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FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

THE HISTORY OF PROSTITUTION IN BEITBRIDGE 1950-1979

BY

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APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have supervised, read and recommend to the Midlands State University for acceptance of dissertation entitled: **The history of prostitution in Beitbridge 1950-1979** submitted by **Itai Matimba (R133076M)** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Bachelor of Arts in History Honours Degree**.

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DECLARATION

I, Matimba Itai, declare that the work I have submitted is my own effort and it has not been submitted before for any degree purpose or examination at any other university. I declare that all sources I have used in the Dissertation have been indicated and acknowledged. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts in History Honours Degree at Midlands State University.

Signature.....

Date...../...../.....

DEDICATIONS

This research is dedicated to my mother Elizabeth Musuka, my husband Respect, my sisters Memory, Otilia, Tendai, Doroth and my brothers, Henry, Murambiwa and Manners for their financial support throughout the time I spent at school.

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My gratitude to my supervisor Dr Chakawa J whose continuous guidance enabled me to come out with this research. Without him less would have been done.

ABBREVIATIONS

UAC.....URBAN AFRICAN COURTS

ICA.....INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION ACT

HLA.....HARMFUL LIQUORS ACT

CLA..... CUSTOMARY LAW ACT

ABSTRACT

The research examines the history of prostitution in colonial Beitbridge from 1950 to 1979. It discusses the coming of women to Beitbridge and the origins of prostitution. The intensification of colonialism forced men into migrant labor. This exposed women to rural poverty since they were left alone taking care of themselves as well as the children. The colonial state preferred male labor and women were denied access to urban life. Women migrated to the town as traders and a few lucky ones were employed as domestic workers. However the success of African women entrepreneurs threatened the colonial state and laws were instituted to deny African women access to town as well as freedom to trade at the urban markets. With this, women were left with no choice except engaging in prostitution which led to the outbreak of venereal diseases. Archival sources, interviews, memos and secondary sources were used to come up with a convincing research.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Beitbridge town was founded in 1929 and was named after Alfred Beit, a British citizen who found the De Beers diamond mining company.¹ The development of the towns triggered the beginning of black men migration from their rural homes to the town followed by women migration which laid fertile ground for the genesis of prostitution.² This research hence examines the history of prostitution in boarder area of Beitbridge. It covered areas on how women entered Beitbridge during the colonial period as well as the origins of prostitution. The study also focuses on colonial rule and sexuality of African women, looking at the pieces of legislation put by the colonial state to deny them access to urban life. The research also focuses on how African women dealt with ravages of prostitution in Beitbridge

The development of towns during the colonial period made prostitution to become rampant in colonial African countries. Forced migration from rural areas to urban areas became the order of the day in colonial Africa and specifically in Zimbabwe. Many black men found themselves working in urban areas where they were given bachelor wages not enough to support their polygamous families in rural home. Poverty and hunger ravaged the rural families which were now headed by women. This was followed by the migration of women to urban areas to seek job opportunities. However women were considered notorious and were not welcomed by the colonial authority in towns. Job opportunities were only for men and many African women were only employed in the domestic sphere working in whites' yards as domestic workers. Those who failed to secure jobs were left with no choice except engaging in prostitution since they were well paid for their service.

The colonial policies on labor migration would have also forced women to migrate to urban areas. In short the male exodus triggered an unprecedented rise in rural insecurities marked by irregular and absent remittance, the breakdown of marriages and betrothals as men completely abandoned their women and children or stayed away longer. In this context the colonially instituted male centered migrant system exposed women to extreme suffering and vulnerability within their own homelands and ironically constituted the conditions impelling them to plunge into migrant stream.³ However when they arrived in urban areas they found life to be different from what they expected. Only a few managed to secure jobs in the domestic arena whilst the rest had to rely on buying and selling which became the basis of their lives. In colonial Beitbridge, the government upon realizing the growth of women population in town went on to endorse pieces of legislation to curtail their mobility. This made it more complicated for African women to survive independently in the urban area. The hostile laws which were imposed against them made it difficult for them to continue buying and trading in urban markets. Most of them hence opted to become “ladies of the night” which directly led to the outbreak of venereal diseases.

To deal with the issue of venereal diseases African women prostitutes employed many measures which include the use of African traditional medicine and herbs which became the dominant healing practice, some embraced spiritual healing while others made use of science-based methods which were brought by the Europeans. In dealing with violent men they used husband taming herbs, persuasions, disguising marriages for example *mapoto* marriage and some opted to be paid before performing the services.⁴ A mood associated with parties and wedding was created when a prostitute died. Dancing, ululating and sexuality works of the deceased were displayed by the other sex workers who attended the burial. The prostitutes would even remove their underwear waving them in the sky whilst singing different songs with sexual connotations.

Statement of the problem

Before the coming of independence, prostitution has been a perennial problem in Rhodesia and it remained a problem in post independence Zimbabwe. Many scholars have produced a lot of researches on prostitution with much of their work tends to focus on contemporary issues of prostitution that is the causes and effects of prostitution with little attention paid to prostitution during the colonial period. Also many of their studies paid much attention to prostitution in Europe, America as well as other parts of Africa with little of their focus on the origins of prostitution and how the colonial rules, polices, acts and regulations provided a fertile ground for the rise of prostitution in colonial Zimbabwe and Beitbridge in particular.

Moreover a lot of research work has been done on prostitution and the outbreak of venereal diseases during the colonial period. However the researchers did little to document the methods which were employed by the African women to deal with the venereal disease as well as to deal with violent men which are another important gap this research is intended to fill.

Objectives

1. To discuss the history of prostitution in Beitbridge.
2. To assess the attitude of colonial authority towards prostitution as well as examining the policies they employed in Colonial Beitbridge
3. To identify the measures taken by sex workers to cure venereal diseases, how they dealt with violent clients as well as how they mourned their dead

Research questions

For a clear understanding of this study, research questions are going to be used as guidelines of the study. Some of them are as follows

1. How did prostitution originated in Beitbridge during the colonial period?
2. What was the general attitude of local government authorities towards women?
3. How did women deal with venereal diseases and violent men?
4. How did prostitutes mourn their dead?

Historical background

The advent of colonialism witnessed the formation of towns. This development forced the migration of African men from rural areas to urban areas where they were employed by the colonial masters in the industrial sector. Many black men found themselves working in urban areas where they were given bachelor wages not enough to support their polygamous families in rural home. Poverty and hunger ravaged the rural families which were now headed by women. This was followed by the migration of women to urban areas in a bid to seek job opportunities. However women were considered notorious and were not welcomed by the colonial authority in towns. Job opportunities were only for men and many African women were only employed as domestic workers. Since Beitbridge town was more like a market square, women resorted to buying and selling of vegetables, tomatoes as well as home produced beer to earn a living. Upon realizing the success of African women entrepreneurs the colonial state went on to impose laws to do away with African women especially at urban markets. This forced many African women to shift from buying and selling activities adopting prostitution as a means of surviving hence as a result prostitution became rampant in colonial Beitbridge.

Literature review

This part analyses and makes a review of work from other writers on prostitution and acknowledges how these scholars give an insight in this study. A considerable amount of work on prostitution has been written in many areas but few have been written specifically on Beitbridge. The formation of towns during the colonial period encouraged the influx of black population in urban areas. The activities which were done by the colonialists such as mining, railway, road and bridge construction would have facilitated the migration of black employees in urban areas as a labor stabilization plan.⁵ Van Onselen goes on to explain the growth of women population in mining and construction camps in colonial Zimbabwe. This study approached the issue of prostitution by tracing its genesis from the colonial era.

Sanger is of the view that prostitutes were common among the Jews before Christ.⁶ When Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah, desired to defeat the cruel Jewish custom and to bear children, notwithstanding her widowhood, she put her widow's garments off from her and covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself and sat in an open place. When Judah saw her, he thought her harlot for she had covered her face.⁷ This account therefore shows that prostitution was common even before colonization, industrialization and urbanization. William Sanger's work is acknowledged in this study as it gives the researcher an insight on the origins of prostitution. A lot of information was borrowed from him. However the study differs from his since the researcher looked at prostitution without using a biblical context. More so, sex work in Beitbridge is unique and can never be compared with the history of prostitution written by other scholars who looked mainly at prostitution in Europe and America like what William Sanger did.

Robertson argues that the colonial state provided a fertile ground for sexual activities in Zimbabwean colonial towns by discouraging African women education and job opportunities. African women lost ground as men gained education necessary for wage

employment and capital accumulation.⁸ Supporting the above Staudt also argues that throughout the colonial period, African women consistently lagged behind in education and thus failed to acquire skills needed. If they received training, it usually emphasized in the domestic skills and preparing for being “better wives and mothers.” Few women became qualified for wage labor and even fewer for professional position. Employed women usually performed low paying, unskilled job connected to the domestic area. As these regulations took force, the status and potential prosperity of men and women increasingly diverged.⁹ The study therefore seeks to add some of the crucial factors which led to the rise of prostitution.

Industrial development and the creation of towns were also considered as the main cause of prostitution by Van Heyningen.¹⁰ Due to urbanization and industrialization men were forced to migrate to urban areas leaving women alone at home without food and some then opted to sneak into urban areas to become sex workers. This was followed by outbreak of sexually transmitted diseases and hence led the local authority to expel unmarried women from urban areas. In 1913, all the major transit routes which were used by women to migrate to urban areas were blocked to curb the influx of women in urban areas.¹¹ The presence of African women and their children in urban areas created economic problems for the colonial employers who enjoyed an act of giving workers bachelor wage as they were regarding black workers as singles without families to support. In addition, fear of sexual contact between black men and white women led the whites to later on tolerate the existence of few black women who worked as domestic workers in their homes. This was also done in order to curb sexual contact between black garden boys and white men’s wives.

Samasuwo also postulate that division between black race and white race became an instrument used to create the myth that whites were superior than the blacks.¹² Those black women who managed to migrate to urban areas desired to be married to the white men since

they were regarded as superior than the blacks. Most black women became white mistress hence prostitution was rampant. Samusawo's work on African crime in colonial Zimbabwe covers the whole country. The researcher for that reason wishes to depart from his work where he looked at colonial Zimbabwe as a whole and specifically focus on reconstructing the history of prostitution in colonial Beitbridge.

Historians like Cutrufelli put forward the colonial administration policies on labor migration and intermarriages as the main cause of prostitution in colonial Africa.¹³ He further argues that, women in rural areas could no longer manage to do all the house work and agricultural activities in the absence of their husbands.¹⁴ These circumstances later on drove women into urban areas to seek for employment. Those who failed to get jobs were therefore forced into prostitution in order to support their families back home. This research will be looking at colonial Zimbabwe and specifically the origins of prostitution in Beitbridge border town. Also the researcher conducted interviews and face to face discussions with the people above the age of 50 who were in Beitbridge during the colonial period and retrieve more information on how women managed to enter into urban areas despite the fact that they were considered as a menace and how then they became prostitutes which is the most important gap this study is trying to fill.

Elizabeth Schmidt in her study of patriarchy and capitalism argues that women were considered as problematic and were confined to rural areas.¹⁵ She went on to say that, colonial employers urged the rural patriarchy not to allow African women to migrate to urban areas and it was all an effort to curb prostitution which was at its peak.¹⁶ However despite all the colonial employer's efforts, women kept on coming to urban areas with a wish to search for job opportunities. Lack of job opportunities later on maximized the desperateness of women leading them resorting to prostitution.

When talking about prostitution and sexuality in Zimbabwe, the influence of colonialism cannot be ignored as it comes to the forefront of much debate.¹⁷ The origins of prostitution is claimed to have been a colonial invention and not an African culture. In Zimbabwe, sex work is believed to have increased a lot during the colonial period because of an increase of European settlers in the country.¹⁸ Maunze's research is acknowledged in this study since it also focus on the origins of prostitution in colonial Zimbabwe. However although Maunze's research proved to be of greater significance, it lacks breath on the history of prostitution since she focused much on contemporary issues. Therefore this study try to find more information to fill the gap though a lot of her ideas will be included in this research.

Mudeka asserts that women faced brutal inspections, arrests and repatriations in town as the colonial regime wanted women to return back to their rural home. Their ability to stay in urban areas was curtailed by the colonial officials.¹⁹ Mudeka further argues that the marginalization of women on job opportunities and the rules and regulations adopted by the colonial masters marginalized women. The colonial regime monitored colonial cities based on the racial principle that the urban areas were no go areas for Africans. They wanted to keep the city exclusively white. However although the colonial states therein sought to deny women's access and primarily preferred male workers in urban areas they challenged such policies and continue with their informal jobs and many of them resorted to prostitution accumulating wealth in order to earn a living and support their families in rural areas.²⁰ Her work acknowledged in this research however Mudeka's research mainly focused on African migrant women who were from Malawi living in Salisbury without much focus on women coming from local rural areas of Zimbabwe which is the most significant area this research is trying to cover.

Sources and methodology

The research approach is qualitative in nature. The researcher preferred qualitative approach because the research focused on inquiring the participants' ideas on prostitution in the area and their understanding on the origins and development of prostitution in Beitbridge. Qualitative approach was also used because it enabled the researcher to gather information from the participants through interviews and focused group discussions.

Interviews were used for data collection. These are face to face interpersonal role situation in which one person, the interviewer asks question to the respondent.²¹ Interviews targeted those people who were in Beitbridge during the colonial period. Interviews were conducted with those from 55 years and above who volunteered and respondents were allowed to terminate the interview whenever they feel to do so. The researcher used languages participants could understand at times using Venda and Ndebele since the area under study is in Matabeleland. Face to face interviews were used on both literate and illiterate population in order to get detailed information from the respondents. Schmade and Mcmillan are of the view that, when both literate and illiterate people are used the research becomes successful as they both express their feelings.²² Interviews are less expensive and they help one to have deep understanding of issues. Interviews also allow mere detailed questions to be asked. However it is time consuming. Interviews can also be costly especially on arranging meeting and visiting the interviewees since the might be a distance from the researcher's residence. Despite the afore mentioned challenges, the researcher find a day to meet those who failed to come for the interviews. This was done by the researcher in order to come up with detailed information required in this research work.

Archives were also used to gather information in this research. These are crucial as it provide with first hand information. Archives are also useful since most of the materials can never be reproduced and only exists in its original form. Disadvantages of archival sources include

data sometimes maybe incomplete. Also the previous research may have been collected according to the researcher's interest. Marwick is of the view that, primary sources are essential in collecting data as the researcher has access to personal diaries, eye witness and letters.²³

Focus group discussions were conducted to edify interviews. These discussions were conducted in Beitbridge town in Dulibadzimo suburbs with women from 55 years and above to get the most appropriate information on how prostitutes dealt with sexual transmitted diseases during the colonial period. The researcher led the discussion sourcing information through asking relevant questions. The advantages of focused group discussion as a tool for collecting data is that it is reliable since the researcher will have a face to face conduct with the participants and this reduces bias as the participants tend to tell the truth when doing discussions. This method also helps the researcher to obtain first hand information on how prostitutes dealt with venereal diseases as well as violent men during the given period.

However this method has challenges since some people always lie even if they are doing discussions especially those who were involved in prostitution would tend to hide information in order to protect themselves since prostitution is regarded as a dirty job linked with evils. As a solution, the researcher first established friendship with the targeted group and were free to give the required information.

Secondary sources were used in this research. This is the use of periodicals and written records in data collection. Written records which include textbooks, journals, published and unpublished articles are going to be used to get more information needed by the researcher. This provides the researcher with second hand information. These are important in providing the analyzed views of scholarly works. Secondary sources are readily available which made easier for the researcher to get more information of historical events. However secondary

sources are not arranged so there is time-consuming in grasping specific issues. More so, secondary sources in many times generalize accounts and other issues in specific areas can be left out.

Due to availability of technology, the researcher also used the internet to retrieve more information. The internet provided a lot of rich information which was used. However using the internet as a source of information was a challenge to the researcher as some need to be paid online to access information which was costly. In addition, some information was irrelevant to the research work which made the internet based method to be of less value to the researcher.

Written records which include textbooks, published and unpublished articles as well as journals were used to get more information on prostitution. The biggest advantage of using written records is that it is economics since someone else has already collected the data, so the researcher does not have to devote money, time, energy and other resources to this phase of research.²⁴ In addition, written records like textbooks provided important information which include previous arguments from other scholars.

Undoubtedly written records have their own drawbacks. The major disadvantage is that, they may not answer the researcher specific research questions or contain specific information that the researcher would like to have.²⁵ Moreover, the use of written records such as textbooks and journals is time consuming since a lot of analyses of the documents need to be done in to acquire the most needed information for the research.

Despite all the challenges associated with each and every method, the researcher shall vary her methods to have accuracy in her findings. This will give a balanced research and will help to figure out all the information needed to come up with a convincing research work.

Dissertation chapter arrangement

The introductory chapter contains background of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, methodology, significance of the study, literature review as well as layout of the chapters and summary. Chapter one examines and discusses the history of prostitution in Beitbridge. It goes further to focus on the coming of women as well as the origins of prostitution in colonial Beitbridge. Chapter two is a discussion on colonial rule and the sexuality of African women. Chapter three is an examination on how African women managed to deal with ravages of prostitution in Beitbridge, looking on the mechanisms they employed to deal with sexual transmitted diseases as well violent men. It also goes further to focus on how prostitutes mourned their dead in colonial Beitbridge. A detailed conclusion is given after the completion of chapter three.

END NOTES

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CHAPTER ONE: THE COMING OF WOMEN INTO COLONIAL BEITBRIDGE AND THE GENESIS OF PROSTITUTION

1.1 Introduction

The chapter is going to focus on the coming of women as well as the origins of prostitution in Beitbridge during the colonial period. After Beitbridge border was constructed, the town developed as a trade route which linked Rhodesia with both African and international countries. Beitbridge also developed as a market square where the majority people came to sell their foodstuffs and it was also a terminus to Pretoria before the railway connection to Rutenga was constructed.¹ Its formation was meant to cater for only few workers and was only meant for men. Women inhabited the place as a way of surviving from both South Africa and Rhodesia. Job opportunities were only a benefit to the black men. Women were considered as trouble makers in urban areas and were not even welcomed in towns by the colonial authorities. The fact that job opportunities for women were limited forced them to earn a living through selling home produced beer, grains as well as vegetables. Those who failed to produce desired profit from selling later on opted to sell their bodies as a way of surviving and supporting their families back home hence the genesis of prostitution in Beitbridge. However although women were not welcomed by the colonial regime in urban areas, the authority later on opened the route for African women into towns in order to keep men inside the compounds. The increase in number of women in urban areas hence led to the rise of prostitution.

1.2 The coming of women into colonial Beitbridge and the genesis of prostitution

Women in colonial Zimbabwe were disadvantaged since they lost access to their economic resources. Mrs Ndou who resides in Beitbridge made it clear that, women came to Beitbridge as a way of earning a living through selling since they have lost access to land. She further her argument saying that, after the colonial regime took fertile land from the blacks, women from local areas of Zezani, Chapfuche, Tshidixhwa, Makakavhule, Mahafha and Chamnanga and other nearby areas flocked to Beitbridge as traders, selling traditional beer made from amarula tree as well as vegetables.² Those who failed to make desired profit later on fell in love with black male workers who supported them and gave them money for their sexual services.³

The introduction of monetary economy forced women to migrate from rural areas to urban areas. Mrs Nengwekhulu pointed out that, the colonial era saw many families struggling to survive both in urban and rural areas. As the colonial administrators demanded tax that they cannot afford, it was during this period of time when women opted to move to urban areas to seek for greener pastures. After migrating to Beitbridge many failed to get job opportunities since colonial employers preferred men than women. Most of the jobs were given to white women. Social status was used as a tool to do away with black women at jobs.⁴ With limited job opportunities women resorted to prostitution.

Failure to adapt themselves to the wishes of the colonial authorities in rural areas made African women to migrate to Beitbridge during the colonial era. The impact of colonial rule on African societies varied greatly, not only from one territory to another but also from one part of a territory to another.⁵ The reasons for the sprang from the social organization on the way in which they made their living, some groups found it much more difficult to adapt themselves to the wishes of the colonial government.⁶ Many Africans especially women hence opted to migrate to urban areas to seek job opportunities.

The colonial order changed the economic setup in Zimbabwe. Women relied on land for their survival. However as Fage and Tordoff, put it, the settlers in Rhodesia built up apparatus of discrimination against Africans in matters of land. The rights of occupancy to them were confined to only two fifths of colony land, usually in areas remote from transport facilities an unattractive to Europeans because of their poor soils and low altitude.⁷ This without doubt would have been forced women of working age to move from rural areas to seek for employment. Due to a decrease in agricultural yield women migrated to Beitbridge and upon arriving, realizing that job opportunities were scarce, they decided to become sex workers as it was emerging as a more profitable business by then.⁸

Women's control over products of their labor declined during the colonial period. Due to that, rural life was increasingly onerous for women. Pushed by patriarchal authoritarianism and rural drudgery and pulled by rumored economic and social opportunities in the towns, many enterprising women voted with their feet and moved to the urban areas. Though they faced much opposition from the colonial state and rural elders, a lot of black women migrated to urban areas and to support themselves, some found black male workers to take care of them but this was uncertain since break ups and abandonment were rampant.⁹ Most unskilled and irregular wage labor remained a male preserve. Consequently, women were shunted into informal sector, where they sold goods and services, including their bodies.¹⁰ This hence witnessed the genesis of prostitution in colonial towns including Beitbridge.

The colonial state provided a fertile ground for sexual activities in Zimbabwean colonial towns including by discouraging African women education and job opportunities. African women lost ground as men gained education necessary for wage employment and capital accumulation.¹¹ Throughout the colonial period, African women consistently lagged behind in education and thus failed to acquire skills needed. If they received training, it usually

emphasized in the domestic skills and preparing for being “better wives and mothers.” Few women became qualified for wage labor and even fewer for professional position. Employed women usually performed low paying, unskilled job connected to the domestic area. As these regulations took force, the status and potential prosperity of men and women increasingly diverged.¹² African women therefore were left with no choice except getting involved in the informal sector especially selling their bodies for survival.

With the intensification of colonialism, women jockeyed for power within their household, changed marriage partners, moved to the city, entered trade, and fought to improve the lives of their children.¹³ All the same in colonial Beitbridge women were moving from were fighting to improve their lives as well as the lives of their children using different ways. Many women engaged in prostitution jumping from one man to another to accumulate capital hence prostitution became the most dominant and lucrative profession.

The origins of prostitution in Beitbridge can also be attributed to the introduction of taxation system by the colonial authority. Most of the African rural and urban families in colonial period were relying on prostitution done by their relatives especially women in urban areas. African men were sending their children into urban areas when tax was on demand by the colonial regime in order to get money to pay the needed tax. Daughters bought blankets and clothes as well as food for their parents and they would thank them without any enquires as to where they were and what they were doing.¹⁴ This situation was the same in Beitbridge, In 1968, there were many ladies under the age of 20 as compared to those above 20. This was because many of them were forced by their parents to seek for employment fearing harsh punishments imposed by the tax collectors upon failing to pay the desired amount.¹⁵ However a lot of them resorted to sex work since women were not preferred by the colonial employers. This made prostitution a common job to the young girls who were living in Beitbridge.

Women were forced into prostitution due to lack of accommodation. During the formative years of Beitbridge town, colonial administrators restricted women from coming to town. To cement their restriction idea, they did nothing to provide houses and services for the multitudes of blacks who came from the rural areas.¹⁶ The new arrivals have to live in shacks and huts they built from flattered-out cans, canvas or whatever they could find.¹⁷ A few lucky African women were able to secure jobs as domestic workers while those who failed became sex workers and secure money from their male clients.

Supporting the above shortage of accommodation and women's small economic means often forced single women to lodge with male workers, either single or as a group. This gave rise to a form of domestic labor sales known in the vernacular as *mapoto*, a term that maybe translated as 'cooking pot marriage'.¹⁸ This situation was also the same in Beitbridge Dulibadzimo high density where women were living with men without having a formal marriage. In Beitbridge almost half of women population was living as *mapoto* wives providing cleaning, washing, cooking and sexual services to black workers.¹⁹

They were more than 200,000 workers employed in Southern Rhodesia and women with their men away on work contracts lasting for a year at a time, or longer villages decayed.²⁰ Forced labor became the order of the day to women who were left in rural areas. Most often, both women and children were forced to walk long distance to work. After 1945, more village people left for the towns in the hope of finding a better life. Even children left, often on their own.²¹ In relation to this account Mrs Zezo, who resides in Beitbridge since 1969, argues that, children who left home especially from nearby areas find it difficult to cope with the kind of urban life. This according to her left a lot of them with no choice except for engaging in prostitution. Many of them lived with shebeen masters and were made to sleep with 3 to 4 clients per day.²²

In connection with the above views Mudeka argues that, the male exodus triggered on unprecedented rise in rural insecurities marked by irregular and absent remittances, the breakdown of marriages and betrothals as men completely abandoned their women and children or stayed away longer.²³ In this context the colonially instituted male centered migrant system exposed women to extreme suffering and vulnerability within their own homeland and ironically constituted the conditions impelling them to move from rural homes to urban areas.²⁴

During the colonial era women who were in Beitbridge acquired property due to prostitution. Among the property were houses which they turned to prostitutes' camps.²⁵ Indeed, prostitutes often became landlords and many landlords were prostitutes, this were not because illicit and respectable roles were indistinct in cities in British colonial Africa, but because women, in the absence of formal employment opportunities, earned the money with which to acquire property through prostitution.²⁶ This therefore made women to view sex work as a more reliable and profitable means of investments to such an extent that by the end of colonialism in Africa many continued living as "ladies of the night".

Economic hardships posed difficulties to women left in rural areas. Their husbands' wages were not enough to sustain them and their children. Commenting on the issue of hardships faced by African women and their children in rural areas Mrs Mupinga a Beitbridge residence said that "...poverty made my children to suffer for the first time in their lives and I was willing to do anything as a means of surviving as long as it brings food for my daughters."²⁷ This shows that economic hardships acted a pivotal role on the genesis of prostitution in Beitbridge.

The colonial regime made prostitution more lucrative as compared to the past years where women were confined to the domestic sphere under the influence of their brutal husbands

who were polygamous. Mrs Magora during an interview said that the coming of settlers in Beitbridge made prostitution a better profession than ever. A lot of rural women who moved to Beitbridge town would service 3-4 men per day and were paid generously for their services.²⁸ This attracted a lot of women population who viewed Beitbridge as a 'resting place' away from the demagogic hands of rural brutal elders.

The introduction of police bribery in urban Beitbridge led prostitution to become increasingly attractive to black women. An interview with Mrs Makore revealed that, prostitutes were so clever that they had a tendency of bribing the Rhodesian police so that they would be anywhere in town at any time they deemed necessary. According to her some women would offer sexual services to the Rhodesian police for them to be left undisturbed.²⁹ This alone made the colonial law on women valueless and prostitution became attractive to many young ladies who were even proud of it as a more profitable activity.

Prostitution in Beitbridge was also as a result of migrant workers who came to the town seeking for employment. Migrant employees from countries like Mozambique and Malawi were interested in young girls whom they found working as prostitutes in the town. The competition for young ladies became stiff between migrant workers and those from Rhodesia since migrant workers were coming in their large numbers. This was supported by Mudeka who argues that, the Malawian men made up over half of Zimbabwe's urban workforce in the colonial era.³⁰ This provided a fertile ground for most of the young ladies to get desired profits from prostitution. Upon hearing the news that young girls were on demand, most rural girls ran away from their parents to Beitbridge where they joined sex work as a way of accumulating capital.

On the other side, colonial officials later on opened the road for African women to migrate to urban areas. Due to high labor turnover the colonial masters began to view African women as

a necessity in order to keep men at work as well as satisfying their sexual needs. It needs to be noted that, African employees were now sleeping around with white women since they were away from their wives. Upon hearing the news the white masters were left with no choice except for opening the route for black women to come to urban areas in order to safeguard their white women who were now on demand by the black workers. Whether travelling to engage in prostitution or seek for job opportunities, if a woman could prove that she had her parents' permission to leave the rural home, the colonial authority would allow her to enter the urban area without being tortured by the white police.³¹ Women during this time became free to move to urban areas whether on formal job or prostitution mission.

Upon realizing that there was no longer stiff supervision on marriage certificates in urban areas, a lot of women freely entered Beitbridge some with the desire of proceeding to South Africa. Shortage of money to proceed to South Africa made a lot of them to become sex workers which was a more lucrative job than anything else in such a small town like Beitbridge. The services they offered to both white and black man made it possible for them to earn money which they later own used to build houses. The researcher found out that most of the houses especially in Dulibadzimo high density are owned by single mothers who range from 60 years and above.

1.3 Conclusion

It was as a result of the coming of women in colonial Beitbridge that led to the genesis of prostitution. A lot of women moved to Beitbridge as traders selling vegetables, traditional beer as well as tomatoes. The coming of women was not welcomed by the colonial authority. Job opportunities for African women were scarce and those who were employed were working as domestic workers in whites suburbs. Those who failed to secure jobs resorted to prostitution as a way of surviving in the colonial economy. It can be highlighted that, to avoid the coming of African women into urban areas, the colonial government did nothing to

provide accommodation for them. They ended up living in what were known as African squatter camps made of old cans, plastics and card boxes. This area was not suitable for the Africans and this forced many women to resort to *mapoto* marriage where women were living with men in single quarters which were made available to them by their colonial employers. This *mapoto* marriage increased the number of prostitutes in urban Beitbridge. However despite that women were not allowed in urban areas, the colonial authority later on opened the route for them since they realized that it was only when women were available that would make the black men available at work anytime their labor was needed. More, so the colonial authority realized that African women were a necessity for their black workers to avoid sexual contact between them and their white women which was rampant in colonial Beitbridge. The rural patriarch due to economic hardships also permitted their daughters to get into urban areas to seek for employment and bring back home food clothes as well as money to pay tax whenever it was needed by the colonial authority.

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CHAPTER 2: COLONIAL RULE AND THE SEXUALITY OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN BEITBRIDGE

2.0 Introduction

The colonial period witnessed a continuous migration of African women from rural areas to urban areas. Their migration was not allowed and to avoid them into towns the colonial authority imposed pieces of legislation which were repressive against women. The colonial government regarded African women as weak and notorious therefore they made sure that the colonial towns were no go areas for them. Many African women who breached the state rules were taken to court where their cases were tried. This chapter examines the attitude of colonial authority towards women as well as the pieces of legislation that were imposed to govern the coming of women and their access to urban life in colonial Africa and specifically in Beitbridge.

2.1 Authority's attitude to women in colonial Beitbridge

The colonial authorities made an effort to do away with women in urban areas. Women of African origin were viewed as venereal-diseases-spreading sex workers who are greatly in need of the state control. The colonial state also viewed women as sexually immoral and restricted their movement in towns in an effort to control their sexuality. The imposition of colonial rules further made African women invisible. Women were undermined and were considered a "problem" especially when they raised their own problems and views. The colonial administrators viewed women as subordinates of men which undermined their status.¹ This was all the same in colonial Beitbridge where women were also disadvantaged and not allowed to participate in the public sphere. They were regarded as subjects to men who were not able to survive in urban areas without the support of men.

Colonialism was very gendered and based on the ideal of the heterosexual family. All the able bodied men were expected to toil on farms or in urban areas while women were supposed to stay behind in rural areas and provide labor there.² Colonialism therefore set up a dichotomy of “mother-rural laborer-black women” and “father-minor-black man.”³

Women in colonial Beitbridge were viewed as notorious and not suitable to live in urban areas. Due to this the local authority showed little interest in their life rights. They wanted African women to remain creatures of rural areas taking care of the children whilst they enjoyed giving their husbands bachelor salaries as well as providing bachelor accommodation in urban areas. Mrs Hwiridzo argues that in Beitbridge women were not accommodated in urban areas and those who were caught living in man’s compounds were arrested and kept hold by the authority under the 90 day law which allowed them to live as prisoners for 90 days.⁴ After that they were later on send back to their villages.

African women were also viewed as weak and not suitable for formal jobs. All formal job opportunities and even informal education were given to men. Women were left with no option except engaging themselves in non-formal jobs that is the buying and selling of goods in urban areas. Only a few managed to secure formal employment with the rest resorting to prostitution. This was also happening in colonial Beitbridge where the colonial authority did not allow women to get formal jobs rather they preferred them to work as domestic workers, cooking washing cleaning as well as taking care of their babies.

This was also supported by Armstrong who argues that the colonial authority viewed women as a weak gender with the male heads representing their families and they also considered them as a gender that cannot litigate without male assistance.⁵ They put in place laws which only allowed women to remain minors for all their lives moving from the control of the guardians to that of their husbands.⁶

In conjunction with the above view, Mudeka asserts that there was general marginalization of African women in the colonial era.⁷ The colonial authority only allowed women to enter urban areas if they need their labor. Mrs Hwiridzo during an interview said that upon completing their low wage contracts women were encouraged to go back to their elders in rural areas since there were no more contracts for them in towns.⁸ The fact that women in colonial Beitbridge were denied formal job opportunities and accommodation in urban areas leaves one without doubt that the colonial authorities viewed African women as a weak and unimportant gender only suitable to live in rural areas.

All the above views show that the colonial authorities did not recognize African women as normal human beings. They portrayed them as over-sexed, uncontrolled in their appetites, promiscuous, impervious to risk and thus agents of their own misfortunes.⁹ With this portrayal African women were not allowed in urban areas and those who were not married were all regarded as prostitutes.

2.2 Pieces of legislations against women in colonial Beitbridge

The colonial state did not recognize women in urban areas. They put repressive laws so as to govern their access to towns. As Yoshikuni asserts women were suffering on both sides that is from the rural patriarch and the colonial regime which did not allow women to enjoy urban life.¹⁰ In colonial Beitbridge women were fined when seen loitering and even selling their goods in the towns. This forced many women to quit informal trade adopting prostitution which became their source of income in order to cope up with urban life.

Gender sensitive legislations were introduced as a way of stopping the increase of women in urban areas. In 1927, the Native Affairs Act was introduced specifically to deal with African women prostitutes in Rhodesia. All the same in Beitbridge the 1927 Native Affairs Act

allowed the police officers to arrest every woman they come across with walking in the street during the night. Mrs Nkwelume said, "...many women in colonial Beitbridge were victims of this act and almost three quarters were arrested and some were driven back to their rural homes."¹¹ However it is important to note that the colonial authority later on banned the arresting of women and impelled the police to arrest them only when they received complaints pertaining their behavior in town.¹²

The introduction of the 1936 Act in Rhodesia negatively affected African women. The act was imposed mainly to deal with the influx of African girls who ran away from their rural areas to urban areas. The act was also introduced to please the African elders in rural areas who were complaining on the mobility of their daughters as well as married women. It was also an effort to please the settlers who were in a stiff competition with African Women entrepreneurs. This act was a serious blow especially to African women who were surviving in the informal sector selling firewood, traditional beer, and vegetables among others. These informal activities were made more difficult and illegal.¹³ In an interview Mrs Mudzingwa said, "my life becomes difficult when the colonial authorities introduced the 1936 act which banned Africans to engage in informal economic sector, life becomes difficult for me that I decided to go back to my rural home in Zezani."¹⁴

As colonial penetration of African economies intensifies, colonial authorities in urban areas became more determined to control both the reproduction and production of labor. In collusion with patriarchal African leaders, colonial laws were tightened to increase control over women in both rural and urban areas. Independent African women posed a threat to both African and European men. The regulation of these women was carried on two fronts. First, laws were set in place which made it more difficult for women to exist independently in the urban areas. Houses owned by women in colonial towns were condemned. Hostile legislation constrained market women's economic opportunities.¹⁵ African leaders supported colonial

officials who enforced harsh laws to limit women's freedom to live in urban areas. The Urban African Courts (UAC) were established in 1938 which gave the rural judges the power to regulate "proud and cheeky" urban women.¹⁶ All the same in Beitbridge the UAC regulated all African women who were considered to be prostitutes and many of them were left with no choice except returning back home where they continued suffering in abject poverty.

Women engage in illegal beer brewing in their squatter settlements. This was prohibited by the colonial law under the Harmful Liquors Act (HLA) passed in the 1940s to remain extent into the 1970s.¹⁷ African women in colonial Zimbabwe brewed two types of opaque beers, *chiseven days and chikokiyana*.¹⁸ This was similar in Beitbridge where women were also beer brewers as this emerged in 1970s as the most profitable job for women.¹⁹ However under the HLA many were arrested for illegal beer brewing and some were send back to their rural homes. This was so because African men now preferred to buy traditional beer which dropped the colonial beer sales which was a big threat to the colonial beer hall owners. All African women who were engaged in beer brewing were considered as prostitutes hence were driven back home. In addition illegal beer brewing necessitated the imposition of the kaffir beer ordinance. Mrs Hwiridzo in an interview said that under the Kaffir beer ordinance act all African women who were involved in illegal beer brewing faced brutal punishments from the state authority²⁰ Many African women who breached this rule were arrested and their cases were tried by the colonial state court.²¹ Mrs Matera said, "...I was caught selling home brewed beer and was taken to court, my case was tried and I was found guilty under the kaffir beer ordinance and the colonial authority send me back to my rural home..."²²

Moreover under the HLA women who brewed beer and ran shebeens illegally were held responsible for bringing moral decay, juvenile delinquency, and high levels of urban crime to the town-ships. Indeed, virtually the entire urban malaise could be blamed on the erosion of traditional patriarchal relationship.²³ As Jansen put it, the undesirable conditions are largely

caused by the presence of women, who in many cases leave their homes contrary to the wishes of their fathers or guardians and contrary to tribal customs.²⁴ African women hence because of this would not be permitted to live in towns except when they have marriage certificates or ministered to the settlers' needs.

In conjunction with the above the colonial authorities imposed stringent liquor laws that monitored what Africans drank and when and where, and closely supervised their recreational activities in sport clubs, women's clubs and other social organizations. The municipal police conducted regular night raids in the townships to root out those without permission to be there.²⁵ This becomes the main problem that women encountered in Beitbridge. In an interview with Mrs Marwisa, she pointed out that most of the African women who were selling their traditional beer near colonial beer halls and African women prostitutes who were found near these beer halls were continuously raided by the white police boys who sometimes beat them without mercy.²⁶ Most of the victims were arrested under the 90- day law which permitted the state to hold them in solitary confinement for up to 90 days without trial.²⁷ One of the victims of 90- day law in an interview reveals that on her day of trial, she was taken to (UAC) and was found guilty for selling traditional beer near colonial beer halls and was beaten by the colonial police.²⁸

African women in Beitbridge were also affected by the 1948 Act. Under this act women faced brutal inspections, arrests and repatriations at various areas in the town as the police sought out those who did not hold the wife's permit as required under the 1948 Act.²⁹ Mrs Nkwelume in an interview pointed out that in Beitbridge there were both house and street searches by the colonial police to an extent that even women who have all needed documents to have access to urban life were sent back to their rural homes.³⁰ This was supported by

Mudeka who asserts that there was intrusive house raids, street searches, repatriations, even of wives who held all adequate documentation, as long as they lacked housing from their husbands, employees or if their husbands were too elderly, injured, or sick to work or died.³¹ This curtailed African women's ability to make a living in urban areas.³² However despite the colonial officials' effort to curtail their ability to have access to life in urban areas their number continued to increase and most of them were accumulating capital through prostitution.

African women in all Rhodesian colonial towns were dehumanized by the colonial doctors. The introduction of the *Bheura* which was the most unpopular Act dehumanized African women who were living in urban areas.³³ Under the *Bheura* system all African women living with their men in colonial houses were inspected for sexual transmitted diseases. This was one of the evil chapters in African women's lives since the act marginalized and humiliated them in front of their husbands. During an interview, Mrs Nkwelume said, "*bheura* was a new thing which was never seen or happened in our rural communities and it only begin with the colonial doctors who were not even ashamed of themselves."³⁴ This reveals that *bheura* was the most unpopular act among the Africans. This forced a lot of women to move back to their homes in order to be free from the *bheura* system.

Under the *bheura* system women in colonial towns were examined for venereal diseases. Jean (et.al) argues that all African women were forced to carry their medical certificates wherever they were. Those native women who were found infected with venereal diseases were driven back to their villages since they were regarded as a threat to the whole population mainly the whites. To cement the system the state introduced the public health act of 1925 which gave the colonial officials more control to apprehend all Africans who were considered public health risks.³⁵ Part 3 section 47 of the act made it a crime for any African who continues in employment while knowing that he or she had venereal diseases. The section also stated that

all employers who continue employing an African with venereal diseases knowingly were to be penalized. Section 52 of the act required all Africans who lived where venereal diseases was suspected to undergo examinations. Anyone who refuses to be examined was considered guilty and prone to ruthless punishment.³⁶ This situation was also prevailing in Colonial Beitbridge where women were continuously examined for venereal diseases by the colonial doctors.

To cement the campaign against sexually transmitted infection the government issued a notice in 1929 commanding all native women to refuse posts as domestic workers when they don't have clean health certificates periodically signed by the registered colonial doctors.³⁷ In an interview with Mrs Mangena who was a domestic worker in colonial Beitbridge, her urban life becomes difficult when she refused to be examined by the colonial doctors. She was taken to UAC where her case was tried. Mrs Mangena was considered guilty under the section 52 of the public health act of 1925 and she lost her job and was evicted from the town.³⁸ Thus with the act the government successfully banned many African women to look for employment in colonial towns and the problem of the outbreak of venereal diseases was half solved.

The 1948 Act witnessed the colonial constructors of a social and economic system neatly compartmentalizing Africans along gender lines, with women being domesticated and men joining the public spheres as migrant workers.³⁹ This was cemented by the Customary Law Act (CLA) where women were made rural creatures not allowed to have access to urban life. Under the CLA African women suffered "double colonization." One was from European colonial domination and the other from indigenous tradition imposed by African patriarch.⁴⁰ According to Armstrong the Customary Law stated that,

- (a) Women are perpetual minors and men being the factory workers, farm workers, teachers and lawyers.
- (b) Marital property and products of women's hands belong to man.
- (c) Women cannot commence divorce proceedings without the help of their husbands since they were the once who paid bride prize.⁴¹

This among others was meant to domesticate African women, making them subordinates to men as well as curtailing them access to urban life exposure. During the period under discussion women were confined to domestic work that is nursing their children, cooking, attending church services as well as giving full respect to their husbands.⁴² All this was an effort by the colonial regime to deny women access to towns. This made women to remain in rural areas suffering in the absence of their husbands.

The introduction of Ordinance of 1901 which forced all African workers in all colonial towns to carry passes also affected women in Beitbridge negatively. Martin Roberts's book South Africa 1948-2000 is characterized of the perspective that, in 1955 the colonial government announced that African women as well as man would have to carry passes. This was done in order to control black movement into cities and this was strictly enforced that it often led to breaking up of marriages since sometimes only men had residence rights.⁴³ In addition under the Ordinance of 1901 women were made to be arrested by the white police.⁴⁴ This was all the same in colonial Beitbridge where all women without marriage certificates which beard their husbands' name and passes which allowed them to live in the town were tortured, persecuted and driven back to their rural communities. The issue of pass law greatly affected African women who later on demonstrated against it in colonial Africa.

African women in colonial Beitbridge also suffered under the Registration Accommodation Act of 1934. Under this act it was the responsibility of employer to provide accommodation

for African employees both men and women.⁴⁵ However this was not a merit to black workers who were employed by the colonial masters. These masters constructed “hostels” for them with poor sanitation and poor ventilation which greatly affected both women and men black workers in Beitbridge. The colonial administrators also went on to impose the 1951 prevention of illegal squatting act. This law authorized the removal of both black men and women who has entered any African location without the authority’s permission to depart.⁴⁶ Those African women who managed to sneak in urban areas, resorted to forming of unions with African men. This created a fertile ground for the suffering of African women who later on become victims of violent men in a bid to form unions with them so as to secure roofs on their heads.

The industrial conciliation act (ICA) of 1934 which was later amended in 1959 also brought with it a suffering phase to both African men and women in colonial Beitbridge. Mrs Ndou who resides in Beitbridge since the colonial period argues that the ICA discriminated black workers in Beitbridge. This created inequalities mostly to women who suffered from both sides that is job discrimination because of their gender as well as because of their colour.⁴⁷ Mr Ndou also supported this argument saying that Beitbrigde was a segregatory town where black workers were not permitted to acquire the same status with the whites. Shops, beer halls and entertainment places were segregated where Dulibadzimo was the only shopping center for the majority.⁴⁸

The colonial government viewed African women as weak and not suitable for formal job opportunities. Due to this the state limited their access to both formal employment and formal education. As Cormack asserts, the introduction of legislations in colonial Africa discouraged women to work in formal sectors. Women resorted to self employment in order to earn a living in the colonial economy.⁴⁹ In colonial Beitbridge as well as other colonial towns in Rhodesia, the colonial regime did nothing to educate women, those who received

little education were employed in the domestic sphere and some were working as nurse aids. For the rest prostitution was the only job at their disposal which made them more prone to sexual transmitted diseases.

In some other parts of Rhodesia including Beitbridge the settlers have a tendency of cohabitating with black women.⁵⁰ The colonial officials were calling black women “stinking kaffir” but on the other hand they were having sex with them. Black men especially those working in the domestic spheres as cooks and garden boys were also driven obsessed into sexual activities by the white women who regarded them as exotic and they have a desire to fulfill their sexual lusts from these black men.⁵¹ In an interview with sister Tendai (not her actual name) in September 1969 her elder sister was raped by her white boss. She reported him with the help of her friend sister Patience (not her actual name) and the case was taken to UAC where the court declared that the white boss was not guilty but rather the victim forced him into such activity since she was a prostitute.⁵²

2.3 Conclusion

It can be concluded that the intensification of colonial penetration in Africa made colonial authorities to be more determined in controlling African women’s mobility in urban areas. The colonial authority viewed women as notorious and a problem to the colonial government especially in colonial towns. The officials hence declared that urban areas were no go areas for women. This was cemented by the imposition of pieces of legislation which were repressive and these laws were designed in such a way that they made African women minors for life. In colonial Beitbridge all women were regarded as prostitutes and the colonial government permitted the colonial police to arrest every African woman they came across walking in the towns especially during the night.

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CHAPTER THREE: DEALING WITH RAVAGES OF PROSTITUTION IN COLONIAL BEITBRIDGE

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how African women dealt with the ravages of prostitution in Beitbridge. The colonial officials considered African women as subjects and subordinates who were supposed to stay in rural areas nursing the children, farming as well as maintaining order at home while waiting for their husbands who were employed in urban areas to come back home. However those who managed to snick into urban areas due to lack of job opportunities for women resorted to prostitution as a better means of surviving. This led to the outbreak of venereal diseases since those women have a habit of jumping from one man to another.

To deal with the venereal diseases African women employed many measures which include the use of African traditional medicine and herbs which became the dominant healing practice, some embraced spiritual healing while others makes use of science-based methods. In dealing with violent men African women employed different measures. Some used husband turning herbs, persuasions, disguising marriages for example *mapoto* marriage some opted “cash and carry” services whilst some even consulted traditional healers for the violent men to be killed as well as hiring a crew of prostitutes to embarrass the men in beer halls during the night. When a prostitute dies a mood associated with parties was created. Dance, ululating and sexuality works of the deceased were displayed by the other prostitutes who attended the burial.

3.1: Mechanisms employed by African women to deal with venereal diseases in colonial Beitbridge

During the colonial era traditional medicine and herbs were the most dominant healing practice. In Southern and Eastern Africa traditional methods of healing was embraced by many African men and women as the most dominant and fast healing practice.¹ The African culture of using traditional medicine to cure every kind of illness made African women in Colonial Beitbridge to continue using traditional herbs during the outbreak of venereal diseases even on the presence of European scientific medicines. Traditional healers become the pillars of health in colonial Zimbabwe. An interview with sekuru Mutemani brings to light that through the use of taboos which include the restriction of cutting down of trees of medicinal value and keeping of sources of medicines as a secret traditional healers were able to administer some of their medicines and they remained of greater importance among African women in colonial Beitbridge.

To deal with venereal diseases African women in colonial Beitbridge continued to seek treatment from traditional healers known as n'anga. N'angas used various methods and techniques to treat venereal diseases which were as a result of prostitution. Supporting the above vie Mr Matsinga confirmed that traditional herbs have been of greater significance in the treatment of venereal diseases among African women and even African men in colonial Beitbridge. He further his argument by saying that roots, leaves, barks and fruits of different trees of medicinal value as well as animal fats were used by traditional healers to treat such kind of sickness.³ They were many traditional healers in colonial Beitbridge but most of the popular once were men. Amongst the popular traditional healers were sekuru Machanja, sekuru chakonza and sekuru Ngalani.⁴

An interview with Sekuru Chakonza a traditional healer in Beitbridge revealed that, many African women especially from Beitbridge urban visited his home seeking for traditional

herbs to cure syphilis. He further narrated that he used the roots of *murumanyama* tree to cure stomach syphilis which was the most dangerous venereal diseases in colonial and even in modern day Zimbabwe. Sekuru Chakonza told the researcher that the roots of *murumanyama* were crushed and mixed with a reasonable amount of salt and the mixture will be put in a bottle commonly known as *guchu*. The patient was made to drink the *guchu* until the illness was healed.⁵

During an interview, Sekuru Ngalani a traditional healer from Zezani said that he was approached by many African women from Beitbridge during the colonial period who was suffering from gonorrhoea. Upon inquiring more on the names of the herbs he used, Sekuru Ngalani refused to give detailed information except only mentioned that the *guchu* was the most popular medicine which restored the health of many African women during the colonial times. According to him his ancestors usually guided him and told him the type of *guchu* to prepare depending on the patient's illness.⁶

Women in colonial Beitbridge also visited traditional herbalists as a way of dealing with venereal diseases. Sekuru Mutembwa a herbalist during an interview pointed out that he served many women's lives by using *musiringa* tree which was the fastest herb he used to cure gonorrhoea. He narrated that the roots of *musiringa* tree have layers which he removed and left with only the inside root which he mixed with a reasonable amount of salt and gave the patient to drink the mixture for seven days or more until healed.⁷ The use of herbs hence become the most preferred healing practiced which was used by women to deal with venereal diseases in colonial Beitbridge.

In addition before the establishment of science-based medicine traditional medicine was the dominant medical system for millions of people in Africa.⁸ This was also the culture embraced by African women in Beitbridge during the colonial regime. Sekuru Machanja said

that African women in colonial Beitbridge mostly incorporated indigenous healing. This was because the colonial regime upon realizing that a women was suffering from a venereal diseases they send her back to the rural areas to avoid the spread of the disease to other African workers and most importantly to the white settlers. For those who approached him he said, "...I gave them crushed muunga seeds mixed with animal fats to rub on their womanhood or any other affected part..."⁹

Under the traditional methods of dealing with venereal diseases women in colonial Beitbridge used the roots and leaves of *rimi remombe* tree to cure herpes zoster. According to Sekuru Machanja the roots and the leaves of the above mentioned tree were dried and mixed together. Hot water was added to the mixture and the patient was instructed to drink every morning and in three weeks time the patient will be cured.¹⁰ The traditional ways of healing were preferred by African women since it does not disclose the illness secret to other people unlike the scientific way of healing which was done at the natives colonial health clinics.

Women in colonial Beitbridge preferred traditional way of dealing with venereal diseases. Mrs Tazviona (not her actual name) a former prostitute in Beitbridge confirmed that she suffered from syphilis in 1975 for more than two weeks. She testified that at first she thought that it was not a venereal diseases but it persisted and was advised to go to the colonial clinics to be treated. According to her, she preferred to visit a traditional healer in Makakavhule village who gave her leaves of the *munembene* tree which were crushed to drink and after a few days the sickness was no more.¹¹ This shows that African women embraced traditional method to deal with venereal diseases.

In African communities people believed that every illness is linked with abnormal cause.¹² This made Africans to continue consulting traditional healers even when the colonial authorities introduced science based medicines in colonial Africa. All the same in Beitbridge

African women continued visiting n'angas to treat venereal diseases. According to Mupota the *chizhuzhu* tree roots mixed with the roots of *mubhedha* tree were popularly used as gonorrhoea treatment. The roots according to him were dried, crushed and put in hot water. After an hour the patient was dozed with it using a barrel through the anus.¹³ Mrs Hwiridzo also supported the view saying that this method was preferred by women in colonial Beitbridge since it was much better than the *bheura* system of venereal diseases examination practiced by the colonial doctors which dehumanized African women.¹⁴

In colonial Beitbridge African women also used traditional prevention ways to deal with venereal diseases. One of the interviews which the researcher contacted with Mrs Nkwelume reveals that from 1960 to 1978 a lot of African women used to wear what was popularly known as *chuma* around their waist. This was mostly done by African female prostitutes who following the belief of a *sangoma* who assured them that his *chuma* was very important since it prevented the spread of venereal diseases from one person to another.¹⁵

To deal with venereal diseases African women in colonial Beitbridge also employed the use of science-based methods introduced to them by the colonial state. It is important to note that European ways of dealing with venereal diseases were also embraced especially through the *bheura* system. The state according to Allman, Geige and Musisi introduced the Public Health Act of 1925. This act gave authority and more powers than ever to the colonial doctors to apprehend those considered public health risks. Part 3 Section 47 of the act made it an offence for anyone to knowingly allowed Africans with venereal diseases to remain in employment. Under Section 52 of the Act all Africans especially women were examined for venereal diseases.¹⁶

The use of science- based methods to deal with venereal diseases in colonial Africa was also popular towards independence. Allman et.al are of the view that the colonial government

issued a notice in 1929 mandating that, “no native female servant be allowed to accept a post as a general servant, housemaid, nurse or children’s attendant except she will be in possession of a clean bill of health signed periodically by a suitable medical attendant.”¹⁷ This made African women who were working as domestic workers to embrace European scientific methods of dealing with venereal diseases in Beitbridge.

Spiritual healing through Christianity was another method employed by African women to deal with venereal diseases in colonial Zimbabwe and Beitbridge specifically. In an interview Mrs Chekai who is a former prostitute her herpes was miraculously healed by God. According to her she become sick in 1978 and she joined a group of Johanne Masowe independent church where she was given spiritual water to drink everyday and in few days she was healed. The healing according to her was also made possible through her own day and night prayers which she conducted every week throughout the period when she was sick. Mrs Chekai never visited the colonial public clinics or traditional healers but only relied on God.¹⁸ This beyond reasonable doubt shows that African women in colonial Beitbridge employed various methods to deal with sexual transmitted diseases.

3.2 Mechanisms employed by African women to deal with violent men in colonial Beitbridge

African women sex workers experienced more violence from men during the colonial period. In colonial Beitbridge a lot of male clients tried to get sexual services from African women through brutality, violence and coercion. A lot of prostitutes’ murder reports were heard in colonial Beitbridge. This was because the clients were trying to maintain a favorable situation for themselves whilst undermining the status quo of female sex workers. African women who were working as sex workers in colonial Beitbridge find it difficult to report matters of violent men since their work was illegal and not allowed by the colonial officials. Due that

they were more vulnerable to violence from their clients. This made them to employ various informal measures to deal with the violent clients without involving the white police.

It is important to note that African women fully protect themselves by using African traditional herbs to deal with violent clients. The use of *chipotanemadziro* as a husband turning herb was dominant during the colonial era in Beitbridge. An interview with Mrs Nkwelume reveals that many African women continuously visited traditional healers seeking traditional herbs to turn their clients from being violent to humble clients. According to her many of them were given *chipotanemadziro* which they were instructed to mix with the client's food when he come for a sleep over at her home and after eating the client will automatically become a "sambo" and in most cases forgetting his family back home.¹⁹

African women also used what they call "cash and carry" method to deal with violent men. In another interview with Mrs Hwiridzo she said that, African women upon realizing that some clients were violent they employed the "cash and carry" method as a way of protecting themselves from them. Furthering her argument she said that men were made to pay for the service first before it was rendered to them. This was mainly done to avoid those violent men who refused to pay and sometimes beat the prostitute after she had performed the service for him.²⁰

Gang hiring was also another mechanism used by African women to deal with violent clients in colonial Beitbridge. The hiring of gangs was usually applied to the most violent clients especially those who refused to pay after sexual services. In an interview with Miss Mawuka (not her actual name) she said that she rendered her sexual services to a Malawian man in an abandoned building near Dulibadzimo rank who later own refused to give her money and dumped her at the same place. The next day she hired a gang of four men and the man was seriously beaten and made to double pay for the service which was 5 Rhodesian penny by

then.²¹ This hence is convincing enough that African women were not just victims of violence but they employed different methods to revenge the violence for their own protection in the prostitution service which was the most capital accumulating job for women by then.

Refusal by African women to offer their sexual services in deserted structures was also one of the most popular mechanisms they used to ensure security against violent clients. In colonial Zimbabwe and Beitbridge specifically women suffered because of violent men who regarded them as their tools to use without giving them what they were working for. Mawuka argues that black men especially those migrant workers from Malawi persuaded African female prostitutes to provide sexual services and paid for the services after. However after the service was performed they refused to pay them threatening to kill them since they were regarded as “magic men.”²² This made women to refuse providing their services in abandoned buildings which were mostly preferred by Malawian migrant workers.

Disguising marriage was also used by women in colonial Beitbridge to deal with those men who proved to be more violent. Another interview with Sekuru Machanja confirms that female prostitutes in Beitbridge embraced the *mapoto* marriage as a way of dealing with violent men.²³ *Mapoto* marriage was a relationship between a man and a women free of the ties of formal marriage in which bride wealth was not paid to the women’s relatives.²⁴ Many African women lived as *mapoto* wives especially during the workers’ pay days. After they exhausted enough they would the run away from the man and continue with their used system of jumping from one man to another.

In addition to that persuasions and defensive measures were also employed by women to calm down violent clients in colonial towns. During an interview with Mr Magara a former Shabanie mine worker he said that in colonial Shabanie women used to persuade men who

proved to be violent to pay for their sexual services promising them to perform better the next time they asked for a service. Some prostitutes were also believed to carry knives as a weapon of defense whenever she met a violent man.²⁵ All the same in colonial Beitbridge women also used to attack violent men using knives especially those who have a habit of refusing to pay for the services.

African women also embraced the use of *rukahu* or *runyoka* to deal with violent men. Mrs Muladelo in an interview revealed that the use of *rukahu* became popular in 1970s. She said that many African women visited traditional healers where they were given clay pots and instructed to turn them upside down and leave them in forests or mountains. This made the man's manhood useless when trying to make love with other women.²⁶

3.3 How prostitutes mourned their dead in colonial Beitbridge.

The manner in which Africans mourn for the dead is composed and filled with sorrow and grief but the opposite can be said about the mourning of prostitutes in colonial Beitbridge. A mood associated with parties and wedding was created when a prostitute dies. Dancing, ululating and sexuality works of the deceased were displayed by the other sex workers who attended the burial. The prostitutes would even remove their underwear waving them in the sky whilst singing different songs with sexual connotations²⁷

Since prostitution was not allowed by the colonial authority most of the sex workers did not attend burials. However for those who attended, different activities were done dances with sexual connotations were the most popular. Tarugarira argues that the funeral of diamond dealers in Mutare was graced by several girlfriends who would sing, dance and drink. The ladies would shake their hips and posteriors. They would do so with lurid songs and dirt bedroom lingo.²⁸ This was all the same in colonial Beitbridge where the friends of the

deceased prostitute would make sexually related dances to show the true picture of the deceased. Mrs Hwiridzo a Beitbridge residence pointed out that, when she attended a prostitute burial in Chapfuche in 1977, the burial site was firstly surrounded by women prostitutes wearing min skirts before the body of the deceased was taken there. She went on further to say that the relatives of the deceased put efforts to chase away the prostitutes to allow the passage of the deceased since they have broke the way to the grave site dancing sexually as a sign of showing people clearly that they shared the same profession with the deceased.²⁹

In addition the other fellow prostitutes would perform various activities that the deceased used to do at burial sites. Sister Melody in an interview bring it to light that at the funeral of their client the professional mourners congregated without underpants and would come around the coffin, swaggering and swaying their bottoms.³⁰ The same also happened in colonial Beitbridge. At the funeral of a sex worker, the fellow sex workers would even go further to act dramas where one would be acting like a client to the deceased performing sexual intercourse as a way of exposing clearly all the sexual works which were performed by the deceased during her life time.³¹

Mafenza in an interviews explained how his friend's sister who was a prostitute in Beitbridge was mourned. He explains that her body was carried from Beitbridge town to Zezani her rural home and was escorted by a number of her fellow prostitutes imitating her sexual works. When they arrived at her rural home the prostitutes spent the whole night singing and dancing. He also said that the sex workers even went on further to remove their underwear, waving them in the air and also their bras tied on their waists. It was very embarrassing and the deceased's relatives tried to chase them away but all was in vain as they were scattered everywhere singing, dancing and ululating.

3.4 Conclusion

The chapter focuses on how African women dealt with ravages of prostitution in colonial Beitbridge. It managed to bring to light the mechanisms which were employed by African women prostitutes to deal with venereal diseases as well as to deal with violent men. The chapter also established how women prostitutes mourned their dead. In colonial Beitbridge lack of job opportunities for women led them to resort to prostitution. This directly led to the outbreak of venereal diseases. To deal with the diseases then, African women embraced mostly the use of African traditional methods and a few of them embraced the European science-based way. To deal with violent men African women in colonial Beitbridge also embraced the use of traditional methods. Interviews conducted by the researcher reveals that many women continuously visited traditional healers seeking for solutions to deal with the issue of violent men. Also, in the case of death by one of the prostitutes a mood associated with parties and wedding was created. Dancing, ululating and sexuality works of the deceased were displayed by the other sex workers who attended the burial. The prostitutes would even remove their underwear waving them in the sky whilst singing different songs with sexual connotation.

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CONCLUSION

The research bring to light that prostitution was rampant in African colonial towns including the area under study during the colonial period. The introduction of monetary economy forced African man to migrate to urban areas seeking job opportunities. This posed a lot of economic hardships to women who were left in rural areas since they were forced to pay tax by the colonial regime. Their husband's wages were not enough to cater for them and their children. The migration of men from rural areas to urban areas also exposed African women to rural poverty. Some African men completely abandoned their families and this exposed them to excessive suffering in rural areas and this alone forced women into the migrant stream.

It was as a result of women migration into colonial Beitbridge that witnessed the genesis of prostitution. Women inhabit the place as a way of surviving and pulling themselves out of the rural poverty. However Job opportunities were only meant for black men. Women were considered as trouble makers in urban areas and were not even welcomed in towns by the colonial authorities. The fact that job opportunities for women were limited forced them to earn a living through selling home produced beer, grains as well as vegetables. Those who failed to produce desired profit from selling later on opted to sell their bodies as a way of surviving and supporting their families back home and this phase witnessed the genesis of prostitution in Beitbridge.

As the colonial penetration of Africa increased a continuous migration of African women from rural areas to urban areas was witnessed. Due to an increase of women population in Beitbridge the colonial authority imposed pieces of legislation which were repressive against African women. This made it more complicated for them to survive independently in the town. Hostile laws which were imposed made it difficult for them to continue buying and

trading in urban markets. Most of them hence shifted to sexual activities which directly led to the outbreak of venereal diseases.

To deal with the issue of venereal diseases African women employed many measures which include the use of African traditional medicine and herbs which became the dominant healing practice. Some embraced spiritual healing while others makes use of science-based methods which were brought by the Europeans. In dealing with violent men African women used husband turning herbs, persuasions, disguising marriages for example *mapoto* marriage some opted to be paid before performing the services whilst some even consulted traditional healers seeking for killing herbs as well as hiring a crew of prostitutes to embarrass the men in beer halls during the night.

The manner in which Africans mourn for the dead is composed and filled with sorrow and grief. However the researcher found out that the opposite can be said about the mourning of prostitutes in colonial Beitbridge. A mood associated with parties and wedding was created when a prostitute died. Dancing, ululating and sexuality works of the deceased were displayed by the other sex workers who attended the burial. The prostitutes would even remove their underwear waving them in the sky whilst singing different songs with sexual connotations.

The research also reveals that when a prostitute died her fellow sex workers would spent the whole night singing and dancing. The sex workers even went on further to remove their underwear, waving them in the air and also their bras tied on their waists which was very embarrassing to an extent that the deceased's relatives would sometimes tried to chase them away but usually their efforts were in vain.

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Fig 1 shows women demonstrating against pass laws. Source Martin Roberts p. 36

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