

## **Culture-Conflict and Delinquency: A Case Study of Colonial Lagos**

**Paul K.N. Ugboajah**  
**(University of Ibadan)**

**Abstract:** Colonialism has been regarded by social scientists as a major vehicle of social change in Africa. In line with this general notion, the British colonisation of Nigeria had forcefully imposed western culture on the people of Nigeria which resulted in a culture-conflict. Consequently, a great deal of the indigenous socio-political and cultural settings was partially or completely burnt away, or totally overhauled. Thus, in colonial Lagos, new styles were observable in food, clothing, housing and other social behaviours which caused some far-reaching consequences of both positive and negative natures. However, the major focus of this study is to examine the negative consequences of the social change heralded by the advent of colonialism in Lagos as it relates to youths. This is the social problem called juvenile delinquency. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to trace the root cause of juvenile delinquency in colonial Lagos to the advent of colonialism. The argument of this paper is that the sudden rise in juvenile delinquency in the 1920s had its root in the advent of colonialism which brought with it urbanisation and Western culture both of which created an irreparable damage to the institution of family. The immediate effect of this damage was the sudden upsurge in social vices by Lagos youth such as stealing, gambling, wandering, drug addiction, hawking, juvenile prostitution, and pick-pocketing, just some examples which caught the attention of the colonial officials in the 1930s. In addition to the foregoing, the paper tries to argue that these delinquencies are typical of an urban city. In other words, juvenile delinquencies could be regarded as a feature of cosmopolitanism. To justify this argument, the advent of colonial rule and the resultant dramatic transformation of Lagos into a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous urban city will be adequately examined. This paper will also examine the reaction of colonial government to the problem which led to the creation of the social welfare department in the colony of Lagos saddled with the responsibility of curbing these delinquencies.

Juvenile delinquency was one of the outcomes of social changes resulting from the conflict between African and western cultures as well as urbanisation which manifested after the advent of colonialism. While examples of this abound in several parts of Africa this paper will, however, focus its searchlight on colonial Lagos. To start with, the paper will look at the theoretical and socio-historical frameworks of these two agents of colonialism one after the other and then examine the effect of these on Lagos youths.<sup>1</sup> A number of factors have been advanced to explain the development of delinquent behaviour amongst the youth. The most common explanation advanced by the colonial administration centered on the breakdown of tribal life and family ties. A comprehensive report compiled in 1948 stressed that a high incidence and constant increase of juvenile delinquency is reported from areas where the decline of the tribal system is fairly advanced and where this decline has its counterpart in the simultaneous growth of urban and industrial centres.<sup>2</sup> This, it was agreed, was the case in Nigeria, Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, where juvenile delinquency appeared to be a specifically urban phenomenon. While this is true, juvenile delinquency resulted more from the clash of the two cultures.

Let us begin by briefly looking at the term culture. In the anthropological usage, every people and every society have a culture. This is the sum total of the integrated learned behavioural patterns characteristic of members of a society. It is the sum total of a people's customary way of doing things. This includes all aspects of their life; their social organisation, economic patterns, socially standardised techniques of doing things and the feelings shared by members of the society. An important aspect of culture is that it is learned and not biologically inherited. It is passed from one generation to the next. It constitutes the social heritage of every new generation. In every society each person is shaped by the culture in which he or she is raised, so that what he or she does, the way he or she thinks, feels and behaves will greatly depend upon the culture. Central within any culture is that which we call value. This is the implicit or explicit socially standardised concept of what is desirable or undesirable in the culture.<sup>3</sup> In the

pursuit of the values of his culture, the individual gives meaning to his life. Thus, as one goes from one culture to another, one sees different ideals and desires clearly dominating the scene. However, in any culture contact situation, the values of the culture in contact do invariably change considerably resulting in somewhat new cultures. It is this culture-contact that produces culture-conflict which in turn brings about a social change.

Culture-conflict can be described as the situation in which two cultures meet and there is a clash of interest. The impact of Western culture on African indigenous culture has created many problems and changes. Among these are the problems of cultural adaptation and the incorporation of Western laws and customs into existing tribal ones. There are also the problems of urbanisation which have brought about radical transformation of the character of African social life. There is also the issue of detribalisation which has created conditions under which the individual African natives were deprived of cultural constraints to which they were traditionally attached. The result of this was the discarding of traditional customs, and values, a trade off that accompanied colonialism. The influx of missionaries into Nigeria at the beginning of the nineteenth-century could be regarded as one of the first instances depicting the symbolic confrontation of these two cultures. However the actual assimilation, and eventual subjugation, of African culture by the West began to take shape in the first and second decades of the twentieth-century.

While nineteenth-century pre-colonial Lagos managed to maintain distinct differences between the two predominant cultures, the twentieth-century, replete with the paraphernalia of colonialism, failed to maintain the distinction as the lines of differentiation could no longer be lucidly defined. Thus, Lagos, embracing the trend of Western emulation lost its own traditions and indigenous cultural elements. This was depicted by its metamorphosis into a commercial Western city. The vestiges that the colonial mindset had entrenched were thus detrimental to indigenous cultural identity.

In other words, a new pattern of social behaviour, a product of cultural heterogeneity of cities, began to emerge. As a melting pot of cultures, the cosmopolitan and heterogeneous nature of urban Lagos that emerged during the colonial period paved way for the emergence of social vices prominent amongst which were juvenile delinquency, child-labour and new forms of criminal behaviours. Rather than conceptualising delinquency as only a problem of the stress and strain related to a weakening of social control, the idea of seeing delinquency as the outcome of a social system being constituted by two diverse cultural groups with conflicting interests, values, and norms is more probable.<sup>4</sup> Within a conflict perspective, therefore, delinquency is conceptualised not as abnormal behaviour brought on by faulty socialisation or normative ambiguity, but as a normal, political process brought about by struggle between two cultures for dominance.

### **The culture of social and juvenile control in pre-colonial Lagos**

Having considered the concept of culture-conflict it is important to examine the socio-historical aspect of culture-conflict by examining Lagos culture prior to its subversion by Western culture in the aspect of social control in order to be able to appreciate the damaging effect of culture-conflict on Lagos youth. To begin with, inherent in Lagos culture, were certain norms regarded as a form of traditional education and social control against juvenile delinquency. In pre-colonial Lagos society, as in other indigenous African societies, education involved the on-going processes of life. This was an unbroken continuity between the processes of education and the daily life of the individual. All forms of training and socialisation were carried out in the context of real life situations in contrast to the Western societies where such activities were very schematised and highly compartmentalised. One of these forms of education in Lagos was the system of seniority which established a single hierarchy of reciprocal obligations in all situations.<sup>5</sup> Traditionally, any senior had the right to unquestioned service and submissiveness from any junior. Traditional rules assigned age seniority

according to order of entry into the lineage, either by birth or by marriage. Seniority was also derived from gender, hereditary titles, designated leadership roles, physical ability, and supernatural endowment as in the case of the priesthood.<sup>6</sup>

Seniority traditionally determined task allocation and resource distribution in the labour system of the household production unit. Distinctions defining seniority were elaborate and were expressed in the myriad terms by which individuals greeted and addressed each other.<sup>7</sup> With regard to sleeping arrangements, the husband and each of his wives had their own separate rooms. Female children slept with their mothers until adulthood, as did male children during early childhood, after which time they moved onto the veranda or into a separate boys' room.<sup>8</sup> Fadipe described the intense interaction of the kinsmen and co-wives of the traditional compound:

A large part of the day is spent in the open...everyone eats and drinks and talks in the full view of everybody else; and as the rooms are hot in the daytime..., most of the life of the compound has to be passed on the open veranda...quarrels and rebukes take place within the full hearing of neighbors...each individual's weaknesses and vices are open to the observation of other[s]... People outside the immediate family are interested in its members and their welfare... This makes exclusive family life in the Western sense impossible. Only a limited amount of privacy is possible.<sup>9</sup>

Under the extended family system, divorce was also very rare because, whenever marital disagreements occurred, the elders were usually around to quickly intervene as marriage counselor and amicable settlements were consequently affected. Divorce was regarded as a challenge to the respect and dignity of the families of both partners; hence, all efforts were made to prevent its occurrence. Under the watchful eyes of the elders, spouse and children abuse were very rare.<sup>10</sup>

According to Aronson, Gugler and Flanagan, the same lack of privacy tended to prevail in urban households with unrelated occupants, although larger windows and amenities such as electric fans made it more comfortable to seek seclusion behind closed doors. Aronson asserts that a major change associated with urbanisation was the possibility of privacy, even if it was rarely realised.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to parent-and-child relationships, Lagos tradition stressed that the parents were the first teachers of their children, instructing them in the 'proper' way of relating to their elders and people of the same age group. In the communal atmosphere of the Lagos traditional family, parents of children who behaved in approved ways were approved as successful; parents whose children misbehaved were shamed and advised to 'put their houses in order'.<sup>12</sup> According to traditional Yoruba religion it was the duty of parents to bring up their children ethically and in the knowledge of God.<sup>13</sup> From the beginning children were made to believe in reward and punishment and, accordingly, in the potency of blessings and the efficacy of curses of spiritual beings. Parents' role in training is reflected in the verse from the Ifa divinatory corpus (Odu):

If one trains one's children,  
They will be perfectly wise  
As Ire, the daughter of Olokun.  
If one does not train one's children,  
They will be stupid and foolish  
Like Ibawini, the son of Otu Ife.<sup>14</sup>

Parents also must love their children and not be harsh to them or selfish. The lesson of generosity towards children is expressed in the following verses:

An elder who consumes everything without leaving a  
Remnant will himself carry his calabash home.

The dove eats and leaves a remnant for the pigeon.

The green wild pigeon eats and leaves a remnant for the mocking bird.

I will leave a remnant for my children when I eat.<sup>15</sup>

A major way in which parents taught their children was by sending them on errands and their performance of errands was found by B.B. Lloyd to be the most valued.<sup>16</sup> Errands taught the child in following sequential instructions, carrying objects, and finding neighbourhood locations, and also taught the social skills needed for verbal and commercial transactions.<sup>17</sup> Children were taught to report to their parents any kind gestures of others and to show them any gifts received and in order to gradually learn how to be honest.<sup>18</sup>

With regard to physical discipline studies have characterized parenting practices in pre-colonial Lagos as emphasising obedience, responsibility, and corporal punishment.<sup>19</sup> According to Babatunde, when Lagosian children erred they were often flogged.<sup>20</sup> The flogging was seen as an act of kindness aimed at preventing the child from becoming a difficult person or at protecting them from true danger.

After the early period of indulgence, the father was required to be a keen disciplinarian and keep a cool formal relationship with the child. Dignity had to be maintained by seniors to preserve their moral authority. The mother provided a gentle refuge from the father's firm discipline. One proverb: 'When we use the right hand to flog the child, we use the left hand to draw him back to ourselves (make him comfortable)', expresses the two divergent parental roles.<sup>21</sup>

With regard to relationships with other relatives and household members, in traditional compounds, the compound-head had wide disciplinary responsibilities.<sup>22</sup> Disrespect to elders, theft, disturbing the peace, or sexual impropriety usually was punished by flogging and warnings against recurrence. In describing traditional Lagos life, Fadipe writes:

It is chiefly within the extended family – that is, from members of his compound that a child obtains the bulk of his education as a member of society. Since the child cannot be continuously under the eyes of his parents and elder brothers and sisters, various members of the extended family take a hand in his education at one time or another. But the indirect education the child receives in the compound is almost as important as the direct. In the extended family the child is afforded frequent opportunities of various experiences not only of the practical effects of many items of the social code but also of the unpleasant consequences attending their infraction. The handling and punishment of such offences as theft or incest which occur within the household and the opinion of members on such crimes are all impressive object lessons to him.<sup>23</sup>

Some children had the privilege of being raised by their grandparents. The relationship between the child and his or her grandparents is one of over-pampering. Nevertheless, it was traditional that the grandparents raise some of their grandchildren. The proverb: 'The child of the elderly one is as spoiled as the left hand', refers both to grandparent care and to the care by the mother of her last-born child.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the importance of ethics and value in child upbringing cannot be overemphasised. The similarity between the value systems of the world religions and the traditional religion of Lagosians is striking. According to Adewale, traditional religious values of Lagosians were embodied in the extensive oral texts (Odu) of Ifa divination. He claims: 'There are only two questions for Yoruba moralists: what conduct do the gods command and what conduct do the gods forbid? Why the gods sanction or disapprove one or another line of conduct does not matter much.'<sup>25</sup> The core values expressed in Ifa are first of all respect, loyalty, and devotion to one's parents. The ethical person must not tell lies, be a talebearer, or break contractual agreements. Faithfulness and loyalty must also be accorded to one's lineage members, to one's government, and to one's

friends or age grade (formal organizations whose membership was based on predetermined age range).<sup>26</sup>

Concerning teaching manners and values there were no separate teachers of moral education. All adults inculcated moral values in children to ensure a healthy and disciplined society.<sup>27</sup> The man of principle, according to Bascom, must be gentlemanly, fearless, socially responsible, and generous.<sup>28</sup> Social responsibility was elaborately articulated through the etiquette of greetings and exchange of resources. Moreover, the language of Lagosians (Yoruba language) had a salutation for every conceivable occasion, situation, and human relationship while sitting or standing; when overtaking another on the road; at work, or at play; while carrying a load; in cold or in warm weather; for relatives, friends, and strangers. On the first meeting of the day for people from different compounds general and specific inquiries must be made about all close relatives.<sup>29</sup> An extension of the greeting code was the obligation to offer condolences or sympathy to anyone who was bereaved, ill, injured, or even momentarily indisposed. Hospitality was emphasized, with older and wealthier persons expected to express their generosity regularly through giving. Warmth, a spirit of fun, cooperation, trust, and mutual help were core values expressed through these practices.

From the foregoing, it is clear that prior to the advent of colonisation by the British in 1861, traditional social welfare or control methods were rooted in the community and were closely interlinked with social and religious structures. Moreover, the enforcement of traditional customs and beliefs was also carried out by other community structures such as age grades, secret societies or vocational guilds (for example, of hunters, farmers or fishermen). Through these diffuse systems of crime control, law and order was maintained, largely without the use of violence.

## **Colonialism and culture-conflict in Lagos**

Formal education introduced by one of the agents of Western civilisation, the missionaries created many problems. These problems were due essentially to the fact that the educational process was divorced from life patterns of the African family. As once stated by Charles S. Johnson: 'One of the problems of formal education grows out of the fact that it has lost touch with the family and that education in the school is frequently in conflict with that imparted in the family.'<sup>30</sup>

The typical African child in Western education was faced with many unusual problems of cultural conflict when he began to go to formal school. This conflict was due essentially to the discontinuity between school environment and the home environment. Moreover, most of the educational approaches forced upon Lagosian peoples never took into consideration the basic cultural values of the people, nor even considered the positive and strong human qualities of the people. Formal Western education processes continued to function as instruments for deculturalising the African peoples so as to bend them more towards the white European cultures and value systems.<sup>31</sup>

When the indigenous training of children and the young people in Lagos society is compared with the modern school systems that were introduced by the missionaries, certain features of the traditional patterns appeared to have been abandoned. In particular this was reflected by those which showed the close correlation between the training of personality and cohesion of family, clan and tribal units.<sup>32</sup>

The effects of the formal school system on the traditional culture of Lagosians are numerous. To start with, it is often claimed by way of criticism of the missionaries that their emphasis was too much on literacy and numeracy *per se* without much attention being given to practical training. To some extent this was

true. The primary reason for introducing the school was to facilitate the missionary effort. In addition, the colonial authorities, and the commercial houses operating in the country needed locally trained literates to assist them. As such, only a good grounding in the 'three Rs' (reading, writing and arithmetic) was necessary. However, as colonialism gained a strong foothold towards the end of the nineteenth-century when there was great demand for artisans, carpenters, masons, tailors in addition to clerks because of the expanding economy, enough attention was given to practical or vocational training. Some education on practical agriculture was also given. The problem was that, despite this approach, literacy was still the prime aim of education and practical training, though found desirable, did not have the same appeal nor did it confer the same degree of status as academic qualifications. The pupils were being trained to emulate the lifestyles of the Europeans who were for the most part involved in bookwork. The result was that, despite some effort on the part of the missionaries to deemphasise the academic content of education, the attempt never quite succeeded and interest in these areas eventually waned.

The emphasis on literacy and the foreign content of education combined to seriously alienate Lagosians from their traditional environment and culture. As the most lucrative jobs opened to them were those requiring their newly-acquired ability to read and write, and these jobs, apart from teaching, were located mostly in the larger towns, there was always the tendency on the part of school leavers to migrate.

Formal education also forced people to take to European lifestyles. In dress, food-habits, music, dance, entertainment and many other aspects of social life it became the fashion for school leavers to follow the Europeans. In fact, it was the lure of these European ways which gave the greatest attraction to education, at least for a large number of people. In this connection, it should be remembered that traditional culture was not only absent from the school curriculum, but concerted attempts were made to prevent the pupils from following it. Thus,

presence at, or participation in, traditional dancing was for a pupil an offence requiring several lashes. The result of all these measures was that school leavers tended to know a lot about European ways of doing things, and about European countries but very little about their own environment. They did not know how their own villages or traditional areas were governed but were expected to know the workings of the British Parliament, the American War of Independence, and the British conquest of India. Ballroom dancing was admirable but traditional dancing was for illiterates.

### **The root of culture-conflict: colonialism and the urbanisation of Lagos**

A major factor responsible for the emergence of culture-conflict in colonial Lagos was urbanisation. Writers from Ravenstein to Mabogunje have propounded many theories relating to urbanisation.<sup>33</sup> However, in order to drive home the argument that culture-conflict is a product of urbanisation as exemplified in the unprecedented growth of cities. This is a reflection of the new capitalist edifice put in place by alien rule and a concomitant new pattern of social outlook or behaviour that emerged. Therefore, we need to examine the evolution of urbanism in Lagos.

The original site of Lagos is an island located between the sea and the lagoon that gave Lagos its name in Portuguese. At the beginning of the nineteenth-century, Lagos became the main slave port along the Slave Coast but it was still a small town when the British annexed it in 1861.<sup>34</sup> During the second half of the nineteenth-century, the population increased slowly from 25,000 in 1866 to 38,387 in 1901 (see Table 1 below). The progressive export substitution of palm oil for slaves and the consolidation of the position of Lagos on the West African coast attracted European merchants, ex-slaves from Brazil and Cuba, slaves freed by the British on the coast and refugees from the interior.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 1: Population growth of selected Nigerian cities (1866-1963)**

	1866	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951-3	1960-3
Lagos	25,083	32,508	38,387	73,766	99,700	126,000	230,250	665,246
Ibadan	100,000	120,000a		175,000	238,000	387,000	459,000	600,000
Kano	30,000b					96,000	127,205	400,000

(a) Rough estimate from Alvan Millson, 'The Yorubas country, West Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 13 (1891), 583.

(b) Rough estimate for 1824 from D. Denham, H. Clapperton and N. Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823 and 1824*, (London, 1828).<sup>36</sup>

The imposition of colonial rule facilitated the movement of people from one part of the country to another. The 'Pax Britannica' imposed by the British was further promoted by the commencement of rail lines which opened up communities and the development of port facilities in Lagos.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Lagos as an urban centre generally attracted a lot of people due to the availability of infrastructural facilities which included electricity, pipe-borne water, tarmac roads and greater economic opportunities.<sup>38</sup>

The second phase of urbanisation that can be described as social was the result of the development of infrastructural facilities, namely the rise of new pattern of social behaviour, a product of cultural heterogeneity.<sup>39</sup> As a melting pot of cultures, the cosmopolitan and heterogeneous nature of urban Lagos that emerged during the colonial period paved way for the emergence of social vices. Numerous beer parlours, cinema houses and several places that were stigmatised as 'red-light districts' known for urbanised behaviour and 'deviant characters' emerged. Moreover, as a container and transmitter of culture, Lagos, like other cities, was characterized by dual role as solvent. For example, it was

seen as 'weakening traditional social ties and loosening the hold of traditional beliefs and values.'<sup>40</sup>

One major factor that caused this was the influx of migrants from all over the country as well as from overseas. Lagos witnessed high levels of migration not only at the tail end of the nineteenth-century but also in the first half of the twentieth-century.<sup>41</sup> The population of Lagos increased from 41,847 in 1901 to 230,256 in 1950.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the number of non-Yoruba migrants increased from 14,478 to 61,057 during the same period.<sup>43</sup> There were four groups of migrants namely, the Europeans, the Saro, the Amaro and the Yoruba indigenes.<sup>44</sup> While the first three groups were foreigners, the fourth group of migrants were the indigenous peoples who migrated from the interior, especially from Abeokuta, Ijebu, and Oyo provinces. Several factors were responsible for this, such as the presence of a seaport which led to economic growth and widened the gap between economic opportunities in the colony and the protectorate, the location of the main railway terminal, and availability of basic infrastructures. For the local migrants, however, the most important factor stimulating immigration to Lagos was the widening gap in employment opportunities between Lagos and the rest of the country.<sup>45</sup>

### **Impact of culture-conflict and urbanism on Lagosian youths: the rise of juvenile delinquency**

With the large-scale migration coupled with improvement in infrastructure, Lagos developed into a formidable heterogeneous city with a colonial urban lifestyle.<sup>46</sup> The social character of Lagos can therefore be appreciated from the heterogeneous outlook that the city took by the 1920s when colonial rule had been firmly established in the country. Although the history of cultural heterogeneity of Lagos can be traced to the late nineteenth-century when ex-slaves began to arrive, the picture which developed at the beginning of the twentieth-century was that which allowed a lot of intermingling of cultures. Social

urbanisation thus emerged with a high level of cultural diversity and this gave birth to a new pattern of social behaviour. This behaviour was negative and it affected both adult and youths. Largely due to the inflow of migrants, Lagos remained a predominantly male and youthful city throughout the period.<sup>47</sup> The age composition shows an increasing proportion in the under-thirty age group, climbing from 62 percent in 1921 to 78 percent in 1972. Within this population the proportion of children under fifteen years of age rose from 27 percent in 1931 to 43 percent in 1963.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, as the value of urban land increased, pre-colonial patterns of land tenure, generally based on lineage and family, changed progressively to a new colonial pattern based on rent.<sup>49</sup> In Lagos the Yoruba family compound broke down into smaller residential units rented out to migrants.<sup>50</sup> With renting, control over tenants and social control over the youths tended to diminish. To keep control over their communities both indigenous dwellers and migrant settlers created political, religious, ethnic or neighbourhood associations.<sup>51</sup> It is obvious, however, that most of the local unions were too loosely organised and short of funds to aid more than a small minority of the poor. Social workers also noted the lack of parental control, family disintegration and the harsh discipline in local schools as factors pushing so many children on to the street. According to Peter Marris: 'Much of the delinquency of children in Lagos is a reaction to the severity and lack of understanding of their teachers and guardians'.<sup>52</sup>

Juvenile delinquency became visible in Lagos from the mid-1920s. Before then there was no mention either in African newspapers, like the *Lagos Daily Times* and the *Nigerian Pioneer*, or in police reports of specific offences involving youths. The first indications of these offences appeared in the late 1920s. From the 1920s to the 1960s, three important features shaped the juvenile delinquency milieu: the increase in the number of young offenders; the affirmation of the existence of male offender youth groups; and the emergence of an organised network of juvenile prostitution. The Senior Resident in Lagos considered that the

average number of cases involving juveniles convicted in Nigeria was only 30 a year between 1927 and 1930, but rose to 112 cases in 1934 and 158 cases in 1935.<sup>53</sup> The very high proportion of petty offences against property was a structural feature of youth offences during the colonial period as a whole. Thefts of less than five pounds comprised half of the cases brought before the Juvenile Court of Lagos during 1945-47 and in the 1960s.<sup>54</sup> The second feature of the period is the emergence of youth criminal groups. There is only limited evidence of offences committed by youth gangs in early colonial Lagos, but this period needs further research. Cases reported by the *Nigerian Pioneer* in 1923 and 1924 involved single young pickpockets operating in crowded places (the post office, railway stations and Tinubu square).<sup>55</sup> Later in the 1920s criminal activities reported both in Lagos and Ibadan were more often by youth groups known as 'Jaguda Boys'.<sup>56</sup> The term 'Jaguda' means pickpocket in Yoruba. The first recorded instance concerns a well-known Lagos pickpocket called Salami Jaguda who was sentenced to nine months hard labour for stealing a huge sum of money from a rich merchant in 1924.<sup>57</sup> The term 'Jaguda', however, did not portray an organised group of youth offenders before the end of the 1920s in Lagos and the beginning of the 1930s in Ibadan. The way that Lagos newspapers reported these cases actually shows the discovery of an apparently new phenomenon. In 1926 the attention of the *Nigerian Pioneer* was called to the 'frequency of assaults on girls by young men and boys...the molestations which follow usually elicit retorts and a squabble follows [sic]'.<sup>58</sup> The *Lagos Daily Times* also reported 'certain bands of young men who parade certain portions of the town armed with sticks or whips. This particular type of hooliganism shows no sign of decreasing and is particularly prevalent during Christmas week.'<sup>59</sup> In 1929 several reports reached the *Lagos Daily Times* about repeated attacks on Carter Bridge between Iddo Station (the terminal station of the Kano-Lagos railway) and Lagos Island:

These pickpockets...would follow (the strangers) to the middle of the bridge, and pretend to be fighting one with the other and eventually knock or push

themselves against the strangers who would be confused, and in such confusion they rob the poor fellows of whatever cash they may be having on them.<sup>60</sup>

Jaguda Boys were originally practical associations of destitute street boys who operated in small groups in order to frighten their victims.<sup>61</sup> They were the historical parents of the present 'Area Boys' with whom they share some common practices.<sup>62</sup> They provoked quarrels in the streets to relieve the victims of their money during the confusion before escaping. They developed collective strategies with shared responsibilities to minimise the risk of being arrested by the police. They generally extorted money from easy targets (such as strangers, farmers, and women) and their main places for these activities were streets, markets and crowded public places such as motor parks, train and bus stations.

During the Second World War the expression 'Boma Boys' first appeared in the Lagos press.<sup>63</sup> The term, according to Fourchard, was probably brought to the West Coast of Africa from America where a 'bum' was a vagrant, a good-for-nothing.<sup>64</sup> The term referred to young boys who acted as unlicensed guides for the thousands of African and European soldiers who stopped in Lagos during the war. Originally, Boma Boys guided them from the port to various places in Lagos such as canteens, bars, night clubs and brothels.<sup>65</sup> Because Boma Boys shared the same public space and often the same practices as the Jaguda Boys they were often considered as an identical menace during that period. A more comprehensive enquiry into these groups was conducted by Donald Faulkner, the first Welfare Officer of the colony in 1941. According to him, there were two groups of boys:

The under twelve group was composed of children left stranded in Lagos, orphans, runaways from home and boys brought to Lagos by older people. They live by begging, petty theft and are in poor physical conditions.<sup>66</sup>

The over-twelve group fell into three sub-groups: inexperienced and destitute boys; delinquent adolescents; and Boma Boys. The difference among the three groups is probably the level of organisation. Boma Boys we considered here to act as a collective group which could be involved in serious crime.

### **Government response to juvenile delinquency in colonial Lagos**

It is interesting to note that nobody within the colonial administration in Nigeria considered juvenile delinquency as a problem until the 1930s. Indeed, it was largely ignored and the existing ordinances were considered to be comprehensive enough to deal with the few cases. This is, however, not surprising because from the beginning of colonial rule the colonial government had devoted itself to the sole purpose of colonialism: to exploit raw materials to feed their metropolitan industries while at the same time creating a ready market to dispose their finished goods. While traders were busy with their 'unequal exchange', the colonial government was established for the purpose of protecting them. That the British had no time for social welfare is therefore understandable.

However, if the issue of juvenile delinquency was largely ignored by the colonial administration it was noticed early by Lagos newspapers which soon protested against criminal activities as well as youth offenders. The *Nigerian Pioneer* and the *Nigerian Daily Times* were undoubtedly more conservative and less critical of the administration than the *Daily News* inaugurated in 1925 by Herbert Macaulay and the *West African Pilot* founded in 1937 by Nnamdi Azikiwe.<sup>67</sup> However, on the issue of youth criminal activities, all these newspapers were united in one voice against these criminals invariably described as 'ruffians', 'young scoundrels', 'undesirable pests', 'hooligans' and more generally considered as a 'menace' to the society.<sup>68</sup> Yet the issue did not catch the attention of the colonial government and the major nationalist leaders in Lagos who were busy with politics from the 1920s onwards.<sup>69</sup> They did not read any of the articles concerned, as they did not generally appear on the front page. However, many

victims did report their experiences to Lagos newspapers which then affirmed them as representing the voice of 'peaceful tax payers and law abiding citizens.'<sup>70</sup> Most of the newspapers - even the more conservative ones - were critical of government handling of crime. They recommended increasing the number of policemen in specific hot-spots and denounced the lack of police presence on the mainland to protect an emerging African working class against armed robbers.<sup>71</sup>

It was, however, the welfare policies implemented during the Second World War that provoked adverse reactions from different political parties, especially because it concerned juvenile prostitution and hawking by young girls. During the 1930s repeated complaints against the young criminals apparently did not modify the colonial administration's perception of youth. Its position eventually changed when the Governor Hugh Clifford realized in 1940 that the 'activities of the Boma Boys were becoming something very much worse than a mere nuisance.'<sup>72</sup> This was followed in December by the promulgation of the Unlicensed Guides (Prohibition) Ordinance that punished severely the harassment of European and African soldiers by Boma Boys. This local ordinance should be seen as a reaction against a group that was considered unpatriotic in wartime. Within two months, seven articles on Boma Boys had appeared in the *Nigerian Daily Times* and the *West African Pilot* congratulating the government's initiative. Just after the promulgation of the Unlicensed Guide Ordinance, the Governor of Nigeria asked Donald Faulkner, then Director of the Approved School at Enugu, to investigate vagrant boys in Lagos. After submitting Faulkner's report, the Governor-General asked the Colonial Office to appoint an officer responsible for juvenile welfare in Lagos.<sup>73</sup> This request, combined with the willingness of the Governor of Sierra Leone to build a reformatory school in Freetown, led the Colonial Penal Administration Committee to set up a Juvenile Delinquency sub-committee with the task of considering 'the question of juvenile delinquency in the Colonies and the Dependencies with a view to its prevention and proper treatment.'<sup>74</sup> Alexander Patterson, Commissioner of Prisons for England and

Wales and chairman of the committee, decided to appoint Donald Faulkner as the first Social Welfare Officer in the British Empire.<sup>75</sup> The Juvenile Delinquency sub-committee, renamed the Child and Youth Welfare sub-committee after the War, was composed of top colonial advisers and welfare officers and had the task of advising the Colonial Office on the best way to deal with youth and children in the colonies. It was largely influenced by the way British children and youth had been dealt with by reformers. From 1941 to 1943, Faulkner produced various reports based on his Lagos fieldwork.<sup>76</sup> He considered poverty, the breakdown of the 'traditional African family' and urbanisation as the main causes of the rise of juvenile destitution and youth offences. These two factors were the result of culture-conflict. Among the 229 boys who passed through the Green Triangle Hostel between February 1942 and August 1943, only 78 had parents living in Lagos. Faulkner came to the conclusion that 'the lack of a permanent and stable home is the main factor.'<sup>77</sup> Most of the activities identified as dangerous for children and youth took place in the street: working; hawking; trading; and prostitution. Consequently, most of Faulkner's recommendations were oriented towards one main objective: to remove children and youth from the criminal influence of the street. Prevention and repression constituted the two sides of his recommendation. In order to keep boys and girls off the street, Faulkner advocated the development of youth clubs and playing facilities (playing fields for football, swimming pools and so on). At the same time, hostels could be used to keep children from delinquency as paupers, street traders, beggars and school boy drop-outs, to assist those in need of 'care and protection' (such as the handicapped, orphans, and juvenile prostitutes) and to provide a safe haven separated from adults for children awaiting trial or repatriation.<sup>78</sup> He also proposed to ban female child hawking because girls 'were criminally assaulted and seduced at a very tender age...13 years of age or under.'<sup>79</sup> Boys and girls clubs had a similar objective of providing discipline, regulation, guidance and improvement. In other words, the colonial state recognised the effect of culture-conflict on the traditional extended family and wanted to bring a lasting solution to this problem by ensuring that children were 'properly' educated, disciplined and

given moral guidance. However, it must be noted that lack of finance denied the colonial state the power to bring a lasting solution to the problem, and as a result, it still persists today.

## **Conclusion**

The above paper examined the effect of culture-conflict on colonial Lagos. It traced the root of culture-conflict to colonialism and the attendant urbanisation of Lagos. The paper also exposed the impact of culture-conflict and urbanism on Lagos youths showing how large-scale migration coupled with infrastructural development transformed Lagos into a formidable heterogeneous city with a colonial urban lifestyle thus giving rise to juvenile delinquency. Lastly, the paper examined government belated response to juvenile delinquency in colonial Lagos. By-and-large, culture-conflict in colonial Lagos exerted a great influence on the local community, the family, the school, and the peer group which affected the youth. Juvenile delinquency which occurred in colonial Lagos could therefore be regarded as a consequence of this. As a result of the inability of the colonial government to affectively curb their menace, delinquents had developed into urban gangs and, until today, have continued to roam about the city periodically to steal and to rob people. At present, delinquent behavior may be seen as an adaptation by youths who have become alienated from the family and school and are thrust into a marginal social position for which the government and the urban community lacked the institutions and agencies to channel the youngsters' needs and energies into conventional outlets. This is because of the inability of post-colonial governments to sustain the institutions and agencies created for this purpose by the colonial government.

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<sup>1</sup> Various works have been written on the impact of colonialism and culture change on youth, some of which are: Andrew Burton, 'Urchins, loafers and the cult of the cowboys: urbanisation

and delinquency in Dar es Salam, 1919-61', *Journal of African History*, vol. 42, 2001, pp. 199-216; Clive Glaser, *Bo Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001; Simon Heap, 'Jagoda Boys: pickpocketing in Ibadan, 1930-60', *Urban History*, vol. 24, 1997, pp. 324-343; Yves Marguerat, 'Les Smallvi ne sont pas des Gevouvi', *Histoire de la Journal of African History*, vol. 47, 2006, pp. 115-137.

<sup>2</sup> 'Juvenile Delinquency and its treatment, 1948, Oyo Prov.', File No. 1352. National Archive, Ibadan.

<sup>3</sup> John Honigmann, *The world of Man*, Haper and Brothers Publishers, New York, 1959, p. 595.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Little, *Urbanisation as a Social Process: An African Case Study*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973.

<sup>5</sup> D.R. Aronson, *The City is Our Farm*, Schenkman, Cambridge, MA, 1980, pp. 93-94.

<sup>6</sup> P.C. Lloyd, *Power and Independence, Urban Africans' Perception of Social Inequality*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974, pp. 35-36.

<sup>7</sup> N.A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1970, p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> N.A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> N.A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>10</sup> Adewale Rotimi, 'Paradox of Progress: The Role of Western Education in the Transformation of the Family in Nigeria', *Anthropologist*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2005, pp. 137-147.

<sup>11</sup> Aronson, *The City is Our Farm*; and W. G. Flanagan, *Urbanisation and Social Change in West Africa*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1978.

<sup>12</sup> E.D. Babatunde, *Culture, Religion, and the Self: A Critical Study of Bini and Yoruba Value Systems in Change*, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, NY, 1992, pp. 8-10.

<sup>13</sup> S.A. Adewale, 'Ethics in Ifa', in S.O. Abogunrin (ed.), *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*, Daystar Press, Ibadan, 1986, pp. 60-71.

<sup>14</sup> Adewale, 'Ethics in Ifa', p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> Adewale, 'Ethics in Ifa', p. 66.

<sup>16</sup> B.B. Lloyd, 'Yoruba Mothers' Reports of Child-rearing: Some Theoretical and Methodological Considerations', in P. Mayer, (ed.), *Socialization: The Approach from Social Anthropology*, Tavistock Press, New York, 1970, p. 83; M.E.B. Akinware, P.A. Wilson-Oyelaran, D. P. Ladipo, and M.F. Zeitlin, *Child Care and Development in Nigeria: A Profile of Five UNICEF-Assisted LGAs*, UNICEF, Lagos, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> J. Timyan, *Cultural Aspects of Psycho-Social Development: An Examination of West African Childrearing Practices*, UNICEF, 1988.

<sup>18</sup> Babatunde, *Culture, Religion, and the Self*, pp. 8-12.

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd, 'Yoruba Mothers' Reports of Child-rearing', p. 85.

<sup>20</sup> Babatunde, *Culture, Religion, and the Self*, pp 8-12.

<sup>21</sup> R. A. LeVine, N.H. Klein, and C.R. Owen, 'Father-Child Relationships and Changing Lifestyles in Ibadan, Nigeria', in H. Miner (ed.), *The City in Modern Africa*, Praeger, New York, 1967, p. 239.

<sup>22</sup> Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>23</sup> Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>24</sup> Babatunde, *Culture, Religion, and the Self*, pp. 8-12.

<sup>25</sup> Adewale, 'Ethics in Ifa', pp. 60-71.

<sup>26</sup> Adewale, 'Ethics in Ifa', pp. 60-71.

<sup>27</sup> Adewale, 'Ethics in Ifa', pp. 60-71.

<sup>28</sup> W.A. Bascom, *Ifa Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1969.

<sup>29</sup> Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, pp. 301-302.

<sup>30</sup> Charles S. Johnson, *Education and Cultural Crisis*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1951, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> P. C. Onwauchi, 'African peoples and Western Education', *The Journal of Western Education*, vol. 41, no.3, Summer 1972, p. 243.

<sup>32</sup> M.H. Read, 'Education in Africa: Its Pattern and Role in Social Change', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 298, March 1955, p. 171.

<sup>33</sup> E.G. Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 48, no. 2, 1885; Akin Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, Longman, London, 1968.

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- <sup>34</sup> Robin Law, 'Trade and politics behind the Slave Coast: the Lagoon traffic and the rise of Lagos, 1500–1800', *Journal of African History*, vol. 24, 1983, pp. 321–348.
- <sup>35</sup> Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, p. 259.
- <sup>36</sup> Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, pp. 327-9.
- <sup>37</sup> Wale Oyemakinde, 'A History of Indigenous Labour on the Nigerian Railway, 1895-1945', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 1970.
- <sup>38</sup> Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, p. 112.
- <sup>39</sup> Kenneth Little, *Urbanisation as a Social Process: An African Case Study*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973.
- <sup>40</sup> Saheed Aderinto, 'Prostitution: A Social Legacy of Colonialism in Nigeria', *French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA) Research Review*, 2004.
- <sup>41</sup> Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, pp. 257-273.
- <sup>42</sup> Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, pp. 257-273.
- <sup>43</sup> Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, pp. 257-273.
- <sup>44</sup> P. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, Longman, London, 1975, pp. 73-104.
- <sup>45</sup> Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, p. 261.
- <sup>46</sup> Aderinto, 'Prostitution', p. 3.
- <sup>47</sup> Mabogunje, *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, p. 265.
- <sup>48</sup> Paulin H. Baker, *Urbanisation and Political Change: The Politics of Lagos, 1917-1967*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974, p. 40.
- <sup>49</sup> Laurent Fourchard, 'Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria, 1920-60', *Journal of African History*, vol. 47, 2006, p. 118.
- <sup>50</sup> Peter Marris, *Family and Social Change in an African City: A Study of Rehousing in Lagos*, Northwestern, 1962, pp. 12-42.
- <sup>51</sup> Marris, *Family and Social Change in an African City*, pp. 12-42.
- <sup>52</sup> Marris, *Family and Social Change in an African City*, pp. 12-42.
- <sup>53</sup> *Nigerian Daily Times*, 31 July 1936.
- <sup>54</sup> Alan Milner, *The Nigerian Penal System*, London, 1972, p. 352.
- <sup>55</sup> 'Pickpockets at the general post office, Lagos', *Nigerian Pioneer*, 3 November 1923; 'Pickpockets again at the central post office', *Nigerian Pioneer*, 7 December 1923; 'Pickpocket in Iddo railway station', *Nigerian Pioneer*, 7 November 1924; 'Pickpocket in Lagos', *Nigerian Pioneer*, 4 December 1924.
- <sup>56</sup> Simon Heap, 'Jaguda Boys: pickpocketing in Ibadan, 1930-60', *Urban History*, vol. 24, 1997, pp. 324-343.
- <sup>57</sup> 'Pickpocket in Lagos', *Nigerian Pioneer*, 4 December 1924.
- <sup>58</sup> 'Assault on a girl', *Nigerian Pioneer*, 29 January 1926.
- <sup>59</sup> 'Local hooliganism', *Lagos Daily Times*, 21 June 1929.
- <sup>60</sup> *Lagos Daily Times*, 2 May 1929.
- <sup>61</sup> Fourchard, 'Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria', p. 124.
- <sup>62</sup> Fourchard, 'Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria', p. 124.
- <sup>63</sup> 'Boma Boys', *West African Pilot*, 16 November 1940.
- <sup>64</sup> Fourchard, 'Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria', p. 125.
- <sup>65</sup> 'A Report on social welfare on the Colony and Protectorate by Alexander Patterson, March, 1944, Commissioner for Colony (Comcol) 1', File No. 2600 National Archive, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- <sup>66</sup> 'Comcol 1', File No. 2471, 1941.
- <sup>67</sup> J. S. Coleman, *Background to Nationalism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985, p. 185.
- <sup>68</sup> Below are a few examples of the news items where juvenile delinquency was decried: 'Assault on a Girl', *Nigerian Pioneer*, 29 January 1926; 'Pickpocketing pestilence', *Lagos Daily Times*, 2 May 1929; 'Boma Boys', *West African Pilot*, 16 November 1940; 'This Jaguda menace', *West African Pilot*, 22 Nov. 1940; 'The Boma Boy menace', *Nigerian Daily Times*, 30 December 1940; 'Menace of pickpockets', *Nigerian Daily Times*, 27 October 1941; 'Pickpockets at large', *Nigerian Daily Times*, 10 April 1942; 'The Jaguda menace', *Nigerian Daily Times*, 2 April 1942; 'A case for action', *Nigerian Daily Times*, 12 June 1943.

<sup>69</sup> Fred I. A. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1978, pp. 227-240.

<sup>70</sup> 'Hooliganism in Lagos streets', *Nigerian Daily Times*, 18 May 1946.

<sup>71</sup> Fourchard, 'Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria', p. 29.

<sup>72</sup> *West African Pilot*, 16 November 1940.

<sup>73</sup> Fourchard, 'Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria', p. 130.

<sup>74</sup> 'Comcol 1', 2600, 1944.

<sup>75</sup> 'Comcol 1', 2600, 1944.

<sup>76</sup> 'Comcol 1', 2471 and 2844, 1941.

<sup>77</sup> 'Comcol 1', 2600, 1943.

<sup>78</sup> 'Comcol 1', 2600, 1943.

<sup>79</sup> 'Comcol 1', 2844, 1942.