



**Thesis**

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**VIOLENT CIUMES IN LAGOS,  
1861-2000: NATURE, RESPONSES AND  
IMPACT**

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**VIOLENT CRIMES IN LAGOS, 1861-2000: NATURE, RESPONSES AND IMPACT**

BY

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**B.A., M.A., LAGOS**



**BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN HISTORY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS**

**DECEMBER, 2007**

**SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS**

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that the Thesis:

**“VIOLENT CRIMES IN LAGOS, 1861-2000: NATURE,  
RESPONSES AND IMPACT”**

Submitted to the  
School of Postgraduate Studies  
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For the award of the degree of  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph. D)**  
is a record of original research carried out

By  
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the glory of God, and to the memory of those who, like my late aunt, Princess (Mrs) Elizabeth Adedotun Okuyelu, had been forced to their untimely grave by men of the underworld.

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## ABSTRACT

Armed robbery and murder are two of the social problems that bedevil the city of Lagos. Although these phenomena have their roots in the pre-independence era, they grew worse in the post-colonial period, particularly after the Nigerian Civil War. To curb this menace, the government responded with the imposition of the death penalty as the highest punishment for the offence of armed robbery in 1970. Mob lynching or what is locally referred to as the 'necklace treatment' also emerged in the same decade as the most brutal popular reaction to this menace while murder continued to attract the death penalty as had been the case since the colonial period.

Yet, the aforementioned crimes persisted. Armed robbery for instance continued long after the end of the Nigerian Civil War indicating that the effect of the war on the offence could only have been momentary. The offence of murder equally deepened. Old traditions of ritual killings equally became rapidly adapted for individual ends. This thesis analyzes the dynamism of official and popular responses to these vexing issues. It argues that the occurrence of these offences have been episodic, rising and falling due to prolonged economic depression, greed, and a breakdown in inter-personal relationships. The thesis demonstrates that official responses to these crimes were not far reaching enough, and that government actually requires a policy shift to address frontally the crime question in the nation's social, commercial and industrial hub. The study is heavily dependent on interviews which were achieved by purposive sampling. Press reports which cover a wide range of issues on banditry and murder during our period including some exclusive stories on some celebrated bandits in Lagos were analysed. A very important source for this study was the numerous government files consulted at two very important repositories - National Archives, Ibadan and the National Archives of the United Kingdom at Kew Gardens. Police records in the colonial and post-colonial periods were also very useful. Information from these various sources was

checked and cross-checked for authenticity in a most rigorous manner. Folk songs and some very popular Yoruba and Igbo dictums on stealing and character were also used in a most incisive and effective manner to place the thesis in its proper cultural context.

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The French Institute for Research in Africa deserves special mention here. Under the leadership of its Director, Dr. Laurent Fourchard, I competed for, and won a French Scholarship to proceed to France for an intensive training in Research Methodology. This proved a turning point for my studies in several ways. To start with, I had to learn the French Language which later exposed me to literature in French that otherwise would not have been considered because of language barrier. Today, I am bi-lingual. Second, while in France, I had the opportunity of visiting several libraries, among which I found the Centre for Research and Documentation (Centre du Recherche et Documentation), Paris 7, and the Centre for African Studies Library (Centre d'études Africaines Bibliothèque) on 54, Boulevard Raspail, Paris, very useful. It was while visiting the latter on one occasion that I discovered that a specialist journal, *The International Journal for the History of Crime and Criminal Justice*, exists. Also, most of the very illuminating materials for this study were obtained from there. Third and very important is the fact that while in France, and by virtue of the fact that I was attending a French University on the bill of the French Government, through IFRA and the French Embassy in Nigeria, it became very easy for me to travel to London. This singular trip made it possible for me to visit the Public Records Office, London, where I collected very useful archival materials, and the British Newspaper Library at Colindale where I made copies of old colonial Nigerian newspapers that were stored in microfiche.

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Paul Osifodunrin

December 2007

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASP - ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE

C.S.O - CHIEF SECRETARY'S OFFICE

CAREL - CENTRE AUDIO VISUEL DE ROYAN POUR L'ETUDE DES LANGUES

CID - CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT

CO - COLONY OFFICE

COMCOL - COMMISSIONER OF THE COLONY

COP - COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

CPTED - CRIME PROTECTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

DANQ - DES ARCHIVES NATIONALE, QUANDO, COUTONOU

FN - FILE NUMBER

IKE DIV. - IKEJA DIVISION

N.A.I. - NATIONAL ARCHIVES, IBADAN

PRO - PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, LONDON

SEDET - SOCIETE EN DEVELOPPEMENT DANS L'ESPACE ET DANS LE TEMPS

SMG - SUB-MACHINE GUN

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background to the study

Public outcry, media reports - print and electronic, and tales by victims and relations of victims more than the official criminal statistics, paint the most compelling picture of the rising rate and frightening state of violent crimes in contemporary Lagos. Curiously, few scholars have attempted to examine the historical dimension of these crimes despite the fact that most of the inhabitants of Lagos, including historians, feel their impact and discuss the ills associated with them. Existing studies on violent crimes in Lagos are mostly non-historical.<sup>1</sup> In addition, these studies have concentrated on the post-1960 period. Hence, little or nothing is known about the nature of these crimes, and their occurrence in Lagos, in the pre-independence era.

Indeed, Lagos has been chosen as study area by many distinguished scholars including reputable historians. Yet, it appears that until now, historical studies on crime in the city are sparse.<sup>2</sup> The study of crime was probably considered the prerogative of lawyers and social scientists. Another plausible reason for the neglect of this aspect of Lagos history is that historians – Nigerians and foreigners – had preference for political, economic and aspects of social themes other than crime. Nonetheless, few scholars had broached the theme.<sup>3</sup> This thesis argues that, the study of crime in Lagos and elsewhere in Nigeria should be of interest to researchers from every discipline since almost everybody is affected or threatened by the danger that crime poses to the security of lives and property. Consequently, this study embarks on the historical study of crime in Lagos by examining the nature of two violent crimes - armed robbery and murder - in Nigeria's commercial and industrial nerve centre from 1861-2000.

Specifically, the study puts into perspective the menace of armed robbery and murder in Lagos, and investigates if **these violent crimes represent a new order or a sustained disorder**. The study argues that armed robbery and murder had been prevalent in Lagos since the pre-colonial period although the two crimes became more intense and sophisticated in the post-

independence period, particularly after the Nigerian Civil War. In addition, the study analyses the various official and popular responses to these crimes and their impact on the society. Ultimately, the study enriches our understanding of the phenomenon of crime in the city of Lagos by providing knowledge about its occurrence and treatment from a long-term perspective.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Lagos is a city contending with many problems, one of which is the insecurity of lives and property. Most Lagosians live in fear of crime, and of becoming a victim of one violent crime or the other, particularly armed robbery and murder.<sup>4</sup> In consequence, people react consciously or unconsciously to this real or perceived danger to their person or property by redesigning and reinforcing their homes<sup>5</sup>, reshaping their life style as exemplified by the early closure of business premises and dwindling nightlife in Lagos as people retire early into their homes which are no safer.

Indeed, the degree of fear of the criminal is better appreciated when it is realised as indicated by existing evidence that having no cash or valuables to steal when attacked by armed robbers has often led to assault of crime victims in Lagos. Instances also abound where crime victims were molested despite their preparedness to accede to the demands of the criminals. In many cases, the crime of rape was committed at the scene of robbery with grave consequences for the victims and their families. At other times, people had been murdered through ritual killings, political assassinations and from conflicts that emanated from inter-personal relationships.

Armed robbery and murder are a social problem with a high degree of constraining influence on people's lives in Lagos. Recently, Mr. Babatunde Fashola, the Governor of Lagos State alluded to this fact at the inauguration of a security committee to combat the menace of insecurity in the city. According to him, Lagos is at present inhabited by "a citizenry living in fear as a result of wanton and rabid activities of armed robbers and miscreants who have taken delight in striking at random in the state."<sup>6</sup> The fear of the criminal and prayers for protection

against becoming a victim have therefore become the beginning of wisdom for many in Lagos. Even churches and mosques have become insecure in recent times. Clergymen have been attacked by robbers. Also, the police have not been spared as some of its officers, and rank and file had been killed by armed robbers. More worrisome is the fact that policemen often run away from robbery scenes due to the superior firepower of the bandits. The recent murder of Engineer Funso Williams also indicates that the victims of crime in Lagos cut across all social strata.

Consequently, there is a feeling of frustration with the security situation in the city as existing investments are endangered while new investors are scared away. Buck passing on the saddening security situation in the state is also noticeable with government and the police blaming the people for not being forthcoming in assisting the police to tackle the crime menace. The people in turn resort to self-help which sometimes manifests in mob lynching of suspected criminals while they accuse the police of complicity, and the government for its inept and cosmetic handling of the crime question. **This study therefore sets out to understand the nature of armed robbery and murder in Lagos from 1861-2000, and to shed light on how government and the people dealt with these crimes and why they persisted despite these responses.**

### **Objectives of the Study**

Few studies exist on violent crimes in Lagos. The aim of this research is to fill this gap. Its objectives are:

- To provide knowledge and stimulate a thorough discussion on the nature of violent crimes in Lagos in the remote and recent past.
- To examine how the initial frontier nature of Lagos, its colony status, prosperity, labour conditions and unemployment aided criminality in the city.
- To determine the nature and context of armed robbery in Lagos.
- To examine the role of cults and charms in the occurrence and control of criminality in Lagos.

- To investigate the nature and context of murder in Lagos.
- To examine how government and the people responded to the menace of robbery and murder in Lagos.
- To determine the impact of armed robbery and murder on the inhabitants of Lagos.
- To produce a historical work that could give instructive direction to the formulation of crime prevention and control policy for Lagos.

### **Justification for the Study**

Lagos is a very important city in Nigeria. Until 1991, it was the administrative capital of Nigeria, and has remained the commercial nerve centre of the country.<sup>7</sup> It is a land of opportunities to every ethnic group in Nigeria and foreigners from different parts of the world. Generally, the problem of crime in Lagos deserves scholarly attention because of its negative impact on security of lives and property. However, the basic justification for this research is that it fills an important gap in the literature on crime in Lagos. The study is also justified in that it is partly a response to the call by a renowned Nigerian historian, Falola, that budding scholars should explore the numerous and fragmented archival materials on crime in Nigeria towards the understanding of this phenomenon in the colonial period.<sup>8</sup> Besides, the diversity and multi-ethnic composition of Lagos makes the subject of crime in the city a fascinating theme for research.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study highlights unpleasant but inevitable aspects of human life in Lagos. It attempts to discuss the consequences of the actions of the Lagos underworld on the society. The study is significant in that it provides seminal knowledge on the nature and treatment of two violent crimes in Lagos. The long-term perspective of the study makes it a major contribution to the growing literature on crime and criminality in Africa.

The study is a reference material for those who wish to know more about crime and the successes and challenges of crime investigation, prevention, and control in the Lagos area. It is a good complement to existing historical works on policing and judicial administration in Nigeria.

### **Scope of the Study**

**The Study Area:** Lagos is the study area. Its cityspace<sup>9</sup> is highlighted in this research in terms of its spatial extent, put at about “357,700 hectares (3,577 Km<sup>2</sup>) ... out of which about 17% are made up of lagoons, creeks and coastal river estuaries”,<sup>10</sup> and second, in terms of the mental picture that people have of the city. A combination of the two features constitutes what Soja calls the lived space which represents the real and imagined perception of Lagos.<sup>11</sup>

Sequel to the annexation of Lagos by the British in 1861, the spatial extent of Lagos increased steadily. By 1863, Lagos was made up of Iko and Iddo Islands, Palma (Orimedu) and Lekki (Leke) in addition to an undefined but “large section considered to be under British protection”<sup>12</sup> constituting the northern districts (later colony area) and Badagry. The Ijebu Expedition of 1892 speeded up the annexation of Epe to the Lagos colony in the same year.<sup>13</sup> The incorporation of Ikorodu into the colony area which also started in 1892 was completed in 1894.<sup>14</sup> Earlier in 1893, the British had established a protectorate over the Yoruba. By 1906, Lagos was named the capital of the amalgamated Lagos Colony and the Southern Protectorate. In 1914 when Lord Lugard amalgamated Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria, Lagos was retained as the capital of the amalgamated country. When the Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria were divided into nine and twelve provinces in 1919 and 1929 respectively, the city of Lagos continued to have its own independent administration.<sup>15</sup> In the 1930s, the colonial administration undertook the re-organisation of the local administrative machinery in the colony area to make it more responsive to the needs of government and the people.<sup>16</sup> In the aftermath of the re-organisation, native authorities were created in Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu and Epe. This was the arrangement until 1952 when the areas extending from the boundary area in Ajegunle came

under the auspices of the Western Region and with the creation of the State of Lagos in 1967; they were incorporated into the new state.

It is instructive to note that since 1967, infrastructure development coupled with population increase have bridged and filled the gaps hitherto separating or hindering the physical merger of the Lagos metropolis with its outlying areas. Mobility has been improved within the metropolitan area through the multiplication of access roads and the construction of overhead bridges or flyovers to link the Island with the mainland areas. As the rural areas in Lagos are opened up and the influence of the metropolitan area continues to extend even beyond the confines of Lagos into the neighbouring state of Ogun, it is obvious that the idea of Lagos has turned full circle. One of the implications of the phenomenal spatial expansion of Lagos is population increase. Between 1921 and 1963, the population of Lagos increased from “98,303 in 1921 to 126,474 in 1931, 230,256 in 1950 and 655,246 in 1963”<sup>17</sup> The provisional figures of the 2006 census put the current population of Lagos at a little over nine million.

The cityspace of Lagos can also be understood by focusing on thoughts or mentalities which reflect how the inhabitants and visitors to Lagos perceive the city. A popular maxim captures one of the mental pictures of the city held by the inhabitants of Lagos thus: “*Eko gb’olé o gbole*” literally, “Lagos accommodates the thief and the indolent.” This maxim can be interpreted in several ways. First, that Lagos is a place of refuge for criminals probably due to the anonymity that its urban milieu provides which makes it difficult to determine the identity of the teeming migrants to the city. Second, that Lagos encourages indolence since the city dwellers are perceived to be kind-hearted enough to give alms, even to persons who are not in anyway disabled. It is therefore not surprising that destitutes abound in the city. Third, the dictum could be a casual perception or interpretation of the ‘idleness’ of so many people milling around seemingly doing nothing throughout the day. Fourth, it could also be a consequence of the initial apathy towards white collar jobs in the city. It should be noted that Lagosians initially had preference for self employment and considered migrants who took up wage employment as lazy

until the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> Again, the issue of indolence in the city of Lagos is typified by the activities of street urchins known locally as area boys, and that of the *omo onile* (son of the soil) who after exhausting the sale of land in their possession, live off the sweat of commercial drivers, traders, lease-holders and free-holders from whom they extort money via the instrumentation of a carefully organised syndicate.

Lagos is also a city where people know that the strength of the police, put at 30,000 in 2007<sup>19</sup>, is grossly inadequate to cope with the population that is estimated at about fifteen million.<sup>20</sup> Again, most people demonstrate no personal attachment and commitment to the public space in the city. This is evidenced by the abuse of the collective environment such as streets, parks, roads, garages, gutters, canals, stadiums and public conveniences. Hence, one of the 'cityness' of Lagos is its dirtiness.

More importantly, Lagos is perceived as a land of inexhaustible opportunities and as its sobriquet suggests a centre of excellence. Jimoh Adisa describes Lagos as a city that depicts a sharp contrast of wealth and penury.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, urbanisation in Lagos was driven by industrialisation<sup>22</sup> and commerce aided by the strategic location of the city in an area bordering the lagoon outlet into the ocean which encouraged the emergence of ports<sup>23</sup> and invariably international commerce and consequently, a rising population. Unfortunately, these opportunities are not always visible, and so, many are unemployed and resort to living on the fringe of urban life.

Another mental picture of Lagos held by the people is that it teaches people to be wise and smart. Hence, the popular saying that "anyone who lacks wisdom after staying in Lagos would never be wise." Lagos is also considered as the home of wisdom, that is, "*Eko akété ile oghon.*" The second part of the latter saying particularly exhorts people to think big for as it goes "*ti o bada kékéré o tilo*" meaning "if one thinks little in Lagos, one is finished". Another popular maxim much like a warning and an expression of pride in what Lagos stands for puts it succinctly: "*Eko o gba ghere*" meaning "Lagos brooks no nonsense". Yet, another popular saying

reflecting people's lived perception of the city says "*ko si ode l'Eko*" meaning "there is no idiot in Lagos." This popular maxim encourages people to be smart even when it is to jump on a moving commercial bus. The Lagos public applaud and approve of this risky act of jumping on a moving bus and even chastise those who are perceived to be slow hence one is told "*ma go ara e*" which one may translate into something like "don't be slow, this is Lagos." Where one is perceived as slow, he is seen as a new arrival to the city.

Indeed, Lagosians, especially the less privileged, are very critical of one another, and it is common to hear one person telling another person to relocate to his village if staying in Lagos is unprofitable (*Bi Eko o gbe e, pada sile*). Interestingly, a top government official in the Abacha era – Late General Abdulkarim Adisa, then Federal Minister of Works and Housing, had giving official backing to this popular view in 1996 when he opined that, many people affected in the wake of a demolition exercise ordered in the aftermath of the fire incident that engulfed the Marine Beach flyover bridge, had no business being in Lagos.<sup>24</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that the average attitude of most inhabitants of Lagos is 'to make it'. Hence, it is common to hear people saying that they 'have not come to count bridges in Lagos.' An Igbo dictum captures it thus: *A biara.m Legosi ikiri biriji*. The following Igbo expression also shows that people in the hinterland perceive Lagos as a place where wealth flows, hence the pressure on an average Igbo resident in the city to be rich. Where such an expectation is not met quickly, the person is disparaged and asked to show what he has achieved since he has been staying in Lagos, that is, *Ino Legosi ke mgbe, Gini ka i meputara?*. Implicit in this expression is the thought that staying in Lagos automatically increases the opportunity for wealth acquisition, and when a person fails to achieve this great expectation, he is often compared to others whose stay in Lagos have been profitable as shown in their ostentatious lifestyles. Taken together, all the aforementioned represent some of the underlying assumptions that characterise the real and imagined picture that constitute the lived experience of an average city dweller in



Lagos, and which undoubtedly has earned for Lagos a distinct culture and mannerism, with a lot of implication for a fast life and crime.

**Period Covered:** The study spans a period of over one and a quarter of a century. Its point of commencement is 1861 while the study terminates in 2000. The choice of the commencement and terminal dates for the research is instructive.. In most literature on Lagos, much importance has been attached to 1861, the year that Lagos became a colony of the British. In this regard, this research is no different only that it considers 1861 more appropriately as representing an interface rather than a sharp break in the history of Lagos.

The same argument applies to the terminal date of the study. The year 2000 permits a brief reflection on the effects of the involvement of the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) on the business of crime-control in Lagos.<sup>25</sup> The OPC, like some youth organisations in post-Apartheid South Africa<sup>26</sup> had redirected its focus towards protecting Lagos neighbourhoods from crime sequel to the inauguration of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999. The response of the people and the Lagos State Government to their activities, given the absence of a state-controlled police, indicate clearly that there is a crisis of confidence in the ability of the national police to maintain security, and hence the relevance of an alternative security provider like the OPC. The preference for the OPC as neighbourhood watchers in some areas in Lagos re-opens the debate as to whether the Nigerian police remain "an instrument of oppression than for crime prevention and control".<sup>27</sup> The long timeframe of the research is historical and deliberate. It permits a consideration of the crimes being studied in their remote and recent past. The research itself was motivated by the need to understand the past of the frightening state of violent crimes in contemporary Lagos.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions would place the research problem in perspective:

1. What was the nature of armed robbery and murder in Lagos before now?
2. What circumstances made armed robbery persist in Lagos?
3. Was armed robbery a form of resistance to colonial or post-colonial rule in Lagos?

4. What was the relationship between secret societies and criminals, and how did the belief in, and use of magic encourage or dissuade criminal activities?
5. Why did people commit murder in Lagos?
6. In what ways did the police and inhabitants of Lagos respond and co-operate to tackle the menace of armed robbery and murder? How far reaching were these responses?
7. Can we actually limit the role of the colonial police in Lagos to the protection of colonial commerce?
8. What were the impacts of robbery and murder on the Lagos society?
9. How can the historical study of crime influence policy formulation?

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

**Violence:** The concept of violence is commonly associated with, but is not limited to the use or the threat of use of physical force. This is because the “psychological denials of autonomy and social denials of access to opportunities”<sup>28</sup> also constitute acts of violence. Mahatma Gandhi once argued that “the deadliest form of violence is poverty.”<sup>29</sup> Turpin and Kurtz also believe that “structural violence [“the dominance of one group over the other with subsequent exploitative practices”<sup>30</sup>] occurs when people are harmed because of inequitable social arrangements rather than overt physical force.”<sup>31</sup> **In this study, violence is defined as “acts of violation in which physical force is applied illegally by unauthorised person(s) for personal or group ends.”**<sup>32</sup>

**Crime:** Crime, like violence, is a complex and culturally relative term to define, and as put by Clifford, crime can mean different, even opposed, things depending on one’s point of view.<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding, there is a general agreement that crime is something that threatens serious harm to the community, or something generally believed to do so, or something committed with evil intent, or something forbidden in the interests of the most powerful sections of society.<sup>34</sup> **Here, the study adopts the most frequently used definition which sees crime as any act or omission of an act for which the state can apply sanctions or as defined in the criminal code, acts or**

**omissions which render the person doing the acts or making the omissions liable to punishment under a written law.”<sup>35</sup>**

**Violent crime:** The International Police consider homicide, rape, armed robbery and assault of various kinds as violent crimes since they all involve the infliction of injury or the threat of violence. **For the purpose of this study on armed robbery and murder, violent crimes are defined as acts or omissions liable to punishment under a written law carried out by force or the threat of the use of force against a person or his property.**

**Armed robbery:** In line with Section 401 of the Criminal Code, armed robbery is defined in this study as the taking of another person’s property from his or her person while armed with offensive weapon, using force or intimidation.

**Murder:** In line with Section 315 of the Criminal Code, murder is defined in this study as the intentional killing of a person or persons by an individual or a group of individuals.

**Urbanisation:** The various ways by which scholars have applied the concept of urbanisation as an analytical tool indicate clearly the absence of an acceptable definition of the phenomenon. The term is used here in broad terms to describe the process of change in the political, economic and social domains occasioned by a rise in population and a transformation and spatial expansion of the Lagos urban milieu that pulls to itself those without since the city that result from the complex relationship of these motivating features then becomes a model, indeed a measure of development because of the opportunities it portends or pretends to portend. Consequently, the city continues to attract more population than it could naturally support.

**Professional Underworld:** As a variant of the concept of social banditry developed by Hobsbawn, the concept of the professional underworld popularised by Austen is adopted here. **The essence of the concept for this study is that the crimes being studied, especially armed robbery is seen as a source of livelihood to the perpetrators rather than an act of defiance to the state.** Thus, the armed robber in Lagos, across time, is seen as a problem, not only to the propertied class but also to the less privileged<sup>36</sup> As a criminal, the Lagos armed robber has a

permanent representation in the minds of the people and government, as he commands their attention with his dastardly acts”<sup>37</sup>.

**Lagosian:** This concept is dynamic and is usually applied in two different ways, depending on who is defining it, and for what purpose. For instance, some indigenes of Lagos believe that a Lagosian is a person whose origin – either by birth or marriage, is traceable to any of the villages and towns that constitute the twenty local governments in Lagos State. Hence, they refer to other inhabitants of Lagos as ‘those from the other side’, that is, *awon atohun rinwa*, and in the case of new arrivals to the city, ‘people from the interior’, that is, *awon ara oke*. In another vein, the concept is used broadly to refer to any person that is resident in Lagos irrespective of his or her ethnic background. In this study, the concept is used in the connotative sense to describe inhabitants or residents of Lagos irrespective of their origin because of the cosmopolitan nature of the city.

### **Literature Review**

This is essentially a study in the social history of crime in Lagos. As earlier noted there is no study of a similar scope, content and dimension. However, the study of violent crimes has received a lot of attention from scholars all over the world. Thus, there are studies detailing one aspect or the other of this theme although the main focus here is criminal violence in an urban setting. Also, there exist several works on the city of Lagos that have provided useful general information for this study. For these reasons, a few works are selected for review.

These are grouped together under relevant headings that reflect their central themes. The first group consists of studies that discuss the concepts and theories on crime and other related themes. The second assembles literature on a general history of Lagos, its socio-economic development and those that discuss the process of urbanisation. The third, which is more specific to the subject at hand, assembles relevant literature on crime, law and society in Nigeria and Lagos in particular.

A particular feature of the literature in the first group is that they often present similar and opposing concepts and theories leading to very beneficial and wide-ranging arguments on the nature and causes of crimes. While most of the literature still amplify Lombroso's theory of biological causation of crime<sup>38</sup> or its variants as popularised by new crimino-biologists such as Kurt-Kells in Germany, Macauliffe and Segaud in France, Villa and Nicole Peude in Italy, contrasting arguments in William Kornblum et al, *Social Problems*<sup>39</sup> advance the argument that deviant behaviour-crime and delinquency are socially determined rather than being found in the genes.

The same argument of contextualising crime socially to determine its cause and nature is used by Freda Adler in Haralambos and Holborn, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*,<sup>40</sup> to refute the notion in biological theories that there is a connection between "hormone, aggression and criminality"<sup>41</sup>. Her argument is that "there are many passive men with normal androgen levels who are less aggressive than women"<sup>42</sup> concluding that female criminality is likely to grow as certain social barriers - equal employment opportunities and political representation-disadvantaging women to compete with men, are removed. Her position has generated a lot of interest among those seeking to discredit what is implied in her submission, which is, that female liberation encourages female criminality. In the same vein, Paul Gilroy also rejects the view that black criminals [in Britain] are pathological. In his opinion they are "defending themselves and hitting back at a society which treats them unjustly."<sup>43</sup> Gilroy's view though instructive is limited in that it does not explain mugging, that is, the affliction of fellow black sufferers by black criminals.

Again, arguments which challenge the economic causation of crime made popular by Bonger, a Dutchman, are equally given prominence in *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*.<sup>44</sup> One of such arguments was put forward by Jack Young and John Lea, two New Left Realist Criminologists, who contend that poverty and unemployment may not be directly responsible for crime though they admit that a close connection exists between what they call 'relative

deprivation' and crime. According to them, "a group experiences relative deprivation when it feels deprived in comparison to other similar groups or when its expectations are not met."<sup>45</sup> They then concluded that "It is not the fact of being deprived as such but the feeling of deprivation which..."<sup>46</sup> "can cause frustration which in turn can cause violence [or crime]."<sup>47</sup>

Still on the economic causation of crime, two articles make very interesting reading. These are Bourguignon "Crime, Violence and Inequitable Development"<sup>48</sup>, and Rubenstein's "The Economics of Crime."<sup>49</sup> While the former is a causation research and suggests "that urban inequality and poverty may be the main economic determinants of crime and violence", the latter is a study reflecting the economic cost of crime in the United States of America.

As opposed to our study which sets out to understand the nature of violent crimes in Lagos, Rubenstein highlights issues of cost and punishment. His allusion to Gary Becker's Basic Model of Crime is particularly enlightening. Developed in 1968, the model submits that "criminals are rational individuals acting in their own self interest."<sup>50</sup> It further contends that "In deciding to commit a crime, criminals weigh the expected costs against the expected benefits."<sup>51</sup>

Against this background, Becker identifies the cost of crime for criminals as (1) "the income forgone by devoting time to criminal activity"<sup>52</sup> otherwise the 'opportunity cost' in economic parlance and (2) "the time criminals expect to be incarcerated because of their activity."<sup>53</sup> On the first cost of crime to criminals, Rubenstein observes that the alternative forgone is small and sometimes non-existent as criminals are "usually unskilled and uneducated..."<sup>54</sup> On the second cost of crime to criminals, Rubenstein draws attention to what he regards as a basic difference between what is expected by the criminal in terms of punishment and what is actually got. In other words, "expected punishment" as the second expected cost of crime for the criminal is not in his opinion "the same as the length of time a convicted criminal actually spends in prison"<sup>55</sup> if he is ever arrested, prosecuted or imprisoned at all. Thus, his conclusions strongly suggest that crimes will continue to rise and criminals will continue to get

confident in their activity as long as the expected benefits remain higher than what the society charges as expected cost.

Rubenstein's economic interpretation of the cost of crime is interesting and his opinion that the "expected prices of criminal activity [that the society charges] are shockingly low"<sup>56</sup>, are definitely worth exploring in this study to determine its applicability to the Nigerian experience.

With particular reference to Africa, William Clifford's *An Introduction to African Criminology*<sup>57</sup> which is in two parts of three chapters each, focuses on familiar issues bordering on definitions and theoretical explanations of the causation of crime as well as preventive measures and control. One interesting feature of this book is its allusion to the supernatural causation or explanation of criminality. In his opinion, the search for the supernatural explanation for criminality is not peculiar to Africa but applicable elsewhere and everywhere at different times in space and time.

For instance, he points out that demonology (possession by some alien spirit), remained a good explanation for crime in pre-scientific Europe while in "Africa [and up to the present times] ideas of crime derived from religious beliefs, irrational fears and systems of magic, divination or witchcraft"<sup>58</sup>. In particular, Clifford is convinced that for Africans in the sub-Saharan area, the "world of spirits provides an extra meaning to life"<sup>59</sup> and as such "everything [including crime] must have a cause...nothing happens without a cause."<sup>60</sup> Ralph Austen in an article on "Social bandits and other heroic criminals: Western models of resistance and their relevance for Africa"<sup>61</sup> also suggests that magic and witchcraft remain key terms for expressing and understanding social deviance in Africa. Austen and Clifford raise a very important issue on the spiritual causation and explanation of crime that could be further explored in our quest to understand criminality in Lagos.

Crummey's edited book *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*<sup>62</sup>, and Chesnais's *Histoire de la violence*<sup>63</sup> are particularly useful because they focus attention on two continents - Europe and Africa - two continents that should learn from each other's crime

experiences. Crummey's book presents a collection of essays that discuss several interrelated problems of violence, criminality, banditry, rebellion, protests and resistance. Of particular importance is the idea prevalent in this book that crime could be regarded as a way of resisting an unpleasant condition. This perception buttresses some views on violence as a tool of redemption. Here, it would be interesting to know if the notion of crime as resistance is applicable to Lagos experience in criminality across time.

One of the most important articles in this collection was written by Austen who reformulated and adapted Hobsbawm's concept of social banditry to African history. He proposes five categories via which social bandits may be understood in relation to Africa. These are (1) self-helping frontiersman (2) the populist redistributors (3) the professional underworld (4) the picaro and (5) the urban-guerrilla.<sup>64</sup> Out of these five, only the professional underworld fits the nature of crimes and criminals studied here. The professional underworld is according to Austen "the individual for whom crime is a source of livelihood rather than an act of defiance, and who is as alien to the peasants as to the wealthier classes upon whom he may prey somewhat more frequently."<sup>65</sup> Yet, he also agrees that professional criminals could also "represent a form of opposition to established order with its own social meaning"<sup>66</sup> noting also that "...the term ...underworld suggests a marginal relationship to dominant institutions[with their location not on the] frontier [but] in the interstices of an already developed and fully extended order."<sup>67</sup>

Austen's proposition is undoubtedly attractive especially as it concerns armed robbery, one of the two violent crimes under scrutiny in this study. His category of the 'professional underworld' is indeed all embracing in the sense that it makes allowance for criminals who operate within defined geo-political zones, and across frontiers, for example, the Nigeria – Benin Republic frontier. However, international criminals may have dual status-villains to those on whom they prey and heroes to those who benefit from their activity.

On the other hand, Chesnais's detailed study on the history of violence in Europe can indeed be replicated in Africa. His point by point analysis of each crime backed with adequate



and complete statistics are particularly challenging to this study. It should be noted however that the availability of accurate data is itself a manifestation of the importance attached to record keeping for planning and indeed research in that continent. Yet his study and the present effort are different in terms of the area covered.

Meanwhile, passing references are made to the phenomenon of crime in the next set of literature reviewed although they embody the history of Lagos and Nigeria in all human domains. Not surprisingly, the choice of the current research was informed by a fleeting reference to the problem of crime in Lagos in one of these studies. The study in point is Akintola-Arikawe's article on "The Rise of Industrialism in the Lagos Area."<sup>68</sup> Though his focus was the phenomenal growth of industrialism in Lagos, he saw the problem of crime as a direct consequence of this action. However, he could not do more than mention it. According to him "It would require an exclusive chapter to analyse thoroughly the various aspects of crime... [in Lagos]". This thesis is devoted to aspects of this social problem.

Similar passing observations were made in Barnes's *Patrons and Power*<sup>69</sup> and Peil's *The City is the People*<sup>70</sup> to the problems of crime in Lagos. Although Barnes's work focused on the transforming nature of power relations in Mushin as an independent settlement and later, a component part of the city of Lagos, yet she found it expedient to mention the serious crime problems in one of the outlying districts of Lagos-the Northern District later Lagos District-which, she attributed to the inability of the Lagos colonial government to effectively police the area outside the traditional Lagos area.

S.H. Brown's "A History of the Peoples of Lagos, 1852-1886"<sup>71</sup> and Michael Echeruo's *Victorian Lagos*<sup>72</sup> both broach the issue of crime in Lagos in the nineteenth century. Brown, in particular, describes the activities of burglars, canoe thieves, kidnappers and their modus operandi during the early years of British administration in Lagos.. He also discusses the activities of murderers whose main targets were women. A very interesting aspect of this work is its suggestion that offences against property were more prevalent than those against persons

during that period. Echeruo's work is a general study which details the different aspects of Lagos life ranging from education to politics, economy and social issues. He reconstructs the patterns of life and thought in Lagos during the second half of the nineteenth century relying extensively on the press of that period, that is, editorials, news reports and correspondence columns. It is important to note that Echeruo was only interested in narrating the stories that he had to tell. The two works are however very important here in that they provide useful insights into the nature of the crimes committed in Lagos in the nineteenth century. Specifically, the details provided by Echeruo on murder in Lagos in his study enabled the present study to probe the issue further with some interesting results.

Essentially, changes engendered by colonialism permeate the discussion in most of the literature reviewed here, a strong indication of the importance attached to this epoch in the history of urbanisation and socio-economic development of Lagos and Nigeria. These include Aderibigbe's *The Development of an African City*<sup>73</sup>, Ade Adefuye et al, *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*<sup>74</sup> and more recently, Falola and Salm's *Nigerian Cities*.<sup>75</sup> Most of the works also underline the importance of the city of Lagos to the economic development of the country. Others like Ekundare's *An Economic History of Nigeria*<sup>76</sup> and Okongwu's *The Nigerian Economy*<sup>77</sup> make allusion to the period of the Nigerian Civil War and the oil boom suggesting that the two episodes have actually created problems for the Nigerian people.

Olukoju's *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos, 1861-2000*<sup>78</sup>, and Mabogunje's *Urbanization in Nigeria*<sup>79</sup> are in particular very illuminating in details and analysis. In particular, the chapter devoted to the study of the city of Lagos by the latter is particularly interesting for providing useful information on the spatial and demographic expansion of the study area, and in raising the issue of unemployment which tends to have a link with the growth of crime.

Olukoju's discussion of infrastructure development, especially the transport sector, implicitly suggests the possibility of a link between a deregulated transport sector and crime. The

transport sector in Lagos attracts and absorbs all kinds of elements who feed and prey on it. It has grown so big that it sustains people whose means of livelihood are hardly discernible- 'area boys, area fathers and mothers'. The networking in this sector has grown in leaps and bounds that it is necessary to carry out a study on how this sector overtly or covertly enhances crime in the city. A recent feature of crime in Lagos involves the use of public transport - *okada, danfo, kabukabu* -- to rob unsuspecting commuters, and the garages obviously serve as training grounds and hideouts for potential and budding criminals.

By and large, the studies in this category are very useful to the extent that they provide background information for this study since the issue of crime cannot be discussed outside the political, social and economic activities of the people including infrastructure development. Yet, they are different in that they had separate aims and objectives that contrast to our focus here.

Law is central to every society. The existence of law in a way betrays an underlying expectation that some people may decide to be different in behaviour and that those who comply with what is regarded as normal behaviour should be protected. The aphorism that law creates crime and that crime creates law suggests a strong relationship between the existence of law and crime. The legal definition of crime also suggests an apparent link between the phenomena of crime and punishment. The aforementioned and the idea that the definition of crime can be meaningful only when it is localised within specific cultures underlie the categorisation of literature in this group.

A book written by Adewoye, a historian, titled *The Judicial System in Southern Nigeria* proved very useful in tracing the development of the judicial process in Nigeria. Hardly any other book demonstrates a mastery of the subject in terms of its detail, depth and level of analysis. Other books provide very useful and complementary information on the nature of law in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. Of particular importance are the works of T.O. Elias especially those that deal with the nature of African laws and their interactions with British law.<sup>80</sup>

Some interesting literature relating to the police, the nature of crimes in Nigeria and a little on violent crime in Lagos are also included in the group. Among these are the two different works on the Nigeria Police Force authored by two Nigerians - Tamuno and Ahire.<sup>81</sup> While Tamuno's work is administrative and has a chapter on the fight against crime by the police, Ahire was emphatic in regarding the police as a colonial institution that was set up to oppress rather than to protect the people against crime. While the two works provide useful information on a governmental institution whose task should be the prevention and control of crime, they did not discuss in detail the issues of crime that occupy our attention here.

Specifically, there is a growing literature on crime in Nigeria. Historians such as Falola and Osoba<sup>82</sup> have explored the issues of theft and corruption in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. Falola and Adebayo's *Culture, Politics and Money among the Yoruba*<sup>83</sup> has actually made very interesting revelations about the nature of crimes among the Yoruba in colonial Nigeria noting that a lot is yet to be done in this area and prompting historians to take up the challenge. This study is a response to this call. It is focused on Lagos where the Yoruba are predominant, and examines two violent crimes in the city. Laurent Fourchard's "Security, Crime and Segregation in Historical Perspective," is undoubtedly useful for its comparative analysis on crime in the West African area.<sup>84</sup>

Recently, the issue of criminality as resistance has been taken up by Olukoju<sup>85</sup> in apparent response to the seminal work edited by Crummey on the issue. His discussion of currency counterfeiting as a form of resistant criminality is suggestive of the fact that law may indeed create crimes. However, it is important to note that the concept of resistance need not be overstretched less all anti-social behaviour become justified on the altar of resistance and by so doing gain legitimacy. A tilt towards this direction is already evident in Nigeria where some criminal activities are rationalised as being resistant in nature.

Olukoju has again made allusion to some of these in another article "Criminality as Resistance."<sup>86</sup> In this paper he took a cursory look at certain criminalities ranging from currency

counterfeiting, to the activities of youths in the oil rich Niger Delta where expatriates are kidnapped for ransom where they are lucky enough not to be killed. He also noted the damaging of oil pipes which has become a pastime in apparent defiance to the exploitative and distant national government in Abuja. Yet, these clandestine activities are at best self-serving than as forms of resistance or both since the benefits are really high.

Perhaps three works that address in some detail the issue of criminality in Lagos are Tunde Agbola's *Architecture of Fear*, Laurent Fourchard's "Urban Poverty, urban crime and crime control: The Lagos and Ibadan Cases, 1929-1945", and R.T. Akinyele's "The Involvement of the Oodua Peoples' Congress in Crime Control in Southwestern Nigeria. Agbola discusses urban violence in Lagos from the perspective of an urban planner with a very penetrating insight on the relationship between land use patterns and crime. He suggests strongly that crime in Lagos can be tackled through environmental design. This proposition is undoubtedly worth adopting in this study, and could explain why criminality was prevalent in the outlying district of Lagos during the colonial period. Fourchard's study is comparative and draws attention to the Great Depression of 1929 and its impact on crime in Lagos and Ibadan. Specifically, he sees the colonial police as largely ineffective. Akinyele's study is more contemporary and focuses on the activities of the OPC as a grassroots initiative to fighting crime in Southwestern Nigeria. Originally, the OPC was formed in 1994 as the vanguard for resisting the continued marginalisation of the Yoruba in Nigerian politics in the aftermath of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential Election that was widely believed to have been won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola. Akinyele identifies two main approaches adopted by the OPC in its quest to combat crime. The first is the cleansing operations of the organisation. Under this approach, violence is used as a tool to dislodge criminals from their hideouts as epitomised by the killing of two notorious criminals in Lagos – Champion and Woronworon. The second approach is the provision of guard duties by the organisation in the low and medium income neighbourhoods. The study is particularly useful for this study in that it examines the structure of the OPC and concludes that the patronage enjoyed by it was a direct

consequence of the loss of confidence in the ability of the police to secure life and property, especially in low and medium suburbs of Lagos.

Godwin Oyakhiromen's thesis titled "The Patterns and Trends of Crimes in Lagos State, 1967- 96", seems similar to the present study but is different in scope, perspective and depth. This would appear to be the first and perhaps the only thesis that has been devoted to this social problem in Lagos till date. This is not to reject other works that have dealt with aspects of criminality in Lagos or those that have looked at law and criminality in Lagos such as the one by Adeyemi on organised crime<sup>87</sup> and Nwanunobi's "Incendianism and other Fires in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lagos"<sup>88</sup> or Alemika's "Criminal Violence in Lagos."<sup>89</sup>

Oyakhiromen's thesis, benefiting from his background as a police officer, insists on the need to localise and determine the strength of crime at a micro level as a way of understanding macro level crimes. Thus, he compares the rates of crimes in the twenty local governments in Lagos and came to the conclusion "That the Mainland Local Government Area showed the worst crime records, accounting for 18.85 per cent of crimes in Lagos State, followed by Ikeja, 18.19 and Island, 17.97,"<sup>90</sup> while "among the Police Divisions, Ajegunle demonstrated a criminal tradition of worst incidence of property, personal and disorganisational crimes"<sup>91</sup>, while "Somolu recorded by far the highest increasing rate of 13.57 per cent"<sup>92</sup> which he considers as "a worrisome potential of dominating the crime scene in future unless something is done."<sup>93</sup>

Although totally based on officially recorded crimes, Oyakhiromen's work is undoubtedly useful for this study considering the detailed statistical presentations. Yet, understanding crime goes beyond the analysis of recorded crimes. Good as these are, they obscure the true nature of crimes and reflect just a fraction of the crimes that are actually committed in the society. This much Oyakhiromen agreed to. As a study in the social history of crime, this study is narrative, descriptive and analytical. It attempts to capture the real essence of crimes in Lagos by looking at two violent crimes in Lagos. Such questions as whether traditionalism was able to control crime better than modernism are thrown up in the discussion. Its strength lies in the attempt to explain

the interconnecting variables sustaining these crimes. No statistical representation can achieve this. Statistical representations are however still important and are used in the present study for they complement the descriptive evidence.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical formulations in crime studies are inter-connected and inter-related. They are at best attempts by scholars of different generations to make sense of an otherwise complex human behaviour. Thus, no matter the reasonableness or unscientific nature of any of these theories, none can fully explain all the remote and immediate reasons for the causation of all crimes. **This study integrates seven theoretical approaches in its analysis. These are the supernatural approach, the culture conflict approach, the economic approach, the behavioural approach, the ecological approach, the social disorganisation theory, and the crime prevention through environmental design theory.**

The **supernatural approach** or demonological explanation of crime suggests that criminal behaviour is motivated by evil spirits or demons who inhabit and control humans in ways that they cannot comprehend. It "attributes undesirable behaviour to the influence of malevolent spirits, to a fate about which man can do nothing or to some outside interference with the natural order of things."<sup>94</sup> Although this approach has been rejected as unscientific, it has continued to attract the attention of scholars in both the developed and developing countries. In Lagos, our study area, criminals often blame the devil for their unlawful behaviour. Basically, the supernatural explanation of crime plays down on the idea of free will while emphasising the demonological model of possession by evil spirits. Criminal liability on the part of the individual is thus reduced although not entirely omitted.

The **supernatural approach** to the study of crime can also be looked at from another perspective. It could also be expanded to mean, as was the case in Lagos, the recourse to *juju* (magic) for crime prevention and control on one hand, and for the perpetration of crime by offenders, on the other. In this study, the spiritual approach underscores the multiple roles of

magic and the devil in the crime experience of Lagos. This approach is particularly useful because it enables an analysis of the interface between magic and crime. This is evident both in the analysis of robbery and murder in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. Indeed, the frequency of ritual killings in Lagos in the post-independence period shows clearly that older traditions of occultism were rapidly adapted for personal rather than societal ends.

The **culture conflict** approach to the study of crime, as popularised by Thorsten Sellin, is also employed in this study. It stresses the importance of culture conflict to the understanding of the phenomenon of crime in each society.<sup>95</sup> Culture-conflict in its primary sense occurs in a colonial context when colonised peoples become criminalised as a result of the introduction of laws or systems that are alien to their culture. This approach is useful here because of its suggestion of an inherent conflict between the culture of the British who colonised Lagos and that of the predominant culture in the city – the Yoruba culture, and other cultures alike. Specifically, it would be interesting to know how such conflicts affected the incidence and treatment of armed robbery and murder. Again, culture is dynamic and as seen in the mentalities of Lagosians, the desire to make money at all cost has become a way of life in the city. It is important to know how the desire for material wealth has affected the crimes being studied given the fact that there are people who live within this emerging culture of ‘craze for money’, and yet live outside crime. The cultural approach also complements the supernatural approach especially in the adaptation of some spiritual aspects of the predominant culture in Lagos for criminal ends.

The **economic approach** is also employed in this study. It stresses the economic causation of crime due to either economic inequality or relative deprivation or poverty.<sup>96</sup> The argument in this theory is that when people lack or are denied access to decent means of livelihood, they become frustrated and then take to crime. Another argument in this theory is that poverty breeds criminality. This theory is useful here because it enables a deeper understanding of some of the cases examined in this study. However, the application of this theory to our study has shown that greed much more than poverty was the prime motive for robbery in Lagos. This is



particularly true in the case of robbers who specialised in bank robberies. The more they robbed and got away with their enormous loot, the more determined they became. Again, the explanation of poverty and deprivation as reasons for crime cannot be applicable in all cases as shown clearly in the case of Lagos. This is because the frivolous things that some robbers spent their loots on such as womanising, drinking and wasting money on musicians at parties belie the poverty argument. A contrasting argument is that by spending money on these aforementioned frivolities, criminals could be making up for their low or destroyed self-esteem which leads to soul murder<sup>97</sup> or trying to emulate the upper class whose lifestyle they cherish but could not attain legally. In any case, those who commit crime are not always poor people. Likewise, all poor people are not always criminals. Thus, there is indeed a need to look beyond the models of inequality, deprivation and poverty in explaining the phenomenon of crime.

The **behavioural approach** is also employed in this study. Two aspects of this approach – the frustration –aggression theory and the anomie theory are actually suitable for this study. The main argument of the first theory is that when there is a gap between expectation and achievement in the social life of an individual, frustration results, and leads to aggression.<sup>98</sup> Ultimately aggression could find expression in criminal activities like armed robbery, murder and other violent crimes including kidnapping for ransom which is now rampant in the Niger Delta area. The second, anomie, stresses a situation where people seek illegitimate means to attain goals set by the society.<sup>99</sup> The concept of anomie or alienation first emerged in the work of Emile Durkheim, the French sociologist on suicide. Durkheim identified two social conditions: social integration and social regulation as the determinants of suicide rates among children, widows. Durkheim's discussion on anomie in relation to economic condition is more relevant to our study. According to him, "no living being can be happy or even exist unless his needs are sufficiently proportioned to his means."<sup>100</sup> This was the view that Robert Merton reformulated and made popular by emphasising the relationship between goals and means and its implication for crime. His argument is that anomie results from a faulty relationship between goals and the legitimate

means of access to them. Out of the five-pronged typology of conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion that Merton developed to explain his view, only one that is, innovation is applicable here. Innovation actually explains how people accept culturally defined goals but refuse to internalise the institutional norms guiding the means and ways of attaining it. This approach complements the economic approach, and helps to sharpen the analysis of the study especially in the understanding of bank robbers and ritual killers.

The **ecological approach** to the study of crime was popularised by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay. Essentially, the approach suggests that delinquency and crime tend to be higher in socially disintegrated communities like slums while the rich areas of the city are less prone to crime. This approach is useful here because it enables an understanding of why the districts of Lagos, especially the Northern District was infested with criminals during the colonial period. Yet, the inadequacy of this approach is evident in that today no particular area in the city of Lagos is considered immune to robbery attacks given the diffusion of crime in Lagos.

The **social disorganisation theory** was popularised by such American criminologists as W.I. Thomas, Frederick Thrasher and Clifford Shaw. It is particularly relevant to this study because of its emphasis on the breakdown of processes that regulate lawbreaking behaviours. The theory asserts that the growth of deviant behaviour can be explained by the absence or failure of controls as cities or any human habitation expands. It is important to note that the element of control in this theory is not necessarily limited to physical control but extends to such social and cultural forms of control as parental control and obedience to established norms guiding behaviour in a particular society. With reference to the city of Lagos, our study area, such factors as poverty, unemployment and the anonymity of the urban milieu have interacted to weaken societal control. The result has been the rising tide of crime in the city.

The **crime prevention through environmental design theory (CPTED)** is also employed in this study. It stresses the importance of proper design and monitoring of public and open spaces, and the creation of a defensible space as a way of curbing crime.<sup>101</sup> It draws

attention to why certain social spaces breed criminality. This approach is useful because it enables an understanding of the reasons why armed banditry was prevalent in the outlying districts of Lagos as compared to the city centre in the colonial period. Specifically, it reveals that the cityspace of Lagos as it is today, is largely uncontrolled, and hence the police could hardly prevent but only feebly control criminality due to the multiplication of criminal spaces.

The point must be made, however that, whatever the reasons are for emphasising these general propositions in explaining the nature of armed robbery and murder in Lagos, these theoretical formulations are at best explanations by rational people seeking to make sense of otherwise irrational people's actions within the confines and limits of research and areas of study. Thus, each of the theories should be regarded as fluid representing a desire to explain and contribute to a better understanding of a phenomenon as complex as that of crime. In other words, no matter the reasonableness of one or more of these theories, they still cannot fully explain all the remote and immediate reasons for the causation of all crimes.

However in relating the concept of urbanisation to the phenomenon of crime, all the theoretical explanations above considered holistically seem to be instructive in spite of their limitations. If it is taken that crime exists in all societies and that urbanisation encourages the rise in, and concentration of population, then it is reasonable to suggest that the transformation that occurs while the society undergoes a restructuring of its way of life also affects the nature of crime hitherto existing in such a society, a clear response to the new ways of life and opportunities created by the process of urbanisation. This is one of the arguments being put forward in this thesis and as shown in the case of Lagos, increased urbanisation, increasing government control of resources, personal contacts and association, opportunities and lack of opportunities, long before and during the early years of British administration seemed to have not only expanded but also opened new frontiers of the underworld in the emerging city.

To this end, the major assumption in this study is that urban crimes in Lagos have external and rural roots. This is because crime, much as the prosperity of Lagos, is enhanced by the

intricate web of relationships existing between the city, its environs and the interior. Thus, just as the prosperity of Lagos depended and still depends on its ports and its economic links with its immediate environs, and a vast hinterland, so also its criminality depended and still depends on the criminality, poverty and deprivation of the surrounding environs and the interior, as Lagos continues to absorb its surrounding villages and attracts people from the interior.

Thus, Lagos, whether rural or urban has demonstrated constant and sustained potentials to absorb and generate criminality. The main argument therefore is that Lagos has been vulnerable to the activities of not only resident criminals but mainly that of drifting gangs and individual criminals from the hinterland, and even across international boundaries. Crime continued to grow as the barriers between Lagos and these erstwhile environs disappear and the distance between the emerging city and the interior thins out.

### **Methodology**

The methodology for studying crime history is still developing, and would continue to develop as more doctoral theses are devoted to this study area. Crime history itself is an emerging sub-discipline in Africa, and as such the methodology for studying it must change continually to incorporate new ideas.<sup>102</sup> Notwithstanding, the basic methodology for this study is historical. The historical methodology adopted here can be grouped under three broad but interrelated headings. The first concerns the sources from where the data analysed emanate. The second is the mode of analysing the data and finally the mode of presentation.

With particular reference to sources, the methodology is strongly informed by the analysis of both oral and written materials. Oral information through structured and unstructured interviews was obtained through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique in which samples are taken randomly from the part of the population with the most information on the theme of a research. Here, the targeted part of the population include some traditional rulers, retired and serving police personnel, historians and academics from cognate

disciplines such as linguistics with adequate knowledge of the study area. All but two of the respondents were interviewed in Lagos.

Victims of armed robbery, who often prefer anonymity, were equally interviewed. Discussions were also initiated with several people who did not know that they were actually being interviewed on the theme of this study. The study equally used the press extensively, that is, newspaper/magazine editorials, news reports and correspondence columns on crime and criminals in Lagos. Personal observation and knowledge of some folk songs on crime proved very useful in determining the appropriateness of some questions that were put to respondents, and in explaining the attitude of the inhabitants of Lagos to crime. A major innovation was the use of friends and colleagues who enjoy close relationships with retired or serving police officers, to establish contacts, arrange interviews, and at times attend interview sessions with such important informants.

The study is also based on information from diverse written materials. These materials can be divided into two broad groups – primary and secondary. Primary materials contain information most of which had never been processed before. Such materials include colonial government files, police records (including crime statistics) and other official publications. Newspaper reports, some of which provide alternative and popular insights on issues of criminality in Lagos were also consulted. Most of the official documents used for this research are available in the following repositories - National Archives, Ibadan; Public Record Office (The National Archives of the United Kingdom) London; *Des Archives Nationale*, Quando, Republic of Benin; Police Records Office in Abuja; *Centre de la documentation et du recherche*, Paris 7. Rare newspapers with stories on crime in Lagos are also available at the National Archives, Ibadan, and in microfiche at the British Newspaper Library at Colindale.

The methodology of study also involved the use of information in diverse scholarly works on crime, violence and the city of Lagos. It is from this literature that concepts and theories applied in this study were adapted. Information from these secondary sources was used to cross

check information from primary sources. The secondary materials including journals and books were consulted at Ghandhi Library, the research section of the University of Lagos Library, Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London and the *Centre d'étude africain*, Paris. The internet also provided useful information for this research. These various sources of information were further complemented by other electronic sources such as recent radio and television based programmes highlighting the nature of crimes and giving security tips. Notable among these are Chuk Maha's *Watchdog*, Eko 89.75 FM at 6:45am daily; Patrick Agbambu's *Security Watch*, Africa Independent Television every Saturday at 12.30 noon, *Crime Fighters and Police Diary* both anchored by the Nigeria Police Force on National Television and Radio respectively.

The mode of analysis consciously underscores the impact of the individual, group, and institutions on crime in Lagos. In all, the analyses combine the chronological, thematic, descriptive, analytic, statistical and graphical elements. Where necessary, tables are generated from fragmented and sometimes incomplete sources and where applicable, maps are adapted and used to illuminate the point being made. In the wider contexts of chronology and themes, an attempt is made to use the twin notion of time-continuity and change, to determine the gradual, abrupt or episodic patterns of crimes in Lagos.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

The research is presented in six chapters arranged chronologically. Each of the chapters is designed in such a way that it can be read separately or as a part of the other chapters.

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

The first chapter introduces the work. It discusses the background to the study and attempts to conceptualise the study area. Other highlights of this chapter include the statement of the problem that the research set out to investigate, the aim, objectives, scope and significance of the study. In addition, the chapter places the study in context by the review of relevant literature to ascertain clearly the state of existing knowledge on the chosen theme, and the gap that the

study hopes to fill in the literature. This chapter also sets the conceptual and theoretical bases for the study, and the methodology of study.

### **Chapter Two: Armed Robbery and Murder in Lagos, 1861-1905**

The second chapter titled “Armed Robbery and Murder in Lagos, 1861-1905” begins with a discussion of the legal and social or traditional meaning of armed robbery and murder. It continues by examining the general nature of crimes in pre-colonial and colonial Lagos until the eve of the amalgamation of Lagos with the Southern Protectorate in 1906. Specifically, it focuses on the nature of official and popular responses to these crimes, and their impact on the society in the first four decades of colonial rule.

### **Chapter Three: Armed Robbery in Lagos and its Districts, 1906-1959**

The third chapter highlights and investigates the dynamics of robbery in the districts of Lagos from 1906 until the World Trade Depression of 1929. It further investigates the dimensions of robbery in Lagos from 1929 until the Second World War, and thereafter, till the eve of Nigeria’s independence in 1960. Other highlights of this chapter include emphasis on the role of gangs, and the changing responses of government and the public to the crime.

### **Chapter Four: Murder in Lagos and its Districts, 1906-1959**

This chapter discusses the emerging socio-political and economic contexts within which murders were committed in Lagos from 1906 to 1959. In particular, it considers murder during this period as largely a consequence of the cultural and demographic diversity of Lagos and the breakdown in inter-personal relationships. The crime of murder is also interpreted as a medium through which members of some traditional institutions, hitherto powerful in the pre-colonial period, sought to remain relevant in a changing environment.

### **Chapter Five: Armed Robbery and Murder in Post-Independence Lagos, 1960-2000**

This chapter discusses the changing nature of armed robbery and murder in Lagos since independence. It focuses on the impact of the Nigerian Civil War, prosperity, population explosion, skewed income distribution and lingering economic depression on the incidence of

these crimes. It also examines the growing sophistication of gangs, their activities, the complicity of police or armed personnel - retired or serving, and the changing attitude of government and the public towards the offences.

#### **Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusion**

The sixth chapter ties together all the discussions in the preceding chapters with penetrating insights on what is common and varied in the commission of the crimes studied. The study concludes with recommendations for the prevention and control of armed robbery and murder in Lagos.

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- <sup>2</sup> Since October 2001, when an international conference on "Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities since the 19th century" organised by the French Institute for Research in Africa took place in Ibadan, growing interest has been shown in the study of crime history in Nigeria. Two specific studies on aspects of crime history in Lagos are the comparative study of Laurent Fourchard, "Urban Poverty, urban crime and crime control: The Lagos and Ibadan Cases, 1929-1945", in S. Salm and T. Falola (eds.), *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2003, pp. 291 – 319, and R.T. Akinyele, "The Involvement of the Oodua Peoples' Congress in Crime Control in Southwestern Nigeria", in Laurent Fourchard (dir.) *Gouverner Les Villes d'Afrique: État, gouvernement local et acteurs privés*, Paris: Karthala et CEAN, 2007, pp. 139-159
- <sup>3</sup> See for instance, Margaret Peil, *Lagos: The City is the People*, Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1991, pp. 129-138; Sandra Barnes, *Patrons and Power: Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos*, London: Manchester University Press, 1986, pp. 19-46. S.H. Brown, "A History of the Peoples of Lagos, 1852-1886", PhD Thesis, North Western University, 1964, pp.381-384.
- <sup>4</sup> For more details on the definition of fear, the way it could influence people's responses to crime and the alternative provided by the defensible space concept, see Agbola, *Architecture...*, pp. 17-20.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 33-42.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Punch*, 13 June, 2007, p. 56.
- <sup>7</sup> J.O. Akintola-Arikawe, "The Rise of Industrialism in the Lagos Area", in Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri and Jide Osuntokun (eds.), *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, Ikeja: Literamed, 1987, pp. 102-125.
- <sup>8</sup> Toyin Falola, "Theft in Colonial South-Western Nigeria", *Africa (Roma)*, 50, 1, pp. 1-24.
- <sup>9</sup> The cityspace refers to the city as a historical, social and spatial phenomenon with its intrinsic spatiality highlighted for interpretive and explanatory purposes. See Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2000, p. 8.
- <sup>10</sup> M.A.A. Abegunde, "Aspects of the Physical Environment of Lagos", Adefuye et al, *History...*, p.8.
- <sup>11</sup> Soja, *Postmetropolis...*, p. 8.
- <sup>12</sup> Barnes, *Patrons...*, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>13</sup> For more details on the absorption of Epe into the Lagos sphere of influence see, G.O.Oguntomisin, *The Transformation of a Nigerian Lagoon Town: Epe, 1852-1942*, Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited, 1999.
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- <sup>16</sup> For details on the re-organisation process, see among others, NAI, Comecol.2 G.1 "Colony District Reorganisation General"; Comecol.2 G.2 "Colony District Reorganisation-Finance"; Comecol.2 G.3 "Epe District Reorganisation-General".
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- <sup>18</sup> Paul Osifodunrin, "From Apathy to Dependence: The Evolution of Wage Labour in Lagos and Its Impact on Official Policy and Society, 1861-1970", Term Paper, Department of History, University of Lagos, 1998.
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- <sup>23</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Development of the Port of Lagos, c. 1892-1946", *Journal of Transport History*, Third Series, XIII, No. 1, 1992, pp. 59-78.
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- <sup>27</sup> Philip T. Ahire, *Imperial Policing: The Emergence and Role of the Police in Colonial Nigeria, 1860-1960*, Milton Keynes: England/Philadelphia, Open University Press, 1991 as summarised in, Ruby A. Bell-Gam and David Uru Iyam (compilers) *Nigeria, World Bibliographical Series* (Revised Edition), 10, Oxford, England: Clio Press, 1999, pp. 127- 129. See a review of the same book by E.O. Rotimi in *Journal of African History*, Volume 34, No. 1, 1993, pp. 148-149.
- <sup>28</sup> William Kornblum, Joseph Julian and Carolyn D. Smith, *Social Problems*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, New Jersey: Prentice Hall/Eaglewood Cliffs, 1985, p.199.
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- <sup>38</sup> For a detailed discussion of Lombroso's theory, see Marvin E. Wolfgang, "Cesare Lombroso" in Hermann Mannheim (ed.) *Pioneers in Criminology*, London : Stevens and Sons Limited, 1960, pp. 168-277.
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- <sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp. 426-433.
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- <sup>58</sup> Ibid, pp. 22-26.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>62</sup> Ibid
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- <sup>64</sup> Austen, "Social..."
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 94.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid, pp. 94-98.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>68</sup> Akintola-Arikawe, "The Rise...", Adefuye et al, *History...*, pp. 102-125.
- <sup>69</sup> Barnes, *Patrons...*
- <sup>70</sup> Peil, *Lagos: The City...*
- <sup>71</sup> Brown, "A History..."
- <sup>72</sup> Michael J.C. Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977.
- <sup>73</sup> Aderibigbe, *The Development...*
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- <sup>76</sup> R. O. Ekundare, *An Economic History of Nigeria, 1860-1960*, London: Longman, 1973.
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- <sup>79</sup> Akin Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*, London: University of London Press, 1968.
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<sup>89</sup> Alemika, "Criminal..."

<sup>90</sup> Oyakhiromen, "The Patterns...", pp. IV-VI.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Clifford, *An Introduction...*, pp. 22-26. For more explanation on demonology see, E.U.M. Igbo, *Introduction to Criminology*, Nsukka: Afro Orbis Publications, 1999, pp. 29-30.

<sup>95</sup> For details see, W. Clifford, "Culture and Crime", in *La Peine (Punishment)*, Bruxelles: De Bocck Université, 1991, pp. 87-108.

<sup>96</sup> See Bourguignon, "Crime...", pp. 199-220. Also, George B. Vold and Thomas J. Bernard, *Theoretical Criminology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 131-141.

<sup>97</sup> J. Galligan, *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic*, New York: Vantage Books, 1996, p. 46, quoted in Cunningham, "What We Teach...", p. 6.

<sup>98</sup> Kornblum et al, *Social...*, p. 178. See also Agbola, *Architecture...*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>99</sup> Agbola, *Architecture...*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>100</sup> For details on Durkheim's concept of anomie and its reformulation by Merton, see John Hagan, *Modern Criminology: Crime, Criminal Behavior and Its Control*, New York: McGraw Hill Company, 1985, pp. 148-150, 192-194.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-42.

<sup>102</sup> Xavier Rousseaux, "Crime, Justice and Society in Medieval and Early Modern Times: Thirty Years of Crime and Criminal Justice History, A Tribute to Herman Diederiks", *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies*, No. 1, Vol. 1, 1997, p. 87.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### ARMED ROBBERY AND MURDER IN LAGOS, 1861- 1905

This chapter begins by defining and conceptualizing armed robbery and murder in the colonial Lagos and wider contexts. This is followed by a discussion of the general nature of crimes in pre-colonial and colonial Lagos until the eve of the amalgamation of the Lagos Colony with the Southern Province in 1906. In particular, it investigates official and popular responses to armed robbery and the offence of murder in the first four decades of colonial rule in Lagos with a view to highlighting their effectiveness.

#### Understanding Armed Robbery and Murder

Armed robbery is legally classified as an offence against property in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> The underlying assumption for this classification is that the ultimate aim of any armed robbery attack, where the attack is not an alibi to assassinate, is to steal and not necessarily to kill. Considered from another perspective, Dambazau believes and reasonably too that armed robbery is also a crime against persons because of its injury potential.<sup>2</sup> Indeed a cursory look at the experience of Lagos and indeed Nigeria in armed robbery reveals that most people fear being victims of armed robbery not much for the possible loss of property but mainly for bodily harm and terrible injuries that may be inflicted on them by armed robbers or the ordeal that they had heard were visited on victims. For instance, stories abound of male victims that had been maimed or killed during robbery attacks whether or not they had property that could be stolen while many female victims - either as wives, daughters or relations of male victims - had been subjected to very humiliating sessions of rape. The dictums 'Your money or your life' and - in the case of a female victim - 'Your money or your life and body' are, therefore, permanently registered in the psyche of those who had been victims and those who may be victims.

The term 'Armed robbery' or what the Yoruba call *idigun jule*, literally meaning 'stealing in war-like fashion', is used to describe an act of stealing in which any dangerous weapon - even a razor blade - was used.<sup>3</sup> It is also defined as the "ferocious taking of another person's property from his or her person, or in his or her presence while armed with offensive weapon, using force or intimidation."<sup>4</sup> Implicit in these definitions are certain ideas. First, that armed robbery involves first and foremost the offence of stealing or the attempt to steal. Fakayode agrees this much by his identification of the act of stealing as the first of the four elements constituting the essentials of robbery under the law.<sup>5</sup> Second, that stealing or the attempt to steal becomes armed robbery or the attempt to rob only when it involves the use or the threat of use of any offensive weapon, force or intimidation. Third, that for robbery to have been deemed to have taken place a person must have been dispossessed of his property or another person's property in his care, or at risk of losing such property.

Section 401 of the Criminal Code also describes

Any person who steals anything, and at or immediately before or immediately after the time of stealing it, uses or threatens to use actual violence to any person or property in order to obtain or retain the thing stolen or to prevent or overcome resistance to its being stolen or retained [as being] ... guilty of robbery.<sup>6</sup>

While the European and contemporary nature of the aforementioned definitions of armed robbery is acknowledged and should be borne in mind when studying issues emanating from and relating to such a crime in Lagos, Nigeria and indeed Africa, it is essential to put in perspective what it meant to steal and rob in the traditional and purely African context.

Naturally, stealing was an anathema in all communities that occupied the Nigerian area.<sup>7</sup> However, its treatment depending on the quantity and quality of what was stolen varied from one group to the other. For instance, hunger was a tenable excuse for stealing among the Igbo and Nupe if the quantity of what was stolen did not exceed what could be consumed by the individual. Karibi-Whyte suggests that stealing depending on the value of what was stolen attracted, "mere ridicule or flogging or not punished at all in some areas while offences such

as adultery, disrespect or assaulting a chief and murder, attracted banishment, serious fines or sale into slavery.”<sup>8</sup> Stolen goods, in the words of Elechi Amadi, could be returned in Alanso, Okposi, Aikpo and parts of Owerri without the thief being punished while the Igara would be resolute in collecting twice the value of the stolen goods from an offender.<sup>9</sup> Among the Jarawa, the thief had to pay back five times the worth of the stolen goods while in Onitsha and Ikwerre damages were fixed by the owner of the stolen property.<sup>10</sup>

Among the Yoruba who own Lagos and are in the majority in the city, stealing was intrinsically a shameful and disgraceful act. A person who stole was called *ole* or such derogatory names as *igara olosa*, *sunmomi*, *gbewiri*, *ofon*, *alo-ki-onirun-digbe*, *jaguda-pali-baba-bilisi*, *atilawi*, *elegiri*, *firi-ndi-oke* literally *swift at stealing valuables* etc. The extent to which this act was abhorred is further underscored by the popular saying that ‘*Eni bi ole ko bi’mo*’ implying that ‘he who gives birth to a thief is childless’. The folk song below reinforces the repulsive nature of stealing to the Yoruba:

Kini ofole se l’aye ti mo wa (2ce)/ Of what use is stealing to my life  
 kaka kin jale ma kuku deru/ I’ll rather become a slave than steal  
 kini ofole se l’aye ti mo wa/ Of what use is stealing to my life

By its very nature and the unreceptive attitude of the people towards it, stealing was something people did with utmost caution. Although, the Yoruba also believe that criminals must of necessity exist in a community and therefore expect that people should take proper care of their property and not handle them loosely to the extent that it tempts a potential rogue, the thief rather than the victim or society was fearful because he was (they were mostly male) aware and afraid of the consequences of being caught and made a laughing stock. The Yoruba dictum ‘*Ojo gbogbo n’tole, ojo kan ni ti oninkan*’ meaning ‘everyday is for the thief but only one day for the owner’ encapsulates and suggests the perceived supremacy of the owner-victim and the society over the thief thus creating the impression that once the thief was caught, he would be punished enough to make up for his past deeds. The dictum also

gives the impression that a thief, at a time in Yorubaland, was only as bold as to steal when the owner was not around or conscious of his valuables being stolen thus suggesting that stealing in its daring context of robbery had not always been known among the Yoruba.

Not surprisingly, the image of a scared-thief created in the Yoruba dictum above that is afraid of the society is not readily applicable in a situation where stealing assumes the dimension of robbery, and becomes an occupation or, more appropriately, a profession. At this advanced level of stealing, the robber is ready to remove any obstacle on his way to stealing. Consequently, a reversal of the trend of fear emerges. Rather than the robber being solely fearful, the society is also gripped by the fear of crime and criminals. As shown in chapter three of this study, the inhabitants of Lagos became so apprehensive in the face of armed banditry that they were reluctant in providing useful information towards helping the colonial police in the fight against criminality.

Meanwhile, the Yoruba term for armed robbery-*idigun jale* better illustrates the import of and contempt for such an offence, and the indignation that such a daring act of stealing with violence elicits. Thus, while the Yoruba like any other group frowned at stealing depending on what was stolen, robbery was condemned out-and-out for several reasons. First, the introduction of the use of weapons downplays the plea of stealing to expel hunger making it a daring expression of greed than a forced and humble expression of need. Second, the offence of armed robbery was more often than not committed in groups thus introducing the element of group criminality and aggregated greed and need into the act of stealing. Third, the society became fearful in a situation where security of property and, in some cases, individual and group safety, could not be guaranteed.

### **Understanding Murder**

Murder, on the other hand, is categorised as one of the offences against the person. It is described in the Western styled Nigerian Criminal Codes of 1915 and 1958 as an aspect of



unlawful, culpable or criminal homicide where homicide is the legal term for the killing of one person by another.<sup>11</sup> Section 315 of the Code stipulates that "Any person who unlawfully kills another is guilty of an offence which is called murder or manslaughter, according to the circumstances of the case."<sup>12</sup> In explaining this offence and for a charge of murder to be established, Fakayode notes that there must be evidence of

The fact of death within a year and a day, the act of omission on the part of the accused directly causing the death of the deceased and the intent to kill or do grievous bodily harm or to do an act or make an omission likely to endanger human life while pursuing an unlawful purpose.<sup>13</sup>

The definition of murder enunciated above takes not just the death of the victim as evidence of murder but goes beyond the evidence of physical death to look at the thought process preceding the act of murder to determine the connection of this process (legally called intent) with the eventual perpetration of the act. Thus, the intent of killing is important evidence that must be proved to sustain the charge of murder against an accused.

In traditional Nigerian society, the idea of 'evil intent' in establishing and proving a murder case could not have been wholly applicable. This is because of the connection between crime and superstition. For instance, the killing of one's own son to make a charm or the killing of a human being for funeral obsequies might have been done without any 'evil intent', the perpetrators being actuated by motives which to them appear to be perfectly normal, noble and probably obligatory given the belief that their forebears had always done so.<sup>14</sup> In another development, a person may kill another person on the suspicion and accusation of bewitchment.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the killing of another person for any other reason was considered a grave offence and handled in several ways in the Nigerian area depending on the unwritten laws of the people. Generally, capital punishment was reserved for murderers usually by hanging.<sup>16</sup> Escape of the culprit was not a problem in traditional judicial administration. "If a murderer escaped, his wife or child or some other relation was killed in

his stead.”<sup>17</sup> This tendency and the mode of carrying out the killing probably informed the view of some scholars that African penal system was barbaric<sup>18</sup> because a lot of pressure and burden of control was placed on kinship to keep all its members in conformity with societal norms, as the crime of one may be visited on the other.

Describing the treatment of murder among some Nigerian ethnic groups particularly in the eastern part of the country, Elechi Amadi notes:

The Kanuri and Edo decapitated murderers, the Abuan and Bassa forced them to commit suicide. The Abaja (Igbo) killed the murderer in exactly the same manner and place that he had killed his victim, the Kalabari gradually clubbed him to death. In other places the family of a murderer was required to replace the murdered man [as was the case in the story of Ikemefuna in *Things Fall Apart*]. The Kwale Igbo required a girl as replacement and twenty bags of cowries as compensation. The Dakkarri required the murderer to substitute either two girls or a girl and a boy. The Gamawa required fourteen slaves as recompense.<sup>19</sup>

Adewoye takes the argument further:

“In most communities in Southern Nigeria, except for intentional murder and witchcraft, the penalty for which was death, virtually all other offences that would rank as crime in the English-style courts could be neutralised by payment of adequate compensation to the injured party. Thus it was said of a number of villages in Onitsha Division that manslaughter and accidental death could be compensated for by the present of a woman or a cow and a piece of cloth to the family of the deceased. Similarly, justifiable and intentional homicide were settled in the area of the Ogwashi-Uku in present day Bendel State (now Delta State) by the payment of compensation to the male next of kin to the deceased sometimes in the form of a marriageable maiden. Such was also the practice among the Western Ijo in the Niger Delta area. Among the Igbo clans of the Kwale Division in Warri Province, as in many communities in the Owerri Province, a man who killed a slave had to replace him with one of equal value. In certain areas even intentional murder could be settled by heavy compensation and the making of necessary sacrifices. Among some communities in Calabar Province, it was expected that a man convicted of a crime punishable by death could avoid capital punishment by paying a very large indemnity, in addition to compensation to the injured party.”<sup>20</sup>

Among the Yoruba, murder was equally viewed as a serious offence. A glimpse of how the Yoruba dealt with murderers has been provided by Johnson<sup>21</sup> and buttressed by Watson<sup>22</sup> in her study on Ibadan. Johnson’s view of the treatment of murder in Ibadan indicates respect for and recognition of status as crucial in applying the death sentence which was usually the punishment for murder. A commoner would be executed at once for murder.<sup>23</sup> This was the case with the young man who, as late as 1851 was beheaded for stoning

someone to death while his family were all sold into slavery for the defiantly unrepentant speech that the condemned man made.<sup>24</sup> Again Peel narrates a murder case in 1855 where a man was killed in Ota over a dispute on kola trees. His killer escaped to Abeokuta thus compelling the victim's family to threaten vengeance on his family. To avoid the imminent danger, the killer's family tricked the offender to return claiming that compensation had been paid to the victim's family and at his return he was killed by his companions.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, a man of status who committed murder was expected to "commit suicide by any method he may prefer, for if executed publicly his house would be demolished and his family ruined."<sup>26</sup> As illustration, in mid-nineteenth century Ibadan, Chief Ayorinde faced with death over the murder of one of his wives whom he beat to death, embarked on voluntary exile to escape the verdict.<sup>27</sup> However, as the Yoruba was dragged to a close and colonialism tightened its grip on Yorubaland, the income of chiefs hitherto assured by spoils of war dwindled. The courts became an alternative source of revenue for the chiefs thus making imposition of fine a greater punishment than death.<sup>28</sup> All said, it is clear that murder as much as armed robbery was severely dealt with in traditional Nigerian societies.

### **Nature of Crimes in Pre-Colonial Lagos**

The initial frontier-like nature of Lagos territory made its lagoons a natural attraction to several migratory fishermen who first used a part of its land as fishing camps.<sup>29</sup> At such a subsistence level, criminality was greatly limited to the theft of fish, canoes and piratical activities.<sup>30</sup> During the reign of Oba Akinsemoyin (c.1760-1790), trade in Lagos blossomed as Portuguese traders encouraged the participation of the Oba and his people in the obnoxious trade in slaves.<sup>31</sup> The collapse of Oyo and the consequent conflicts in the Lagos hinterland further guaranteed the supply of slaves to Lagos through the imperialist activities of some emergent states such as Ibadan and Abeokuta in the Yoruba interior in the nineteenth century.

The Egba, for instance, in their new home in Abeokuta constantly raided their neighbours in their quest for survival and dominance.

The implication of this development on security and crime in the vicinity of Lagos was three fold. First, slave raids became rife in the outlying districts of Lagos and beyond thus engendering a feeling of insecurity arising from the fear of being kidnapped even extending as far as Ota, a town in present day Ogun State.<sup>32</sup> The activities of some migrant ex-war boys also contributed to this state of insecurity. Second, the slave trade brought more foreigners (traders and after its abolition, missionaries) to Lagos. This category of people became ready targets for rogues who believed either rightly or erroneously that they had money, personal effects or valuable articles of trade worth stealing. Thirdly, as the wealth of the local merchants increased, first, due to their involvement in the slave trade, and later "legitimate" trade, Lagos assumed the position of a great commercial centre for traders from the hinterland who demonstrated preference for the attractive prices offered for their goods in Lagos markets. Merchants and traders as well as other dwellers and visitors to the emerging city thus became potential victims of robbery attack. For instance, traders were robbed on trading routes while Lagos bound canoes bearing traders and their goods from the interior were often plundered with the stolen goods often disposed to soldiers and warring states in the Yoruba interior.<sup>33</sup> In 1859, two years before the declaration of a colony over Lagos, John Glover himself a European merchant based in Lagos and who at different times between 1864 and 1872 occupied the position of Lt. Governor and Administrator of Lagos, was robbed in Egba territory.<sup>34</sup>

Crime in pre-colonial Lagos thus derived partly from the economic activities of the people and partly from the political situation in the Yoruba hinterland. Indeed the economy mostly dictated the nature of crime and was greatly aided by environmental factor. Trading, both in slaves and agricultural produce, as the mainstay of Lagos economy, had intensified in

the post-Akinsemoyin era. To that extent, traders from neighbouring and distant Yorubaland brought their goods for sale in Lagos markets while Lagos merchants also traded in the markets of the interior.<sup>35</sup> As roads as we know them today and railways were unknown, waterways in addition to the overland trade routes, served as a major means of transporting goods and persons in Yorubaland. The former was particularly suitable for trade and in moving articles of trade especially in areas bordering the Atlantic Ocean like Lagos which is also traversed by the lagoon and several creeks. It has been noted that “most strips from Lagos to the small communities in the south-eastern parts [were] connected by the lagoon, reinforced in certain other places by the Atlantic Ocean.”<sup>36</sup> Goods were transported to and from Lagos on the Ogun River. Iseri, a town bordering and sharing close affinity with Lagos was particularly useful “because of its link with both the lagoon and River Ogun”<sup>37</sup> as “the principal rendezvous between Lagos and Abeokuta.”<sup>38</sup> The importance of this means of communication was underscored by Marsh who in 1845 reported that he saw about four hundred small canoes from Abeokuta and another one hundred large ones from Lagos at Iseri.<sup>39</sup>

Expectedly, the waterways aided criminality in two ways. First, just as roads in contemporary Lagos and indeed Nigeria are settings for highway robbery, waterways were a major operation centre for pirates and plunderers during the pre-colonial period. The plundering of commercial canoes was rife and was obviously the contemporary equivalent of car snatching or bicycle stealing during the colonial period.<sup>40</sup> Second, the waterways also provided a major escape route for criminals who often came from such neighbouring lagoon towns as Badagry, Epe and even as far as Porto Novo.<sup>41</sup> The activities of Teju Avoseh and his gang of pirates named “*Ode Omi*” (water hunters) based in Epe in the mid-nineteenth century has been documented by Falola.<sup>42</sup> The gang had “a fleet of canoes all designed for war and for fishing. Their main weapon was muskets, though they also carried spears, cutlasses, knives,

bows and arrows, all useful for long range and hand to hand combat.”<sup>43</sup> Recruitment into the fold was based on the display of “courage, restlessness and ability to fight and swim”<sup>44</sup> and, as might be expected, its recruits, apart from Epe indigenes, came mostly from inhabitants of other lagoon areas such as Mahin (Haje) and Atijere.

The gang rather than hunt for fish, hunted “for cowries, liquor, arms and ammunition, women and other goods”<sup>45</sup> on the waterways in Yorubaland and in the process “...abducted, raped and then dumped”<sup>46</sup> their victims while they disposed of their loot, especially arms and ammunitions to warring Yoruba soldiers at reduced prices. Canoes, another important item often snatched, were sold or added to the raiding fleet. Falola described the Avoseh gang as ruthless even with its own members such that “members who felt they had had enough did not dare leave as there was a follow up squad to hunt them down unless they relocated to Lagos or Ijebu Ode.”<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, non-Yoruba pirates from Benin and the Niger Delta also encroached on the eastern section of the lagoon in Yorubaland. The most notable were the Ijo of the western Niger Delta, who were noted for their migration motivated by economic reasons. The lagoon was one of their most favoured areas when it was profitable to engage in large scale fishing. Thus they established small settlements along the banks of the lagoon and the Atlantic sea coast from where they worked as fishermen, canoe builders net repairers, fish traders and pirates.<sup>48</sup> Falola claims that the Ijo were involved in piracy in self-defence against pirates who raided ijo canoes and secondly that it was their attempt to recover canoes and goods lost to piracy that drove them into the nefarious activity. Yet, piracy was as important as fishing for the Ijo to enable them realise the maximum economic gains from migration.<sup>49</sup> This is because migration to the Ijo was associated with survival and with fortunes since migrants invariably returned or were expected to return home with money and goods. Thus, it is suggested that the quest for maximum profit from migration led many Ijo into piracy.

Their piratical activities cut across the entire lagoon area, Lagos inclusive. Baikie underscores this point in his description of their activities in the 1850s thus:

Up the various creeks and branches, the waters are infested by a wild, piratical set, who live almost entirely in their canoes, and who subsist by plundering traders while on their way to markets, often adding murder to their other crimes. They extend their ravages from the Brass River on the one side, as far as Lagos creek on the other.<sup>50</sup>

In some cases, piracy was a means of generating revenue for the state as was the case with the Awujale of Ijebu.<sup>51</sup> At other times, it guaranteed the much needed revenue to nurture and sustain status as was the case with some Egba and Lagos chiefs who had their own syndicates. Again, there were other groups like that of Teju Avoseh who had nothing to do with traditional politics but led a piratical gang for personal aggrandisement. Whatever form it took, it would seem that stealing in Lagos either through piracy or looting had often involved the use of force, intimidation or offensive weapons.

Meanwhile, the treatment of crime involving individual or single criminals in pre-colonial Lagos was greatly aided by the compact nature of the society.<sup>52</sup> The fact that people knew one another had two implications. Firstly, it reduced individual criminality. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it moderated the tendency by individual criminals to escape justice as the society upheld the collective rather than individual responsibility for crime. Akinyele and Tamuno had in their different seminal works underscored this point. The latter in particular drew attention to a tendency towards group liability for crime among the Yoruba thus: "the extended family or kindred suffered for the wrongs of the members who were under its protection."<sup>53</sup> Thus, the escape of the culprit could not have totally impeded punishment, as the family would be held responsible.

Acting independently or in concert in *Ose Iga (Osega)*<sup>54</sup>, the Oba of Lagos and his chiefs - the Akarigbere, the Idejo, the Ogalade and the Ashogbon - and the village heads in the outlying districts were at the centre of the treatment of crime in pre-colonial Lagos with the king's palace serving as the highest court where cases of serious offences were heard and

judged.<sup>55</sup> The treatment of crime was carried out in several ways. First, the Ogalade class of priestly chiefs headed by the Obanikoro offered sacrifices to the gods and performed rituals for the cleansing of the city of Lagos from criminal tendencies and other vices.<sup>56</sup> It was and still is the belief of this class of chiefs that criminals rather than endanger the prosperity of the city would be 'sacrificed' in rejuvenating it. Second, criminal offences were often jointly tried by the Ogboni and the Awo Opa as elsewhere in Yorubaland. The members of these societies, most of who held titles in one of the four classes of chiefs in Lagos, and were patrons to some of the outlying villages acted as the "conservators of the public weal."<sup>57</sup> They arrested, tried and meted out appropriate punishment to convicted criminals in a court room called *iyara igbejo*.<sup>58</sup> They handled the most serious criminal offences and were usually responsible for the execution of their own judgements. Indeed, Idoluwo, a settlement near Lagos became an arbiter in the punishment of criminals by execution as the influence of Obanikoro, the founder of the settlement and later the chief priest of Ifa in Lagos spread among the Awori. Where a criminal was brought before the Osugbo cult in Idoluwo<sup>59</sup> and after divination, was found innocent, he would be released but if found guilty, he would be killed.<sup>60</sup>

Third, the application of the system of ordeal was rife and a deterrent to several would-be offenders. The fear associated with this kind of treatment was awesome. This was probably why Adewoye concluded that "the judicial system in traditional Southern Nigeria [of which Lagos is a part] was rooted in fear: fear of the supernatural, fear of ordeals, fear of the ancestors, and even fear of the elders, especially in the chiefly communities."<sup>61</sup> This traditional system is considered by many to be more effective in comparison to the colonial and contemporary judicial process which main bite is imprisonment or execution, two sanctions which seemed ineffective in tackling the problems of crime in the cosmopolitan city. Yet, the traditional system of treating crime could not have continued to function properly without adaptation in the rapidly expanding city of Lagos.



Thus, as Lagos grew and the population of the city increased, the traditional system of maintaining law and order became inadequate for certain reasons. First, it lost focus due to disputes arising from claims and counter claims to the Lagos throne in the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Under this disorderly atmosphere, factions usually emerged each supporting one claimant against the other and a natural sequel to these crises were civil wars which usually resulted in the burning and looting of largely raffia-houses (arson in modern parlance) in the emerging city.<sup>63</sup> Although the Ogboni society and the kingmakers usually tried to maintain law and order,<sup>64</sup> there was usually a thin line between neutrality and bias by their membership in the disputes. At such moments, the pre-colonial machinery for maintaining law and order were in the words of Tamuno often thrown hopelessly out of gear.<sup>65</sup> It was probably under this circumstance that the phenomenon of group criminality emerged in Lagos mostly committed in the heat and under the guise of civil and political disputes. This is because once order broke down and means of livelihood were shattered, disorder set in. Crime through looting thus provided a means of survival, particularly for the warrior class who were trained in warfare and had been used to raiding and living on booty. The unstable political situation made criminals, occasional or professional, out of people. Second, the traditional apparatus seemed to have been slow in adapting its structure to the new reality of tackling new problems arising from the admixture of cultures and trading relations. For instance, the traditional system could not ensure that debtors repaid loans advanced to them by their creditors.<sup>66</sup>

Still on the above, and seen from the perspective of the Europeans, the custodians of the traditional system appeared to have been carried away by the desire to exploit the strategic location of Lagos as the preferred entry port into the interior of Yorubaland. Thus, strangers whose destination was the interior were often robbed, as early Lagosians sometimes with elite complicity, hid under the guise of the much acclaimed hospitable nature of the Yoruba to steal from strangers while welcoming them. At least three known incidents of such roguish attitude

were recorded. King Oluwole who ruled Lagos between 1834 and 1841 was involved in the first case. He was alleged to have been privy to the robbing of Sierra- Leonean immigrants who landed at the port of Lagos on their way to Abeokuta sometimes during his reign. The 265 immigrants were said to have got to Abeokuta empty-handed.<sup>67</sup> Another case in point was the robbing of seven chiefs from the Gold Coast by Kru boatmen under the guise of welcoming them.<sup>68</sup> Again, Aje a notorious nineteenth century robber in Lagos was particularly reputed for robbing immigrants of their property before his arrest due to pressure from the Brazilian community.<sup>69</sup> Thus, at the tail end of the period of informal jurisdiction in March 1861, William McCoskry (alias *Apongbon*-The Red bearded) then Vice-Consul at Lagos and himself a leading merchant was anxious over the security of life and property and actually complained that King Docemo could not control his people. McCoskry further claimed that Africans accused of theft, robbery or other offences sought the protection of the Lagos chiefs.”<sup>70</sup>

This was the context in which it became imperative to establish a form of government that would bring all categories of residents in Lagos under a fold that could enforce law and order. It is doubtful if the traditional political system could have adapted itself to the new challenges being posed by the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos. Britain however took the initiative and by 1849 had assumed the role of a peacemaker in the Bights of Benin and Biafra with the appointment of a Consul to mediate between African merchants and traders of British origin. In 1851, the British had become entangled in the internal affairs of Lagos and ten years later they annexed the Island from where they began the gradual but steady movement into the interior of Yorubaland.

### **Colonial Laws and Crimes in Lagos, 1861-1905**

The nineteenth century was generally a period when there was genuine concern in suppressing common criminality in Europe.<sup>71</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the British

imported this attitude of zero-tolerance for crime into the Lagos colony in 1861 through treaty making and the establishment of English style machinery of justice and the introduction of English substantive law.

As a body of rules governing human conduct and recognised as obligatory by members of a society, law “was central to colonialism in Africa [as elsewhere] as conceived and implemented by Europeans and as understood, experienced, and used by Africans and other [colonised peoples].”<sup>72</sup> Unlike the traditional African law which “main prop was largely religious and metaphysical, the imported European law had behind it the ultimate sanction of force.”<sup>73</sup> As put by Roberts and Mann:

Law formed an area in which Africans and Europeans engaged one another—a battleground as it were on which they contested access to resources and labour, relationships of power and authority, and interpretations of morality and culture. In the process, Africans experienced colonialism, and both they and Europeans shaped the laws and institutions, relationships and processes, and meanings and understandings of the colonial period itself.<sup>74</sup>

The British annexation of Lagos had certain implications. Unlike before when the King of Lagos held sway in spite of his weakness at enforcing law on the growing heterogeneous population, and his apparent lack of control over the existence of separate courts for the British traders, and another for the returnees, British authority was now paramount indicating a shift in the balance of power.

The annexation of Lagos thus necessitated the introduction and application of British laws and their enforcement. This brought about certain changes hitherto unknown in this West African area. First, a gaol was built. Second, a small force was set up in October 1861 by McCoskry to tackle the problem of insecurity although the number was inadequate as there were 25 police constables to a population of about 30,000. In 1862, Governor Freeman increased the strength of the police department to 100 Constables under the supervision of 1 Superintendent, 4 Sergeants and 8 Corporals. Third, a Police Court, Criminal and Slave Court and Commercial Tribunal were set up. By 1863, two police branches - one civil, the other

semi-military or Armed Hausa Police had emerged to enforce the supremacy of European law.<sup>75</sup> The “exercise of the power of life and death over... [colonial subjects was surely] the last seal on the stability of British rule” in Lagos.<sup>76</sup> By this development, the individual responsibility of an offender favoured in British common law replaced that which underscored collective blame in the unwritten law of Lagos.

One of the implications of this turn of events, among others, was that African notions of justice, law enforcement and crime control became gradually subservient to those of the Europeans both in Lagos and in the hinterland. Paradoxically, the supposed supremacy of British law did not mean its efficacy even though, as would be seen shortly, the activities of the police and the courts during this period gave the impression that the new laws were efficient and properly enforced. Some Sierra-Leoneans who lived in Lagos at this time struck the right note on the true situation of the application of foreign law and machinery in fighting crime in the colony when they noted that “[T]he stricter system[s] of enforcement exercised by native governments in the interior [of Yorubaland] were superior to the lenient British system”<sup>77</sup> that operated in Lagos. Needless to say therefore that the imposition of the new principle of individual liability for a crime committed had both positive and negative impacts on criminal justice. On one hand, the new system came to respect the rights and liabilities of a criminal offender as distinct from that of his family. Put in another perspective, a criminal could now escape justice without transference of criminal liability to his family. Before long, criminals were to start exploiting this inbuilt leniency and other loopholes in the new judicial system.

At the inception of British rule in Lagos, the society was in transition and the Yoruba interior in turmoil. As subsequent events bear out, it was easier for the British to occupy than to administer Lagos effectively. One of the problems that confronted the incipient administration was the issue of security and the protection of property. During the 1860s, the

organised robbery of canoes and kidnapping, whether for political reasons as was the case with Kosoko since his deposition in 1851<sup>78</sup> or purely economic, as the activities of plunderers and slave traders from Badagry demonstrate,<sup>79</sup> continued unabated. Such criminal activities affected Lagos as trader-victims and canoe owners sustained losses. Two reasons could be adduced for this. First, the grip of government on administration in the outlying districts was weak.<sup>80</sup> Governor Glover had to appoint stipendiary chiefs and village headmen who were paid stipends varying from £2. 10/- to 12/6d a month and whose primary function was to keep open the roads near their villages. In addition, they served the new government as Rural Constables or District Police to maintain law and order<sup>81</sup>.

It was not until the 1880s and 1890s that the work of administering the outlying districts devolved on the Lagos Constabulary. Before then, the better organised Armed Hausa Police was seldom used for local policing among the 35,000 inhabitants of Lagos Island and another 75,000 in the outlying districts of the colony. Available records show that the outfit proved its mettle in fighting criminality each time it was called upon as was the case in 1864 when it killed Chief Hunkain Abuioko of Ajido, near Badagry who resisted arrest over the accusation of robbery and violence made against him. But it was mostly used for military expeditions in the rural districts close to Lagos and as far as the Gold Coast.<sup>82</sup> Second, plundering of canoes was partly political. For instance, unlike Avoseh, Kosoko's piratical activity stretching as near to Lagos as in Ebute-Metta though economically rewarding for him and his followers, was resistant in nature and meant to ruin Lagos trade in protest against his deposition as king of Lagos. Brown also argues that there were other neighbouring towns whose motivation for robbing canoes was political rather than economic. He gave as illustration the Yoruba towns of Abeokuta and Epe which were in a position to benefit more fully from direct trade with Lagos. But, as political consideration often precluded such trade, they resorted to robbery to secure part of it.<sup>83</sup>

Another major offence that the new government contended with was stealing which was rife in Lagos before and did not abate after the British take-over. Indeed, it seems to have intensified as it became the most prevalent crime in Lagos in the first decade of colonial rule. Brown, for instance, notes that in 1865 “housebreaking [was] daring and persistent, often ingenious and sometimes industrious [while] thieves were a source of continual concern and considerable financial loss for the wealthier residents of Lagos.”<sup>84</sup> As shown in the criminal statistics presented in the table below, which may not be fully representative of the situation but yet instructive for our purpose, theft ranked highest among the three offences recorded separately, and was only lower to the rate of offences jointly recorded as ‘other offences’ in 1863. Even at that, theft - a crime against property – was more common than those against persons, and shows a steady fluctuation compared to other offences from 1865-1871. Considered singly, the table and the figure below depict a fluctuating rate of reported cases of theft rather than a steady increase. The number of reported theft since 1865 however grew steadily until 1869 when a lower figure was recorded only for a higher figure to be reported in 1870 and a lower figure in 1871.

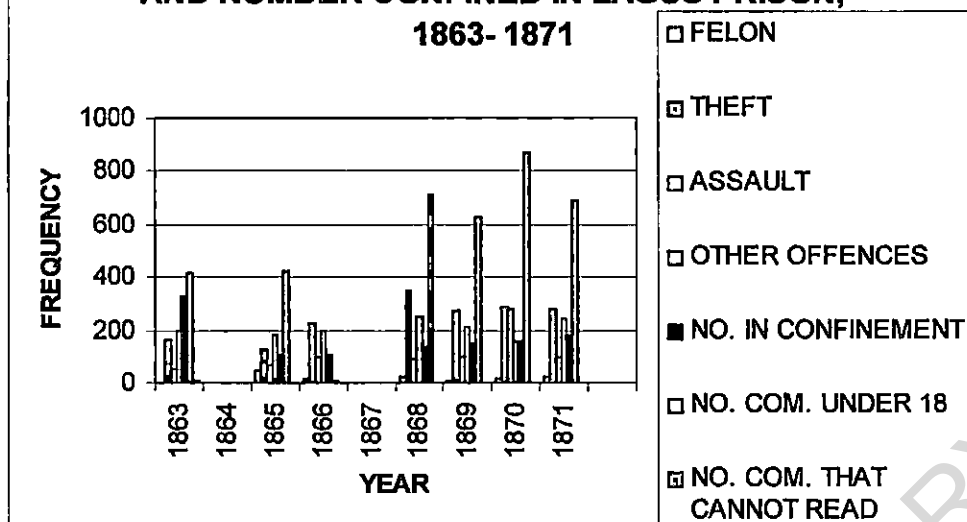
**Table 1: Offences and Number Confined in Lagos Prison, 1863-1871**

FELON	THEFT	ASSAULT	OTHER OFFENCES	NO. IN CONFINEMENT	NO. COM. UNDER 16	NO. COM. THAT CANNOT READ
1863	0	165	51	196	324	413
1864	0	0	0	0	0	0
1865	46	127	69	185	107	428
1866	16	224	98	197	106	10
1867	0	0	0	0	0	0
1868	19	350	89	253	136	710
1869	11	272	97	210	149	632
1870	17	286	283	160	162	868
1871	19	281	99	244	180	693

Source: Compiled from PRO, London, CO 151/2, *Colony of Lagos, 1863* and CO 151/3-9, *Lagos Blue Books of Statistics, 1863-1871*.<sup>85</sup>

NB. Com. = Committed

**FIG. 1: SHOWING THE TREND OF OFFENCES AND NUMBER CONFINED IN LAGOS PRISON, 1863- 1871**



The table and figure above make an interesting revelation about the age of offenders thus suggesting the early involvement and predominance of youths, mostly fugitives and migrants but also including indigenes, in criminality during this period in Lagos. As indicated in the column of “number in confinement” and that of those who were under the age of eighteen committed for trial, the latter were obviously more in number than the former. Although the figures seem unbelievably too high, it however shows a steady increase from 1863 to 1871 except for 1864 and 1867; for which the figures were not available, and that of 1866 for which a ridiculously low figure of 10 was returned, and 1869 which figure was lower than the previous year. Generally, however, the figures show a steady increase in the number of arrests made and those committed for trial suggesting that the machinery of justice during this period was efficient.

The number in confinement also indicates the level of importance that the colonial government attached to incarceration as a mode of punishment during this period in spite of the fact that the phenomenon was new in Lagos and indeed relatively rare in sub-Saharan African societies before the advent of colonial rule. A “more common form of detention was to restrain prisoners by attaching them to a log or tree.”<sup>86</sup> Killingray has noted that

punishment of offenders and not their rehabilitation took pre-eminence in early colonial Lagos until after 1922 when the 1893 proposal of the Gladstone Committee which favoured reform rather than punishment was eventually implemented.<sup>87</sup> Until that time, penal labour such as working on paths, roads and buildings was the rule and prisoners earned nothing at the Lagos Prison located at Faji.<sup>88</sup> Initially, each cell at the Lagos prison was capable of accommodating six inmates at a time. And when more than one prisoner slept in one cell, it could accommodate twenty prisoners in 1863.<sup>89</sup> The Gaol as it was called was built of mud and floored with boards. The hour of labour within the common gaol was between 8am and 5pm. Prison facilities were improved when a 300-capacity building patterned after the British model was opened for prisoners on Broad Street in 1872.<sup>90</sup>

Be that as it may, Governor Glover in particular did much to fight crime in Lagos and its environs. He continued the policy of appointing one or two local men to man their usually one-man police posts as a part of their rural policing team normally made up of the headmen, and those described as 'Natives Chiefs Sergeants.'<sup>91</sup> Ewu, Isasi, Isolo, Idimu, Janike (Ijanikin) Igamu (Iganmu) Agbara, Ojo, Oto, Igando, Werakun and Onibeju; communities hitherto in the outlying districts of Lagos but now absorbed and forming a part of the Greater Lagos idea, were all affected by this policy. By 1872, these outfits numbered about sixty-three in the Eastern District of Lagos suggesting its popularity while in 1873 a vote of £800 was reserved for them in the annual Estimate.<sup>92</sup> In the heart of Lagos itself, efforts were made to increase police presence in the neighbourhood through the proliferation of police stations. There was only one civil police station located at Olowogbowo in 1871. In the same year effort was made to site one at Tinubu Square, one in Tapa's quarter near Dosunmu and yet another in Olowogbowo.<sup>93</sup>

At his departure however, Glover's efforts could not be sustained for some reasons. First, the change in leadership meant the introduction of a new approach to administration.



Second, as the administration of Lagos was yet intertwined with that of Sierra-Leone and later that of the Gold Coast from 1874-1886, J.P. Hennessy, Administrator-in-Chief could not immediately appreciate the police needs of Lagos. Third, the Isaac Willoughby affair<sup>94</sup> which need no elaboration here, went a long way in beclouding what should otherwise have been the commendable efforts of Glover at encouraging rural policing and invariably enhancing internal security in Lagos. These reasons coupled with the fact that the Civil Police itself was bedevilled with the problems of inefficiency, recruitment of illiterates from "the very lowest off-scourings of people"<sup>95</sup> mostly from the interior-ex-slaves and *alarus*, made Lagos residents especially the merchant class irrespective of race, to seek the help of the Colonial Government in providing more and better police supervision as well as the introduction of police detectives to fight crime.

The criminal statistics below indicate a steady reduction in the total number of offences reported to the police from 1872-1876 although it represented a higher figure to those returned from 1868-1871. By 1877, the figure picked up slightly only to continue the downward trend in succeeding years. The fluctuating figures from 1886 were especially low raising questions as to their reliability and the possible existence of a high dark figure,<sup>96</sup> that is, unknown criminality. Granted that Alfred Moloney, thrice Governor of the colony in acting, deputising and substantive capacities in 1878-1880, 1883, and 1886-1887 and 1890<sup>97</sup> respectively had obliged the merchants' request of 1878 by increasing the strength of the Civil Police by fourteen constables and the introduction of six detectives<sup>98</sup>, it is doubtful if the force could have performed creditably well as the statistics seem to suggest.

Besides in 1874, there were complaints that organised crime had increased and that no man's house was safe as the thieves thought nothing of digging through walls of houses built of mud or sun-dried brick or door burning if no easier access route was available. This was in addition to carrying weapons which they did not hesitate in using to injure or in extreme cases

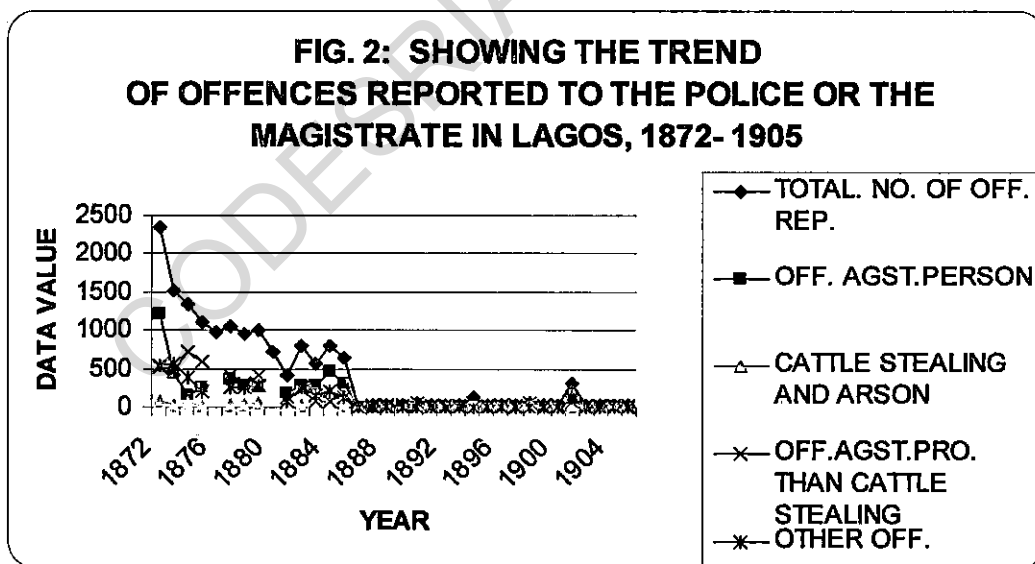
kill anyone who endangered their personal safety or professional success.<sup>99</sup> Again, the dampened morale of the law enforcement groups in the post-Glover years was definitely not an inducement for their efficiency.<sup>100</sup> The public itself demonstrated loss of confidence in the police severally as typified in a petition addressed to Lord Derby, the Secretary of States for the Colonies in 1884 and the observation of a General Meeting held in Lagos the same year. The petition alleged that “the policemen most of whom were known thieves and Kru men of bad character, had failed to protect the citizens at a time when cases of murder, arson and burglaries were rife.”<sup>101</sup> The Meeting observed that “instances have been known when a robbery is committed, those to whom is entrusted the protection of life and property have been found to form allies (sic) with the thieves.”<sup>102</sup>

The meeting subsequently denounced the Lagos Police in no uncertain terms: “the Police Force supposed to be for protection is useless for that purpose; it has among its members men known to be thieves.”<sup>103</sup> The *Mirror* put it quite straightforwardly in a comment of February 18, 1888 that “the rampant stupidity and ignorance of the police [was] proverbial”<sup>104</sup> and therefore not new. As early as 1863, for instance, the *Anglo-African* had reported that the Police rather than concentrate on tackling “real nuisances which would only give them trouble without recompense, found abundant occupation of the kind for which there was extra remuneration.”<sup>105</sup> Given the above, it should not be surprising why Brown concluded that the purported drop in the number of crimes and convictions during this period of great anxiety was unquestionably clerical rather than actual.<sup>106</sup> It was possible that fewer crimes were reported as the Lagos public became discontented with the police. It might also be the case that as more crimes were reported less crime was recorded due perhaps to a less efficient police force. The crime rate in Lagos almost certainly continued to rise as the population increased as migrant criminal gangs fed parasitically on the colony.

**TABLE 2: NUMBER OF OFFENCES REPORTED TO THE POLICE OR THE MAGISTRATE IN LAGOS, 1872-1905.**

	TOTAL NO. OF OFF. REP.	OFF. AGST.PERSON	CATTLE STEALING AND ARSON	OFF.AGST.PRO. THAN CATTLE STEALING	OTHER OFF.
1872	2357	1219	65	520	553
1873	1525	439	38	477	571
1874	1328	154	61	720	393
1875	1099	251	30	601	217
1876	971				
1877	1060	349	15	410	256
1878	949	289	34	308	270
1879	995	269	46	400	280
1880	709				
1881	414	168	23	134	89
1882	804	295	18	235	256
1883	576	279	69	76	152
1884	794	457	65	69	203
1885	648	315	16	169	118
1886	12	2	0	0	8
1887	28	4	1	23	0
1888	25	3	0	22	0
1889	22	0	0	22	0
1890	51	0	0	51	1
1891	29	1	0	28	0
1892	35	5	0	28	2
1893	36	2	0	31	0
1894	133	0	0	0	0
1895	20	2	0	18	0
1896	36	2	0	34	0
1897	27	1	0	25	0
1898	41	2	0	39	0
1899	32	2	0	30	0
1900	30	1	0	29	0
1901	320	120	5	69	126
1902	25	1	0	24	0
1903	29	3	0	25	1
1904	27	0	1	28	0
1905	32	2	3	27	0

Source: Compiled from PRO, London, CO 151/10-43, *Lagos Blue Books, 1872-1905*



Yet, the table and the figure above give fresh insight into the nature and trend of criminality in Lagos from 1872 to 1905. First, contrary to what obtained in the first decade of colonial rule when offences against property: theft, burglary or robbery were highest, in the

opening years of the succeeding decade, a shift seemed to have taken place as the criminal statistics showed an initial tilt towards the commission of offences against persons in 1872 and 1873. If however we add the figures in the first two rows of the fourth and fifth columns as both constituting offences against property, the total for the first row would still trail behind the figures quoted for offences against property in the same years in 1872 the exception being a slightly higher figure over offences against persons for 1873. By 1874, the offences against property once again bounced back to prominence and thereafter jostled for prominence in competition against offences against persons till 1905. Second, the table above also reveals that cattle stealing and arson were particularly widespread during this period. Indeed arson was sometimes an adjunct of housebreaking, burglary or robbery in nineteenth century Lagos.<sup>107</sup> Brown put it thus: "To set fire to houses accidentally while attempting to burn the door or deliberately in order to force the occupants to flee hurriedly, was an approved technique among burglars especially during the eighties."<sup>108</sup>

The point must be made that all categories of people, not excluding those who were considered poor by the standards of that period, were at the receiving end of these criminal activities although the degree of losses differed. Understandably, the Europeans, immigrants and some local merchants<sup>109</sup> who were rich, or were considered so, were the ones most affected by the organised gangs that came from the neighbouring towns and those who operated from within. The gangs which Brown described as mischievous, destructive and dangerous also stole from the poor. His words are particularly instructive here and are worth quoting:

Individuals who were poor by Lagos standards were also visited by robbers, and it was not uncommon for a man, and his wife to be removed naked from their bed, either bound and gagged or rendered unconscious by a narcotic and then left in a public street [while they stole whatever thing of value they had]<sup>110</sup>

Meanwhile, the prosperity of Lagos and its relative wealth compared to that of the neighbouring and distant towns in the hinterland, its early colonial status and its poorly

policed districts, in contrast to other parts of Yorubaland, which were later to come under British protection but hitherto enjoyed autonomy in their justice system, made it (Lagos) a haven for slaves fleeing from their masters, slave criminals, and other migrant and dislodged criminals escaping from the hinterland. Indeed, Lagos crimes to a large extent had rural roots. For instance, at the execution of the leader of a band of one hundred thieves at Ilorin in 1868, the police in Lagos was put on the alert as not a few of the scattered thieves were expected to make their way to “the riper and less dangerous fields of Lagos.”<sup>111</sup> In the same vein, when burglars were driven out of Abeokuta in 1886 and 1887 during the clampdown on their ranks by the Egba Government, they found it convenient to escape to Lagos<sup>112</sup> thus confirming a popular dictum that ‘Eko gb’ole o gb’ole’ that is, ‘Lagos accommodates the thief and the indolent’. This was why Brown concluded and reasonably too that

Every clean-up of an interior caused more professional thieves to make their way to the coast and once there, they either formed or joined a gang and usually lived at Ebute-Metta, Apapa, Igamu (Iganmu) or some other places within easy canoe distance of Lagos. Gangs with their residence at Badagry and even as far as Porto-Novo would also come to steal by night and then slip away with their loot by canoe before dawn.<sup>113</sup>

The impact of the wealth of Lagos relative to that of its hinterland on crime needs some elaboration here. It should be noted that Lagos owed its growth and development largely to European influence and African co-operation and initiative. A justification for this assertion was the transformation and multiplication of the spatial activities that went on in the colony in the post-annexation era. Details of these need not delay us here as Olukoju has recently concluded a study on infrastructure development and urban facilities in Lagos.<sup>114</sup> Again, the author has just published his Doctoral thesis devoted to the study of the impact of maritime trade on Lagos.<sup>115</sup> The two studies have shown clearly how the development of ports, modern transport and electricity during the colonial period facilitated the growth and development of Lagos.

Earlier in 1964, Hopkins had also studied the economic history of Lagos and noted that the fundamental changes which took place in Lagos in the early colonial period undoubtedly had disruptive tendencies although they were later beneficial.<sup>116</sup> It is therefore not unlikely that the period from 1880 to 1905 in which most of these developments took place affected not just the merchants, traders, and producers who had to adjust to the more demanding conditions of trade which these innovations brought about but also the common men who had to rediscover their role within the emerging colonial context. Here, it is sufficient to note that these developments-urbanisation, introduction of modern transport facilities, monetisation of the economy, establishment of a modern banking system, introduction of wage labour and at the social level, the new status which education, wealth and affluence conferred on people in addition to the fine structures that people put up, went a long way in making Lagos not only to tick as the preferred destination of all migrants seeking employment or trading opportunities, but invariably a breeding ground for unemployment and by consequence, crime. That Lagos itself was at times a generative city that induces economic growth in neighbouring towns is not contestable. However, as the experience of Badagry indicates at least until 1887,<sup>117</sup> Lagos proved a parasitic city as it drained the prosperity of Badagry in the aftermath of the abolition of the slave trade. One of the implications of this development was that Badagrians became more criminally active in Lagos during this period.<sup>118</sup>

It is still not clear whether trade fluctuations in Lagos had any direct impact on crime, but definitely the image of Lagos as a land of inexhaustible opportunities did. As the experience of Bello Jaguda illustrates, Lagos was a place where the possession of a skill or talent - drumming for him - could guarantee a means of livelihood. But where restrictions hamper the use of this talent, as was the case when the ordinance against noise-making reduced the potentials of drummers to make enough for a living, crime may become the

alternative for such disgruntled people.<sup>119</sup> Jagudà came to Lagos sometimes in the late 1880s from Okitipupa with the intention of selling his talent - drumming - which was in high demand in Lagos as Lagos people enjoyed dancing and praise singing.<sup>120</sup> However, as the law on noise making was enacted in Lagos around this time, it made the vocation unprofitable.<sup>121</sup> He resorted to organising and training young boys as pickpockets and for this he gained no mean popularity as his name soon became synonymous with stealing even up till today.<sup>122</sup>

Meanwhile, it would be interesting to know if boom or depression in Lagos trade impacted on crime in Lagos. Either way, the point should be made at the outset that prosperity and poverty can both influence the rate of criminality in a given environment as lack, unequal distribution of wealth and other issues could breed criminality in both conditions. The 1880s no doubt represented a period of slump in Lagos trade. In his study of the economic history of Lagos from 1880-1914, Hopkins came to the conclusion that trade in the 25 years before 1906 suffered depression, and were years of fluctuating fortunes while the succeeding years from 1906-1914 heralded prosperity<sup>123</sup>. Yet, as already noted, the criminal statistics returned in the period of depression (1880-1906) suggest a downward trend in crime that seems illogical. Be that as it may, newspaper reports on crime during this period hint otherwise with a wide variety of reasons.

The outbursts came in different ways. Generally, there were newspaper reports which informed the public in the 1880s that crimes were on the increase and that gangs were being more efficiently organised and supported by key figures resident in Lagos. A Muslim priest called Sunmanu and one Yoruba Priest - Bada Foresythe - were accused of making money from gangs of thieves through the sale of charms which protected them from apprehension in 1883 and 1884 respectively.<sup>124</sup> Some members of the police force were also accused of co-operating with the thieves.<sup>125</sup> It was also alleged in 1882 that many thieves had formerly

served in the police force just to learn the law and how to circumvent it.<sup>126</sup> Press reports also noted that the government strategy of recruiting non-Yoruba into the force to reduce the degree of co-operation between some of the Yoruba policemen and the Yoruba thieves achieved little as the men, mostly of Kru origin, made little difference.<sup>127</sup>

In the same vein, the *Times* on October 10, 1883, complained that thefts and robberies were becoming increasingly rampant: It noted that some who were esteemed respectable mentor gangs of thieves whom they employ to steal and rob for them and whom they pay with a portion of the property stolen. Again the same newspaper made an interesting observation which, if taken as it is, may lead to misleading conclusions. It wrote that the robberies in Lagos were probably a creation of the new Christian cosmopolitan civilisation of Lagos. The paper based its submission on the knowledge that "much larger countries of Abeokuta and Ibadan, independent Yoruba states, had a much lower amount of flagrant crimes than Lagos"<sup>128</sup> suggesting that the "summary executions [which those states dealt out for] murders, incendiarism, thefts and robberies, and the exposure of the bodies of the executed to public dishonour... had a very deterrent effect."<sup>129</sup> While it is true that colonialism altered the mode of offending in Lagos inducing new crimes, white collar crimes for instance, it would be unjust to say that it created robbery. Rather, this form of crime which had always been prevalent in Lagos only found new expressions within the colonial framework. Thus, rather than be limited to canoe plundering and the robbery of agricultural produce, murder, rape and kidnapping, criminals now had a wider sphere of operation and articles of value to steal including money.

Notwithstanding, the newspaper's allusion to a Christian-cosmopolitan-civilisation-induced criminality in Lagos, has a great potential to illuminate our understanding of crime in the city during this period. First, it drew attention, however implied, to the difficulties that efficient crime control in adjacent jurisdictions posed to Lagos during this period. Second, the



assertion of the paper that robbery was a colonial creation provides a window into what could be the opinion of a section of the Lagos public - possibly Africans - on criminality during this period. Indeed, a Yoruba dictum on criminality which probably had its roots in the colonial period submits that *Oyinbo o ko ole, afara lo ko*<sup>130</sup> literally that Europeans, or figuratively colonialism, abhors untidiness in the act of stealing. Put differently, the dictum connotes that stealing was permissible as long as the culprit was not caught.

Meanwhile, murder was one of the offences against which the newly established government first displayed its might and seriousness to fight crime through the application of the capital punishment. Killingray has noted that the death penalty in most British colonies was restricted to a single crime, murder, in line with judicial practice in Britain for the whole of the modern colonial period.<sup>131</sup> This rule was applied in Lagos, first in 1864, with the public execution by hanging of three men convicted for "premeditated murder and theft."<sup>132</sup> This trend of executing criminals continued publicly until the 1870s when executions were held secretly in the yard of the prison.<sup>133</sup>

As an offence against persons, murder naturally attracted much publicity especially in the 1880s. The *Times* of October 10, 1883 captures the situation thus:

Crime in Lagos is assuming a very serious aspect and an alarming proportion and the government do not seem able to cope with it efficiently. Murders are sometimes committed not in a fit of passion but with coolness and deliberation; not with the object of appointing to one's self anything belonging to the murdered, but from motives plainly of envy and jealousy. Incendiarism has become a ready means of revenge for those who believe themselves wronged and the purpose thus to revenge a wrong, real or imaginary, has often no regard whatever for innocent people who can hardly ever escape.<sup>134</sup>

The story of a celebrated murder case involving one Adeoshun, a refugee from Dahomey in 1884 has been told by both Brown and Tamuno.<sup>135</sup> However it is necessary that it be recounted here for some reasons. Firstly, it underscores the role of the victims in their victimisation. Secondly, it highlights the lure of superstition in the commission of murder during this period. Thirdly, it shows continuity, though under different circumstances, in the

attitude of criminals as the murderer also robbed his victims. It would be recalled that killing people was sometimes an adjunct of robbery in pre-colonial Lagos. Relying on the two accounts, the story revolved around the recurring disappearance of women in Lagos under mysterious circumstances for about eight or nine years before nemesis caught up with Adeosun in 1884 when his last victims, Mrs Selina Cole and her servant, disappeared. Their skeletons including those of two others were later discovered in a bush along Ikoyi. Police investigations directed by Superintendent A.C. Willoughby, acting on a clue, discovered Mrs Cole's property at the residence of the culprit who "in the assumed role of a 'doctor, alchemist and conjurer' had succeeded in enticing superstitious women to his home or other convenient spot where he robbed and subsequently murdered them."<sup>136</sup> His trial and conviction for the murder of the two victims and another by name Catherine Clegg resulted in his being hung. It should be noted that Adeosun was not the only offender. However, evidence on others who faced trial for the offence of murder committed in similar circumstances is not available. Again the accounts did not provide detailed information on the nature of superstition that took the victims to their killer. It can however be assumed that they met their death while seeking for some sort of spiritual solution which Adeosun took advantage of.

On August 8, 1885, the editor of the *Eagle* again drew the attention of the public to what was then public knowledge: that burglars in Lagos were becoming daring, armed with spears, cutlasses, knives and other weapons absolutely necessary for aggressive procedures.<sup>137</sup> Four years later, the *Record* also described the prevailing numerous and daring burglaries in December 1891 which it claimed had made Lagos unsafe, thus requiring better and increased measures of protection.<sup>138</sup> By 1895, the Civil Police was still being accused of inefficiency and complicity with criminals. In fact, it was said that the low wages payable to police officers attracted people of low status and shady character into the force. Another newspaper

report gives insight into the modus operandi of some of the criminals. For instance, it was recorded that in the mid-80s, thieves found it convenient to rob during the rainy season.<sup>139</sup> The advantages were many. First, what few policemen and night watchmen were around usually took cover during the rains. Second, walls were easier to tunnel through. Third, the nights were darker and escape was easier, and the chances of grounding on a sand bar and having to jettison part of the loot were less. This seasonal pattern was still followed in 1900.

In the intervening time, the colonial authority tried to fight crime in several ways in the aftermath of the separation of Lagos administration from that of the Gold Coast in 1886. First, it tried to improve the efficiency of the police. Governor Moloney had planned and subsequently received approval of the Colonial Office to re-organize the Lagos Constabulary by increasing their "strength, improve the beat system, entrust them with the duties of a fire brigade and make them responsible for street lighting" which took off effectively in 1898."<sup>140</sup> The improvement in the beat system yielded some positive results which effect soon wore off as "the thieves soon learned the schedule of the patrols."<sup>141</sup>

Government also initiated the process of enhancing street lighting in Lagos. By 1898 it succeeded in installing electric light in lieu of kerosene and gas lanterns that had once illuminated the street of Lagos. Indeed, press reports suggest that the lack of street lighting resulted in frequent burglaries in Lagos.<sup>142</sup> This might be true in relation to the criminals who worked perhaps effortlessly under the cover of darkness, but the introduction of street lighting neither stopped burglaries in Lagos. Besides, police business requires a balance of illumination and darkness to thrive.<sup>143</sup>

At another level, the government also tried to improve the calibre of men who sought enrolment in the force. In 1887, it solicited for the first time the recruitment of "intelligent men who could speak English and Yoruba to become lance corporals in the civil police force."<sup>144</sup> This laudable idea however proved unworkable as "the pay of thirteen pence a

day... was no inducement for capable men.”<sup>145</sup> The low income could only attract men of little honour to the force. Brown notes that the Civil Police remained a neglected force and still wore the short, baggy trousers that some Sierra-Leoneans thought was disgraceful. By 1887, in spite of the armed Hausa and civil police patrol, general insecurity of life and property had returned.<sup>146</sup>

Another dimension of official response to criminality was evident in the co-operation it sought with an adjacent power through treaty making and boundary demarcation. The enactment of treaties by the British has been interpreted as representing a frantic “search for... some appearance of legal certainty and claims over territories that were illegally acquired by imperial force.”<sup>147</sup> But beyond the issue of legally protecting territorial claims, treaty making was also a means by which the British tried to control criminality in its possession in Lagos. In doing this, it had to co-operate with a rival colonial power - France - to ensure that criminals or suspects emanating from the colony did not take advantage of the existing order in adjacent jurisdictions to undermine colonial security. Thus, for instance, in 1876, it enacted a treaty with the French Colonial Government in Dahomey to achieve the extradition of criminals fleeing prosecution into French territory. The treaty was bilateral, and there was a proviso that normal diplomatic procedure would be bent for a less rigorous one to hasten the process of inter-colonial extradition, the treaty was signed at a time when the grip of the two colonial powers on their colonial territories was yet wobbly.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, the Agreement of 1889 between the British and the French, demarcated the frontier between Lagos and Porto-Novo from “the north of the Ajarra Creek northwards to the north parallel.”<sup>149</sup> Subsequently, the British established protectorates over such border communities as Igbessa, Ipokia, Addo, and Ajilete up to Ilaro. While political reasons had been generally adduced for this demarcation, it is not unlikely that the action also became inevitable to curb criminals who often came from the neighbouring communities on the Dahomean side to rob,

and when under pressure, retreated to their communities thus converting the closeness of these villages to advantage. For instance, Egbado seemed to have been one of the source regions of most criminals who terrorised the outlying districts of Lagos during the colonial period.<sup>35</sup> The effect of the demarcation on transborder crime was however limited.

Be that as it may, organised robbery continued in and near Lagos. The Ojo affair at Atijere, the principal market east of Lagos in the 1880s, demonstrate vividly the extent to which the Colonial Government in Lagos was prepared to infringe on the right of non-colonial subjects in its eagerness to combat crime in Lagos and its environs. The affair involved the attempted arrest at Atijere of three native chiefs accused of plundering and kidnapping a canoe and its occupants on the Ifere Route in the eastern waters in 1891.<sup>150</sup> Warrant was subsequently issued for their arrests. The three were Chiefs Ojeo, Ipintan and Ojo residing at places beyond what was hitherto known as British jurisdiction.

In the process of effecting the arrest, Captain George Basil Haddon Smith, Inspector of Constabulary, but at the time the Acting District Commissioner at Lekki, charged with the execution of the warrant and in the company of Mr. A.G.W. Willoughby, a Deputy Registrar and a force of 14 Armed Hausa proceeded in a steam launch called Constance to Atijere on 1<sup>st</sup> September to effect the arrest of Ojo-chief of that place. The Acting Commissioner despatched Willoughby to summon Chief Ojo who proceeded at once to the steam launch in a canoe accompanied with eighteen men, three of whom carried machetes and a fourth, a spear. Ojo was at first reluctant to board the Launch but after some persuasion he boarded the launch and seated himself on the gunwale. On being approached by Smith and informed of the charges against him, and told of the necessity to proceed to Lagos, to answer them, Ojo refused ready compliance making the Captain to hold his wrist to arrest him and Mr. Willoughby, the feet. Ojo resisted and struggled to free himself and one of his men who raised his spear was immediately shot by the Captain's revolver. In the process, Ojo fell into

the water and escaped and the Hausa seeing the position opened fire on the men in Ojo's canoe without orders. In the scuffle, five men were shot dead, and two seriously wounded, one of whom died later from the wound.

The *Lagos Weekly Record* raised objection as to the manner in which the attempted arrest of Chief Ojo took place. The newspaper could not agree with the view of Captain Smith that in the attempt to arrest the native chief, a resort to arms became necessary because the men who accompanied Ojo to the launch were armed with three machetes and a spear. The newspaper noted that the men did not oppose the officer in the execution of his duty. Besides, the officer was protected, as he was, by a force of 14 Hausa armed with Sniders. The paper was of the opinion that the captain used his weapon with fatal intent. It therefore concluded thus:

If we were to enquire into the motives which informed the gallant captain to use his revolver with such deadly intent on a man within touching distance of him, we would be inclined to give evidence to the rumour which gained currency a short time ago to the effect that Captain Smith was instructed to arrest Ojo dead or alive, and to which the subsequent barring of the village and market by the Acting Governor seemed in a manner to confirm.<sup>151</sup>

The newspaper further observed that it could not believe that the parties responsible for the orders received by Captain Smith ventured to instruct him to go the length of taking the chief's life in arresting him on a charge which had not been proved against him and which at best was based on the sworn information of a single individual. On this note the *Record* concluded that there can be no gainsaying the fact that viewed in the light of the above, the act of Smith in deliberately shooting the man he had invited on board his launch and who went in good faith unarmed and harmless was nothing short of base treachery and the most brutal and shameful cowardice. The paper went further: "it is not to be wondered at then that the [14 Armed] Hausa imbibed the examples of their officer and fired upon defenceless and unoffending natives seated in canoes scarcely five yards away."<sup>152</sup> The intent it concluded was "murderous in the extreme for the short distance between the guns and the victims made

death terribly certain and the responsibility of these cold-blooded massacre most be borne by the Captain”<sup>153</sup> while it considered the subsequent action of the acting governor, Denton, in barring the village and its market as tantamount to waging war.

As expected, public outcry in Lagos against the perceived injustice was loud and deafening. The tragedy and story produced a widespread feeling of indignation and horror of the terrible results. Chief Ojo, it was gathered, was the eighth victim of such cold blooded tragedy as recounted by a private critic. He lamented that the Captain and his men were not brought to justice and asked rhetorically: is this British justice?<sup>154</sup> Meanwhile, it was later gathered that the real culprit was Chief Ipintan of Imoboro village who plundered the said canoe laden with palm kernels, ivory and country cloths with passengers for Lagos, and that Chief Ojo, on hearing of this plunder, had wanted to arrest him for this offence and for selling one of Chief Ojo’s boy into slavery.

The tragedy on the Ifere Route recounted above is indicative of the nature and treatment of crime in Lagos and environs during the first four decades of the colonial period, and depicts official frustration leading to aggression in the handling of issues bordering on criminality during this period. First, the plundering of canoes by communities occupying lagoon shores was and remained a big problem in colonial Lagos. Their victims were usually traders from the interior who were mostly victims of chiefs like Ipintan who had been used to plundering and had probably not come to terms with the fact that power had shifted to a set of foreign rulers. Second, that the notoriety of the criminal activities of these village-based chiefs (who were now tagged criminals, in the colonial context) troubled the psyche or peace of Lagos dwellers could be seen in the rash attitude of the Captain towards the suspects. Another plausible explanation is that the activities of these criminals disrupted Lagos trade and invariably the prosperity of Lagos. The impact of canoe plundering on trade in Lagos have been studied elsewhere.<sup>155</sup> Here, it is sufficient to note that canoe plundering contributed

immensely to the engendering of the spirit of fear among traders coming to Lagos to trade. Hence, government action in arresting the chief for prosecution and by so doing make the water routes safe for passage.

Notwithstanding all these efforts, criminals continued to operate in Lagos until 1906 when the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos was amalgamated with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (formerly the Niger Coast Protectorate) to constitute the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In 1900, there were reports of thieves entering the premises of one Mr. S.J. Sawyer on Joseph Street and stealing a watch. A considerable quantity of stolen property could have been carted away but for the fact that the victim woke up in the process making the thieves to decamp hurriedly.<sup>156</sup> In the same year, the *Record* reported a robbery at Government House, suggesting that there was no special place that could not be robbed in Lagos.<sup>157</sup> Indeed, as early as 1867, a similar incident had occurred when burglars, not minding the safeguards put in place, broke open the buildings of the Supreme Court at Tinubu Square and made away with public money.<sup>158</sup>

Meanwhile, the amalgamation of 1906 is of some consequence for this study.<sup>159</sup> Although Lagos became the administrative and commercial capital of the new colony, criminal statistics about the crime of the town itself was less visible after 1906 as they were mostly muddled up with those concerning the Western Province, an administrative division in the Colony of Southern Nigeria which may not always provide adequate and precise information relevant to the crime history of Lagos. Luckily, colonial files, reports and newspaper reports relating to Lagos crimes are available for the period between 1906 and 1960.

This chapter has examined the nature of crimes in the first four decades of colonial rule in Lagos. It has shown that the fight against criminality was a major preoccupation of the colonial government during this period. Yet, crimes such as robbery, burglary and murder



continued to thrive in spite of the various official responses and public outcry of the press. The next chapter explores the crime situation in Lagos beginning from this period of amalgamation. It should be noted that the Western Province, corresponded to the area previously covered by the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A.B. Dambazau, *Laws and Criminality in Nigeria*, Ibadan et al : University Press PLC, 1994, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Sina Idowu, *Armed Robbery in Nigeria*, Lagos: Jacob and Johnson Books, 1980, p. 11. A person who fraudulently takes anything capable of being stolen, or fraudulently converts to his own use or to the use of any other person anything capable of being stolen, is said to steal that thing. For more information on the legal definition of stealing see Emmanuel O. Fakayode, *The Nigerian Criminal Code Companion*, Benin: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1977, pp. 26-38.

<sup>4</sup> Dambazau, *Laws*, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> The other elements are: (a) the use or the threat of the use of force (b) the use of threat or actual violence must occur at or immediately before or immediately after the act of stealing (c) the use of actual violence or threat must be aimed at retaining the stolen property. See Fakayode, *The Nigerian Criminal*, pp. 39-42.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Colonial records suggest a few exception to this general belief. Specifically, it was recorded that stealing was a source of pride among the Sobos (Urhobo). As an illustration, a colonial official noted that a mother, as soon as she could move after the birth of a male child, would endeavour to steal water from another woman to wash the baby, in order that the baby may be a good thief. Similar observations were made on the deviant nature of Egun people in 1935. See NAI, CSO 26/4 File No. 3003/0 Volume 1, "Intelligence Report on Badagry District (Colony, Parts 1 and 2)", p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Honourable Justice A.G. Karibi-Whyte, *Criminal Policy: Traditional and Modern Trends*, Lagos: Nigerian Law Publications, 1988, pp. 10-16.

<sup>9</sup> Elechi Amadi, *Ethics in Nigerian Culture*, Ibadan: Heinemann, 1982, pp. 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> M.A. Owoade, *Law of Homicide in Nigeria*, Ile-Ife: O.A.U Press, 1990, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Fakayode, *The Nigerian Criminal*, p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> National Archives Ibadan (NAI), File No. (FN) 03286 Volume 1, "The Nigeria Police Magazine", Volume 1, No. 1, October 1937, p.17.

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note that the accusation of bewitchment has persisted in Lagos, Nigeria and indeed Africa despite modernisation. Indeed, it has become widespread such that there are religious denominations that thrive on hunting and delivering people from witches. Accusation and counter accusation of witchcraft have broken up families and turned children against their parents and vice versa. More importantly, there are cases of criminals whose only explanation for their involvement in crime was that they were bewitched. At another level, there are those who believe that drunkenness and sexual promiscuity could arise as a result of bewitchment. For details on the traditional meaning of crime in Africa, see William Clifford, *An Introduction to African Criminology*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, pp. 55-61.

<sup>16</sup> Amadi, *Ethics*, p.15.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> See David Killingray, "Punishment to Fit the Crime? Penal Policy and Practice in British Colonial Africa", in Florence Bernault (dir.), *Enfermement, prison et châtements en Afrique du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours* Paris., Karthala, 1999, pp.182-185.

<sup>19</sup> Amadi, *Ethics*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> O.A. Adewoye, *The Judicial System in Southern Nigeria, 1854-1954: Law and Justice in a Dependency*, London: Longman, 1977, pp.5-6.

<sup>21</sup> See Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos: CSS Limited, 1921, passim.

<sup>22</sup> Ruth Watson, "Murder and the Political Body in Early Colonial Ibadan", *Africa* 70 (1), 2000, pp. 25-48.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, *The History*, p.322.

- <sup>24</sup> J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000, p.59
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.60.
- <sup>26</sup> Johnson, *The History*, p. 322.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Watson, "Murder," p.43. Idem, 'Civil Disorder is the Disease of Ibadan': *Chieftaincy and Civic Culture in a Yoruba City*, Oxford: James Currey, 2003, pp. 55-85.
- <sup>29</sup> Babatunde Agiri and Sandra Barnes, "Lagos Before 1603" in Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri and Jide Osuntokun (eds.) *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, Ikeja: Literamed, 1987, pp.25-26.
- <sup>30</sup> For details, see Toyin Falola, "Brigandage and Piracy in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. X11 Nos. 1 & 2, 1995, pp.83-105. Also Agiri and Barnes, "Lagos", pp. 27-28.
- <sup>31</sup> Ade Adefuye, "Oba Akinsemoyin" in Adefuye et al, *History*, pp. 33-46.
- <sup>32</sup> Interview, Chief Imam Ota, March 2005.
- <sup>33</sup> Falola, "Brigandage", pp.92-95.
- <sup>34</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Politics of Free Trade Between Lagos and the Hinterland, 1861-1907" in Adefuye et al, *History*, p.86.
- <sup>35</sup> Kunle Lawal, "Background to Urbanization, Lagos Society Before 1900", Kunle Lawal(ed.) *Urban Transition in Africa: Aspects of Urbanization and Change in Lagos*, Ikeja: Pumark, 1994, pp. 13-15.
- <sup>36</sup> Falola, "Brigandage", p.89.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> S.H. Brown, "A History of the Peoples of Lagos, 1852-1886", PhD Thesis, North Western University, 1964, pp. 381-382,384.
- <sup>42</sup> Falola, "Brigandage", pp. 93-94.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 92.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90.
- <sup>52</sup> Interview, Chief Obanikoro, Head, Ogalade Chiefs, Iga Obanikoro, Lagos Island, September 4, 2006.
- <sup>53</sup> Tekena Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria, 1861- 1965: Origins, Development and Role*, Ibadan: University Press, p. 74.
- <sup>54</sup> The Osega was a council of state meeting. Some scholars describe it as a ceremonious meeting of Lagos chiefs held at the palace every seventeen days. See Agiri and Barnes, "Lagos", pp. 22-23.
- <sup>55</sup> Allusion to this fact was made by Otunba J.A. Payne, Esquire, Late Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court of Lagos in "Memorandum as to the Law Courts of Lagos", not dated.
- <sup>56</sup> Interview, Chief Obanikoro
- <sup>57</sup> Interview, Chief Obanikoro. Also Adewoye, *The Judicial*, pp. 4-5. The changing role of these societies is well demonstrated in the Apalara murder as enuciated in chapter four of this study.
- <sup>58</sup> Interview, Chief Obanikoro
- <sup>59</sup> For details on the ancestral home of Oluwo-Nla, the first Obanikoro, see NAI, CSO 26/4 File No.. 3003/0 Volume 1, pp. 67-75. See also, Patrick Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 25-26.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-74.
- <sup>61</sup> Adewoye, *The Judicial...*, p.10.

- <sup>62</sup> For more details on these disputes, see Cole, *Modern*, pp. 21-22. Also Lawal, "Background", pp. 11-12.
- <sup>63</sup> See Cole, *Modern*, p. 21.
- <sup>64</sup> Interview, Chief Obanikoro
- <sup>65</sup> Tamuno, *The Police*, p. 11.
- <sup>66</sup> This was one of the reasons that informed the British annexation of Lagos in 1861.
- <sup>67</sup> See S.O. Biobaku, *Egba and their Neighbours*, Ibadan: University Press, 1991, p. 28.
- <sup>68</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 384.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.386.
- <sup>70</sup> Tamuno, *The Police*, p. 13.
- <sup>71</sup> See M.Charif Bassiouni, *International Extradition and World Public Order*, Leiden/New York: A.W. Suthoff-Leyden/Oceana Publications Inc.-Dobbs Ferry, 1974, p. 4.
- <sup>72</sup> Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts (eds.) *Law in Colonial Africa*, Portsmouth/London: Heinemann Educational Books/James Currey, 1991, p. 3.
- <sup>73</sup> Adewoye, *The Judicial*, p. 12.
- <sup>74</sup> Mann and Roberts (eds.) *Law*, p. 3.
- <sup>75</sup> Tamuno, *The Police*, pp. 15-17.
- <sup>76</sup> N.A.I., CSO 1/1, 1, Freeman to Newcastle, 4 February, 1864 cited in A.G. Hopkins, "An Economic History of Lagos, 1880- 1914", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1964.
- <sup>77</sup> Brown, "A History", pp. 381-382.
- <sup>78</sup> Falola, "Brigandage", pp. 94-95. For more details on the activities of Kosoko after his expulsion from Lagos, see G.Oguntomisin, *The Transformation of a Nigerian Lagoon Town: Epe, 1852-1942*, Ibadan: John Archers, 1999, *passim*.
- <sup>79</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 384.
- <sup>80</sup> Tamuno, *The Police*, p. 19.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>83</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 384.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 381-382.
- <sup>85</sup> Statistics for 1861 and 1862 are not available. A plausible reason for this is that the colonial administration was yet to settle down to the business of administering the Lagos colony. *The Lagos Blue Book* for 1864 is however missing. Meanwhile, available records also indicate that the publication of the Lagos Blue Books commenced in 1865. Thus, as shown above, statistics relating to the Colony was published in a book simply titled *Colony of Lagos, 1863*.
- <sup>86</sup> Killingray, "Punishment", p. 185.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 188.
- <sup>88</sup> PRO, London, CO 151/2, *Colony of Lagos, 1863*
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>90</sup> Killingray, "Punishment", p. 188.
- <sup>91</sup> Tamuno, *The Police*, pp. 20-21.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>93</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 388.
- <sup>94</sup> He was the first African Superintendent of Police in Lagos from 1862-1873. The affair borders on theft of government money by a brother of the superintendent, and the latter's unwillingness to prosecute him, and perceived high handedness of the ASP by the public. For details, see Tamuno, *The Police*, pp. 21-23.
- <sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- <sup>96</sup> The "dark figure" or unknown criminality refers to the crimes which are neither discovered by the police nor reported by the citizens. It also includes crimes which are reported but not recorded. For more details, see Anna Alvazzi Del Frate, *Victims of Crime in the Developing World*, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, Publication No. 57, Rome, 1998, pp. 6-11. Walker

calls it the unrecorded percentage of the events which one is trying to study. See also Nigel Walker, *Crimes, Courts and Figures: An Introduction to Criminal Statistics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971, pp. 15-21.

<sup>97</sup> L.C. Gwam, *An Inventory of the Administrative Records Assembled from the Colony Province*, Ibadan: National Archives Headquarters, 1961, p. 77.

<sup>98</sup> Tamuno, *The Police*, p. 24.

<sup>99</sup> Brown, "A History", pp. 381-382.

<sup>100</sup> Tamuno, *The Police*, pp. 23-26.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Michael J.C. Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977, p. 22.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 384.

<sup>107</sup> For details, see C.O. Nwanunobi, "Incendiarism and other Fires in Nineteenth Century Lagos (1863-88)", in Last, Murray (ed.), *Africa, Journal of the International African Institute (Revue de l'Institut Africain International)*, vol.60,1, 1990, pp. 111-120.

<sup>108</sup> Brown, "A History", pp. 381-382.

<sup>109</sup> Patrick Cole in his study of elites in Lagos had written that many of them made their life as pleasant and comfortable as possible even as early as the 1850s. They "built huge houses and furnished them with floors nearly all of inlaid marble, and pictures of the best modern Italian masters...most of them surrounded by pretty gardens, tastefully laid out." See Cole, *Modern*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>110</sup> Brown, "A History", pp. 381-382.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos, 1861-2000*, Ibadan: IFRA, 2003, passim.

<sup>115</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, *The 'Liverpool' of West Africa: The Dynamics and Impact of Maritime Trade in Lagos, 1900-1960*, Trenton, US: Africa World Press, 2004, passim.

<sup>116</sup> Hopkins, "An Economic", p. 377.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-81.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Simon Heap has an article on 'Jaguda boys': Pickpocketing in Ibadan, 1930- 60 (with emphasis on the district of Ekotedo), *Urban History*, 24, 3, 1997, pp. 324-342. However, no reference whatsoever was made to the existence of Bello Jaguda.

<sup>120</sup> Oral Information, Dr. 'Yomi Akinyeye, Professor of History, Department of History and Strategic Studies, University of Lgos.

<sup>121</sup> For details on the drumming question, see Echeruo, *Victorian*, pp. 67-79.

<sup>122</sup> Oral Information, Akinyeye.

<sup>123</sup> Hopkins, "An Economic", p. 377.

<sup>124</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 384.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p.388.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Echeruo, *Victorian*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Oral Information, Dimeji Ajikobi, Lecturer, Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos.

<sup>131</sup> Killingray, "Punishment", p. 198.

<sup>132</sup> Brown, "A History", pp. 381-382.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid;

<sup>134</sup> *The Lagos Times*, 1882-1883, Vol.III, Lagos, November 8, 1882.

<sup>135</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 384 and Tamuno, *The Police*, p. 26.

<sup>136</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 384 and Tamuno, *The Police*, p. 26.

<sup>137</sup> Echeruo, *Victorian*, p. 21.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 384.

<sup>140</sup> Tamuno, *The Police*, p. 26.

<sup>141</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 389.

<sup>142</sup> Echeruo, *Victorian*, p. 21.

<sup>143</sup> See NAI, Comcol 1 FN 1532, "Street Lighting in the Municipality of Lagos", pp. 22-24.

<sup>144</sup> Brown, "A History", p. 389.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Adewoye, *The Judicial*, p. 17

<sup>148</sup> Reference to the existence of the treaty can be found in Porto-Novo, Republic of Benin in, Des Archives Nationales, Quando (D.A.N.Q.), 1F 58/ 365 , Police, Extradition d'indigènes entre le Nigeria et le Dahomey, 1909 and D.A.N.Q, 1F 57/ 360, Police, Extradition: Convention Franco- anglaise, 1911. The original treaty may have been lost although it is not impossible that it may be somewhere in the Archives of the Minister for Foreign Affairs in France (Le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères

<sup>149</sup> Hopkins, "An Economic..." p. 111. For more on boundary matters, see A.I. Asiwaju, "Law in African Borderlands: The Lived Experience of the Yoruba Astride the Nigeria-Dahomey Border" in Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts (eds.), *Law in Colonial Africa*, Portsmouth, Heinemann, pp. 224-238.

<sup>150</sup> *Lagos Weekly Record*, 15th August 1891 to 26th December, 1896. Available in British Museum File, British Museum Microfilm Service, Newspapers Library, Colindale.

<sup>151</sup> *Lagos Weekly Record*, 15th August 1891...

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Cole, *Modern*, pp. 61-72.

<sup>156</sup> Echeruo, *Victorian*, p. 22.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Payne, "Memorandum"

<sup>159</sup> Hopkins in his study of the economic history of Lagos had made a similar observation. See Hopkins, "An Economic", p. 377

## CHAPTER THREE

### ARMED ROBBERY IN LAGOS AND ITS DISTRICTS, 1906-1959

The year 1906 was significant in the history of Lagos for two main reasons. First, it was the first year of boom in Lagos trade after a decade of slump which ended in 1905.<sup>1</sup> Second, it was also the year in which Lagos, sequel to its amalgamation with the Southern Protectorate, became the administrative, judicial and commercial capital of the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria with some far-reaching consequences for law enforcement and crime control. The amalgamation actually conferred some advantages on Lagos. For instance, it induced the merger of the separate police of Lagos and that of the erstwhile Southern Protectorate which resulted in the emergence of the Southern Nigeria Police with headquarters in Lagos. By implication, this meant that the newly appointed Inspector General of Police (IGP) resided in Lagos while more men were deployed in the Lagos area.<sup>2</sup>

A look at Table 3 which shows the strength and distribution of the police in the Western Provinces of Southern Nigeria, of which Lagos was a part, indicates that out of the five hundred and fifty six men deployed in the Western Province in 1908, Lagos alone, that is, the municipal area including Ebute-Metta<sup>3</sup> had three hundred and twenty four men representing about fifty-eight per cent of the total strength of the police in the province. When this figure is added to those of its outlying areas like Ikorodu, Epe and Badagry, it would be realised that virtually all the men available for deployment were deployed in the Lagos Colony. As Anderson and Killingray argue, policing in the colonial context was mostly urban policing since the protection of property and the propertied classes was paramount.<sup>4</sup> It is within this context that the concentration of police personnel in Lagos, the administrative and commercial centre of colonial Nigeria, should be understood. Despite these advantages, the seemingly enhanced status of Lagos in the post-1906 amalgamation years was not without a

shortcoming. Beginning from 1906, it is worth noting that criminal statistics with respect to Lagos were hardly distinguishable from those of the Western Province.

**Table 3: Strength and Distribution of the Southern Nigeria Police in the Western Province as at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1908.**

	Lagos Home District	Badagry District	Ikorodu & Shagamu	Epe District	Ilesha District	Ibadan District	Meko District	Ondo District	Jebu-Ode District	Railway District	Ebute-Metta District	On Leave	
Inspector General												1	
Deputy Inspector General	1												
Commissioner													
Asst. Commissioner	2												
Superintendent	1												
Asst. Superintendent	1												
Native Inspectors	1			1								1	
Pay & Quartermaster	1												
Sergeant Major												1	
Sergeants	9	1		1						2			
Corporals	10	1	2	1	1			1	1	1	1		
Lower Corporals													
1st Class Constables	29	7	5	1	4	1		1	1	2	2	1	1
2nd Class Constables	38	10	10	5	3	5	1	1		2	5	5	
3rd Class Constables	194	15	41	13	26	9	1	2	3	10	30	22	1
Clerks	4												
Tailors	2												
Armourer	1												
Total=	294	32	58	21	36	16	2	4	4	15	40	30	4

Source: Report on the Police Establishment and the state of Crime for the year, 1908, p. 58

Unlike before when criminal statistics for Lagos were returned separately and thus measurable, in the post-1906 amalgamation years they were lumped with figures from other areas thus making the statistical measurement of Lagos crimes difficult. As an illustration, Table 4 shows the statistical returns for principal offences in the Western Province from 1905-1908 without any reference to the number of such offences committed in Lagos and its environs. Yet, it is plausible to suggest that a fair amount of the crimes originated from Lagos given its economic importance and the concentration of the police in the area. The value of property stolen in the Western Province during this period was put at a little over £1, 372, £1,985 and £1,481 for the respective years.<sup>5</sup>



**Table 4: Number of Principal Offences Reported in the Western Province, 1905-1908**

	Murder	Manslaughter	Burglary and House breaking	Larceny and Receiving	Robbery with Violence	Other Offences
1905	13	5	9	414	2	1072
1906	6	5	9	495	1	1214
1907	7	5	5	455	1	1070
1908	1	5	10	466	0	1170

Source: *Report on the Police Establishment and the state of Crime for the year, 1908*, p. 63.

The statistical problem alluded to above, notwithstanding, the crime situation in Lagos during our period can still be reconstructed although documentation on crime during the First World War, 1914-1918 is scanty. This is understandable as the prosecution of war efforts often took precedence over other government functions, and in this case, the publication of government reports was suspended.

At any rate, and for the purpose of presentation and convenience, criminality in Lagos during the period under review is highlighted from two broad perspectives. The first concerns the nature of crimes committed in the municipal area of Lagos while the second reflects the nature of crimes perpetrated in the districts. In the municipal area where policing should have been more effective given the number of men deployed in the area, stealing of a minor degree was often recorded.<sup>6</sup> As would be shown shortly, the situation was different in the districts where policing was poor and robbery with violence prevalent. This disparity in the criminality of the two areas, that is, the city and the suburbs of the colony area, had also been pointed out by Barnes with reference to their political set-up.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, the reports of H.A. Young, E.O. Prelboroe and A.R.W. Sayle published in 1930, are particularly instructive here because of their contents relating to crime. The reports were viewed in colonial official circle as the most important “aspect of any report submitted in respect of Magistracy...[and considered to be] of far greater interest to the public than any other”<sup>8</sup> because it indicated the progress made by the three magistrates in the reduction of crime in their areas of jurisdiction within the Lagos area. Specifically, the reports noted that the cumulative schedule of criminal cases heard and determined in Lagos and

Ebute-Metta Magistracy from 1926 to 1929 showed an appreciable decrease in number except in 1928 when, in respect of Lagos, an increase of 635 over the 1927 figure of 3,174 was shown.<sup>9</sup>

Generally however, the reports of the three men who were Police Magistrates in Lagos at different times during the aforementioned period, suggest that the offence of stealing in Lagos township was minor and generally restricted.<sup>10</sup> For instance, a decrease in the kind of crime attributable to certain bands of young men known as *Alikali* boys, probably contemporaries of *Boma* Boys and colonial versions of street urchins in modern Lagos known as Area Boys, was reported.<sup>11</sup> The Alikali boys usually disturbed public order by parading the town armed with whips or sticks, especially on the Island and at Christmas in Ebute-Metta. Their menace was however reduced with better police arrangement.<sup>12</sup> Again, in the 1930s, the stealing of safes in which people kept mostly cash, was high and Lagosians, especially those who lived on the Island who did not have their safes securely fixed with concrete, were usually warned to beware of safe thieves.<sup>13</sup> It was observed that these thieves gave a wide berth to those with fixed safes while they went after those who loosely placed their safes either on the floor or on a chair. At a particular instance, a safe was stolen from an office on the Marina and transported by canoe to the Badagry creeks where it was later recovered unlocked.<sup>14</sup>

In the environs of Lagos, robbery was much more prevalent. From 1928 to 1946, various crimes considered to be serious were reported in the Lagos District.<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that an administrative headquarters was established for the Lagos District in the Ikeja area between 1927 and 1928, as a way of bringing the system of administration in the area in line with that of the neighbouring provinces in the Protectorate.<sup>16</sup> Until that time, the work of administering the outlying villages of the Colony devolved on the Lagos Constabulary. From 1896, each village supplied its own watchmen, while police from Lagos were only sent to the

district when any serious outbreak of crime occurred. Later, the Lagos District was policed by means of village police posts of which there were seven at that time.<sup>17</sup> The district was thus policed by the posting of seven constables singly in outlying villages while the Supreme Court, in spite of its alien rules and procedure, exercised judicial control in the area.<sup>18</sup> With the establishment of the headquarters of the district first at Agege and later at Ikeja in August 1928, a police detachment consisting of a corporal and five constables was posted to this station, and all the police, including the seven constables from the outlying villages merged into one detachment under the Assistant District Officer.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding the improvement in the policing of the district, crime seemed to have been on the increase.

As might be expected, the shift of the centre of authority of the district from the Island to Agege and later Ikeja did not immediately translate to the restoration of order in a district that had long been sidelined for about sixty-six years during which time the area had undergone a lot of changes. First, new villages had been established in the area by the constant stream of migrants of various background into the area. Barnes has described some of these villages as being loosely organised and less bound together by the rights and obligations of kinship found in the son-of-the-soil-villages.<sup>20</sup> Second, and closely related to the first is the fact that as the population of the area became heterogenous, village authority in the area became somewhat inadequate to cope with the expansion in space.<sup>21</sup> Lawlessness which manifested mostly in robberies, was bound to result.

As an illustration, a case of burglary typical of the crime situation in the district during this period, was reported to the Assistant District Officer, Lagos District by the constable stationed at Ifako in 1928.<sup>22</sup> At about 5am, a body of eight armed men appeared at a farm belonging to one Mr. Karunwi, near Ifako. Few men were in the farm buildings. Emboldened by their number and weapons including a gun, they broke into some of the buildings and removed three boxes and three baskets containing the property of the inhabitants. Any form of

resistance was severely dealt with as illustrated by the shooting of one farm labourer in the thigh by one of the raiders using a sawn-off dane gun.<sup>23</sup> The matter was subsequently reported to the Commissioner of Police, Ebute-Metta who visited the scene of robbery in the company of the Assistant Commissioner, Criminal Investigation Department (CID), and interviewed the inhabitants of the farm. The Assistant Commissioner, CID spent several days and nights in the neighbourhood with a number of detectives trying to apprehend the perpetrators of the crime. Fingers were pointed at Igbariba (Bariba) labourers as a considerable number of them belonged to the "large floating population of the neighbourhood." By September of the same year no one had been caught probably because of the itinerant nature of the culprits.<sup>24</sup>

The World Trade Depression which began in 1929 had a lot of impact on crime in Lagos. A newspaper editorial opined that the wave of crime in Lagos, during this period, had a connection with unemployment.<sup>25</sup> Villages or farmsteads round about Ikeja, it alleged, was a rendezvous to which a certain class of criminals; chased out of the colony after repeated convictions, decamp. Once in the district, they disguise as potential farmhands or newly arrived unemployed seeking for land upon which to settle in apparently peaceful occupation only for them to perpetrate heinous crimes later. The paper concluded that Ikeja had become a district of criminal repute.<sup>26</sup>

Several cases of robbery were recorded in Ikeja in 1930 inducing an increase in the amount of court work carried out in the area.<sup>27</sup> A serious outbreak of crime spread through the district in November as gangs of burglars raided outlying villages at night and committed burglary with violence. In one case, murder was committed.<sup>28</sup> On another occasion, at about 2am in the early hours of 18<sup>th</sup> November, the house of one Oseni Opcifa at Hausa Village was raided by a gang of burglars who stole his goods and inflicted serious injuries on him with machetes.<sup>29</sup> The wounded victim was sent to the hospital while policemen were drafted to the scene of robbery to investigate but no immediate discoveries were made. In another case, on

the 20<sup>th</sup> of the same month, at about 2am the house of one local notable trader, Madam Bamgbola of Abule Williams, on the Idimu Road, was broken into by a gang of burglars. The goods in the house were stolen, and the woman was seriously wounded with machetes.<sup>30</sup> The woman was also sent to the hospital by the Assistant District Officer while the police were invited to also investigate the matter. The next day, and at about the same time that Madam Bamgbola was attacked, the house of one Olaewe of Olaewe village, near Oshodi was broken into by fifteen armed robbers. They murdered him with machetes in the presence of his wife, daughter and infant grand child.<sup>31</sup> The robbers and murderers thereafter threatened the daughter with death if she made a noise and made her disclose the place where the deceased kept his valuables which they ransacked.

In recounting their ordeal to the police, the deceased's daughter probably conscious of the threat issued by the attackers, failed to assist the police in their investigation. Despite this constraint arising from her inability or unwillingness to identify the miscreants, she however gave a clue to the investigating officers as she opined that the offenders were either Ijaw or Sobo since they spoke in a foreign language, and were all dressed in Khaki shorts and shirts.<sup>32</sup>

In the aftermath of this robbery and murder incident, Detective Sergeant Major James Benin was drafted to the scene of robbery to commence investigation. By 28 November, 1930, a week after the incident was reported, Detective Benin had arrested two suspects, and having searched their houses, found a dane-gun which, was identified by members of the family of the murdered man as one of the property stolen from their house. Some articles of clothing believed to have been stolen were also found including two native shorts with bloodstains on them. The dane-gun and a matchete found in the house of the two accused persons also had blood stains on them. A letter of intention to rob, similar in character to the one placarded by the burglars around the Ikeja District, was found in the house of the two

accused persons. Prior advertisement of intention to rob, as a feature of robbery operations during the colonial period, would be discussed later.

Meanwhile, the two suspects were subsequently charged for armed robbery and murder including the possession of criminal juju and burglarious charms. It should be noted that the possession of charms with intent was a penal offence in colonial Lagos (See Appendix 1). By December of the same year, nine more persons had been arrested in connection with the November burglary, and more stolen goods recovered. A man hunt was initiated for the arrest of four of the suspects that had escaped to the Oyo Province. Eventually, most of the accused persons were tried and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment with only the leader put on trial for burglary with violence.<sup>33</sup>

The police, especially the CID, demonstrated impressive efficiency as they succeeded in apprehending and securing the convictions of members of several robbery gangs. Yet, they did not achieve as much success in dealing with trans-border piracy. Pirates, supposedly from Porto Novo in Benin Republic, raided the villages on the Badagri creek during the night.<sup>34</sup> By July 24, 1931 another robbery incident took place at Iseri, close to Iju Water Works. This was in spite of the fact that one junior Non Commissioned Officer and three police men were permanently stationed at Iju Water Works out of the police detachment of two Non Commissioned Officers and eleven men stationed in Ikeja.<sup>35</sup> The victims of the attack were Odunakun, the *Bale* of Iseri and one Ogundele who were injured by robbers near the Iju railway station. The robbers also ransacked three houses.<sup>36</sup> All the inhabitants ran into the bush. The wounded people, even though they could not identify the robbers, noted that they, the robbers, spoke in Egun. In 1931, another burglary was reported in Ajegunle in which cash, assorted gowns, cover cloths, jumpers, trousers and beads were stolen.<sup>37</sup> In January 1932, armed robbers raided George Taylor's farm in Agege.<sup>38</sup> Three Hausa were subsequently arrested two months later for this burglary and others that had taken place in the area.<sup>39</sup>

A *Nigerian Daily Times* editorial of Saturday April 9, 1932 described the crime situation in the Ikeja District of Lagos during this period as worrisome. According to it:

The finding of a corpse on the wayside [in Ikeja] deepens the mystery which surrounds criminal activity in that area. Daylight robbery, robbery with violence at nightfall, and accidents shrouded in yet deeper mystery are among the most recent happenings reported.<sup>40</sup>

In the same vein, several cases of burglary and robbery with violence, involving in some instances murder, attempted murder and rape were reported in Agege in 1933.<sup>41</sup> The robbery operation often followed a pattern: A gang of men, sometimes numbering as many as thirty, would arrive at the selected farm village and announce their presence to the villagers between 11pm and 2am. The victims were then ordered to leave or cover their faces. Those who resisted were assaulted and, in extreme cases, murdered. Every resistance broken, the contents of the houses were then removed. On three or four occasions motor lorries were used to cart away stolen property from the scene of robbery. Before the 1930s, stolen goods, depending on the scene of robbery, were often carted away by canoes, head portage or bicycles. Otherwise, the robbers simply disappeared into the bush.<sup>42</sup>

The introduction of the use of motor vehicles as aids to robbery in Lagos had certain implications.. First, it hastened and facilitated the escape of robbers from the scene of robbery. Second, it allowed more property to be stolen as the robbers did not have to worry about being slowed down by the weight of the stolen property during escape. At another level, the use of motor vehicles also exposed to some extent the identity of those who were patrons to these robbers during this period. This was because in the Lagos of the 1930s, few people owned lorries, especially the light Ford American vehicles that were imported into Lagos and indeed the whole country in the 1920s.<sup>43</sup> Thus, it was possible to identify the owners of the Lorries used in two of the raids. Indeed, the owners were said to be "well known to the police, the people of Agege and the surrounding villages."<sup>44</sup> Yet, no one was willing to testify to this effect for fear of reprisal by the gangs.

Testifying against robbery suspects in Lagos during the colonial era was something that people did with a lot of apprehension. Indeed, provision of information to the police was rarely done and only by night. Informers would not dare go to the police by day.<sup>45</sup> Villages and communities which felt insecure due to the positive disposition of any of its members in assisting the police, as a witness, did not hesitate to expel such a person. This was the case in Agege in the aftermath of the 1933 robberies and burglaries when “a man was driven from his home because he gave information to the police and so ran the village into further danger”.<sup>46</sup> Owing to the terror which robbers inspired during this period, the police had to contend, not merely with the apathy, but actual obstruction of investigation by informants who could distort or provide wrong information.<sup>47</sup> Again, even when arrests were made, it was often difficult to rely on witnesses or get them to come forward. This attitude often stalled the prosecution of offenders as gleaned from the following statement credited to a woman who was invited to inspect recovered stolen property in the C.I.D. office after the arrest of suspects involved in the Agege robberies: “If this cloth was found in the possession of A or B (naming two influential men who had been arrested) it is not mine, but if it was found elsewhere it is mine.”<sup>48</sup> Her reaction reflects the extent to which her mind-set was influenced by the fear of criminals that pervaded colonial Lagos. District Officer Wilkes also drew attention to this trend sequel to his tour of the affected villages. Following deliberations with the villagers, he reported that in every instance of the reported robberies, the people had admitted knowing many of the robbers but did not dare give evidence. He concluded, therefore, that, if this dangerous trend persisted, an upsurge in crime should be expected once the dust raised by the efforts aimed at controlling crime in the affected area settled.<sup>49</sup>

The colonial government was undoubtedly baffled by the nature and prevalence of robbery in the environs of Lagos, and sought to understand the problem. A pointer to this effect is found in the report of Wilkes which gives a clue as to why robbery was prevalent in



the district of the colony. The report suggests a direct link between crime, the economy, and unemployment among farm labourers in Lagos. It argues that the crime rate in other parts of Yorubaland was lower than in Lagos during this period because of the favourable and less expensive labour condition in the former. According to Wilkes, it was unthinkable that organised crime of the nature that occurred in the districts of Lagos could occur in any part of the Yoruba country,<sup>50</sup> since "generally speaking the farmer [in the Yoruba Province] cultivated his land with the assistance of his whole family and possibly *iwofas*."<sup>51</sup> If he employed outside help he engaged local men who he paid by piece work, that is, at so much for 1,000 heaps cleared, and who lived in their own homes.<sup>52</sup>

However, the labour situation was different in the colony district where a farmer had to employ regular labourers whom he paid at a monthly rate in addition to accommodating them. A contract was usually entered into by the two parties. The general pattern of the contract was that the labourer would agree to work for a year but would receive only 5/- per month with the whole balance payable at the expiration of the contract.<sup>53</sup> Thus, a labourer on 15/- per month was owed £6 at the end of a year, a sum sufficient to carry him home and perhaps marry a wife.<sup>54</sup>

The success of this contract labour system pulled a lot of strangers into the district, majority of whom were Egun, Bariba from Dahomey and Ebira from the Kabba Province.<sup>55</sup> Certainly, the system was functional especially when produce prices were high and the farmers prosperous.<sup>56</sup> However, in the period of slump as was the case between 1929 and 1933 when, there was depression in world trade, most employers became incapacitated in meeting and fulfilling their obligations to their labourers with far reaching consequences. First, as defaulting employers became the rule rather than the exception, disgruntled labourers sought judicial solution to redress the violation of their contract with their employers. It was reported that no fewer than fifty-nine labourers obtained judgement for the payment of their

wages in the Ikeja court.<sup>57</sup> Second and alternatively, many continued to work on the same terms in the hope of eventual payment. Third, others accepted payment in kind. Fourth, and as argued by Olukoju, the greatest impact was that an unpaid labourer whose contract had expired and who, more often than not, was without a means of subsistence or money to transport himself back home, ended up in crime as he was compelled to steal to survive.<sup>58</sup> In this manner, such labourers turned criminals became willing tools in the hands of professional criminals.

The economic and labour crisis enunciated above thus created amateur criminals who in collaboration with professional criminals terrorised the people including their former masters. The amateur criminal, that is, the labourer had at his disposal the knowledge of the inner workings of his former master's house which he was quick to put at the disposal of his new companions in crime.<sup>59</sup> The professional criminal, on the other hand, provided the wherewithal for the criminal operations. With each member of the group having something to contribute towards a criminal operation, a gang was soon formed. Perhaps, it should be mentioned that ex-labourers who fell into this category opted for crime due to desperation. Besides, not a few of them saw crime as a means of getting back at their ex-masters who had treated them unjustly.<sup>60</sup> Thus formed, and emboldened by one successful operation after the other, a gang became increasingly bold even to the extent of sending advance letters or notices of intention to rob to selected individuals or communities. Indeed, gangs became so daring "until no one dared to resist or give information against them."<sup>61</sup>

Writing letters of threat or sending notices of intention to rob to prospective victims was common during this period.<sup>62</sup> It was usually written in Yoruba (See Appendix 2 for a sample written in 1939) and was undoubtedly intended to intimidate and cow their prospective victims. A way to explain this act is that the robbers; although some usually disguised by having their faces whitened,<sup>63</sup> had so much confidence in themselves and

believed that the victims could offer little or no resistance. Another plausible explanation is that the robbers were equally aware of the poor police protection in the district and that it would take a while before a distress call could be honoured by the police who were mainly in the municipal area. Besides, robbers in colonial Lagos seemed to have been aware that surveillance of a location after a robbery incident was often shortlived as the men were soon redeployed to other areas. Again, and as shown in the threat letter in Appendix 2, robbers knew individuals who were in the vanguard of combating criminals and often directed their letters at such people. This particular letter was addressed not only to Gbadamosi, the *Bale* of Ijeshatedo Village, but also to the night watchmen, village marksmen, native doctor and the woman leader, all members of the village council.

This single threat letter raises a lot of interesting issues that require elaboration. First, is the fact that members of the Ijeshatedo Village Council were no strangers to the robbers. Second, the robbers knew each of them and their individual role in the village in combating crime. Third, and very interesting is the allusion to the use of charms in fighting crime, the recognition of such by the robbers, and their indifference to it. Fourth, the letter represents an expression of bravado. Finally, the tone of the letter in question did not suggest that the robbers were complete strangers to Ijeshatedo. Under the influence of such a letter and other daring acts of robbery gangs, it is not surprising that colonial Lagosians and other inhabitants displayed great apathy towards rendering assistance to the police.

An interesting dimension to the issues of fear of the criminal, gang formation, their boldness and eventual entrenchment in colonial Lagos is that once a gang established a reputation for notoriety, it enjoyed patronage by the wealthy and influential persons who, realising the possibility of using them for illegal activities, became their patrons. At a time, such men used them to supplement their income depleted by the fall of produce prices. These rich men also found the gangs useful to avenge themselves on others against whom they bore

a grudge. At another level, there were instances of farmers paying large sums to gang leaders for protection or what they hoped was immunity from burglary.<sup>64</sup>

From the incidence of crime and other issues enunciated above, certain preliminary conclusions can be drawn. First, that robbery in the district of Lagos during this period was mainly induced by the indiscriminate expansion of villages, the emergence of a heterogeneous population arising from the influx of migrants and settlers, and economic depression. Second, that the prevalence of robbery was sustained and further entrenched by the prevailing apathy, not unfounded, of the people towards collaboration with the police in the fight against criminality. Third, that inadequate police presence in the district encouraged robbery. Fourth, that robbers understood the logic of official and popular responses to crime in colonial Lagos.

Meanwhile, several suggestions were made as to how to tackle criminality in the districts. The propositions by Wilkes, the District Officer in this regard is particularly instructive and requires some attention here. Emphasis was laid on two broad preventive rather than control measures against further outbreaks of robbery in the Lagos district. The first centred on enhancing the confidence of the people in the police so that they would cooperate with the law enforcement agents through adequate and prompt dissemination of information relating to crime. The second was to eliminate the factors which led to the outbreak of raids in addition to purging the district of actual and potential criminals.<sup>65</sup>

In implementing the first preventive policy, Wilkes recommended that the district should be patrolled regularly for three months by an inspector of police and six constables who would move slowly from village to village.<sup>66</sup> The men would in turn be visited frequently by an Assistant Commissioner of Police and the District Officer. To encourage these top colonial officials to visit the districts regularly, he suggested that rest houses be built in some villages in spite of their nearness to Ikeja. The villages in question were Ayobo, Idimu, Isolo, Iba and Ogudu. The construction of a rest house would, in his opinion,

encourage longer police presence in the districts while discouraging short visits which, he considered to be of little value as most of the people were usually at work in their farms when such police visits took place, and could be of no assistance to the police.<sup>67</sup> With regard to the second preventive policy of attacking the roots of criminality in the district, Wilkes recommended that a clause be inserted in the Masters and Servants Ordinance to the effect that "an employer may not pay a servant in any one month any sum less than he had agreed to pay him for work done during that month, and that it shall be an offence to draw a contract with the express purpose of evading the above".<sup>68</sup>

Apparently, the last recommendation was to tackle the rising problem of defaulting employers who could not fulfil their contractual agreement with their labourers. Wilkes realised that the suggestion, if implemented, would be very unpopular since the farmers had usually complained that they had no sufficient money to pay full wages during the off season. He was however convinced that any farmer interested in employing a labourer should be capable of saving six pounds during the produce season in order to pay his labourer during the following lean period.<sup>69</sup>

More importantly, he suggested that power should be granted to the Commissioner of the Colony to order any unemployed person, belonging to a native community ordinarily subject to a native tribunal, to leave the colony within three days. In other words, Section 79 of the Townships Ordinance of 1927 should be applied to the whole colony in an amended form. Finally, and arising from consultation with representatives of the robbery-prone communities, he urged that a Labour Bureau be set up where all labourers should be registered and that it should be an offence to employ an unregistered labourer. Good and well intentioned as this last suggestion was, its implementation would entail extensive organisation despite Wilkes optimism that it was practicable and that it would serve a useful purpose not only in the suppression of crime, but also in the collection of tax. By charging a small fee for

registration, he believed the idea could be made self supporting and even a source of revenue to government.<sup>70</sup>

The attitude and perception of some top colonial officials to the issue of robbery in Lagos and its treatment was however different. In his reaction to the report written by the District Officer, Colony, sent to him by the Commissioner of the Colony, the Commissioner of Police, Colony, while agreeing with some of the suggestions put forward by the District Officer, disagreed on some grounds. For instance, he was of the opinion that once a fair number of the suspects arrested in the wake of the Agege robberies were convicted, that it was unlikely that any attempts would be made by robbers to repeat the offences soon. This is because, in his view, "a number of the ringleaders had received a severe fright as a result of the recent investigations instituted by the police."<sup>71</sup> Regarding the idea of regular and longer police visitation to the district, he did not think that this system would go very far in rekindling or restoring the confidence of the people in the police though he agreed it might help to some degree. He however concurred with the view that if labourers received their full month's pay at the end of each month, much of the temptation to take part in armed raids would be taken away from them.<sup>72</sup>

Wilkes' reaction to the comments of the COP was swift. The District Officer rejected the view that the cessation of armed robbery, sequel to the arrest and conviction of suspects, was inevitable, and if so at the moment, was not sustainable. He referred to another raid which occurred on the night of October 10 1932 when a village in the neighbourhood of Isheri Church was raided and property, including a shot-gun, was stolen.<sup>73</sup> He noted that although there was no evidence at that moment to suggest that the perpetrators of the crime were armed, a boy left in charge of the house was rough handled. Again, he disagreed with the COP's view that a longer police patrol was not likely to impact on the crime situation in the district. He reiterated that the implementation of his earlier suggestions would have an

excellent effect on the morale of the people, and also reduce the confidence of criminals residing in the district.<sup>74</sup>

The differing views expressed above highlight the importance of perception and the role of personalities, in this case, colonial officials as men on the spot, in determining the extent to which colonialism responded - positively or negatively - to the plight of colonial peoples. It equally re-opens the debate as to whether colonialism, in any form, had a human face or was necessarily exploitative in all its ramifications, and as such, uncaring about colonised peoples. The Commissioner of the Colony and the Commissioner of Police seemed to have underestimated the crime situation in the district and would rather control than prevent its occurrence giving the impression that they cared little about the people. Wilkes, on the other hand, demonstrated not just a perfect understanding of the situation as the colonial official closest to the people by opting for, urging and insisting on the prevention of crime, but also showed a genuine commitment to addressing a problem that bedevilled colonial subjects in the district.

By 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1933 the District Officer once again wrote to the Commissioner of the Colony intimating him with a series of burglaries that had occurred within the district. Reports had been made of gangs of hooligans armed with machetes and knives appearing in villages at nights terrorising people by threatening their lives, breaking into their houses and helping themselves to anything of value which they could lay their hands on.<sup>75</sup> The people admitted that they were too afraid to stand up to the gangs, and would rather lose their entire belongings than suffer personal injury.<sup>76</sup> As usual, no one was found that could identify any of the offenders. The obvious explanation besides the issue of fear, was that the moment a gang made its presence felt or known in a village, doors were speedily barricaded, usually of no effect anyway, or people sought for shelter in the bush<sup>77</sup>.

To be sure, raiding in the Ikeja District had abated in the latter part of 1932 when police detection of crime owing to series of investigations and conviction of offenders were intensified. However, the temporary closure of the Ikeja Court, probably routine but ill-timed, seemed to have sent a wrong signal to criminals that the siege on criminals was over, hence, they resumed their nefarious activities.<sup>78</sup> Between 19<sup>th</sup> May and 2nd August, 1933 when the Supreme Court at Ikeja went on recess, it was recorded that the closing of the court had an extremely bad effect upon the majority of the people. A general feeling of unease was created round the district.<sup>79</sup> Specifically, it was rumoured that the Ikeja Court buildings had been sold to the local villagers, and that colonial law and order, and taxation had been abolished. Surprisingly, these rumours spread in an astonishing manner and were believed not only by illiterates, but by literate and influential people locally, and even in Lagos.<sup>80</sup>

To reassure the people that law and order would continue to be enforced in the district, two detectives were posted for duty with the Ikeja detachment to assist the sergeant in charge of the investigation of all cases of armed raids and robbery. Strategic consideration of the possible positive effect of revealing the identity of the two detectives to the public took precedence over the normal undercover approach of the men. It was conceived that public knowledge of the presence of the two detectives may assist in rekindling self confidence among the people, and make them realise that steps were being taken to assist them. The Commissioner of Police regretted his inability to release more men to the area on the grounds of shortage of forty men, and the embargo on fresh recruitment. He also drew attention to the essence of time and the need to report any serious crimes to the Criminal Investigation Department at the earliest possible opportunity to ensure the commencement of immediate investigation as "every hour's delay tended to lessen any chances of detection"<sup>81</sup>

That said, criminals were undeterred by such official posturings, as can be seen from an incident that can be regarded as one of the reasons that emboldened criminals in Lagos



during our period. A man called Idowu Apena apprehended a thief on his farm at Ijan, and managed to lead his captive to the station.<sup>82</sup> The thief, however, complained to the police that "he was belaboured by those who brought him."<sup>83</sup> Idowu, the original victim, who had brought the apprehended thief to the station was, on the complaint of the latter "held by the direction of one of the policemen at the station who, ordered the thief to beat the victim in return to his satisfaction before, he (the suspect) was arraigned before the District Officer."<sup>84</sup>

This act was no doubt a dangerous and bad precedent in the fight against criminality. Indeed, a newspaper report noted that the expected sequel to this kind of behaviour was that a gang of robbers was emboldened to visit the farmstead of another person in the district whom they nearly clubbed to death "besides digging no less than sixteen holes in his house searching for money."<sup>85</sup> Consequently, the newspaper noted that "the despoiled people were so cowered down that they would not report to the police."<sup>86</sup>

In apparent response to this publication, and earlier information on this affair, the Commissioner of Police sent a high ranking officer J.B.G. Austin, the Assistant Commissioner of Police at Ebute-Metta, to investigate the affair. The policemen concerned however denied the allegation as they contended that contrary to the insinuation of improper police conduct levelled against them by the newspaper, the suspect - Abudu Egba - was accused of stealing kolanuts but that preliminary investigations into the allegation was stalled by the lack of evidence. Hence, he was released to the dissatisfaction of the complainant<sup>87</sup>

At its face value, the incident recounted above seems ordinary but a closer look suggests otherwise. Indeed, the incident deeply addresses a central theme in the Anglo-Saxon Common Law - its insistence on the innocence of the accused until proven guilty - which had become applicable to Lagos in principle since the annexation of the area in 1861. When the alleged action of the policemen is situated within this context, it would be realised that they would have been merely demonstrating their understanding of this principle, however bizarre,

by asking the suspect to beat the claimant in return since the former had not been declared guilty. Besides, even if the suspect was guilty, under the existing British law, the claimant did not have the right to molest him. Thus, if indeed the policemen ordered the suspect to beat the claimant, their action could be interpreted as an indirect way of telling the latter to his dismay and by extension, that of the public that under the British law, only the police had any legal backing to prosecute crime. Hence, victims of crime could not on their own punish criminals, even by beating, as this would amount to assault. As shown in chapter five, the tendency to apply *jungle justice* testifies to the impatience of the people with the law and the entire criminal justice system relative to the treatment of armed robbery. It was a popular response of the people to the menace of armed robbery and the seeming helplessness and, at times, complicity of the police.

Meanwhile, one of the outstanding events of 1934 was the arrest and conviction of a number of the armed robbers that terrorised the districts of Lagos as indicated in official sources.<sup>88</sup> Two colonial reports however returned conflicting figures as to the number of arrests and convictions made in the aftermath of the 1933 and 1934 robberies in Agege and Ikeja. The first reported that thirty-two suspects in 12 out of the 32 reported raids were captured in May and June, and committed for trial noting that capital sentences were attracted in six cases while others attracted sentences of long term imprisonment.<sup>89</sup> The other report however noted that depositions in thirteen cases were taken and twenty-four persons committed for trial. It further drew attention to an interesting point which is that, only two of the offenders committed for trial in the 1933 and 1934 robberies were gang leaders, the remainder being mere labourers.<sup>90</sup> This was because it was impossible to obtain evidence against the real masterminds. Evidence against many of the defendants committed for trial was equally scanty forcing the prosecution to rely, perforce, largely on the evidence of accomplices with little or no corroboration.<sup>91</sup>

In spite of the conflicting figures, the two reports once again confirm some issues earlier highlighted, and additional ones about crime control in the districts of Lagos, during our period. First, that conviction of criminals was prompt. This contrasts vividly with the protracted delay that is experienced in the criminal justice system in contemporary Lagos. Second, appropriate punishments, depending on the nature of the crime perpetrated, were meted out to fit the crime. Third, most of the people apprehended were gang members and not their leaders. Fourth, police investigation was greatly hampered by the apathy of the people towards them on one hand and the fear of the criminal on the other hand. Finally, that the colonial police just like their counterparts in modern Lagos, were reactive rather than proactive in tackling criminality during this period.

Paradoxically, this reactive attitude of the police to criminality yielded some positive results, at least in the short term, as crime abated in the area. By 1936, it was observed that “there were no crimes of particular interest or importance during the year.”<sup>92</sup> It was also noted that “armed robberies which were at one time so frequent in the district, had entirely ceased owing to a big increase in police strength.”<sup>93</sup> The police strength was increased to thirty-three under the direction of an Inspector who patrolled the area regularly.<sup>94</sup> Yet, police intelligence report indicated that the area continued to attract ex-convicts from elsewhere in Nigeria. For instance, Saidu Madawa, a well known thief was reported to be proceeding to Agege enroute Ilorin in 1935, after serving a sentence of ten years in Sokoto.

Also, as the second experience of George Taylor in the hands of robbers indicates (his farm had earlier been raided in 1932, armed robbers used to come from as far as Ota town to rob in Agege. Early in 1936, Taylor was robbed and he reported this incident to the police at Ikeja. In his report, he told the police that he shot at the robbers and seemed to have injured one of them. Police investigation team made up of Constable P. Aboderin and Alao Ibadan went to work combing surrounding villages for clues that would lead to the arrest of the

robbers. First, they spent a night at Sango-Ota where they found no clue. After, they proceeded to Ota where the people were in a mournful mood. They extended their sympathy to the mourners while at the same time sniffing around for information. Soon, it was revealed to the investigators that the deceased, whose death was being mourned had died of gun shots and that he was a member of the gang that had robbed Taylor. An examination of the corpse confirmed this when Sergeant Major James Benin arrived to reinforce the team of investigators. Subsequently, other members of the gang were arrested and they were each tried and sentenced to ten years imprisonment.<sup>95</sup>

### **Policing, Crime and Administrative Re-Organisation in the Colony Districts, 1937-1944.**

It has been noted earlier that efforts at redressing the administrative neglect suffered in the Colony Districts of Lagos resulted in the establishment of an administrative unit in Agege in 1927. A decade later, this trend was followed by the re-organisation of the entire administrative system in the districts made up of Ikeja, Epe and Badagry.<sup>96</sup> Barnes has adduced some reasons for this development, the most important of which was economic.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the creation of administrative units and its eventual re-organisation was meant to harness the tax-paying potentials of these districts towards "augment[ing] the colony's budget and paying for administrative expansion."<sup>98</sup> Notwithstanding, the re-organisation also permitted the direct participation of people in local administration either through the native administration as was the case in Epe (including Ikorodu at that time) and Badagry since 1938 or through direct consultations with the District Officer as was the case in Ikeja which did not have a Native Authority until 1944. The last development actually undermined the Baba-Isale (Patron-Client) system that was the rule in the area.<sup>99</sup>

Beyond the issue of taxation and participation in local politics, the re-organisation had a lot of impact on policing and crime control in the districts. In a letter addressed to the Commissioner of Police, Lagos, by the Commissioner of Colony on 29 December 1937

relative to the scheme for the reorientation of the administrative system in the Colony Districts, the Commissioner of Police was intimated that the Ikorodu Area would be transferred on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 1938 to the administrative district for which, the District Officer, Ikeja, was responsible.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, Ikorodu was to be included in the Epe District. In connection with this change, the desirability or otherwise of retaining a Police detachment at Ikorodu came to the fore in official circles.

Until 1938, Ikorodu had a resident District Officer, and thus had a police detachment under close European control.<sup>101</sup> With the proposal to establish Native Administration in the Colony Districts, it was envisaged that inspection and control of the detachment in Ikorodu would be ineffective since, neither the District Officer from Epe nor the Superintendent of Police from Lagos could visit the detachment on regular basis. Thus, the question arose as to whether it was desirable to have detachments of Government Police permanently stationed in places where close European supervision was not available. For, the responsibility for law and order would, at the launch of the Native Administration (N.A.) System on 1st April, 1938, become the prerogative of the new local administration, in line with the dictates of the system of Indirect Rule.<sup>102</sup> Consequently, it was decided that it should be the rule, in areas where 'indirect rule' administration was to emerge as elsewhere, that any Government Police which were considered to be necessary should be stationed at the administrative headquarters of the area in question, under proper European control.<sup>103</sup> In the case of Ikorodu, a considerable force of Police was stationed at the N.A. headquarters at Ikeja from which small detachments could be sent to Ikorodu as required. The Ikorodu detachment was thus to be withdrawn and replaced by the N.A. Police Force.

It is however doubtful whether the N.A. Police Force which eventually replaced the detachment was able to discharge its duties effectively given the experience of the N.A. Forces in the Provinces.<sup>104</sup> *The Nigerian Daily Times* of 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1940 gave a hint as to the

reason for the apparent helplessness of the N.A. Police Forces to deal effectively with the crime situation during this period.<sup>105</sup> It noted that the N.A. Police Force were unarmed, and as such could not deal effectively with armed bands of desperate ruffians who, it said had no scruple using their weapons.<sup>106</sup> To assist the N.A. Police in curbing robbery and other crimes in their areas of jurisdiction, the newspaper suggested the organisation and use of armed night guards composed of native hunters.<sup>107</sup>

This idea was not new as it had been practised with some degree of success in most of the Yoruba towns for many years and was being practised in the provincial towns.<sup>108</sup> With reference to Lagos, the idea of armed night guards was not completely new. In the Badagry District of the Colony, for instance, it had been practised since 1893.<sup>109</sup> The emergence of night guards in Badagry was particularly unique in that it was adapted from what was regarded as a 'nocturnal secret society' found in every *Egun* or *Awori* village in the area.<sup>110</sup> The mastermind of this adaptation was Major J.H. Ewart, the District Commissioner of Badagry in 1893 who served till 1898. Each quarter in the Badagry District operated for sixteen days in pairs, and provided ten night guards each that patrolled the paths and detained suspected persons for examination by the village head in the morning.<sup>111</sup> The system was well organised under the Badagry Head Night Guard who controlled the organisation throughout the district.<sup>112</sup> To encourage the members, a local rate of a penny a head, was collected and used to pay the members.<sup>113</sup>

The Badagry Night Guard System was indeed successful. In 1910, M.C. Patridge, the District Commissioner drew the attention of the colonial government in Lagos to the full co-operation given to his administration by the village head and his people (night guards) towards crime control. Such was the success of the scheme that by 1913 the government in Lagos felt compelled to withdraw and re-deploy the village constables in Badagry to other areas.<sup>114</sup> According to Patridge, "crime was being reported ...and the Bale were sending in

prisoners without any difficulty".<sup>115</sup> In the same vein, and probably responding to a suggestion to scrap the night guard system, H.N.G. Thompson, the District Officer, Badagry (1935-1936) noted in his Intelligence Report of 1935 relative to the proposed administrative re-organisation of 1938, that "if the night guards were suppressed, the strength of the Badagry Police detachment would have to be doubled"<sup>116</sup> to fill the vacuum that the absence of the guards would create. Night guards, however, continued in Badagry although their efficiency seemed to have dwindled as time went on given their weakness for sleep or inclination to scamper for cover when robbers approached.<sup>117</sup> This tendency, among other factors, aggravated the crime situation in Badagry which reached an alarming proportion in the 1940s as would be shown shortly.

In the meantime, despite its success in Badagry and elsewhere, the night-guard system was not free from abuses in some places. For instance, night guards had at times taken advantage of the authority invested in them to molest innocent citizens, even when they (the innocent citizens) observed the prescribed precaution of carrying lit lanterns when going out late at night.<sup>118</sup> Again, night guards had been found to extort money from innocent people before permitting them to leave.<sup>119</sup> At other times, night guards had been tried in several places for crimes of physical violence, even murder.<sup>120</sup>

Against this background, *The Nigerian Daily Times* underscored the essence of restraint in enlisting men for this important service to ensure that those recruited were men whose integrity and sense of responsibility could, at least to a certain extent, be vouched for by some responsible members of the community. Attention was also drawn to the fact that the system under which these night guards were recruited haphazardly left much to be desired.<sup>121</sup> It suggested the arrangement of these guards into divisions while placing them under properly constituted leadership as well as laying down well defined rules for the conduct of their patrols. This it considered would be a "definite step towards attaining more satisfactory

results from their work.”<sup>122</sup> It continued by saying that the matter deserved prompt and earliest consideration at the hands of all Native Authorities concerned. Public safety in the areas where the services of armed night guards were employed, it noted, demanded that all reasonable precautions were taken to make sure that the men employed were worthy of the trust reposed in them.<sup>123</sup>

Yet, the newspaper seemed to have been mindful of the limitations of the night guards as indicated by the experience of Yoruba towns such as Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ijebu Ode and other provincial towns which, although credited as being safer and less prone to robbery, were witnessing similar problems of crime such as was prevalent in Lagos by the late 1930s.<sup>124</sup> Thus, with reference to the question of armed burglary in the suburbs of Lagos, the *Nigerian Daily Times* expressed the hope that the Commissioner of Police would waste no time in making arrangement for the effective combating of the menace. The newspaper recalled that the Nigeria Police had had to make special effort to round up the marauders and to rid the districts concerned of their menace. However, the result of the effort seemed, in the paper’s opinion, to have been shortlived as the situation was gradually returning to that which necessitated the emergency measures adopted in 1934 by the police in dealing with armed burglary in these districts.<sup>125</sup>

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, war-time efforts took the centre stage in colonial policies and planning as officials, including those in the districts, were often called upon to handle other functions that were considered expedient in prosecuting the war.<sup>126</sup> The war however had other far reaching implications on Ikeja beyond the issue of withdrawal of personnel, including the consequent lull in local administration, a drop in produce prices, and invariably, a reduction in tax revenue.<sup>127</sup>

Furthermore, the war accelerated the urbanisation process in the area as military installations and an air field came to adorn the Ikeja landscape thus redefining the use of its



largely rural space.<sup>128</sup> Besides, land speculation in the area which had been acute in the 1930s,<sup>129</sup> aggravated inducing and manifesting in real estate development by individuals, and the government in the Government Reservation Area (GRA). Expectedly, there was an increase in the population of the area. More importantly, as Ikeja transformed from a rural to a semi-urban centre, an altering of the occupational structure of the area also occurred. Unlike before, when agriculture was the mainstay of the district's economy, a growing dependence on trade, commerce,<sup>130</sup> as well as wage labour in the Public Works Department and elsewhere, became noticeable.<sup>131</sup> As would be shown later, these changes impacted on criminality in the area as the problem of criminality, especially robbery, persisted in the districts of Lagos. Reports of robbery in the suburban districts of the colony such as Agege and Ikeja, and other surrounding villages increased significantly due to the "depredations of armed burglars who were a menace to the safety of life and property in the area."<sup>132</sup> There were many instances of daring robberies accompanied with acts of gross violence as a result of which human lives were lost and valuable articles, including money were looted from the houses raided by the marauding gangs.<sup>133</sup>

Unexpectedly, the Badagry District of the Colony was also affected by the menace of robbery and other criminal offences as reported in the area in 1941.<sup>134</sup> Several villages were raided in the district causing alarm and despondency. Several arrests were made after which some of the suspects - Deji Johnson, Ayonu Sintoyi, Akoanu A. Agundugbu and Avoise Motunde and others – were charged for burglaries and receiving stolen goods. In prosecuting these criminals, the police were mindful of some issues. First, it needed to restore the confidence of the people in its ability to fight crime, and second, it lobbied that the trial should take place in Badagry, for; if they were found guilty, their conviction and sentence would have a much greater deterrent effect locally than it would if the cases were heard in Lagos.<sup>135</sup> Third, a large retinue of witnesses could be easily mobilised in Badagry if the case

was heard at the Supreme Court in Badagry than for the witnesses to be moved to Lagos. Fourth, transferring the cases to Lagos would mean depriving the Badagry Police detachment much needed men since the police witnesses and the sergeant in charge, and the Station writer would have to go to assist the prosecution in the arrangement and presentation of the exhibits.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, a request was made for a judge to visit the district to try the accused persons in Badagry.

However, for some reasons not easily discernible, a judge could not be arranged to visit Badagry hence, the trial took place in Lagos in 1942. Witnesses and exhibits were moved while a list of thirty-one literate jurors who, understood both English and the language spoken by the accused persons, was prepared.<sup>137</sup> The burglars were eventually sentenced to various terms of imprisonment ranging from one to eight years. Specifically, thirteen men were convicted at the assizes while the Acting Divisional Officer himself convicted five others, and sentenced to a year each, two others who took part in one of the burglaries while three others arrested after the deposition, were tried and sentenced in Badagry.<sup>138</sup> This was, according to an official, "an excellent clear up of a gang of rogues who caused a lot of trouble in a series of serious robberies..." in Badagry.<sup>139</sup>

Until now, the impression created by some scholars is that the police in colonial Nigeria were nothing other than instruments of coercion.<sup>140</sup> Yet, the activities of the police in Lagos did not always reflect this sweeping generalisation. While the police may be castigated for their reactive approach to fighting criminality, it would be unfair to accuse them of absolute inaction in the face of increasing banditry. Many of their rank and file had actually proved their mettle in an attempt to reduce criminality in the Lagos area. For instance, the arrest and detention of the convicted criminals in Badagry detailed above could not have been possible without the dedication to duty of some policemen who were later recommended for commendation by the Acting Divisional Officer of Badagry.<sup>141</sup>

Sergeant Emeloizo was one of those recommended for commendation and reward for his zeal and determination in effecting the arrest of the accused persons, in conducting the investigations into the complicated ramifications of the cases, and in effecting the recovery of much stolen property. In particular, it was noted that although all the burglaries but one occurred before Emeloizo was transferred to Badagry in August 1941, it was only after his arrival that satisfactory results of police investigations into the burglaries began to appear.<sup>142</sup> Emeloizo's success where his predecessor failed could be attributed to either inefficiency or complicity with criminals on the part of the latter, or the former's dedication to duty. Others who contributed to the investigations were No 5271, 1st Class Constable Francis Lateju, No 4840, 1st Class Constable Francis Ajoku, and No 8202, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Constable Emanuel Odi. Francis Lateju, as station writer, worked very hard, took innumerable statements and classified with efficiency exhibits amounting to about a hundred produced in court, and many others which were not produced. Obo effected the arrest of several of the accused and the recovery of a considerable amount of property. Mention was also made of the night guards of Gedu Village, who were instrumental in arresting the accused persons in spite of the tendency of their colleagues elsewhere to abscond. They tracked down and caught some of the accused persons as well as discovered where much stolen property was hidden.<sup>143</sup>

By August 1943, an appreciable increase in crime against property was recorded in the Ikeja area. A noticeable difference seemed however discernible in the activities of criminals during this period. Whereas robbery attacks were mostly and could only be directed at farm houses and villages before the commencement of the Second World War, in the wartime and post-war years, robbery attacks had been extended to the newly established governmental institutions in the urbanising Ikeja District. For example, in the six months prior to August 1943, burglary or felonious entry and stealing occurred at the Royal Air Force Station several times, at the Transit camp and at the quarters of the Divisional Officer.<sup>144</sup> This

expansion in the sphere of operation of the criminals did not however save the villages as the situation was no different there. Patrol by the police was intensified but it was not necessarily successful in tracking down offenders.

Two possible reasons were adduced in official quarters for this renewed upsurge in crime. First, is the view that the increase in crime appeared to have taken place during the period of reduction of Public Works labour force in the area, and that to that extent, unemployed and destitute labourers may, to some degree, have turned to crime.<sup>145</sup> Alternatively, it was opined that there may be an organised gang operating in the area since a large number of strangers, without any visible means of support, lived in the area.<sup>146</sup>

One of the official responses proposed to tackle this problem was the unreserved use of powers by the Divisional Officer after due consultation with the Ikeja Area Council, of Section 12 of the Native Authority (Colony) Ordinance which empowered the former to order strangers who could not prove that they had means of support, to leave the area or find work within a period of three weeks.<sup>147</sup> The only work which was said to be available was the production of palm kernels. The order was to be made in written form and served by the police. If implemented, it was expected that such a decision might lead to the defection of those affected to the township. It was, however, argued that in the event of a defection to the township by these undesirables, a more adequate machinery for dealing with them existed in the municipal area than in Ikeja.<sup>148</sup> In particular, the Divisional Officer was of the opinion that the additional burden that would be placed on authorities in the township would be compensated for by the relief obtained by him and the police at Ikeja. He subsequently suggested the early response of the Commissioner of the Colony to his mail to enable an immediate round up of the undesirables, which he said, would take a while to complete.<sup>149</sup>

The Commissioner of the Colony gave approval to the plan in principle but insisted that the Divisional Officer should take no action until he heard from him. Meanwhile, the

Commissioner of the Colony contacted the Superintendent of Police (SP), Colony for comments on the proposed action. The latter reported that consultations had taken place with the Divisional Officer and the police department at Ikeja, and that he would forward his comments on the proposed action.<sup>150</sup>

In the meantime, while officialdom delayed action, criminality persisted in the area. On 22 August 1943, the Divisional Officer, by a letter of that date once again reminded the Commissioner of the Colony of the expedient nature of the action to be taken on the pending issue of unabating criminality in his area. According to him, since his first letter on the issue on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1943, and the Commissioner of the Colony's response on the 9<sup>th</sup> August, more crimes of burglary and stealing had been reported. For instance, he noted that a night before, on the 21<sup>st</sup> August, "the locked kitchen building of the office messengers was broken and all their enamel bowls and plates were removed... leading to a definite feeling of insecurity."<sup>151</sup> While he was not too definite that the reported thefts were the work of unemployed stranger labourers, their large number in the area made him uncomfortable. He justified his earlier suggestion for the expulsion of unemployed people from the district by saying that it would narrow the field of investigation of the police considerably.<sup>152</sup>

The much awaited comments from the SP, Colony finally arrived on 31 August 1943. He upheld the decision of the Divisional Officer to invoke wider powers as indicated in Section 12 of the Native Authority Ordinance.<sup>153</sup> In addition, he itemised certain actions taken by the police to deal with the crime situation in Ikeja. The first, which seems like a colonial version, and possibly symptomatic of the colonial roots of the contemporary tendency to encourage joint military and police anti-robbery patrol teams, was that, the police had been working in concert with the Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force Camp, and had organised a special campaign using police personnel from Ebute Metta, to deal with some reported crimes.<sup>154</sup> Second, it noted that since most of the thefts reported seemed to have occurred in

the 'native' villages, which were not under normal police supervision, instructions had been given to the Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police, to visit Ikeja more frequently than had been the case in the past, and that his inspections were to be extended over two or three days, if necessary.<sup>155</sup> Consequently, the Commissioner of the Colony by a letter of 6 September 1943, authorised the Divisional Officer to take action against the undesirables.<sup>156</sup> Records are however silent as to how this action was taken without infringing, for instance, on the rights of this calibre of people. Again, it was not recorded how far reaching the action was. Olukoju has however noted that in the aftermath of this expulsion, some of the expelled persons found their way to municipal Lagos.<sup>157</sup>

Not surprisingly therefore, robbery persisted, not just in the suburbs but also in the township of Lagos. In November 1943, series of burglaries were reported in the municipality of Lagos, especially in Ikoyi.<sup>158</sup> For instance, Mr. Taylor, General Manager of Shell Company of West Africa Limited reported a case of burglary to the Commissioner of Colony in that year, drawing the attention of the latter to what he described as the "recent increase in the incidence of burglaries at Ikoyi, particularly at houses owned by his company on Waring Road".<sup>159</sup> He subsequently requested that the number of policemen patrolling the streets be increased, and for some steps to be taken to ensure that they did actually patrol. He also asked for better street lighting.<sup>160</sup>

In his response to the above, Mr. L.G. Purkis, the Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) at the 'B' Division, Oke Suna Police Station, noted that the question of burglaries and thefts in Ikoyi was not strange or unusual to the Division.<sup>161</sup> According to him, the situation of crime in Ikoyi had fluctuated over the years hence, the Waring Road burglaries were no worse than had been other burglaries in the past.<sup>162</sup> He noted that so many of the cases reported indicate either an insider offence or insider cooperation with outsiders. Therefore, he was persuaded to believe that servants and their 'brothers' or other 'hangers-on' in the affected

compounds were prime suspects, probably working in league with outside professionals, using canoes to cart away the loot.<sup>163</sup>

A plausible reason adduced for the frequency of successful burglaries in Ikoyi was the “ridiculous faith”<sup>164</sup> that Europeans in Ikoyi placed in the honesty of their servants whilst considering everyone else a potential rogue. They left their houses and property entirely at their domestic servants’ mercy. The ASP expressed shock at this attitude noting that he had heard people say, after a burglary, that they trusted their boy: “I don’t trust them, and never shall so long as I am in Lagos!”<sup>165</sup> This statement reveals clearly the suspicious disposition of the ASP towards domestic servants in Lagos in contrast to the trusting attitude of his fellow Europeans. He based his opinion on the premise that he had received several cases of domestic servants being caught red-handed stealing their masters’ property, only for the master to decline further prosecution of the matter. This, he said indicated the state of mind of many Ikoyi residents many of who also resented any questioning of their house servants.<sup>166</sup> The Commissioner of Police agreed with the views of the ASP noting that Europeans would have to make their domestic servants more responsible for safeguarding their employers’ property in their absence since most of the burglaries reported were committed when the owners were either on tour, out at the cinema or were temporarily absent.<sup>167</sup>

On the suggestion of increasing the number of policemen in Ikoyi, the ASP opined that this may not be the solution to the crime problem in the area since, according to him, the compounds were usually dark and full of bushes and hiding places, and escape of criminals was quite easy since most of the houses adjoin the water front.<sup>168</sup> Residents of the area, in his view, would have to check their own establishments. Besides, he noted that a good number of policemen were usually on duty in Ikoyi every night, either on beats or on special patrols. Yet, he recommended the deployment of more policemen to the area. The Commissioner of Police, however, felt otherwise and in fact thought that the number of policemen in Ikoyi should be

reduced given the fact that it enjoyed, notwithstanding the different circumstances prevailing in the two areas, fifteen to twenty times the number of policemen that would have been employed in a similar area in England.<sup>169</sup> Finally, his recommendations which Olukoju argues were “laced with racism and colonial paternalism,”<sup>170</sup> urged cooperation among European residents in treating their servants with suspicion and keeping temptation out of their way, and refusing outsiders to live in their compounds or visit at night, and better lighting of the streets especially Waring Road, one of the parts of Ikoyi that were badly lit.<sup>171</sup>

Proper street lighting was considered a very important aid to crime prevention and control. Hence, people wanted to have more of it as indicated above in the demand for better lighting to reduce burglary in Ikoyi. Also, those who did not have electricity at all, considered its provision essential towards the quality of life and enhancing the battle against criminality in their area.<sup>172</sup> This was the case in Ikeja where appeals were made to government to hasten the extension of electricity to the area. By 1946, electric light was yet to be extended to the public in the Ikeja Area since the first application to that effect was submitted in 1937.<sup>173</sup> The quest for electricity no doubt grew louder with the creation of Ikeja Native Authority, following the administrative reform of 1944.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, at a meeting between the Ikeja Area Native Authority Group Council and J.G.C. Allen, the Commissioner of the Colony, Lagos, on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1946, T.A. Ogunbiyi, Council President, asked for more water supply and electric lights in the principal towns of the district that were on the main road such as Mushin, Oshodi, Ikeja, Agege and Agbado.<sup>175</sup> He pointed out that the communities were in dire need of light and water. Lastly, he asked for the protection of the lives and property of the people, which he said were at the mercy of burglars.<sup>176</sup> Specifically, the point was made that the Colonial Government should effect the immediate installation of lights in Agege. In the words of Ogunbiyi, “if there were lights in the town, the agitation of burglars would be less”<sup>177</sup>



Accordingly, in 1947, provision for an electric sub-station in Agege Town was made in the Estimates of that year.<sup>178</sup> Arrangement was also made to build the electric sub-station at a site that had been obtained.<sup>179</sup> The actual extension of electricity supply to Agege and other emerging towns in the districts was however stalled by the following reasons. First, repairs had to be carried out on electric installations which had worn out consequent upon the heavy consumption of electricity during the Second World War. Second, the power engine had become old and needed to be changed.<sup>180</sup> Thus, while war-time restrictions on the extension of electricity and non-recruitment into the engineering department delayed the supply of electricity to Ikeja and environs shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, in the post-war years, the need to repair installations stalled the extension of electricity to Agege.<sup>181</sup> In short, by 1951, thirteen years since the first application for electricity was made to the Electricity Undertakings in Lagos in 1937, Agege, Mushin and environs were yet to be connected to the amazement of Allen, the Commissioner of the Colony, who considered the prolonged delay unacceptable especially given the prompt extension of electricity to the Ikeja Arms Hotel in 1950.<sup>182</sup>

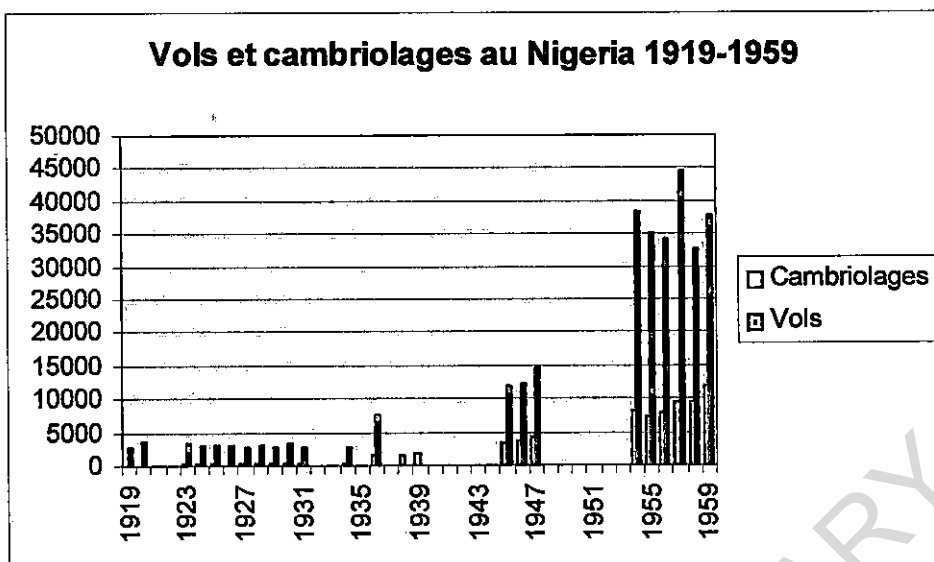
### **Crime and Its Treatment in Lagos, 1945-1960**

The Alexander Patterson<sup>183</sup> Report on "Crime and Its Treatment in Nigeria",<sup>184</sup> submitted to the Colonial Government in 1944, is of much relevance to this study, in spite of its wider national focus, and the controversy that it generated among colonial officials, for certain reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the importance of research in understanding crime in the country. Secondly, it represents a serious attempt by the government to appraise, without bias, the state of affairs in its penal system preparatory to the launch of a Post-War Development Scheme. Thirdly, and perhaps more relevant to our discussion here, are three of the general submissions of the report which highlight the nature and volume of crime in Nigeria during this period. The first, is that the number of persistent and professional

criminals in Nigeria as at 1944 was not considerable, and second, that crime as a career, had little appeal to the young Nigerian despite much idleness and unemployment everywhere, in addition to a somewhat monotonous life in the villages.<sup>185</sup> Third, that the number of juvenile offenders was increasing and unless they were dealt with suitably, they would graduate into adolescent criminals. Finally, that a mishandling of the demobilisation and re-settlement of thousands of African soldiers could create “a fringe of idle and discontented men”<sup>186</sup> who might take to crime.

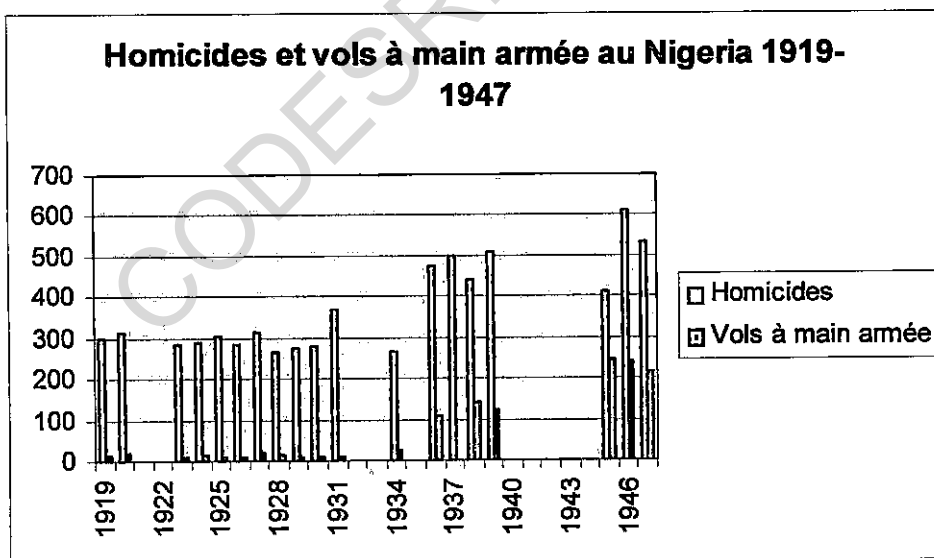
Patterson had surveyed available crime statistics on reported cases, visited the prisons and interviewed experienced administrative officers before reaching the above stated conclusions. The following figures indicate a steady increase in the crimes of stealing, burglary, murder, armed robbery, and juvenile delinquency in Nigeria between 1919 and 1965. In particular, Fig.3 seems to confirm Patterson’s conviction of the inconsiderability of crime in Nigeria as at 1944 in its return of a higher and rising trend of stealing and burglary from 1946, although with slight fluctuations till 1959, as against the recorded rates from 1919 to 1945. Fig. 4 shows that murder was much more prevalent than armed robbery in Nigeria from 1919 to 1947.

FIG 3



NB : “Vols” is the French word for stealing while “cambriolages” means burglary.  
**Source:** Laurent Fourchard, “Le Contrôle de la rue on AOF et au Nigeria, Fin 19<sup>e</sup> – 1960”, Conférence Internationale Sur : Sécurité, Ségrégation et Réseaux dans les villes d’Afrique de l’Ouest, 19<sup>eme</sup> – 20<sup>eme</sup> Siècles, Ibadan, Nigeria, 29-31 Octobre, 2001, p. 15.

FIG 4 :



NB : “Vols à main armée” means armed robbery.  
**Source:** Fourchard, “Le Contrôle”, p. 16.

Yet, the ultimate relevance of Patterson’s report for this study lies in its prescient submissions. Its opinion of the likelihood of disgruntled ex-servicemen and juvenile offenders

pioneering the next phase of criminality in Nigeria, was proved right in the case of the former, as some ex-soldiers turned robbers, were to terrorise Lagos in succeeding years. An indication of the involvement of ex-soldiers in robbery in Lagos was first given by Chief Asogbon, at a meeting held between the Oba of Lagos, his chiefs and the Commissioner of the Colony on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1946.<sup>187</sup>

The agenda was mainly the issue of robbery, a major highlight of which was the involvement of ex-soldiers in robbing people in Lagos. Chief Ashogbon specifically informed the General Meeting that “robbers were in the habit of challenging Lagos inhabitants with revolvers in the daylight”<sup>188</sup> and suggested that “a check be put to these desperate acts by some discharged soldiers.”<sup>189</sup> He noted that some policemen used to take flight at the sight of these robbers. Chief Saba, in his own contribution, also noted that some policemen tended to flee rather than arrest for prosecution masked robbers armed with sticks or clubs who waylaid and removed money or anything of value from members of the public in broad daylight.<sup>190</sup> The Acting Commissioner, in his response, stated that he was well aware of this lawlessness and was satisfied that the SP, Colony, was doing all he could to arrest the trend regarding the increased patrolling of dark spots in the town. However, he pointed out that the police were faced with certain difficulties such as shortage of men, a tendency among certain magistrates to impose trivial sentences on offenders, and lack of co-operation by the public.<sup>191</sup> The news that some police constables had been seen running away from criminals however shocked him. He expressed the hope that the chiefs would inform him of any future act of this nature so that disciplinary action could be taken by the Police. He welcomed suggestions that could improve the fight against crime in Lagos.

At a similar meeting on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1946, Chief Ashogbon acknowledged certain actions taken by the police in its effort to tackle robbery in Lagos since the last meeting in November. For instance, he noted that some Police Constables had begun to patrol

the Great Bridge area and Ebute Ero Street. Yet, he thought that more policing of the area was necessary in order to put an effective check on the menace of daylight robbery and its attendant evils. He mentioned that some arrests were made at Palm Church Street, Lagos, of persons armed with revolvers. Chief Saba, supporting Ashogbon's request gave as instance an occurrence at No 56 Agoro Street, Lagos, where the occupants were assaulted by some pickpockets who gained entrance into their premises in the daylight.<sup>192</sup>

Meanwhile, popular response to the issue of robbery in some of the villages that shared boundaries with Ikoyi included the restriction of movement, a decision which was often communicated to the colonial authority, and for which official approval was often granted. For instance, the Bale and inhabitants of Falomo Village wrote a petition to the Commissioner of the Colony in January 1947 to intimate him with the planned intention to restrict movement into their village after 11' O'clock in the night in response to incessant robbery attacks.<sup>193</sup>

By 1951, the Central Government, in line with the constitutional reform of that period had made far-reaching changes in the political and administrative set up of Lagos.<sup>194</sup> This gave the emerging city a dual status - that of the seat of the Central Government, while its erstwhile districts, later constituted into administrative divisions (Ikeja, Epe, aand Badagry) became a part of Western Regional Government with headquarters in Ibadan. Besides, Lagos by this period had all the trappings of a modern city.- the busy traffic of the port, the headquarters offices of all the leading commercial concerns, the considerable internal trade, and the presence of large numbers of government employees, all contributed to an enhanced prosperity not found elsewhere in Nigeria.<sup>195</sup>

Prosperity however brought many problems in its train. Thieving, pickpocketing, prostitution and immorality were on the increase. Unemployed vagabonds and never-do-wells flocked into Lagos from elsewhere.<sup>196</sup> This was not new. It had antecedents in the 1890s and

early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>197</sup> The lure of the glitter and glamour of urban life was irresistible to the partially educated youth in search of employment less arduous than that of farming. Existence on the congested Island of Lagos was preferred to the better planned mainland, with the result that every possible shack, nook, and cranny was converted into a dwelling. 'Squatters' camps appeared overnight all adding to the congestion, an indication that Lagos was reverting rapidly to its pre-colonial unplanned setting.<sup>198</sup>

In the Ikeja Division, which by 1952 was made up of Ikeja, Ikorodu, Ijede, and Eti-Osa Area Native Authorities, the situation was critical as inefficiency of local authorities arising from internal wranglings and proximity to Lagos had an unsettling effect on local affairs.<sup>199</sup> In the area covered by the Ikeja Native Authority where, about half the population lived in the semi-urban areas of Mushin, Agege, and Ikorodu, conditions were not conducive to enhance the development of a stable community (dormitory towns to Lagos) considering the degree of prostitution and the incidence of robbery and burglary in the area.<sup>200</sup> The Lagos Police, as usual, was handicapped.<sup>201</sup> Faced with a growing heterogenous population and with crimes of an urban society, they functioned and suffered under the handicaps of shortage of men and accommodation.<sup>202</sup> A measure of their efficiency in Ikeja in 1952 and 1953 is illustrated by the number of offences recorded in the area. Reported cases of burglary and stealing added up to 195 and 170 respectively for each year while 53 and 90 cases were returned for the various forms of house breaking for each of the years. Other forms of stealing including robbery had the highest number of cases returned for the two years: 404 in 1952 and 1,235 in 1953. The figures for assault, 180 in 1952 and 447 in 1953 were also high.<sup>203</sup>

In the Badagry Division, there was also a marked increase in crime while the crime situation in Epe was no better. The two divisions shared the same strength of policemen put at about twenty men each. Special Police units had to be deployed occasionally to assist the local detachments in the two areas whenever the need arose. Badagry also had a government

prison, although small, while Epe and Ikeja Divisions had none but relied on the Lagos Prison which served the colony area.<sup>204</sup>

Meanwhile, increases in police strength in Lagos did not keep pace with the demands brought by an increasing population, the extension of residential and business premises, and the growing frequency of political demonstrations, processions and so on. Nevertheless, there was in 1953 a decrease in serious offences against property but an increase in minor offences and notably, in bicycle thefts.<sup>205</sup> Thus, it was argued that until there was an appreciable improvement in manpower and equipment for the police it was unlikely that crime could be combated wholly satisfactorily in Lagos. Indeed, it was only by stretching available manpower through long periods of overtime duty in 1953, that a minimum essential coverage of the colony area was maintained.<sup>206</sup> Crowd control of public functions made a persistent demand on police strength.<sup>207</sup> As stated in the Colony Annual Reports of 1953, "in November alone, more than 7000 man hours were taken up by this duty".<sup>208</sup> The congestion in the courts also added to the difficulties of the police as cases became repeatedly adjourned and police witnesses were kept in idleness waiting to give their evidence.<sup>209</sup>

Yet, the police continued to work under this very difficult condition. By August 1954, a celebrated robber in Lagos, Raimi Akanni (a.k.a. The Terrible) was convicted and sentenced to death alongside three others at the Lagos Assizes for the murder of Gbadamosi Olorunnishola, an S.C.O.A. night-watchman.<sup>210</sup> Akanni-Joshua Ekundayo (a.k.a. Omopupa) a notorious robbery gang leader in Mushin, who was charged along with him, committed suicide,<sup>211</sup> Another Raimi Akanni was charged and convicted for house breaking and stealing of eight bales of cotton goods worth 2,947 pounds from the premises of Messrs Thomopulous at Alakoro, Lagos on September 25, 1953. The judge, Justice Odumuyiwa Jibowu sentenced him to five years imprisonment with the hope that "the punishment would teach Akanni that crime did not pay"<sup>212</sup>

Meanwhile, theft of automobiles or its accessories occurred concurrently with the theft of bicycles which, had been rife in Lagos, and for which the colonial government had sought the extradition of bicycle thieves of Nigerian origin hiding in Dahomey, now Republic of Bénin, in 1945.<sup>213</sup> Between 6 and 15 October 1945, the joint efforts of the two police forces yielded results leading to the arrest of twenty persons in the possession of stolen cycles and their subsequent extradition to Lagos.<sup>214</sup> In another instance in 1954, as many as thirteen bicycles were recovered when a van was captured by the police in Lagos owing to their resolve to stop the outflow of stolen bicycles out of the country.<sup>215</sup> Apart from being stolen, bicycles were also used as means of escape by criminals, especially pickpockets or *jaguda* even in the 1930s.<sup>216</sup>

Car stealing and theft of its accessories which had been reported in the mid-1940s in Lagos, rapidly replaced bicycle theft by the middle of the 1950s. In 1954, one David Adeyemo, a mechanic of Saba Court, Lagos, was found guilty of stealing three lorries belonging to Baoku Iseotan Agency of 37A Shitta Street, Lagos and was sentenced by Magistrate A.R.F. Jackson to three years imprisonment.<sup>217</sup>

One way by which stolen cars were disposed of during this period was to hide the car once it was stolen. Thereafter, parts were removed piecemeal, and subsequently sold for good price at second hand accessories shop.<sup>218</sup> In what is reminiscent of government action today, 'war' had to be declared on car thieves shortly before independence in 1960 while car owners were advised to be vigilant about their safe keeping and parking.<sup>219</sup> Describing the development, the C.I.D. Headquarters in Lagos said it was determined to combat crimes of car thefts, and trafficking in Indian hemp both of which were considered rampant in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos. The crime of car thefts was obviously a burden not only to the owner-victims, but also to the insurance companies which had to pay fabulous amount of money to their clients.<sup>220</sup> Under this circumstance, it is needless to say that the cost of crime in Lagos



was and is still being shared, directly or indirectly by all. This is perhaps most apparent in the crime of murder, which we shall consider in the next chapter.

CODESRIA - LIBRARY

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A.G. Hopkins, "An Economic History of Lagos, 1880-1914", PhD Thesis, University of London, 1964, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Tekena Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria, 1861-1965: Origins, Development and Role*, Ibadan: University Press pp. 41-42.

<sup>3</sup> By 1908, the Municipal Area of Lagos which, was designated as such in 1899, included Eko and Iddo Islands, Palma (Orimedu) and Lekki as well as Ebute-Metta. Outside the municipality, the Colony area included the Western, Eastern, and Northern (later Lagos) Districts. For more details, see Sandra Barnes, *Patrons and Power: Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos*, London: Manchester University Press, 1986, pp. 19-46.

<sup>4</sup> David M. Anderson and David Killingray, "Consent, coercion and colonial control: policing the empire, 1830-1940", David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds.) *Policing The Empire: Government, Authority, and Control, 1830-1940*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991, pp. 1-15

<sup>5</sup> *Report on the Police Establishment and the state of Crime for the year, 1908*, p.64.

<sup>6</sup> *The Nigerian Daily Times*, Lagos, Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1930, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Barnes, *Patrons...*

<sup>8</sup> *The Nigerian Daily Times*, Lagos, Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1930, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *The Nigerian Daily Times*, Lagos, Wednesday 22 April, 1930

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> See NAI, FN 507, "Serious Crimes, Lagos District, 1928-1934" and Comcol I FN 1257 "Crime in Lagos and its Districts, 1930-1946"

<sup>16</sup> L.C. Gwam, *An Inventory of the Administrative Records Assembled from the Colony Province*, Ibadan:

National Archives Headquarters, 1961, pp. 21, 103.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-21. See also, NAI, File No, G 80, "Ikeja District: Police Protection", p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Barnes, *Patrons*, pp. 19-46.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 31-34.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> NAI, FN 507, "Serious Crimes, Lagos District". I.F.W. Schofield served as the first Assistant District Officer, Lagos District, Agege from 1927-1928, and in 1930.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> NAI, File No, G 80, "Ikeja", p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Comcol I FN 1257 "Crime in Lagos and its Districts, 1930-1946"

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp. 9-12.

<sup>34</sup> NAI, File No, G 80, "Ikeja", p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp. 15-18.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 7.
- <sup>43</sup> See Akin Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*, London: University of London Press Limited, 1968, pp. 146-147.
- <sup>44</sup> NAI, FN 507, "Serious Crimes", p. 8.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 10.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 8
- <sup>47</sup> NAI, FN. G 80, "Ikeja...", p. 8.
- <sup>48</sup> NAI, FN 507, "Serious Crimes", p. 8.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup> NAI, FN. G 80, "Ikeja", p. 8.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid, pp. 8-9.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>58</sup> See Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Travails of Migrant and Wage Labour in the Lagos Metropolitan Area in the Inter-War Years". *Labour History Review* (Edinburgh), vol.61, no. 1, 1996, pp.62-63.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid. Also, NAI, FN. G 80, "Ikeja", p. 8
- <sup>61</sup> NAI, FN. G 80, "Ikeja", p. 8
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 2.
- <sup>63</sup> Comcol 2, FN. G.40, "Ikeja District-Re-Organisation, General", p. 31.
- <sup>64</sup> NAI, File No, G 80, "Ikeja", p. 8.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid, p.10.-11.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid, pp. 12-13.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 15.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid, pp. 24-28.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>79</sup> NAI, File No, G 80, "Ikeja", p. 6.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid See also *The Nigerian Daily Times*, 25th January, 1934, pp. 31-37.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid and NAI, File No, G 80, "Ikeja", p. 8
- <sup>89</sup> NAI, File No, G 80, "Ikeja", p. 8
- <sup>90</sup> NAI, FN 507, "Serious Crimes", p. 7.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>92</sup> NAI, File No. G 80, "Ikeja", p. 8

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Comcol 1 FN 1257 "Crime in Lagos and its Districts, 1930-1946", p. 38. For the attack on Taylor, see *Headlines*, No. 8, November 1973.

<sup>96</sup> There is at present no systematic study of this administrative re-organisation in the Colony Districts of Lagos. This is surprising because it represented a turning point in the history of colonised people in this area who, before this period had only heard or felt colonial administration through the Lagos Constabulary or their Baba-Isale (Patrons). For a detailed study of this system in relation to Mushin, formerly a part of the Ikeja District, see Barnes, *Patrons*, passim.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> NAI, F N. G46, "Police: Colony District", p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> A detailed study of the Native Authority Police Forces is Kemi Rotimi, *The Police in a Federal State: The Nigerian Experience*, Ibadan: College Press Limited, 2001.

<sup>105</sup> Comcol 1 FN 1257 "Crime", p. 45.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. It formed the basis for the formation of the Egba Police in 1905. For more information see Rotimi, *The Police*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>109</sup> CSO 26/4, 30030/S.1, "Intelligence Report: Egun Area of Badagry District, Supplementary Report leading to formation of Confederation", p. 30.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> "Commissioner of the Colony's Covering Report" enc. in CSO 26/4, 30030/S.1, "Intelligence", p. 3.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> NAI, FN 1763/1, "Serious Burglaries in Badagry District", p. 11.

<sup>118</sup> Comcol 1 FN 1257 "Crime", p. 45.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Barnes, *Patrons*, p. 40

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> The Agege area of the district of Ikeja was famous for cocoa and kolanut cultivation. Besides, the railway had a lot of impact on the area inducing the emergence of a vibrant Hausa and other settler communities in the area. It was these settlers including those of Yoruba origin that made land speculation attractive in the area. See Comcol 2, FN G77, "Agege Station-Re-Organisation General".

<sup>130</sup> Barnes, *Patrons*, p. 40

<sup>131</sup> Comcol 1 FN 1257 "Crime", p. 67

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>134</sup> NAI, FN 1763/1, "Serious", pp. 1-2.
- <sup>135</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid, p. 6.
- <sup>138</sup> Ibid, p. 12
- <sup>139</sup> Ibid, p. 10.
- <sup>140</sup> See Ahire, Philip T., *Imperial Policing: The Emergence and Role of the Police in Colonial Nigeria, 1860-1960*, Milton Keynes: England/Philadelphia, Open University Press, 1991, passim, and Laurent Fourchard, "Sécurité, crime et ségrégation : une perspective historique" in Laurent Fourchard et Isaac Olawale Albert (eds.) *Sécurité, crime et ségrégation dans les villes d'Afrique de l'Ouest du XIXe siècle à nos jours*, Paris/Ibadan: Karthala/IFRA, 2003, pp. 1-23.
- <sup>141</sup> NAI, FN 1763/1, "Serious", p. 12
- <sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 11
- <sup>143</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>144</sup> Comcol I FN 1257 "Crime", p. 67.
- <sup>145</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>146</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>147</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>149</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>150</sup> Ibid, p. 69.
- <sup>151</sup> Ibid, p. 70.
- <sup>152</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>153</sup> Ibid, p. 72.
- <sup>154</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>156</sup> Ibid, p. 73.
- <sup>157</sup> Olukoju., "The Travails", pp. 59-61.
- <sup>158</sup> Comcol I, FN 1532 "Street Lighting in the Municipality of Lagos"., p. 43.
- <sup>159</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>160</sup> Ibid. For more details on the connection between street lighting in Lagos and crime see, Ayodeji Olukoju, *Infrastructure Development and Urban Facilities in Lagos, 1861-2000*, Ibadan: IFRA, 2003, pp. 24-29.
- <sup>161</sup> NAI, Comcol I, FN 1532 "Street Lighting", p. 46.
- <sup>162</sup> Ibid. See also, Olukoju, *Infrastructure*, p. 24.
- <sup>163</sup> Comcol I, FN 1532 "Street Lighting"., p. 46.
- <sup>164</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>165</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>166</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>167</sup> Ibid, p. 49.
- <sup>168</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>169</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>170</sup> Olukoju, *Infrastructure*, p. 24.
- <sup>171</sup> Comcol I, FN 1532 "Street Lighting"., p. 46.
- <sup>172</sup> For more details on the provision of electricity in Lagos during the colonial and post-colonial periods, see Olukoju, *Infrastructure*, pp. 22-45.
- <sup>173</sup> NAI, Ike Div. 3 File No C.P. 346, "Electricity Supply- Colony Districts", pp. 14, 31.
- <sup>174</sup> Barnes, *Patrons*, p. 41.
- <sup>175</sup> NAI, Ike Div. 3 File No C.P. 346, "Electricity", pp. 14, 31.
- <sup>176</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 16.
- <sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 19.
- <sup>179</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>180</sup> Ibid, pp. 31-32.

- <sup>181</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>182</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>183</sup> Mr. Alexander Patterson, a Prison Commissioner in Britain was probably sent to Nigeria by the Colonial Office.
- <sup>184</sup> NAI, CSO 26/2 FN. 18900/S.1, "Crime and Its Treatment: Report On By Mr. Akexander Patterson".
- <sup>185</sup> Ibid, p. 1. See also, Fourchard, "Sécurité," p. 31.
- <sup>186</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>187</sup> Comcol 1 FN 1257 "Crime", p.76
- <sup>188</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>189</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>190</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>191</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>192</sup> Ibid, p.78.
- <sup>193</sup> Annual Report of the Colony, 1952, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>194</sup> For detailed information on this, see A.G. Adebayo, "Lagos : The Choice and Position of a Federal Capital", in Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri, Jide Osuntokun (eds.), *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, Ikeja:Literamed, 1987, pp. 293-307.
- <sup>195</sup> Annual Report, 1952, pp. 22-23.
- <sup>196</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>197</sup> Olukoju., "The Travails", pp. 51-58. Also B.A. Agiri, "Kola in Western Nigeria, 1850-1950: A History of the Cultivation of Cola Nitida in Egba Owode, Ijebu-Remo, Iwo and Ota Areas", PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1972, passim.
- <sup>198</sup> Ibid, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>199</sup> Ibid, pp. 15-16.
- <sup>200</sup> Ibid, p. 23.
- <sup>201</sup> Colony Annual Reports, 1953, p. 27 and Colony Divisional Annual Reports, 1953, pp. 25-26.
- <sup>202</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>203</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>204</sup> Ibid,
- <sup>205</sup> Colony Annual Report, p. 26.
- <sup>206</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>207</sup> Ibid, p. 10.
- <sup>208</sup> Ibid, p. 26.
- <sup>209</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>210</sup> *Daily Times*, Lagos, Wednesday September 1, 1954, p. 1.
- <sup>211</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>212</sup> *Daily Times*, Lagos, Monday, October 11, 1954, p. 16.
- <sup>213</sup> N.A.I., C.S.O. 26, 06320/ C 1, "Bicycle Thieves: Extradition Of from Dahomey".
- <sup>214</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>215</sup> *Daily Times*, December 31, 1954, p. 16.
- <sup>216</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>217</sup> *Daily Times*, October 8, 1954, p. 10.
- <sup>218</sup> *Daily Times*, August 11, 1960, p. 2.
- <sup>219</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>220</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MURDER IN LAGOS AND ITS DISTRICTS, 1906-1959

Murders were committed in Lagos for diverse reasons and under different circumstances between 1906 and 1960. While some committed the offence to settle real or imagined grievances, others killed as an adjunct of robbery. Also, there were those who murdered or were murdered because they were lunatics. Finally, there were offenders who hid under the guise of religious fervour to perpetrate the heinous crime

Available records suggest the rarity of the occurrence of murder in the Western Province, of which Lagos was an important part, in the first decade of the twentieth century. Compared to recorded murder cases in the Eastern and Central Provinces, murder cases in the Western Province were low. For instance, out of the 113 murder cases returned for the three provinces as a fraction of the total offences against the person which was put at 1,101 in 1907, the Eastern and Central Provinces had 88 and 18 respectively while the Western Province had 7.<sup>1</sup> In 1908, a total of 1000 offences against the person were returned as committed in the three provinces while the attendant proceedings resulted in 635 convictions and 365 acquittals. The principal of these crimes were: murder, 130, manslaughter, 26, malicious wounding, 7, slave-dealing, 380, robbery with violence, 20, rape, 38, and other offences, 399.<sup>2</sup> The Eastern Province led the list with 106 murders, the Central Province coming next with 23 while only one murder was recorded in the Western Province.<sup>3</sup>

The difference in the rate of murder in the Western Province, in comparison to the other provinces, is indeed very striking. A high ranking colonial official, Captain J.L.R. Parry, Deputy and Acting Inspector General of the Southern Nigeria Police in 1908 gave a plausible reason for the gap in the rate of murder in the three provinces. According to him, disputes were often settled violently with the aid of lethal weapons in the Eastern Province and to a lesser extent in the

Central Province as opposed to the penchant for litigation or recourse to police action, on similar disputes, in the Western Province.<sup>4</sup> Parry's opinion is undoubtedly instructive, and his idea is worth exploring in a comparative study. Here, our focus is on Lagos and as shown in the study, a lot of disputes were resolved violently rather than through litigation or police action.<sup>5</sup> Police and legal actions, in most cases, followed the incidence of murder.

A major pointer to the fact that murder had been committed in colonial Lagos was the discovery of corpses in the bush by passers-by or police constables who, were usually attracted to such scenes by the stench from the decomposing body. Two of such discoveries were reported by a constable at Agege, a suburb of Lagos, in 1928. On 14 May, the constable found the body of a woman in a bush near Ikeja about 150 yards from the Ikeja-Isheri Road.<sup>6</sup> A report was made to the Assistant District Officer who visited the scene accompanied by the Commissioner of Police. Preliminary investigations revealed the identity of the corpse as that of a thirty-five year old woman, one Emily Shodeju of Ebute-Metta. Earlier, the woman had been declared missing since she left her farm near Ikeja on 9 May. A post-mortem examination carried out at Ebute-Metta could not ascertain the cause of death as there were no visible signs of violence on the corpse although the officials suspected foul play. The second discovery was made about eighteen hours after the incident had occurred. It involved the murder of yet another woman, Molana, about fifty years old who, until her death, resided in Ogba but sold cooked beans in Agege where she was last seen at about 3pm on the previous day. Her body was found at about 8am on 15 May near her village about eight yards from the shortest path from the village praying ground to the main road, and about 400 yards from the main road. Investigations into this murder case ruled out robbery as a possible motive for the murder as "the calabashes of the deceased and some money were found scattered along the path with a silver bracelet on the left arm of the corpse."<sup>7</sup> It was however clear, on this occasion, that the woman was strangled as a rope was found round her neck.



In the two murder cases narrated above, the colonial police did not have any clue as to who the murderers were. The furthest they got was to conclude that the two cases did not appear to be connected. As they posited, the technique of one was different from the other while they also ruled out any sexual motive.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, crime detection in relation to murder was often a difficult task to unravel during this period especially when the crime was committed in an obscure place, usually an area outside the residential ambit of the victim, like a bush path.

A notable feature of the crime of murder in colonial Lagos was that the victims were often known to the offenders. Indeed, some victims and offenders were acquaintances suggesting that murder in Lagos during this period was the climax of the breakdown of normal inter-personal relationships. It is not surprising, therefore, that the offence was often committed by individuals although the murder of an individual by a group of people often drew more attention.

This was the case in the peculiar murder of a thirty-six year old lunatic, Thompson Sabo, in Okokomaiko Village in May 1937.<sup>9</sup> Prior to his death, he had been accused of stealing a goat belonging to a woman called Salamotu, and was taken to the Badagry Police Station. At the police station, Thompson could not respond to interrogation because of his unstable mind, hence his release by the District Officer, Mr. Carpenter, while the goat was returned to the owner.<sup>10</sup> About three weeks later, Thompson was found dead in a bush by a villager from Ojo who was on his way to Okokomaiko. A report was made to the *Olojo* who subsequently instituted an investigation and arranged for the conveyance of the corpse to the police station. Thereafter, the body was taken to the Public Mortuary at Lagos where Dr. Adebayo Ajose performed a post mortem examination on it. The examination revealed that the man had sustained lacerated wounds on the skin of his cheek and a dislocated jaw. The doctor concluded that Thompson must have died of the shock and injuries received from prolonged beating.<sup>11</sup>

In the meantime, investigations conducted by the *Olojo* into the incident revealed that Thompson was indeed whipped and dragged out of Okokomaiko by some men acting under the authority of Sunmanu, the village head.<sup>12</sup> It was alleged that the lunatic was flogged twice. The first flogging session was probably the punishment for goat stealing. This did not lead to the death of Thompson. The fatal flogging session was undertaken in response to the complaint made by one Abudu Baki to the Baale that Thompson, after the first flogging, was loitering in his house and that all entreaties to him to depart had failed. The *Baale*, probably fed up with the nuisance of Thompson, decided to terminate the menace. In the evening of that day, the Baale and four other men proceeded to the house of Baki where Thompson was loitering. They tied a rope round his neck, stripped him naked and dragged him out of the village for a quarter of a mile in the direction of Ojo town. To ensure that nobody came to his rescue while he was being flogged, the Isangbeto horn was blown to keep people indoors although villagers were not oblivious of the development.<sup>13</sup>

The *Baale*, however, denied any knowledge of the incident despite the alleged revelation that Baki had admitted their culpability and shed tears on spotting Thompson's corpse. Also, four other men who were alleged to have taken part in the flogging did not admit their guilt on being told that the man they flogged a day before had died. They however admitted that certain sticks found near the dead body were theirs. Consequently, six men including the *Baale* were arrested and charged for murder at the Lagos Criminal Assizes. The indicted persons were Sunmanu (*Baale*), Abudu Baki, Mutairu Salami, Amodu Tijani, Amodu Rufai and Siaka Salami.<sup>14</sup>

The murder case was presided over by His Honour, Mr Justice O.W.Y. Carey assisted by a jury. However, the trial turned out to be another unsolved murder case despite the fact that the indicted persons were put up for trial. Actually, the proceedings were bungled by the prosecution witnesses most of who proved unreliable. The only credible witness was Corporal Frederick

Elabeboro, N. 114 attached to "B" Division of the Nigeria Police who confirmed the earlier story of Thompson's arrest and discharge. His deposition was however not weighty enough as it did not reinforce the evidence against the accused persons. The depositions of the other witnesses such as those of Rabiū Bello (*Olojo's* messenger and principal prosecution witness) and Sunmanu Nassarawa, a Hausa were discredited. Bello's deposition was discredited on the strength of the rift that existed between the *Olojo* and the *Baale* of Okokomaiko which it was thought could have prejudiced his evidence.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Nassarawa's testimony was discredited because he had been convicted for perjury, and had been a pick-pocket. Indeed, he was nick-named Sunmanu Jaguda (Sunmanu the pickpocket).<sup>16</sup> Besides, it was alleged that Nassarawa was not on good terms with Sunmanu, Baale of Okokomaiko and that the former had actually supported the ambition of the *Oniba* of Iba, his relation-in-law who had wanted to be the head of Okokomaiko against the latter. Moreover, the *Olojo* chieftaincy which had occasioned enmity between the *Baale* and the *Olojo* also trivialised the evidence against the accused persons.<sup>17</sup> It was learnt that all the accused persons, with the exception of the *Baale*, belonged to the same Sakara Band that played for one Liasu, a keen rival of the *Olojo* for the *Olojo* Chieftaincy. The issue of whether Okokomaiko was under the authority of the *Olojo* also came up in the court with Alli Balogun, an elderly man from Okokomaiko, giving evidence to the contrary. According to him, Okokomaiko was never under *Ojo* and *Olojo* had no authority over the people.<sup>18</sup> Thus, it became evident that it was impossible for the *Olojo* to have received full co-operation in the investigations which his messenger claimed to have conducted.

The trial judge agreed this much when he bared his mind that he had a feeling the prosecution witnesses were insincere but regretted that he was not in a position to determine what was behind the lies. Addressing the accused persons, Justice Carey observed that it was perfectly

clear that Thompson was murdered by unknown persons. He however did not have enough evidence on which to convict the accused persons, hence they were discharged.

From the above narration, it is clear that Thompson was known to those who murdered him. A closer look at the narration also indicates that his insanity and abnormal behaviour were the immediate factors that unjustifiably induced his murder. For instance, it is worthy of note that the penultimate and final incidents that preceded his murder were the act of stealing and the accusation of loitering. Also, it is important to note the negative influence of traditional politics on the discharge of modern justice vis-à-vis the fabrication of evidence by the *Olojo* against his perceived enemies.

Meanwhile, lunatics were not always the pitiful victims of murder. Colonial records are replete with murder cases perpetrated by criminal lunatics. Indeed, such cases were a thorny issue in colonial Lagos since they were considered unfit to stand trial and at the same time, too dangerous to be discharged. Thus, they had to be remanded in custody in order not to endanger public safety. At a point, the question arose as to the stage at which a person deemed “guilty but insane” on a charge of homicide and detained in accordance with the law, could be discharged without danger of inflicting injury on himself or any other person.

The opinion in official circle was that in such cases involving lunatics, the offender was not detained because of his insanity. Rather, he was detained in accordance with the law on the crime committed. In the parlance of that period, he was detained at “His Majesty’s pleasure”. Thus, the question to be answered before the discharge of such a lunatic criminal who could not face prosecution was not whether he had regained sanity but whether, in accordance with Section 233 of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance, 1945 (No.42 of 1945), he may be discharged without danger of his doing injury to himself or to any other person.<sup>19</sup> In short, should a lunatic criminal be released at all? Governor Arthur Richards was of the view that the lunatic murderer should not

be set free.<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding his personal opinion, he sought clarification on the matter via a letter to the Secretary of State in London on 9 May, 1947.

In his detailed but belated response dated 8 October 1947, the Secretary of State noted that since August, 1941 the detention of a criminal lunatic in the United Kingdom (UK) was no longer considered a punitive action. Such detention, he said, was a necessary precautionary measure imposed solely in the interests of the community and of the patient himself. The responsibility for the discharge of such lunatics, who had been found guilty of the act of omission charged but insane at the time of its commission or omission was the prerogative of his office which exercised the function on the recommendation of the medical superintendent of the asylum who by statute was required to submit an annual report on the condition and circumstances of every criminal lunatic. The Secretary of State was required to review such cases at least once in every three years. In practice, every case was considered at least once in every year and reports were often more frequently obtained.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the Secretary of State noted that in considering these cases with a view to discharge, regard was paid, not only to the patient's mental history and present mental condition, but also to the nature and circumstances of the offence, the prospects which would be open to the lunatic on discharge and the degree of supervision which could be exercised over him by relations or friends.<sup>22</sup> A primary consideration in the discharge of a lunatic was the likelihood or otherwise that stress of circumstances might lead to a further mental breakdown and a repetition of the offence. For instance, a woman, who killed her child in a fit of manic depression, may justifiably be discharged after a comparatively short period, while a man addicted to drink or drugs may need detention for a period of prolonged observations after he had recovered to such an extent that he can no longer be certified as insane.<sup>23</sup>

The circumstances of these cases, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, vary to such an indefinite extent that it was impossible to determine a fixed term of detention for lunatics after recovery of sanity. Indeed, he cautioned that it was rarely safe in a murder case to contemplate discharge as soon as the patient became rational and tranquil under the conditions of institutional life in the asylum. A patient who may exhibit no signs of instability under these circumstances may relapse into insanity when exposed to the stresses and strains of ordinary life in the outside world.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, a prolonged period of observation was necessary in order to enable the presiding authority to decide whether the patient could be set at liberty without undue risk. At the expiration of this period of observation, it was considered expedient to interpose a transitional period between detention in the asylum and restoration to the complete freedom of ordinary life in the outside world. During this period, patients were often required to reside for a time in institutions such, for example, as a Salvation Army Home or a Convent, where they could remain under some mild form of control until it was shown that they were fit to take up once more their place in society. Whether a patient was discharged and entrusted to the care of a charitable organisation or to the supervision of some responsible relative or friend, it was an almost invariable rule that discharge shall be made conditional in the first instance.

The Secretary of State further noted that a standard condition of discharge of a lunatic was that periodic reports on the patient's progress shall be forwarded to the medical superintendent of the asylum, and that the person who undertook the patient's supervision would be required to promptly report any signs of instability in the patient's condition. Again, the warrant of discharge usually contained a condition of possible revocation at the pleasure of the presiding authority. This was to enable the immediate recall of the patient to the asylum if at any time his condition suggested a recurrence of insanity. Even where the periodic report on a lunatic was favourable

over time, it was seldom the case that a conditional discharge was made absolute.<sup>25</sup> However, if the periodic reports were favourable over time, the Secretary of State was usually willing to dispense with further reports when the patient had been at liberty for several years. But the conditional discharge was seldom made absolute.

In considering the UK model, the Nigerian government noted that there were no such institutions as the Salvation Army Home or Convent for criminal lunatics in Nigeria as both criminal and civil lunatics were discharged from lunatic asylums under the provisions of Section 18 (1) of the Lunacy Ordinance (Cap. 51), which provisions were similar to those of Section 235 of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance 1945 (No. 42 of 1945). In short, it seemed impossible to adopt the UK practice until there was a place where criminal lunatics could be kept under close supervision. Following this, it was again observed that the UK model was not wholly applicable to the problem as it existed in Nigeria.

From the above details, it is clear that the issue of criminal lunatics as murderers, and their discharge was a delicate one. Even in the UK, statistics showed that between 1941 and 1947, less than two percent of criminal lunatics were discharged from Broadmoor Asylum.<sup>26</sup> Thus, it was thought that no great hardship would be inflicted on the criminal lunatic population in Nigeria if all were to be detained for life. In any case, there was a consideration that the duty to the public was of paramount importance and that no risk should be run of releasing a potential murderer simply by reason of a regard for the interest of the criminal, or because it was found possible in England.

Commenting on the UK model on the treatment of criminal lunatics and its possible adaptation to the Nigerian situation, the Commissioner of the Colony addressed a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Government in Lagos. In it, he noted that while it may be possible in Great Britain to screen the inmates of a criminal lunatic asylum as to obviate any risk of their premature

discharge, he knew of no local institutions which could carry out the mild form of control apparently undertaken by the Salvation Army Homes and similar establishments in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the care and supervision which would normally be exercised over a discharged lunatic in Europe by his friends or relatives was virtually non-existent in Nigeria. By experience, such persons were either allowed to roam at will or were strictly confined under conditions of considerable hardship. He concluded that, in his view, the over-riding factor for consideration in such cases was the safety of the public.<sup>27</sup>

Other officials involved in the management of lunatics, especially the Alienist also made their view known about the issue. Their opinion is worth elaborating here. First, they noted that the position of 'criminal lunatics' who were found insane on arraignment and unfit to plead was somewhat different from that of others who became insane on conviction. If such a person, recovered quickly he could be put on trial and proved either guilty or not guilty. Second, they noted that the form of words "without the slightest risk of his doing injury" is far too severe a condition for discharge. In their view, the degree of risk required should be no greater than that involved in discharging a normal person provided there was nothing in each particular case pointing to a relapsing tendency (such as epilepsy or manic depression psychosis). Third, a recommendation was made that the Mental Hospital scheduled for the Eastern Provinces (Development Scheme) be used for criminal lunatics, particularly for those involved in acts of violence.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, issues arising from marital and other emotional relationships lay behind most of the murder cases in Lagos. This is in line with the view of Clifford that recorded murder in Africa appears to be derived from the pattern of relationships – the killing of close relatives, wives or associates.<sup>29</sup> In Colonial Lagos, marital disharmony caused by infidelity, jealousy, distrust and a feeling of neglect featured prominently in the murder cases recorded. The three



cases recounted below are indicative of the extent of the problem during this period. The first case involved one Lamidi Adigun, his wife and a native doctor. Lamidi sent his wife to the native doctor for treatment. Soon, an affair developed between the native doctor and the woman to the extent that the woman came home one day and was bold enough to tell her husband that her "private was no longer for him as it now belonged to the native doctor."<sup>30</sup> For this, Lamidi killed both the woman and the native doctor with a cutlass. The second case involved a man called Akintola, who had been blind for twenty three years and for this reason was despised by his wife. During an argument, the man struck the woman with a cutlass, and she died.<sup>31</sup> The third case which resulted in the murder of four persons and the condemnation to death of the accused, Ogunleye Odofin, did not actually occur in Lagos although the culprit was detained and eventually executed in the Lagos Prisons. The murder incident was triggered by the sudden departure of the wife of the accused.<sup>32</sup> According to the convict, he married a woman with whom he was deeply in love. As time went on, their marital life became so closely knit that it rubbed off on their parents and other siblings through such display of confidence as when he gave a sum of fifty pounds to one of his brothers-in-law for safe keeping. This was the situation until his wife packed out of their home without any prior notice or reason to her parents' home. All efforts to inquire into the cause of her departure proved abortive, and neither the parents nor the brothers were willing to intervene. And as he requested to retrieve his fifty pounds, a fight ensued in which he claimed he was attacked by five armed men, and seeing that his life was endangered, he defended himself with a machete which he sighted nearby. At the zenith of self defence, he wounded severely four out of the five assailants, three of whom died the same day, and one died after three days. On realising what he had done, he immediately travelled 34 miles from his house to Ado-Ekiti to lodge a report with the District Officer, and on the strength of this report, he was escorted to the Police Charge Office where he made statements.<sup>33</sup>

In a related development, the murder of Lion Buyota Okerekene in 1946 further attests to the fact that issues emanating from and relating to soured intimacy were usually murderous in colonial Lagos, particularly when complicated by money matters. At the Assizes held on 3 March 1947, at the Supreme Court of Nigeria in the Lagos Judicial Division, Jacob Akpugo was charged with the offence of murder contrary to Section 319 of the Criminal code. He was eventually tried by a Senior Puisne Judge, Francis H. Baker with a jury on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April 1947.<sup>34</sup>

Jacob Akpugo was a discharged soldier, and a friend to Mary, sister to the deceased. Indeed, she introduced him as her fiancé to the deceased and her other brothers, Oji and Boy, in the first week of November, 1946. The accused confirmed later that they intended to get married. As he was newly discharged from the army in 1946, he needed a job and Mary's brothers, particularly Oji, offered to help him to get one. Later, Oji in the company of Boy led him to the Labour Office.<sup>35</sup> After four days of going to the labour office, without any success of getting a job, the accused asked Oji, what he could do to get a labour card. In response, Oji requested for 10 shillings as bribe for the labour clerk which the accused obliged through Mary, who by then held for safe keeping, all his benefits from the army. Two days later, he got a labour card, but still had no job. Again, Oji demanded for some money as bribe for the Chief Clerk in the Labour Department to enable the accused secure a job. Specifically, he collected three pounds and ten shillings which he did not give to the clerk before his sudden departure for Warri on 15 November, 1946. Expectedly, the labour clerk denied receiving such money from Oji on inquiry. Infuriated by this development, Mary decided to travel down to Warri to look for Oji.<sup>36</sup> This was the background to the crisis that led to the murder. The accused and the deceased quarrelled several times about the money, the last taking place on the eve of the incident when the two men threatened each other.

A key prosecution witness, Joseph Okodasho, house mate and brother-in-law to the deceased recalled in his evidence that on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1946, the three men slept in a room and a parlour apartment rented by the deceased. The deceased slept in the parlour while the accused and Joseph slept in the room. At about 4.30 am, Joseph said that he heard the deceased calling his name, and shouting in Yoruba "ole, ole" meaning "thief, thief"<sup>37</sup>. This prompted him to run into the parlour where he saw the deceased on the floor and a man on top of him. At that moment, he said he could not determine the identity of the assailant since there was no light in the room. Joseph said he fell over them and began to hit the man with his fist not knowing that it was the accused. Ten minutes later, two constables with other neighbours came to the apartment. A lamp was brought in. It was then that he recognised the accused. More importantly, they saw a stab wound in the stomach of the deceased and his intestines protruding. He was quickly bandaged and taken to the African Hospital.<sup>38</sup>

At the hospital, medical examination revealed that Buyota had many wounds on his body. The first on the left side of the upper abdomen one and half inches long penetrated the abdominal cavity with some bowels protruding. The second wound was on the right side and upper abdomen about one and half inches long and also penetrated the abdominal cavity. The third was an incised wound on the right side of the face, three in number; one and half inches long respectively, and skin deep. Another wound on the right side of the chest over the inner end of the collarbone, an inch long and deep, penetrated the muscle. Yet another wound, one and half inches long, was found on the outer aspect of the lower part of the left arm penetrating into the muscles. The medical officer noted that there were other minor wounds.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the opening of the abdomen revealed that the first wound had punctured a loop of small intestines from one side to the other. The second wound had affected the intestine causing the escape of their content into the peritoneal cavity. The wounds were thereafter treated while the peritoneal cavity was drained.

Notwithstanding the effort, Buyota died five days later. In his evidence, the medical officer told the court that he was of the opinion that the dagger found in the hand of Jacob could have caused all the wounds.<sup>40</sup> The medical officer's view was buttressed by that of Phillip Stones, a pathologist, who performed a post-mortem on the body. He concluded that the cause of death was general peritonitis, the result of the stab wounds and the superficial cuts.

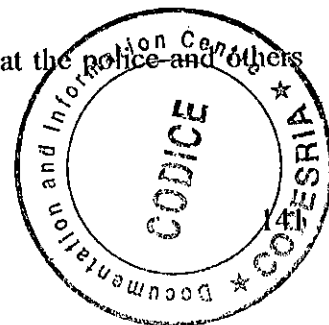
It is important at this juncture to consider two reports relating to the murder. First, was the statement made by the accused at the Police Station, and second, the dying declaration of Buyota to the police at the African hospital. In the former made at the Central Police Station, Colony Province, Jacob narrated how he had to leave Ikeja for Abeokuta when his unit in the military moved. During this time, he left his box in care of Mary, his lover for safekeeping. While in Abeokuta, he was visited by Mary once during which the Burma soldiers from overseas arrived at Ikeja, and Mary left him at Abeokuta and came down to Ikeja, and did not visit him again until his discharge from the military.<sup>41</sup>

At his discharge, he was paid about £28. When he got to Lagos, Mary took him to Koseh Street where she claimed her brothers lived and introduced him to them and one Joseph, a teacher and their brother-in-law. On the advice of Oji, he decided to get a labour card to enable him get a job. After four days of trying to get a card without success, Oji offered to assist but said the labour clerk would take a bribe. He duly paid the sum of 10 shillings after which he got the card. At another time, he gave Oji £3:10 as bribe for the labour clerk to secure a job. Although Oji claimed to have given the money to the labour clerk, the job was not forthcoming until he left for Warri.<sup>42</sup> The accused said he thought he should have a refund of his money as the job for which the bribe was paid was not forthcoming. Later, it was discovered that contrary to his claim, Oji did not give the money to the labour clerk and Mary volunteered to go after him to retrieve the money promising to be back in three days. She went away still keeping his remaining money and

never came back. Meanwhile, he said, while Mary was away, Boy and Lion began to make life miserable for him. He tried on his own to look for a job but was not successful. Re-enlisting into the army equally proved difficult and this increased his frustration. At the last time that he approached the labour office, and was told there was no job for him, he left in despair and thought of how he had been swindled by Mary and her brothers. He therefore decided "to lay hands on Lion...took a knife and cut him but [did] not know whether he cut him to [his] satisfaction."<sup>43</sup>

The second report was the dying declaration made by Buyota having entertained no hope of recovery from the injuries received.<sup>44</sup> His story corroborated that earlier told by the accused that Oji collected some money from the accused. Buyota said he offered to pay the money back in two instalments, and told his sister not to travel to Warri. He went to work in the morning, and by the time he came back, she was gone. He said five days after the sister left for Warri, in the night, the stranger came upon him and started to cut him in the face and all over the body and he the victim shouted "you have killed me for no just cause."<sup>45</sup>

At the court, however, the accused told a slightly different story and denied ever making any statement purporting that he did not stab the deceased to his satisfaction. According to him, trouble began at the departure of Mary and Buyota particularly asked him to leave his house. All entreaties to him fell on deaf ears.<sup>46</sup> On the day of the incident, at about 4.30a.m, he was going to urinate when Buyota picked a quarrel, telling him that, he, the accused was troublesome. Thereafter, the deceased slammed him to the floor, wounding him and a struggle ensued. The deceased then brought a knife out from under the pillow to stab him. After a struggle which lasted for about five minutes, during which time it was possible that the deceased sustained wounds, he was able to wrest the knife from him. It was at this point that the police and others came in and separated them.<sup>47</sup>



Addressing the jury, Mr Kester, counsel to the accused noted that the accused was charged with murder, which is the killing of a person with malice aforethought either express or implied. Malice aforethought means an express design or intention. He pointed out to the jury that it was his duty to interpret the law and to point out to them the aspects from which they can consider certain parts of the evidence, how far they may use it, and how they ought not to use it. He told the jury that theirs was the responsibility as to fact and his the responsibility as to law and that therefore when they retire to consider their verdict, the principal question they would have to consider is: has the prosecution satisfied them with that reasonable certainty that a jury ought to have in a matter of life and death, that the accused murdered the deceased?<sup>48</sup> He noted that if their state of mind after they had considered the matter was that they were very suspicious and were inclined to think that he did it but were not quite sure, then the accused was entitled to the benefit of doubt and they must return a verdict of not guilty.

Having listened to the defence counsel and the trial judge, the jury retired and returned a verdict of guilty and sentenced him to death with a recommendation to mercy without giving any reasons. The trial judge felt that it was a very clear case of a very brutal and premeditated murder and that there was no evidence of provocation whereby the charge of murder could be reduced to manslaughter. The witnesses for the prosecution, he noted, gave their evidence in a perfectly straightforward manner and the judge was satisfied that they told a true story. The accused on the other hand was said to be hesitant while giving evidence and indecisive, and told in the opinion of the judge, "an incredible story", and presumably this opinion was shared by the jury. The judge, however, could not find any mitigating circumstances in the case supporting a recommendation to mercy as made by the jury, and could therefore not associate with it especially since they gave no reasons. The accused was told of his right of appeal to West

African Court of Appeal.<sup>49</sup> Jacob appealed the ruling in April 1947 but the verdict of the Supreme Court, Lagos, was upheld and he was executed in the Lagos prison on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1947.<sup>50</sup>

Another murder took place in Ikorodu on the eve of Christmas in 1946. Tiameyi Anjorin was stabbed to death after participating in an Igunu ceremony.<sup>51</sup> The Igunu is a secret society and resents intrusion into its enclosure. Traditionally, no one could enter an Igunu enclosure unless he was a member.<sup>52</sup> The ceremony had ended at about 11p.m after which the deceased sat with two others in the Igunu enclosure where the display had been held. After a while, the accused, Jacob Robert who, they did not recognise or could identify as a member of the cult, strolled in, and was asked about his mission.

Meanwhile, Robert, responded in an unsatisfactory manner, and was therefore, asked to leave. When he refused, the deceased pushed him out of the enclosure. In retaliation, the accused hit the deceased and a fight ensued. Soon, Robert drew a knife from his pocket and stabbed the deceased.<sup>53</sup> A prosecution witness, Jinadu, deposed that the deceased was stabbed twice on the left and right side of the chest, as a result of which he lost a lot of blood and died. The accused was later arrested in a friend's house where he hid under the bed. The father of the accused however chartered the canoe which conveyed the deceased's body to the mortuary in Lagos.

Another member of the cult, Ibikunle Jaiyesimi, gave a clue as to why Robert was reluctant to respond to the question put to him by the deceased and others. He told the court that the accused was formerly a member of the cult and was at the meeting that night. In his opinion, the deceased might not have known that Jacob was a member but should have asked him to give the identification sign. He agreed, however, that while the membership of the accused lasted, he was not regular at meetings.<sup>54</sup> Cross-examined by the jury, Jaiyesimi admitted that the accused was an intimate friend and that he accompanied the father of the accused to the enclosure that night.<sup>55</sup>

Tiamiyu Raji, another member of the cult however disagreed with the view that the accused was a member of the cult, and never had been to his knowledge. He corroborated the story earlier told by Jinadu that the accused quarrelled with the deceased because the latter told him to go out of the enclosure. According to Raji, the accused said he would not leave because the compound was his father's and not even the grandfather of his could send him out of the place. The deceased then got up and pushed the accused towards the entrance, and then a fight ensued. It was at this point that the deceased shouted "I have been stabbed."<sup>56</sup>

Actually, the deceased died of wounds sustained from the stab. In his evidence, a pathologist at the African hospital, Dr. Phillips told the court that his post mortem on Tiamiyu Anjorin on 27 December 1946, revealed two stab wounds in the chest; one on the lower chest, about an inch long, which had penetrated the liver, and a second one on the left chest, also an inch long, just to the side of the sternum passed upwards and slightly inwards entering the chest cavity between the fifth and sixth ribs and penetrating the heart. This wound, he noted was the cause of death. He said the wound could have been caused by a sharp instrument such as a knife and this could make the victim die instantly.<sup>57</sup>

In his ruling on the case on the 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1947, the trial judge, Francis H. Baker, noted that there were usually two pleas open to the defence in a murder case – that of self defence in which case the killing could be excused, and the second is killing upon provocation in which case the offence could be reduced from murder to manslaughter. With regard to the question of self defence, he observed that there was no evidence that the accused was ever in peril of losing his life or of serious bodily harm. He said the proceedings had not suggested that the accused was injured in anyway noting that all the evidence showed that the deceased was unarmed. With this fact he told the jury that they should have no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that no question of self defence arose.<sup>58</sup>



With reference to the question of provocation, he felt that if this existed, the crime of murder would have to be reduced to manslaughter. To do this, he noted that provocation must be such that temporarily deprived the person provoked of the power of self control as a result of which he committed the act which caused death. In applying the test, consideration must however be given to whether a sufficient interval had elapsed since the provocation to allow time to cool and to take into account the instrument with which the homicide was effected. The mode of resentment must bear a reasonable relationship to the provocation. In his opinion based on the depositions of the prosecution witnesses, there was no reasonable relationship between the provocation and the resentment and retaliation via the use of a dagger. On the issue of whether the provocation was sufficient to deprive the person charged of his self control, the trial judge noted that in law, no words or pester however provoking, was regarded as sufficient to reduce the charge of murder to manslaughter if the killing was effected with a deadly weapon or an intention to do the deceased some grievous bodily harm was otherwise manifested. He concluded that it was murder or nothing. The jury subsequently returned a verdict of murder and, in accordance with the law the judge sentenced the accused to death. He was executed on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1947.<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile, the township of Lagos witnessed other murders which were at best mysterious in the late 1940s. The murders were mysterious because neither the police nor the public knew the criminals.<sup>60</sup> The situation became particularly worrisome in Lafiaji, one of the very popular districts in 'C' Ward, an administrative area in the township which extended from Tinubu Square up to Ikoyi.<sup>61</sup> A newly reclaimed area of the district, largely uninhabited and unkempt, it was the notorious murder spot and dumpsite of corpses murdered elsewhere. Specifically, the dark spot was close to the northern foreshore of the Lagos lagoon and hemmed in by Foresythe Street in the south. The old Muslim cemetery and Oke-Suna Street encircled the dangerous zone in the east while Simpson Street and Oke-Suna Square occupied its western part.

Official reaction to this problem was to increase police patrol in the area. The area was actually split into two for proper surveillance. Although uniformed men were sent to the area, preference was given to the deployment of plain clothes men for effective undercover functions. Actually, since the upsurge of murder in the area, police strength in Oke-Suna, for instance, was increased, first to eight and later to thirteen. The police also embarked on the compilation of the names of all residents in the affected area with a view to questioning them.<sup>62</sup>

By 1947, the Association of Rate Payers and Home Owners in the Ward sent a delegation to discuss the issue and other matters affecting the interests of 'C' Ward with the Commissioner of the Colony who doubled as President, Lagos Town Council, and the Commissioner of Police. The delegation included respected members of the Lagos community such as Honourable Dr. Olorun-Nimbe, Ward Representative, A.O. Lipede, and Joint Secretary: Messrs J.A. Williams, A.O. Phillips, Imam Dauda, Madams Schidi and Moriamo.<sup>63</sup>

At the meeting which took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> December in the Colony Office, Mr. E.A. Carr, the Commissioner of the Colony, his deputy, Mr. J.G.C. Allen and three senior officers of the Nigeria Police were in attendance. They were Mr. R.G. Henderson, the Superintendent of Police in charge of the Lagos Province, Mr. A. Cooper, Assistant Superintendent of Police, C.I.D, and Captain R.P. Rankin, Assistant Superintendent of Police, "B" Division.

Lipede told the meeting that his association had been greatly upset by the murder incidents in Lafiaji because they were a direct threat to the security and lives of the residents. The situation, he said, persisted because of inadequate lighting of streets and the compound of Government School, overgrown grass and weeds which were not cut promptly by the relevant authorities and finally, the absence of police patrols. Thus, at the setting of the sun, the spot became an ideal location for thieves, a home for all mischief-makers and a retreat for every

lawbreaker, including murderers. Consequently, he urged that steps be taken to light up the streets and ensure that the weeds were cut regularly while police patrol should be provided.

In his contribution, Dr. Olorun-Nimbe equally emphasised the fact that police protection in the ward was hopelessly inadequate compared to the number of policemen available in Ikoyi. He alluded to the issue of discrimination in the deployment of police personnel to the area as he could not understand why a part of the same ward should be left entirely unprotected. Furthermore, Dr. Olorun-Nimbe noted that it was important to improve illumination on Strachan Lane, "a renowned avenue of escape for thieves hunted by the police, since they took advantage of its stark darkness, and if anyone dared to follow a thief into that Lane anything could happen."<sup>64</sup>

The Commissioner of the Colony admitted the inadequacy of street lighting not only in the area in question but in the township generally. He promised to bring the matter to the attention of the authorities. Mr Henderson, while addressing the issue of inadequate police protection, agreed with Dr Nimbe that the police did not have sufficient manpower to patrol the whole of Lagos in the manner they would like. But he noted that the police had had to give preference to areas in which crime was pronounced. Thus, the seeming concentration of policemen in Ikoyi was in response to the incessant burglaries and larceny reported in the area early in 1947. The situation, he said, was not different under the present circumstance as the police had called in men from other units to patrol Lafiaji in conjunction with the C.I.D. Mr Henderson pointed out that almost all the policemen in the Lafiaji-Oke Suna area were in plain clothes, and therefore, might not be recognisable to the local residents. He assured the meeting that the area was saturated with police presence.

Mr Cooper affirmed all that was said by Mr Henderson. In addition, he stated that there were six inspectors working in the area on the murder cases, and that Lafiaji was probably more

closely patrolled than any other area in Nigeria. A major setback in apprehending the criminals was the lack of cooperation from the people living in the area. He solicited the support of the association in persuading residents to give reliable information to the police. He then suggested that a meeting with the association should be called once a crime was detected, and that in turn the association would interrogate the people. The meeting also agreed to the suggestion that the Police Public Relations Officer should give lectures and write articles on the value of co-operating with the police, as a way of educating and awakening the people to their civic responsibility.

Captain Rankin, on his part noted that beyond the issue of patrol, the police had other statutory functions to perform such as providing security at government establishments. For instance, out of a numerical strength of 185 in "B" Division, he had to deploy men (with the exception of those on leave) to the Juvenile Court, the Lagos Town Council and others. Besides, police patrol in his area of operation covered twenty locations which had to be catered for.

In sum, Mr. Carr noted that the "C" Ward, like any other place in Nigeria, was inadequately policed. The Nigeria Police Force, like other government departments, was understaffed and the solution was therefore to increase the strength of the force several fold. Still, he expressed satisfaction at the performance of the police as they were using their number to the best advantage. He concluded that if the people could be persuaded that it was to their own advantage to give information to the police, it would be a great step forward and a great help in investigating the crimes.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, murder was also committed deliberately as an adjunct of robbery during our period. In the first case, one Sunmola from Kontagora, was arraigned at the Assizes held in Lagos on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 1949 charged with murder which he allegedly committed on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 1949 at Igbobi Village in the colony of Lagos. The victim was one Ben Okafor.<sup>66</sup> The murder

incident actually began as a theft. Sunmola had attempted to steal the bicycle and wooden box of one Nasiru Tella, a bricklayer.<sup>67</sup> He had succeeded in removing these materials from Tella's house and was already on his way out when the latter suddenly woke up at the sound of a noise between 4 and 4.30am. He saw the inner door and that of the yard ajar, and intuitively knew that a theft had taken place. On running out through the yard, he saw somebody running away with his bicycle. He pursued the person even as he raised an alarm. While he was a short distance away from the thief, the latter dropped the bicycle which terminated the solo chase but the action was too late as the villagers numbering about fifty were by now out and on the trail of the thief who scampered into a nearby bush for cover.<sup>68</sup>

It was while looking for the thief in his hideout; where two baskets of stolen fowls were later found that, Ben Okafor was stabbed by the thief.<sup>69</sup> A labourer and co-villager, Simon Ayadigwe, who lived in the same unmarked house with the deceased, stated that on hearing the alarm raised by Tella, Ben ran out of the house to participate in the hunt for the thief while he remained behind to keep watch in the house. Unfortunately, Ben was brought back to the house stabbed in the back.<sup>70</sup> Albert Akuba, a clerk at the Ordinance Depot who lived at No 25 Igbobi Village gave a more detailed account that revealed how Ben was stabbed in the bush. In his words, the thief meant to stab him but he parried the deadly stroke with his lighted lamp. It was at that moment that Ben came and was hit in the back. Yet, Ben held on to the thief despite his bleeding until help came.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, the accused was thoroughly beaten by the villagers. Bernard Lunenka, a Police Constable, attached to the Mushin Police Post, testified that he got a report on the incident and proceeded to Igbobi village in an ambulance. He went to the village in an ambulance as the new Ikorodu Road had just been constructed, and the village was located along that route. When he got there, he found the deceased and the accused lying on the ground, both unconscious. The

first had a wound in his back and blood stains while the second had some bruises on him.<sup>72</sup> The two men were later taken to the Lagos General Hospital. Having lost much blood, Ben, the first man died while the thief was charged to court for murder.

At the trial presided over by Francis Baker, Sunmola, the accused denied any wrong doing. He told the court that he was a wood-seller, and that, at the time of the incident, he was returning from the Military Hospital where he went to gamble. As he approached the village, he heard some people shouting "thief, thief". Eventually, two men later identified as Albert and Ben came out from the bush and seized him as the culprit. He also denied stabbing anyone.<sup>73</sup>

The trial judge was however convinced that Sunmola was lying considering the weight of the evidence against him. First, all the witnesses identified him as the man who attempted to steal Nasiru's bicycle and wooden box. Second, the blood stain found on the knife and that found on the khaki that he wore on the day he was caught were the same. Third, the evidence of the accused was found to be unconvincing as he could not mention those with who he had been before the incident. Consequently, he was found guilty by the jury and was sentenced to death by hanging. He was executed at the Lagos Prison on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1949.<sup>74</sup>

A similar but more daring case of armed robbery led to the murder of a fish seller in September 1949. At the Assizes held at Lagos on 5<sup>th</sup> of September, 1949, the Court was informed that the accused, Samson Ajeagwu, a roof thatcher, was charged with the murder of Obodogowa Martin at Apapa in the colony of Nigeria on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1949. The case was presided over by Mr Justice Abbott.<sup>75</sup> The Crown counsel, Mr Denos Synge Stephens, stood for prosecution while Mr Augusto (Junior) was assigned for the accused.

Calabar Martin, the husband of the deceased, worked as a deck-hand and lived at Ajegunle Village. On the morning of the incident, his wife, a trader in fish left the house at about 6am as usual with a calabash, paddles and a big hat. She also had in her possession about £33

which she was going to use for trading.<sup>76</sup> This was the last time he saw her alive. Four hours later, her dead body was found close to Olodi waterside, just off the roadside not far away from the village where she lived. Her dead body was later identified by her husband who, on searching the body, discovered that the money on her had been stolen, raising the suspicion that the murderer or murderers had killed her from greed or gain. The murder was thereafter reported at Ajegunle Police Post and Police Corporal Effiong Udoh was detailed to investigate. The body was subsequently deposited in a hospital where a post-mortem was performed on it.<sup>77</sup>

Police investigation revealed that the body of the woman was found lying upon its back. A part of the nose had been sliced off with a very sharp instrument such as a razor and a tight ligature of cloth had been knotted about the neck. The government pathologist, after an examination of the body opined that the cause of death was strangulation. This ruled out the possibility of suicide. The Doctor also examined the scene of the crime and noted that an area around the body showed that there had been a struggle.

In his delivery, the judge tried to lead the jury to picture a situation in which a helpless woman struggled with the attacker or attackers for life. While it is possible that she was attacked by more than one person,, the judge reiterated that the evidence at the disposal of the court indicated that beside the body there was a ragged khaki shirt, and that the shirt according to the doctor, had stains of human blood upon it on the outside and a similar stain upon the inside.<sup>78</sup> The judge noted that "it may be reasonable for the jury to think that the blood stains found upon the outside of that shirt were from the severed nose of the deceased. The doctor, in his evidence, had told the court that the stain of blood found on the shirt on the inside was on the left shoulder. He also stated that on examination, the accused person had a graze on the top of the left shoulder thus making the court to consider the possibility of a link between the stain on the inside of the shirt and the graze on the shoulder of the accused.

The question however was to determine if the evidence of the doctor in this regard leads to the conclusion that the accused was the owner of the shirt? The answer was provided by the evidence of two other witnesses - Emmanuel and Alice. Emmanuel told the court that on the day the deceased was killed, he crossed over from Lagos by the Apapa Ferry and headed in the direction of Araromi Village, to which the accused belonged. On the way, he saw the accused who was not wearing a shirt. In short, he was half-naked. This, he said, was strange as he had never seen the accused dressed that way. As he knew the accused well, he also deposed that the shirt found close to the dead body was that of the accused. Alice, who lived in the same compound with the accused, corroborated this. She confirmed that she had occasionally washed the shirt on behalf of the accused. At other times, she had removed it from where it was spread in the sun to prevent it from getting wet in the rain.<sup>79</sup> With this evidence, the court had little doubt in believing that the accused was at the scene of the crime on the morning that the deceased met her death. Again, the court was also led to believe the deposition of other witnesses when it learnt that at the execution of a search warrant in the house of the accused, a safety pin similar to the one found on the shirt was discovered in his house.

Beyond the evidence of the shirt, the case against the accused was further strengthened by Alice who told the court that on the 27<sup>th</sup> May, the accused had in a way warned her not to go towards the scene of the crime. In her words, the accused had told her that "you have always been kind to me and given me food, I now advise you not to go near the bush to collect firewood".<sup>80</sup>

Equally, the express denial of the statement that the accused made to the police in court was suggestive to the court that he was inconsistent. He had made the statement through the aid of an interpreter, in the Okpe language, a variant of Urhobo language. In it, he had noted that it was one Edward and Awudu who killed the woman, and that he only tipped them off as the



woman approached and that he stood at the end of the road to ensure that nobody approached while the crime was being perpetrated.<sup>81</sup> In court, he denied ever making such a statement.

Notwithstanding, the court interpreted this evidence as meaning that the accused knew more about the murder than he led the court to believe in the dock. The evidence of a man named Goni was also considered by the court. To start with, Goni was an ex-convict sent to prison for being in illegal possession of Indian hemp.<sup>82</sup> Traditionally, his evidence would have been discredited. But, the court held that under the circumstance in which he gave the evidence, it was just as credible as the evidence of any other witness. It justified its position on the ground that the interest of Goni was not in any way at stake.<sup>83</sup> Goni, in his evidence actually told the court that some days to his release from prison, the accused who was then remanded in custody requested for a meeting with him which he obliged. After the exchange of pleasantries, the accused told Goni that he had killed a woman and that her death "was nothing but the works of evil".<sup>84</sup>

The motivation for the murder came when he went to buy fish one day from the dead woman and paid her one shilling and six pence for the fish. He gave her a ten-shilling note and when she opened her bag to give him change he saw that she had two rolls of currency notes in her waist wrapper. He saw that she also had loose coin. Thereafter, he left and conspired with two others to rob the woman. Eventually, they decided to kill her to get the money since they could not steal the money otherwise. More importantly, he told Goni that he shared the money with Edward and that the stolen money amounted to £47.<sup>85</sup>

In his submission, Justice Abbott charged the jury to give either one or two verdicts, guilty or not guilty. According to him, no question of manslaughter could possibly arise in the case, and as such the jury must return a verdict, a verdict which must be the verdict of every member of jury each according to his own conscience. In other words, the verdict must not be a verdict of the majority but a verdict of all based on individual convictions of the fifteen -member

jury. Thus, if a verdict of guilty was returned, then every member of jury must be satisfied of the guilt of the accused beyond any reasonable doubt. If such doubt exists, then the accused must be acquitted but if the evidence satisfies their conscience beyond any such doubt, that the accused willfully killed this woman or that he knowingly took part in bringing about her death it was their duty to return a verdict of guilty. A verdict of guilty was returned, Ajcagwu was sentenced to death and was executed on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1949.<sup>86</sup>

In another development, James Oka was accused of murdering his wife, Lucy, at Odo Bush, Agbowa Village in the Lagos colony.<sup>87</sup> The incident took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1952. Lucy had packed out of the house while James was away at work. Later, it was discovered that she had moved into the house of another man, Alfred Okuah, in the same village. Indeed, both of them had begun to live as husband and wife.<sup>88</sup> Naturally, James was infuriated by this development.

Alfred Miller Okuah lived at Agota Street, Agbowa, and was engaged in palm oil making. According to him, he met the deceased on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1952 and beginning from March 11, 1952 she came to live with him as his wife. He admitted that he had not paid any dowry on her, and did not marry her in the church or at the registry.<sup>89</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1952, they went to make palm oil at the waterside. In the afternoon, he heard a cracking sound which made him to look round, and saw the accused aiming a gun at him. Lucy and himself ran into the bush where, he heard Lucy shouting "James biko, James biko" which could mean in the Igbo language "I beg you James, I beg you James."<sup>90</sup> In the interval, he shouted for help but before any came, Lucy had been murdered. As villagers began to arrive at the scene of the incident, he went to Agbowa village to report to Mr. Reed, the Assistant District Officer, Epe, who was then on tour there. Later that night, a police constable assisted him in removing the body to the mortuary at Ijebu-Ode Hospital.<sup>91</sup>

Meanwhile, Aruna Animashaun, the Native Court Messenger at Agbowa gave a clue into the background to the incident. In his deposition distilled from the court proceedings on the case, he noted that he received a letter from the deceased on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1952. In the letter, the deceased narrated her ordeal with James. She said James had two wives and that the other woman, Alice, had left him because of constant beating following allegations that she was having extra-marital affairs with the Isobo (Urhobo) and Ijebu in the village. Furthermore, she also complained of repeated beating and the constant threat to her life with a cutlass. She concluded that she was tired of the relationship. On the strength of this letter, Aruna said he sent for the accused and tried to convince him to allow the deceased to go and stay with her family.<sup>92</sup>

The perspective of the accused on the incident is interesting. He lived in Agbowa as a farmer, with two wives. One of them, Lucy, had been his wife for four years. On the 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1952, he requested that she accompany him to the farm but she refused. Before then he had noticed a kind of intimacy between her and Alfred. He alleged that on the morning of the incident, a sexual intercourse session with Lucy was interrupted by Alfred who came to knock on their door. To his surprise, Lucy immediately threw him off once she knew it was Alfred. Later, on his return from the farm, he discovered that his property had been removed from where it was kept and that Lucy had left. He looked for her and later reported to the Native Court Messenger that she was missing. When he later found her in Alfred's house, he appealed to her to return but she rebuffed the pleas of his emissaries. In addition to this, the duo, he said, was fond of spiting him by singing abusive songs each time they saw him. And on demanding why they were abusing him on that fateful day, a fight ensued which resulted in the death of the deceased.<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile, after the incident, the accused went into hiding. A search party was raised, and on 26<sup>th</sup> April, acting on a tip off from one Gold Coast man, Alfred and four others laid

ambush for the accused somewhere in a bush where he was caught and handed over to the police at Epe.<sup>94</sup>

The accounts of the accused and Alfred are no doubt contradictory especially on the issue of whether the attack on the deceased was spontaneous or premeditated. While the accused claimed that the abusive song directed at him when he was passing by initiated the quarrel that led to the unfortunate incident, Alfred in his testimony claimed that they were attacked while at the factory, a point which a female prosecution witness, Abeju Sunmola, present at the waterside when the incident occurred, confirmed.<sup>95</sup>

In his address to the jury, counsel to the accused, Fawehinmi told the court that the important fact to consider was that of motive. He asked rhetorically: why did the accused kill the deceased? According to him, the evidence available indicated that the deceased and the accused lived as man and wife until Miller came on the scene. The relationship became sour and the deceased ran away with the belongings of the accused. Appeals were made to her to return but she would rather abuse her husband. He said the whole issue was further compounded when Alfred, in response to a plea, asked the accused to pay £2 to get his wife back. This, he noted, was a humiliating response, and on 18<sup>th</sup> March, the last straw came when the accused was provoked with an abusive song, a fight ensued and led to the death of the deceased. For him, Alfred offered the accused great provocation which started when the accused discovered his wife in the house of Alfred. He ended by commending the accused to the mercy of the jury.<sup>96</sup>

In his response to the submission of the defence, Crown counsel, T.A.B. Oki noted that the facts of the case were clear, and it was not in dispute that the accused killed the deceased. Earlier, the doctor had told the court that Lucy would have died instantly from haemorrhage and shock on account of the wound that she sustained when her right hand was smashed into pieces by the machete of the accused. He went further to state that the issue of provocation raised by the

prosecution did not arise considering the fact that the accused went to the waterside with the intention of killing, a fact attested to by his possession of two lethal weapons—a gun and a machete.<sup>97</sup>

In summing up the case to the jury, the trial judge, Honourable Mr. Justice Jibowu noted that the prosecution had established beyond doubt that the deceased was living with the accused as his wife, and that on the day of the incident they quarrelled and she left his house to which she never returned until her death. The prosecution, he said, was convinced on the authority of the evidence of Abeju Sunmola and Alfred Okuah that the accused killed the deceased. Justice Jibowu equally recalled the issue of seduction raised by the accused against Alfred and the series of unfruitful appeals made by him and others to Lucy to return. Furthermore, he recalled the story of the accused to the effect that on the day of the incident a fight ensued as a sequel to his reaction to the abusive song directed at his person as he was passing by and that the use of the machete on the deceased was co-incidental. The judge also recalled that contrary to the deposition of Alfred, the accused claimed that after the incident he went to his house where he remained until his arrest. He drew attention to the inconsistencies in the statement that the accused made at the police station which he signed after it was read to him, and his deposition in court that it was never read to him before he signed. The judge pointed out at this juncture, that it was a matter of common knowledge that when an accused person makes a statement to a police officer, usually a junior man, the police officer was duty bound to take him to a superior so that the accused might either confirm or deny the statement. This important procedure, Justice Jibowu noted, was observed when the accused was brought before Mr. Reed.<sup>98</sup> The trial judge was thus of the opinion that the claim by the accused that he signed the statement without reading it or it been read to him was an afterthought. He also considered the story of a spontaneous quarrel as incredible.<sup>99</sup>

In addressing the issue of provocation raised by Fawehinmi, Justice Jibowu recalled the submission of the learned counsel: that the seduction of Lucy by Alfred amounted to provocation and, secondly, that it was provocation to the accused when Alfred and the deceased directed abusive songs at him. Reflecting on this submission, the trial judge deemed it necessary to clarify what is meant in law by 'provocation'. Section 318 of the Criminal code, he noted states that:

When a person who unilaterally kills another in circumstances which, but for the provisions of this section, would constitute murder, does the act which causes death in the heat of passion caused by sudden provocation, and before there is time for the passion to cool, he is guilty of manslaughter only.<sup>100</sup>

From the above, the trial judge explained that sudden provocation could not be pleaded when a man whose wife had been taken from him broods over it for sometime after which he decides to kill her and the seducer, and actually carried out the act. In other words, the provocation and the action arising thereof was not sudden and did not follow in rapid succession. The trial judge thus noted that he could not deduce any such action that supported the plea of provocation. According to him, in law, a man cannot say because 'A' provokes him, he is going to kill 'B'. Thus, since the accused did not kill Alfred and was not in court on the charge of killing Alfred, but was there on the charge of killing his wife, Lucy Okuah, the question of provocation from Alfred was no defence for him. Again, following Archbold, a reputable legal luminary, the trial judge associated himself with the view that provocation by one person followed by the homicide by the person provoked of another person is not sufficient to reduce such homicide to manslaughter. Besides, he concurred with the view of Fawehinmi that where there is evidence of express malice, even if there is provocation, it does not avail the accused person.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, James was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was executed on the 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1953.<sup>102</sup>

The application of the law in colonial Lagos was usually stringent and without any undue interference especially in murder cases involving any retired personnel of any of the armed forces. While court proceedings are silent on such a consideration in reaching verdict on such cases, it is instructive to note that none of the ex-soldiers charged for murder ever got a pardon or had his sentence of death commuted to life sentence. The case of condemned convict Duwe Kombara is of particular interest to this study for this reason, and it shows that the law would take its course no matter the level of provocation.<sup>103</sup>

Duwe Kombara was an ex-soldier who served in the army for nine years. He rose to the rank of a sergeant although he was demoted to the rank of a full corporal in the Gold Coast. The reason for his demotion is irrelevant here. The remote cause of the murder began, according to the accused, in the military. He was a Regimental Provost and responsible for scraping people's hair on joining the army or as the case may be, once a month. He performed this duty most impartially that it earned for him a bad name, and many hated him bitterly for it. Specifically, a clerk in the army, one Emmanuel, became so enraged with him that he openly told him that he would make his life uncomfortable, and barely a week after this daring encounter, the army discharged Kombara. He discovered later that Emmanuel had falsified his personal documentation by backdating his entry date into the military, an act which hastened his discharge.<sup>104</sup>

At his discharge, Kombara thought that the bitterness was finally over but he was proved wrong as he soon realised that his sworn enemy was still on his trail, and had found a 'willing' ally in Kombara's wife. Kombara alleged that Emmanuel manipulated his wife against him through the use of juju which made him impotent and invariably dim-witted. His first reaction was to report the incident to the police and to seek police protection. Understandably, the police did nothing about it as there was no empirical evidence to support his claim. Kombara however

believed that the police refused to act because he did not bribe them to give weight to his complaint.<sup>105</sup>

Not too long after and unknown to him, his wife secretly divorced him although she was still pretending to be interested in his welfare which made him to sponsor her trip home to look for remedy to his problem. Eventually, he realised too late what she had done, allegedly with the connivance of Emmanuel, and that he had become an object of public ridicule.<sup>106</sup> This enraged him, and, on one occasion, with bitter provocation, he killed three women and wounded two men. In his deposition, the accused noted that had the police, who were expected to protect the people responded to his complaint, the incident might not have happened. But, having reported to the police as was expected of him, and with no help forthcoming, he had no alternative but to seek to avenge the ill done to him. Expectedly, the law also took its course as the judge found no reason for mercy.<sup>107</sup> He was subsequently executed on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1952.<sup>108</sup>

A number of insights can be drawn from the foregoing discussion on murder in Lagos. First, most of the victims were women. Second, all the victims were known to their killers. Third, the motives for the murders were basically jealousy although often complicated by monetary issues. Fourth, all the murders either took place or the bodies of the victims were found in areas located outside the township of Lagos in the colony districts. Fifth, out of all the cases discussed, only in the first two were there no suspects. Out of the remaining ten, investigations were initiated and concluded on nine leaving out the case of lunatic Thompson as the only one unsolved. Sixth, none of the murder cases considered above arose from or was related to the accusation of witchcraft. This is in contrast to the findings of Bohannan in his study of homicide among seven ethnic groups in Africa where he found murder to have been committed out of fear of witchcraft, sorcery or as retaliation for supposed bewitchment.<sup>109</sup> Seventh, all the murderers



were executed. Table 5 below shows the number of murder convicts executed in Lagos Prison between 1934 and 1954.

A look at the Table indicates that there were so many murder cases in 1944 and 1945. It is not clear why this was so although ex-soldiers were often the perpetrators. Given their involvement in murder cases during this period, it might be reasonable to suggest that the Second World War had an indirect impact on murder in Lagos as demobilised soldiers seemed to have resorted to killing at the slightest provocation. Notwithstanding, the Table also shows that there were several offenders without any military background.

The success of the investigation of murder cases during this period should however not give the impression that the police and its machinery for detecting the crime of murder during this period were wholly efficient. Rather, it is suggested here that the witnesses who gave evidence should indeed be acknowledged as the leading actors and actresses in the fight against the crime of murder during this period. As shown above and buttressed by Mr. Cooper, Assistant Superintendent of Police, C.I.D, the police could not detect those behind the Lafajji murders due to lack of co-operation from members of the public. The validity of this submission is further driven home below in the celebrated Apalara murder in 1953.

**Table 5: Convicts Executed in Lagos Prison For Murder, 1934-1954**

Convict Name	Convict Number	Year of Conviction	Age on Conviction	Sentence	Commuted	Trial Judge	Place of Trial
Lasisi Makinde	M.G. 83	1934	28 Years	Death	15 I.H.L.	George Graham Paul	Supreme Court, Lagos
Lamidi Ibikunle	M.G. 82	1934	28 Years	Death	15 I.H.L.	George Graham Paul	Supreme Court, Lagos
BuraiMoh Babalola	M.G. 80	1934	45 Years	Death	Life I.H.L.	George Graham Paul	Supreme Court, Lagos
Moses Uyeosil	M.J. 257	1937	30 years	Death	Life I.H.L.	William Butler Lloyd	Supreme Court, Lagos
Gabrlel Vamillga	M.J. 258	1937	28 years	Death	Life I.H.L.	William Butler Lloyd	Supreme Court, Lagos
Garuba Yako	C.2/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Panama Umukoro	C.2/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Onokpoma Unusere	C.8/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Tom Utumu Emurifere	C.9/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Dlemuroro Udi	C.11/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Loya Adeporoye	C.8/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Peter Okuode	C.5/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Ashamu Ebo	C.15/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Ukale Okokoba	C.14/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Jackson Akpan Umo	C.23/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Mbo Adiaka Uko	C.24/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Aaron Umo	C.25/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Anson Akpan	C.26/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Dekor Aburu	C.30/44	1944		Death	Executed		
Isaac Ekiجهen	C.29/44	1945		Death	Executed		
Aston Iwoalabo	C.31/44	1945		Death	Executed		
David Manuwa	C.27/44	1945		Death	Executed		
Aston Iwoalabo	NA	1945		Death	Executed		Supreme Court, Lagos
Madu Kagu	C.1/45	1945		Death	Executed		
Ahando	C.2/45	1945		Death	Executed		
**	C.3/45	1945		Death	Executed		
Kasali Ogunowo	C.4/45	1945		Death	Executed		
Amos Afanda	C.12/45	1945		Death	Executed		
Tanko Audu Danja	C.14/45	1945		Death	Executed		
Moses Ajayi	C.17/45	1945		Death	Executed		
BuraiMoh Dada	C.15/45	1945		Death	Executed		
Buari Ojo	C.18/45	1946		Death	Executed		Supreme Court, Ibadan
Odubomehin Ebikomo	C.1/48	1946		Death	Executed		Supreme Court, Ibadan
Yesufu Aremu	C.3/46	1946		Death	Executed		Supreme Court, Ibadan
Kohinda Ajayi	C.4/46	1946		Death	Executed		
Idofare Etoruku	C.12/46	1947		Death	Executed		
Taiwo Akantbi	C.5/46	1946		Death	Executed		Supreme Court, Ibadan
Gbadamosi Oyewola		1946		Death	Executed		Supreme Court, Ibadan
Jacob Akpugo	C.1/47	1947	37 Years	Death	Executed	Francis H. Baker	Supreme Court, Lagos
Jacob Robert	C.2/47	1947	24 years	Death	Executed	Francis H. Baker	Supreme Court, Lagos
Sunmola A8875Konta	C.4/47	1949	30 years	Death	Executed	Francis H. Baker	Supreme Court, Lagos
Samson Ajeagwu	C.9/48	1949	22 years	Death	Executed	Charles Abbott	Supreme Court, Lagos
Ademola Esubajo	C.2/53	1952		Death			
Ogunleye Odofin	C.6/52	1952		Death			
Salu Ogundipe	C.8/52	1952		Death			
Duwe Kombara	C.9/52	1952		Death	Executed	Olumuyiwa Jibowu	Supreme Court, Lagos
John Fatoyinbo	C.13/52	1952		Death			
Miss Esther Johnson	C.5/53	1953	25 years	Death	Life Imprisonment	A.A. Ademola	Supreme Court, Ibadan
Lamidi Adigun	C.6/53	1953		Death			
Selami Akintola	C.7/53	1953		Death			
Isalah O. Odeyale	C.8/53	1953		Death			
Isaac Esha	C.6/54	1954		Death			
Thomas Umogbal	M.X.297	1951	28 Years	Death	Life Imprisonment	W. Wells Palmer	Supreme Court, Ijebu-Ode
Raji Afonja	B 500	1954		Death	Executed		
Gbadamosi Alaga	B501	1954		Death	Executed		
Okunola Akinyun	B502	1954		Death	Executed		
Tijani Okunlola	B503	1954		Death	Executed		
Sunmonu Onifila	B504	1954		Death	Executed		
Oni Oshun	B505	1954		Death	Executed		

Source: NAI, FN 601 Vol. X, "Capital Sentences: Notification of Execution",

## **The Era of Celebrated Murders in Lagos, 1953-1960**

The 1950s in Lagos were as exciting in the domain of politics as they were saddening and dramatic in the sphere of crime, particularly murder, for several reasons. First, and for the first time in the history of constitutional changes in Nigeria, Nigerians participated proactively in a national constitutional conference held in Ibadan in January 1950 towards the making of the 1951 constitution. Second, it was the decade in which the port and municipality of Lagos was merged with the Western region. Third, it was also the decade in which the popular motion for self government was moved by Chief Anthony Enahoro in the defunct House of Representatives in 1953. Fourth, it was the decade in which the Lyttleton Constitution entrenched a federal structure in Nigeria in 1954. Fifth, it was the decade in which the Independence Constitution of 1960 was made. Sixth, it was also the decade in which the future status of Lagos, as the capital territory in an independent Nigeria, generated a lot of controversy.

In relation to crime, the decade witnessed at least three celebrated murders. The first and the most dramatic took place in January 1953, two months before the motion for self-government in Nigeria was moved. It involved the savage murder of a Muslim cleric, Alfa Bisiriyu Apalara. The murder of the young preacher generated a lot of outrage and tension in the township of Lagos. It was a murder that shocked the people greatly. Two years later, Lagos witnessed the murder of two other men - one was Israel Njemanze, a popular singer and leader of the Three Night Wizards Band; and the other, Bolaji Kasali, a notorious robber based in Ikorodu area of Lagos.

Apalara was a carpenter. He became a preacher in 1952 and was turbaned. Soon, a body of followers gathered round him, and in furtherance of his faith, he formed a society, "The Conquest of Muslim Youth", at No 8, Awoyejo Street, Mushin, where he lived.<sup>110</sup> Basically, the main objective of this society was to promote the teaching of the Koran. To achieve this, he went

out every week with his followers, distinguishable by their white caps, to preach on the streets of Lagos. A preaching session was usually preceded by the selection of a spot on a chosen street. A table with a Koran and a petrol pressure lamp placed on it completed the process to create an artificial demarcation between the preacher and his congregation. His congregation was usually made up of his followers and others, mostly women who had heard of his incisive teachings.<sup>111</sup>

As earlier noted, Alfa Apalara was highly critical of those who indulged in traditional religion. The major content of his sermon was directed at educating the people that there is only one God. In the process, he condemned the worship of other gods and the belief that Ifa or any other god made up of perishable items and located in a particular place could end the trauma of a barren woman. In short, Apalara's preaching technique was to identify and condemn what seemed to him to be observable flaws in the traditional religions to justify and explain the sacrosanct nature of Islam. But to what extent was the misrepresentation of these other religions justified? Whatever the answer is to this question, the important point to note is that the teachings of Apalara attracted a lot of resentment from certain quarters which subsequently led to his abduction and death.<sup>112</sup>

An indication to this effect had been given on the 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1952, when Apalara addressed a meeting at Kadara Street, Ebute-Metta. At the end of that meeting, Apalara had announced the date of, and the location for his next sermon to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1953 at Oko-Baba, a renowned stronghold of cultists. He was, however told by Oluwa and Kosegbe, two of his future assailants, to shelve the idea or risk losing his life. Earlier, he had received an anonymous letter on the same issue. Again, it was later learnt from the evidence of two prosecution witnesses - Aboderin and Aro - that a day before the incident, a meeting was held at the house of the *Bale* of Oko-Baba. The meeting discussed the intention of Apalara to preach in the locality the next day. Present at that meeting were several members of Awo-Opa; Ogundipe, a

member of the Agemo cult and other persons. In short, it was clear that majority of those who attended the meeting hated the denigration of traditional rites by Apalara.<sup>113</sup>

Available records indicate that Apalara took the threat to his life seriously. Specifically, he requested and paid for police protection as a result of which at least one police constable from the Ebute-Metta Police Station was posted to the venue at Oko-Baba to forestall any possible breakdown of law and order. The request for police presence was indeed an unusual practice. This was not necessarily because he was afraid. It is not clear whether Apalara actually believed that the threat on his life could be carried out, and if he did, he definitely could never have imagined that it could be done in the full glare of the enforcement agent. This was a costly presumption. Policemen are human and it is wrong for anybody to expect them to provide adequate security, not even when Europeans were at the helm of affairs. As noted in previous chapters, desertion of duty posts and dereliction of duty by policemen was not uncommon in the colonial period. They would either run or simply hide, and this was what Police Constable Albert Babatunde did.<sup>114</sup>

On 3rd January, Apalara arrived at the chosen venue for his sermon at about 8pm. A few of his followers came with him and they took their position at the junction of Jebba and Tapa Streets. With time, people began to gather. It was estimated that there were about a thousand people in the congregation that night. The sermon began in earnest and as usual, the denigration of the cults commenced. A lot of penetrating questions were put to Apalara on the merit of Ifa? In particular, someone asked if Ifa could give somebody a child? Apalara found the idea repulsive. It is needless to say that people were engrossed in the challenging and persuasive discussion. The night itself grew darker quickly and, all of a sudden, the serene atmosphere of the venue was broken as people heard the dreaded but familiar bellow of the Oro cult. Expectedly, the congregation was thrown into confusion as people ran for safety on hearing "Oro baba o"

meaning "Oro is supreme" In the confusion, Apalara was attacked and abducted. That was the last time he was seen in public. The Oko-Baba sermon turned out to be his last.<sup>115</sup>

At the time of the murder, it was believed that the crime had none of the motives which could normally be attributed to murder in an urban society. In fact, an official report inappropriately concluded that the murder was "notable mainly for its exposure of [religious] fanaticism and for its value as a subject for reflection."<sup>116</sup> Popular opinion in Lagos in 1953 also believed that Apalara was murdered because he had vigorously and unrepentantly attacked and exposed the vainness of traditional rites and the secrets of some renowned cults, such as the Oro, Agemo and Awo-Opa, and had thus attracted to himself the bitter enmity of certain persons who felt that his preaching jeopardised their interests. *The Daily Times* of January 14, 1953 equally reported the incident as a religious issue with emphasis on the fact that Apalara, a Moslem preacher based in Mushin, was kidnapped and killed by aggrieved members of the Agemo Secret Society while preaching against their practices at the junction of Jebba and Tapa Streets.

In the same vein, one of the very first reactions of the people to the death of Apalara came, and understandably too, from his immediate constituency, the Muslim community. The Moslem Welfare Association of Nigeria called a mass meeting of Moslems at the Ansar-Ud - Deen School, Lagos, to discuss alleged interference with Moslem worshippers.<sup>117</sup> A delegation of the Muslim Community of Lagos and Ebute-Metta led by Chief Imam Ahmed Tijani Ibrahim of the Jamat Muslim Sect also visited the Oba of Lagos, Alaiyeluwa, Adeniji-Adele II in connection with the alleged murder. The visit was embarked upon to register their displeasure at the unfortunate incident which they viewed with dismay. They condemned the murderous attack on a preacher of their Faith. They subsequently appealed to the Oba to facilitate, on their behalf, a meeting with relevant authorities, to discuss the unfortunate incident. Specifically, they considered such a meeting important to forestall a recurrence of such a dastardly act on their

members or the adherents of any other religion in Lagos and the Colony districts. A meeting was thereafter scheduled for 24 January, 1953.<sup>118</sup>

At the meeting which turned out to be an interview at the Colony Office, the spokesman of the delegation, Olori Arowasi, in response to the question put by Mr E.A. Carr stated that they knew nothing about the whole incident, beyond the reports in the daily newspapers. When asked whether all the things written in the newspapers concerning the incident was right, the Imams replied that they could not confirm or refute the reports in the press since no other reports were made available to them. The Administrator further asked whether the congregation at the prayer meeting saw the preacher when he was being taken away, the Imams retorted that they could not make any statement about that since they were not there and only relied on the reports in the Press. Again, when they were asked whether they made any attempts to find out the truth, the Imams replied that they could not get at the truth since nobody came forward with a report. Another question was put to them as to what they did when they heard of the incident? The spokesman replied that they went to report the incident to Oba Adele.<sup>119</sup>

Frustrated that the interview session was yielding no result, Mr. Carr told the delegation that if they wanted quick justice, they should get witnesses to testify before the police. Although the delegation would not confirm his view, he told them that he was of the opinion that those in Apalara's congregation would have seen the preacher being taken away. Finally, the administrator reiterated the need for them to encourage the people to cooperate with the police by coming forward with useful information that would facilitate the arrest and prosecution of the culprits.<sup>120</sup>

Indeed, Apalara was murdered by persons who had connections with some dreaded cults in Lagos. He was also killed in a manner that clearly indicated that the cults, not necessarily in unison, were behind his abduction, execution and disposition of his body. As it is said, "Akii ri

ajeku Oro” meaning “Oro kills without traces or the remains of whatever Oro eats (properly, kills) cannot be seen”. This popular parlance fits perfectly the Apalara case. His body was never found. Contrary to existing belief that the body was burnt to ashes<sup>121</sup>, the corpse of the slain preacher was actually deposited into the lagoon. An anonymous informant told one of the investigators that it was cut into pieces, and dropped one after the other into the lagoon, in a paddled canoe.<sup>122</sup> Yet, as would be shown here, religion as motive for the murder of Apalara was at best an alibi. Beneath the mask of religion, lay the real reason which was largely selfish and economic in all its ramifications. Although, the men appeared to be defending their faith, their real intention was to protect their individual interests which their membership of the cults had promoted. Nonetheless, the incident typifies the height of religious intolerance among the adherents of Islam and those of Yoruba traditional religions.

Police investigations into the abduction of Apalara did not commence immediately. Curiously, the police constable that was present, and had actually fled the scene of the incident, did not make any report. Yet, the police admitted that on the night of the incident, they received a report that law and order had broken down in Oko-Baba. In response, Sub-Inspector P. Addo and Sergeant Major R. Engurube led 15 Police constables to the scene but every where was calm.<sup>123</sup> Undoubtedly, the calm atmosphere that they saw was an uneasy one for an obvious reason: the Oro scare had driven people indoors. If the police had been more vigilant, they would have noticed that the calmness was unusual and that behind the closed doors, people discussed the incident in hushed tones. It was not until a day after the incident that the police swung into action. By then, it was too late. Even at that, investigation was only commenced sequel to the report made by one Adebayo Sule, at the Denton Charge Office that, one Bisiriyu Apalara, a Muslim preacher who went to Oko-Baba area to preach a day before, was missing. Entry of this report was made at the station and referred to ‘I’ Branch for investigation.<sup>124</sup>



Accordingly, several arrests were made with the assistance of the complainant. To start with, five initial arrests were made by Police Constable J. Ugwu at No. 8, Tapa Street while Sub-Inspector Ekere interrogated the suspects. This investigation continued until the 5 January when Sub-Inspector Addo and Police Constable Ugwu arrested and detained Joseph Ogundipe, the owner of the building at No. 8, Tapa Street, into which Apalara was carried, and one Kehinde Jaiyeola of 51, Simpson Street, Ebute-Metta.

Investigation into the alleged murder, however, became more sizzling when Sergeant Major Aboderin of the Criminal Investigation Department joined the team of investigators. Earlier police visits to, and a thorough scrutiny of No. 8 Tapa Street had only discovered blood stains at the entrance - about fifteen yards from the site where Apalara had been preaching. A more painstaking inspection of the surroundings of No. 8, Tapa Street was conducted by the duo of Aboderin and Ugwu on January 6. The careful inspection yielded a good result which was to have ripple effects. Some dry track of blood starting from No 8 Tapa Street to the waterside was discovered. Immediately, photographers from the Criminal Investigation Department were called in, to picture the track of blood. In addition, some gravel on the track and pieces of cement blocks with blood stains were collected and forwarded to the pathologist for examination. Also, a search warrant was executed at No. 8, Tapa Street. This time around, the police discovered a wet drawer with blood stains. This was also sent to the pathologist. Again, all the occupants of No 8 Tapa Street, including four women, were arrested and detained. Next, the conclave of Awo-Opa Cult at Oko-Baba was visited by the investigators where eleven members were arrested. Other members living at Agoro Court, Ebute Metta were equally invited for interrogation at the station.<sup>125</sup> Briefing newsmen on the issue, Mr R.T. Pallet, Senior Superintendent of Police, Ebute-Metta told the *Daily Times* that preliminary investigation suggests strongly that Alfa Apalara had been murdered although his body was yet to be found.

whereas the search team was looking for a trunk, the body was deposited into the lagoon in tiny bits.

Another hint from one Yesufu Aka, member of Awo-Opa Cult led to the arrest of four other persons on January 14. Meanwhile, an additional clue was an anonymous letter sent to the police on the Apalara incident. In it, the author, a self-professed member of the Awo-Opa Cult, denounced the murder which, according to him, was wicked. Furthermore, he listed the names and location of the following people as culpable. They were: Bakare Aburo and Mudasiru Sule of Ejigbo Village; Y.S. Ladega and L.A. Oluwo from Mushin; Rafiu Sule, Yinusa Balogun and one other person from Ewu Village. Others were Adamson Bakare and Murano Bakare from Oshodi Railway Station. The anonymous writer made other useful revelations. According to him, Adamson Bakare, Murano Bakare and one Yesufu Owoseni were notorious burglars. He also wrote that Owoseni was a seller of smuggled cloth which was displayed by one of his wives in a shop located in a newly completed storey building, at Oshodi Station.<sup>128</sup>

To convince the police of the authenticity of his claims, he listed the names of other members of the Awo-Opa in Ikeja District which included Lamidi Ekerin, a staff of Ikeja Native Authority; a Native Authority Sergeant in Ikeja, Moses Banjoko; an ex Royal Air Force Sergeant and son of the Imam Onigunnu of Mafoloku Village, Momodu Imam. He also reminded the police of the role played by some of the aforementioned people in an earlier incident that could have resulted in murder but for the timely intervention of the law enforcement agents at Ikeja who, acted on a tip-off by an informant at Oshodi village. The short but telling story of the aborted murder is summarised here. At midnight, some cluster of Awo-Opa members who had been summoned to Ikeja from different parts of Lagos, mandated the ex-wife of Murano Bakare, a member of the Awo-Opa, to return to his house. The anonymous author claimed that their original intention was to abduct and kill both the woman and her new husband in Oshodi Village;

in a manner replicated at the murder of Apalara. Finally, he urged the police to search for the corpse of Apalara inside the room of Koshegbe at Oko-Baba though already buried and cemented.<sup>129</sup>

The letter was forwarded to the police and other top government officials for whatever it was worth. There are however no indications that the police acted on it. Yet, the letter is instructive in some ways. First, it buttresses the claim earlier made that murder cases often attract false claims. In this case, some of the information provided in the letter appears incorrect. For instance, the body of Apalara was never buried. Again, out of all the names listed, only two – Kosegbe and Oluwa, took active part in the murder of Apalara. The names of the other people listed by the anonymous writer never came up during investigation. It was, of course, possible that they were invited and discharged owing to lack of evidence. At another level, the letter shows clearly the status of people that made up the membership of Awo-Opa, especially government officials. It should be noted that Sergeant Aboderin was himself a member of the Awo-Opa.

Still on the above, the most important hint suggesting that the letter had an iota of truth was the allegation that some members of the Awo-Opa were involved in some nefarious activities such as burglary and sale of smuggled goods. Elsewhere in Ijebu-Ode and Ijebu-Remo, their members had been fingered as burglars too.<sup>130</sup> Besides, those who killed Apalara were also engaged in smuggling. An indication to this effect was given to Aboderin by another anonymous informant. Apalara had mimicked the fearful sound associated with the Oro to prove to his congregation that it was ordinary. Unknown to him, the use of the Oro signal had been abused. The awe the sound elicits which, drove people indoors created the right kind of confidential atmosphere required for the smuggling business of his assailants to thrive as they were able to move their smuggled goods from the lagoon into their depot without the prying eyes of law

enforcement agents and the public. Thus, trivialising the Oro sound would embolden the people to remain indifferent to it the next time they heard it, with dire consequences for their business. Hence they acted in defence of their economic interests.<sup>131</sup>

Be that as it may, and despite the influence of Awo-Opa, the police made several arrests. By 11 February 1953, twenty men were charged to court and committed for trial for the murder of Apalara by the Magistrate, Mr. Abayomi, at the Yaba Magistrate Court. They were: (1) Joseph Ogunbayode Ogundipe (2) Kehinde Jaiyeola (3) Lasisi Oluwa (4) Nosiru Ajose (5) Yinusa Kosegbe (6) Lamidi Akinwunmi (7) Buraimoh Alli (8) Lawani Omopupa Oluwo (9) Salami Adedokun (10) Isiaka Ajana (11) Karimu Ayinde (12) Raji Lawani (13) Ojo Elegunado (14) Ashirikoko Adetunji (15) Akanbi Omoba (16) Abudu Kadiri (17) Sufianu Yesufu (18) Ashimi Musediku (19) Mustafa Oteka (20) Raimi Oteka<sup>132</sup>

In committing the suspects for trial, Mr. Abayomi noted that the prosecution had established a prima facie case against the accused persons considering both the circumstantial and material evidence available, although the latter was still being compiled. The mental antecedents ascertained that the accused persons were sound and healthy at the time of the incident. There were also no cases of insanity in the families of any of the accused.<sup>133</sup>

The trial lasted for thirty six days. It began on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1953, and ended on the 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1953. Mr Charles Madarikan led the prosecution while Mr. G.B.A. Coker and other lawyers stood in for the defence. Soon, revelations as to how Apalara was actually killed emerged from two prosecution witnesses – Odetoki, one of Apalara's followers and Yesufu Aka, a member of the Awo-Opa cult. According to Odetoki, once abducted Apalara was struck down with an axe by Raimi Oteka just outside Ogundipe's veranda. Later, his body was dragged on to the veranda and from there to the door of the parlour. He narrated how, at the risk of his own life, he tried in vain to pull Apalara's body away. He then ran to the Ebute-Metta Police Station to

report the incident but was chased away. Some of his co-followers who went to the same station were also sent away. The deposition of Aka reinforced that of Odetoki. In addition, he explained that the first attempt to hit Apalara landed on Mustafa Oteka, Raini's brother. This explains the stitches on Mustafa's head, carried out at the General Hospital. The second attempt hit target although in the intervening moment Apalara had somehow managed to injure his assailant.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, the court was told that the body of Apalara was lashed alongside a canoe, and taken to an unknown destination on the lagoon.

From the above, it was not difficult for Mr. Madarikan to conclude that Apalara was murdered by the accused persons who felt compelled to preserve cult secrets. Apalara, he noted, had become unpopular in certain quarters and was killed for preaching and freely denouncing the secrets of these cults which were otherwise jealously guarded by members, some of who were the accused. The defence Counsel, Mr. G.B.A. Coker, on behalf of the other lawyers argued otherwise. For him, before a verdict of guilt could be returned in any murder trial, three essential conditions must be established. First, it should be proved that death actually took place. Second, the deceased should be identified as the person allegedly murdered and third, it should be proved that death was due to unlawful violence or criminal negligence or both. None of these conditions, he said, had been established in the trial. He noted two celebrated trials, one of which took place in England. Three men had been hung for the alleged murder of somebody, only for the person believed to have been murdered to reappear after so many years of absence. As a result, he was of the opinion that a strong circumstantial evidence must be established and sufficient evidence based on moral certainty must also be established before conviction in the case. Besides, he noted that there was no evidence in the case because the absence of the body had made it impossible to prove that death had been caused by the action of the accused persons. He concluded that

numerous accusations and counteraccusations had been made by both the defence and the prosecution, and that the benefit of the doubt, should be given to the defence.<sup>135</sup>

Delivering judgement on the case in a crowded court room in Tinubu Square, Mr. Justice Henri de Commarmond upheld the verdict of the Jury that found eleven, not seven as earlier suggested by another study, out of the twenty accused persons guilty. They were, as numbered above, Convicts: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 15, 18, 19 and 20. Consequently, they were sentenced to death. They were to be hung by the neck till they die.

Meanwhile, the condemned convicts exercised their rights to appeal. They petitioned the Governor over their sentences as seen in their individual letters dated 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1954. A general trend discernible in all the petitions was the insistence on their innocence. All of them claimed that those who testified against them were their enemies, and the evidence they gave in court, were false and motivated by revenge. Even Raimi Oteka claimed that Daniel Aro was his enemy. He also mentioned another witness, one Gbadamosi Olaiifa who, he said he had quarrelled with over a plot of land. Besides, all of them pleaded for mercy as they had dependants to cater for.<sup>136</sup>

Mustafa Oteka and Musedinku also maintained their innocence. In their separate petitions, they both fingered Yesufu Aka as their enemy. Indeed, both claimed that Yesufu became their enemy because of the role that they played in his expulsion from Oko-Baba, an action which divided the town into two camps. It was the camp of Yesufu that eventually conspired to give false evidence against him in spite of the fact that he was in his place of work at Mamu, about 25miles from Ibadan, when the incident occurred. He also claimed to have been pressurised by Ibekwe, the police officer who headed the investigation, to stand as Crown witness, and that on refusal, he was tortured into making involuntary confessions.<sup>137</sup>

The petitions failed, however, and they were executed on the 26th May, 1954. Contrary to the procedure governing the treatment of capital cases which stipulates that the next of kin of a

condemned convict be allowed to see the condemned man before his execution, no next of kin was informed until after their execution which was kept a close secret for security reasons. Even after the execution, the issue of whether to inform the relatives became an issue for the exchange of several correspondences among the District Officer, Colony, Lagos, the Administrator of Colony and the Administrative secretary.<sup>138</sup>

Certainly, the Apalara murder divided the Lagos public into two groups. The first group, obviously in the majority, were those who felt that the killing of Apalara could not be justified. They were satisfied with the outcome of the judicial proceedings. The Muslim community, for instance, could not have wished for anything else. Yet, there were others who felt that Apalara, fell foul of tradition, and was treated traditionally. This group would rather have the accused unconditionally released. The differing positions jostled for prominence in the minds of the judges and counsels. Indeed, acting under anonymity, representatives of both positions thought they could reinforce their positions by the issuance of threat letters.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that the cults did not act in unison. It is important therefore to make a distinction between the action of a cult and that of some of its members. It is reasonable to suggest that those who killed Apalara did not take the initiative on behalf of the cults. Rather, their action constituted an abuse on a much respected traditional institution. This is exemplified by the fact that they were not actually defending the institution but interested in protecting their personal business interests. Moreover, the fact that fellow cultists could give evidence against the accused persons is enough to show that their action was detested even by their own who demonstrated their readiness to condemn the act by providing useful information to the police and in the court during the trial. Indeed, it was the evidence of Aro and Aka that substantiated and consolidated other material evidence against the accused persons. The petitions written by the condemned men also show that it would be wrong to assume that the Apalara

murder was symptomatic of the concerted reaction of the traditional religion against one of the two religions that had for so long denigrated it.

The Apalara murder reveals that the Nigeria Police Force during the colonial period was made up of diverse elements. While the attitude of Albert Babatunde puts the force in a bad light, the same cannot be said of Ibekwe, Aboderin, Ugwu and others who investigated and eventually charged the accused persons to court for murder. Indeed, the link that Aboderin had with the cults was crucial first, in unravelling the details of the crime, and second, although much later, in demystifying the disappearance of the body of Apalara. Although their membership of the cults did not constitute an illegality, at least until 1965, the revelation at the trial that they had connection with a cult while at the same time they played the role of a law enforcer, attracted public condemnation.<sup>139</sup>

Finally, the Apalara case raises a lot of questions about how rudimentary or modern was the practice of crime detection in colonial Nigeria. In Britain, the application of scientific knowledge in the detection of crime had been well developed in the early twentieth century. Nigeria, as one of her dependencies benefited from this, and by the 1930s, the usefulness of evidence based on micro-photography and fingerprint impressions were becoming popular in the detection and prosecution of crime. A fingerprint school was opened in Lagos in 1959. As at the time of Apalara's murder, the scientific knowledge of blood in the detection of crime was also becoming popular. Although, the system could not aid the investigation greatly, it however confirmed that the blood stain found on the veranda of No. 8, Tapa Street was human blood. Two years later, scientific knowledge, particularly forensic science, was to prove decisive in the detection and prosecution of those who murdered Israel Njemanze.

The murder of Njemanze was equally dramatic in the crime history of colonial Lagos. First of all, he was a soldier attached to the Command Workshops, Yaba, who devoted his leisure



to the musical entertainment of the public in major club houses in Lagos. He led a band strangely named "Three Night Wizards". It is not clear why the band was so named but the leader died a curious death. The news of the death of the popular singer became public knowledge when his mutilated body was found on April 8, 1955. The body had been dismembered because it had been crushed on the rail line, where it was dumped, by a moving train along the Surulere level crossing. Tamuno has echoed the view credited at the time to the Government Pathologist, Dr. Justin Uku that the effect of the train cut the body into eighteen pieces. The other implication of this development was that the dismembered body decomposed rapidly.

Police investigation into the case was slow in revealing who the killer(s) was, and their motive. The intention of the killers to confuse investigation by creating the impression that Njemanze was knocked down in the night by a fast moving train did not work. Despite the advanced state of decomposition of the dismembered body, a forensic expert soon revealed, after four days of painstaking post-mortem examination, that Njemanze had died before the body was cut into pieces. Indeed, he told the court that the singer was struck behind the head and on the chest, and died after a sharp cutting object was used to stab him. Furthermore, the forensic expert also revealed that Njemanze's body was dragged on the ground after his death. In other words, the body must have been moved from the scene of murder to where it was discovered.<sup>140</sup>

With this information at their disposal, efforts were intensified by the police to arrest the culprits. Normally, the first suspects in any murder case are the closest associates of the victim. Juliana, his wife was a nursing mother at the time of his death. His mother and siblings were living outside Lagos in Benin and Owerri. Thus, his other associates were in the military and the band. Expectedly, the band much more than the military attracted the attention of the police since he went out with them to sing on the night that he was killed. Soon, it was discovered that

to Kasali and an ex-convict too, lured Kasali out of his house, after which he was shot and macheted by the guards. The second story was that on the night of Saturday May 14, 1955, during a heavy rain, one of the guards, Emmanuel Jegede, heard a dog barking at about 3am. On going out to check what the problem was, he found himself in the midst of thieves who immediately shot at him twice but misfired. He responded sharply hitting one of them while others ran. However, it was dark and the injured thief could not be identified. While he sought help from his compatriots, the injured thief disappeared. His contention was that it was impossible for the injured thief to have moved without being aided, probably by his colleagues, given the seriousness of his wound. At the post-mortem examination, it was confirmed that Kasali actually died from a gun shot and machete wounds.<sup>144</sup>

Indeed, Ikorodu experienced a lot of burglary during this period. As noted in the previous chapter, the crime situation in the area covered by the Ikeja Native Authority was critical. The *Otunba* of Ikorodu, Chief O. Isikalu, lent credence to this view when he noted that property was not safe in Ikorodu during this period since the town had been terrorised by the likes of Kasali, who he described as a notorious burglar that could jump from a three-storey building without being hurt. Consequently, an arrangement was put in place to safeguard life and property. First, societies performed vigilante activities in Ikorodu till 1953. By 1955, however, the Oba of Ikorodu and his chiefs approved another arrangement whereby each quarter employed paid night guards or watchmen who were empowered to defend themselves.

Eventually, five out of the twelve accused persons were committed for trial by Magistrate J.J. Marinho, at the Magistrate's Court, Ikeja on October 21, 1955. The trial was presided over by Mr Justice Adetokunbo Ademola, Chief Justice of Western Nigeria while counsels for the defence included Messrs (later Chiefs) T.O.S. Benson, Abraham. Adesanya and Chris.O. Ogunbanjo while Mr. B.A. Adedipe stood in for the crown.

Mr Benson, on behalf of Jegede, argued that it was unsafe to convict him on the alleged story that the murder of Kasali was planned to put an end to his menace. Moreover, he was of the opinion that the prosecution was neither able to say clearly who killed Kasali nor did it tell the court who dumped Kasali's body in the swamp. In recalling the expert opinion of the pathologist, he reminded the court that Kasali died of multiple injuries and not solely from the gun shot that he received from Jegede. There is evidence also that Kasali did not die as a result of the shot from Jegede. The question was therefore to ascertain who used a machete on Kasali since there was no blood stain on the machete found in the house of Jegede. On the question of malice aforethought, he said this could not be proved as the accused fired the shot in self defence in response to the two gun shots earlier fired at him by the thieves. Besides, he noted that it was impossible in the dark for the accused to know who of the thieves was hit. Again, he noted that the use of Dane guns by the night guards was approved by the community. He submitted therefore that the charge of murder could not stand if the court was convinced that the whole incident amounted to self defence, and that the accused should be discharged and acquitted.<sup>145</sup>

In his reply, the Crown counsel, Mr. Adedipe, reminded the court that the incident happened at night, a period when only the night guards and the chiefs had the liberty of going out. He told the court that it was unfortunate that the police could not come up with adequate evidence to prosecute the case. In his opinion, Kasali was murdered by Jegede and other night guards acting in concert and on the information provided by Rufai that Kasali would be going out that night on 'business'. This he said amounted to malice. Besides, he argued that even if Kasali was a notorious thief, death was definitely not the right punishment for him. He concluded therefore that the men in killing Kasali had taken the law into their own hands. Mr Justice Ademola, in his ruling, sentenced the five men to various terms of imprisonment. Emmanuel Jegede who shot Kasali and Kasali's friend, Rufai Odutola who, the prosecution alleged, lured

the deceased out of his house, were each sentenced to three years imprisonment with hard labour. The remaining accused persons were each jailed for two years.<sup>146</sup>

In all, this chapter has examined the crime of murder in colonial Lagos from 1906 to 1959. It started by noting that murder as a means of settling inter-personal disputes seemed to have been more prevalent in the Eastern and Central Provinces compared to the Western Province. Yet, the study has shown that Lagos witnessed series of murder mostly in the district. The study has also demonstrated that a breakdown in marital relationships induced most of the recorded murders in Lagos. However, it was also shown that murder was sometimes an adjunct of robbery. The next chapter considers the nature of robbery and murder in contemporary Lagos with a view to determining whether the tendencies noticeable in the colonial period were replicated in the post-independence period.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Police Establishment and the State of Crime for the year 1908*, p. 55

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Before the advent of colonial rule, the Yoruba people had punished murderers, depending on their status, by death or in the case of a chief, fine. See, E.A. Ajisafe Moore, *The Laws and Customs of the Yoruba People*, Abeokuta: Fola Bookshops, date of publication unknown, pp. 33-34.

<sup>6</sup> NAI, File No. 507, "Serious Crime, Lagos District", p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Comcol 1, File No. 1257, "Crime in Lagos and its Districts, 1930-1946, Extract from the *Nigerian Daily Times*, 16 December, 1937.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Comcol 1, FN. 3234, "Criminal Lunatics Detained during His Majesty's Pleasure-Question of Discharge On Attaining Improved Mental Conditions"

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-13.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Broadmoor Asylum was built in 1856 to accommodate the growing number of criminal lunatics in London.

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

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> William Clifford, *An Introduction to African Criminology*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 119-124.

<sup>30</sup> Comcol 1, FN 15/1/C/63, "Condemned Convict No. 6/53, Lamidi Adigun: Petition from" p. 2

<sup>31</sup> Comcol 1, FN 15/1/C/64, "Condemned Convict No. 7/53, Salami Akintola: Petition from" p. 2

<sup>32</sup> Comcol 1 File No. 15/1/C/56, "Application for Review of Sentence: Ogunleye Odofin", pp. 1-3

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Comcol 1 FN 601/S.3 "Rex vs. Jacob Akpugo: Murder, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

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- <sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 32.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 34.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 35.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 18.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 19.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 22.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 29.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid, pp. 41-42.
- <sup>51</sup> Comcol 1 FN 601/S.4 “Rex vs Jacob Robert-Murder”
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid,
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 7.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 10.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 8.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid, pp. 9-10.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp. 25-26.
- <sup>60</sup> Comcol 1, 1257/S.1, “Murder in Lafaji District of Lagos, 1947”. Lagos township also witnessed the kidnapping of children for ritual purposes in the 1940s and 1950s. This theme is being explored in a separate study.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 14.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 20.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid, pp. 1-2, 5.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-19.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 23.
- <sup>66</sup> Comcol 1, 601/s.8 “Rex vs. Sunmola Kontagora-Murder”, p. 3.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid, pp. 5-6.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid, pp. 7-8.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid, pp. 7-8.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 10.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid, pp. 15-18.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid, pp. 17-21.
- <sup>75</sup> Comcol 1, 601/s.9 “Rex vs. Samson Ajeagwu-Murder”, p. 3.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 4.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 5.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 24.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 25.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid, pp. 20-22.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 11.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 27.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid, pp. 28-33.
- <sup>87</sup> Comcol 1, 601/s.15 “Regina vs. James Oka-Murder (see the attached Court proceedings)”, p. 1.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 6.
- <sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 5.
- <sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

- <sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 7.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid, pp. 10-11.
- <sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 17-18.
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid, pp. 2-5.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>97</sup> Ibid, pp. 24-25.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid, pp. 26-28.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid, pp. 29-31.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid, pp. 33-34.
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid, pp. 35-47.
- <sup>102</sup> Comcol 1, File No. 601 Vol. X, "Capital Sentences, Notification of Executions", p. 109.
- <sup>103</sup> Comcol 1, 601/s.13 "Regina vs. Duwe Kombara-Murder"
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 44.
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>106</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 45
- <sup>108</sup> Comcol 1, File No. 601 Vol. X, "Capital Sentences..." p. 104.
- <sup>109</sup> Clifford, *An Introduction*, pp. 119-124.
- <sup>110</sup> Comcol 1, FN 3742, "Alfa Bisiriyu Apalara, Muslim Preacher-Murder of", p. 75.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 76.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid, pp. 76-77. Also, Tekena Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria, 1861-1965*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, pp. 210-212.
- <sup>115</sup> *Headlines*, No 4, July, 1973, p7.
- <sup>116</sup> Annual Report of Nigeria, 1953, p. 6.
- <sup>117</sup> Comcol 1, FN 3742, "Alfa Bisiriyu...", p. 5.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid, pp. 1-3.
- <sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 10.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 11.
- <sup>121</sup> See Tamuno, *The Police*, p. 210.
- <sup>122</sup> *Headlines*, No 4, July, 1973, p7.
- <sup>123</sup> Comcol 1, FN 3742, "Alfa Bisiriyu...", pp. 6-7.
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid, pp. 103-104.
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 12?
- <sup>129</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>130</sup> See Tamuno, p. 208.
- <sup>131</sup> *Headlines*, No 4, July, 1973, p7.
- <sup>132</sup> Comcol 1, FN 3742, "Alfa Bisiriyu...", p. 75.
- <sup>133</sup> Ibid, pp. 16-33.
- <sup>134</sup> Ibid, pp. 76-77.
- <sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 11.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid, p. 81.
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid, pp. 80-101.
- <sup>138</sup> NAI, FN 601 Vol. X, "Capital Sentences: Notification of Execution", pp.128-130
- <sup>139</sup> See Tamuno, p. 212.

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<sup>140</sup> *Daily Times*, Friday May 20, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Daily Times*, Monday January 15, 1956, p. 1.

<sup>143</sup> *Headlines*, No 21, December 1974, pp. 1-4.

<sup>144</sup> *Daily Times*, Friday May 27, 1955. page not indicated.. Also, *Daily Times*, Wednesday 18, 1955.

<sup>145</sup> *Headlines*, No 21, December 1974, p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### ARMED ROBBERY AND MURDER IN LAGOS, 1960-2000

The attainment of independence on October 1, 1960 brought a lot of excitement to Nigerian peoples as it marked the end of over a century domination of the Nigerian area by the British. In practical terms, the independence of the country meant that the business of governance would henceforth be the sole responsibility of Nigerians, a reality which was further reinforced by the attainment of the status of a republic in 1963. Sadly, independence did not mitigate criminal activities in Lagos. If anything, criminals seemed to have thought nothing of the new status of the country as armed robbery and murder remained a constant feature in the city. Ona Ekhomu, a security expert and founder of Trans-world Security System believes that despite the constant and steady rise in Police budgets since the 1960s, crime has grown phenomenally since the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, armed robbery turned more violent four decades after independence.<sup>2</sup> Justice Rotimi George had remarked while sentencing Bolade Alade, a notorious robber to 15 years imprisonment for car snatching in 1970 that, armed robbery had increased at an alarming rate and that on some occasions there had been loss of lives as a result of the activities of armed robbers.<sup>3</sup> As would be shown below, robbery in post-independence Lagos assumed wider and fearful dimensions both in its manifestations and in the official and popular responses to it than could ever have been imagined in the colonial period.

#### Armed Robbery in Lagos, 1960-1989

The decade of the 1960s began with the activities of some young amateur criminals who terrorised the inhabitants of Kuramo waters in Lagos. In particular, a gang of three – Godwin Okwame, Ishola Mirisiq and Bode Abayomi, aged 19, 22 and 18 respectively, specialised in dispossessing victims of their valuables before their arrest, conviction and sentence at the Yaba Magistrate Court in November 1960.<sup>4</sup> Their conviction did not however

deter other criminals as the succeeding years witnessed the emergence of more armed robbers that Austen fittingly describes as constituting the professional underworld.<sup>5</sup> In this category were Bolade Alade<sup>6</sup> and Isiaka Busari, alias Mighty Joe, a notorious thug and robber. Others were the more deadly Babatunde Folorunso (*Onilace*)<sup>7</sup> and Ishola Oyenusi, both apprentice mechanics in the same workshop who later became notorious for their exploits in the underworld.<sup>8</sup>

Mighty Joe was born to a Muslim family at Lafiaji on Lagos Island. At childhood, he had displayed much despicable character that he was sent to a reformatory. This corrective home had little effect on him as he came out worse off.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, he began to lead a gang of like-minded youths on Lagos Island that had no visible means of livelihood. Their favourite pastime included the harassment of innocent traders including *nubians*<sup>10</sup> and the extortion of money from transporters, an action reminiscent of the activities of modern day street urchins (area boys) in Lagos. His pastime was picking things from jewellery shops and the outright looting of the victim's shop if the latter offered resistance.

The *Headlines* described Mighty Joe as a person who had no job but ate and drank well, and wore expensive clothes. Justice Ladipo Gomez, first judge to head an armed robbery tribunal in Nigeria, described him as a notorious thug.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the dirty and violent nature of Nigerian politics in the First Republic between 1963 and 1966 gave relevance to people of Mighty Joe's character since 'thuggery' was at its peak especially in the 'Wild Wild West'. Thus, he acted as thug to different political parties domiciled in the Western Region during this period until the coup of January 15, 1966 which terminated the first civilian administration.

In the aftermath of the coup and shortly before the creation of Lagos State<sup>12</sup> and the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war, Mighty Joe returned to Lagos and relocated from Lagos Island to Idi-Oro in Mushin. Mushin was then a part of the Western Region but according to

Barnes, it suffered administrative neglect because the Western Regional government feared that it might be severed and merged with municipal Lagos.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, lawlessness reigned in the area than on the Island that was better policed. Mushin was therefore more conducive for the activities of Mighty Joe. His relocation to this densely populated area soon ignited a gang war with two other gangs in Mushin over the peddling of Indian hemp and sphere of influence. The conflict raged on with the leaders of the two other gangs working in concert against Mighty Joe. This led to his arrest and detention by the police. After his release from police custody, a truce was declared among the gangs. With the truce, Mighty Joe began to establish himself in Mushin. He opened a beer parlour, installed a gambling machine, recruited followers and began to extort money and protection fees from traders and hoteliers.

Mighty Joe had a deluded conception of himself. Unlike Anini who was erroneously regarded in some quarters as a populist robber, Mighty Joe was a self-acclaimed Robin Hood of Mushin. It was possible that he had watched the Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest film in a cinema and had liked the role of the protagonist. However, his actions were not in anyway comparable to that of the latter. Indeed, Mighty Joe was a greedy person who preyed on innocent people. He was a common criminal who was only interested in himself, and would stop at nothing to deal with any one that stood in his way, even his recruits. His loot was his and no one else's. When one of his boys stole one of his neck chains -probably stolen - a lit candle was used to burn the thief's fingers until he confessed.<sup>14</sup>

As he became mature, he ventured into the more serious crime of outright robbery. By 1971, he had reached the zenith of his career in crime. First of all, he robbed a man of his money during a robbery at the Right Time Hotel. Thereafter, he led a gang of criminals to waylay a business man who was transporting his textile materials from Apapa to somewhere in the Western region. The hold-up took place at Majidun on the outskirts of Ikorodu. They

carted away all the materials in addition to stealing one hundred naira from the man.<sup>15</sup> These two robberies marked the beginning of the end of Mighty Joe's criminal career.

After an abortive attempt at jailbreak that afforded dangerous and notorious criminals like Willy Oputu and condemned Lasisi Lawal alias Lasisi Akintola to escape from custody, Mighty Joe was arraigned for trial before the newly formed Robbery and Firearms tribunal. At the conclusion of the trial presided over by Justice Gomez, he was sentenced to death by firing squad. On June 6, 1971, Mighty Joe was led to the execution platform at Pleasure Bar Beach where he was shot by police marksmen.<sup>16</sup> Popular response to the news of his death was indicative of the extent to which Mighty Joe had terrorised the inhabitants of Mushin. Actually, his death was celebrated in Idi-Oro.

While Mighty Joe was terrorising Lagos Island and later Mushin, Ishola Oyenusi was equally active in Lagos. However, a notable difference between the two criminals was that unlike Mighty Joe who, graduated from 'thuggery' to robbery, Oyenusi went into full time robbery from the beginning although he engaged in trade as smokescreen for his clandestine activities.<sup>17</sup> A self-styled doctor of the Lagos underworld, he was regarded as the first enemy of the public (*l'ennemi publique numero un*) during his lifetime, and was undoubtedly one of the most dangerous armed robbers in the history of crime in Lagos.<sup>18</sup>

Oyenusi had his roots in Agerige Village in Araromi, Okitipupa, in present day Ondo State (formerly a part of the defunct Western State of Nigeria). Co-incidentally, he was born on April 24, 1945, the year in which the Alexander Petterson report on crime and its treatment in Nigeria was released. Reminiscing Bello Jaguda his kinsman in a more violent dimension, Oyenusi specialised in car-snatching, hold-ups, bank robberies and stealing of any valuable materials that could be converted into money. His area of operation was mainly Surulere although it extended beyond the geographical limits of Lagos to other parts of Nigeria such as Ibadan and Maiduguri.<sup>19</sup>

Available record suggests that Oyenusi launched himself into the business of robbery with the formation of a gang with Babatunde Folorunso.<sup>20</sup> However, as is common to gang formation in Lagos, the name of the gang formed by the duo is unknown, if it ever had any. Also, information on the activities of the gang supposedly formed by the duo is virtually non-existent as each of the criminals seemed to have operated separately, each leading different gangs. Specifically, Oyenusi had two separate gangs, one in Ibadan and the other in Lagos. At times, he also operated in ad hoc gangs.<sup>21</sup>

Oyenusi started his robbery career at the age of twenty in February 1965. His first attempt at robbery which took place in the house of a European, failed as the five-man gang he led was caught, tried and later freed by the court. His second attempt at robbery was however successful as his gang succeeded in stealing £1,400 at the Stationery Stores in Apapa. Investigations, however, revealed that Oyenusi was involved in the robbery. He was thereafter arrested and sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour by Magistrate Adewale Oshodi in Apapa on December 16, 1965.<sup>22</sup>

The short imprisonment did not deter Oyenusi in the pursuit of criminal activities. If anything, his stay in prison emboldened him. A French criminal once noted that detention in prison affords criminals the opportunity to think out and prepare new acts of criminality.<sup>23</sup> Thus, upon the release of Oyenusi from prison in 1967, he embarked on a more daring robbery. This time around, his target was a bank.<sup>24</sup> The affected bank was a branch of the Standard Bank of West Africa (now First Bank of Nigeria PLC) located on Yakubu Gowon Street, Lagos in May 1967. The violent bank robbery<sup>25</sup> was a resounding success in terms of the loot and the inability of the police to make any useful arrest in connection with the crime. Actually, the loot amounted to £14,000.<sup>26</sup>

Each robbery success motivated Oyenusi and his gang to further robberies. As an illustration, three months after the Standard Bank robbery, Oyenusi, operating with a four-

man gang snatched a Peugeot car at Iyalla Street, Mushin, preparatory to the hold-up of a CFAO cashier, Mr Ezekiel Fancye at another bank. While his gang members escaped, Oyenusi was later arrested, and by co-incidence arraigned before Magistrate Oshodi who recognised him and recalled that he had jailed Oyenusi two years earlier at Apapa for the Stationery Stores robbery.<sup>27</sup> He was thereafter tried and sentenced to three years imprisonment with hard labour in addition to flogging. In the judgement, the magistrate in what seemed like an expression of the inadequacy of the punishment for robbery noted that Oyenusi was lucky as he, that is, the judge had very limited power but for which he would have sent the criminal for a long term in prison.<sup>28</sup>

Oyenusi, however, escaped from detention to lead another armed robbery operation in Maiduguri. The robbery which was never detected, according to him, yielded ₦5700.00 and was carried out by Oyenusi and one other criminal, who proposed the crime, at the Maiduguri Rest House in October 1967.<sup>29</sup> In the same month, himself and an accomplice snatched the car of one Mr John Elegbede in readiness for another robbery operation in which Mr Eraldo Noca, the paymaster of Cappa D'Alberto Company was attacked.<sup>30</sup>

It should be noted that a common pastime of robbers in the 1960s up to the 80s was grabbing workers' salary. The movement of the bullion van or the private car in which the workers' pay was being conveyed to the company or a site, as was the case in the Noca hold-up, was usually obstructed with the aid of an 'abandoned' vehicle packed deliberately across the narrow roads that adorned the streets of Lagos during this period. The vehicle was usually packed in a way that the approaching van or car would have to reduce its speed and in the process, was attacked by the robbers. This was what happened in the Noca hold-up by Oyenusi and his gang members on the Onigbongbo end of the Ikorodu Road.<sup>31</sup> On his way to site to pay workers, Noca accompanied by an armed police escort had to slow down on seeing

a white car packed across the road. Suddenly Oyenusi and five others who had been hiding in the bush swooped on them firing at their targets.<sup>32</sup>

The initial response of the policeman was to fire shots into the air to scare off the attackers. The robbers were however not deterred as one of them drew a machete on Mr. Noca while another grabbed the box containing money. It was at this point that the policeman shot and killed the two of them. In the meantime, soldiers in the nearby Ikeja Army Cantonment who had been attracted by the sound of gun shots, joined the armed escort in reprising the robbers, and one other gang member was killed. Oyenusi and the remaining three robbers were subsequently arrested and arraigned for trial in the Ikeja Grade "A" Magistrate Court. By November, 31, 1967, Oyenusi and his remaining gang members were each sentenced to 25 years imprisonment.<sup>33</sup>

A very interesting feature of the trial was the remark of the magistrate, Chief Victor Adedolapo which, from all indications reflected the mood of the wider society on robbery and foreshadowed the application of the death penalty as official response to the menace of robbery beginning from the 1970s. First, he described Oyenusi and his accomplices as a menace to the society and the people, and hoped that the robbers would let the society rest once they were sentenced.<sup>34</sup> Second, and more importantly, he noted that Oyenusi and the others were very lucky that they were not killed as were their dead colleagues. In other words, if they had been killed, it would have been a case of good riddance as no charges of the use of maximum force would have been levelled against the armed personnel. Third, the magistrate praised, and by so doing endorsed the action of the police and the army for doing what he considered as "justice to three members of the gang by shooting them to death on the day of the incident".<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, it was death and not imprisonment that would put an end to the menace of robbery unleashed by Oyenusi on the Lagos society. This is illustrated by the ease with which

he planned and escaped from the Kirikiri Maximum Prison along with Folorunso who was equally serving a ten year jail term for a robbery offence. Evasion of justice by criminals in the colonial and post-colonial periods through jail breaks and other forms of escape was undoubtedly a potent factor that encouraged criminality. It is therefore not surprising that Oyenusi, at his escape, tried although unsuccessfully to snatch the car of an army officer at Aborishade Street in Surulere on April 24, 1968. He was however re-arrested and convicted for attempted robbery and escape from lawful custody. On this occasion, Oyenusi told the magistrate when he was being convicted for attempted robbery and escape from lawful custody that he acted under the influence of alcohol as the incident took place on his birthday. Folorunso was also arrested and both were transferred to Jos Prison from where they escaped once again and made their way back to Lagos.

Oyenusi and Folorunso had a penchant for defying lawful custody. How they did it is unknown but there were speculations that they had a potent medicine woman in Oje, Ibadan. The story has been told by Pastor Kayode Williams, a repented robber and ex-convict of how the old medicine woman drenched them in all kinds of concoctions and took them through all manner of rituals to fortify and make them fearful to their victims and invincible to law enforcement agents.<sup>36</sup>

Yet, beyond the issue of juju as aid to crime was the motivation to steal. The experience of Oyenusi indicates that robbers as rational beings could be motivated to rob in response to a request, a perceived need, in preparation for festive periods, to satisfy a habit or celebrate a special day in their lives. An indication to this effect was given by Oyenusi when he told the magistrate who convicted him after the failed attempt to snatch an army officer's car at Surulere that he did not know he committed a robbery until he found himself in hospital. According to him, he drank himself stupid since it was the night of his birthday.<sup>37</sup> In the same vein, Oyenusi was to rob a car along Sir James Robertson Street, Surulere on request



by one Robinson who told him that he had a friend who could buy a Peugeot car and pay in cash, if one could be stolen.<sup>38</sup> One was thereafter stolen in Surulere and driven to Empire Hotel in Idi-Oro where Robinson and Oyenusi met after which the former drove the car to the client, one "Calabar (presumably Efik or Ibibio) man." Oyenusi was given an initial sum of ₦ 100 and never got the balance of ₦ 800.<sup>39</sup>

In November 1970, Oyenusi and his Ibadan gang made up of George Femi, Balewa, Lati, Dan Blocker, an ex soldier, carried out a night raid in Ibadan in a house along Ring Road.<sup>40</sup> In the operation, Mr Suara Sabo the victim was killed. The undetected robbery took place on the hint from Balewa that Sabo had about ₦ 100,000 in his house.<sup>41</sup> Sabo was killed and the money was taken. Balewa also brought the robbery proposal that culminated in the theft of tyres at Feleye in Ibadan. Oyenusi organised the same gang members, and according to him, they had a very successful and undetected outing. The tyres were all carried off.<sup>42</sup>

And then Oyenusi's last robbery took place in Lagos on 27 March 1971 at the premises of the West Africa Household Utilities Manufacturing Company (Nig.) Limited (WAHUM) in Ikeja. It involved a huge sum of money by the standard of that period. The amount involved was about ₦ 200,000 naira.<sup>43</sup> The initial robbery proposal was made to another gang in January by Steven Ndubuokwu alias Diokpa, a relation of Joel Amamieye, the Personnel Manager of WAHUM.<sup>44</sup> The plan was to snatch the January pay of WAHUM workers. This attempt failed, however, because members of the gang contacted got drunk on the eve of the robbery. It was this failure that made it expedient to call in more reliable hands. This explains the involvement of Oyenusi in the robbery.

The WAHUM robbery was different from the other robberies that Oyenusi had undertaken in Lagos because he had to lead an ad hoc gang to carry out the operation. It would be recalled that Oyenusi's gang had been decimated in the failed Noca-hold up of

1967. Other members of the ad hoc gang included Phillip Onuora Ogbulumani, Appolus Nlemibe, Joseph Osamedike alias Ossai, Ademola Adegbitan and Nwokohia.

A meeting of the ad hoc gang took place at a palm wine bar run by Ndubuokwu. One of the important features of this meeting besides the issue of planning and apportioning of roles was the swearing to an oath of secrecy that no one would leak the secret before or after the robbery.<sup>45</sup> On the eve of the robbery, Nlemibe and Adegbite dressed in very expensive lace materials snatched a Peugeot car at gun point at Randle Avenue, Surulere preparatory to the WAHUM robbery.<sup>46</sup>

On March 27 Oyenusi armed with a submachine gun and 50 rounds of ammunition manned the company gate. Other members of the gang took their positions, each with his own assignment. As the pay van approached, Oyenusi fired a shot that instantly killed the police escort in the front of the van who was just three months old in the Nigeria Police Force. At the end, the sum of £10,000 was grabbed. Equally stolen was the Mark 4 rifle of the dead policeman. The gang thereafter retired to a bush in Abule-Okuta where the loot was shared.<sup>47</sup> In the aftermath of the robbery, Oyenusi relocated to Ibadan where he set up a beer parlour and a building materials shop. A police investigation into the WAHUM robbery however commenced in earnest and shortly afterwards, Oyenusi was traced to Ibadan where he was arrested on May 7, 1971.<sup>48</sup>

It should be noted that the arrest of Oyenusi at Gate in Ibadan would have been difficult without the assistance of the public. First, the information that revealed the name and address of his woman friend, Iyabo, was provided by another notorious criminal, Balewa, who was deeply involved in the distribution of Indian hemp in Ibadan. Second, when Iyabo took the police investigators to Gate where Oyenusi had a shop where he sold building materials, he would have escaped but for the fact that the policemen raised a familiar alarm shouting 'thief thief', to which the people responded thus apprehending Oyenusi.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, at the time of his last arrest, a far reaching change had taken place in the judicial system that had tried Oyenusi since his criminal career began in 1965. Unlike before when the court had the last say in robbery cases, the Federal Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon had set up the Robbery and Firearms Tribunal in Lagos with Mr. Justice John Ojomo as chairman. While the courts under section 402<sup>50</sup> of the 1958 Criminal Code could only impose long sentences on robbers depending on its nature before 1970, the newly established tribunal was empowered to impose the maximum punishment, the death penalty irrespective of its nature.<sup>51</sup> In addition and perhaps guided by the antecedent of Oyenusi, the police was particularly instructed to tighten their security.<sup>52</sup>

The WAHUM robbery and trial was unprecedented in the history of armed robbery in Lagos. It represented the first known trial in Lagos robberies that implicated a top management official of the company-victim. The trial brought to the fore the possibility of an insider complicity not only in the WAHUM robbery but also in the other robberies that had taken place in Lagos, especially in banks

The top management official implicated in the WAHUM robbery was Joel Amamieye. Until his ordeal, he was the Personnel Manager of WAHUM. It was alleged that he was the one that contacted Diokpa, his relation and charcoal dealer, for the hold up. While he denied this allegation till he breath his last at the stake, his life style made it difficult to prove his innocence. As a personnel officer, Joel had a spending problem. His salary was never enough in spite of the fact that he earned one of the highest in the company.<sup>53</sup> On several occasions he had had to approach his superiors for pay advance and loans to settle domestic bills. Shortly before the robbery, he had approached his immediate boss for a loan of 100 pounds which was refused. However, he was able to secure pay advance which it was later alleged he used in prosecuting the robbery.

The proof against him was weighty. First, he collected his salary in advance a day before the robbery. It was alleged that this was the money that he used to finance the robbery. Second, Diokpa confessed that he was the one who initiated the plan and the robbery. Third, the gateman, Nwokobia confessed to his part in the robbery which was to delay in the opening of the gate for the pay van as he was wont to do and indicted Joel as privy to the arrangement.

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Joel Amamieye put up a spirited fight to save himself but to no avail. He pleaded unsuccessfully with Nwokobia to modify his confessional statement that implicated him. He also evoked the ethnic sentiment that had plunged Nigeria into the civil war that had just ended in 1970 to support his claim to innocence. In his words, he was up against several enemies in the factory and as such was a victim of collective hatred on the part of other workers. Probably from Delta, he noted that all the members of the investigative panel that handled the case consisted of eight Bini, five Yoruba, one Urhobo and one Rivers man<sup>55</sup>. The trial began on August 11, three months after the execution of Mighty Joe and lasted till 26 August, 1971 when judgement was delivered. Oyenusi and six others including Amamieye were sentenced to death by firing squad.<sup>56</sup>

From the above, it should be reasonable to describe the 1970s as the decade of the firing squad, public execution or in popular parlance 'bar beach shows' in the criminal history of Lagos and indeed Nigeria.<sup>57</sup> Throughout the colonial period, capital punishment, usually carried out by hanging, was exclusive to the crime of murder and only extended to robbery cases when, like in the case of Kotangora (see chapter four) a person was killed during the robbery operation. Another way of explaining the introduction of the death penalty to combat robbery during this period is to see it not just as an offshoot of contemporary official response to the intensity of the crime of armed robbery but rather as a response deeply rooted in Nigerian culture. Nigerians had zero tolerance level for robbery in the pre-colonial period, and

as exemplified by the Egba in the nineteenth century, they would either kill or drive robbers out of the community (see chapter two). The introduction of the death penalty to curb the menace of robbery in contemporary Lagos could therefore be considered as a restoration of this indigenous approach which had proved more effective compared to the British approach.

Be that as it may, the first enabling law that made the death penalty applicable to the offence of robbery in Nigeria was the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree 47 of 1970. The decree was abrogated or simply neglected after the inauguration of a civilian administration in 1979 but was re-introduced in 1984. The Buhari-Idiagbon regime actually re-invigorated the system by issuing the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree 1984 otherwise called Decree 5 as amended by Decree 21 of 1986 and later the Armed Robbery and Firearms(special provisions) Act Cap 398 of the Laws of Federation 1990. Under this act, any person who commits the offence of robbery risked 21 years imprisonment. If the offender was armed with any firearms or with any offensive weapon, he was liable upon conviction to be sentenced to death.<sup>58</sup>

In Lagos, Group Captain Gbolahan Mudasiru (now deceased) responded to the newly introduced decree in 1984 by establishing two tribunals in May of the same year, one each in the judicial divisions of Lagos and Ikeja headed by Justices Victor Famakinwa and Olugbade O. Obadina respectively.<sup>59</sup> In his words, the establishment of the tribunals became necessary in view of the fact that “robbers had become so daring that they not only raided in the night but also in the early hours of morning and daylight”.<sup>60</sup> Two additional tribunals were established in July 1984 under Justices Adesola Oguntade and Oluwole Kotun. Following this action, 257 robbery cases pending in the courts were transferred to the tribunals which were expected to expedite action on them.<sup>61</sup> Before long, reports of condemned and executed convicts began to flood the pages of newspapers as robbery cases were disposed of speedily. Yet, the tribunal system had a major shortcoming. The decree that established the tribunals

abrogated the right of appeal that was guaranteed under the 1979 Constitution. Thus, unless the Supreme Military Council, the highest ruling organ in Nigeria during the military administration of Generals Buhari and Idiagbon, in the performance of its restricted appellate functions confirmed, reduced or commuted sentences, no other body was empowered to do so. This was why Omotola and Adeogun submitted that in spite of the seeming advantages in the tribunal system, the courts, if reformed, remain better machineries for the administration of criminal justice in Nigeria.<sup>62</sup>

Yet, the tribunal system was favoured throughout the duration of the military regimes in Nigeria although with slight changes. For instance, at the inception of the Babangida administration on 27 August 1985, and in line with its Human Rights Policy, the Aguda and Bello Judicial Tribunals were set up to review cases of persons convicted by some of the Special Military Tribunals.<sup>63</sup> This was to serve as the prelude to the promulgation of Decree No. 21 of 1986, earlier alluded to, which established Appeal Tribunals. Again, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was thought that the tribunals were becoming slow in the performance of their duty. Governor Raji Rasaki actually spoke of his intention to reorganise the Lagos State Armed Robbery Tribunals under the headship of a retired judge for the speedy discharge of armed robbery cases as was the case in the Appeal Tribunals.<sup>64</sup> By 1991, it was still being suggested that the headship of the military tribunals should be reserved for retired judges rather than serving ones since the latter already had enough to do.<sup>65</sup> Again, it was also suggested that retired soldiers and police officers should replace serving officers who more often than not delay the proceedings of the tribunals since their official assignments often clashed with those of the tribunal's.<sup>66</sup>

It is certain that the above suggestion was not immediately adopted given the fact that serving judges and others were appointed to head more robbery tribunals that were established during the administration of Colonel Buba Marwa in 1996.<sup>67</sup> The four additional tribunals

were established to complement the hitherto existing ones since 1984, one of which had become moribund as a result of the death of its chairman. The new tribunals created were located two apiece in Lagos Island and at Ikeja, and were headed by Justices Adebayo Adediji Adesanya, Kudirat Tomori Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun, Leslie Alaba Marsh, and Opéyemi Olufunmilayo Oke and other members from the police and the army were members.<sup>68</sup>

Marwa had justified the setting up of additional robbery tribunals on the grounds that, “the crime rate in the state had worsened due to a dearth of robbery tribunals”. The effect of this, he said, was the “delay in the administration of justice while criminals roughly assumed that the law against robbery existed only in theory”.<sup>69</sup> He therefore considered the establishment of more tribunals as an important aspect of the fight against robbery and a testimony of his administration’s commitment to the crusade against criminals. A fundamental feature of the new tribunals was that they worked closely with Operation Sweep, a joint military-police security outfit set up during the administration of Colonel Olagunsoye Oyinlola to combat the menace of armed banditry in Lagos. Marwa had revived the outfit by further providing equipment and gadgets as well as over 300 vehicles for effective delivery of service.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the tribunals tried or adjudicated mainly in robbery cases that emanated from arrests made by men of the Operation Sweep.

In the meantime, the introduction of the death penalty and the subsequent execution of Mighty Joe, Ishola Oyenusi and other criminals did not immediately reduce armed robbery in Lagos. Criminal statistics during this period indicate that recorded armed robbery cases in 1971, the year in which the death penalty was first applied, was higher (114) compared to the lower figures of 88, 31, and 81 returned in 1968, 1969 and 1970 respectively.<sup>71</sup> The only exception was in 1967 when a higher figure of 349 was returned. Thereafter, between 1972 and 1973, the figures returned showed a progressive decrease - 50 and 33 respectively. By 1974, however, the figure once again shot up to 122 and continued to rise until 1979 when

485, representing a decrease, compared to 1978 were once again recorded. The figures returned for 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978 were 144, 343, 656, and 1051 respectively.

The marked difference in the figures returned for 1978 and 1979 seemed to suggest a possible relationship between crime and politics. The lifting of the ban on politics and the formation of political parties had probably engaged some youths that could otherwise have gone into crime as political thugs just as it did for Mighty Joe. Yet, if political 'thuggery' was indeed an alternative to robbery then its impact, mainly in the area of shifting attention of potential or actual robbers from robbery to 'thuggery', was bound to be short-lived as the inauguration of the Second Republic and the opening years of the 1980s ushered in a downward trend in the economy of the country owing largely to falling oil prices in the world market. A sequel to this development was that the standard of living in Nigeria fell considerably while many lost their jobs and many more remained unemployed despite the Economic Stabilisation Act (otherwise called Austerity Measures) introduced by the Alhaji Shehu Shagari government in 1983 to address the distress in the economy.<sup>72</sup>

Surely, a combination of all these factors did not help the crime situation in Lagos. If anything, it aggravated it as armed robbery rose.<sup>73</sup> To buttress this, the *Punch* reported in May 1980 that crime was on the increase and that 1,008 persons had been killed and another 4,513 injured through robbery and murder in the first eight months after the inauguration of the Alhaji Shehu Shagari administration, that is, between October 1979 and May 1980.<sup>74</sup> Police records however showed that the increase was not consistent as lower figures were returned for robbery in 1980 (442), 1982 (314) and 1983 (247). It was only in 1981 that a higher figure of 620 was returned for robbery.<sup>75</sup> Between 1984 and 1986, police records returned fluctuating figures for robbery that was as low as 154 in 1986 compared to 387 and 375 in 1984 and 1985 respectively. By 1987 and 1989, higher figures of 316 and 306 were again returned only for lower figures of 140, 235, and 68 to be returned in 1988, 1990 and 1991.



From 1992 down to 2000, there was steady fluctuation in the recorded robbery cases ranging from 107, 112, 272, and 375 to 363, 226, 234, 144 and 185.<sup>76</sup>

Mr Emmanuel Osamor, the Minister in charge of Police Affairs in the Second Republic noted the inability of the Nigeria Police Force in recovering property stolen by bandits said to be worth 400 million naira while out of another 645 million worth of property lost to bandits, the police could only recover 65 million worth of property. Oyakhiromen puts the value of property lost to crime in Lagos State between 1967 and 1996 at ₦ 2.2 billion representing an average loss of ₦ 73.3 million per annum out of which the police could only recover ₦ 580.5 million (₦19.3 million yearly) representing a recovery rate percent of 26.33 of total loss each year from 1967 to 1996.<sup>77</sup> Again, the minister lamented that out of the 185,318 crime cases reported in the country, only 106,021 were under investigation, 36,580 were awaiting trial, 15,304 were prosecuted while 6805 persons were convicted and 2999 acquitted while 2,666 cases were closed as undetected by the police during the same period. He concluded by blaming the dismal performance of the police on inadequate numerical strength - 75,000 - which he said was grossly inadequate for the size and population of the country.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to the above, inadequate equipment was also one of the major excuses for the non-performance of the police in Lagos in the 1980s. The Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr Mohammed Gambo, in 1980 lent credence to this view. According to him, the seeming impotence of the police in the face of growing armed banditry was due to a number of factors. First was inadequate communication system within the Force. Second was the shortage of manpower. Third was the inadequate supply of arms and ammunition. The firearms supplied to the police were at times too outdated for effective combat with criminals carrying automatic and sophisticated weapons. Fourth was the inadequate interpretation of the law as it affected arrested robbery suspects. For instance, the idea of granting bail to suspects

by judges was considered by him to be detrimental to police investigation as such suspects released on bail often went out to commit new robberies<sup>79</sup>

Specifically, Mr Gambo noted that robbers were operating with such seeming impunity because they knew of the problems which patrolmen had in linking up with divisional police headquarters to request for reinforcements. Even where reports of robberies were made at police stations, it was difficult for the men in the stations to reach those on patrol. As a result, robbers often got away with their crimes before the police could be mustered into action. A case in point was the 1979 robbery at Boulos Nigeria Enterprises at Oregun by Youpele Dakoru, Nelson Dieth, Ayo Oduko and another robber known in the underworld as 'Vulture'. The robbers seized ₦ 80, 000.00 and killed two policemen. The death of the two constables however motivated the police to hunt and prosecute the criminals after which all but 'Vulture' was executed.<sup>80</sup>

The change in government from military to civilian was also viewed as a limiting factor on police efficiency. This is because the change necessitated the withdrawal of soldiers guarding public places. Their replacement with police officers reduced the number of men available for patrol service. Hence, police officers had to be withdrawn from one duty post to those places vacated by the military. A consideration of all these problems was what probably made *The Punch* to note that the people would have to continue to pray not to be visited by robbers since the condition of the police made it impossible for the police to guarantee full protection.<sup>81</sup>

To be sure, Lagosians prayed concerning robbery and robbers just as they were wont to do in other affairs. Father Matthew Kukah has argued that Nigerians like to call on God to solve all their problems rather than act.<sup>82</sup> Regarding crime, however, Lagosians did not only pray; they also acted within and outside the law for protection. Some of the popular responses to robbery included the lynching of robbers, the formation of vigilante groups which the

police condemned because of what it described as their jungle justice approach, the imposition of unofficial curfews and the improvement of building and street designs to meet the challenges of robbery.<sup>83</sup> In addition, the *juju* option was also adopted by many. There were claims that the use of charms could confuse or divert the attention of robbers away from one's home. There was also the claim that some charms could cast a spell on robbers such that they would stay glued or begin to sweep a robbery scene till daybreak.<sup>84</sup> In recent times, the activities of the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) especially its involvement in vigilante work, has further reinforced the belief in the power of *juju* as sine-qua-non in the fight against robbers. It is widely believed that a major source of the confidence of the group derived from its recourse to *juju*.<sup>85</sup> This is why this study suggests much as did Clifford that the supernatural or spiritual explanation of crime, though unscientific, is germane to the understanding of African criminality<sup>86</sup>.

Landlords and tenants also co-operated and employed people from the rural areas to guard their streets. The menace of robbery in Lagos also attracted the attention of a popular predictor, Dr. Godspower Oyewole, a parapsychologist and parapsychician. Although it is impossible to measure the impact of his predictions vis-à-vis the fight against armed banditry in Lagos, his prediction regarding crime is however noted here because of its potential to embolden the police and the people in their fight against robbery. In the midst of growing armed banditry in Lagos, he predicted in 1982 that robbers would meet their Waterloo while also warning the people that the fear of robbers would grip everyone in Lagos particularly, residents of the following areas prone to crime such as Agege, Alaba, Amuwo, Apapa, Amukoko, Olodi Apapa, Aiyetoro, Isolo-Festac Road, Dopemu, Oshodi and Ikeja.<sup>87</sup> It is striking that Ajegunle was given double citation as Amukoko and Olodi Apapa. Little wonder that Oyakhromen regarded Ajegunle as an area of high incidence of crime in Lagos State in 1996.<sup>88</sup> Agbola was more definite as he described Ajegunle as the most dangerous residential

slowly. Female criminals were seldom giving this kind of treatment although a few had been killed this way. In most cases, they were undressed and assaulted publicly.

Incessant robbery attacks in Lagos also led to the formation of vigilante groups as if to justify the Yoruba adage that 'the baby which deprives its parents of sleep will also not sleep'. In the Agege area, for instance, it was as if robbers had declared war on the residents and the people had to fight back since the police could not be relied upon. Hence the residents working in concert and armed with all sorts of weapons kept vigil. In the words of one of them, "if they think we are helpless because the police have not come to our aid, we shall show them that we too can handle machetes and bottles."<sup>100</sup> This move was a positive concerted move against the state of wanton assault by armed robbers in the Lagos area during the period. Male residents kept vigil every night and at the sound of a signal they went out with cutlasses, cudgels and sacks of bottles awaiting robbers. Roadblocks were mounted at entrances into the area while motor vehicles were denied entry. No visitor could leave the area unless accompanied by the resident visited. Those who belonged to traditional institutions such as the Oro brought out their paraphernalia and performed rites in readiness for any invaders.<sup>101</sup> It should be recalled that in the olden days, the Oro cult was in charge of the execution of criminals among the Yoruba.

The immediate implication of the commencement of the vigil was relief and safety from robbery, an indication that a potent way of curbing robbery was to confront and resist the robbers.<sup>102</sup> The conduct of the vigil however had psychological effect on the families of the residents which were not sure of the safety of their husbands. Besides, the vigil also had negative impact on productivity of the conscript watchmen.

Certainly, it was difficult for the police to guarantee total protection to Lagosians given the dynamism of robbery in Lagos in the 1980s. At times, robbers had changed tactics and explored the act of doping victims and the strategy of disguising as women as preferred

alternatives to violent robbery. The method of disguising as women was often used in hotels or on the roads to lure men looking for prostitutes with the ultimate goal of robbing the unsuspecting victims of their cars and other valuables.<sup>103</sup> The case of doping was used by robbers operating around Ilupeju Industrial area to rob unsuspecting factory workers at various factory locations. Investigations conducted during this period revealed that reported cases of robberies in the area followed this pattern: The robbers would offer to buy drinks that had been drugged for factory security men which would make the latter to sleep after which the former would rob the premises. At least four robberies perpetrated via this method were reported at four different factories in the area, and in each of the factories the security men were sent into deep slumber after having taken some fruits which the robbers had earlier injected with some kind of drugs.<sup>104</sup>

While on the surface, one may consider the change in tactics of robbers in Lagos during this period as 'innovative', it is important to note that the seeming ingenuity was possibly the response of the criminals to the unrelenting efforts of the police and the public at fighting crime. Notwithstanding, violent robberies continued in Lagos. Night robberies were carried out in Lagos in the 1980s by gangs of young men operating in large numbers who apart from robbing also raped wives and grown up female relations of victims.<sup>105</sup>

One of such robberies occurred on June 10, 1980 when armed robbers struck at Agege in the midnight. Numbering about fifty and armed with guns, cudgels and other weapons, they stormed houses in the Akowonjo area, raped, injured and drank the refrigerated drinks of their victims. They wore no masks suggesting that they did not reside in the immediate neighbourhoods.<sup>106</sup> The anonymity of the urban milieu, the high proportion of "stranger elements in the population of Lagos and the petrification of victims are the other possible factors that could make robbers dispense with the use of masks.

In the meantime, all the robbers in the Agege robbery were young men in their early twenties. They demanded for money and trinkets and where one could not produce to their satisfaction, they resorted to violence and destroyed everything in the house. During the operation that lasted for about two hours, one of the victims noted that while they were ransacking his house, the robbers humorously told him that they were looking for their share of the 2.8 billion naira allegedly embezzled by General Olusegun Obasanjo before leaving office in 1979.<sup>107</sup> Another man who quietly surrendered his cash, still had his wife raped by two of the robbers while in another house a man who pleaded with the robbers to spare his sister had his right thumb cut, and was held at gun point to watch his sister raped. In all, the robbers operated freely, and thereafter left in a 'molue' bus with their loot of cash and jewelleryes.<sup>108</sup>

Official response to armed banditry in Lagos was surprisingly not always coordinated in the early 1980s. While, for instance, Governor Lateef Jakande believed that one of the ways in which to curb the riding tide of robbery in the state was to ban night parties,<sup>109</sup> Alhaji Muhammadu Gambo, the Commissioner of Police, felt otherwise. Indeed, the latter believed that the organisation of, and attendance at night parties had no bearing with armed robbery and as such the Lagos State Police Command did not take the enforcement of the ban on night parties as a priority.<sup>110</sup> Besides, it was also argued that the police did not have the logistics with which to enforce such a ban. Accordingly, the police stated that with the addition of 600 recruits to the 8000 men in the Command, they should be able to reduce the crime rate in the state.<sup>111</sup>

Between December 1983 and 26 August, 1985 when General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd) and Late Major General Tunde Idiagbon (Rtd) ruled Nigeria, crime persisted in Lagos in spite of the tough measures that they introduced to check the menace and, not surprisingly, their promise to wipe out the evil of armed robbery from the society was never fulfilled.<sup>112</sup>

The promise itself to wipe out crime from the society was a clear indication that the two military leaders did not understand the depth of the robbery crisis. Hence, their hope of creating an armed robbery-free society by merely patrolling Lagos roads and streets by a combined team of the army and the police was bound to be ineffective even when such joint patrols were to be armed with automatic weapons. Besides, the Buhari regime also revived the public execution of condemned robbers as a deterrent to other criminals.

Yet, criminal statistics from the police earlier alluded to showed an increase in the robbery cases reported in 1984 (387) compared to that of 1983 (247) while a figure (375) representing a marginal decrease was returned in 1985. Mr Taju Odofin, Lagos State Commissioner for Finance in 1984 and Chief David Adeyemo, first Nigerian chemical engineer and Commercial Director of West African Portland Cement Company, Limited were some of the victims of armed robbery in Lagos between 1984 and 1985. While Odofin was attacked in his house in the Ebute area of Ikorodu and sustained injuries from the underworld men who demanded for a share of state money, Adeyemo was waylaid and killed on Ikorodu Road even after his Mercedes Benz car had been snatched without any resistance from him and his driver.<sup>113</sup> While trying to get away, the robbers also shot and killed one Mr. Agbaje whose car was said to have slowed down their escape bid.<sup>114</sup>

In September 1984, a robbery case involving some kid robbers<sup>115</sup> stunned Lagos as much as it generated mixed reactions from the public, the judiciary and the international community.<sup>116</sup> The robbery was allegedly perpetrated by twelve youths. It was claimed that the kid robbers attacked and robbed a couple – Mr and Mrs Olayiwola Odusanya of 16, Benson Street, Ikorodu. In the aftermath of the robbery, they were arrested at different locations in Lagos, tortured by police investigators despite their repeated claim to innocence before they were arraigned before a Lagos State Robbery and Firearms Tribunal under Justice Moshood A. Olugbani who condemned them to death in June 1988.<sup>117</sup>

The judgement generated a lot of controversy both locally and internationally. Several petitions were submitted premised on the argument that the convicts were below 18 years when the offence was committed and could therefore not be sentenced to death. Mrs Eniola Fadayomi, Attorney General of Lagos State at this time felt the judgement should be upheld.<sup>118</sup> The idea of capital punishment itself came under scrutiny with divided conclusions.<sup>119</sup> A lot of concern was expressed over the state of health and safety of the boys. Human Rights Organisation such as the Civil Liberties Organisation were particularly vocal in this respect. They condemned the sentence and did much to arouse public sentiment on the issue.<sup>120</sup> At a time, some people thought that the youths had been executed secretly when their counsel, Anselm Odinkalu, was barred from seeing them.<sup>121</sup> Later Chief Mike Ozekhome became their counsel.<sup>122</sup> Actually, the boys were kept in solitary cells at the Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison. One of them, Mohammed Ibrahim died of tuberculosis in 1990 while others also ran the risk of dying of the same disease.<sup>123</sup>

By August 27, 1985 when Babangida overthrew Generals Buhari and Idiagbon, robbery was still rife in Lagos and was to continue years later in spite of Babangida's excuse that he took over government to address among other national problems, the debt burden, low productivity, dwindling export earnings and more importantly, to stem the growing insecurity of life and property in the country. Although police records returned a figure (154) which represented a substantial decrease compared to the figures returned in the previous years, it is doubtful if this represented the true situation of crime in Lagos especially with the influence of Lawrence Anini, a celebrated Edo-based underworld kingpin, on robbers in Lagos until his arrest, trial and execution in 1987.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, perceived inconsistencies in criminal statistics provided by the police underscores the essence and need of victimisation surveys to complement police statistics towards improving the basis for developing appropriate and reliable crime prevention policies in the state and the entire country.<sup>125</sup>



## **The Era of Executive Robbers, 1990-2000**

The criminal career of Lawrence Anini and his gang in the mid-1980s overshadowed that of many other armed robbers in Lagos and indeed Nigeria considering the kind of publicity that the press gave to the activity of the criminal. In the aftermath of the execution of Prince Eweka, a member of Anini's gang in 1986, Anini launched a deliberate attack on members of the Nigeria Police Force which resulted in the death of at least six policemen. The shooting of Casmir Akagbosu and other top police officers in the defunct Bendel State further increased the fear of the public.<sup>126</sup>

A consequence of this development was that criminals in the Lagos area and elsewhere became emboldened in their nefarious activities. A major factor in the rise of Anini was his possession and acclaimed mastery of the use of firearms such as the Sub-Machine Guns (SMGs) and military assault rifles that were considered superior to the ones carried by men of the Nigeria Police Force during this period. By the early 1990s, the use of SMGs had become widespread among men of the underworld. Their preference for cars had also become more focused on the different series of Mercedes Benz, Path Finders and other highly valued cars. In other words, while the robbers probably found the haven of the rich too difficult to penetrate, they found it easier to snatch their cars on Lagos roads while night travellers also became their regular victims.<sup>127</sup>

Elite involvement in robbery in Lagos had been noted in the pre-colonial period. For instance, the extent of the involvement of the elite in robbery during this period had been shown in the complicity of the highest echelon of the traditional political institution in the robbing of strangers (see chapter two). In the colonial period, the involvement of the elite in robbery had manifested both in the provision of logistics for criminal gangs and in their resort to the latter for material gains. Again, elite involvement in robbery during the colonial period had also manifested through the participation of ex-soldiers in robbery.

The decade of the 1990s witnessed increasing sophistication in robbery operations within Lagos and across Nigeria's international border with the Republic of Benin. Although illiterates, school drop outs, secondary school leavers, artisans and ex-service men and some serving officers continued to dominate the ranks of robbers, it should be noted that the decade also witnessed the increasing involvement of Nigerian undergraduates and graduates in armed robbery. In addition, robbers also became more daring and flamboyant in their ways of life as they struggled to conceal their real identity. Another unique feature of robbery in Lagos in the 1990s was that unlike before when robbery proceeds were basically spent on women, gambling and drinks, a new crop of robbers invested in property, commerce and other legitimate businesses.

Lagos metropolis witnessed a high wave of robberies in 1992. It was the year in which the trans-border gangster – Shina Rambo - terrorised car owners in Lagos and Ogun States. In the first two weeks of October, the Lagos State Police Command recorded about two hundred robberies with about 115 Peugeot cars, Mercedes Benz and Path Finders stolen. It was then suggested that the increased car robberies was due to the dismantling of police check points sequel to the killing of Colonel Ezra Rimdan by a policeman at Yaba on September 6, 1992.

The true identity of Shina Rambo is still shrouded in mystery. Indeed, some police officers believed that the Shina Rambo affair was a myth. The Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos State Command in 1994, Mr. Isaac Akinmoyede opined that the Shina myth was probably cooked up by the press because three members of the gang bore the name 'Shina'.<sup>128</sup>

Notwithstanding the controversy, Olusegun Adeshina Adisa Kuye, alias Shina Rambo terrorised Lagos for almost two years. While Lagos and Ogun States were his operational base in Nigeria, Rambo resided in the Republic of Benin from where he disposed of stolen cars as far as Burkina Faso. It was alleged that he used to carry a live tortoise on his chest during

robbery operations in addition to popularising the use of the deadly Russian AK 47 rifle. His arms supply and operational vehicles came from a man called Casmir Kpossou who died about two years after the purported arrest of Rambo in police detention in Benin Republic. Kpossou usually got his arms from Liberia that was then embroiled in a bitter civil war and from some unscrupulous Beninoise gendarmes.

Rambo specialised in dispossessing people of their flashy cars and was reputed to have a bevy of beautiful ladies who he used as bait to trap unsuspecting car owners. The ladies were always neatly and corporately dressed and adopted a very simple but effective strategy. They would walk up to a victim and tell him “Baba ni ko fun mi ni kọkọrọ mọto yin” meaning “Papa requests that you hand in your car keys”.<sup>129</sup> Once the request was made on the usually bewildered victim, a gun was drawn to enforce it while the lady robber would point to Rambo, usually in a jeep and other members of his gang in other stolen cars.<sup>130</sup> At other times, cars were snatched at gun points and those who dared to resist were killed after which Rambo and his convoy of stolen cars would drive across the Nigerian border into the Republic of Benin.

International complicity in the crime of Lagos is high. This had been the case since the colonial period when robbers who preyed on Nigeria had their base in Dahomey. Also, bicycles stolen in Nigeria had ready markets in this French controlled territory. This trend has continued as robbers such as Rambo have continued to exploit the proximity of the western boundary of Lagos to the Republic of Benin as natural escape routes. The case of another robber, Taju, an indigene of Abeokuta in Ogun State drives home this point. Having led the gang that killed a naval officer, Navy Commander Stephen Babatunde Alabi after snatching his Mercedes Benz car, Taju escaped into Benin Republic with the car after bribing his way through the border. The interesting point to note in this case is that with Nigerian detectives on his trail, it soon became obvious that Beninois authorities were covering up for him thus

frustrating the efforts of the Nigerian police to arrest and bring him to justice. This was the situation until the arrest of his father forced him to confess to the crime. The suspect thereafter noted that he was able to escape from custody after bribing some policemen to facilitate his escape to Benin where he changed his identity.

The proximity of Lagos to Nigeria's border facilitated the inflow of arms, a consequence of civil wars in neighbouring African countries, which greatly impacted on the crime situation in Lagos and Nigeria. This endangered the peace and security of Lagos in some ways. First, some people running away from the war torn countries found their way into Lagos. While some of them picked up and genuinely engaged in menial jobs, others hid under such jobs to survey potential victims. Police spokesman in Lagos State Police Command in 1989, Assistant Superintendent of Police, George Ogar-Ola corroborated this when he described the method of these foreign robbers thus: "They first get menial jobs such as security duties, study the movement of their boss, invite their colleagues, form a group and then raid the entire area."<sup>131</sup>

Eventually, Shina Rambo was allegedly arrested in Porto Novo by gendarmes in the Republic of Benin on 30 December, 1992.<sup>132</sup> His arrest and the process of his extradition to Nigeria was however delayed and perhaps never effected at all. At a point, authorities of the Nigeria Police Force complained that the Beninois authorities, who earlier claimed to have arrested the culprit, were blocking his extradition to Nigeria. In the meantime, other robbers exploited the continued controversy that surrounded the actual status of Rambo by impersonating him. Popular opinion was indeed sceptical of Rambo's arrest although the public soon forgot about him.

While Rambo specialised in car snatching, Niyi Sowemimo and other members of his gang favoured robbing banks before their arrest in 1997.<sup>133</sup> An interesting point to note is that Niyi was a graduate robber who claimed to have gone into robbery to tarnish his family name.

According to him, his extended family pushed him into armed robbery since they refused to come to his aid. While he acknowledged the singular role played by his mother in his educational career, he regretted his decision to start a career in crime.<sup>134</sup>

Niyi was born on August 1, 1967 and had a fast education such that at the age of 16, he had secured admission to study accountancy at the Yaba College of Technology in 1983. He finished his Higher National Diploma in 1988 after which he began to look for a job which never came his way. According to him, he searched but could not get a job. Neither could his family render any assistance in this regard. Frustrated, he began to look for other means of survival. It should be noted that Niyi is a member of the famous Late Justice Sowemimo family in Ikorodu. His late father, Jolaosho Sowemimo who died in 1976, was an agriculturist and the younger brother to the Justice.<sup>135</sup>

After a while, Niyi was introduced into the business of advance fee fraud, popularly called 419 or obtaining by false pretence (OBT). This business proved very lucrative until 1996 when a disappointment by Paul Palmer, his co-fraudster business partner forced him to once again look for an alternative means of survival. Hence, he joined a robbery gang led by an old friend, Adckunle Solanke, with the intention of raising money to start his 419 business again. But with one successful operation after the other and the flow of easy money, Niyi got hooked to robbery.

Specifically, Solanke's gang specialised in robbing banks outside Lagos. In other words, Lagos and indeed Ikorodu was their residential and not their operational base although the last robbery operation which failed was carried out in Lagos. Every operation was planned and executed by Solanke whose abode no other gang member but Niyi knew. Solanke's robbery strategy usually commenced months before the actual operation. The first step was the opening of an account with the targeted bank with at least a sum of ₦ 500, 000.00. This would normally afford him the opportunity to study the bank system and their security.<sup>136</sup>

Once satisfied, gang members were summoned hours or days before the operation, depending on the distance to be covered, where they were given roles. The gang had been successful in all its operations but one which strangely was carried out in Lagos.<sup>137</sup>

Also in October 2000, another robbery gang that specialised in robbing banks was busted by the police in Lagos.<sup>138</sup> Like the Solanke gang, the Jimoh Audu gang was daring as it was deadly. More importantly, the Audu gang also concentrated on banks outside Lagos.<sup>139</sup> It is not totally clear why robbers prefer to rob banks outside Lagos but records seem to suggest that it is much more difficult to rob banks in Lagos than elsewhere. This is not necessarily because security is better in the state but due to the bottlenecks on Lagos roads which may hinder the escape of the hoodlums. Yet, recent developments in bank robberies have however shown that banks in Lagos are not totally immune from attacks.<sup>140</sup>

Alhaji Chief Adeola Owolabi Oresanya alias Adesuka, Chairman of Money, was the most deadly member of the Audu gang. He was based in Sagamu and was the keeper and supplier of arms and ammunitions which he imported from the Republic of Benin. Consequently, he got the largest share of all the loots. Two other gang members were electronic magnates at the Alaba International Market. At the time of their arrest, Celestine Okoro and Oladipupo Musa had goods worth millions of naira in their shops in this market. Jimoh Audu, from Kogi state was constructing a hotel that was valued at ₦ 20 million at the time of his arrest in Okene. He also had houses, landed property and many expensive cars.<sup>141</sup>

Police investigation into the activities of the robbers was indeed professional. Within a week, the investigation cut across Lagos, Ogun and Kogi States and the Federal Capital Territory. In the last robbery operation of the gang in September 2000 at a branch of the Omega Bank in Kano, they had stolen ₦ 30 million in addition to US \$65,000 in traveller's cheques. It was the attempt to change the traveller's cheques into naira in Lagos as envisaged by the police, which quickened the arrest of the criminals.<sup>142</sup>

The first gang member to be caught was Shobayo Coker Showemimo who had given the travellers cheque to one Rasaki Shobande who in turn gave them to one Adeola Iyapo alias 'Eske' for conversion. Thus, it was the arrest of Eske that led to the arrest of Shobande who eventually led investigators to Abuja where Showemimo, a self-acclaimed contractor, was arrested. His arrest was productive as he led the police to the residence of Adesuka in Sagamu and Iperu. Although, Adesuka had abandoned his home before the arrival of the police, they however found enough evidence that pointed to the fact that the former was actually a member of the gang. Arms as well as a large sum of money were found in his house.<sup>143</sup>

Meanwhile, the first attempt at arresting Audu, the gang leader by men of the Nigeria Police Force failed as he escaped by shooting a transformer which exploded and caused panic as people ran for safety from the fire and smoke that engulfed the area. However, he was later arrested at a drinking joint. Soon, and acting on a tip-off, the police also proceeded to Ijebu-Ode where they engaged Adesuka in a gun battle in which he was killed. Other members of the gang were also picked up at the Alaba International Market.<sup>144</sup>

Armed robbers were particularly violent in Lagos in the 1990s. The following cases recounted below are typical of the vicious nature of robbers during this period. The first case was a bloody incident of robbery that took place in Ajegunle in the Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Area in August 29, 1998.<sup>145</sup> A gang of robbers of different ethnic origin numbering over 30 invaded the house of one Alhaji Hameed Idris, a millionaire cattle dealer at Malu Road, Apapa. In the aftermath of the attack, two of his wives – Anadife and Kaltuma, and a business partner from the Republic of Chad – Hussein Hoisky- were shot dead. In the robbery operation that lasted for about forty-eight minutes without any police intervention, the entire area was held hostage while the robbers, obviously acting on a tip-off, broke into Alhaji's house asking occupants to show them where the money was.<sup>146</sup>

Eventually, Alhaji Idris was also killed when he came out to rescue two of his daughters who were being tortured ostensibly to lure him out from his hiding place in the building. The robbers later went away with the sum of ₦3.3 million. Alhaji Idris had brought home the money to settle his business partner.<sup>147</sup>

The second robbery incident took place in the house of Felix Ekokobe on Mystic Fellowship Avenue in Abule Egba in August, 1999. Until his death, Ekokobe was the Deputy General Manager of Powerline Nigeria Limited, a company that produces high tension cables. The robbery operation commenced around 1.30am and lasted for almost three hours.<sup>148</sup> The robbers came with vengeance.

It was said that in November 1997 they had come to rob the same house but were shot at by Ekokobe who killed one of them. Thus, the 1999 robbery was vengeful and ruthless, and for this the robbers came prepared. They came with all kinds of house breaking implements. Rather than scale the electrified barbed wire on the high wall fence, the robbers dug a hole in the wall through which they gained entry into the compound. To penetrate the upper floor where the Ekokobe lived with his family, they climbed the scaffold bearing the water tank that supplied water to the house, and from there they gained entry into the building. In the building, they continued to order the perplexed victims to open the door. The orders were ignored out of fear and shock than resistance, and progressively, the strong doors in the house which the occupants had thought were unbreakable gave way one after the other to the bullets of the robbers, and as Ekokobe attempted to open the last door, a shot from the robber's hit his head causing him to die instantly.<sup>149</sup> Now indoors, the robbers assaulted Ekokobe's wife, threatened to kill her children and other members of the house if they failed to pay the sum of ₦2 million which they thought should be available and affordable by the occupants of what they considered was a magnificent building. They took jewellery and all the money that they could lay their hands on including the gun of Ekokobe.<sup>150</sup>



Eventually, Alhaji Idris was also killed when he came out to rescue two of his daughters who were being tortured ostensibly to lure him out from his hiding place in the building. The robbers later went away with the sum of ₦3.3 million. Alhaji Idris had brought home the money to settle his business partner.<sup>147</sup>

The second robbery incident took place in the house of Felix Ekokobe on Mystic Fellowship Avenue in Abule Egba in August, 1999. Until his death, Ekokobe was the Deputy General Manager of Powerline Nigeria Limited, a company that produces high tension cables. The robbery operation commenced around 1.30am and lasted for almost three hours.<sup>148</sup> The robbers came with vengeance.

It was said that in November 1997 they had come to rob the same house but were shot at by Ekokobe who killed one of them. Thus, the 1999 robbery was vengeful and ruthless, and for this the robbers came prepared. They came with all kinds of house breaking implements. Rather than scale the electrified barbed wire on the high wall fence, the robbers dug a hole in the wall through which they gained entry into the compound. To penetrate the upper floor where the Ekokobe lived with his family, they climbed the scaffold bearing the water tank that supplied water to the house, and from there they gained entry into the building. In the building, they continued to order the perplexed victims to open the door. The orders were ignored out of fear and shock than resistance, and progressively, the strong doors in the house which the occupants had thought were unbreakable gave way one after the other to the bullets of the robbers, and as Ekokobe attempted to open the last door, a shot from the robbers hit his head causing him to die instantly.<sup>149</sup> Now indoors, the robbers assaulted Ekokobe's wife, threatened to kill her children and other members of the house if they failed to pay the sum of ₦2 million which they thought should be available and affordable by the occupants of what they considered was a magnificent building. They took jewellery and all the money that they could lay their hands on including the gun of Ekokobe.<sup>150</sup>

One interesting feature of this robbery was the role of noise which drowned all the yelling by the Ekokobe to get help from their neighbours. On arrival at the house, the robbers had noticed that a night vigil was going on in the church that was opposite the building of the Ekokobe. They then announced their arrival to the church and mandated the members to increase the tempo of their prayers and songs failure for which they would face the consequences. Thus, no matter how loud the alarm from the victims was, it was drowned by the noise from the church. Again, in spite of the long hours that the operation took, the police were no where to be found even when it was alleged that they got hint of the robbery.<sup>151</sup>

The third case was the robbery and killing of a retired police officer, Chief Titus Ogunbode. He was the Aide-de-Camp (ADC) to Alhaji Lateef Jakande, first Civilian Governor of Lagos State 1979 – 1983). He was attacked in his house at Satellite Town by bandits who robbed him of ₦ 30,000. His plea to the young armed robbers to spare his life irritated one of the robbers who found the septuagenarian's expression that he was old enough to be his father unnerving. Hence, he shot and killed him.<sup>152</sup>

In the three cases of violent robberies narrated above, certain issues are discernible. Firstly, excessive force was used by the different robbers in separate operations to dispossess their victims of their property and lives. While the experience of Ekokobe is explicable in that the robbers were on a vengeance mission purportedly provoked by the deserved shooting of a gang member by Ekokobe in 1997 during the first robbery attempt on his house by the same gang, that of Alhaji Idris and Chief Ogunbode are not comprehensible. Ojajuni's explanation is that the desire to kill victims of robbery by their assailants is in most cases induced by the consumption or abuse of hard drugs such as cocaine and Indian hemp, and also alcohol.<sup>153</sup> Unlike Alemika who as earlier noted, believes that the viciousness of the criminal is a natural sequel to the non-graduated application of the death penalty for all categories of robbers, Ojajuni argues that it is the intake of drugs and the momentary loss of sanity that the hard

drug induces that is responsible. Klein concurs with this view when he notes that in Lagos, drug users are equated with the insane whose actions are unpredictable and beyond the dictate of reason.<sup>154</sup>

Secondly, the experience of Alhaji Idris indicates that the robbers had information prior to the robbery operation that their victim had brought a huge sum of money to the house. This underscores the role of informants in the perpetration of crime in Lagos and indeed, Nigeria. A 1990 research jointly carried out by the Federal Directorate of Investigation and Intelligence (FDII) and the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which was confirmed by Mr. Nuhu Aliyu, then the Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of FDII and Police Commissioner Oduoye, head of SARS, attest to this view. According to the report, active robbery in Nigeria was undertaken by youths between the ages of 18 and 29 who are aided by adults between the ages of 30 and 40 who act as their sponsors, receivers and sellers of stolen goods. The structure is completed with the category of people within the age range of 40 and 50 who act as targeters, that is, they identify potential victims.<sup>155</sup> This category of people occupies a very important place in the structure of robbers. They provide information on who is to be robbed.<sup>156</sup> The structure is further reinforced by accomplices who were local scavengers or day-time refuse collectors that hid weapons in refuse dumps in target areas as experienced by neighbourhoods in Bariga.

The act of robbery (excluding car snatching which is usually spontaneous although sometimes with an understanding of police beats and patrols) does not actually start with the actual attack but first with the identification and surveillance of the place and the person to be robbed and a study of the security arrangement in place (if any). It is this information that the targeters pass on to the robbers. A popular national radio jingle reminds us and rightly too, that robbers are not spirits. This is true as they do not have the powers to know what people do behind closed doors. Yet, as humans they live, listen, see and are guided by what goes on

around them. This is probably why Nkpa concludes that the victims of robbery play an important role in their victimisation.<sup>157</sup> While this is true given the experience of Alhaji Idris who had such a large sum of money in his house, information which his associates were probably privy to, it is important to also point out that it is sometimes unavoidable to keep money in the house. In the case of Alhaji Idris, the nature of his business (he was a bulk cattle dealer) was such that proceeds of daily sales could be brought to him at any time by his retailers. On that fateful day, the huge sum was given to him on a Saturday. Today, it is noteworthy that some banks operate on Saturdays probably in response to the needs of highly valued customers as Alhaji Idris although the banks too are not immune from robbery.

Finally, a major feature of robbery in Lagos that is important to note at this juncture is the response of victims at the actual time that they were being robbed. This has been varied and diverse as there had been victims that it is worth a separate study. At times, victims had pleaded for mercy and they had ended up being killed. Others had been lucky not to be killed. Many had not been as lucky as they had been raped as a result of which many hitherto peaceful homes and relationships had been broken. A story was once told of how a woman was raped in the presence of her husband. During the course of the intercourse, the husband felt that the woman was responding to and actually enjoying the touch of the rapist. Thus, the marriage collapsed. The marriage collapsed not because the woman was raped but because the man felt that his wife enjoyed the ordeal.<sup>158</sup> Not a few women, sisters and female children have become a psychological wreck after being raped by robbers. At least one and probably many unknown women had committed suicide following the nightmare. For male victims, they had usually been killed while some survived with minor injuries. From whatever perspective, the point is that the cost of robbery given the investment of the state in terms of fighting crime and the losses of the people in terms of victimisation and fears, has been incalculable.

## **Murder in Lagos, 1960 – 2000**

Violence was a major feature of Nigerian politics in the 1960s. The killing of party rivals and some innocent peoples were the manifestations of this ugly trend. A typical example was the post-election violence in the Western Region in October 1965 which left many people dead.<sup>159</sup> The January 15, 1966 coup d'état also introduced another violent and murderous dimension into Nigerian politics with the premeditated killing of high ranking politicians of the First Republic and some senior military officers.<sup>160</sup> In the aftermath of the killings, further violence erupted that culminated in the ethnic killings that took place first in Northern Nigeria and later, in Eastern Nigeria. The counter coup of July 29, 1966 also resulted in more premeditated killings which ultimately precipitated the Nigerian Civil War in 1967.<sup>161</sup>

Against this background, It is clear that partisan politics to a large extent set the stage for and dominated murderous activities in Nigeria in the first decade of independence as political parties, some ethnic groups and the military committed unlawful homicide, actions which overshadowed murders that were committed singly and devoid of political associations at least up till 1967.

## **Murder in Lagos, 1967 – 1975**

It is important to mention at the outset that it is difficult to reconstruct a history of murder, just like any other crime in Lagos since independence for some reasons. First, files of police investigations into murder cases, solved or unsolved, are rarely, if ever, made available to researchers. Apart from the fact that the police are suspicious of anyone asking for such information, their attitude also shows that information in police files is not for the public. While it is acknowledged that abstracts of crime statistics are now available for public scrutiny, it should be noted that statistics alone cannot and surely do not tell the whole story about crime. It is hoped that the recently passed Freedom of Information Bill will redress this

problem as no adequate crime prevention and control policies can be designed without the adequate historical study of crime in Lagos and indeed, Nigeria.

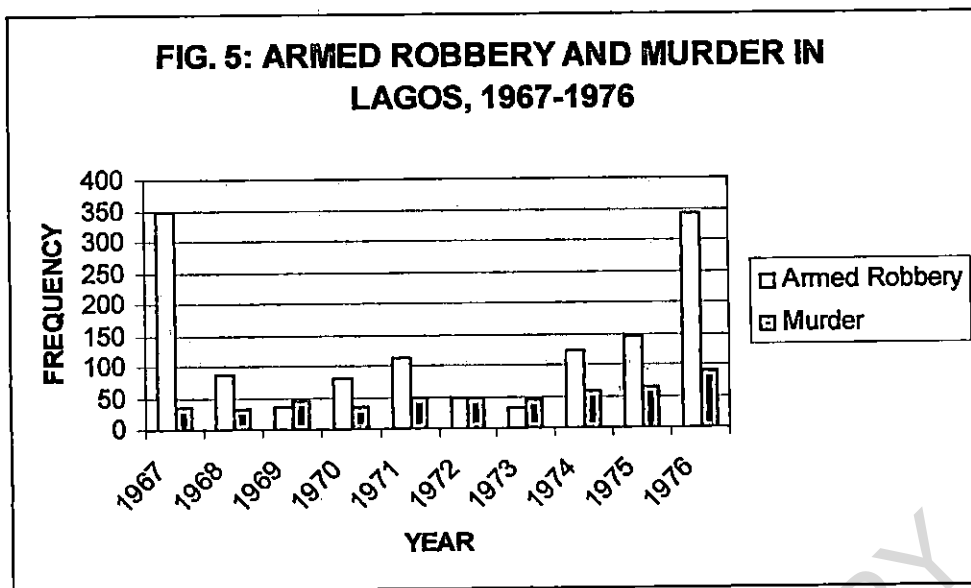
However, an attempt has been made through the checking and cross checking of newspaper reports, oral information, interviews, official crime statistics and available secondary sources to glean the nature of murder in Lagos since 1967 to arrive at this synthesis.

To start with, the table and figure below indicate that the offence of murder was comparatively lower than that of armed robbery in Lagos. This suggests that crime against property was more prevalent than that against persons except in 1969 and 1973 when slightly higher figures were returned for murder and in 1972 when the figure for robbery and murder were at par. Yet, it can be argued that most crimes are against persons since property are owned by people or institutions. Considered alone, the offence of murder recorded a steady increase from 1973 to 1976. Before this period, the crime had fluctuated. At times, as was the case in 1968 and 1970, decreases were recorded as against the figures returned in previous years.

**Table 6: Armed Robbery and Murder in Lagos, 1967-1986**

	Armed Robbery	Murder		ARMED ROBBERY	MURDER
1967	349	36	1977	656	191
1968	88	31	1978	1051	226
1969	37	44	1979	485	155
1970	81	37	1980	442	147
1971	114	48	1981	620	235
1972	50	49	1982	314	193
1973	33	45	1983	247	184
1974	122	58	1984	387	180
1975	144	63	1985	375	121
1976	343	90	1986	154	101

Source of Data: Godwin I. Oyakhiromen, "The Patterns and Trends of Crimes in Lagos State, 1967-96", PhD Thesis, The Department of Public Law, University of Lagos, pp. 180, 196. Graphic illustration by author.



Source of Data: Godwin I. Oyakhiromen, "The Patterns and Trends of Crimes in Lagos State, 1967-96", PhD Thesis, The Department of Public Law, University of Lagos, pp. 180, 196. Graphic illustration by author.

A notable feature of the offence of murder in Lagos in the late 1960s was that security men were at times the perpetrators and victims of the crime. Three cases are selected here for illustration. In the first case, a policeman and a soldier both attached to the Apapa Wharf security unit killed a senior army officer, Major Oluremi Roberts of the Nigerian Army in 1968 at the wharf.<sup>162</sup> Roberts was killed while driving through an area regarded as prohibited. The accused persons had challenged him and in defiance he was said to have pulled out a gun which he fired at Anthony Okpe who, claimed that in self defence, he shot and killed the officer. Adeniyi Oyefeso, the policeman, had also shot the officer in the leg.<sup>163</sup>

At the trial, Mr. Alao Aka Bashorun, who stood in for Okpe admitted that the incident was unfortunate but told the court to discharge his client on the strength of the argument that Okpe had a reasonable apprehension for his life. He noted that Roberts died in circumstances which are permissible by the law. He argued that the death was not unprovoked since Major Roberts brought out a gun, and the only thing Okpe could do under the circumstance was to fire in self defence. In his own submission, counsel to Constable Oyefeso, S.A. Adelana urged the jury to declare the constable not guilty of murder since the constable only shot the officer

in the leg to disable and not to kill Major Roberts who had a gun. He contended that the action of Oyefeso was justified by the police regulation. <sup>164</sup>

The prosecuting state counsel, Mr. Akintola Ejiwunmi however submitted that there was no question of self defence in the actions of the accused persons. He contended that Roberts had no gun on him and urged the jury to disbelieve the story of Okpe that the officer had fired a gun at him since there was no evidence to support Okpe's claim that he was fired at.

In his summary of the evidence, the trial judge, Justice Rotimi George declared that pointing a gun at somebody constitutes an assault and if the shooting was deliberate, murder. He noted that a policeman has the right to shoot a felon trying to escape arrest, to maim him or even to kill him in cases where the arrest was lawful. He further observed that the Armed Forces and Police Special Decree gave members of the armed forces and the police force the same powers of arrest. Consequently, he noted that both the accused admitted shooting at Major Roberts but they pleaded self-defence and justification respectively. Eventually, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty of murder. <sup>165</sup>

The second case involved another soldier, Lance Corporal Mustapha Shehu of the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Nigerian Army, Ikeja. He was alleged to have murdered one Mudashiu Jinadu at Osholake Street, Ebute Metta on July 18, 1968. <sup>166</sup> A key prosecution witness, Constable Sufianu Osho of the Lion Buildings, Lagos told the Lagos Assizes that he saw the deceased in a pool of blood minutes after he heard a gun shot from the house. He told the court that he and Shehu were in a combined team of army and police patrol on the day of the incident. He continued that as their patrol van approached the junction of Kano and Osholake Streets at Ebute Metta in the early hours of that morning, Shehu beckoned to a man that, they saw with a wrapped bundle of clothes to come. However, the man threw away the clothes and ran instead. <sup>167</sup>



The patrol team became suspicious and decided to pursue him. At No. 14 Osholake, Shehu jumped out of the van and ran after the man who had taken refuge in a room in the house while other members of the patrol team stood guard outside the house. Minutes later, a gun shot was heard and on getting to the room, he saw the late Jinadu writhing in a pool of blood. Meanwhile, the man that Shehu pursued into the house was there hiding in a corner. It was later learnt that the trigger of the Sub-Machine Gun (SMG) that Shehu was carrying was mistakenly pulled by someone in the room while the occupants were begging him to leave.<sup>168</sup>

The third murder case emanated from a quarrel which ensued in a household in Surulere on April 29, 1969.<sup>169</sup> The quarrel was between one security officer in a manufacturing company at Ikeja, Clement Aniedel and a couple, Lance Corporal Helma Johnson and his pregnant wife, Mrs Elizabeth Johnson of No. 3, Akinwande Street. Records are silent on the cause of the quarrel but it resulted in the death of the couple after they were stabbed with a foot-long dagger. Although the accused claimed to have killed the couple in self-defence, the 12-man jury after a long deliberation felt otherwise and returned a verdict of guilty of murder. The trial judge, Mr. Rotimi George, subsequently pronounced death for Aniedel by hanging.<sup>170</sup>

Two out of the three murder cases narrated above require further explanations. First, the murder of Roberts and Jinadu emanated from the discharge of the lawful duties of the accused persons. Second, the Jinadu case shows that a lot of care and restraint is required in the handling of arms and ammunitions by security operatives, that is, if it was true that the trigger was pulled mistakenly. In contrast, the Aniedel case shows the readiness of the law to deal with security operatives who violate the tenets of their profession by embarking on extra-judicial killing.

Meanwhile, and as noted in the colonial period, jealousy and other emotional issues continued to induce people to commit murder in post-independence Lagos. One of such

murders was the amazing story of a woman who killed her husband because he refused to have intercourse with her on request.<sup>171</sup> The man had gone for a stroll and on his return, the request for sex had been made, which he refused. This developed into a quarrel and as neighbours tried to intervene, they were scared away by the woman brandishing a cutlass with which she attacked the husband cutting him all over the body. After the incident, she abandoned their two children and ran away.<sup>172</sup>

In a similar vein, an expatriate from Italy shot and killed his girl friend, a Lebanese cabaret dancer for being unfaithful in January 1970.<sup>173</sup> He had found her in bed with another man. In anger, he shot both the girl and the man after which he shot himself in a house somewhere along Ikorodu Road. The lady died instantly while the man survived with serious injuries. The attempted suicide by the Italian however failed as the shot directed at his own brain hit his face. He was rushed to the Orthopaedic Hospital at Igbobi where doctors treated him.

Murders arising from jealousy reached a higher height in Lagos in 1971 when a lawyer murdered his wife, a trader who had a shop on Lagos Island, in a brutal manner after which he committed suicide. The couple, Mr and Mrs Sina Abina got married in 1964 and lived at the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB) Low Cost Block of Flats at Alhaji Masha Street, Surulere where the tragic incident occurred on the night of May 5, 1971.<sup>174</sup>

The couple had quarrelled two days before the incident. Sina had refused to permit Abike, his wife to honour an invitation from her friend to attend a house warming party. In a bid to prevail on him to change his mind, she intuitively told her husband that she would expect her friend to also honour her own invitation when her own house warming party comes up too. The husband was shocked. This is because until then Sina had no knowledge of the house that Abike was constructing. He asked her if she meant what she just said and she said yes noting that she did not build it with any one else's money but her own sweat. She also told

her husband that she would soon move alone into the said house. Sina was further alarmed at this outburst. Eventually, the party issue was resolved and they both agreed to attend.

At the party, Sina was greatly uncomfortable with the disposition of a young man who paid more than a friendly attention to his wife. He was practically all over her and naturally, Sina was jealous. To stop the trend, Sina repeatedly cautioned his wife who assured him that there was nothing to worry about, and when the young man persisted, he urged his wife to leave the party earlier than they had scheduled, just a little after midnight.

It is not clear whether Sina had thought of killing Abike at the party or had hatched the plan ever since the revelation of the secret house under construction. But the activities of the young man at the party and the thought of infidelity on the part of his wife, certainly led him to murder. At home, the couple quarrelled again before they went to bed. Abike was soon asleep. Sina, on the other hand was wide awake. Once he was sure that Abike had slept, he went to the kitchen to collect a knife which he used to stab her. The *Headlines* noted that he stabbed her about twenty times. Post-mortem examination confirmed that Abike died of multiple injuries consistent with that inflicted by a sharp object. Assured that she was dead, he left the house for an unknown destination immediately.

The murder of Abike was detected the next day by her maid who raised the alarm that attracted their neighbours. The Police were called in and investigation into the murder commenced. Police hunt for Sina soon commenced but this initially proved abortive. Later, his car was found parked along Ijora Causeway.

Five days after the murder of Abike, the decomposing body of Sina Abina was found by wood sellers on the edge of the Lagos Lagoon opposite the Old Niger House at the end of the then Yakubu Gowon Street, Lagos Island. The Coroner's inquest into the death declared that Sina Abina committed suicide by drowning when the state of his mind was unbalanced after having murdered his wife.

From the above, it is clear that the study of murder sheds light on the nature of marital relationships in Lagos. Indeed, cases abound where many hitherto married people had exited from matrimony traumatised, shattered and worse than dead. Morbid jealousy was at the root of the murder of Abike. However, the import of the incident should not be lost. Indeed, the experience of the Abina raises a lot of questions about what should be the ideal nature of marital relationships given our cultural context. First, should a woman have her own house or not? Among the Yoruba for instance, a woman is allowed to own property. Second, should she own the property after marriage, as in the case of Abike without the knowledge of the husband? Third, should a woman abandon her matrimonial home simply because she has built a house of her own? Fourth, is it normal for a man to be jealous to the point that he is not able to control the presence of another man around his wife? The historical study of the nature of marital relationships in contemporary Lagos since the seminal work of Kristin Mann, no doubt awaits the attention of budding scholars. Here, it suffices to say that Abike had a role in her victimisation.

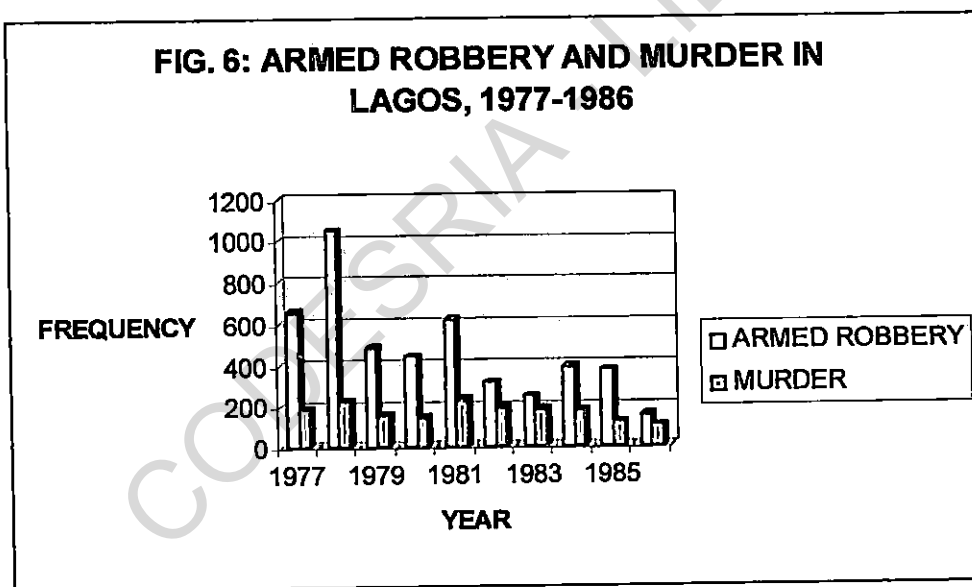
Land is a very important source of wealth and conflict in Lagos. It is therefore not surprising that land-related murders had occurred in Lagos. A celebrated case involved Ejigbadero, a very rich Egba man who planned and killed a man over a plot of land. To confuse investigation, he had organised a birthday party on the night of the murder to which he invited very senior police officers. At a point, it seemed impossible that the murder case would be solved. With time, however, it became clear that Ejigbadero was the one who planned and paid those who carried out the murder. He was subsequently tried and executed.<sup>175</sup>

### **Murder in Lagos, 1976 – 2000: Patterns and Trends.**

Nigerian leaders have done a lot to engender the culture of violence in Nigeria. As noted earlier, the orgy of violence initiated by rival parties and the military dominated the

political scene in the 1960s. While the politicians trained thugs and taught them how to set perceived opponents ablaze after dousing them with petrol, the military did what people like Alhaji Inua Wada, Minister of Defence in the First Republic, thought was impossible by planning a coup and murdering people.<sup>176</sup>

By 1976, a sitting Head of State was again assassinated in a botched coup led by Colonel Buka Suka Dimka. The coup plotters were subsequently arrested, tried and executed. The military under General Olusegun Obasanjo continued to rule until the inauguration of the Second Republic on October 1, 1979 when Alhaji Shehu Shagari assumed office as the first Executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. By 1983, political violence once again erupted in Nigeria leading to the destruction of lives and property. The figure below indicates the fluctuating nature of the murder rate in Lagos between 1977 and 1986.



Source of Data: Godwin I. Oyakhiromen, "The Patterns and Trends of Crimes in Lagos State, 1967-96", PhD Thesis, The Department of Public Law, University of Lagos, pp. 180, 196. Graphic illustration by author.

By October 19, 1986, a different kind of murder surfaced in Lagos. It was the killing of Dele Giwa, a journalist and editor-in-chief of Newswatch, a popular magazine in Nigeria. This was the first time in the history of Lagos and indeed Nigeria that a parcel or a letter bomb would be used to eliminate a victim. It was indeed a new dimension in the mode of

murdering people. The sophistication of the killing made many people to believe that it was masterminded again by the military since the technical device used could not have been available to the public.<sup>177</sup>

Events before the murder of Giwa also showed that he had dealings with military intelligence much more than usual before his death. The names of Haliru Akilu and Kunle Togun, both military intelligence officers under the Babangida regime lent credence to the feelings of the public that Giwa's murder was hatched by the military.<sup>178</sup>

Circumstantial evidence also suggests that Giwa's death was ordered to cover up drug barons who were either in the military or who had military backing. Specifically, the story was told of the arrest of one Gloria Okon, at the Alhaji Aminu Kano Airport for drug related offences on April 22, 1985 for being in possession of cocaine. She was subsequently detained but later declared dead in police custody under mysterious circumstances.<sup>179</sup>

Public opinion on the issue was that Gloria Okon was killed by drug barons who feared that she would expose or mention their names. The suspicion of the public was further heightened when at the receipt of her corpse, family members raised an alarm that the body was not that of Okon in spite of official insistence that it was hers. Later, public opinion was again heightened when it was learnt that Gloria Okon was seen in London. Dele Giwa was said to have interviewed her in London and was bent on publishing the story despite pleas from some quarters to desist, when he was killed via a letter bomb. Twenty years after this gruesome murder, the case remains unsolved.<sup>180</sup>

The criminalisation of the state was more intense during the regime of General Sanni Abacha. On May 23, 1996, Rear Admiral Olu Omotehinwa, a former Chief of Plans, Nigerian Navy and Flag Officer, Commanding the Eastern Naval Command was assassinated by gunmen at Maryland. The dreaded 'Strike Force' organised by Late General Sanni Abacha's Chief Security Officer, Major Hamza Al-Mustapha murdered a lot of people. According to a

confessional statement credited to a member of the hit squad, Sergeant Barnabas Mshelia, alias Rogers, he killed the late Alhaja Kudirat Abiola on June 4, 1996 for a paltry sum of ₦30,000.00 on the orders of Mustapha. <sup>181</sup>

According to him, the original plan was to rape her before shooting her but the circumstances under which she was shot did not permit rape. Other murders carried out by the squad include that of Pa Alfred Rewane and the attempted murder of other prominent citizens such as Senator Abraham Adesanya and Mr Alex Ibru. <sup>182</sup>

Again, Madam Abisoye Tejuosho, an octogenarian, the mother of the *Osile* of Oke-Ona, Oba Adedapo Tejuosho, was killed on September 19, 1996 in her Surulere home. Her body was macheted and mutilated. A former Chief Security Officer of the Nigerian Airports Authority, Dr. Shola Omatsola was also killed on November 14, 1996 when his car exploded. A bomb had been planted in his car and had been set off by remote control when he was driving along the Murtala Mohammed International Airport Road. He was blasted to pieces with his cousin. <sup>183</sup>

Later, the Presidential Task Force on Bomb Blast claimed that explosives were found in Omatsola's office and that the bomb that killed him was planted by the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO). In 1999, three years after the incident, Abubakar Tsav, then Commissioner of Police when the explosion took place made some revelations regarding the explosion. According to him, the police conducted a thorough search on Omatsola's office immediately after the blast and found nothing incriminating. A diary belonging to one Mr Kazeem was retrieved, and based on the content of the diary; some people including Chief Olu Falae were invited for interrogation. The detectives however concluded that the invited persons knew nothing about the bomb blast, and they were released.

Tsav contended that it was after this initial search by the police which revealed nothing that the Task Force on Bomb Blast claimed to have searched and discovered

explosives in Omatsola's office. According to him, the mode of discovery of the purported explosives was suspicious as detectives and members of the Police Bomb Disposal Unit were not aware or informed of the search. Abubakar Tsav therefore concluded that the Task Force should be held responsible for the planting of the explosives allegedly recovered to give the impression that Omatsola was responsible for the blast that took his life.<sup>184</sup>

Others killed during the regime of Late General Sanni Abacha were Alhaja Suliat Adedeji (killed November 14, 1996 in Ibadan for telling her political colleagues that Abacha had mental psychosis which made him violent and erratic occasionally) and Toyin Onagoruwa (killed on December 18, 1996 in front of his father's house).<sup>185</sup>

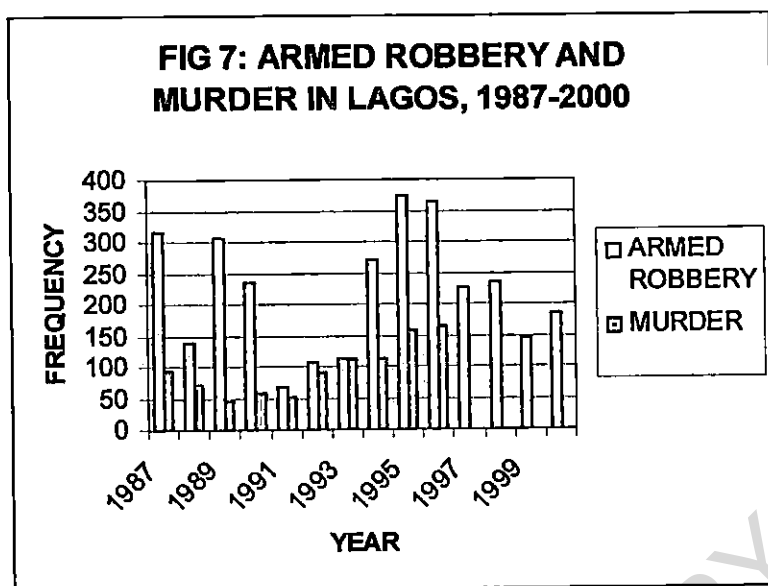
The table and figure below indicate that there was a steady increase in the number of murder cases reported in Lagos State between 1990 and 1994. Also, in a spate of four years between January 1994 and July 1999, a total of 7,380 cases of murder were recorded by the Lagos State Police Command.<sup>186</sup>

**Table 7: Armed Robbery and Murder in Lagos, 1987-2000**

	ARMED ROBBERY	MURDER
1987	316	92
1988	140	72
1989	306	44
1990	235	59
1991	68	52
1992	107	91
1993	112	114
1994	272	114
1995	375	157
1996	363	166
1997	226	NA
1998	234	NA
1999	144	NA
2000	185	NA

Source of Data: *Abstracts of Crime and Offences Statistics, 1987-1991*, Lagos: The Nigeria Police Force, 1993, pp. 3, 12, 16, 20, 24; *Abstracts of Crime and Offences Statistics, Lagos: The Nigeria Police Force, 1992-1996*, pp. 3, 7, 11, 15, 19; ; *Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2001 Edition*, p. 198. Graphic illustration by author.





Source of Data: *Abstracts of Crime and Offences Statistics, 1987-1991*, Lagos: The Nigeria Police Force, 1993, pp. 3, 12, 16, 20, 24; *Abstracts of Crime and Offences Statistics, Lagos: The Nigeria Police Force, 1992-1996*, pp. 3, 7, 11, 15, 19; *Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2001 Edition*, p. 198. Graphic illustration by author.

Meanwhile, murder through ritual killings was also common in Lagos. This form of murder has received little attention in the literature. A story was told of a couple who killed their son to get rich. Eventually, the deal did not work out as the concoction prepared yielded no result after the boy had been strangled.<sup>187</sup> In another incident, a pastor was accused in the Ikotun area of Lagos of murdering a young girl, Ayisat Akinyele, about 18 months old, for ritual purpose with the ultimate aim of getting rich. Indeed, he had told his congregation on the eve of New Year on 31 December 1998 that, as a servant of God, God will bless him abundantly in 1999. A day after, he lured Ayisat into his house, killed her, plucked her two eyes and other vital parts of her body before dumping the mutilated body in a bush about fifty miles from his house. Unknown to him, he had been under surveillance since his own children confessed that he had asked them to lure the child into their house. His house and Mercedes Benz car were touched by a mob.<sup>188</sup>

The undying tradition of ritual killings noticeable in Lagos is markedly different from what obtained in pre-colonial times. Supposedly, human sacrifices were carried out to purify the society in pre-colonial times but the modern version is mostly self-serving. In other words,

while many traditional rulers denounce the tradition openly, it has continued although now adapted mostly for greedy ends. Rumours of the existence of ritual homes exist. Testimonies have been given by various peoples in churches and mosques on how God intervened and saved them from the clutches of ritual killers in some remote villages along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway. At other times, some victims had recounted their ordeal in the hands of ritualists somewhere around the Badagry environs.

The experiences of undergraduate girls that had disappeared from school lend credence to the view that ritualists have been on the prowl in Lagos. Some unlucky female students have bled to death after their breasts had been slashed. A story was told of some undergraduate students who went to a party which turned out to be a bait to capture them for rituals, in one remote area in Ijebu. They were driven there in a bus. The destination, a lone house with high walls and heavily built gates and security dogs precluded the possibility of escape. But one of the ladies managed to scale the wall to tell the story.

Captain Hadiza Oboh, Nigeria Airways' first female pilot was murdered in her house on Bourdillon Road, Ikoyi on January 10, 1998 by the conspiracy of her domestic staff, Peter Eche, and Abdullahi, an ex-mai guard. They killed her and buried her in a septic tank. Thereafter, they collected her money both in local and foreign currency and started selling her property. It was the removal of property that aroused the suspicion of vigilant policemen working in the area. The curiosity of Constable Emmanuel Uvwa and Corporal John Job was aroused by this strange movement of property since Oboh did not inform them that she was relocating. On enquiry, Peter told them that his madam had travelled and had instructed them to sell off the property. Further questioning however revealed that his responses were false. The men of the Nigeria Police also inspected the building and found that it was virtually empty. This was the beginning of the investigation that was to reveal the death of Oboh and the arrest of Peter and the buyer of the property.<sup>189</sup>

Acid attacks have also surfaced as a way of killing people in Lagos. A thirteen year old student of Queens College, Yaba, Lagos, Miss Uwana Bassey was one of the victims. She was bathed with acid by an unknown person on June 23, 1999. She died later. The dastardly act was said to have been committed by a woman possibly on a vengeance mission. The unidentified woman assailant and murderer seemed to have been aggrieved by the behaviour of someone close to Uwana, possibly her mother. Uwana's mother had been divorced by her husband because she did not have a male child for him.<sup>190</sup>

Another acid induced murder occurred in Lagos over disputes that arose from the bid to control a motor garage at the Mile 2 Branch of the Road Transport Association of Nigeria (RTEAN). It is important to note that leadership change at motor parks in Lagos was often achieved by violence. In this case, the three men from a rival faction of the RTEAN were forced to drink acid while they were also bathed with the substance. Subsequently, twelve members of the association were arrested for interrogation and detained at the Homicide Section of the Force CID, Alagbon Close, Lagos for culpable homicide.<sup>191</sup>

Yet, murder arising from jealousy and passion continued in Lagos. A pathetic story of love turned sour took place in Lagos in December 1998. Basher Shape and Olatundun Anwo started a love relationship in August 1997. They vowed to be faithful to each other and even to settle down as life partners. Bashiru was a lorry driver while Olatundun was interested in furthering her studies. To assure that their relationship would endure, they went to an herbalist to swear an oath of blood in which knives and kolanuts were used. The oath swearing involved the soaking and the eating of the blood soaked kolanut by the lovers.<sup>192</sup>

Soon, Olatundun started another relationship and when reminded of her oath, would not listen. A major feature of the oath was that a misunderstanding between the two must not exceed a month. The two lovers however had a lingering quarrel, and on the day of the incident Bashiru went to her place to settle the quarrel. Rather than a settlement, however, he

stabbed her after which he injured himself by almost cutting his manhood into half. In the aftermath of the attack, Olatundun died while Bashiru survived the injury and was later charged for murder.<sup>193</sup>

In another development, a lady had set her fiancé ablaze in Aboru near Iyana Ipaja. The background to the incident started when she picked quarrel over the presence of another woman in her fiancé's apartment. Neighbours intervened and the woman said to be a distant relation was asked to leave. The woman subsequently went to the kitchen to prepare food which Apolo ate and after, went to bed. In what was reminiscent of the murder of Abike in 1971, she waited for him to sleep before she doused him with petrol and lit him up, and fled. Neighbours, who had earlier left the couple to sort themselves out, returned at the alarm of the victim, rushed in and took him to the hospital. But the severity of the burns led to his death.<sup>194</sup>

Again, land and related issues continued to induce the murder of many people in Lagos. A case in point was the death in 1999 of Sunday Uba and his younger sister, Ijioma in Ikotun-Egbe. An initial attempt on his life concerning a land deal had failed as he was able to overpower the assassin who was later charged to court. But the second attempt succeeded as he was shot severally. The attackers had come in as visitors on a business trip since Uba was a business man. It was alleged that Uba had bought a parcel of land for ₦400,000 from a land speculator who later came back to inform him that he would refund Uba's money since the land speculator's family had decided to use rather than sell the land. Uba agreed and said once the money was returned, he would return the documents of the land. The money was however not returned. Rather, he was murdered. The wife, Chinyere escaped death through the kitchen window.<sup>195</sup>

Meanwhile, robbery and murder using the experience of contemporary Lagos in crime are more interwoven than it was in the colonial period. Many robbery victims in Lagos had been murdered after their belongings had been stolen. The following selected cases buttress

this view. First, Engineer Adesoji Adebola Dina was attacked and killed by robbers at home in Gbagada in September 1998. Second, Robbers invaded Akinyele Street in Surulere and killed two young ladies and one young man in March 1999. Without any iota of resistance, and having surrendered all that they had to the robbers and lying face down, they were shot. The victims, Bose Esoregbe Isibor, a 400 Level Computer Science Student at the University of Benin, Onajite Biowovwi, a French Language Student and one Collins were shot dead by the robbers unprovoked.<sup>196</sup>

Third, in May, 1999, a supposed police informant was shot by robbers who paid him a visit at his Ebute-Metta residence. A businessman, Chief Oyedele Adebamiro was murdered by robbers in Ebute-Metta on the allegation that he was a police informant and that he was disturbing their activities. Numbering about twenty, they came to his house on Odunfa Street, broke the gate, shot his door open, collected some money from him, and shot him. He died the next day.<sup>197</sup> Fourth, the Eze Ndigbo in Ijora-Badiya, Chief Hassan Okafor was also shot and killed by robbers in Lagos in July 1999. The leader of the gang, Tajudeen Olajide, later alleged that they killed Okafor for his failure to give them a share of the proceeds of stolen goods that they gave to him to sell on their behalf. It was also said that the late Ndigbo gave them the three double barrel short guns that they used in armed robbery.<sup>198</sup>

Fifth, a former Sports Minister, Air Commodore Anthony Ikhazoboh was also murdered in Lagos by people initially dubbed assassins on Victoria Island in July 28, 1999.<sup>199</sup>. Later, it was discovered that he was actually killed by robbers because he resisted the attempt of the young robbers to snatch his car. This clarification was made by Mr. Mike Okiro who succeeded Sunday Aghedo as Commissioner of Police, Lagos State. He noted that the murderers were armed robbers and not assassins as earlier suggested by the police and the public. The five suspects included the son of a serving Assistant Inspector General of Police. The gang specialised in robbing rich people in high brow areas of Lagos.<sup>200</sup> Minutes before

the attack which led to the killing of Ikhazoboh, the robbers had snatched a Pontiac car belonging to one ALhaji Adeniyi Ariyo, a Lagos businessman with which they trailed the victim.<sup>201</sup> Sixth, Chief Anthony Anegbode Eromoscle, a businessman was killed in Lagos by bandits at his Ikoyi residence.<sup>202</sup>

Seventh, an Assistant Superintendent of Police Uwen Akpan of Okota Police Division was killed by robbers in October 1999. He had been recognised by a robber as a former member of the State Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) when he ran into a gang of robbers operating in Bode Thomas. To confirm his identity, one of the robbers searched and found a police identity card on him. He was shot dead.<sup>203</sup>

Eighth, the death of Isaac Ugwaneyi also came as an adjunct to a robbery operation foiled by a team of the Rapid Response Squad, a crime busting outfit put in place by Governor Bola Tinubu to replace Operation Sweep. The crime busters had intercepted a gang of robbers that was trying to rob a motorist of his vehicle at Costain Bus-Stop. In the process, there was an exchange of gunfire and the robbers had escaped. A member of the gang had, as part of the plan for the robbery operation hidden at a roadside pepper soup joint to survey developments. On being informed of the botched plan via the telephone by his colleagues, he decided to escape in the pandemonium that had ensued. In his bid to escape, he shot Isaac, the husband of the owner of the joint who he thought could identify him as a robber. He was eventually caught by the police who could not save him from being lynched.<sup>204</sup> The wife of Isaac thus became a widow with five children to cater for. The husband had agreed to join his wife in her business when he resigned from his company due to the non-payment of salary.

It is clear from the above that murder in contemporary Lagos had been committed by several methods and perpetrated for different reasons. People had been killed through assassinations, ritual killings, robbery, strangling, acid bath, plucking of eyes and removal of vital organs from the body. It is therefore not surprising that markets where fresh human parts

are sold exist in Lagos and elsewhere in Nigeria. Yet, it is important to note that Lagos has no recorded case of pathological murder in our period of study.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Times*, November 4, 1992, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> For general details on armed robbery, murder and other violent crimes in Nigeria see, Tckena Tamuno, *Peace and Violence in Nigeria*, Ibadan: The Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project, 1991, pp. 80 – 122. Also Olufunmilayo Oloruntimehin, "Crime and Control in Nigeria", in Hans-Günther Heiland, Louise Shelley and Hisao Katoh (eds.), *Crime and Control in Comparative Perspectives*, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992, pp. 163- 188.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Times*, Wednesday January 14, 1970, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Times*, Lagos, Thursday November 3, 1960, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph Austen, "Social Bandits and other Heroic Criminals: Western Models of Resistance and their Relevance to Africa" Donald Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*, London: James Currey, 1986, pp. 89 – 108.

<sup>6</sup> One of his criminal operations was the snatching of a bag containing £ 1, 500 from one Mr. Gabriel Raji Alli, the cashier of the Sterling Products Limited. See *Daily Times*, Wednesday January 7, 1970, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Babatunde Folorunso wore a lace material to the death stake on Saturday April 24, 1971 at the age of 28, hence the alias 'onilace' meaning 'owner of lace'. Consequently, a stigma was attached to the wearing of lace necessitating a juju maestro-Chief Ebenezer Obey to wax a record to admonish the people on the matter. See *Daily Sketch*, August 29, 1992, pp. 9, 12-13. Also *Sunday Times*, April 26, 1992, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Headlines*, No. 3, June 1973, pp. 3-5.

<sup>9</sup> *Headlines*, 4 July 1973, p. 8

<sup>10</sup> A Nubian was a Lagos coinage for a prostitute. It was derived from the fee charged by the sex workers which was probably fixed at two shillings. Hence, people used to say when trying to negotiate with them in pidgin "no be two shillings". It was this expression that was corrupted to 'no be' later 'Nubian'. Oral information, Mr. 'Dimeji Ajikobi, Lecturer, Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos, June 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Yetunde Francis, "Ladipo Gomes: First Judge to head armed robbery tribunal in Nigeria", *National Concord*, Friday Jan. 24, 1997, no page cited by Guardian Library

<sup>12</sup> Till date, Lagos has had twelve governors. Three of them were elected while others were appointed by the military. They are : Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson (1967 – 1975), Rear Admiral Adekunle Lawal (1975 – 1977), Rear Admiral Ndubuisi Kanu (1977 – 1978), Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe (1978 – 1979), Alhaji Latcef Jakande (1979 – 1983), Air Commodore Gbolahan Mudashiru (1984 – 1986), Commodore Okhai Mike Akhigbe (1986 – 1988), Brigadier Raji Alagbe Rasaki (1988 – 1991), Sir Michael Otedola (1992 – 1993), Lieutenant Colonel Olagunsoye Oyinlola (1993 – 1996), Colonel Mohammed Buba Marwa (1996 – 1999), Bola Tinubu (1999 – May 29, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Sandra Barnes, *Patrons and Power : Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos*, London : Manchester University Press, 1986, pp. 23-43.

<sup>14</sup> *Headlines*, No. 4, July 1973, p. 8

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Headlines*, No. 3, June 1973, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Interview, James Bob-Manuel, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Lagos, Friday December 2, 2005. Also Interview, Olubode Ojajuni, Deputy Superintendent of Police and Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos State Police Command, Oduduwa, Ikeja, Friday December 2, 2005. Justice Ladipo Gomes described Oyenusi as a very deadly criminal. See *National Concord*, Friday January 24, 1997, no page indicated by Guardian library. See also Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Monclos, *Violence et Sécurité Urbaines en Afrique du Sud eu au Nigeria: Un Essai de Privatisation*, Tome 1, Paris : L'Harmattan, 1997, p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> *Headlines*, No. 3, June 1973, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3 – 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *The Roots of Evil: A Social History of Crime and Punishment*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963, p. 247.

<sup>24</sup> *Headlines*, No. 3, June 1973, pp. 3 – 5.

<sup>25</sup> Although the idea of bank robbery is generally perceived as a violent act during this period, it should be noted in the light of future occurrences in Lagos and indeed Nigeria that bank robbery may also be non-violent especially in cases of frauds that left many banks distressed in the 1990s which consequently necessitated the setting up of the Failed Bank Tribunals by the Abacha administration.



<sup>26</sup> *Headlines*, No. 3, June 1973.

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

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Oral information from Dr. Dole Odunbaku, Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria. Pastor Kayode Williams now runs a ministry that is prison focused in Ibadan. He had also been a victim of robbery at least once since his repentance. Although, he introduced himself to the young robbers which made them to treat him with some respect as a retired member of the underworld, they however dispossessed him of his valuables.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Late Mr. Joseph Adeola was the Commissioner of Police, Lagos State during the arrest, trial and eventual execution of Oyenusi.

<sup>49</sup> *Daily Sketch*, August 29, 1992, pp. 9, 12-13.

<sup>50</sup> Under this section of the criminal code, the offence of robbery was liable to imprisonment for fourteen years. An offender was liable to life imprisonment if he was armed with any dangerous or offensive weapon or was in company of one or persons or if at or immediately after the robbery he wounded or used any other personal violence to any person. See Etamibi E.O. Alemika, "Criminal Violence and Insecurity in Lagos State, Nigeria", *Africa Peace Review, Journal of the Centre for Peace Research and Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 1, No. 2, October 1997, pp. 81 – 82. If the robber killed in the process of robbery, then the provisions governing would apply. In other words, he would be charged for both robbery and murder. It should also be noted that as early as the 30 January, 1967, the Federal Military Government had promulgated Decree 2 known as 'The Suppression of Armed Robbery Decree, 1967. It was this decree that first amended Sections 402 and 403 of the 1958 Criminal Code. Specifically, the decree increased the severity of the punishment for armed robbery to life imprisonment while at the same time expanding the powers of the police. See A.B. Dambazau, *Law and Criminality in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1994, p. 85.

<sup>51</sup> Alemika believes that the death penalty imposed on the offence of robbery without any consideration for the circumstance under which it was carried out, explains the growing viciousness of robbers in Nigeria. According to him, the increasing violence associated with robbery since 1986 resulted from the failure of the military decrees to graduate punishments. See Alemika, "Criminal Violence..." pp. 82 – 83.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Headlines*, No. 3, June 1973.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Headlines*, August 1976, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> It is important to note that the public execution of criminals was not a colonial creation.

<sup>58</sup> *Daily Sketch*, Monday November 24, 1997

<sup>59</sup> See *New Nigerian*, 3 May, 1984. Also *The Guardian*, 3 May, 1984.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *New Nigerian*, 31 July, 1984.

<sup>62</sup> J.A. Omotola and A.A. Adeogun (eds.), *Law and Development*, Lagos: Lagos University Press, 1987, pp. 312 – 330.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Daily Times*, 29 April, 1989.

- <sup>133</sup> *Weekend Vanguard*, July 26, 1997, pp. 3, 5
- <sup>134</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>135</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>138</sup> *Weekend Concord* October 14, 2000, pp. 11, 13. Also *Nigerian Tribune*, October 14, 2000, p. 4 and *Weekend Vanguard*, October 14, 2000, p. 2.
- <sup>139</sup> The gang confessed to robbing a branch of Zenith Bank in Ilupeju, Lagos at a point in time. Other banks robbed by the gang include: United Bank for Africa, Oyo; Wema Bank, Iwo; Afribank, Ikire; Standard Trust Bank, Minna; First Bank of Nigeria PLC branches at Lokoja, Ore, Ondo and Ile-Oluji.
- <sup>140</sup> Towards the end of year 2006, several bank robberies were recorded in Lagos. A former Commissioner of Police in Lagos, Emmanuel Adebayo had paraded suspected robbers who were accused of carrying out one of the attacks on the banks before his redeployment.
- <sup>141</sup> *Weekend Concord* October 14, 2000, pp. 11, 13. Also *Nigerian Tribune*, October 14, 2000, p. 4 and *Weekend Vanguard*, October 14, 2000, p. 2.
- <sup>142</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>143</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>144</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>145</sup> *The Guardian On Saturday*, September 5, 1998, pp. 13 – 14. Also *Sunday Vanguard*, September 6, 1998, p. 27.
- <sup>146</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>147</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>148</sup> *The Guardian*, September 4, 1999, pp. 7, 12.. Also, *Weekend Concord*, Saturday September 25, 1999, pp. 9, 25.
- <sup>149</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>150</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>151</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>152</sup> *Sunday Vanguard*, June 4, 2000
- <sup>153</sup> Alemika, "Criminal Violence...". Interview, Ojajuni.
- <sup>154</sup> Axel Klein, "Trapped in the Traffick : Growing Problems of Drug Consumption in Lagos", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32, 4, 1994, pp. 657 - 677. See also, Oyakhiromen, "The Patterns and Trends...", pp. 207-208.
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>156</sup> *Vanguard*, 29 December, 1990
- <sup>157</sup> Nwokocha K.U. Nkpa, "Armed Robbery in Post-Civil War Nigeria : The Role of the Victim", in *Victimology: An International Journal*, Volume 1, Number 1, Spring 1978, pp. 71 – 83. Oyakhiromen mentined in his study that taxi drivers were fingered by a robbery tribunal in Lagos as being the kingpins in the world of robbery in Lagos. This is probably because of the major role they play in conveying people to their homes and other destinations during which time they might be oppotuned to survey the environment of a potential victim. The list of targeters can be expanded by including women, and now young children. See Oyakhiromen, "The Patterns and Trends...", p. 216.
- <sup>158</sup> Late Wale Oyedele, Lecturer, Department of English, Olabisi Onabanjo University told me this pathetic story during one of the vcry stimulating academic discussions that we had before his death on 15 June 2006.
- <sup>159</sup> For further details on violence in Nigerian politics during this period see, Remi Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience*, New York/Enugu: NOK Publishers, 1982.
- <sup>160</sup> Akinjide Osuntokun, *Power Broker: A Biography of Sir Kashim Ibrahim*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 1987, pp. 99 – 117.
- <sup>161</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>162</sup> *Daily Times*, January 1 and January 3, 1970, p. 7, p. 1.
- <sup>163</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>164</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>165</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>166</sup> *Daily Times*, Wednesday January 28, 1970, p. 6.
- <sup>167</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>168</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>169</sup> *Daily Times*, Thursday, January 22, 1970, p. 1.
- <sup>170</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>171</sup> *Daily Times*, Thursday January 15, 1970, p. 19.
- <sup>172</sup> Ibid.

- 173 *Daily Times*, Monday February 2, 1970, p. 1 and *Daily Times*, Wednesday February 11, 1970, p. 1.
- 174 *Headlines*, No. 8, August 1973, pp. 11, 16.
- 175 *Daily Sketch*, 29 August, 1992.
- 176 Osuntokun, *Power Broker...*, p. 100.
- 177 Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *Beyond the Execution: Understanding the Ethnic and Military Politics in Nigeria*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, U.S.A.: Beyond the Execution Publication, 2000, pp. 29- 30.
- 178 *Newswatch*, November 10, 1986, pp. 18, 19, 20.
- 179 *Ibid.*
- 180 *Ibid.*
- 181 *The Guardian on Sunday*, October 17, 1999, p. 16.
- 182 *Ibid.*
- 183 *Ibid.*
- 184 *Ibid.*
- 185 *Daily Times*, 27 September, 1999
- 186 Agbola, *Architecture...*, p.4. Also, *ThisDay*, 14 September, 1999. Murder returns from 1997 to 2000 were lumped together for the country and could therefore not be distilled on state basis.
- 187 *Daily Times*, 14 August, 1999. Also *The Guardian*, 7 August, 1999.
- 188 *The Guardian on Saturday*, January 9, 1999, pp. 26 – 29. Also *Sunday Vanguard*, January 10, 1999, p. 18.
- 189 *The Guardian*, Friday April 23, 1999.
- 190 *Saturday Champion*, July 17, 1999, p. 3.
- 191 *Nigerian Tribune*, Saturday 11, September 1999.
- 192 *The Vanguard*, 7 February, 1999. Also *Sunday Punch*, January 3, 1999, p. 2.
- 193 *Ibid.*
- 194 *Daily Times*, 20 November, 1999
- 195 *Daily Times*, Friday, August 20, 1999, p. 19.
- 196 *The Guardian on Saturday*, March 6, 1999, p. 16.
- 197 *Weekend Concord*, Saturday June 12, 1999.
- 198 *Vanguard*, 6 October, 1999. Also *Daily Champion*, 7 October, 1999
- 199 *ThisDay* August 10, 1999, p. 10
- 200 *The Punch*, 22 September 1999
- 201 *Saturday Champion*, July 31, 1999, pp. 16 – 17
- 202 *The Guardian*, 27 August, 1999. Also, *Daily Times on Saturday*, October 30, 1999.
- 203 *Daily Sketch*, 9 October, 1999.
- 204 *The Guardian on Saturday*, October 9, 1999

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

On 3 September, 2007, a Security Trust Fund Bill was signed into law by Governor Babatunde Fashola to tackle the growing state of insecurity in Nigeria's industrial, commercial and social hub. This was the first time in the history of the state that such a fund would be instituted to address security issues. Yet, criminals, especially armed robbers seemed to have become more determined in combating the forces of order in the state. Indeed, not a few officers and men of the Lagos State Police Command have lost their lives while combating armed robbers since 29 May 2007.

Although, the rise in daring banditry in the state may be an indication that government efforts are yielding results, and that the Lagos underworld is getting jittery and trying to defend its sphere of influence, the recent upsurge in crime however underscores the essence of this study which sets out to know the nature and incidence of armed robbery and murder in Lagos during our period against the backdrop of the pervasiveness of these crimes in contemporary Lagos, and to shed light on how government and the people responded to them.

The study has shown that armed robbery and murder are two violent crimes that have bedevilled the city of Lagos since the pre-colonial period, and that just like Ibadan, its frontier nature in its formative years compounded its security problem. In other words, these crimes were neither created by colonial rule nor produced by post-colonial governments in Lagos. Before 1861, robbery had manifested itself mostly through the plundering and stealing of canoes. While murder largely resulted from relational intimacies during the colonial period, it was sometimes an adjunct of the daring act of stealing with violence during the pre-colonial period. The victims of plundered canoes were often indigenous traders although foreigners – Africans and Europeans alike – were also robbed of their personal effects.

The slave trade also helped to entrench a state of insecurity in the vicinity of the emerging city. Its pathways and trade routes were equally made unsafe by deserters and marauding soldiers linked to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the nineteenth century. The response of the traditional institution to the menace of plundering and stealing was to a large extent feeble as existing evidence suggested that this was the norm during this period. Again, political and dynastic disputes often rendered crime control inefficient as factions would normally plunder and loot property.

The emergence of colonial rule, however, began to transform the nature of crime control in Lagos with the formation of a police force that had powers to extend its activities to the nooks and cranny of the city and its outlying districts. The new system also adapted existing traditional institutions for crime control as village heads were made stipendiary policemen of their communities, and were answerable to the colonial government in Lagos. In short, crime control in colonial Lagos was not the sole prerogative of the colonial police but involved communities through vigilante groups as was the case in Ikorodu, Epe and the Ikeja Division. The success recorded in the adaptation of the Zangbeto in Badagry, for community policing between 1893 and 1936 also demonstrate the importance of communal solidarity in the business of policing Lagos. Although some members abused the system, it however proved a workable formula such that the police detachment in the area was withdrawn and re-deployed elsewhere. It is important to note as shown in the study that this effort at community policing was not without a cost as it was sustained by compulsory monetary contributions from members of the community.

Beyond this, the police on their part were largely reactive in their treatment of crime in our period of study. While government tried at various times to increase the strength of its police, the study shows that these increases were often inadequate. Under such a circumstance, public spaces were ineffectively controlled while criminal spaces multiplied.

While the death sentence was reserved for murder in the colonial period, it was shown in the study that this capital punishment had to be extended to armed robbery in 1970, and was implemented save for its suspension in the short periods of civil rule in 1979 and 1999. Yet, these crimes persisted although it was noted in the study that the application of the death sentence at times reduced robbery in the short run but had no enduring effect on the crime.

During the colonial period, armed robbery and murder continued unabated in spite of the centralisation of the system of crime control. Indeed, the system was lopsided and concentrated on the town, and thus, was more effective in the municipal area than in the outlying districts. Hence, robbery was more prevalent in those areas than in the town. This was one of the anomalies which the administrative re-organisation of 1937 came to redress. Besides, people who came from the interior and could not get jobs were often deported from the township of Lagos to the outlying districts. The immediate result of this kind of official response to unemployment and crime was that the township enjoyed relative peace while criminality continued to rise in the urban fringe.

Indeed, the colonialists had expanded the spatial extent of the city of Lagos which, by 1894 included the municipality, Lekkie, Badagry, Epe and Ikorodu. However, they could not cope with the police needs of the expanded and growing urban territory. In most cases, the police complained of shortage of manpower. The point was made in the study that the spatial expansion of Lagos stretched the colonial police which had to devise the ad hoc method of moving detachments to areas in need, a system which robbers soon learnt and took advantage of. The creation of the Native Authority Police for the colony area, after the administrative re-organisation of the 1930s also achieved little.

Meanwhile, the prosperity of Lagos attracted a lot of rural people to the city. A major characteristic of Lagos since the pre-colonial period is that it attracts a lot of people. In fact, some indigenous Lagosians believe that the continued prosperity of Lagos is partly dependent

on the continued influx of people into the city. In the words of Agiri and Barnes, the choice of Lagos as the preferred destination of many people is a process to which there is no predictable end.<sup>1</sup> This is true because the flood of migration into the city which is the commercial hub of Nigeria seems unstoppable. This is because most of the people attracted to Lagos are attracted for economic reasons. It has been shown in the study that when the economic expectations of people are not met, as was the case of Bello Jaguda, and Bariba migrant labourers during the Great Depression that started in 1929, crime often became the last resort. This tendency remained a constant feature of the entire period under study.

By the 1940s, the end of the Second World War and the demobilisation of officers further increased the tenacity of robbery in Lagos as trained ex-service men joined the league of robbers with dire consequences for the society. While robbers had used charms, machetes, clubs, sticks and Dane guns as weapons, the ex-servicemen introduced the use of revolvers. The proliferation of small arms during the Nigerian Civil War also contributed to the growth of these crimes while the increased involvement of serving police and military personnel as well as ex-service men in crime – retired or dismissed, made robbery more daring in the city. Other features of robbery during the colonial period were the formation of gangs by robbers and their membership of cults. Formation of robbery gangs in Lagos pre-dates the colonial period, and has remained a useful tactics to intimidate victims. Thus, robbery gangs numbering about thirty and above unleashed terror on villages (now towns), streets and roads in Lagos.

Members of secret societies also played an enduring role in the occurrence of armed robbery and murder in Lagos. It is important to note that there is a difference between the action of cult acting in unison and that of some of its members. A major finding in this study is that the membership of some dreaded cults in Lagos was put to criminal use by some members. As earlier noted, the celebrated case of Bisiriyu Apalara, a Muslim preacher that

was murdered in 1953 by a group of cultists acting on their own rather than in the interest of the *Opa* cult, was a case in point. The investigations were so brilliantly conducted that the culprits were tried, found guilty and executed within months of the crime. Indeed, it was suggested in the study that murder cases seemed to have been more efficiently handled and prosecuted in the colonial period than in post-independence Lagos. This suggestion is worth exploring in a future research. Besides, the use of magic or charms (juju) was found to be a constant feature in the perpetration and control of criminality in Lagos during our period. Surprisingly, women were found to have been active in the preparation of juju for criminals as exemplified in the case of Ishola Oyenusi.

Male dominance in the crimes studied was, however, not in doubt although they had female accomplices, especially in the post-independence period. Women also benefited from the proceeds of robbery, and were often the victims of murder. The offence of armed robbery in Lagos was mostly self-serving and a means of livelihood for those who engaged in it. This finding fits perfectly and confirms one of the five categories of social banditry enunciated by Ralph Austen as applicable to Africa. Armed robbers in Lagos just like the study of Amoo<sup>2</sup> showed in the case of Ibadan were mostly interested in cash, cloth and other valuables of their victims. It is interesting to note that in the colonial period, robbers would spare no effort in dispossessing victims of their valuables. As shown in the study, on one occasion robbers dug several holes in the room of a particular victim to dispossess him of his money that they thought was buried in the ground for safe keeping. The same dexterity was observable in the modus operandi of post-colonial robbers in Lagos. Again, the theft of canoes, bicycles and later, cars and motorcycles as well as bank robberies all attest to the fact that robbers in Lagos stole mainly but not solely for economic related reasons. In short, no Robin Hood was found in the crime experience of Lagos. Mighty Joe, a self-acclaimed Lagos Robin Hood was shown to be a common criminal. He was neither resisting oppression nor redistributing his loot.



Armed robbers in the pre-colonial and colonial periods were also shown to be vicious. In other words, the viciousness of criminals in contemporary Lagos should not be interpreted as their response to the brutality of the state and the people to their nefarious activities.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it is a continuation of what had been a constant feature of armed robbery in Lagos. This point is important because it demonstrates contrary to what is believed in some quarters, that being lenient or tough with convicted robbers in terms of reduced sentences or the death penalty has no direct bearing on their viciousness. For instance, and as shown in the study, cases of rape, maiming and killing of robbery victims recorded in the pre-colonial and colonial periods preceded the application of the death penalty or lynching to the offence of robbery.

Official responses to the incidence of robbery and murder varied during the colonial period. With reference to murder, the death penalty was strictly enforced as exemplified by the Alfa Bisiriyu Apalara case in 1953. The trend of relationship-induced murders also continued in post-colonial Lagos. This was typified by the experience of Sina and Abike Abina in 1971. Sina had murdered his wife, and thereafter committed suicide when he discovered that Abike, his wife, had built a house without his knowledge. This connection between murder and marriage, and other intimate relationships raises a fundamental question about the nature of our emotional relationships. By drawing attention to this link, the study hopes to stimulate serious discussions on the changing nature of our marital institutions over-time.

Again, the study also noted that the crime of murder became more elitist than ever before in the post-colonial period. This point probably explains why most murder cases remain unsolved. Unlike in the colonial period, when ultimate power rested with the colonialists, power now resides with the rich and highly placed citizens who, people believe, were behind these killings. In particular, ritual killing, as a form of murder, was found to have

been more prevalent in modern Lagos. Indeed, the point was made in the study that the tradition of ritual killing which colonialism and westernisation sent underground (where it has remained) had become very active, and was rapidly adapted from this secretive space for personal ends. The study suggests that there is a hidden economy of vendors, buyers and consumers of fresh human parts and blood on one hand, and on the other, another hidden economy of those who seek assassinations and the actual assassins. In that way, some people are 'employed' in Lagos without scruples.

Varied prison sentences were imposed in the case of stealing and robbery. The colonial government also enacted extradition treaties with adjacent authorities to tackle the smart idea of seeking refuge in such jurisdictions. Furthermore, the colonial government also changed its recruitment policy into the Police. Unlike in the early years of colonial rule, when people of shady character were recruited into the force, efforts were made to recruit intelligent men into the force. The poor wages paid to the policemen however made it unattractive for such calibre of people. The colonial government also embarked on the strengthening of the Nigeria Police Force in the area of equipment, welfare and personnel.

In the post-independence era, tribunals were introduced to try armed robbers. The promulgation of Decree 47 of 1970 applied capital punishment to robbery while there was preference for public execution. There was also preference for the formation of joint military and police task forces which usually recorded successes in the short-term but soon became inefficient with the passage of time.

Popular responses to robbery and murder were equally varied. First, fear of the criminal became rife in Lagos. Another popular response was the use of charms to fight criminality. The formation of vigilante groups, use of night guards and reinforcement of home and office securities were also some of the ways by which people responded to the menace of violent crimes in the city. Mob lynching also became a welcome alternative to police

inefficiency at tackling the menace of robbery in the state. Early closure of businesses and dwindling night life were equally responses to banditry in Lagos.

Yet, these crimes persisted due to the following reasons. First, law was better enforced in the municipal area than in the outlying districts of Lagos during the colonial period. In contemporary Lagos, police patrols are concentrated on the highways to the neglect of the streets and suburbs where criminal acts are hatched before they are carried out. Second, recruitment into the Nigeria Police Force has remained grossly inadequate despite the occasional increases since the colonial period. In 1999, the Minister of Police Affairs, Major General David Jemibewon (rtd.), recommended the recruitment of an additional 23,000 policemen annually to increase the strength of the Police Force from 175,000 over a five year period to achieve a ratio of one policeman to 600. If that suggestion was implemented, the country would have achieved a ratio of one policeman to about 500 people given the provisional figure of Nigeria's population put at 140 million in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

Third, greed, inequitable distribution of wealth, lack of contentment, and the 'craze for money' have sustained the occurrence of these crimes in Lagos. The robbery and murder problems in Lagos were no doubt intensified by a worsening politico-economic crisis. As such, the two violent crimes have become a profession of some sort. A critical look at armed robbery incidents and the personalities involved indicate that two sets of robbers are discernible. The first were those forced to make robbery a vocation because they had no sponsor or opportunity for gainful employment. In this category were graduates (Niyi Sowemimo, was a typical example), and artisans who had no money to set up or buy equipments after freedom ceremony. The second category is those who are greedy, and desire wealth through banditry just like pen robbers. In this category were bank robbers such as Jimoh Audu, Chief Adeola Oresanya and others.

The robbery epidemic is equally alarming in Lagos because youths are involved. While youth employment was the main reason for the involvement of youths in criminality during our period, it is important to note that the penchant for material gain is also at the root of youth involvement in banditry. It is even more alarming now because more undergraduates are getting involved. Campus-based cult groups are going beyond the confines of their universities to unleash terror on the society.

Essentially, this study has shown continuity and change in the perpetration of robbery and murder in Lagos in the period under study. It has equally shown continuity and change in the treatment of these offences in the same period. Although post-colonial governments in Lagos had introduced some measures in the fight against criminality, it is to be noted that these responses had hardly abated the problem of banditry in the state. This is because government often tried to decree or impose security from the top rather than build it from the ground or community level. As earlier noted, government often responded to the menace of banditry in the state with the creation of joint military-police task forces, increase in police strength, purchase of more equipment for the police and stiffer sentence for offenders. Yet, these have achieved little. It is in this context that this study recommends a policy shift in the approach of government to the menace of violent crimes in the state.

### **Recommendations for Crime Control in Lagos**

To start with, the seriousness of the offence of banditry and murder in the state makes it imperative for government to fund researches that would instruct the direction of crime control policy in the state. For example, difficult questions such as whom these robbers are and their background need to be answered. Another pertinent question is how many robbers do we actually have in Lagos? What is the actual percentage ratio of resident robbers to that of roving gangs in the state? What is the level of involvement of cults in the perpetration of robbery and murder in contemporary Lagos? Why is it difficult to solve murder cases in the

state? What is the ratio of occasional robbers to that of professional robbers? How do people become robbers and how do they get involved in the business of murdering people? When the decision to rob is taken, how do robbers move undetected to their target? What kind of escape plans do robbers hatch before carrying out a robbery operation? As shown in the study, Lagos robbers sometimes preferred to rob outside the state. Is this still the trend in modern Lagos? The colonial government sponsored such a research to answer some of these questions in the 1940s, and this is the practice in most developed countries. Furthermore, since anonymity is key to the commission of crime in the city, it is important to set up an institutional framework that would make it possible for government to monitor the influx of people into the state since as shown in this study, the criminality of Lagos was highly but not solely dependent on the influx of people from the hinterland.

One of the policy implications of this suggestion is that any crime prevention and control policy aimed at curbing or reducing criminality in Lagos, must first recognise and deliberately address the problem of unemployment that push people out of their homes in the villages and towns in the interior, and which make Lagos their destination. Thereafter, people should be supported financially by government to relocate and earn a living in the interior. In short, it is the destiny of Lagos to consider poverty and lack of opportunities within its cityspace and its vast hinterland as a potential danger to its security, and by so doing, take adequate steps to reverse the trend by systematically using its generative capacity to induce development in those less endowed places.

The point being made therefore is that Lagos might have a limited land space, but its reputation as a land of opportunities, extends far and wide, even across international frontiers, and this compounds its crime problem. Again, effective policing of Lagos should be embarked upon with the co-operation of the public while government embarks on the aggressive policy of reclaiming criminal spaces by clearing slums and redesigning unplanned

areas in the city. Indeed, infrastructure development and efficient social services can be used to address the problem of inequitable distribution of wealth in the state. For instance, if the Bus Rapid Transit programme (BRT) of the government succeeds, and people know that they do not necessarily have to own a car to move around comfortably in the state, this may affect their attitude towards car acquisition at all cost.

Also, since a street constitutes the primary unit of residential areas in the state, government can reduce the anonymity of the Lagos city by encouraging street registration to generate a database on its citizenry. Indeed, the recently concluded parallel census conducted by the Lagos government can assist in this regard, and should be made a regular feature of governance in the state. By so doing, strangers are easily identified, the burden of escape on a criminal – armed robber or murderer – is increased, potential criminals may be discouraged, and finally community solidarity against criminality would be enhanced. The emerging co-operation between government and corporate organisations to tackle security issues in Lagos is also commendable.

## **Contributions to Knowledge**

The following are some of the contributions that the study has made to knowledge.

1. The long-term perspective of the study offers an uninterrupted evaluation of the incidence of armed robbery and murder in Lagos in a way that enables a better understanding of the present state of insecurity in the city.
2. The study has established that prolonged economic crisis is at the root of sustained banditry in Lagos while events such as the Second World War and the Nigerian Civil War only had momentary impact on the offence. This is a crucial observation because thirty-seven years after the end of the Nigerian Civil War, and sixty-two years after the end of the Second World War, banditry remains a big problem in Lagos.
3. The study has drawn attention to the link between marriage and murder. By so doing, the study is capable of initiating new researches into this aspect of life in Lagos.
4. Generally, the study provides a sort of database from which future crime prevention and control policies could benefit.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> B.A. Agiri and Sandra Barnes, "Lagos Before 1603", in Adefuye, Agiri, Osuntokun (eds.), *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, Ikeja: Literamed, 1987, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Adebisola Amoo, "Armed Robbery in Ibadan, 1861-1960", B.A. Long Essay, Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.

<sup>3</sup> Alemika, "Criminal Violence...", pp. 82-83.

<sup>4</sup> *National Concord*, 11 October, 1999, p. 2.

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## **APPENDIX 1: NATURE OF OFFENCES PUNISHABLE IN LAGOS DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD**

Adulteration of produce

Attempted suicide

Attempted burglary

Attempting to convey letter into prison contrary to Regulation

Assault and battery

Assaulting and resisting the police in execution of their duty

Aggravated Assault

Assault and wounding with intent

Burglary

Behaving violently in the police station

Behaving irreverently near church

Being found by night in an enclosed premises for an unlawful purpose

Breach of contract of service

Causing Abortion

Committing Nuisance in the public

Convict prisoner escaping from lawful custody

Contravention of dog licensing Ordinance

Contravention of canoe licensing Ordinance

Causing obstruction in the public thoroughfare

Cutting a tree in a street without permission of Governor

Disturbing the peace by quarelling in the public street

Drunkenness and behaving violently or indecently in the public

Driving or riding bicycle after sunset without light

Embezzlement

False pretences

Falsification of account

Gambling

Going armed in the public so as to alarm the people and behaving violently therein

Having in possession by night house-breaking implements and charms with intent

Harbouring convict prisoner

Impersonation

Improperly refusing to be vaccinated

Interfering with convict prisoner outside prison

Larceny

Larceny and receiving

Murder

Malicious wounding

Manslaughter

Malicious injuries , wilfully damaging the lamp on electric wire

Navigating the lagoon without light

Robbing with personal violence

Slave dealing

Selling spirit without license

Unlawful possession of police uniform

Vagrancy

Wounding with intent to prevent lawful apprehension

**Source: PRO, CO 151/3, Lagos Blue Books of Statistics, 1863**

Appendix 2: Threat Letter from Robbers to Bale, Ijeshatedo Village, 1939

12

23. 3. 39.  
Iyalode Street,  
Orun ni Ile.

Gbadamosi Bale, Hanni Lemomu and Momodu Oba,  
a ki yin pupo, afe l'eti fi si eti igbo yin pe ki  
e so fun Murayimo ati Ojo Oyo, ode yin pe ki won lo  
ra otu o'd' ahaya to da won loju nitori egba wa bo ya  
l'eti be yin wo. Kehinde Oti Tayiwo, ata matasa, a  
ki yin pupo ki e lo re Atara yin daradara nitori a e  
so abawo yin, Asani Onisegun, matava laya niford  
po e ti mo pe Onisegun ni e, ti o ba si tawa l'aga,  
e ba wa ni ibe. Anana Iya Egbe Adugbo, onu so fun  
e pupo, sugbon ki ovo oke ati ile gege bi won ti siun  
si ile nitorina ma mura wa bile.

Egbe pari iwa ni ihin.

Awa Okote Igbale  
Olari O. O. Okitipupa.

Source: NAI, Comcol 2, G 80, "Ikeja District: Police Protection"

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3	Olubode Ojajuni,	Adult	Deputy Superintendent of Police (now Superintendent of Police) and Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos State Police Command	Ditto	Oduduwa, Ikeja.	Friday December 2, 2005	Reliable
4	Dr. Dele Odunbaku	Ditto	Lecturing	Oral Information	Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State.	October, 2006	Reliable
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6	Dr. 'Yomi Akinyeye	Adult	Lecturing/Professor	Oral Information	Department of History and Strategic Studies, University of Lgos, Lagos.	May 11, 2005	Ditto
7	Chief Obanikoro	Adult	Head, Ogalade Chiefs in Lagos	Oral Interview	Iga Obanikoro, Lagos Island	September 4, 2006	Ditto
8	Kayode Olaniyi	Adult	Deputy Superintendent of Police	Oral Interview	Lagos	Friday December 2, 2005	Ditto
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10	Chief Anibaba O.	70	Traditional Ruler/Baale, Odiolowo, Mushin	Oral Interview	Baale Compound, Mushin, Lagos	22 November, 2005	Reliable
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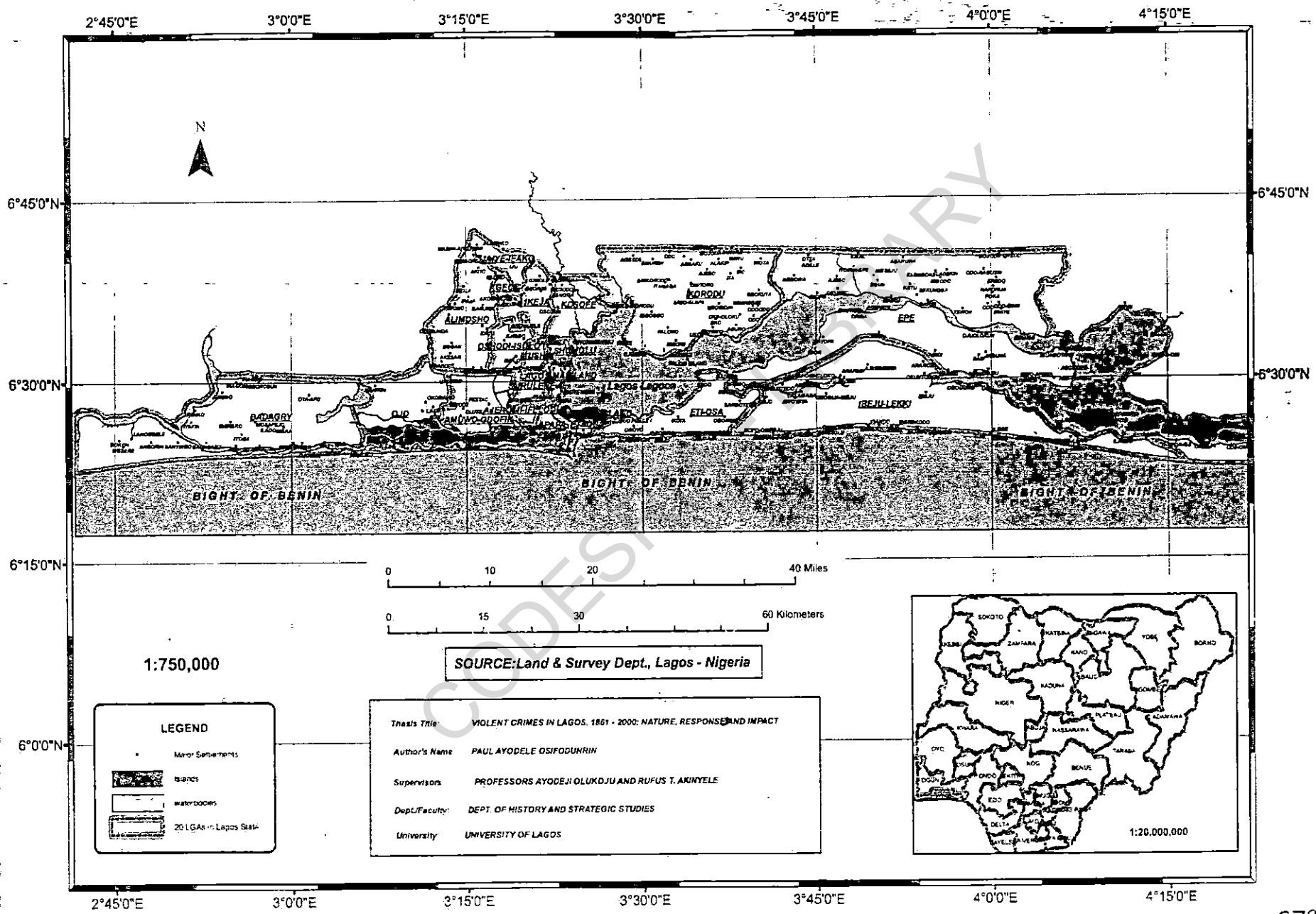
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# Map: Showing the 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Lagos State



1:750,000

SOURCE: Land & Survey Dept., Lagos - Nigeria

**LEGEND**

- Major Settlements
- ISLANDS
- WATERBODIES
- 20 LGAs in Lagos State

*Thesis Title:* VIOLENT CRIMES IN LAGOS, 1861 - 2000: NATURE, RESPONSE AND IMPACT

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