of approved space. These official spaces, however, were hardly the only ones used by Bathurst's youths. Official spaces such as McCarthy Square, King George V field (KGV), and Box Bar were not nearly enough to cater to the needs of the city's young population. In 1940, KGV field was described as being poorly designed such that the walls trapped rainwater and turned the place into a mosquito infested swamp with grass three feet high that had never been cut.<sup>1225</sup> It was not uncommon for young urban dwellers to spend their time at the Quadrangle, which housed the Secretariat and other official government houses, and turn it into a playing field.<sup>1226</sup> Although it was not a designated field, since it was at the heart of the administrative center of the city it was relatively well maintained. Additionally, authorities complained of the way that the official fields were being used. KGV seemed to be littered with broken glass bottles while at McCarthy Square youths climbed the fences all day and the old guard posted at the field was unable to catch them. More police patrols were suggested to chase down the offenders.<sup>1227</sup>

Instead of widening the availability of existing playing areas a frustrated administration doubled down on class segregation and banned football from McCarthy Square. Both football and cricket were played at the square, which led officials, supported by rate payers, to complain that cricket was being overwhelmed by the popularity of football among Gambians. Instead of apportioning playing space democratically by demand, they reserved McCarthy Square for cricket and moved all official football to KGV field.<sup>1228</sup> The results of this decision can still be seen today as goats graze in the unused McCarthy Square (which became Independence Square after the British left and July 22<sup>nd</sup> Square after the 1992

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<sup>1224</sup> NRO: CSO 2/873 African Tennis Court, General Secretary to the Colonial Secretary, August 10, 1929.

<sup>1225</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* September 2, 1940, 6.

<sup>1226</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2168 Minutes of the Meeting of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority, September 12, 1945.

<sup>1227</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2168 Minutes of the Meeting of the Bathurst Town Council, July 25, 1951.

<sup>1228</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2957 School and Public Recreation Grounds.

coup) and KGV still hosts the city's official football matches. KGV was also used to hold wrestling contests, another sport associated with the lower classes, to “develop the manhood of the town” and provide a space of exercise and entertainment for laborers.<sup>1229</sup> Precisely because the space was set aside for the working class, women were allowed to take part in the activities. Out of the 160 member of the KGV organization led by Honorary Secretary B.O. Janneh, 70 were women.

For a few lucky and talented players, football allowed them to play internationally. By 1946 Gambian players were already playing international matches against teams from Cassamance, Guinea Bissau, St. Vincent and Senegal.<sup>1230</sup> In 1948 the Dakar Sports Organization invited the Gambia to friendly matches. Finally, in 1952, the Gambia Football Association was founded. A Gambian team that traveled to play Sierra Leone was lionized as a “young band of heroes.”<sup>1231</sup> Of course, only a select few Gambians were able to play at a level which afforded them these opportunities. The same reverence was not applied to the unofficial football organized by children in the streets which one editor of the *Echo* believed was attracting “Mau Maus” who would rather show up to kick each other than the ball.<sup>1232</sup>

#### JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: 1930S-1950S

The yearly prison report for 1931, the same year the Scouts were banned, contains the first reference to a different “class” of prisoner: the juvenile offender.<sup>1233</sup> This new class of offender is mentioned, however, only to note their absence. The fact that the “juvenile delinquent” shows up in colonial reports to note their absence indicates how much of a colonial import this construct was. Nervous colonial officials expected the problem of juvenile delinquency to rear its head at any time. Prison officials in The Gambia wrote about juvenile delinquency because they expected to find them in the city. In fact, the construct of the “juvenile delinquent” was an import from Britain where the famous British borstal system was created to discipline British youths. In England, the juvenile delinquent had emerged as a liminal figure, both vulnerable and capable of societal disruption, no longer a “boy”, yet not ready to

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<sup>1229</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 29, 1941, 4.

<sup>1230</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3033 Football Matches.

<sup>1231</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2957 School and Public Recreation Grounds.

<sup>1232</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 14, 1955, 8.

<sup>1233</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1931

accept the discipline necessary to be a “man.” Colonial officials considered these youths impressionable and in need of discipline, yet that feared that without prison architecture that segregated “juveniles” from the general population they could become infected by “hardened criminals.” Since the Commissioner of Police was also the Inspector of the Prisons this contradiction was dealt with outside of the prison where juveniles could be punished by the police with lashes from a birch rod, admonished, fined, or put on probation if they were found guilty in court.

In the mid -1930s small numbers of juveniles, usually no more than two or three per year, were incarcerated which further prompted calls for reforming prison architecture in order to keep these especially vulnerable prisoners from the general population. Although women were housed in a separate section under the supervision of a matron, the warders found the complete segregation of juveniles to be impossible.<sup>1234</sup> As the Inspector of Prisons put it, there was “little opportunity to reduce the risk of contamination” of the first time and juvenile offenders from the ever present threat of that other category of prisoner: recidivist. The inadequate architectural design of the prison was consistently cited as making proper prisoner segregation impossible.<sup>1235</sup>

The *Gambia Echo* also began sounding the alarm about children in the mid -1930s. After the first High Life “Daylight Dance” in 1934 the editors of the paper warned the public of “guitar and lascivious songs” which would damage the moral compasses of the city’s youth.<sup>1236</sup> At least in the past, dances had been held at night where they could be ignored, but to showcase young, swaying bodies in broad daylight was too much for some Gambians. Indeed, the editors of the *Echo* never ceased criticizing the fondness of the youth for dance. They decried “orgies of revelry” alarming the community and religious bodies and “Bacchanalian festivals” which destroyed the moral fiber of the nation.<sup>1237</sup> Dances held for birthdays, naming ceremonies, and other celebrations were cast as the only form of self-expression youths “these days” were capable of. Critics of the new musical trends sweeping the city longed for the days of

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<sup>1234</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1938

<sup>1235</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1936

<sup>1236</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 1, 1938, 5.

<sup>1237</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 20, 1941, 2.

“traditional” Wolof and Mandinka songs or even English language music with positive messages. Instead, critics were worried about “lewd and vulgar songs” like “Battalion,” which celebrated the martial, masculine virtues of young men becoming popular in the city.<sup>1238</sup> Dances were more than a topic of conversation for elders, colonial officials, and intellectuals. Increasingly, the police began to break up dances and enforcing a midnight curfew where dances had previously been held until 2 AM. Not all the city’s residents, however, were comfortable with turning to the colonial state to enforce codes of conduct for youths. Whatever opinion they might have held about the dances, some Gambians editorialized in the *Echo* that the greater threat to the city was its transformation into a “police state” which was beginning to intrude into city dwellers’ personal lives and lump all Gambians together in order to deal with the moral panic over the city’s youths.<sup>1239</sup>

Another source of controversy was the cinema. (Figure 38) In 1941 one contributor to the *Echo* thought it lucky that there were no commercial cinemas in the city yet to provoke the youths, but by the late 1940s cinema shows had become quite popular. The first “talkie” was screened by the administration in the city in 1941 to disseminate war propaganda, and the demand for films in the city followed inexorably. £9 was earned by selling tickets to the show and weekly cinema shows put on by the administration became the norm after that.<sup>1240</sup> Charlie Chaplain films were among the favorites of the city’s youths. Enterprising individuals and firms such as Alliance Francais soon began holding cinema shows, sometimes with uncensored films which made the administration fearful of what urban youths might be seeing.<sup>1241</sup> In 1955, when the Bathurst Town Council learned of “uncensored and unwholesome” films being shown in local cinemas, they promptly called the police. A cinema board was created to ensure that only censored films were shown in the city, but it was frustrated by its inability to prevent uncensored films from being shown. Although the censorship board was able to enforce a code of

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<sup>1238</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 27, 1941, 1.

<sup>1239</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* March 8, 1953, 5.

<sup>1240</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 24, 1941, 3.

<sup>1241</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2170 Minutes of the Meeting of the Bathurst Town Council, August 3, 1950.

censorship at registered cinemas, they were always a few steps behind the importation and viewing of uncensored films outside of registered cinemas.

The moral panic over youths in the city came to a head in the 1940s as World War II marked the beginning of a serious reevaluation of the position of young people in the city. The overcrowded nature of the city created by the boom in employment forced colonial officials to pay more attention to what was happening on the city streets. It also attracted more young boys and men seeking employment to the city. In 1944 administration officials were complaining of the number of youths flooding into the city to work as domestic servants, but in 1951 there were four times as many domestic servants in the city as there were in 1944.<sup>1242</sup> Colonial officials began to complain of “Dongo boys” loitering in the streets and making noise and the *Gambia Echo* complained of “undisciplined urchins” crowding the streets.<sup>1243</sup>

In 1944 the commissioner of Kombo St. Mary declared “the problem of young boys in Bathurst an urgent one” and called for the young male population to be absorbed through clubs and social welfare organizations.<sup>1244</sup> Most boys were spending their time on the streets and officials were beginning to complain of a rise in juvenile delinquency. Only about 5% of youths in the city belonged to a registered youth group and 2/3 of those youths were schoolboys. Plenty of speeches were given to young boys, but the funding for clubs never materialized in the way that officials wanted it to. The large development projects of the postwar era, while investing in schools, did not set aside funding for extracurricular programs at all. E.H. Joiner tried to found a Youths Council outside of the control of the state; however, he was called a communist and told to cease and desist in his efforts to organize the city’s youths.<sup>1245</sup>

After the Second World War the state became increasingly concerned with the ability of the prison system to reform offenders. More attention was also given to creating opportunities for the “rehabilitation” of juvenile offenders. Upon the conviction of a juvenile offender a representative of the Alex Patterson League, named for a famous British prison reformer who worked with juveniles and

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<sup>1242</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2996 Census of Bathurst, Report of the Census Commissioner.

<sup>1243</sup> NRO: CSO 2/1810 Traffic Order, 1939. NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 28, 1940, 3.

<sup>1244</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2932 Formation of an Anglican Boys Club in Bathurst, 1944.

<sup>1245</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 25, 1952, 8.

women, visited with the new prisoners.<sup>1246</sup> Additionally, the gaol also segregated juvenile offenders in a self-contained wing, now separate from other class III convicts. There, juveniles were employed under skilled tradesmen officers in building construction.<sup>1247</sup> This was mirrored outside of the prison by the creation of a social welfare officer in Bathurst who dealt explicitly with youth as well as a Juvenile Court created in 1949.<sup>1248</sup> Generally speaking, however, the incarceration of youths remained small compared to the number of cases brought before the courts.

Table 11: Juveniles Tried and/or Imprisoned in Bathurst, 1948-1956

Youths brought before the court	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
Tried	41	23	42	76	NA	NA	23	20	34
Imprisoned	0	0	2	6	14	4	0	4	2

The new emphasis on reform over punishment also meant that corporal punishment for juveniles began to decline from its peak during the war years when beatings were apportioned more liberally to control the influx of youths into the city.<sup>1249</sup>

Despite lower incarceration numbers in the 1950s, panic over the morality of youth gave way to full on fears of lawlessness and juvenile delinquency. The editors of the *Echo* began warning of idleness and unemployment in an article title “Bathurst Gangsters,” which claimed the city was “breeding gangsters” and warned city residents about street youths robbing pedestrians, smashing car windows, and stealing.<sup>1250</sup> This time the “gangsters” breeding uncontrollably in the city were young men, not mosquitoes. Indeed, throughout the 1950s prison officials began systematizing the way they treated juvenile offenders. Reading lists were circulated to ensure that prison officials were well versed in the literature on juvenile delinquency coming primarily out of England, but also a few French titles, including

<sup>1246</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1952

<sup>1247</sup> The Gambia Prisons Department Annual Report 1952

<sup>1248</sup> The Gambia Report 1954 and 1955, 41.

<sup>1249</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2641 Corporal Punishment on Civilian Persons.

<sup>1250</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 28, 1952, 4.

*Prisons and Borstals, Boys in Trouble, The Young Lad, The Child and the Magistrate, The Young Delinquent, Wayward Youth*, and a few journals such as the *British Journal of Delinquency*.<sup>1251</sup> Some officials did have enough foresight to understand that the juvenile delinquent narrative would turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Social Welfare Officer, for example, argued poignantly that the state should be spending its time taking care of juvenile welfare instead of dealing with youths under the criminal codes and giving them the “stigma of criminality.”<sup>1252</sup> Alternative institutions for the young, such as probation schools or juvenile detention facilities, were not present in The Gambia, though, it should be noted, these institutions have not exactly proven to be havens for youths in the Western world. Instead of institution building the Children and Young Persons Ordinance of 1949 attempted to create a juvenile court separate in both place and time from the existing court system which would impose imprisonment only as a last resort.<sup>1253</sup>

The inability of the penal system to discipline youth can further be seen in the application of corporal punishment. In 1946 the British Treatment of Offenders Sub-Committee sent a dispatch to the colonial governors urging them to reduce the instances of corporal punishment in their colonies with a mind to eventual abolition.<sup>1254</sup> Two years later this call was echoed by the Colonial Social Welfare Advisory Committee who recommended that corporal punishment be restricted to the sentences of the high court and especially to find alternatives to floggings for juveniles.<sup>1255</sup> At first this had a noticeable effect in Bathurst. The war years saw an unprecedented amount of juvenile floggings in the city, but by the mid -1950s, flogging had been eliminated. In the late 1950s, however, trends were moving in the opposite direction as administrators who worried about juvenile crime turned to corporal punishment to deter youths. In 1958, the chief justice of the Supreme Court responded to complaints that juvenile crime

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<sup>1251</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2751 Bibliography on the Treatment of Offenders, 8.

<sup>1252</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2946 Appointment of a Probation Officer.

<sup>1253</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2946 Appointment of a Probation Officer.

<sup>1254</sup> Gambia Outlook, 10 July 1948, 1.

<sup>1255</sup> Gambia Outlook, 3 June 1950, 1.

was getting out of hand and ordered corporal punishments to be handed out after assigning no whippings in 1956 and 57.<sup>1256</sup> Seven whippings were ordered in 1958, five in 1959, and two in 1960.<sup>1257</sup>

Table 12: Court Ordered Juvenile Floggings, 1940-1954

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1951	1952	1953	1954
Floggings	6	15	17	21	7	8	8	1	0	0

As late as 1960 most juvenile offenders were still being disciplined not in prison, but in the court system through fines, admonishment and whippings with a birch cane.<sup>1258</sup> Lacking institutions for the reform of juveniles separate from the court and penal systems judges frequently took the punishments of juveniles into their own hands. By the 1950s and 60s the police had also begun to bemoan the lack of corrective institutions for juveniles. As late as 1945, however, the chief superintendent of police was claiming that delinquency was not high, was praising organization of the Bathurst Boy Scouts for their work, and calling for a proliferation of other youth groups such as the Church Lady’s Brigade and boys’ sports clubs for football and boxing.<sup>1259</sup> Only five years later, however, increases in juvenile delinquency were being noted and a full time Probation Officer was appointed to deal with juveniles.<sup>1260</sup> By the late 1950s police reports began to attribute to juveniles responsibility for numerous crimes which were never solved.<sup>1261</sup> To some degree this was a matter of colonial officers conjuring the boogeyman of the “juvenile delinquent”, but it is also an admission of the weakness of the state to understand, let alone discipline, the youth.

These trends have much to do with the population of the city. Between 1951 and 1954 the overall population of Bathurst decreased and reclamation projects eased overcrowding. After 1953 the groundnut trade plummeted, which resulted in an influx of families to Bathurst who had little income or employment

<sup>1256</sup>Gambia Annual Report of the Judicial Department 1956, 57, 58

<sup>1257</sup> Gambia Annual Report of the Judicial Department 1924

<sup>1258</sup> Gambia Annual Report of the Judicial Department 1955-1960

<sup>1259</sup> The Gambia Police Force Annual Report 1945

<sup>1260</sup> The Gambia Police Force Annual Report 1950

<sup>1261</sup> The Gambia Police Force Annual Report 1958



opportunities. These new immigrants to the city could only afford the worst housing in the city and even then they struggled to make ends meet, leaving their children without supervision during the day. The result, so authorities believed, was a spike in the level of delinquency. The 26 cases of juvenile offence in 1955 were enough to send many officials into a panic. The colonial magistrate, Mrs. Carroll, and Mrs. Maloney proposed to send juvenile delinquents back to the village, with the consultation of the chiefs, where it was expected that the chiefs would properly discipline the wayward youths.<sup>1262</sup> They suggested building a compound in a village specifically for juvenile offenders where they could garden, raise chickens and goats, or even tend to herds if well behaved. Of course, while they were doing this, they would be observed and studied by colonial officials.

Beginning in the mid -1940s and continuing into the 1950s fears about youths coincided and overlapped with a number of other moral panics on topics which the state had long turned a blind eye to. Venereal disease, prostitution, *cannibas sativa*, and alcoholism were known to exist in the city for a long time. All of a sudden, the state felt the need to begin writing and thinking about these subjects. The police, for example, knew exactly which houses in Bathurst served as brothels but never, before 1945, were they asked to begin checking in on them to see if there was a link between them and venereal disease in the city until the Treatment of Disease Ordinance of 1945.<sup>1263</sup> In 1952 the first links between marijuana and crime were posited. Marijuana had existed in The Gambia for a long time, the report admitted, but claimed that all of a sudden it had become a serious issue. Youths were becoming “highly excitable” and “violent thieves,” it was claimed, leading to a damaged social structure and an increase in crime due to “reefer madness.”<sup>1264</sup> In 1951 the police reported zero cases of crime linked to marijuana, in 1952 there were 18 cases involving 22 people, and by May of 1953 there were ten cases. This type of panic over “reefer madness” is hardly unique to Bathurst and here, as elsewhere, there is no evidence it is anything but fabricated by an ever extending colonial gaze.

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<sup>1262</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2984 Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency, UN Social and Economic Adviser to the Colonial Secretary, November 8, 1955.

<sup>1263</sup> NRO: CSO 10/87 Venereal Disease Policy, August 17, 1945.

<sup>1264</sup> NRO: CSO 10/138 Cannibas Sativa, Memo for the Executive Council November 4, 1952.

In the early 1950s two exceptional cases of murder were linked to venereal disease related insanity, though it is not clear if *either* was legitimately tied to VD. In 1951 Daniel Fatty was sentenced to three years for theft and attempting to stab a police officer with a knife. While he was in prison the superintendent of prisons described him as suffering from VD related insanity. He believed the superintendent of prisons was “intending to shoot him and of leading a band of Europeans for that purpose during the hours of darkness.”<sup>1265</sup> In August 1951, Fatty was officially certified insane and the certificate listed some of his quotes to justify the certification. “Many people are troubling him,” the report claimed. “They pull away his blanket from him at night. They are all European. They sit upon him. They urinate in his food. I get annoyed and use any weapon I have. I am still being troubled by these Europeans. A good number of them. I cannot count them. When I see them my ‘heart used to cut’ (beat fast).”<sup>1266</sup> After certification Fatty was transferred to Kissy Asylum in Sierra Leone, but according to the Director of Medical Services in Freetown, Fatty told him that he was instructed by Mr. Pearce to feign insanity and say that he saw “small Europeans with beards running about the floor” in order to get out of his sentence.<sup>1267</sup> It was the opinion of doctors in Freetown that he was sane.

In 1952 Denang Jawara murdered his estranged wife while she was living with her brother. When he saw her brother he told him, “Kill me for I have killed your sister.” In his confession he admitted, “It is true, I have killed my wife, Kumba Jallow, by stabbing her with a knife three times on her side, underarm, and her shoulder.” According to the medical officer Jallow’s body displayed “brutal and vicious wounds inflicted with a penknife.” An incised wound on the upper parts of her left ear had removed the upper parts of the ear, but not the lobe. A half inch wound cut from the left ear to the jaw. A two inch long and 1 ½ inch deep wound on the left collar bone penetrated the apex of the left lung, severed the first rib, and entered the main vein of the neck. Incisions were made on the left arm, left elbow to index finger, and a vertical stab wound was made which ran the breadth of the left abdomen and penetrated the abdominal

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<sup>1265</sup> NRO: CSO 10/297Criminal Lunatic Daniel Fatty, Superintendent of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary, August 27, 1951.

<sup>1266</sup> NRO: CSO 10/297Criminal Lunatic Daniel Fatty, Certificate of Lunacy, S.H.O. Jones Medical Officer.

<sup>1267</sup> NRO: CSO 10/297 Criminal Lunatic Daniel Fatty, Director of Medical Services Freetown to the Director of Medical Services Bathurst, October 20, 1952.

cavity causing the intestines to extend through the wound. According to Dr. Carrol, syphilis had rendered Jawara insane. Dr. Jones believed he had syphilis, but that he was sane. The Medical Officer disagreed, citing a tumor on the right lobe of his thyroid gland which caused thyrotoxic edema (hyperthyroidism) and claimed that he did not have syphilis at all.<sup>1268</sup> Much like the situation with the cities youths, precisely what happened inside the body of Jawara remains a mystery.

By the mid -1950s colonial officials supposedly had a list of over 90 known juvenile offenders. They produced a list of seven reasons for delinquency: Lack of education at home and in school combined with mothers who were petty traders and did not spend time with their children, detribalization, public leniency towards “theft and hooliganism” bordering on “sporting admiration of daring exploits,” no community feeling in the city, “frightful overcrowding” faced by the poor, French aliens swarming into the city, outdated African customs and obscene dancing traditions, and a group of social and mental defectives living in the city.<sup>1269</sup> C.O. Van der Plaas, the economic and social advisor to the United Nations declared the situation to be hopeless and predicted the city’s youths would all become “jailbirds” even if they had a remand home unless the urban dislocation which had uprooted individuals could be reversed, they could be sent back to the village, and be retribalized by farming and raising animals<sup>1270</sup> Van der Plaas suggested setting up a compound in a host village where the delinquents could be separated and studied to see how they handled farming and raising crops. If they were well behaved they could even be allowed to herd larger animals.<sup>1271</sup> These views were also backed by female members of the newly created juvenile court. The usual critiques of the vices of civilization in general and of urban life in particular were trotted out with the city being called “mentally unhygienic” for young children.<sup>1272</sup> In fact,

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<sup>1268</sup> NRO: CSO 10/276 Capital Cases: Denang Jawara May 1, 1952.

<sup>1269</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2984 Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency, UN Social and Economic Adviser to the Colonial Secretary, November 8, 1955.

<sup>1270</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2984 Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency, UN Social and Economic Adviser to the Colonial Secretary, November 8, 1955.

<sup>1271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1272</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* April 6, 1959, 2.

the proposal to relocate juveniles to more mentally hygienic surroundings mirrors the consensus among prison officials that “criminal lunatics” should be sent to villages “among their own people.”<sup>1273</sup>

The acting justice of Bathurst, however, stood up to Van der Plaas and the other juvenile delinquency alarmists. The youth, he claimed, were not “running wild (as one says)” and, according to him, the figure of 91 known juvenile delinquents cited by the administration was a total fabrication.<sup>1274</sup> The justice cited 43 cases before the court, 20 of which were public health prosecutions being launched by “overzealous” health officials for offences like defecating at Lasso Wharf and not evidence of juvenile delinquency. Even the best family, argued the justice, can have a child who gets into trouble, though good families could go a long way to help children. Finally, he pointed out that by the time Bathurst youths reached their teen years they did not have “an ounce of farming instinct left” and “their whole mind is in something urban, usually mechanical.”<sup>1275</sup> Rather than sending youths back to the protectorate the judge argued that a “good Bathurst home” would be the surest way to protect the city’s young people. We like to call district commissioners the “fathers” of the people, he added, but in reality they would not be able to supervise “retribalized” youths.<sup>1276</sup> Instead, one editor of the *Echo* argued that modern adolescents, needed time, patience, and understanding in order to develop into a useful member of society.<sup>1277</sup>

Although no large scale back to the land program for children was initiated, a trial community had already been tried at Kristi Kunda (Christ’s Place/Village) where the twin benefits of religious and social reform in a rural boarding school environment were supposed to help a few troubled young urbanites.<sup>1278</sup> The results seem to confirm the justice’s argument. It was hardly a paradise on earth. When the Medical Officer of Health visited to see how the children were getting along he found deplorable conditions. The children were eating significantly less than they had in Bathurst. Two children, Jacob and Esau, were singled out as being especially damaged. Both were extremely thin, having little or no

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<sup>1273</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2648 Report on a Conference of the Heads of Prison Departments in West Africa, 1944.

<sup>1274</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2984 Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency, Acting Justice February 2, 1955.

<sup>1275</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2984 Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency, Acting Justice February 2, 1955.

<sup>1276</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2984 Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency, Acting Justice February 2, 1955.

<sup>1277</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* April 13, 1959, 8.

<sup>1278</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2984 Care for Bathurst Juvenile Delinquents.

subcutaneous fat, little musculature, dry limbs, and skin eruptions. Jacob had an ulcer on his tibia, pustular eruptions of his skin, and scrotal dermatitis. Esau had otorrhea (discharge from the ears), general malnutrition, and genital scabies.<sup>1279</sup> The Aku missionaries running the village were found to be profoundly ignorant of village life and disconnected from the wider Muslim community around them which could have helped them. There was no planning or set of policies to take care of the children. The medical officer called it an “overdose of faith and a deficiency in realism.”<sup>1280</sup> Simply shipping off youths to the protectorate without meaningful ties was no kind of solution at all.

Indeed, Van der Plaas probably had some sense of this given the fact that he also suggested the colonization of the city by the village rather than the other way around. Van der Plaas touted new, model houses in Bathurst designed especially for the poor which would take into account the number of people who shared rooms in poor households. He suggested 35-50 houses with room for 200 families which Bathurst residents could build themselves with available materials. Van der Plaas, however, also wanted to plan streets with open spaces which could act as “traditional” *bantabas* or meeting spaces used by elders and cul de sacs planned “exactly as they are in Mandinka and Wolof villages.”<sup>1281</sup> The purpose of the layout would be to encourage a kind of “traditional” panopticism which he believed operated in the village whereby everyone would be under the eye of everyone else and “if a child sins an elder hastens to clean it up.”<sup>1282</sup> This, he believed, would harness the power of tradition to sanitize city streets while also curing urban youths of the bad case of “civilization” they had come down with.

In the end, the state adopted more of an ad hoc approach to the city’s youths. Unlike in England where disciplinary institutions such as borstals and remand homes were connected to welfare societies and other overarching branches of the state, a loose affiliation of organizations created a very porous net in which they hoped to catch the city’s youths. Welfare officers were appointed and some welfare organizations popped up, but they had very limited scope and power. Schooling remained a struggle for

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<sup>1279</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2910 T.P. Eddy, Medical Officer of Health to the Senior Medical Officer, January 11, 1944.

<sup>1280</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2910 B.J. Green, Medical Officer of Basang, Report on Kristi Kunda, February 13, 1944.

<sup>1281</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3472 Layout of Crab Island, 1955.

<sup>1282</sup> NRO: CSO 2/3472 Layout of Crab Island, 1955.

many children whether in its availability or quality. One unexpected outcome of the moral panic over juvenile delinquency was the integration of women into the police force. Female police, lauded as “Crime Busters in Skirts” by the *Gambia Echo*, were hired because they were considered to be “peerless as preventers of juvenile crime.”<sup>1283</sup> (Figure 40)

#### The Baldwin Report and the State of the Schools in the Late Colonial Period

The 1940s and 50s were heady days for education reform, though the reforms never equaled the need. In 1942 Governor Blood, newly arrived in the colony, asked why science based education was nonexistent in the city. Teachers and students responded enthusiastically by performing for Blood, and for years thereafter, a play called *Dr. Jenner* about Edward Jenner’s smallpox vaccine. The enthusiasm of the students kept the call for science education alive in the city until 1946 when Sheikh Omar Fye took up the call and wrote to the colonial secretary to ask why there was currently no science curriculum at all in the city’s secondary schools.<sup>1284</sup> The Colonial Secretary worked with the Christian missions to secure a grant of £1,100 and £500 per year thereafter to start a science curriculum. The end of the war and the beginning of new school development projects made the funding possible. The first science school in the city was founded at Dobson Street in 1947. It was, however, a general science school which was incapable of holding specialized classes to prepare students to go on to become doctors or biologists due to a lack of space and scientists capable of teaching advanced courses.<sup>1285</sup> Biology, chemistry, physics, and advanced mathematics were all missing from the school, but the situation was less promising for girls in the school who were being pushed exclusively into so-called “biology” courses aimed at turning them into better mothers and midwives rather than scientists.<sup>1286</sup> Only in the early 1950s did trained doctors, engineers, and scientists begin arriving and laying the foundation for education in the sciences.

In 1946 the first Board of Education was founded in the city, consisting of the Senior Education Officer, Senior Medical Officer, Senior Commissioner, Senior Agricultural Officer, a member of the

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<sup>1283</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 3, 1960, 2.

<sup>1284</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2410 Bathurst School of Science, Minutes of Meeting of the Legislative Council, June 25, 1946.

<sup>1285</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2410 Bathurst School of Science, 1947.

<sup>1286</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2410 Bathurst School of Science, 1947.

Legislative Council selected by the Governor, three representatives from the Anglican, Methodist, and Roman Catholic churches, one African to represent the city's Muslims, two Africans from the protectorate based on the Chiefs' recommendations, one African from the teachers union, and four nominees to represent female education selected by the Governor.<sup>1287</sup> The Gambia Weekly Newspaper praised the move to include a diverse group on the board, but also pointed out that the state retained *de facto* control of the board which tended to manifest itself as a dictatorship of the Senior Education Officer.<sup>1288</sup>

In 1951, T.H. Baldwin inspected the secondary schools of Bathurst and released an influential report. Baldwin had high praise for the principals of the schools and the devoted men and women who worked there, but criticized the educational background of the teachers and their rote style of learning.<sup>1289</sup> Baldwin suggested a liberal arts education which would include physical education, handicrafts, and music, but not "frills," in a large secondary school of mixed denomination which could accommodate all of the city's secondary school aged children. Since The Gambia could not afford a college or advanced post-secondary school, Baldwin felt this would be the best option to educate children while building an "esprit de corps" among the them.

The school, according to Baldwin, could retain a religious character and religious instruction could still take place.<sup>1290</sup> The director of education knew that Catholics, once again, would be difficult to bring along. He proposed a denominational house system in which there would be an Anglican, Wesleyan, Catholic, and two Muslim houses. He believed Catholics would resist because he saw them as a "pressure group with rigid permanence of policy, a clear vision of what it wants, and an inner compulsion to get it at all costs."<sup>1291</sup> The Methodists, despite rivaling the Catholic schools for being the oldest and best schools in the colony, were willing to go along with the Baldwin Report and the Anglican Church was so small it would follow the Methodists in order to not be consigned to irrelevance. The

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<sup>1287</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2412 Education Ordinance of 1946.

<sup>1288</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2412 *The Gambia Weekly News*, October 31, 1946.

<sup>1289</sup> NRO: CSO 10/259 Baldwin Report on Secondary Schools, 1951.

<sup>1290</sup> NRO: CSO 10/259 Baldwin Report on Secondary Schools, 1951.

<sup>1291</sup> NRO: CSO 10/259 Director of Education to the Colonial Secretary March 17, 1952.

chairman and superintendent of the Methodist mission suggested founding the school in Cape St. Mary, where ample room was available to provide all faiths with places of worship and religious teaching without a “multiplication” of churches in competition with each other.<sup>1292</sup> The director of education proved to be correct: Catholic leaders reacted by criticizing the Baldwin report. The Archbishop of the Catholic Church in The Gambia worried that a new school would lead to the closing of St. Augustine Boys Secondary and St. Joseph’s Secondary. It was suggested to threaten cutting funding for the Catholic schools in order to force them to fall in line, but instead an appeal was made to the notion that Catholics would be able to maintain a Catholic atmosphere in the new school. It was a failed appeal and the new school was never built due to the lack of support from the Catholic schools. After the failure of a multi-denominational school, the state returned to the idea of a secular high school. One proposal was to take the European houses built for the failed Colonial Development Corporation’s poultry farming scheme and turn them into a school, or, failing that, a prison, a borstal establishment, or a leper colony.<sup>1293</sup>

The development projects after World War II did assure that some new schools would be built. £60,000 was suggested to improve education in the city. Schools were badly overcrowded and would-be students languished on waiting lists. Aging schools were in bad structural condition and old army huts, abandoned after World War II, were used as a new school to try to ease the demand for education in the city.<sup>1294</sup> As much as 1/3 of the city’s youths did not attend any school. It was proposed to build two new primary schools, each capable of enrolling 400 students, as well as extending the existing trade school for older students.<sup>1295</sup> One new school was slotted to be built at the reclaimed Crab Island and the other at Half Die south of the oil tanks. Critics of the plan rightly noted that it only expanded primary schools and that a new secondary school was badly needed as well. Prices for the schools continued to rise from £60,000 to a possible £91,670. In the end £82,000 was allotted as a free grant. A school for children ages six to twelve was built at Half Die and a denominationally mixed school for children over twelve at Crab

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<sup>1292</sup> NRO: CSO 10/259 Chairman and Superintendent of the Methodist Mission to Mr. Forrest, December 5, 1951.

<sup>1293</sup> NRO: CSO 10/174 CDC Egg and Poultry Production, October 12, 1951.

<sup>1294</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2418 Bathurst Schools Development Project, 1951.

<sup>1295</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2418 Bathurst School Building Project, 1952.



Island.<sup>1296</sup> In 1958 Governor Percy Wynn-Harris decided to sidestep Catholic opposition to proposals for mixed schools and ordered the creation of the Gambia High School by combining two Methodist schools and the Gambia School of Science. The result was the first public school in the country which was neither controlled by the government nor any mission body, but an elected board of governors.<sup>1297</sup>

Another key provision of the development programs was the creation of a program to provide meals for school children. Some children under seven years old had no meal during school time and many might not have had breakfast before school either. This lack of nutrition stayed with children after their formative years, leading to health problems later on in life. Authorities proposed providing snacks and midday meals for school children and other children living in the city which would supplement the nutrients they were not receiving daily including animal proteins, calcium, vitamin A, and riboflavin.<sup>1298</sup> School children were rationed a 1/3 pint of milk and yeast biscuit daily. The program cost £358.12.3 for every 50 children fed. Women who were capable of overseeing the cooking staff and feeding over 100 children during meal time were hired to oversee the program. Criticisms of the program were virtually immediate. The medical Officer of Health decried the “unsanitary” state of the kitchen and the “disgraceful” mode of eating meals practiced by the children. He also alleged that “large” boys with wealthy fathers were enjoying free meals at the Islamic school and demanded that meals only be provided for the poor.<sup>1299</sup> The Senior Education officer further argued that children in the protectorate were far more at risk of nutritional deficit disorders and needed a meal program far more than urban children did. Feeding city children, he argued, reinforced the asymmetry between the city and the rural areas. Either the administration should feed children throughout The Gambia or it should feed none at all, he argued.<sup>1300</sup> In fact, rather than purchasing milk from protectorate cows, authorities opted for imported powdered milk, so that farmers in the protectorate derived no benefit from the program at all.

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<sup>1296</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2418 Note for the Executive Council May 19, 1953.

<sup>1297</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* March 16, 1964, 3.

<sup>1298</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2394 Distribution of Meals to Bathurst School Children.

<sup>1299</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2394 Medical Officer of Health to the Senior Education Officer, March 13, 1950.

<sup>1300</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2394 Senior Education Officer to the Colonial Secretary, April 17, 1950.

Even with the development programs there were still a number of Bathurst children who were unable to get into a school due to the lack of available positions for them and the growing population of the city. Provisions had to be made for education of students after school hours.<sup>1301</sup> The Gwilliam Report on teacher training in Bathurst, conducted four years after the Baldwin report, highlighted many of the same structural challenges as the Baldwin report. It also measured the number of children out of school. It found that 1,500 school aged children were “not privileged” to attend school while 360 were on waiting lists trying to get in to a school. Some children had been on the list for over two years.<sup>1302</sup> It was probably more like 500 students who wanted to get onto a waiting list, but rigid entrance examinations and financial requirements made it impossible for many to even apply. For every two children being registered to a school, one was being sent away and strict leaving ages meant that students were often removed from the schools without diplomas if they did not graduate on time. Gwilliam’s “prescription for this canker in our society” was to hold classes after school hours from 2:15-6:30; each school would hire three teachers to take on three classes of 30 students each totaling 360 positions available for students.<sup>1303</sup>

In 1961, a decade after the development projects were unveiled, the situation in the city was no better. New school construction only raised demand and overcrowding in the schools remained a constant. Schools responded to this overcrowding by expelling students who took longer than expected to finish their schooling. Students in advanced forms were kicked out of school before finishing to make room for younger students. Fears over the future of education led to a mass meeting. Parents with students enrolled in school were worried that the growing number of students on the waiting list would push their children out of school before they were able to finish.<sup>1304</sup>

The Gwilliam report also engaged with the lack of teachers as a major factor holding back education in the city. The report explained that educated Gambians, even those graduating from the Yundum Teacher Training College, were aiming for jobs as clerks, positions in commerce, and

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<sup>1301</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 8, 1954, 3.

<sup>1302</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 15, 1954, 7.

<sup>1303</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* February 15, 1954, 7.

<sup>1304</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 23, 1961, 1.

employment in the civil service rather than teaching.<sup>1305</sup> Young women, who were difficult to find teaching in secondary schools in the first place, often had to leave when they were married or became pregnant.<sup>1306</sup> A lack of provisions for maternity leave made it difficult for female teachers to remain at one position or even to return to teaching after taking leave. To mollify the shortage of qualified teachers the administration looked to the Yundum Teacher's College to enforce high standards and turn out a class of professional teachers. The class of 1959 was the first to feel the crackdown at the college in response to the perception that the school was not producing professional teachers.<sup>1307</sup> The college administration complained of resistance by the students to the new disciplinary measures. They cited rivalries between the class of 1958 and 1959, conflict within the student body due to romantic competition, gossip run wild, accusations of jujus and counter jujus being used, and "dancing to the music of their voices late into the night" with "fiercely abusive language" grafted into popular music.<sup>1308</sup> Other students sneaked out of the college at night, especially in the weekend, and spent their time in Bathurst. Fines of 2/- for improper dress during physical education, 2/- for being absent without permission, and 5/- for being absent during tutorials were instituted. Second offences would result in double fines and all fines would be paid into a general fund "for the welfare of the student body."<sup>1309</sup> The breaking point was reached when Mrs. Downes -Thomas, a teacher, struck a girl for verbally abusing her.

The student in question, as well as other students with discipline problems or low academic performance, were expelled. Godwin Adeyemo, a Nigerian former 1<sup>st</sup> class constable and unlicensed teacher who was attending the college, was suspended for not restraining his classmates despite being a former police officer. The principal implicitly threatened to deport Adeyemo by warning him "You must realize you are not a Gambian," despite his Gambian wife.<sup>1310</sup> The female students of the class of 1959 marched to the principal's office and threatened to resign from the college if the expelled students were

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<sup>1305</sup> NRO: CSO 10/260 Gwilliam Report on Teacher Training, 30.

<sup>1306</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2418 Note for the Executive Council May 19, 1953.

<sup>1307</sup> NRO: CSO 10/378 Yundum College Student Discipline, January 6, 1960.

<sup>1308</sup> NRO: CSO 10/378 Report of an Enquiry held by the Director of Education at Yundum College, March 29, 1958.

<sup>1309</sup> NRO: CSO 10/378 Yundum College Student Discipline, January 6, 1960.

<sup>1310</sup> NRO: CSO 10/378 Report of an Enquiry held by the Director of Education at Yundum College, March 29, 1958.

not reinstated.<sup>1311</sup> In response, the President of the Gambia Teachers Union went to the Board of Education criticizing the staff at Yundum and threatening to quit. Students also staged a walkout and marched directly to the Director of Education in Bathurst, who sided with the authority of the principal. Students continued to protest through strikes, boycotts of exams, walkouts, and a letter writing campaign to colonial officials.<sup>1312</sup> The school administration responded by doubling down. A mass letter was sent to the entire class threatening to expel them if they caused any more trouble, student allowances were declared to be too high and it was recommended that they be reduced in order to pay for books and equipment, and a new residential pattern was suggested with strict segregation of the sexes enforced by “wardens.”<sup>1313</sup> It was even suggested to expel the entire 1959 class. In the end the expelled students were reinstated, except for George Gomez, who resigned to accept a position at a bank instead. The classes of 1960 and 1961 also seem to have cleared the college without problems.

#### THE ASCENDANCY OF YOUTH

Outside of state and religious institutions, efforts to encourage youth volunteerism included six voluntary boys clubs and a Central Council of Youth Clubs which encompassed nine bodies including the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.<sup>1314</sup> The King George V Memorial Hall was also built as a center for youth clubs complete with game rooms, a small gym with a stage, pavilions, and a committee room.<sup>1315</sup> Of course, the KG V Hall would later be cited as a breeding ground of juvenile delinquency.<sup>1316</sup> A reading room opened by the BATC, on the other hand, went virtually unused.<sup>1317</sup> Lord Lloyd had also sent a crate of books to Bathurst in 1941 to form the “nucleus of a lending library” in the city, but all the books disappeared.<sup>1318</sup> The city’s intellectuals were worried that outside of school children had no outlet for

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<sup>1311</sup> NRO: CSO 10/378 Report of an Enquiry held by the Director of Education at Yundum College, March 29, 1958.

<sup>1312</sup> NRO:CSO 10/378 Confidential Memo, Governor to Secretary of State November 28, 1958.

<sup>1313</sup> NRO:CSO 10/378 Confidential Memo, Governor to Secretary of State November 28, 1958.

<sup>1314</sup> *The Gambia Report 1954 and 1955*, 41.

<sup>1315</sup> *The Gambia Report 1954 and 1955*, 41.

<sup>1316</sup> Edrissa M.O. Faal, 1970, *Juvenile Delinquency in the Gambia: A Selective Study*, Banjul: The Department of Social Welfare, 40.

<sup>1317</sup> *The Gambia Outlook*, 9 September 1950, 2.

<sup>1318</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 14, 1941, 6.

study and mental stimulation. Thus the youth confounded colonial planners both by their appropriation of spaces and their neglect and avoidance of them, depending on the situation.

We should not assume that because youths avoided the reading room they were not civically engaged. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, the editors of the *Gambia Echo* reckoned, had led to the ascendancy of youth throughout the world.<sup>1319</sup> The youth needed, they argued, to be invited to discuss the “big and burning questions” of the times instead of being forced into rote learning. One way that school teachers accomplished this was by bringing their students, often younger than 14, on trips to the Bathurst Town Council to observe and participate in meetings at which policy was debated. Rather than urging their students to sit silently at the meetings the teachers allowed them to speak up and challenge the council members, which infuriated the councilors to no end. The council actually suggested banning the students and requiring an adult escort, despite the fact that its charter called for open meetings and that the children were, in fact, escorted by their teachers.<sup>1320</sup> Although the students were not banned, a representative of the police began attending each meeting to keep an eye on the young “agitators.”

Many residents of Bathurst also felt that literacy in general and the newspapers in particular had a role to play in developing the character of the city’s youths. Only then could the youth act like a “tonic on a debilitated frame” and become a progressive force that could work with conservative elders.<sup>1321</sup> One editor of the *Echo* wrote in verse, “Wake up men and women of Bathurst/the young at heart.”<sup>1322</sup> E. Hamilton Joiner argued, in an editorial titled “The Press Helping to Make of our Children and Youths Litararily (sic) Useful Citizens of Good Mentality,” that the press should make useful citizens of the children and “inculcate contentment” for what they had. He believed that the youth were too greedy for money and were in the process of losing their souls seeking after profits.<sup>1323</sup> This was a common sentiment among elders and the educated. Another contributor to the *Echo* echoed this sentiment, claiming “In my boyhood people accepted that they were insecure, learned to bear life, and gained the

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<sup>1319</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 22, 1940, 3.

<sup>1320</sup> NRO: CSO 2/2170 Minutes of Meetings of the Bathurst Town Council, February 20, 1952.

<sup>1321</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 22, 1940, 3.

<sup>1322</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo*, January 20, 1941, 2.

<sup>1323</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 6, 1958, 2.

highest point of human wisdom.”<sup>1324</sup> Elders also believed the youths to be overly critical of them and their ways and too eager to abandon the old ways for the lures of modernity. As Joiner put it, the youth walk around thinking “my little finger is thicker than your father’s loins; our fathers chastised you with whips, but we will chastise you with scorpions,” and “Your (elders) age only adds obduracy to stupidity.”<sup>1325</sup> Some were more understanding. Remembering his own youth, one man editorialized that the youth of his era would also criticize their elders and claim that only they could see clearly how to change the world. As an older man he had come to accept change as a process of steady jerks which cannot be achieved by oversimplifying the world’s problems into revolutionary solutions.<sup>1326</sup>

None of the education reforms, of course, addressed the fact that when boys and girls finished school they had few jobs waiting for them.<sup>1327</sup> A more creative attempt to engage literate youths without working through formal structures was through the newspapers. In 1954 one of the more interesting attempts to engage Bathurst youths was launched. In the May 10<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Gambia Echo* children found a new column in the paper called the Children’s Corner written by a woman who identified herself as “Auntie Maria.”<sup>1328</sup> Many youths were intrigued by the Corner and began to write in questions to Auntie Maria. She responded:

Many wrote in asking who I was and where I lived. One asked what country because my address was odd (a PO Box). You need not bother your head wondering! What matters is that Auntie Maria loves you and wants you to be numbered among her friends. Why worry about an odd address anyway?<sup>1329</sup>

Auntie Marie quickly changed her mailing address to “a box that we can call our heart’s own” outside the Mosdally Drug store at 9 Cameron Street. The letters began to roll in to the Corner and Auntie Maria announced that each letter which arrived complete with the name and address of the correspondent would

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<sup>1324</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 4, 1954, 6.

<sup>1325</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 6, 1958, 2. This is a reference to Rehoboam, the biblical king who turned to young men instead of elders for advice and caused the Israelites to rebel against him. The original goes: “Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, ‘Come back to me in three days.’ The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, he followed the advice of the young men and said, ‘My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’”

<sup>1326</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* April 1955, 25, 1.

<sup>1327</sup> NRO: *CSP Gambia Echo* October 20, 1958, 4.

<sup>1328</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* May 10, 1954, 8.

<sup>1329</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* May 31, 1954, 8.

be given a number so they could be “numbered among her friends” and “entered in Auntie Maria’s roll book as well as in her huge heart.”<sup>1330</sup>

Auntie Maria kept the attention of her correspondences with weekly quizzes, crosswords, and puzzles in the *Echo*. To “her” credit, the Children’s Corner included weekly quizzes on Gambian history. This, however, did not stop the questions about her identity. She did receive some hate mail including a “filthy” anonymous letter which she had the post office trace in order to bring the author to court. Most letters, however, merely questioned her identity. William A. Cole, a 16 year old living at 27 Fitzgerald Street who wrote under the name “Fireproof,” alleged that Auntie Maria was actually Sam Jones, one of the editors of the *Echo*. Auntie Maria responded in the Corner “How could you care to have your letters read by a group of young men, one after another...I am a woman to the backbone and strongly object to you calling me a man.”<sup>1331</sup> Mass Kah wrote that he agreed that Auntie Maria was really a man, William Goswell asked what church she belonged to so he could see her, Hatib Janneh asked if she was a Gambian because he would be much happier if she were, and an unidentified friend #89 asked if s/he was white or black. Auntie Maria continued to play coy, claiming to be a woman and to belong to no particular church, but to be a person of faith.<sup>1332</sup> It is clear enough that these children were no fools. They very quickly and perceptively identified the missing details in Auntie Maria’s column and drew their own conclusions.

There was, however, another consensus. An anonymous correspondent calling themselves “Well Wisher” argued that whether or not Auntie Maria was Gambian or a woman did not matter. Cecilia Senghore agreed adding that before the corner she found letter writing a bore, but now that she could write “off the chest” to Auntie Maria and she would begin enthusiastically contributing to the Corner.<sup>1333</sup> In 1955 even “Fireproof” was writing in to the Corner to encourage other youths to join and contribute their letters despite his earlier questioning of her identity.<sup>1334</sup> The mystery of who precisely Auntie Maria was became among the biggest draws. The city’s youths eagerly began to adopt the role of detective in

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<sup>1330</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* May 31, 1954, 8.

<sup>1331</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 5, 1954, 1.

<sup>1332</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* August 16, 1954, 10.

<sup>1333</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 19, 1954, 12.

<sup>1334</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 3, 1955, 10.

order to discover the “brains” behind the *nom de plume*. Some youths also realized that, whatever Auntie Maria’s identity was, the Children’s Corner created a community of literacy and a place where they could shine and connect with other literate youths. Auntie Maria wrote triumphantly:

All learned men who use the pen  
Have write the praises high  
Of the children’s nook in the Echo page  
That bids dejection fly  
Away with pills! It cures all ills!  
Of children big and small  
So stop your sighs and feast your eyes  
On what Auntie writes to you

Over time Auntie began adopting more partisan positions on issues and began to sound more and more like the actual men who composed her fictional body than a nurturing Auntie merely waiting for the brilliant contributions of her children. In particular, she began to espouse nationalism and to look forward to young people building the nation to come. She began lauding the participation of youths in Empire Day and the “great body of former pupils” who were going to “carry The Gambia into the great community of free nations.”<sup>1335</sup> She further declared that instead of merely an Empire Day there should be a youth month where youths would take it upon themselves to “self-drill” at school and “build a good foundation on which to erect a proper, useful, and lasting structure for the ornament and welfare of their country.”<sup>1336</sup> She also featured trivia questions and crosswords in her paper based on Gambian history after some of her readers suggested it. “I am old,” she declared, “I need young ideas and brains to keep me going.”<sup>1337</sup> She also warned her young readers against the pursuit of money. She advised “Scribbler” to pursue his dream of publishing a novel, but warned against doing so for the purposes of acquiring a large bank account.<sup>1338</sup>

There were other optimists as well. As independence crept closer some were hopeful that the young men who had taken up posts in the government had “old heads on young shoulders” and would combine their wisdom and youthful exuberance to create progress.<sup>1339</sup> Another editorial argued that the

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<sup>1335</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 2, 1958, 3.

<sup>1336</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* May 12, 1958, 4.

<sup>1337</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 19, 1954, 12.

<sup>1338</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 25, 1955, 10.

<sup>1339</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* October 8, 1962, 2.



youths of the country would be the ones to decolonize their minds, fight poverty, and forge unity of the country with their dynamism, strength, and courage.<sup>1340</sup> Indeed, Bathurst youths began to play a role in the process of independence. Colonialism, it was generally recognized, had enlarged the social and political capital of youths. Politicians began to recognize this in their statements if not so much in their actions. G. Hayes, who wrote an editorial titled “The Approach to Sovereignty” under the nom de plume “A Student” argued in 1963 that it was time to unite and free the motherland which could “only be achieved by building every man, woman, and child in The Gambia into a great family with one personal goal and desire.”<sup>1341</sup> June of 1963 was declared the month of youth which the Young Workers Movement (YWM) took advantage of. The newly formed YWM held a rally at KGV and presented the Universal Workers’ Charter to the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare.<sup>1342</sup> Unfortunately, attendance was reported to be low. Two explanations were given. The Minister of Labor and Social Welfare argued that the major political parties had told supporters not to attend the rally in order to ensure their own control of a newly independent Gambian state. Representatives of the parties, on the other hand, argued that they were not approached for help prior to the rally.<sup>1343</sup> Dawda Jawara, an already established politician who would be the first president of an independent Gambia, declared himself to be “of the younger generation,” but he was hardly involved in the more radical youth movements.

## CONCLUSION

Unlike other columns in which women were secretly penned by men, such as the popular *Dear Dolly of Drum* who gave out sex and relationship advice to young people who wrote in, Auntie Maria did not last long. By 1955, only a year after the column was founded, she was already complaining that readers had stopped contributing original materials and were leaving the creative content entirely to her. Both were written by men, but *Dear Dolly* had the freedom to be frank and explicit with an older audience about mature topics. Similarly, Isaac B. Thomas, the editor-proprietor of the Yoruba language *Akede Eko*,

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<sup>1340</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* September 9, 1963, 3.

<sup>1341</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* January 28, 1963, 3.

<sup>1342</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 10, 1963, 5.

<sup>1343</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 10, 1963, 5.

who wrote as a Lagosian prostitute named “Segilola of the Fascinating Eyes,” enjoyed a much greater deal of popularity, titillating his readers with the goings on of a prostitute and encouraged them to imagine they might one day meet Segilola on the streets of Lagos.<sup>1344</sup> Auntie Maria, on the other hand, adopted a maternal tone and pushed the abstract virtues of literacy and knowledge without being able to acknowledge the daily struggles of youths in the city that would have upset many readers. When a contributor who called himself “the scribbler” wrote to express his desire to become a famous novelist Auntie Maria praised his desire to write, but chided him not to write because he desired financial gain from his work.<sup>1345</sup> “Her” audience was small, young, and quick to become bored with what Auntie was writing to them. Segilola, Dolly, and other literary characters like them became *de facto* persons by being believably honest and willing to engage with what everyone was talking about in private. Auntie Maria failed in her bid for personhood because she blended into the din of admonishing voices lecturing the young on the virtues they needed to inculcate and the vices they needed to avoid. She questioned the ages of her contributors publicly as well as whether or not the reasons they were writing to the paper were “worthy.”<sup>1346</sup> Being linked to a specific mailbox, moreover, and teasing readers to see if they could glimpse her picking up the mail failed to secure for her the kind of anonymity which inspired wonder and established that she might be anyone in the city, in any place, at any time. In short, it prevented her from being associated with the city itself and all its visceral attractions and revulsions and turned her into another ineffectual elder. False accusations, according to Auntie Maria, “from envy,” required her to go to court to vindicate herself. After that she required names and numbers to be written on envelopes, otherwise they would not be opened and thus she became like the colonial state itself.<sup>1347</sup>

The story of the Children’s Corner is the story of youths in Bathurst. Frustrated with ineffectual institutions in the city and struggling to find their place in the world, they attempted to carve out spheres of influence where they could. What is striking from the records is a distinct lack of juvenile delinquency

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<sup>1344</sup> See Stephanie Newell. 2013. *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

<sup>1345</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* July 25, 1955, 10.

<sup>1346</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* June 28, 1954, 10.

<sup>1347</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* May 2, 1955, 8.

and gang activity rather than its stridency. Moral panics among elders, prison officials, and colonial administrators receive little support in the records. This is a testament to the daily struggle of parents in the city to raise their children more than anything else. Since the founding of Bathurst the institutions created for the benefit of the city's youths have been exceedingly meager. The few schools and apprentice programs that were created were never meant to service the entire population of young people in the city. Even after the Second World War, when the state finally began contributing to the educational infrastructure of the city, the colonial state dreadfully failed to meet the demands of families who demanded that education be available for their children. The schools were enough to produce a precarious middle class of educated Africans who could glimpse the promises of modernity, but who were mostly excluded from its benefits. Faced with the limited choices available to them, young people in the city did what they could to take their places as urban men and women.

## CONCLUSION: MADENSS IN THE HEARTS OF THE SONS OF MEN

Today I wrote the final sentence, the one that concludes the book... It's about culture, feelings of guilt, happiness and other elevated subjects and, it rightly seems to me, quite superfluous, unlike the earlier work, behind which there was always some internal drive. During the writing, I rediscovered the most banal truths. -Sigmund Freud. Letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé. July 28, 1929.

This dissertation has been framed as a study in the banality of colonial rule and the struggle for existence which dominated the history of Bathurst. For some this struggle was quite literally for their lives and for others it was to create or maintain an identity, a culture, and a place in the world. I have attempted to deal with questions of resistance and collaboration, alienation, agency, hegemony, and racism, but they all seem to be rather inadequate lenses, taken in isolation, through which to view the history of this city. Each has something to tell us, but none adequately conveys the *ad hoc* struggle which constituted daily life in the city on the part of the colonizers and the colonized. The struggle over animals in the city was different from the struggles over labor and yet each is intimately connected and animated by each other. This is precisely what historical accounts of Bathurst have been missing. Each author who has treated the history of the city has mentioned it only when it fits into these broader metanarratives: the abolition of the slave trade, the sanitary state of the city, the soninke-marabout wars, and the peanut economy. Far from rejecting these narratives I have attempted to incorporate them into the history of the city. The details I have attempted flesh out about the struggles of daily life challenge the salience of each of these narratives without displacing their importance for framing the history of The Gambia. Since this dissertation has proceeded thematically it follows that a thematic summary would best sum up the major conclusions which have been drawn.

## LIFE, DEATH, AND THE LOGIC OF THE COLONIAL STATE

The realities of daily life also show the inadequacy of these narratives by revealing the great colonial lies of civilization, development, and benevolent colonial rule. The colonial Gambian state emerges in this account as neither a benevolent patriarch nor as Crawford Young's irresistible *bula matari*. The Gambian state, like many states, was deeply aware of its precarious position and intensely

interested in its own survival. Simply put, the state existed for its own benefit and played other actors off each other to maintain its survival for as long as it could. Sometimes this meant deferring to the power of the merchant community, but many times the state frustrated the merchants by refusing them protection, regulating their wages, and intervening in labor disputes. On the whole the state was friendly to commerce on the river, but this was not so much because the state was the executive committee of the bourgeoisie. Rather, the state understood that only the merchant community could create an economy which could feed the growth and maintenance of the state. The early years of the colony taught administrators how lean the state could be without commerce. Similarly, the state often touted its role as the great civilizer, but it was never willing to spend the money necessary to create a public education system or other public institutions which would provide significant opportunities to Gambians. Not that doing so would have justified colonial conquest, but it is important to recognize the gap between the rhetoric of the state and its parsimony. “Native ignorance and sloth” provided a ready excuse for all the state’s failures which easily masked the true intentions of the state behind widely accepted racist tropes.

Gambians who came to Bathurst did so out of a combination of economic interest and desire. Although individuals certainly had their own logic for when and how often they came to the city, how and where they lived, how often they returned home to rural areas, how often they chose to sell their labor, and so on, we can speak of some general push and pull factors which influenced immigration and emigration to and from the city. The most significant of these was the seasonality of work linked to the groundnut season. When groundnuts needed to be loaded on board ships bound for Europe employment opportunities swelled, and when the nuts season was ended many returned to rural areas to tend to other business unless they were employed on projects in the public sector. World War II briefly broke this cycle by creating “war work” jobs which built infrastructure to support the RAF in Bathurst and built a defensive infrastructure in case of Axis attack. The immediacy of the need caused the armed forces to offer exceptionally high wages which led to an immigration boom of workers looking to secure high wages. For many the taste of these wages stoked hopes that, in the future, they might be able to live in the city and make a good living. Unfortunately, none of the projects built during the war was destined to last.

No productive industry was created and hopes of an industrial boom in Bathurst died soon after the war. The old cycle of low wages, price gouging, and parsimonious employers renewed its hold on the city as soon as the state relinquished its control over wartime prices and employers no longer had to compete with each other to secure enough labor. The hope that the war would reduce the vicious circle of cradle to death indebtedness proved false.

Those who came to the city looking for work, from the very founding of Bathurst, found a city which half needed them and half wanted them to turn around and go home. The British knew they needed immigrant labor in the city and yet they constantly complained of the rural virtues being lost as Gambians came to the city and encountered the “vices” of civilization. Nowhere is this more clearly reflected than in the housing situation. The colonial administration reflected its ambivalence towards newcomers in the fact that it never engaged in a proactive project of housing development until overcrowding forced their hands. Other than the administrative core of the city and some European bungalows, the British left the building of homes in Bathurst to newcomers. They primarily engaged with this housing by ignoring it, criminalizing it through legislation when it became a public health issue, and then ignoring it again when actually enforcing public health legislation became inconvenient. During the Second World War many young men had to live in the streets or in sheep sheds. For the entirety of the colonial period Bathurst was locked into its housing situation. Prior to the development of the suburbs and cities like Serekeunda and Brikama in southern Kombo, Bathurst was the only game in town.

Residents of the city dealt with the fact that they were both necessary and unwanted by relying on traditional patterns of living. If they could, they relied on friends and family from rural homes for food, lodging, and connections in the city. Many engaged with the state and with capital as selectively as they could in an effort to bend the terms of employment in their favor. They often refused to sell their labor if the terms were unfavorable, but these kinds of negotiations did not lead to long term gains in wages. Those who formed or joined unions were occasionally more successful, but again only when conditions were favorable to their negotiations. Relatively few who possessed essential skills could consistently rely on the ability to set their wages at a level they considered to be acceptable. Yet the goals of workers, from

unskilled laborers to clerks and traders, were fairly consistent. They wanted to raise families, educate children, take money back to rural homes where they could invest it, build homes, acquire imported commodities, and produce themselves as modern people.

## ANIMALS

Whatever significance one attaches to the role of animals in history, it is undeniable that animal metaphors, at the very least, have shaped the history of Banjul. Humanity has always and probably will always be defined against an understanding of what is not human. Animals, and more recently machines and robots, have been the primary “other” through which humanity has been defined though other “races” of human beings can and have stood in just as easily. What a human being could rightfully expect in Banjul was often defined against animal life. School children were taught to ensure that they were not displaying animal-like behaviors such as “parroting” information or treating language as “monkey ticks.” In its attempts to discipline laborers, the state stopped short when it worried that the workers might feel like cattle and attempted to align the minimum wage with the amount of money a family would need to be able to call themselves human. “African wildness” had to be domesticated and “native sloth” enervated. Animals who colonized protectorate lands or the government house had to be defeated, by military means if necessary.

Yet this dissertation also makes the argument that animals matter to history simply because they are intelligent, sentient beings worthy of our consideration. Practically no historian questions whether or not human lives matter or whether or not they are the legitimate focus of historical inquiry, and the same should be said of animals. In fact, there is a distinct premium which should be put on the study of animal lives and how those lives change under colonial regimes because adopting this lens brings us closer to the lives of human animals in the city. People, it turns out, cared a great deal about their animals even if only as a food supply. The struggles over animals in the city provided a galvanizing force for the city’s population and provided some of the most cogent examples of protest against and engagement with the colonial state. Rats show how the efforts of the state to enter into the private lives of Bathurst’s residents were resisted, sheep show how religion and public health clashed over city regulations, cows show how

economics and public health changed over time, and so on. Each animal, in the end, also reminds us of the tenuousness of life in the city and reminds us to ask, upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed?

### COLONIAL DISCOURSE AND AFRICAN SOULS

In *So Long a Letter*, Mariama Bâ describes the failure of colonial discourse to establish hegemony in Africa. Discussing her husband Modou who has succumbed to a heart attack, Ramatoulaye describes how the doctor, Mawdo, failed to revive him. Mawdo mimed how he used “heart massage” and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to try to save Modou, but these, Ramatoulaye concludes, were “ridiculous weapons against the divine will.”<sup>1348</sup> Later, remembering the death of her Ivorian friend Jacqueline, she further recounts how doctors could tell someone so much about their internal organs, and so little about their minds and souls. Mawdo, the doctor, listened to her heart and prescribed tranquilizers as she complained of an invisible lump under her breast and piercing pains cutting through her flesh to her bones. A doctor from Ivory Coast similarly conducted tests with modern medical equipment, but found nothing by reading her heart and checking her blood. A regime of blood tests, X-rays, electrocardiograms, and electro-encephalograms followed, all of which opened up Jacqueline’s body to the medical gaze and found nothing to report back to her. After all this, Jacqueline discovered that the “heart of her illness” was moral and psychological. Ramatoulaye retells the story of Jacqueline, in her letter to Binatou, in order to link her decision to embrace polygamy with the failure of Western medicine to save Jacqueline. For Bâ, the heart is a symbol of the failure of colonialism to touch the souls of Africans despite its ability to gaze inside their bodies.

Yet capital has been far more successful in insinuating itself into African souls. Numerous scholars have shown the limitations of capital in Africa. Capitalism has generally failed to totally eliminate precapitalist social formations or systems of land tenure, it has not totally proletarianized Africans, and it has left Africa in a subservient position in the global economy. Yet there is no doubt that the cash economy and the circulation of commodities have profoundly reshaped the hearts and souls of many Gambians. Imported commodities have not totally replaced local manufactures and foodways, but

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<sup>1348</sup>Bâ, 2.



they have claimed a place of prestige which has equated imported goods with upward mobility, respectability, and modernity. Along with the regime of taxation imposed by the British, imported commodities helped to establish the cash economy as the predominate measure of value in The Gambia. Despite fierce resistance for decades, even cattle became reevaluated in terms of their economic value as they ceased to be the dominant measure of bride wealth. Every battle over wages in the city only demonstrated, all the more keenly, that the cash economy was king and that Gambians had begun to accept key aspects of the world view of their employers.

It should come as no surprise that religion shapes the decisions of historical actors. This point hardly needs elucidating. Residents of the city were very concerned with balancing the demands made on them by their religious beliefs with the economic and social realities of life in the city. The argument over keeping sheep in the city is one clear example. In this dissertation Christian viewpoints have certainly been over represented because the literate Gambian elites of the city were overwhelmingly Christian. Nevertheless, these elites are significant because they were often located at the intersection of the colonial state, capital, and the city's African population. They became the first union organizers, editorialists, politicians, nationalists, and Pan-Africanists. Their writings are suffused with overt biblical references which demonstrate the depth of their Bible study and commitment to some of the moral content of the Christian Bible. The same could be said of the British administrators of the city, though the two rarely quoted the same types of passages. The bible could be a source of liberation theology from which the poor could make demands of "pharaoh," but for the state it could just as easily be used to remind subject populations that the wages of their sinful ways was death. The Christian metaphor of a piercing light which would bring all the nefarious deeds done in the dark to plain sight could just as easily be a metaphor for the policing, civilizing power of the state as it could for missionaries seeking converts. Much has been said about the role of missionaries in Africa and whether or not they were colonialists, but the colonial state itself was always, under the surface, a Christian state in the Hobbesian sense. Not that the state was primarily interested in gaining converts to Christianity, but rather that it established itself as

a sovereign even if it sometimes portrayed itself as a more Christlike figure tending its flock. The colonial state, first and foremost, handed its subjects The Law from on high.

### PROGRESS AND CHANGE

E.H. Joiner's essay "Madness in the Heart of the Sons of Men: The Picture of Top-Floor Houses in Bathurst," published in the *Echo*, is among the most interesting works of short writing ever produced by a Gambian.<sup>1349</sup> It takes as its jumping-off point the erection of "story houses" in Bathurst and the association of verticality with modernity. Among Jawara's first insights into Bathurst after arriving from the protectorate was of the buildings of varying shapes and sizes, high block houses, and the tall houses of Clifton Road, Hagan Street, and Buckle Street.<sup>1350</sup> Yet Jawara did not see Bathurst as entirely modern, despite taller buildings and straighter roads than he was used to, but as a large and organized village.<sup>1351</sup> This is also reflected in the fact that the word for village in Mandinka, saatewo, is also applied to a city. The term could be modified as saatee baa indicating a big village/city, but there is no linguistic distinction between the two. This, of course, does not mean that Gambians did not distinguish between Bathurst and villages in the protectorate, but rather that they avoided the strictly dualistic thinking implied in the village/city dyad. Joiner, by contrast, certainly did see Bathurst as something quite different from a village both practically and morally.

Joiner quotes the second half Ecclesiastes 9:3: "Madness in their heart while they live and after that they go to the dead." But here we need to quote 9:1 through 9:18 to understand why he chose Ecclesiastes.

For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.<sup>2</sup> All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.<sup>3</sup> This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.<sup>4</sup> For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.<sup>5</sup> For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have

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<sup>1349</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 15, 1958, 2.

<sup>1350</sup> Jawara, 68.

<sup>1351</sup> Ibid, 68.

they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.<sup>6</sup> Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun.<sup>7</sup> Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.<sup>8</sup> Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.<sup>9</sup> Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.<sup>10</sup> Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.<sup>11</sup> I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.<sup>12</sup> For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.<sup>13</sup> This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: <sup>14</sup> There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: <sup>15</sup> Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.<sup>16</sup> Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.<sup>17</sup> The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.<sup>18</sup> Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.<sup>1352</sup>

The main themes of the entire Book of Ecclesiastes recur throughout Joiner's essay: the circularity of time ending in the inevitability of death, the unity of man and beast in the animal way of death, the impossibility of maintaining the fruits of labor in biblical time, the "eat drink and be merry" ethos, the necessity of obeying The Law, and the judgment to come echo throughout Joiner's essay and this dissertation.

The subtitle of the short essay references the construction of the Woolworth building in New York which reached to 60 stories tall by the time it was opened. It was one of the earlier skyscrapers built in New York to such a height. In a line which echoes Shelley's "Ozymandias" Joiner claims that "Men build these things so others will look and despair." There is no doubt Joiner had in his mind Shelley's infamous line "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" though he likely also conceived of the Woolworth building as a kind of Tower of Babel. In Joiner's estimation skyscrapers showed modern men as "impotent" rather than powerful. One doesn't need to be a Freudian to recognize Joiner's use of the term impotent as a contrast to the verticality of the building to be a critique of what Derrida would later term phallogocentrism: the privilege given to masculinity (attached to the signifier of the male phallus) to

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<sup>1352</sup> Ecclesiastes 9:1-9:12 *King James Bible*.

convey meaning. According to Joiner, man's attempt to build these phallic structures in cities has the paradoxical effect of diminishing the place of humanity in the world. Have we become "puny insects scurrying over the vanity of a building?" he wonders. "Are such men (who build skyscrapers) moved by reason or instinct" and being transformed by the "lower animal in their ambition" he questioned. Foolish men build these things, he concluded. Over 50 years after Joiner's essay Will Self would later write "a skyscraper is always a big swaying dick vaunting the ambitions of late capitalism to reduce the human individual to the status and the proportions of a submissive worker ant."<sup>1353</sup>

Not content to merely imagine New York as humanity's Babel, Joiner turned to the history of Bathurst in a move which seems contradictory, but only if time is taken to be linear. Early in his essay, after his initial critique of Woolworth, Joiner seemed to dismiss the relevance of a discussion of skyscrapers to African history. "We, the black people of Gambia," he noted, could not build a 60 story building in any case. Some Gambians dress and eat sumptuously, he argued, but they do not build. Joiner explained that he did not mean Gambians should covet the "tremendous and elaborate" houses of their neighbors because they might find in their lifetime or their children's that they may not be able to maintain it and would be forced to sell. Instead, Joiner had a different critique in mind.

Instead of using this difference to disqualify the possibility of discussing New York, Joiner continued his critique of Woolworths and transitioned to a discussion of Bathurst. In each case of dispossession he recounted he asked the reader to supply the answer to the question "Whose was it and how was the owner dispossessed?" At Bedford place where the UAC bought up the land what happened to the original owners and how were they dispossessed? Joiner lamented that he could no longer draw the sweet water of his childhood from the well on the property the UAC bought. At Russell Street, he noted, a man who built a two story house was ruined by it and was forced to sell it during his own lifetime. Another African who built a two story house at the intersections of Cameron, Buckle, and Wellington was, by the end of his life, living in a tiny house. Not only are repairs to these houses a curse, but in both

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<sup>1353</sup> Will Self. 2015 "Will Self on the Meaning of Skyscrapers – From the Tower of Babel to the Shard" *The Guardian*. March 27 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/27/will-self-on-the-meaning-of-skyscrapers>

these cases of “madness” the moneylenders had come for each man to claim their due. What happened to the mulattoes of Buckle Street, he asked. Their property was “ALL GONE” (caps in original). Even our political leaders, he noted, could not maintain story houses. On Angelesa Joiner also knew an African man who had owned a large house. “I knew him,” he recounted. “He was little of stature. He lived there. How came he to be dispossessed of them (his lands) and he had to go and live the rest of his days at almost the end of this street in a small house of stone” when it was bought by the firm of V.Q. Peterson.<sup>1354</sup> How did L. Vezia acquire his offices and headquarters? Whose property did Mr. Farid Nachif demolish when he built a story house on Buckle Street? “At Picton, Hagan, Angelesa, Cotton, Dobson, Fitzgerald, Stanley, Clarkson, Grant St., and Lovell Square,” he concluded, “you must come across a case or two.”<sup>1355</sup>

The apparent contradiction of discussing New York, declaring that Bathurst was not New York due to the inequalities faced by Africans, and then continuing to push the discussion is resolved through a reversal of “evolutionary time.” Time, after all, is the real subject of Shelley’s “Ozymandias” and its theme of the collapse of great kings and of great empires. The “shattered visage” of the statue of Ozymandias (Rameses II) is encountered thousands of years after its creation. According to Shelley, the presumption of the pharaoh to command was still etched in the stone by “The hand (of the sculptor) that mocked them and the heart (of the pharaoh) that fed” them. Yet his presumption to immortality lies in ruin as “Round the decay/ Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare/ The lone and level sands stretch far away.” The “lone and level” sand is a counterpoint to the vertical erectness of the statue and the very immortality he hoped to construct.

The theme of ambition fading to ruin is clear in Joiner’s discussion of the history of property in Bathurst, but what of New York? There is no reason that Joiner *had* to begin a discussion of property expropriation in the city with a discussion of the Woolworth Building in New York if Joiner had in mind an essay which detailed how black Africans in the city were losing their property to the state and to

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<sup>1354</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 15, 1958, 7.

<sup>1355</sup> NRO: *Gambia Echo* December 15, 1958, 7.

wealthy firms, businessmen, and foreigners. Nor did he have to make such liberal use of Ecclesiastes or allusions to Shelley throughout. The essay must be read, then, with the assumption that Joiner is positing Bathurst as the future of New York and that one day in the undetermined future a traveler may come across the colossal wreck of the Woolworth Building and reflect on the arrogance of its builders which caused them to usurp the powers of God and claim immortality for themselves. One can imagine Charlton Heston, writhing on all fours in front of the ruined Woolworth building, in lieu of the statue of liberty, and realizing that his own civilization destroyed itself. Joiner reverses the old Hegelian teleology which posits Africa as the West's past and posits it as a sign of the future to come if arrogance remains unchecked. This is precisely what Rem Koolhaas says about Lagos, almost 50 years later. "Lagos is not catching up with us," Koolhaas says "Rather we may be catching up with Lagos."<sup>1356</sup> Later in his essay Joiner cites Ecclesiastes again, this time from chapters five and ten. "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand."<sup>1357</sup>

#### LESSONS FROM THE COLONIAL STATE

At the end of Kafka's "Penal Colony" the traveler visits a bar packed with rowdy sailors.

In the bar he finds an inscription:

Here rests the old Commandant. His adherents, who now must be nameless, have dug this grave and set up this stone. There is a prophecy that after a certain number of years the Commandant will rise again and lead his adherents from this house to recover the colony. Have faith and wait!

Of course Kafka means to conjure, through the person of the commandant, the specter of resurrection and return. It makes for a good story and an even better analogy for African history. If this chapter has shown, as Crawford Young has argued, that the colonial state evolved into the "purest modern form of bureaucratic autocracy,"<sup>1358</sup> it was because the administrator who issues the law directly from his mouth was biding his time until the conditions were ripe for his return. The leaders of postcolonial African

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<sup>1356</sup>Bregtje van der Haak. 2002. *Koolhaas: Lagos Wide and Close Interactive Journey Into an Exploding City* Pieter van Huystee Film, 2002.

<sup>1357</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:15

<sup>1358</sup> Young, 160.

states, whatever their stated intentions, resurrected the Hobbesian model of sovereignty and, along with it, notions of biopower with their origins in antiquity and modernity. As Mbembe points out, these postcolonies are chaotic pluralities and yet they have inherited an internal coherence in the way that they fabricate signs and simulacra which mask divisions in sovereignty and legitimate the most brutal and excessive forms of violence (as well as the most banal) in the name of the father of the nation.<sup>1359</sup> One could argue that a direct connection could be established between colonial rule in The Gambia and the regime of the current dictator, Yahyah Jammeh.

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<sup>1359</sup> Mbembe, "The Banality of Power", 2.

## APPENDIX



Figure1: Location of Banjul, Google Maps



Figure 2: 1909 Survey of Banjul Island and Southern Kombo

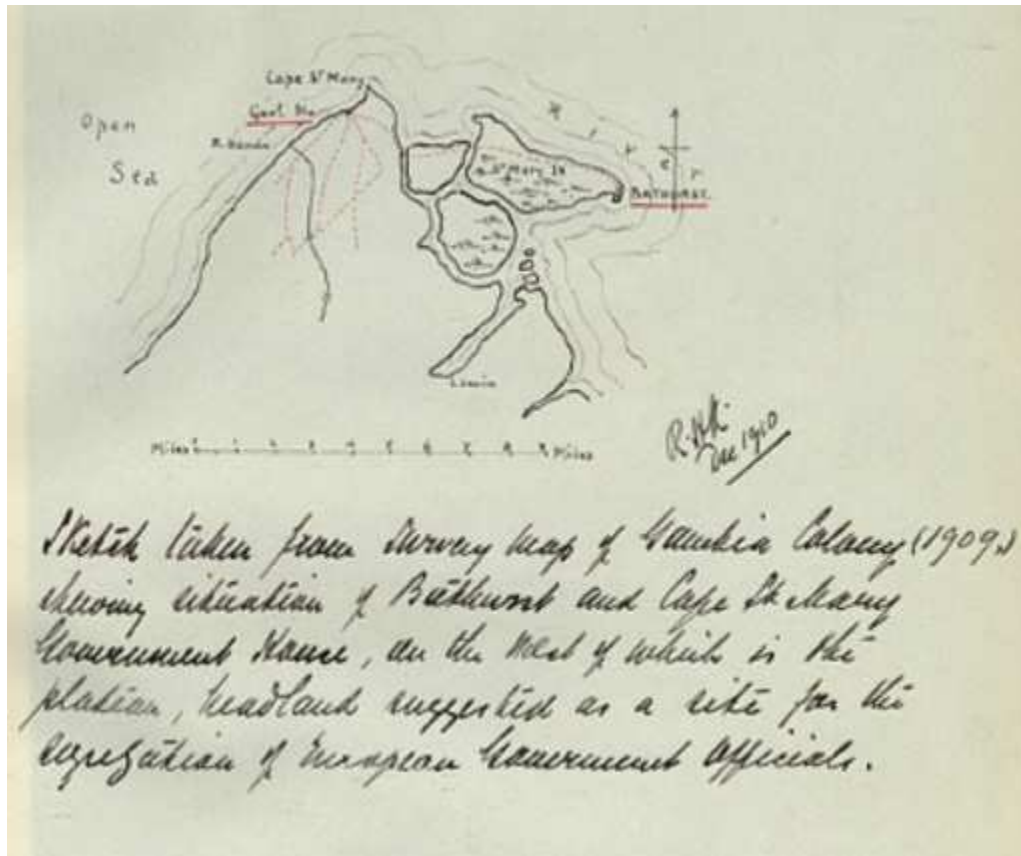


Figure 3: The Five Wards of Bathurst

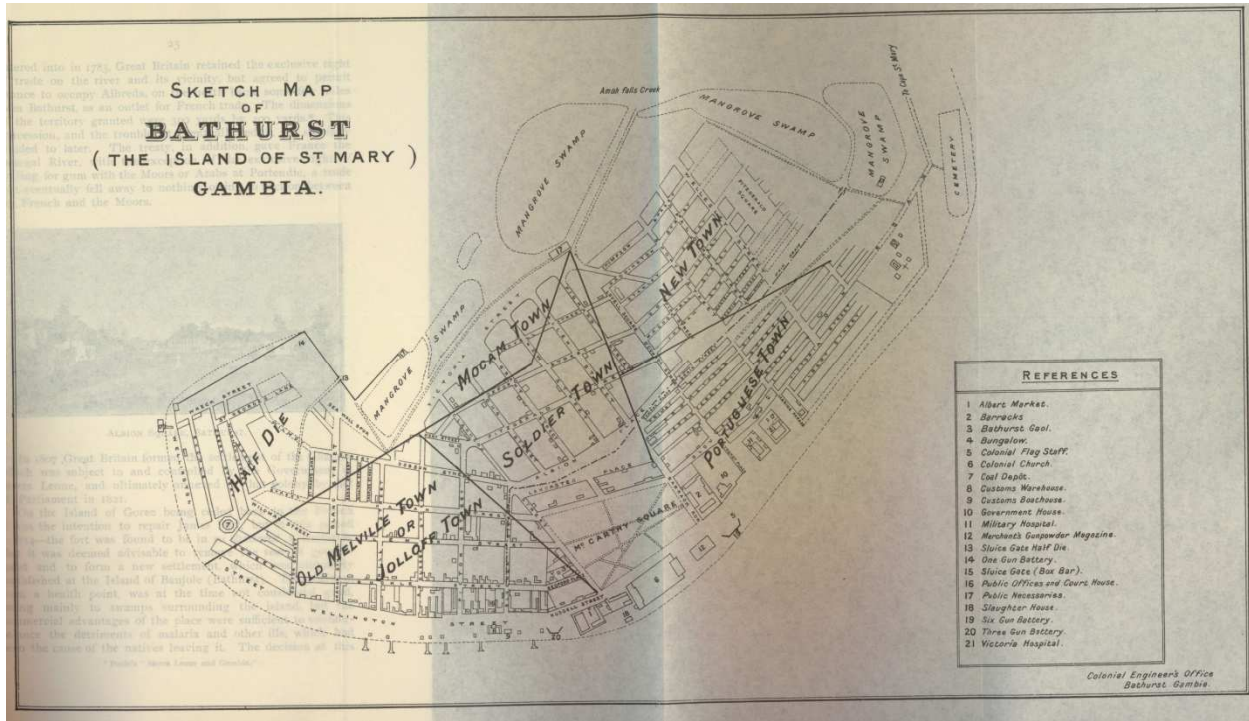


Figure 4: Boundaries of The Gambia, Google Maps



Figure 5: Organization of the Protectorate into Districts

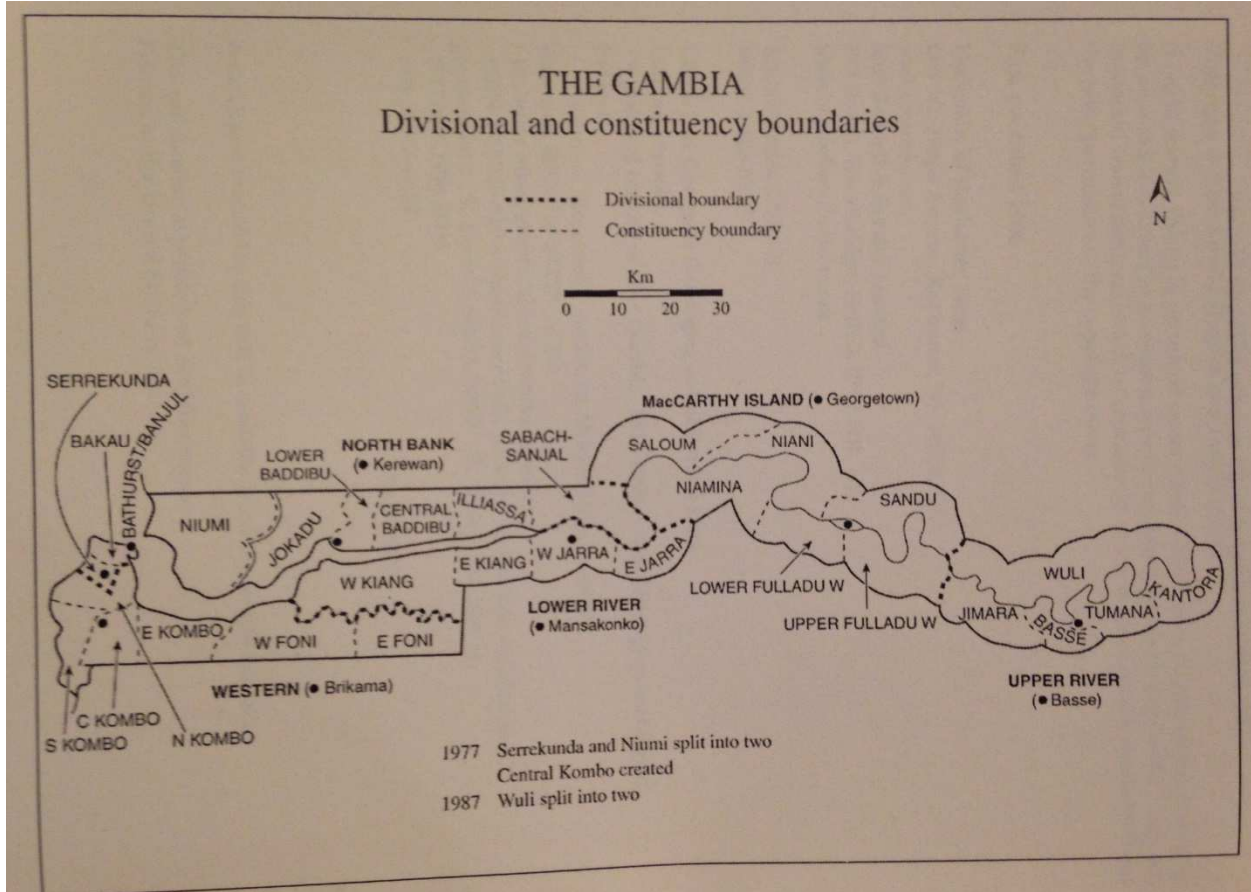


Figure 6: Colonial Proclamation- Dieu et Mon Droit (God and My Law)

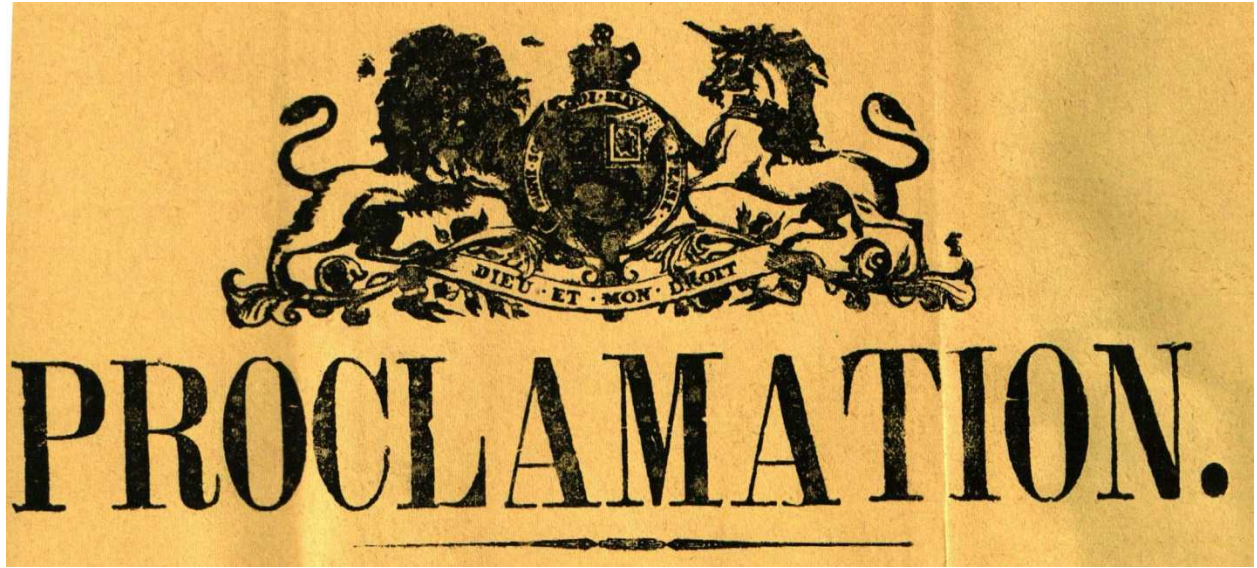


Figure 7: European and African men collaborate in producing patriarchy through “tradition”, Men holding daggers loom over prostrate women



Figure 8: Shot Drill diagram sent to Bathurst Gaol

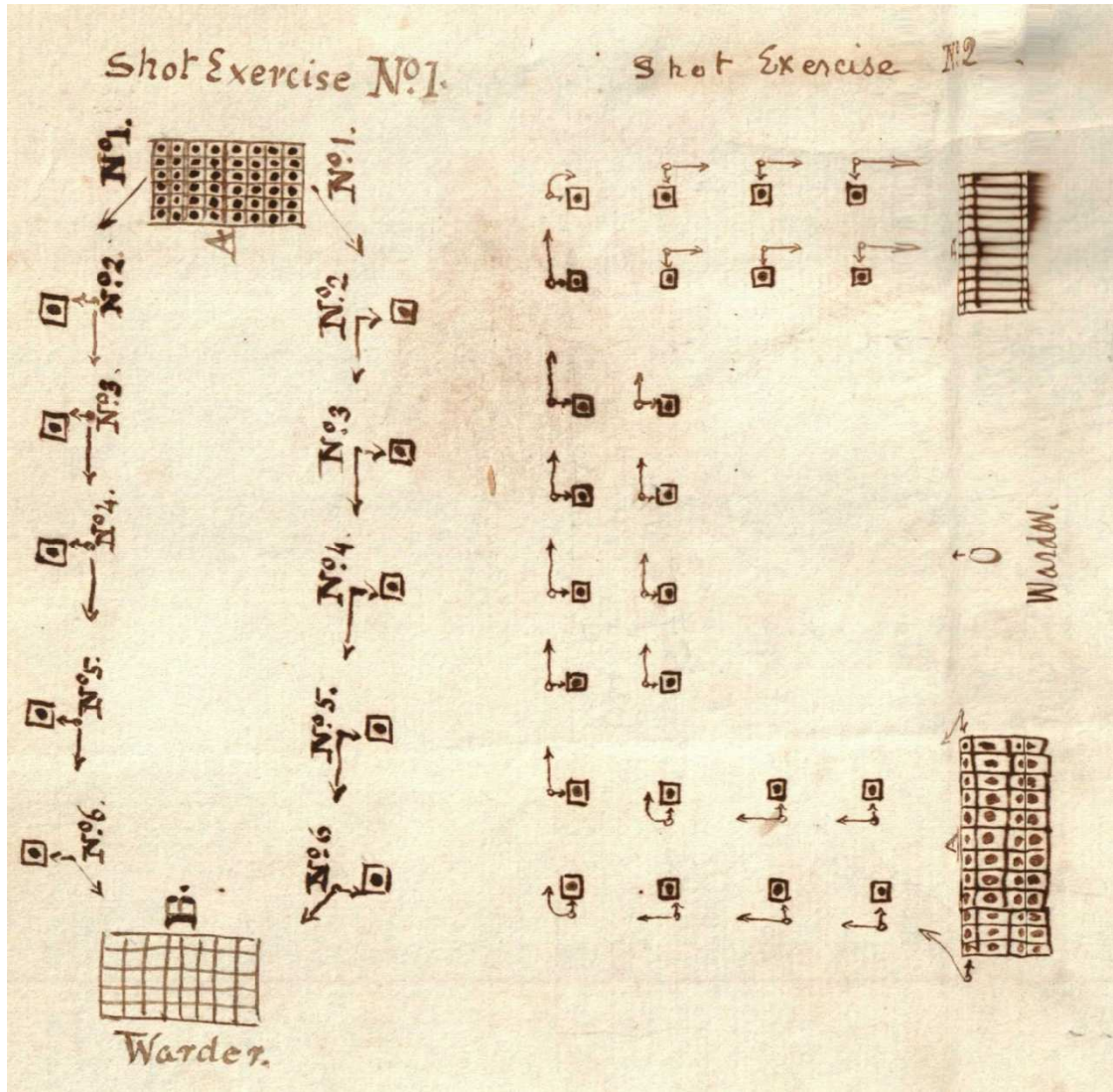




Figure 9: Shot Drill diagram sent to Bathurst Gaol

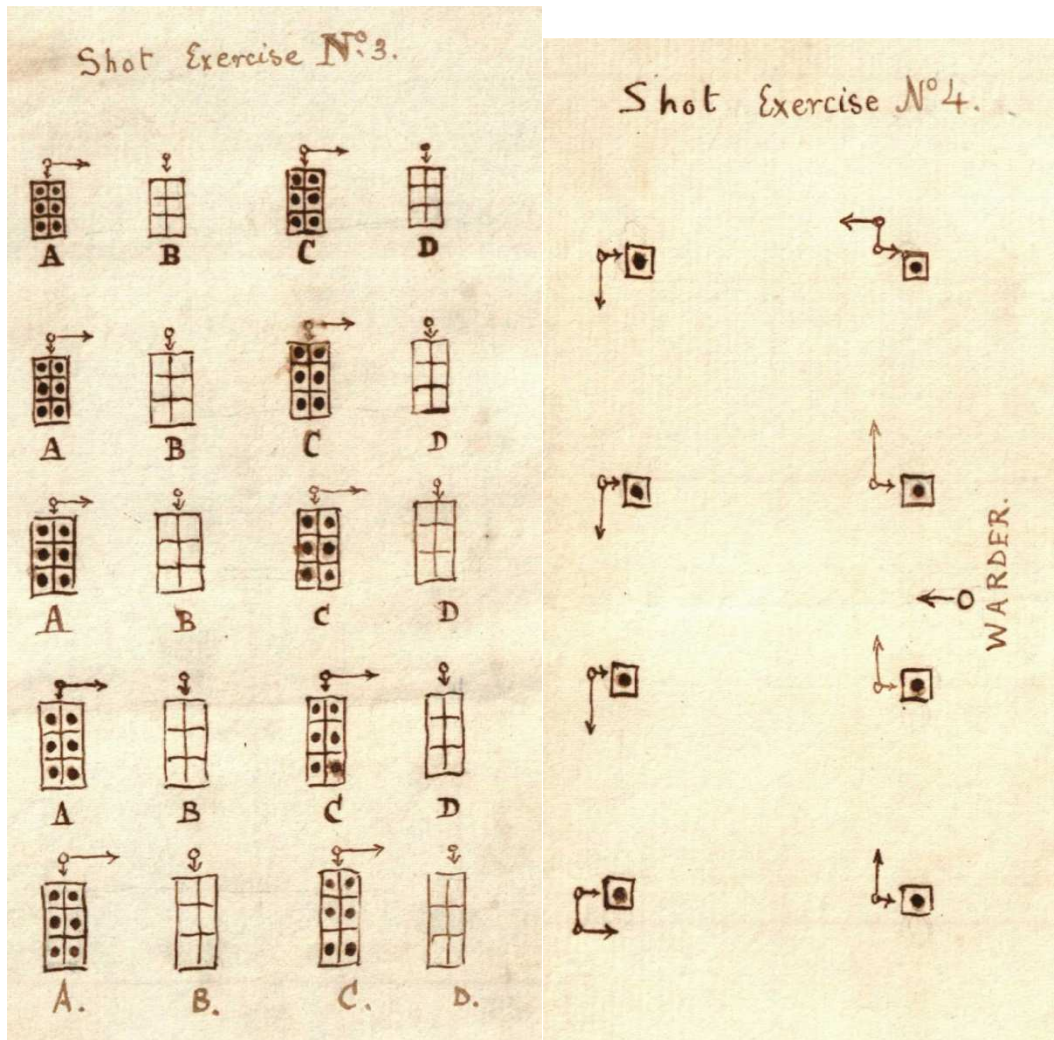


Figure 10: Shot Drill diagram sent to Bathurst Gaol

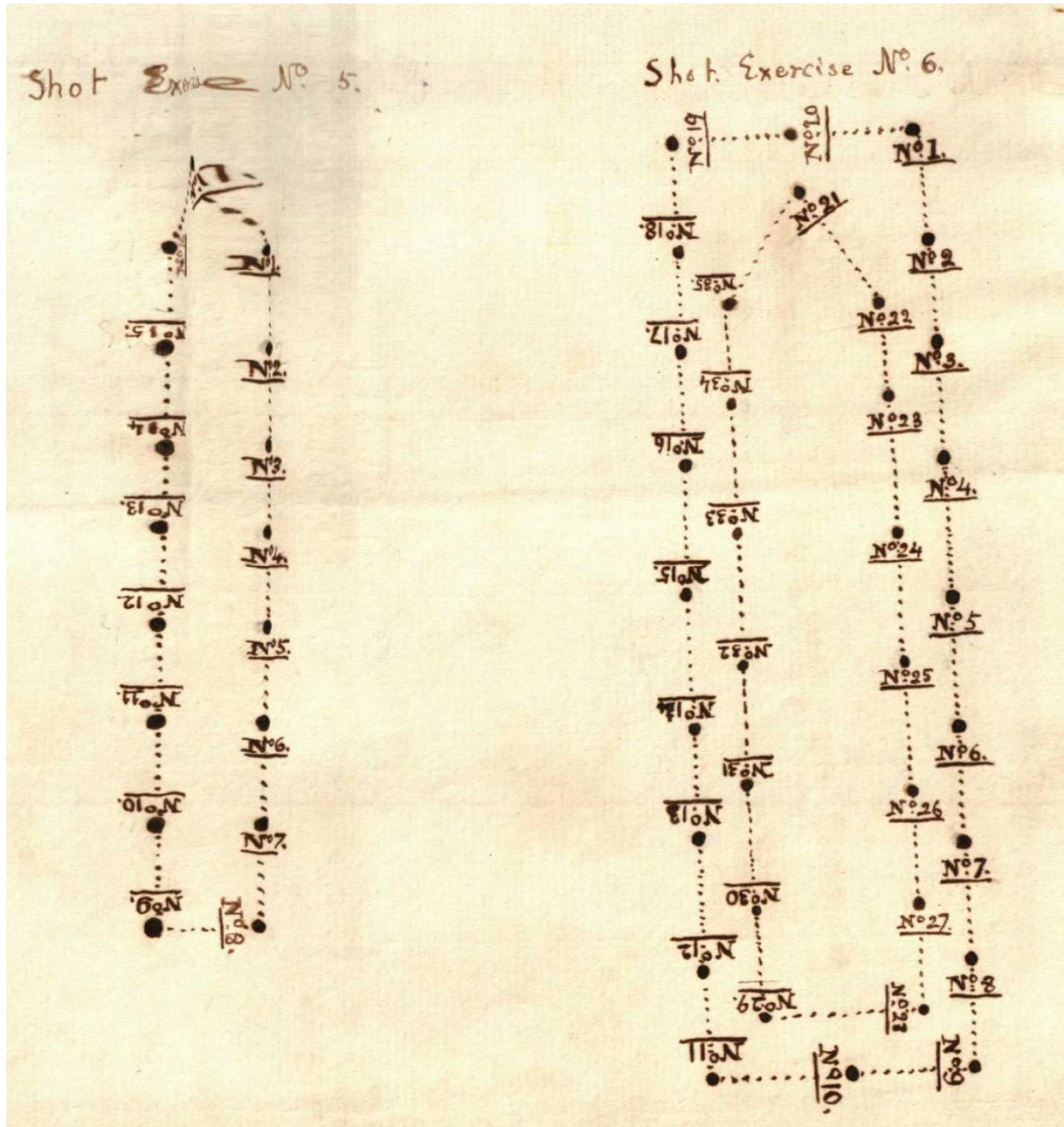


Figure 11: Plate 2 of William Harvey's *Exercitatio anatomica de motu cordis et sanguinis in animalibus* showing that blood in the veins returns to the heart

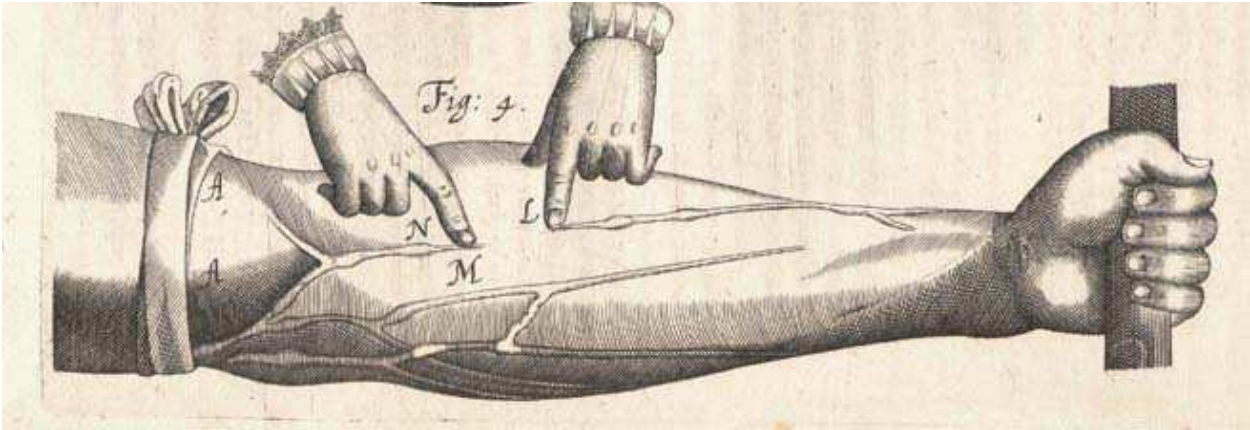
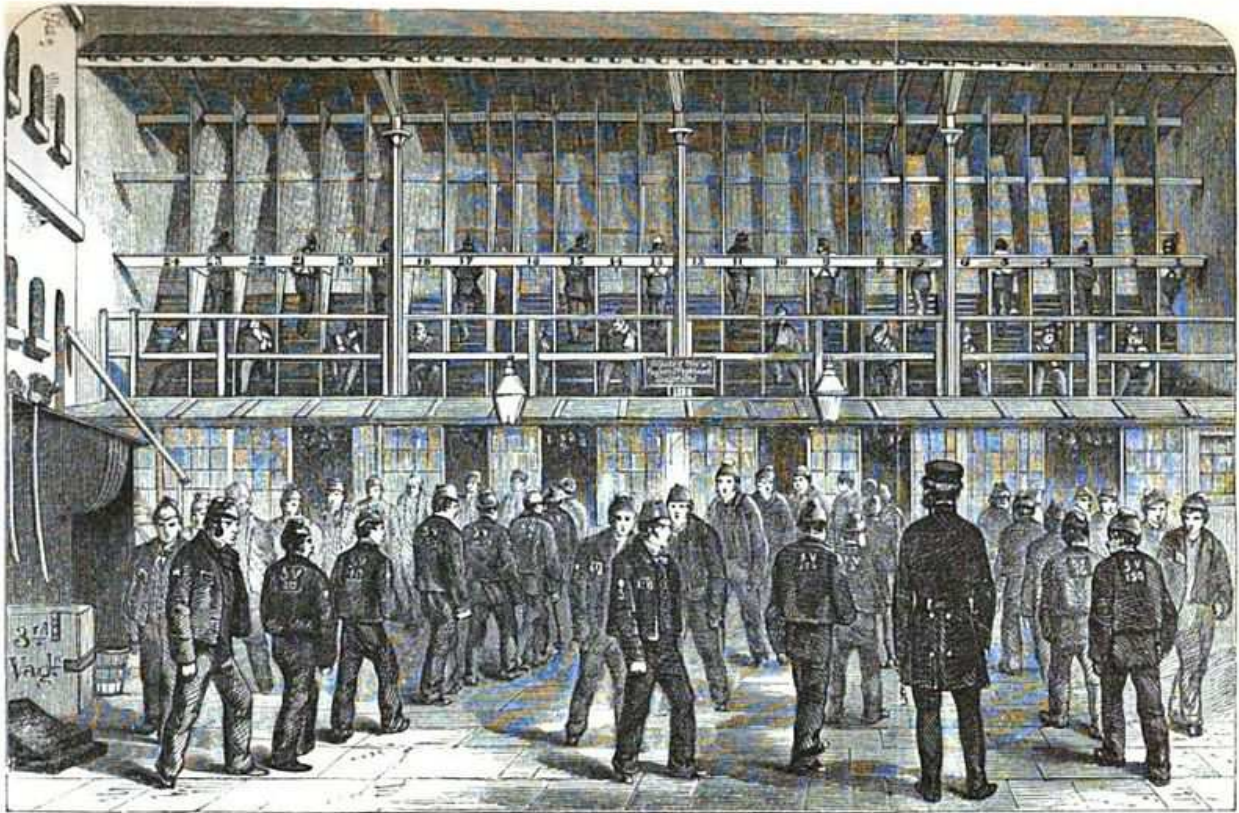


Figure 12: Treadwheel at Colbath Fields Prison



PRISONERS WORKING AT THE TREAD-WHEEL, AND OTHERS EXERCISING, IN THE 3<sup>RD</sup> YARD OF THE VAGRANTS' PRISON, COLDBATH FIELDS.

(From a Photograph by Herbert Watkins, 119, Regent Street.)

Figure 13: Illustration of a tread-wheel from James Mursell Phillippo's 'Jamaica: It's Past and Present State.', 1843



Figure 14: A Warning to Merchants that the state will not protect them in case of war or plunder above  
Georgetown, 1877.

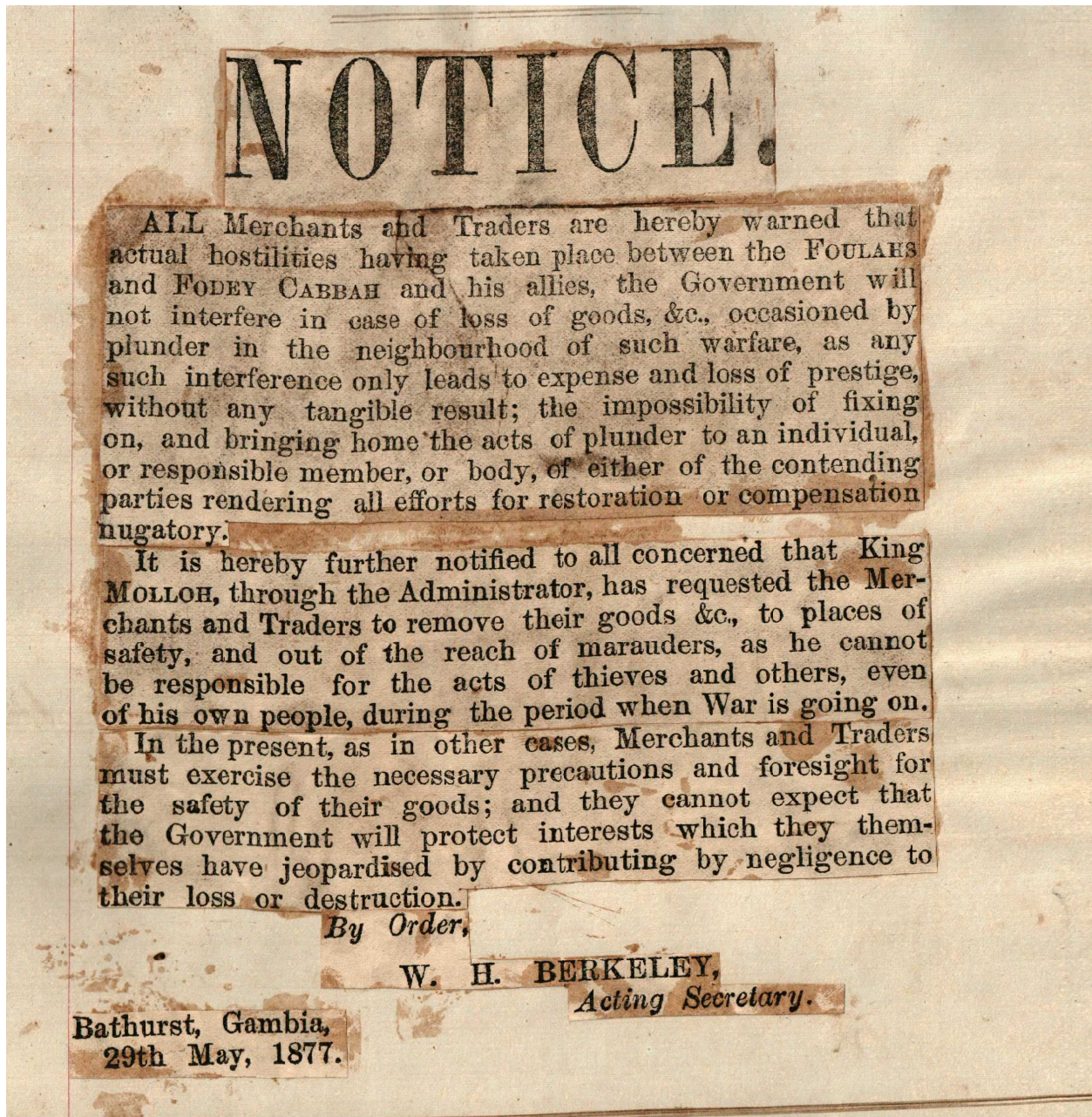


Figure 15: Groundnuts at a Farmer's Coop



Figure 16: Decauville Tram Lines

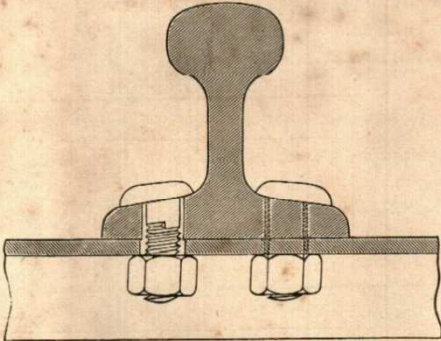
**"DECAUVILLE" PORTABLE RAILWAY FOR EXPORT,**

— SUITABLE FOR —

TEA AND TOBACCO PLANTATIONS, BRICK-YARDS, HARBOURS, DOCKS, PIERS, MINES, QUARRIES AND FACTORIES,  
GENERAL CONSTRUCTION AND CONTRACTOR'S WORK, and for PERMANENT or PORTABLE LINES wherever channel  
sleepers are necessary.

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PARTICULARS OF CONSTRUCTION AND PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES OF THE "DECAUVILLE" BOLTED DISMOUNTABLE LINE.

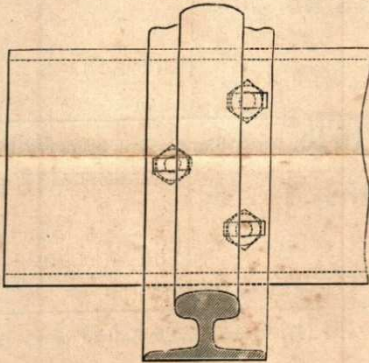


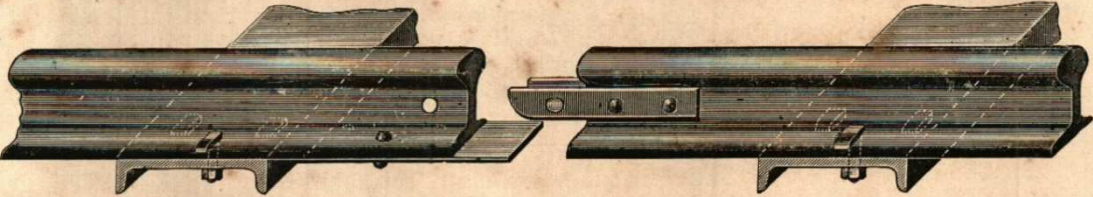
It has been found that a clip attachment where a single bolt and nut is employed is very apt to work loose, and requires frequent attention and tightening up, whereas the "Decauville" bolted system (in which 3 bolts and nuts are used to secure the rail to the sleeper) when properly bolted up, forms a rigid track, requiring a minimum amount of attention and maintenance.

The three bolts, in triangular position (see fig. 2 in accompanying sketch) fastening the rail to the sleepers, so equalise the strain and pressure that there is no risk whatever of the nuts working loose at any single point, and for all permanent light lines the bolted system will be found admirably adapted to resist rough wear and tear in hot countries.

Special attention is called to these Lines for Export to the Colonies, owing to the saving in freight and inland transport effected by shipping the line dismounted, whilst at the same time all the advantages of the well-known "Decauville" Portable Riveted Line are practically secured with but very little extra labour.

The annexed drawings fully explain the system.





These narrow gauge railways are especially useful in opening up new countries or to act as feeders to existing main lines where it is out of the question to build normal gauge branch lines.

The 2 ft. gauge has now been adopted by the Indian Government as the standard gauge for feeder lines.

The Rolling Stock manufactured by the Decauville Company is adapted to every description of passenger and goods traffic, with steam, electric, horse, mule, hand, or other form of traction.

Photographs of passenger cars and locomotives in use on a 2ft. gauge line can be obtained at the London office, where sections of the lines and sleepers, and several types of wagons can also be inspected.



Figure 17: Post-Independence Gambian Currency



Figure 18: Gambian Currency Showing Nut Screen

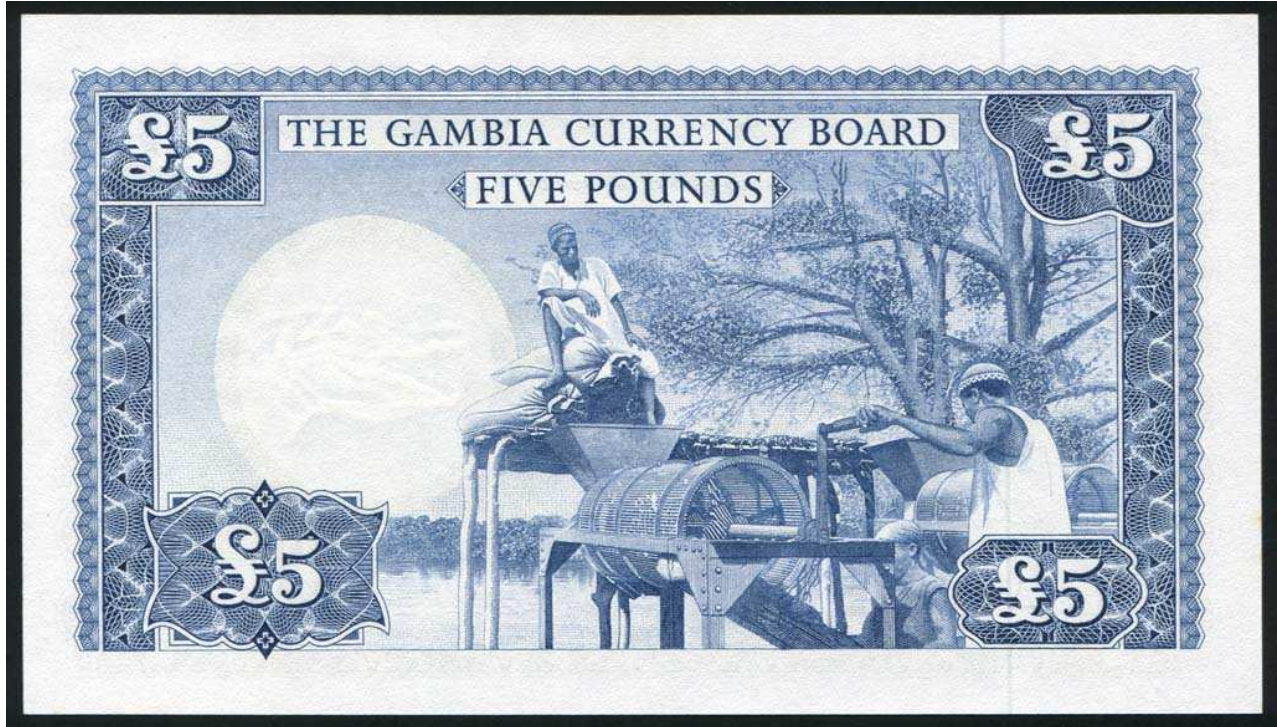


Figure 19: Postage Stamp Featuring Wealthy Wolof Woman



Figure 20: Gambian Groundnut Bushel Basket

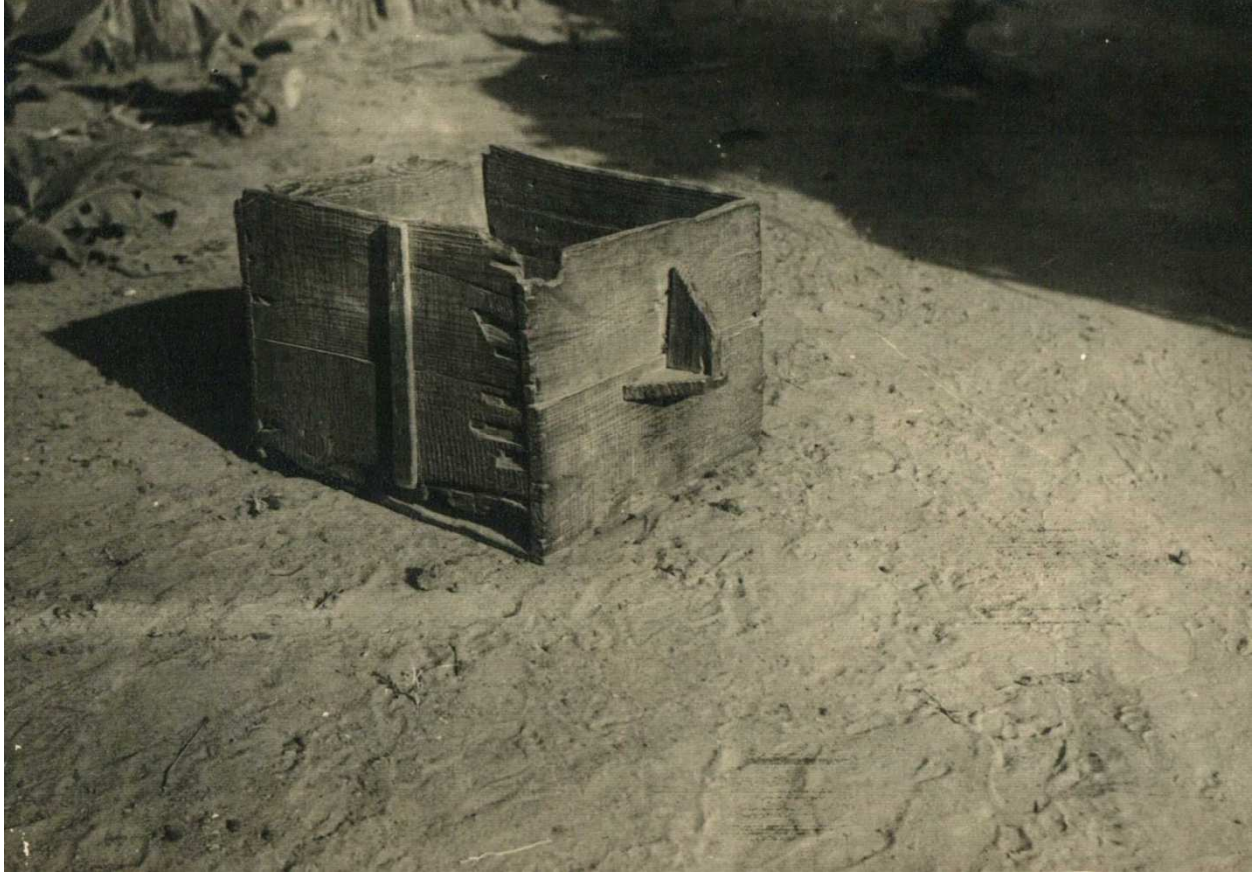


Figure 21: Charles Laveran *Chanteclair* 1909



Figure 22: Rinderpest Inoculation



Figure 23: Splenic Vaccine prepared at Abuko Veterinary School



Figure 24: Front of government house with man operating mowing machine





Figure 25: "Old Tree with many rot-holes, hollows, etc"

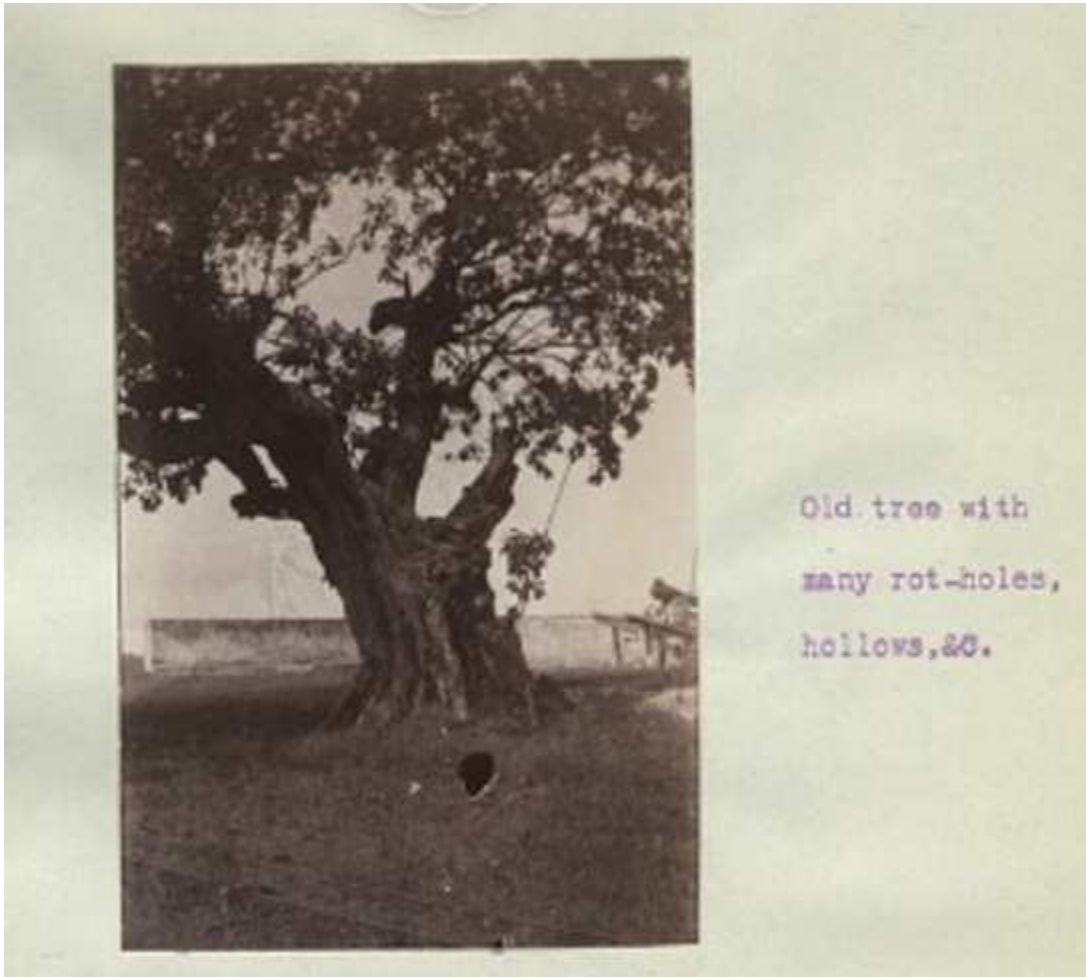


Figure 26: Gambian 12 Dalasi Stamp Featuring the RAF de Havilland Mosquito which established its fame in WW II flying "nuisance raids".



Figure 27: Diagram to show butchers how to properly flay hides for the European market

PLATE V.

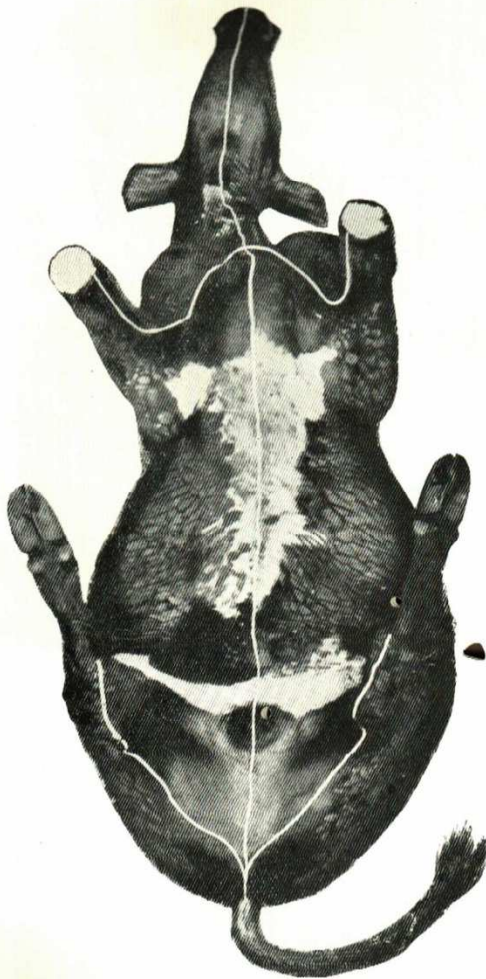


FIG. 1.—Cattle: Correct lines for ripping.



FIG. 2.—Sheep: Correct lines for ripping.

Figure 28: First Rat Week Flyer, 1936

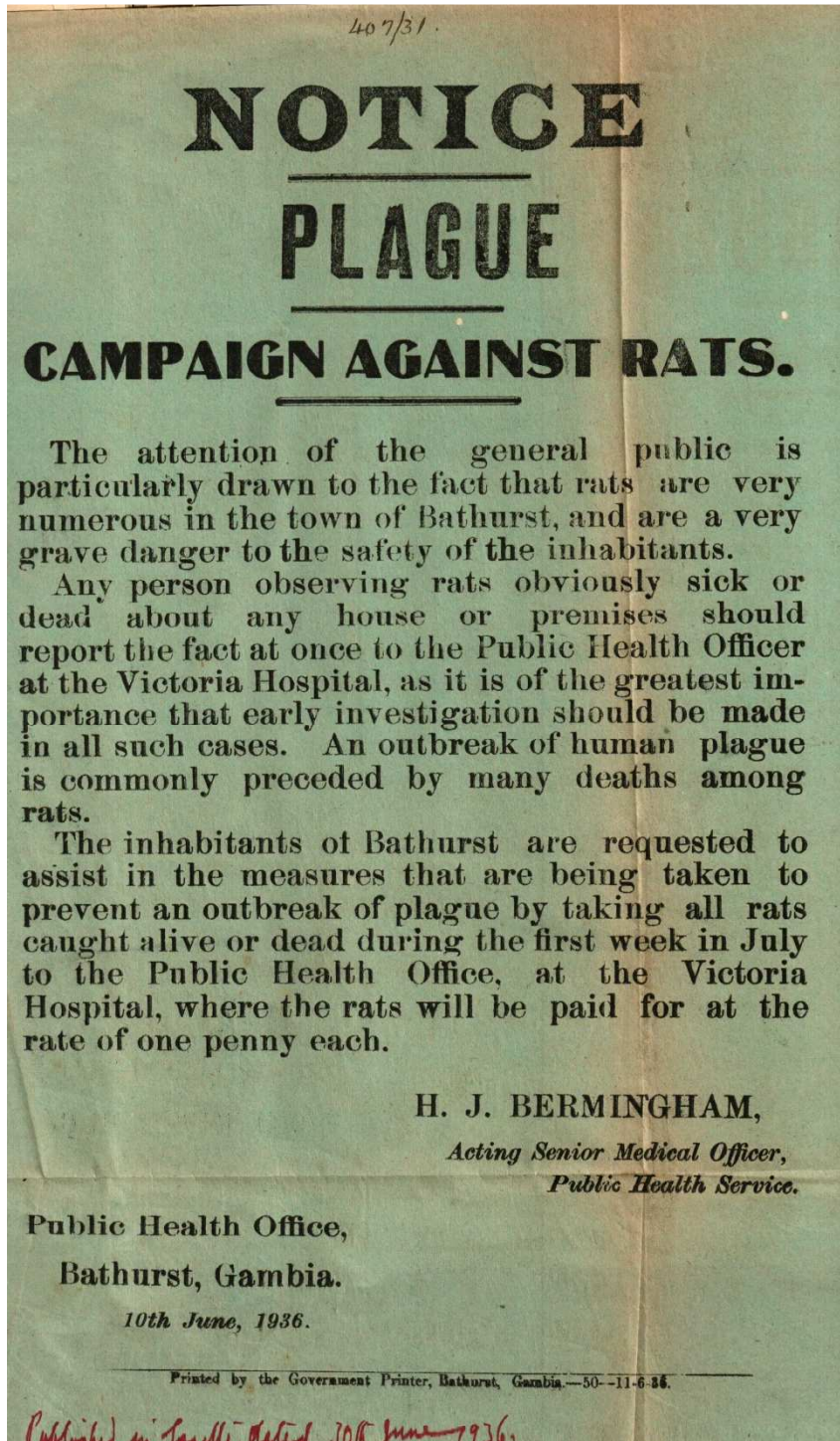


Figure 29: A (top) and B (bottom): Advertisements for Monkeys, Birds, Chimpanzees, etc

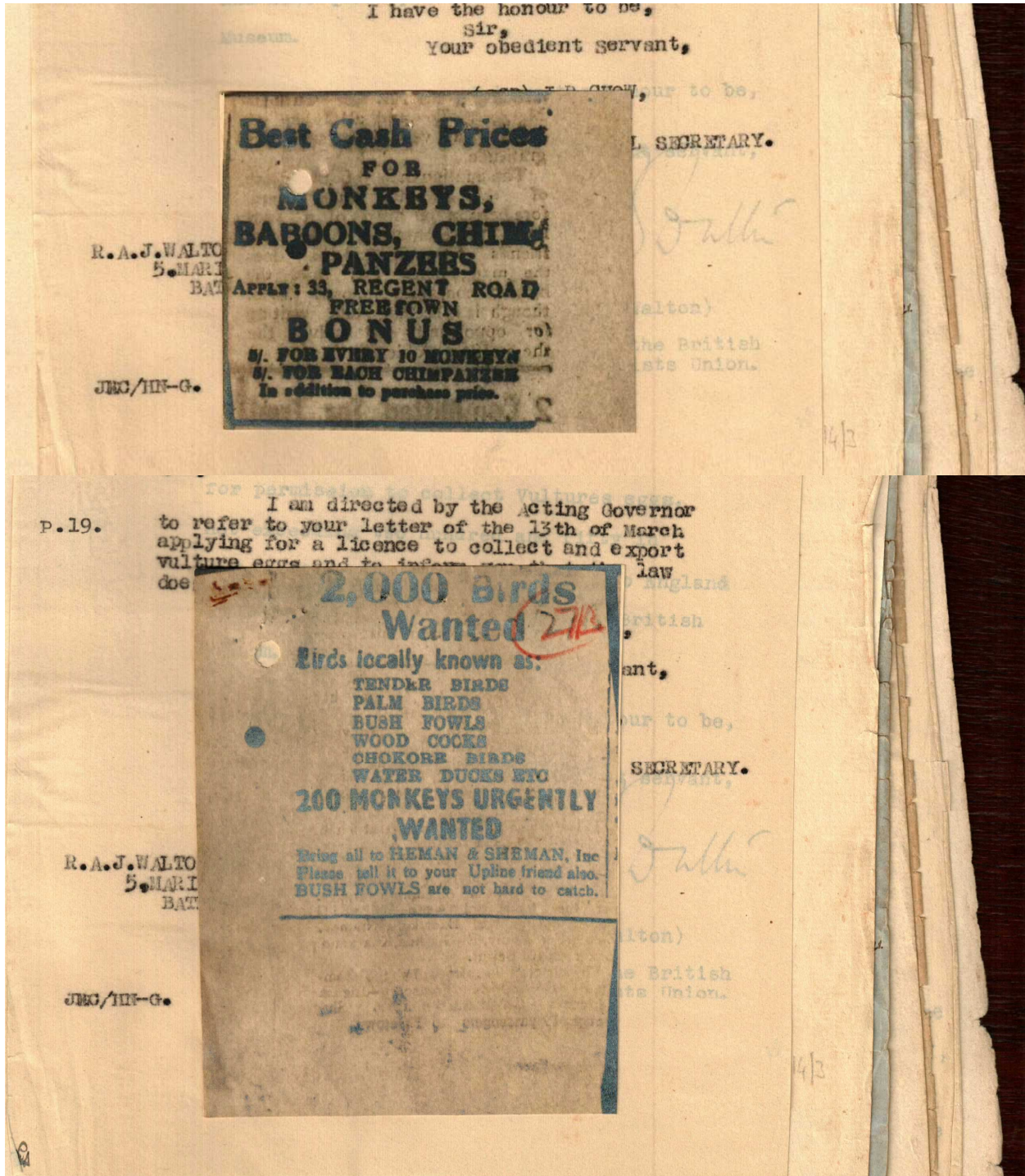


Figure 30: West Africa Women's War Service "Busy Bees"



WEST AFRICAN WOMEN'S WAR SERVICE [See page 246]  
*Committee of the "Busy Bees"—a girls' club formed by Lady Southorn (extreme left) in the Gambia*

Figure 31: Young Police Officer in Bathurst



Figure 32: Board of Health Iron Scavenger Cart with Donkey





Figure 33: Bathurst in 1889 Showing Half Die Swamp

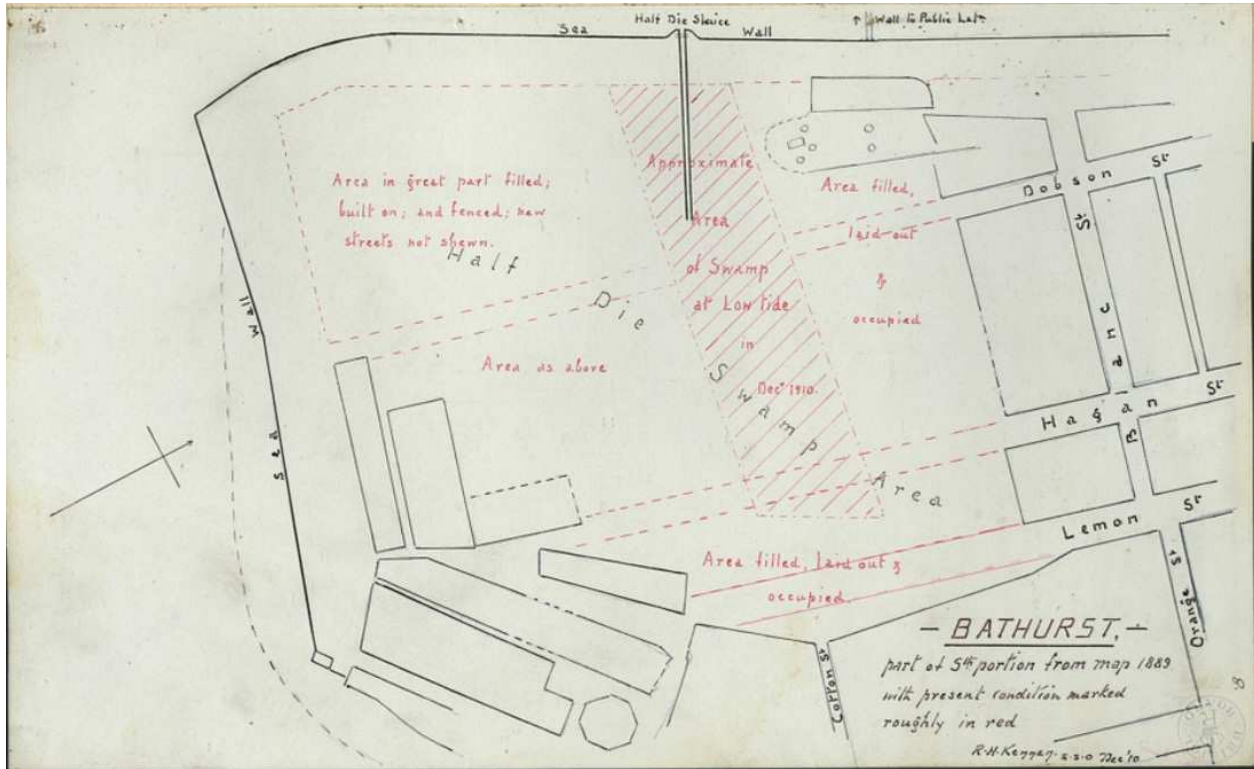


Figure 34: Half Die Swamp High and Low Tide (top to bottom), Latrine can be seen in distance



View of part of  
Half Die Swamp,  
looking in line &  
for distance re-  
presented by words  
"Die Swamp" on map  
i.e.S.W.from "D".  
Time high tide.



Same as above.  
Time, near low  
tide.  
(Pub.Latrine in distance  
(on

Figure 35: Refuse Incinerator, Bathurst



Figure 36: Political Cartoon in 1989 *Topic Gambia* Magazine lampoons Gambian sanitation and sanitariums



Figure 37: Proposed Garden for Bathurst

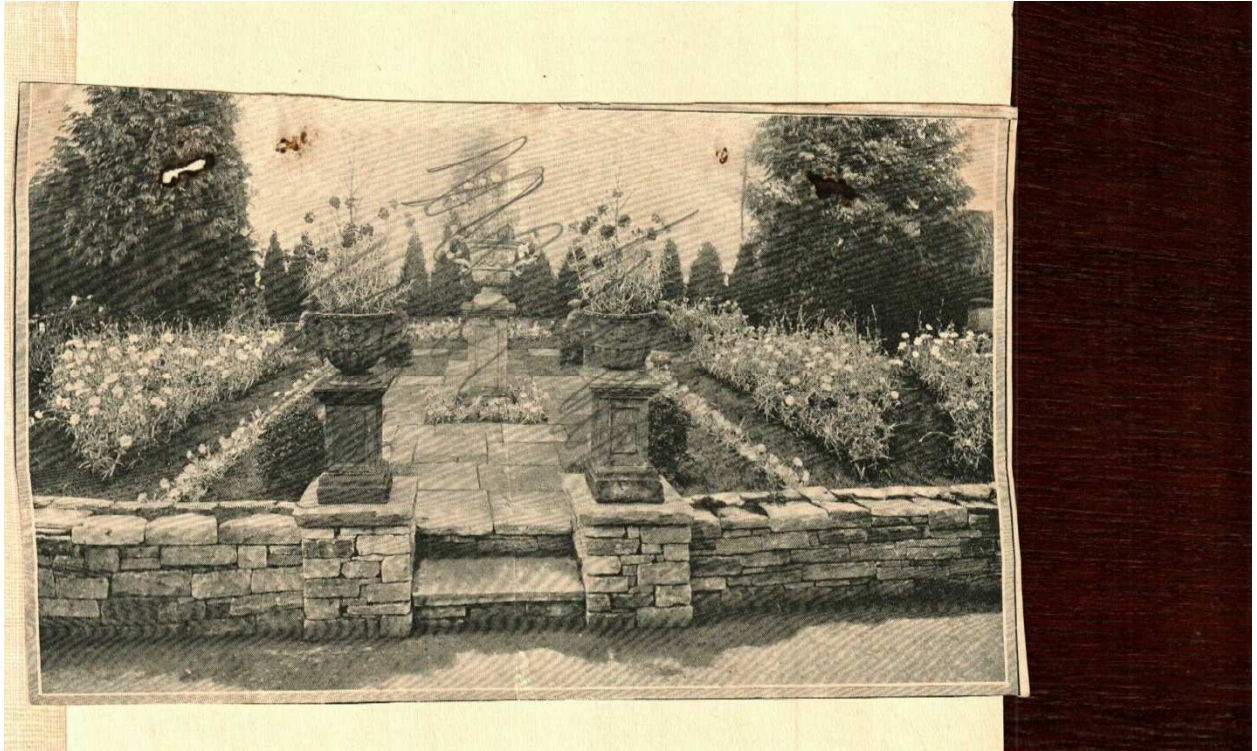
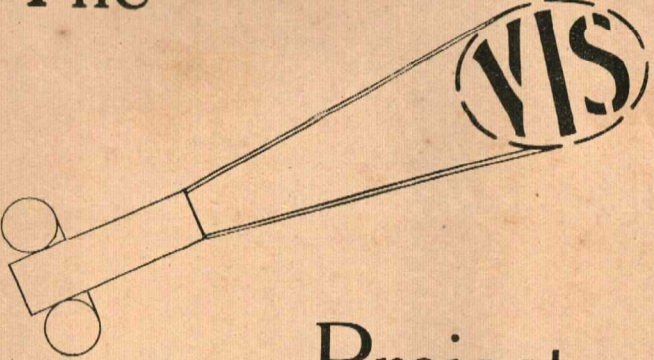


Figure 38: Film Projector

*H. E. De Thomas Southon* 91B  
704/30.

The



Projector

IS THE

Most up-to-date  
Lowest Priced  
AND  
Most Efficient

FILMSLIDE LANTERN

OBTAINABLE  
BRITISH MADE THROUGHOUT.

---

VISUAL INFORMATION SERVICE,  
The Original British FilmSlide Producers,  
168a Battersea Bridge Road, London, S.W.11.  
Telephone: BATTERSEA 0846.

Figure 39: Gambian School Children

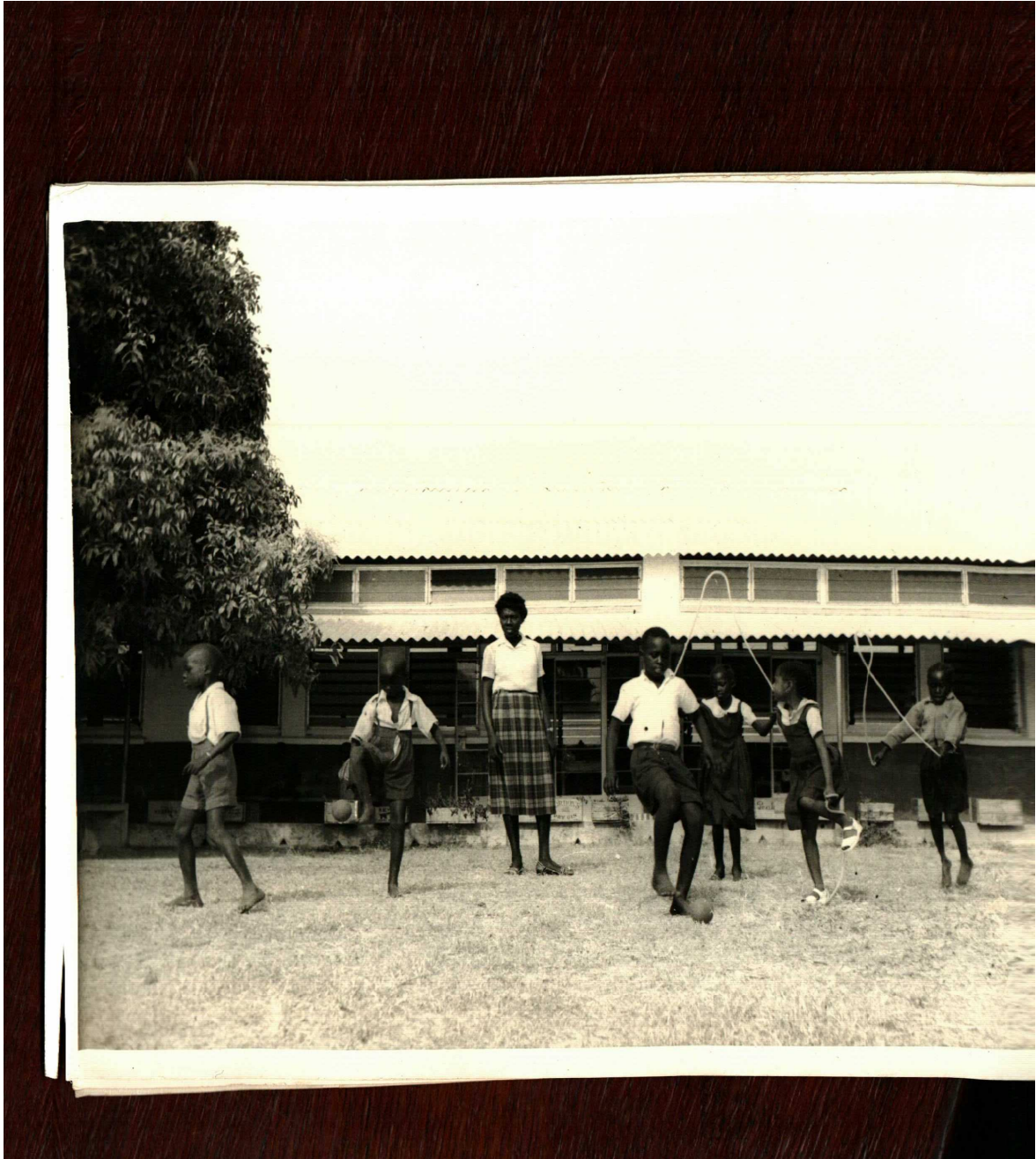


Figure 40: The First Women to be inducted into the Gambia Police Force





Figure 41: Heart of Banjul Mural, Grant Street, Banjul, Photo by Author 2011



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