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Colonialism and Christianity: Factors Affecting the Evolution of Women's Rights in Uganda and Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This project is intended to study the evolution of women's rights in Uganda and Zimbabwe, specifically within the context of colonialism. Research into these nations, with the methodology of comparing pre-colonialism with the colonial state of affairs, focused on attitudes and practices regarding aspects of daily life such as female sexuality, education, political representation, and economic power, to name a few. The topic requires nuanced scrutiny because the frequent use of colonialism as a catchall term betrays the number and variety of actors involved in transforming African nations from pre-capitalistic, largely decentralized societies into extensions of nineteenth century Europe. Government officials and Christian missionaries, when not vying for ultimate control over the indigenous populations, collaborated to formally institute Eurocentric patriarchal systems.

The kingdoms of pre-colonial Uganda relied on division of roles according to sex, but these roles complemented one another rather than established hierarchies, and the populations on the whole were relatively egalitarian. In Zimbabwe, patriarchal structures predated colonialism, but government formalization of these customs, nevertheless, further reduced women's power. Women experienced similar loss of status in both nations, but owing to the divergent ways in which Uganda and Zimbabwe received colonialist intrusion, this marginalization manifested itself differently in each country. In Uganda, religion was the key factor in subjugating women. In Zimbabwe, subjugation was achieved largely due to economic motivations. For both nations, understanding the most common sources of justification of female inequality is key to formulating methods to empower Ugandan and Zimbabwean women in the modern era.

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Introduction

The nineteenth-century colonial "scramble for Africa" transformed the continent in almost every conceivable aspect, but the British colonial government's attempts to diminish and regulate women's rights and the methods by which these goals were achieved are particularly interesting. The influence of Christian theology, particularly to the extent that missionaries played an active role in the formation of colonial policy, established a foundation upon which future governing would take place. Furthermore, aggressive efforts to convert indigenous Africans to Christianity served to create a paradigm through which future (i.e. post-colonial) governmental actions would be based.

My attempts to analyze the various actors that influenced the development of women's rights around the turn of the twentieth century are achieved by a comparative case study of Uganda and Zimbabwe. Both nations were colonized by the British and received significant influxes of missionaries attempting to Christianize the continent. By studying these countries, I will be able to differentiate between changes that resulted from colonial influence and those that could be more directly attributed to the preexisting culture of the indigenous populations.

Following a review of the existing literature, I will study the status of women's rights in each country prior to colonization and compare them to women's rights post-colonization. The particular indicators of women's rights that will be examined include economic autonomy, attitudes toward female sexuality, educational access, and political representation, among others.

A well-developed analysis of the nature of African women's rights has particular relevance in a modern context. Women in Africa are currently considered second-class

citizens by their governments. Gender-based discrimination is far-reaching and is reinforced at formal and informal levels. The patently unequal treatment of many women in modern African society makes it rather easy to assume that such a power imbalance has always existed between African men and women. It would be disingenuous to suggest that current gender relations in countries such as Uganda and Zimbabwe do not have a basis in colonial intervention. The crucial question, then, is how particular European cultural standards took hold in these societies and how the numerous actors promoted their varied interpretations of proper gender roles.

Identifying the particular aspects that contributed to the formation of patriarchal systems and the mentality behind them may aid in the development of more effective methods of transforming societal attitudes towards women's rights. A comprehensive understanding of each of the threads that together weave the narrative of women's status changes throughout the colonial period make it easier to distinguish the schools of thought that dominate the current conversation on women's rights. It would be difficult to implement substantive changes for women in these nations, empowering them both in society and in their homes, without this nuanced understanding.

Literature Review

To create a narrative that will make clear the influences of religion during colonialism, I will first outline the roles assigned to women in Christianity in general. Secondly, I will outline the institutional context of the topic and discuss how institutions have been built around Biblical notions, as well as the implications for women. Finally, I will demonstrate how these depictions of women manifested themselves in nineteenth

century Britain among all classes of women, which will shed additional light on the British colonial influence on African women. Furthermore, a better understanding of women's statuses and roles in society will be helpful in explaining my method of research and particularly the nature of the sources available to me.

The experiences of women in Africa during the colonial period—approximately from 1890 to the mid-1960s—were heavily influenced by their colonizers' cultures, which were in turn shaped in large part by religion. In Uganda and Zimbabwe, for example, this influence meant that British understanding of Christianity played a significant role in the development of women's rights in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The influence of Christianity in laws and other manifestations of colonial rule, consciously or otherwise, led to measures designed to control women politically, sexually, and economically, among others. The idea, on the whole, was to keep women in their 'rightful places.' In some ways, religion and patriarchy were mutually reinforcing, and an analysis of Christian perspectives of women and their roles is necessary to understand the evolution of patriarchal colonial Africa. In researching Christianity, it became apparent that its texts concerned themselves with three aspects of women's identities in particular—autonomy, sexuality, and intellect. Colonial conceptions of each of these three significant components of women's experiences spurred the development of (often problematic) gender norms in Africa in ways that are still being resolved today.

Autonomy in Christian, British Culture pre-Scramble for Africa

For the most part, women are only occasionally mentioned in the Bible. Men or issues regarding men comprise the large majority of the Bible's scriptures—prophets

were largely male, Jesus was of course male, and so were all of his disciples (Breazeale 2010, 6). While women are intermittently mentioned in the Bible, for the most part "women simply do not figure in [Biblical] traditions" (Franzmann 2000, 44). Compared to the more than one thousand men name-checked in the Bible, there are only 188 women named throughout the text (WebBible Encyclopedia 2012). Unlike the men featured in the Bible, who display a wide variety of complex personalities, women are instead restricted to personality extremes—a Biblical woman is either an honorable vessel of truth (e.g. the Virgin Mary) or a conniving, immoral harbinger of sin (e.g. Jezebel) (Breazeale 2010, 15).

Women's general invisibility within Christian texts is likely due to a combination of factors, among them the strongly patriarchal era in which the Bible was written as well as the fact that men themselves wrote the books of the Bible. Almost exclusively, appearances of women in the Bible happened within the context of a parable about a man—such as Rebekah, mother of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 24:67), or Sarah, wife of Abraham (Genesis 17:15)—or occurred in a situation where the woman was behaving immorally—such as Gomer, the sexually promiscuous wife of Hosea (Hosea 1:2-3) (Study Bible, King James Version (KJV)). By framing women in this way, the Bible could be used "to provide religious justification for the political and economic domination of wives by their husbands, as well as cultural norms that reinforce this domination" (Breazeale 2010, 3). Examples of virtuous or admirable women tended to uphold ideals of meekness, obedience, and chastity—notable examples are the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:16), Ruth (Ruth 1:4), and Rachel (Genesis 29:17) (Study Bible, KJV).

While much of the Bible disregards women, the sections in which they are discussed describe the roles of women within the context of Christianity very plainly.

The Christian woman has her status in society and right to autonomy rather plainly outlined in the Bible. Female subordination, e.g. as wife, mother, and general non-citizen, is prescribed in the Bible as a form of restitution for Eve's (and, by extension, all women's) culpability in the transgression of original sin. Pauline texts make reference to the Fall of Man as being central to women's subordination, something explicitly prescribed in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, which commands, " Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (King James Version). Martin Luther, for all of his differentiations from Catholicism, maintained the Catholic notion of women's inferiority, arguing that "Eve had to be under her husband's power because of her complicity with original sin; thus God commands that husbands must rule, wives must obey" (Breazeale 2010, 15). Tohidi & Bayes (2001) discuss the implications of Biblical depictions of men and their indirect impact on women, noting that "the exaltation of men through images of the highest spiritual being as males…[has] implied that women are inferior both in body and in spirit" (46). The story of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman created by God, has been upheld as the classic representation of men and women's predetermined relation to one another: "This story asserts that God created man first and that a man is primary, that a woman is responsible for man's fall from grace, and that woman is created as companion or in some interpretations simply for men" (Tohidi and Bayes 2001, 20).

Not only was female subordination the necessary consequence for women's existential inferiority, this theory constituted one of the foundational beliefs for Christian

views on human existence. By fundamentally separating men and women, development and maintenance of a hierarchy between the two became easy to justify from a Biblical perspective. In the earliest centuries of Christianity, men and women were stratified, as "the Greco-Roman world created a dichotomy of public versus private, where house (*oikos*) indicated private (the realm of female, indoor, stationary, natural, inferior), while public (*polis*) pertained to male, outdoor, mobile, civilized, and superior" (Kirk-Duggan and Torjesen 2010, xi). This mentality held steady throughout the nineteenth century, as "Christian teachings on marriage had given a religious meaning to male authority in the household, assigning a sacramental character to the subordination of a wife to a husband as a symbol of the relationship between Christ and the church" (Kirk-Duggan and Torjesen 2010, xiv). Women were relegated to the home and they were considered solely within this framework for centuries, with some societies even today restricting women to the private sphere. Ultimately, a woman was defined by her role as a wife, her identity conditional upon her husband. Breazeale (2010) summarizes the power imbalance that eventually developed to compensate for the average woman's spiritual inadequacy thusly: "The ideal Christian wife is the subordinate wife. Her subordination is political, economic, and ordained by God. She silently and obediently accepts her inferior nature and status. Her morality and honor are judged according to her submission of her power to her husband" (20).

It is her family to whom she owes the bulk of her attention, always placing it before herself, in fulfillment of "the responsibility to present to the world attractive and physically cared-for house, children, [and] husband…as a significant indicator of the state and status of the family," as mandated by Ephesians 5:22-25 and Titus 2:5

(Kopytoff 2005, 139; Study Bible, KJV). The fact that women were only considered functional in conjunction with another person—such as a husband, father, or child— served to deny women their fundamental rights to identity. Anchoring their worth to their usefulness to others meant that women without these connections found themselves adrift and lacking a critical framework through which to measure self-worth. The concept of the autonomous woman in the nineteenth century was not assumed as it is now in some parts of the world. Rather, women were assumed to have dominion over the state of their home, the upbringing of their children, and little else. As a matter of fact, even these concessions were not uniformly granted to women.

Lack of autonomy spanned most facets of daily life and development of political rights with the coming of modernity did not include women in its innovation. Instead, Bayes & Tohidi (2001) indicate that aspects of democracy "such as individual autonomy, citizenship, civil rights, civil society, and social contract theory were construed from an androcentric or male normative perspective" (42). In defining the rights of women and determining their position in society on the eve of African colonialism, there developed "Victorian ideals of womanhood, [including] the doctrine of separate spheres, domestic and public, that confined women's activities to family life and the moral education of children. This ideal of womanhood was held up by Christian preachers and supported with biblical authority" (Kirk-Duggan & Torjesen 2010, xiii). Elizabeth Schmidt (1992) corroborates this sets of norms, noting that "according to their Victorian Christian ideals, good mothers stayed at home raising their children according to Christian values, while fathers went out to work in order to feed the family" (129). As a result of these ideals, a lack of autonomy meant, among other things, that women lacked sufficient property

rights, employment rights, equality within marriage, divorce rights, and the ability gain representation in public and political fora.

The development of these standards of femininity created deeply ingrained sexual values in British society at the turn of the twentieth century. Christianity formed the moral backbone of Victorian society and shaped expectations and norms regarding acceptable roles for women, standards that changed little throughout the nineteenth century. The treatment of women in the matter of divorce proceedings in particular demonstrates the level of control a typical woman had over her own welfare. With a lack of equality—by present-day standards—within marriage essentially a given in Victorian society, it would perhaps seem a natural progression that women also found themselves at a legal disadvantage in the matter of divorce. While women were granted enough autonomy to independently file for divorce, the conditions under which they could so were different than those for men. Men were able to file for divorce due to any occurrence of adultery, while women were only permitted to file in the face of what was termed aggravated adultery, "a transgression that combined adultery with incest, bigamy, desertion, or cruelty (these last two being categories that Parliament was long loath to define)" (Poovey 1988, 84).

With Victorian marriage in many respects consisting of the transfer of a woman from her father to her husband, as "an unmarried woman [no matter her age] was legally her father's ward," in addition to the fact that men in general had many more liberties than did women both within and outside of marriage, it is not surprising that women were submitted to more stringent criteria in order to file for divorce (Poovey 1988, 223). Even women who were able to find recourse in divorce courts were not necessarily guaranteed

full independence. In mid-nineteenth century England, many types of divorce existed within law, some of which still granted a husband rights to his wife's property, even after the termination of the marriage (Poovey 1988, 55).

The issue of divorce is a strong example of the general lack of access to the law with which women had to contend. All through the nineteenth century, women did not have suffrage, putting them on par with children in a political sense, and ensuring that advocates for women in the political sphere were all but nonexistent. This lack of representation ultimately meant that, again, rights for women were conditional upon the express wishes of men, marginalizing women and denying them autonomy in their own rights.

In discussing the male domination in society that made women a second-class group, Delamont and Duffin (1978) reference Ardener, whose description of dominant and subdominant groups classified women as a "muted, inarticulate group" (11). Because men as the dominant group set the paradigm through which ideas are discussed, "a muted group transforms 'their own unconscious perceptions into such conscious ideas as will accord with those generated by the dominant group'" (Delamont and Duffin 1978, 12). In part, this phenomenon helps to explain why female subordination was so pervasive. Women, of course, were just as fervently religious as men and they frequently reinforced patriarchal norms, as faith in Christianity was a tacit acceptance of female inferiority. By policing one another's piety, women were ultimately contributing to their own oppression. One woman's insistence that another woman's promiscuity was sacrilegious ultimately only reinforced the notion that women were inferior and deserving of fewer rights than men.

In this way, women are continually marginalized, their identities conditional upon their acceptance of and operation within the male-generated, collectively perpetuated paradigm. This conditional state rings particularly true when one considers women's lack of suffrage. In turn-of-the-century England, for example, women were unequal (or entirely voiceless) in politics, marriage, religion, education, the workforce, and even amongst themselves in instances of women's castigation of themselves and others.

Christian and British Sexuality pre-Scramble for Africa

Men, by contrast, retained the capacity to lead and make decisions for women by virtue of their superior intellect, and this further divided men and women, whereby "Two social categories that emanated from this construction were the 'man of reason' (the thinker) and the 'woman of the body,' and they were oppositionally constructed" (Oyewumi 2005, 7). Under the assumption that the body would defer to the mind, "women's bodies tend[ed] to be valued or devalued in relation to their functions as signs of men's status" (Tohidi & Bayes 2001, 46).

There was little that a woman could claim as her own, but least of all did she retain ownership over her body. In conjunction with her sexuality, a woman's body was regarded as dangerous and it was generally assumed that a woman could not be trusted to comport herself and wield her sexuality in an acceptable manner, without some sort of external guidance or control. With roots in the Old Testament, "the double standard of sexual morality of patriarchal cultures arises from the necessity of controlling female reproductive sexuality; wives are viewed as the sexual property of their husbands" (Kirk-Duggan & Torjesen 2010, xv). References affirming as much can be found in Deuteronomy 22:12-21 and Leviticus 15:19-24 (Study Bible, KJV). With woman

considered little more than a vessel for future generations of men, valued chiefly for her reproductive capabilities, her body became a commodity and another concession in the male pursuit of control.

Because a woman's sexuality was considered a threat to men and, indeed, to the moral fabric of society, it was necessary to rein in sexuality and prevent women from using sex to wreak havoc. Men in general and theologians in particular regarded female sexuality with something akin to fear and "they regarded women's otherness characteristics such as reproduction and physical attraction to male partners as both 'sacred and soiled, holy and hellish, attractive and repulsive, and all powerful and therefore impossible to live with" (Baik-Chey 2010, 169). Women were depicted as temptresses, suspected of enticing men and inevitably bringing harm to them. This notion is ancient, dating back thousands of years, an example being Homer's *Odyssey*, which featured sirens who seduced mariners into approaching them, subsequently causing shipwrecks and certain death. Female sexuality was therefore something from which men had to protect themselves, and Christianity reinforced the vilification of female sexuality. The general emphasis on celibacy that was particularly restricting for men in the Church shaped Christian views on sexuality beginning in the fourth century CE, as church movements saw "sexuality as incommensurate with spirituality" and issued "sermons and tracts decrying the dangers of association with females" (Kirk-Duggan and Torjesen 2010, xiv).

According to the Bible (Hebrews 13:4), one of the most vital ways for a woman to demonstrate her piety was to remain a virgin until marriage (Study Bible, KJV). A violation of this expectation for women was tantamount to a wholesale rejection of

Christianity, by conventional standards. Among other things, virginity was upheld as a feminine Christian value in that it emulated the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus and the only woman considered worthy of being impregnated with the Son of God. Imitating the holiest woman in Christianity, who had lived "a heroic and self-sacrificing life of prayer, study, and charity [was] to be embraced only by the wisest and hardest working of women" (McNamara 1976, 152). In fact, the ultimate commitment a woman could make to God, entering the convent and becoming a nun, included the stipulation of lifelong celibacy. Chastity belts, strict parental control, and other measures were designed in order to ensure female 'purity.' Remaining virginal until marriage is still upheld by the Christian church as a method of honoring God. Virginity, which was more practically important in the early eras of history when paternity was difficult to determine and cleanliness was not well developed, maintained its significance within the Christian context despite developments in hygiene and technology that would likely have rendered it obsolete without its accompanying religious origins.

One consequence of deemphasizing sex was that it came to be depicted as a job or chore rather than a means of pleasure. Young women were taught that sex was a privilege within marriage that was primarily a means to an end—reproduction—with the directive to "be fruitful and multiply" (Study Bible, Genesis 1:28 (KJV)). An accompanying fiction that developed out of this lesson was that women did not experience sexual desire to the same degree that men did. While it was admitted that women could feel passion, many in the Victorian era—particularly men—believed that female passion was rooted more in their desire to raise a family than any amount of lust that was comparable to that experienced by men. It was agreed that male sexuality was driven by lust, whereas

"women were thought to be less carnally motivated; their sexual feelings were held to revolve around the desire to love and be loved. Women's passion was for a husband, home, and family" (Seidman 1990, 48).

Franzmann (2000) discusses the critical point that female depictions in Christianity are "almost totally one-dimensional, based on gender and sexual function" (84). In the nineteenth century, the assumption was that "a woman's primary role was to be fruitful and multiply—to mother—enabling men (apparently white men) to have dominion over all the earth" (Corey 2010, 141). The description of man as thinker as summarized above and women's responsibility to endure childbearing were mutually reinforcing, as "Victorian physicians and anthropologists (all white males) determined that women's capacity to conceive and bear children diverted energy from their brain's creativity, and women's bodies, in fact, distorted their ability to reason and write well" (Corey 2010, 142).

As Christian citizens, women were expected to fulfill their obligations as mothers and wives, beholden to the expectation that "proper gender roles [were] designed to play out within the sacrament of marriage, and procreation [was] the primary purpose of marriage" (Hoyt 2010, 315). Because it was the product of procreation and not the procreator herself who was considered important, "mother's bodies which [were] invested in the menial labor of mothering [were] not a very high commodity in a patriarchal system" (Corey 2010, 145). The identification of a woman as an object for transportation of valued offspring—specifically when motherhood is an expectation and necessary component for significance in society—created "oppressive dichotomies,

splitting [women] off from [their] physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves"
(Corey 2010, 158).

Intellect in Christian, British Culture pre-Scramble for Africa

The third aspect of identity over which Christian conceptions of women wielded considerable control was intellect. The accepted notion that women were inferior to men was to be found true, above almost all other traits, in regards to the mind. As the train of thought followed, if man was to be 'the thinker' and woman was to represent 'the body,' there certainly could not be any other conclusion but that a man's mind was more valuable than a woman's. Colossians 3:18 states, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord," an excerpt from the Bible that implicitly justifies the idea that men are superior, with the question of intellectual superiority implicit within the Bible—if a man is given dominion over his wife, surely it must be due to his natural advantage in the mental faculties (Study Bible, KJV).

This biblically derived mindset was lent further credence in the nineteenth century by science, as "What began among evangelical missionaries at home and abroad was ripe to be appropriated among scientists by the fad for anatomical measurements and anthropological generalisation from the late 1850s onwards" (Boddice 2011, 330). It became 'scientific fact' that women, owing to statistically smaller brains and other arbitrary factors, were less intelligent than men. Further, Boddice (2011) establishes women's rank within the hierarchy of natural order with reference to a quote by Gustave LeBon, "who in 1879 opined that 'All psychologists who have studied the intelligence of women…recognize today that they represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man'"(325).

Aside from reinforcing men's claims to God-given control over women, this accepted state of affairs also inevitably had an effect on the sphere of education. In fact, spheres were a common theme in creating and upholding a gender divide in Victorian England with general society propagating a "model of binary opposition between the sexes, which was socially realized in separate but supposedly equal 'spheres'" and through which sexual division "underwrote an entire system of institutional practices and conventions at midcentury" (Poovey 1988, 8). The main failing of the 'separate but equal' justification was that it suggested that it was entirely proper for men and women to be treated differently and to have different privileges, which "effectively endorsed male exclusivity in the realms of statesmanship, philosophy, art and science" (Boddice 2011, 321).

The education that a woman received (if at all) was, naturally, different from the education a man could expect to receive—they were separated according to sex and a woman learned skills that could be useful to her within the scope of the household, while a man was educated was typically educated in science, mathematics, and other topics thought to be more cerebral. Men considered this distinction a benevolent act for women, as most "thought it absurd to educate women in the same manner as men because their minds would 'revolt' at disciplines, such as mathematics, fitting only for a masculine mind" (Boddice 2011, 325).

Rather than being taught subjects that were only considered fit for men, women were typically given religious instruction, lessons in literature, and education in a second language such as French or Italian. In addition to these more traditionally academic subjects, she was also likely to learn ladylike skills such as needlepoint and

housekeeping, due to the assumption that "outwardly-visible filth and disorder mirrored an inner moral corruption" (Auerbach 2010, 74). In the middle of the nineteenth century, women in Britain pushed for access to better education and in doing so secured for themselves a wider scope of subjects from which to choose as well as admission to tertiary education (Delamont 1978, 139). Part of this push for more equal educational opportunities was dependent upon justifying female education within the context of Christianity—it was necessary to argue that women being educated on par with men would be a fulfillment of their Christian duties, rather than a violation thereof (Schwartz 2011, 675).

The educational experiences described above, it must be noted, were generally exclusive to women at higher socioeconomic levels. Until laws were passed in England mandating public elementary education for all children, women with fewer economic opportunities were far less likely to be provided with educations and it was considered unusual simply for a poor woman to be more than minimally literate (Webb 1950, 336). Poorer women also had even less access to means of gaining representation, as the husbands through whom they might have traditionally made their voices heard were also relatively powerless within the Victorian system. Women who gained access to tertiary education in the second half of the nineteenth century were rarely, if ever, from poor backgrounds. With the double 'burden' of being both female and poor, these women were at an even greater disadvantage than more economically stable women.

The experiences of women in colonial Africa would ultimately mirror those of British women, particularly British women of a lower socioeconomic status, the only difference being that African women were subject to the importation of British education

standards from the beginning of the nineteenth century, setting them back half a century and requiring them to endure the same struggles as British women in order to receive an equitable education, something which even today has not been fully achieved.

Economics in Christian, British Culture pre-Scramble for Africa

As could be easily inferred, women as a group had few economic advantages, a fact which manifested itself in many ways. Economic freedom for women was the exception rather than the norm in Victorian England. According to Delamont (1978), women who were independently employed were relatively rare, typically working as governesses, maids, and nurses (139). It was expected that women who were financially able would become homemakers upon marriage, such that most employed women were either relatively young or 'spinsters.' Governesses, for example, were rarely "teacher[s] by choice, had no training for the work, and her unmarried state was a living testimony to her failure in the only contest open to the lady, husband-hunting," by popular estimation (Delamont 1978, 136).

One resource that provided a bridge for women between home life and the public sphere was that of voluntary work, which "had originally been presented as an extension of their roles in the domestic sphere" (Auerbach 2010, 71). Because voluntary social reform projects were considered the purview of women, who would be appropriately nurturing, these types of roles gave women a chance to establish themselves in jobs that eventually became state-sponsored. Their presence had become normalized and because "middle-class women had already established considerable authority there, [they] could therefore contribute to the effort without transgressing gender expectations" (Auerbach 2010, 71).

Additionally, they often worked the same hours as men for much lower wages. Because they had few mechanisms of power as a group, women were often badly treated by employers, who were aware that, in the age before unions and labor laws, they had little recourse in the face of abusive treatment and often were not financially stable enough to simply quit their jobs. Simply put, they were in "a position of powerlessness: no women had votes, could hold political office or alter their legal position for themselves. All women were dependent on men to alter their situation" (Delamont 1978, 135).

Among other results, economic growth and technological innovation in the nineteenth century brought about the Industrial Revolution, which changed the face of working life for men and women alike. Spurred by the rapid development of capitalism, factories sprang up throughout England and created new job opportunities for women, albeit with unregulated working conditions and barely adequate living wages. The net effect of the Industrial Revolution on women is difficult to essentialize briefly, but many historians assert that "an unequal sharing of unpaid family responsibilities prevented women from competing equally with men, intensifying female oppression in an era of individual competition" (Nicholas and Oxley 1993, 724). To state it plainly, if a woman had to be at home tending house or looking after her children, the time spent on those responsibilities necessarily meant she had fewer hours in the day to devote to employment and earning a steady income. In addition to already being paid less simply for being a woman, her earning power is further reduced with each time-consuming household chore. Speaking relatively, comparing her depleted income with a man's

uninterrupted wages throws into sharp relief her increasingly vulnerable position in society.

The poor in England had few resources through which they could gain representation, and this was particularly true for women. One key example of this, illustrating the lack of regard for both women and the economically disadvantaged, is the fact that England did not make public elementary schooling available for all children until 1870, it was not made mandatory until 1880, and schooling fees were not eliminated until 1891 (Auerbach 2010, 64).

Colonialism was on the forefront of British expansion in the nineteenth century, and Africa became the newest target in the century's last decades. Undeniably economically advantageous, colonialism could also be justified by Christianity, which advocated universal conversion and made conquest of new countries a divine imperative, as the next section will reveal. With God on their sides, British colonialists did not hesitate to impose themselves on the African continent.

Arrival of colonialism

With little exception, there is a general consensus across the literature that European influence had a net negative effect on African women's experiences since the nineteenth century (Cornwall 2005, 1). The ways in which European Christianity had evolved by the arrival of colonialism is one factor that affected how women were treated. Christianity was and is a universalizing religion, meaning that it "is not contained within a particular culture, race, or geographic location but moves across boundaries and encounters a variety of sociocultural and political situations as well as other religions" (Franzmann 2000, 42). Because of this tendency, Christianity attempts to assimilate

people into the culture that has developed around the religion, rather than immediately adapting to a new culture that it encounters. In instances where the influence of Christianity is stronger than that which it encounters, the tendency to overpower smaller groups and marginalize the members of these groups is a seemingly inevitable consequence. Franzmann (2000) elaborates, noting that where "texts are controlled by a political and religious elite, in this case the colonial Christian structures, large groups of people in various populations who lack any access to these texts or any means of creating and disseminating documents of their own within the tradition may simply remain invisible" (44).

Despite the consensus on the eventual effects of colonialism, there is less consistency when it comes to whether the oppression of women was systematic or largely incidental. Beoku-Betts (1976), for example, holds that men's sheer disinterest in African women (in a formal sense) led to their marginalization, "since they [women] were so characteristically uninformative and uninteresting" (Beoku-Betts 20). Holly Hanson suggests that colonizing Europeans excluded women from formal society "because they could only see and comprehend the political power of men," implying that their dismissal of women was due to the ingrained expectation that women simply did not matter (Hanson 2002, 220). British colonizers' apparent inability to conceive of women in positions of power—in spite of the fact that their monarch at the time, Queen Victoria, was a woman—reflects the deeply ingrained attitudes with which they arrived in Africa.

Conversely, Musisi (2002) holds that Europeans had inconsistent views about the prescriptive nature of colonialism, but "they all agreed that certain customs and aspects of culture needed to be refined by colonial administration and the missionary projects… In

their efforts to preserve customs and traditions, the British reshaped gender and class configurations through biased laws and regulations" (Musisi 2002, 98-99). Burke (2005) lends support to this theory, acknowledging a conscious effort by colonial officials to redefine the roles of women, as "there was a powerful conceit that remaking culture through the private and feminine sphere would ultimately ensure the transformation of the whole of what was imagined as problematically 'African'" (Burke 2005, 66). This appraisal of the situation, with the underlying assumption that women were the root of the perceived issue, hearkens back to nineteenth century views on women and is informed by Christian influences as previously described.

Colonialism and Religion

Religion, of course, was a pervasive force in colonial African society and affected how African women were treated on a day-to-day basis, both by Europeans and their own people. Whether these effects were positive or negative remains a matter of discussion and it would be dangerous to make the automatic assumption that Christianity was applied in Africa in the same manner as it came to be in Britain. It is possible that adoption of Christianity helped African women better assimilate into colonial society, giving them a voice that they might have otherwise been denied by the colonial patriarchy.

Members of European churches, of course, tended to interpret Christianity as a saving grace for African societies. Robert Delavignette (1964) stresses the Church as a force of social justice, noting its "vocation to see that justice is done as she [the Church] has been from the very beginning of European colonization, by protecting almost alone the populations of the overseas countries and by introducing a moral ferment into

colonialism" (96). In interpreting the Church's role in this manner, however, he tacitly

rejects the notion that pre-colonial societies had acceptable preexisting moral standards or

that any alternative approaches to morality could have had in merit in comparison to

Christianity.

Alternately, the more prevalent view is one of Christianity used as a tool to

redefine women's roles and narrow their opportunities for access within the colonial

framework. Burke (2005) discusses instances of deliberate efforts by missionaries to

redefine women's roles, spurred by their belief that "the reproduction of Christian

communities was contingent upon wresting away female converts from indigenous

family structures" (66). Gaitskell (2005) explains one consequence of this calculated

restructuring of womanhood. She points out that Christian enforcement of a woman's

proper place in the home as a 'helpmeet' for her husband "ensured that it was primarily

women who would face all the difficulties of the home; but with its stress on

individualism and monogamy, Christianity cut them off from older, communal supports"

(Gaitskell 2005, 181).

The racial undertone that imbued the Christianization of Africans was no secret.

The superiority of the white man, in addition to being decreed in the Bible, was also

deeply felt by the white men themselves. With the assumption that European civilization

was the most highly developed in the world, colonialists regarded Africans as racially,

morally, and socially inferior.

Colonialism and Capitalism

One of the larger questions concerning the intersection of capitalism and women's

rights is how to compare their colonial state with that of pre-colonialism. Because little if

any formal literature exists on the subject, there is significant debate regarding the nature of African women's status prior to European arrival. In particular, questions remain as to whether the introduction of capitalism had any influence on the development of patriarchy in Africa. Sudarkasa (2005), for example, claims that in pre-capitalist societies prior to colonialism, "women's activities were complementary to those of men and that women producers and traders were not subordinate to men" (28). April Gordon (1992) supports this notion, rationalizing that Western impressions of female pre-colonial subordination are influenced by our own misconceptions of African culture. She warns against making any strong generalizations about gender roles due to the lack of written history, but adds that "depictions of women as dominated, servile beasts of burden is an example of the kinds of distortions that have resulted from European ethnocentrism in dealing with African cultures" (Gordon 1992, 202).

However, demonstrating the truly ambiguous nature of the available evidence, a mere four years later Gordon changes tack somewhat and asserts that "before colonial capitalism, African economic, social, and political institutions…promoted male-dominated societies" (5). She concludes decisively that "we cannot claim, as some Marxist feminists do, that capitalism created patriarchy in Africa" (Gordon 1996, 5). Guy 1987 supports the idea of a patriarchal pre-colonial Africa, suggesting that "the dominant class consisted of married-men/homestead-heads. The subordinate class consisted of women and children, the product of their labor being appropriated by their husbands and fathers" (24). Determining the specific origins of patriarchy in Africa, while challenging, is an important factor in analyzing the evolution of women's rights and particularly the

degree to which European influence affected women's experiences, so this will be expanded upon in later sections.

While the sources I have discussed here deal mainly in generalities, they provide an important foundation for more detailed analyses that will be dealt with in subsequent chapters. For the most part, scholars agree that the changes experienced by women during the colonial period served to put them at a disadvantage, economically, socially, politically, and otherwise. The texts within the literature review touch briefly on the many factors that affected women's experiences, but none has attempted to definitively synthesize these experiences. I will attempt to place myself within the literature by creating a coherent narrative that takes into account the interplay between gender and religion, particularly within the colonial-era patriarchal and capitalistic context. In doing so, I hope to provide new insight into the importance of not considering each of these topics in a vacuum, thereby increasing the potential to address women's right in a comprehensive, substantive fashion.

Uganda

Introduction

The developments briefly previewed in the literature review played out in Uganda in some ways that make the country an ideal starting point for exploring these topics in greater depth. Although Christian missionaries did not turn their focus to Uganda until the 1870s, the success with which they met and the timeline upon which their success occurred marked Uganda as a notable example of the often overwhelming influence of European infiltration of the African continent.

The net effect of colonialism on Ugandan women's daily lives can be said to have been negative, as will presently be argued; but caution must also be exercised not to overstate the extent to which women's experiences can be generalized. A footnote in Tamale (2000) can be cross-applied as a caveat to my ensuing analysis, as she points out that "African women are not a homogenous group. Despite the common heritage derived from colonialism, economic exploitation, and racism, there are wide variations in the ways that these have impacted on individual women in different regions and communities" (14). Many female experiences will be accurately represented in the following discussion of the transformations that took place in the categories introduced in the literature review. However, it cannot be assumed that the examples used are universally representative, as other factors such as wealth or power may have further shaped some women's individual experiences.

Having acknowledged this possibility, we can say that, in general, Christianity swiftly took a remarkably strong hold in Uganda. In comparing the case of Uganda with that of less enthusiastically religious [Rhodesia], the specific role that religion played in shaping the evolution of gender roles in British colonial Africa may be more clearly demonstrated. This investigation into the changing status of women in Uganda must be divided into two distinct sections, which will be necessary to clearly construct a cohesive, logical argument.

The first section is an overview of women's status among pre-colonial Ugandan societies and the ways in which gender roles were or were not prescribed. Although there was no cohesive Uganda prior to colonization, I will describe some of the larger societies and identify common characteristics among populations, which will serve to create a

comprehensive image of pre-colonial "Uganda" against which turn-of-the-century colonial Uganda can be compared. Particular characteristics I will focus on include the nature of family structures, women's relative economic power within society, and pre-colonial religious traditions. Following this, the second section will examine the extent of European influence in Uganda, particularly as regards, the introduction of Christianity, women's access to power, and mentality toward female education. In establishing a clearer narrative on which to base discussion of women's evolving status at the turn of the twentieth century, it is necessary to delineate between changes caused by colonial administration and those attributable to zealous missionary efforts to inculcate social reform.

Among the many questions raised by an examination of Ugandan gender roles, perhaps the most important is, *"What was the overall impact of British colonialism on Ugandan women's rights?"* This question will be answered by a deeper look into exactly how women were valued prior to European entry into the region. Women's rights certainly changed as a result of colonialism, but whether the change was ultimately positive or negative for women is less obvious, and the answer is unique for each country. Uganda's unique receptivity to Christianity provides an interesting foil for the Rhodesian case, in addition to being instructive in determining from which angle to approach a realistic effort to improve the status of women in Uganda (and throughout Africa).

Pre-Colonial Uganda

The area comprising present-day Uganda is a piece of land accounting for 93,065 square miles and 35,873,253 inhabitants (Central Intelligence Agency 2012).

Contemporary Uganda is home to more than a dozen ethnic groups, each derived from one of the five traditional kingdoms within Ugandan borders—Buganda, Ankole (or Nkore), Bunyoro, Toro, and Busoga. Prior to the arrival of European colonists and missionaries, the region's various ethnic groups were largely separate and often antagonistic toward one another. With the exception of some occasional contact for trading and other such purposes, each society was quite distinct and in possession of fully-developed social structures, customs, and beliefs. While each society had an independent identity, there were numerous characteristics that were commonly found among the societies of the region. A closer look into some of the major kingdoms in pre-colonial Uganda helps to identify common traits among them and create a generalized picture of Ugandan society. Of particular interest are women's status and power within these societies and the extent to which they experienced parity with men (if at all).

As with any study of an oral, non-literate culture, reliable accounts of centuries' worth of societies are hard to come by. The bulk of existing knowledge about pre-colonial Uganda, as with most African cultures, has been derived from oral histories and secondhand accounts. As a result, Uganda's constructed history is just that—a fragmented picture capturing a society from a primarily European point of view, replete with biases and misunderstandings. Because of "the constructed and artificial nature of many of the missionary and colonial accounts," our knowledge of Uganda's past cannot definitively be much more than "fragmentary perceptions" (Musisi 2002, 107).

Women's positions in pre-colonial societies in Uganda, while not ideal, were relatively egalitarian. To be specific, Ugandan cultures had a more fluid concept of gender roles—there was a division of labor among the sexes but the differing roles, in

addition to being more flexible than they would be later on, often counterbalanced one another. Women were predominantly considered something of a gateway to cultural knowledge and rituals, as they wielded influence in matters related to sexuality (relatively speaking), marriage, and birth. Upon their arrival to Africa, beginning with the kingdom of Buganda, colonial administrators began devising ways to mold the indigenous populations in their image, disagreeing perhaps on specific policies but united in agreement "that certain customs and aspects of culture needed to be refined by colonial administration and the missionary projects (Musisi 2002, 98).

Rituals

Some of the most significant changes that Ugandan women experienced with the arrival of colonialism occurred in areas that they had to contend with nearly every day, such as education, rituals, and sexuality. One of the common tropes in pre-colonial Ugandan societies was women's roles as the guardians of substantial rituals and traditions.

The Iteso culture, as studied by Ayers 2006, was one of the largest in Uganda, and as a stateless society, it operated on a kinship basis. Located in northern Uganda, the societies of which typically had less strict social structures than those in the south, the Iteso people were highly egalitarian and no one member of the kingdom had the final say in any decision. As one might assume, this type of society allowed significant mobility and women were permitted to obtain positions of power, although perhaps not as commonly as men. In each *aketer* (roughly equivalent to a clan), the most senior woman would be named the *Apolon ka etale*, a title that made her "responsible for the decisions that governed the taboos of the *aketer*" (Ayers 2006, 162). Women in numerous Ugandan

societies also had the ability to dictate dietary restrictions, such as a ban on consuming chicken; carry out initiation ceremonies for the young women of their communities; and uphold longstanding birth traditions (Ayers 2006, 162).

The ritual authority that Ugandan women possessed during this time period far outstripped what they would later experience, as administrators and missionaries attempted to 'civilize' them by discouraging their traditions and imposing new methods as much as they were able to. By the early twentieth century, for example, missionaries and colonialists had joined forces to develop the Maternity Training School (MTS), which was designed to reform Ugandan birth rituals and attended by African women who would return to their communities as midwives trained in Western medicine and groomed to constantly embody the ideals touted by colonial propaganda. The ultimate goal was to reduce infant mortality rates while further indoctrinating the indigenous Ugandans in Christian behavior. Thus, in addition to promoting safer methods of childbirth, the Maternity Training School "emphasized the Christian education of midwives and mothers and cultivated the role of the midwife as a moral exemplar for her community" (Summers 1991, 803).

An even more utilitarian approach, one in which British interests were placed higher still above those of the Ugandans, the committee secretary at Mengo Hospital made the argument that reducing the mortality rate would diminish "the enormous annual loss to the Protectorate of what might be useful lives owing to the prevalence of venereal diseases and dangerous Native treatment by poisonous drugs" (Musisi 2002, 110). To administrators, this line of thought was perfectly reasonable and demonstrates the lack of regard they had for the indigenous populations unless financial or political interests were

at stake. While their disregard also extended to Ugandan men, women and their reproductive systems received double the ire and presumption of inferiority. Thus, the most convincing argument in favor of trained midwives was not the opportunity to save lives, but instead the colony's increased future earning potential. This motivation reduced Ugandan women and children to little more than chattel in Britain's colossal income network.

The administrators' success was moderate, in that the midwives were effective but not particularly prevalent. Ugandans often mistrusted and avoided the perfectly competent new midwives, instead preferring to maintain the use of natural, traditional treatments. For the colonial administration, making these small concessions disturbed the illusion that white culture had been fully embraced; instead, they had to acknowledge "that Baganda women were not fully dominated and that they maintained some form of control over their medical conditions and knowledge" (Musisi 2002, 109).

These facts aside, having a birth attended by an MTS midwife was improbable anyway, as there were relatively few midwives and particularly so outside the colonial hub of Buganda. In 1926, for example, midwives only attended approximately 12% of the 16,000 Baganda births that year (Summers 1991, 804). This exercise in the perceived improvement of local women was fairly typical of the colonial administration—Ugandans were wary of outside intrusion, mouthpieces of European cultural ideals (in this case, the African women who trained as midwives) struggled to be considered adequately Anglicized while also failing to win over very many Ugandans, and officials were dismayed at the apparently underwhelming efforts of the midwives.

The MTS example perfectly captures the intersectionality that characterizes the changes that took place in Uganda and elsewhere. In establishing a maternity training school, the colonial government targeted traditional conceptions of ritual, education, sexuality, religion and morality, and female autonomy. With all parties involved feeling prolonged dissatisfaction with the status quo, the eventual compromise that came about in Uganda was a high rate of nominal Christian conversion—Ugandans adopted various Christian practices such as praying to Jesus but they also retained many of their traditional animist beliefs and rituals, which they incorporated with their new faith.

Education

African pre-colonial education was markedly different than that which was imposed upon them by the Europeans. Ugandans and the English differed in opinion regarding basic teaching philosophies, end goals, and most everything in between. Educational content varied throughout Uganda prior to colonialism, but there is a general shared structure. In each of Uganda's societies, no one person in the clan or kin group was responsible for the education of the next generation. Youth were taught practical skills, spirituality, how to perform future jobs, and other such components of what was considered a comprehensive education (Adeyemi & Adeyinka 2003, 432).

In pre-colonial Ugandan societies, learning was not formalized, but instead typically involved a holistic, skill-specific approach. Education was not technically gender-segregated, but as each student was learning skills to be used later in life and roles were often divided by gender, this outcome often ended up being inevitable. However, it is worth noting that roles assigned to each gender were not the result of the assumed inferiority of one gender to another, but they were intended to play to each gender's

strengths. Whether or not this approach is simply a more subtle form of sexism is debatable, but there was by no means a blanket assumption that men were intellectually superior to women, as was the case in nineteenth England.

Pre-colonial education is described as holistic because the skills taught helped students master a particular trade or job from start to finish. In Acholi society, for example, "a child destined to become a fisherman, as already noted, learned not only to catch fish but also to preserve and market it; to make and mend nets; to manufacture canoes and to erect temporary fishing huts" (Adeyemi &Adeyinka 2003, 433). More abstract (but still oral) education took place as well, such as the learning of the tribe's history and the enhancement of mental and moral development, which was partly achieved by the acquisition of "such qualities as perseverance, self-control, courage and endurance" (Adeyemi & Adeyinka 2003, 435).

The notion of the clan collectively teaching the new generation was very strongly felt. Parents had the lion's share of the educational duty but their efforts were supplemented by involvement of all other elders in the community, who were permitted to discipline and advise children, among other responsibilities. This communal involvement was not considered optional, as an example from the Banyaruguru people of Western Uganda will illustrate: "[A]n adult who showed no interest in the education of the young people in the community was regarded as inimical to the community. He or she was often branded a witch… [T]he task of teaching and bringing up children in pre-colonial communities was a collective responsibility" (Adeyemi & Adeyinka 2003, 436). The Banyaruguru prioritized education to the extent that those disinclined to contribute were actually considered opponents of the community.

Living purposefully was the central tenet of pre-colonial African education, but this concept can be broken down into Fafunwa's seven cardinal goals of traditional education:

"1. To develop the child's latent physical skills.

2. To develop character.

3. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority.

4. To develop intellectual skills.

5. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labor.

6. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.

7. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large" (Adeyemi & Adeyinka 2003, 429).

Because there was no formal ceremony to denote 'graduation' from education, it was generally understood to be a process that lasted from childhood until the child left his or her parents' home.

When formal Western education was introduced to the indigenous population, the spirit of communal teaching carried over and resulted in the establishment of village schools. Imbued with a strong appreciation for knowledge, and as "missionaries from Europe brought the skill of literacy to Uganda, hundreds of Ugandans responded, first by learning to read themselves, and then by teaching the skill to tens of thousands of others" (Hanson 2010, 159). This literacy influx was accompanied by the arrival of the printing press from Europe and the subsequent distribution of printed materials.

Because the number of missionaries was far outstripped by the number of students, all students who learned to read were subsequently expected to teach this to the members of their community. The teachers in the village schools, for example, were not missionaries, of whom there simply were not enough. Instead, the newly educated turned around and became the teachers in the village schools, which cropped up with the arrival of missionaries and marked the beginning of formal education in Uganda. In this way, literacy spread very quickly and was received enthusiastically.

To the dismay of the missionaries, village schools were coeducational and boys and girls were taught similar curricula, along with adult learners (Hanson 2010, 162). The schools were nevertheless significantly different from the type of education that preceded them, as their curricula lacked more practical, vocation-oriented education and instead focused on literacy and Christian religious indoctrination. The colonial administration did not permit male-female coeducation beyond the village school level, so Ugandans had no choice but to conform if they wished to continue their academic educations. This reflects the nature of the compromise between indigenous and colonial forces, as was the case with birth rituals and many other aspects of colonial Ugandan society. Education became a conduit by which new generations of colonized Africans learned about the inherent superiority of European culture, demonstrating that "imperial conquest was an intellectual conflict as much as a military or economic one" (Hanson 2010, 162).

For the most part, village schools were self-funded and communities came together to ensure their continued existence. For a brief period in the early twentieth century, there was a tax rebate for teachers that prevented them from having to leave the schools in favor of better-paying jobs that would enable the teachers to afford their

regular taxes (Hanson 2010, 160). This practice ended in the 1920s, as the colonial government elected to focus their money on 'more successful' schools. A variety of pressures from the colonial government made village schools increasingly difficult to sustain and missionary-led schools, which would invariably reinforce European gender norms that marginalized women (in education and otherwise), gradually replaced them. However, the village schools were significant in that they were the first examples of "'adapted education'—Africans adapting new knowledge to forms of organizing education they already knew" (Hanson 2010, 171). They merely represented a stage in the evolution between pre-colonial and post-colonial education structures and they reflected the Ugandans' adaptability and willingness to compromise.

As a result of the widespread implementation of missionary methods of education, female students were disempowered as male students learned more intellectually rigorous subjects while women learned stereotypically feminine skills such as sewing and cooking. Subjects that were taught by missionaries in Buganda included reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, religion, and handicrafts (Walakira 1975, 146-7). While the goal in teaching male students was to produce a contributing member of the economy who worked within the established colonial framework, the goal in teaching female students was simply to prepare them to be the wives of these men: "Education for women was primarily geared towards providing the educated men with good wives and home-makers, and focused on domestic skills, nutrition, and home economics" (Tamale 2000, 10).

Not all Ugandans were so enthusiastic about education once it became clear that the subjects taught to students would be limited to those that best enabled them to make

money for the British without making them so knowledgeable as to attempt to supersede the societal status assigned to them by the colonial administration. In order to soften the transition into British control, they called upon the chiefs for assistance. Chiefs, who gained economic and political power by collaborating with the colonial government, were the first recipients of the government's rigorous and intensely applied scientifically based interventions. This strategy choice was due to the fact that "the missionary and colonial establishments believed that educational and medical interventions would be more acceptable to the Baganda and more widely disseminated if they began with" chiefs, inspiring something of a trickle-down effect that would encourage the general population to be less suspicious of these foreign ideas and techniques (Musisi 2002, 106). This strategy, however, was largely focused on Ugandan men, as the colonial government did not think that the women needed to be 'convinced' to accept these interventions—they were expected to be subservient because they were women and therefore lacking the necessary agency to resist colonial imposition.

Because education was neither compulsory nor free, there arose stratification within Ugandan society that differentiated those who could afford education from those who could not. Marking a departure from pre-colonial access to goods and services that was mostly egalitarian, economics now decided many students' futures for them, as a lack of formal education rendered a person ineligible for white-collar employment within the colonial structure. This trend particularly impacted Uganda's young women, as the strict new hierarchy imposed by the British trapped them at the bottom of the ladder. For families struggling to succeed within the new currency-based paradigm, the cost of education was often prohibitive (or nearly so). One solution that could provide at least

partial access to the colonial framework was to select one child to represent the family and receive a proper education. In situations like these, the child was much more likely to be male, given that Europeans were unlikely to hire women on principle, regardless of education received. There were a few reasons for this preference of the male child: a) education for young men was more broad and intellectually rigorous than the female equivalent; b) if the family was hoping to ensure future power, men were the only ones likely to find work in the colonial government; and c) whereas pre-colonial society had skewed patriarchal but was generally egalitarian, religious influence and other factors contributed to Ugandans' developing perspective that women were in fact inferior to men.

While Ugandans' contended with the complications that accompanied their rapidly evolving educational environment, the colonial government reaped numerous benefits from the new system. To the British, the successful education of the population was little more than a fringe benefit to the larger goals being accomplished as a result of European schooling. Among these were the inculcation of Christianity and the attempt to 'improve' morality by changing cultural values, especially those of women (Summers 1991, 803). These goals were the norm because Europeans brought with them the nineteenth century assumption that women had a moral sphere of influence (as discussed in the literature review) with which they could guide the moral behavior of those around them by setting an example as an upstanding, morally righteous Christian woman.

Female students learned basic reading, writing, and arithmetic; religion and morality; practical skills such as sewing, cooking, and hygiene; and little else (Gordon 1992, 209). There was an inherent distrust of African women that shaped the way they

were treated. Because they were seen as immoral, inferior, and impure, they were assumed to be incapable of mastering anything beyond the basic skills required for domesticity (Musisi 2002, 107-8).

This focus on education that emphasized literacy and accompanying subjects eventually replaced the holistic, goal-oriented African education. Without the comprehensive traditional education to teach students the skills necessary to flourish economically, a new generation of Ugandans found themselves ill equipped to succeed in communities that necessitated practical knowledge they had not learned. Rather than having a country- or even continent-specific curriculum for Uganda, their education was identical to that being disseminated throughout the British Empire, including Europe and India. As a result, "the implication of this noble principle was that in a quest for certificates that would lead a tiny minority to work in the colonial administrations, all Africans would receive an education irrelevant to rural life" (Hanson 2010, 163).

The reasoning behind this relentless enthusiasm for education, despite the fact that it frequently failed to improve career prospects, had much to do with status. As Ugandan communities quickly assimilated and expanded upon social hierarchies instituted by Europeans, education became yet one more determinant of personal value, which was why an educated Busoga woman "has more bargaining power than a woman with little or no schooling" (Sorensen 1996, 622). This bargaining power increased in importance because female economic power decreased with colonial intrusion and its disruption of traditional gender roles and rights. Bargaining power was thus an important "means to gaining access to and control over economic resources," which these educated women likely would not have otherwise had (Sorensen 1996, 622).

While some native Ugandans resisted the European standards of individualism and pursuit of wealth, "almost everyone else made the standard of living of the wealthy their goal and let go of the ethic of community responsibility that an earlier generation had learned" (Hanson 2010, 163). This shift would particularly impact women, since men largely embraced their new individualistic identities and facilitated their own advancement by marginalizing and disempowering women. Tamale (2000) references theories that "cite missionary education as the single most important policy that adversely affected African women in relation to men" (10). The lack of equal access to education put women at an automatic and typically permanent disadvantage. Instead of learning about subjects that "provide[d] women with the intellectual skills needed to participate in Western-style politics," such as English language or political science, women were taught skills that left them qualified to do little more than run a household, as was expected of a proper Christian wife (Tamale 2000, 10). Female education was shaped under the assumption that a woman's highest aspiration would be to serve her family faithfully, with the result that "education for women was primarily geared towards providing the educated men with good wives and home-makers, and focused on domestic skills, nutrition, and home economics" (Tamale 2000, 10).

Sexuality

Sexuality, like so many other aspects of pre-colonial Ugandan culture, was incredibly varied and took numerous forms as the pre-colonial kingdoms developed. There were vacillations between matrilineality and patrilineality, evolution of roles and rights assigned to women (and men), and different interpretations of appropriate sexual behavior across cultures. The most adequate summation of pre-colonial Ugandan sexual

culture would be to state that it was largely patriarchal, but the delineations between matrilineality and patrilineality were not so rigid as one might expect. Sexual and gender roles, while dominant, were less strict and not as much of a foregone conclusion as they would later come to be. There were many types of relationships that were predicated upon gender structures, and they were far more diverse than the conventional European notions of man-woman marriage and the nuclear family.

In the study of pre-colonial sexuality, as with most other aspects of pre-colonial Africa, it is difficult to create a coherent narrative, as so little material exists—particularly primary sources. Additionally, the fact that these societies were initially observed by Europeans who found it near-impossible to extricate themselves from their Christian notions of gender, such that they misconstrued and poorly defined their interpretations of many Ugandan relationships, as they struggled to understand practices that defied their prior notions of how societies were to be constructed. In fact, there are African critics who argue that "even the concept of 'gender' is an insidious form of Western imperialism… Not only do gendered binaries and related ideas about individual sexual identity and desire misrepresent African societies, in this view, but they shore up primitivist or pathologized constructions of Africanness in the West" (Epprecht 2009, 1259).

Unable to conceive of an entirely different and nevertheless valid approach to sexuality in society, particularly from a people they viewed as primitive, they underestimated the complexity or purposefulness of Ugandan sexual relations. Instead, their essentialized view zeroed in on what they perceived to be female African

subservience (sexual or otherwise) to men, men's denial of female sexual pleasure or autonomy, and the general lack of sexual modesty or guilt (Epprecht 2009, 1262).

The reality of relations between the sexes in Uganda was of course different from how Europeans perceived the relations, but in many senses, was somewhat similar. In the Toro kingdom, premarital virginity was highly valued. Within the marriage, Toro women were subordinate to their husbands, to the extent that a woman's husband "had control over her movements, and he could also order her to sleep with a visiting guest, especially a blood-brother or clansman" (Perlman 1966, 569). Although there were controls in place to prevent a woman from being excessively abused by her husband, males were strongly dominant which reflected their generally superior status. Another expression of this inequality was the fact that a woman was expected to be faithful, while a man "was allowed to have other wives and sexual relations outside marriage" (Perlman 1966, 569). This emphasis on virginity was not especially common in other areas of Uganda, but Toro society is otherwise representative of Ugandan expectations regarding bridewealth, marriage, and the inferior status of women.

In a fundamental sense, Ugandan culture leaned toward patriarchy. The Buganda creation myth, for example, involves Nambi choosing to leave heaven and its attendant luxuries in order to join Kintu on his newly established clan land, where she encountered "hard work, restricted freedom, and subservience in Kintu's household" (Musisi 1991, 767). In Musisi's analysis, the story serves multiple functions:

> "While the myth can be seen as a justification for women's inferior position in Buganda and as the beginning of domesticity, it could also be interpreted as the story of a woman leaving her natal kin group to join that of her husband in a

monogamous union. The myth thus legitimated the ideology of patrilocality and

patrilineality as central to marriage arrangements" (767).

Of course, given the longstanding prevalence of polygyny in Ugandan society, it

is clear that the creation myth was by no means intended to be the final word on sexual or

marital relations. However, it did provide a solid origin point for Baganda women's

status and rights for women fluctuated in the ensuing centuries.

Despite the monogamous marriage of Nambi and Kintu, polygyny was an

indicator of status by the nineteenth century. Although there were many reasons for its

development—population skew as far as gender (by some accounts, the female-to-male

ratio was 3.5:1), increased potential for reproduction, etc.—the prevalence of polygyny

mirrored the patterns of expansionist warfare, as the opportunity for "plunder increased

the potential for wealth differentiation among men and enhanced men's ability to acquire

extra wives," with the implication being that "the more wives a man had, the higher his

status on the political and social ladder" (Musisi 1991, 772).

Because of the financial burden involved in obtaining and keeping a wife, each

additional wife that a man had was considered a status symbol. This objectification of

women was bolstered by the fact that they were considered their fathers' property, to the

extent that a man could repay a debt or fine by offering forth his daughter for marriage

(Musisi 1991, 783). Polygyny was an unrestricted practice, although it was often the

province of the elite, as a male peasant would have to work for several years in order to

earn enough money to pay the bridewealth. Payment of bridewealth was almost universal

among Ugandan cultures, as it made a marriage official and granted the man paternity of

his wife's future paternity (Musisi 1991, 783-4).

Although polygyny's objectifying undertones would suggest otherwise, women were able to derive advantages from the practice and the multiple-wife arrangement was positive for some women, as it was a means by which women could share household labor, thereby lessening their individual burdens (Gordon 1992, 205). Reproduction, which was considered vitally important and one of the bases of polygyny, is one area that in fact demonstrates the complexity of sexual relations. Until the nineteenth century, Buganda princesses could neither marry nor procreate, although these stipulations did not preclude them from engaging in sexual activity. In fact, "it was socially legitimate for them to initiate sexual liaisons with any man they fancied at any time they wish," a luxury that served to counterbalance their restrictions and which symbolizes their "ambiguous gender position—elevated in some respects, circumscribed in others" (Musisi 1991, 774).

In many ways, the rules regarding Buganda royalty were radically different from the sexual mores for commoners. While almost all Buganda communities were patrilineal, matrilineality was often a critical aspect of Buganda royalty, due to the kingship's lack of a clan totem. As a result,

> "[T]he kin ties and role of the bakembuga became of crucial importance…[T]he bakembuga carried responsibility for the clans' biological perpetuation and succession to the throne. The princesses' matrilineal affiliations were so important that they rendered their patrilineal connections largely irrelevant" (Musisi 1991, 780).

Aside from this exception, however, patrilineality was predominant, although this did not necessarily render women as powerless as one might assume. Although this will

be discussed further in the next section, it is important to note that the patterns of power expression and rights granted were very different than those in Europe, which contributed to the confusion and faulty assumptions that clouded European analysis of pre-colonial society.

There were numerous relationship types that escaped outsiders' understanding, but each was useful within their societal context and women had a reasonable amount of mobility in selecting a particular type of relationship into which to enter. In fact, Baganda women also had the option to live independently of men. These women, known as banakyeombekedde, were able to cultivate their own land and support themselves rather than enter into a patriarchal marriage scenario. Their established singlehood did not preclude them from being sexually active, and this was occasionally a source of stigma, as they were markedly different from married women in their sexual freedom and economic independence (Davis 2000, 33). Although the sexual freedom of the banakyeombekedde was relatively unusual, it was certainly not unheard of, since premarital sex was fairly uncontroversial and carried none of the mortally sinful connotations that lead to its condemnation in Christian societies (Davis 2000, 34).

In all, women in various Ugandan societies were the subjects of numerous expectations regarding their sexuality, but the arrival of missionaries and British colonists changed their experiences with sex significantly. Under the influence of Christianity, Europeans conflated sex with feminine evil and repainted women as manipulative and promiscuous, which significantly affected how Ugandan men learned to treated women. To discuss colonial conceptions of women's sexual rights would suggest that they even

believed in such a thing. Rather than being viewed as a physical expression, women's sexuality was reduced to its practical functions and otherwise discouraged.

The colonial view of sexuality was grim, especially for women. Constrained by rigidly defined sexual roles and guided by a religion that reduced women to vessels and temptresses, Victorians arrived in Uganda with an extremely negative view of any sexual behavior that did not align with their perspectives. In particular, missionaries and colonialists were struck by Ugandans' casual attitude toward sex, which they interpreted as evidence that Africans were sex-crazed and immoral. Shocked by customs such as polygyny and a relative state of undress, colonialists such as Dr. Albert Cook lamented the "'uncontrollable sexual drive of the Baganda'" (Musisi 2002, 100). Cook's estimation of the situation reflected the opinions of an overwhelming number of colonialists because "juxtaposed against the highly conservative Europe's sexuality, the unique sexuality of Africans, which was largely unrestrained, posed a huge challenge to the Victorian minds of the early explorers" (Tamale 2004, 3). The British, appalled by the state of affairs, felt that it was their duty to reform Ugandan morality, the basis of which they believed to be women.

One aspect of these reform efforts was a focus on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). By British standards, the prevalence of STDs such as syphilis was bordering on epidemic levels by the turn of the twentieth century. Dr. Cook recalled a statement by prominent colonialist Colonel Lambkin, who in 1908 opined that, "As things are at present, the entire population is in danger of being exterminated by syphilis in a very few years, or of being left a degenerate race fit for nothing" (Musisi 2002, 112). In an effort to rectify the issue, the colonial government instituted the Moral Purity Campaign,

spearheaded by Colonel Lambkin, which had the aim of both curing disease and reforming perceived sexual deviance.

Of course, the colonialists' judgment was clouded by their preconceptions, as they struggled to force African experiences to fit into their European frameworks. It did not occur to them to temper their own beliefs against those of the indigenous populations, and this was no less the case with the syphilis epidemic. Dr. Cook is but one example among the countless physicians and administrators who were convinced of Ugandans' primitiveness and sexual depravity. By this point, it perhaps goes without saying, but

> "There was a good deal of cultural and ideological colonialism in Cook's medical
> theories and practice in Buganda… W.D. Foster poignantly sums up Cook's
> medicine: 'Cook's epidemiological notions were led astray by his missionary
> keen nose for sin.' He looked at Buganda women's illnesses solely in terms of
> what Christianity and civilization could effect and perfect" (Musisi 2002, 103).

The Moral Purity Campaign was but one in a series of steps designed to reign in women's sexuality. It was accompanied by a concerted attempt to control women and reproduction by means of education, which was not altogether unsuccessful.

One of the most obvious avenues for this was school, since missionaries ran the education system. Religion and homemaking were the two most aggressively taught subjects, giving teachers countless opportunities to stress the virtues of premarital virginity and responsible reproduction. In addition to traditional education, the previously discussed Maternity Training School was another method of promoting chastity and sexual health, as the school's administrators were "hoping to produce salvation as well as treatment" (Summers 1991, 803). Although Ugandan women were somewhat resistant to

attempts to modify their sexual and birth customs, it was nevertheless the case that "through their pedagogy and medicine, missionaries like Cook managed to make sexuality, particularly women's, not only a religious concern but a secular one as well, that needed to be regulated by the colonial state" (Musisi 2002, 105).

Marriage customs and husband-wife relations were another major area in which colonial infringement attempted to impose itself on Ugandan sexual mores. In addition to essentially doing away with matrilineality once and for all, marriage and divorce laws changed significantly. While bridewealth was still routinely paid as a signifier of marriage, began to take new forms. Where previously the exchange would have involved animals or other sorts of material resources, in places such as colonial Toro the men began using cash to pay their bridewealths, which "led to some commercialization of the institution. It was beginning to lose its original meaning as part of a gift exchange between affines, and now served as one means of making money," further objectifying women (Perlman 1966, 572).

Toro marriage, among others, retained its female subordination and emphasis on (female) premarital virginity. However, the Toro population was so strongly patriarchal (uniquely so, in fact) that the reform instigated by colonial authorities actually improved women's status, despite having the opposite effect in most other parts of Uganda. Even this, however, was slow going—where previously women were not allowed to eat with their husbands, encouragement from the Christian King Kasagama promoted the behavior, although "it was not until about the 1930s that the majority of ordinary peasants started eating with their wives, and even then these were mainly Christians" (Perlman 1966, 574).

In most other areas of Uganda, the colonial scrutiny of women's sexuality generally narrowed their rights and provided another area in which women 'needed' to be controlled. Premarital sex was no longer permissible, nor was divorce considered acceptable, despite its prior prevalence. The Uganda Divorce Act, modeled off of contemporary British divorce laws, was passed in 1904 and codified the new expectations of the interplay between gender and marriage. Laying out the conditions under which a marriage could be terminated or annulled, it radically altered the role of divorce in society, with profound ramifications for Ugandan women.

Where previously divorce was relatively common and typically involved the return of the bridewealth to signify the marriage's dissolution, it now became much more difficult to obtain, particularly for women. Any instance of adultery on the part of his wife was considered grounds for a man to file for divorce, while women faced more stringent requirements. A woman was not permitted to file for divorce unless her husband had for two years committed some specific forms of adultery, including incestuous adultery, adultery with bigamy, rape, and adultery coupled with desertion or notable cruelty (Uganda Legal Information Institute). Aside from the law's obvious misogyny, women were further negatively affected as a result of the length situation. Instead of being able to divorce her husband as she saw fit, a woman was trapped in her marriage for at least two years, making divorce much less accessible for the common woman and formally removing yet another right that women in pre-colonial societies could have freely exercised.

In general, the colonial period institutionalized female inferiority, granting women a lesser status and according them fewer rights, including but not limited to those

within marriage. Tamale (2004) discusses the issue of "the law blatantly imposing double standards on sexual norms" via the Ugandan Penal Code, which stipulates that "a wife is guilty of criminal adultery if she engages in sexual intercourse with any man. A husband, on the other hand, will only be guilty of the same offense if he has sex with a married woman" (5).

With the moral regulation of the native state one of colonialists' primary goals, women were targeted as the source of what they perceived to be Uganda's ills. Intending to use women as the conduit through which all Ugandans would become 'civilized,' missionaries and colonial administrators openly denounced and in many cases blocked women's access to equal education, ritualistic privileges, and sexual freedom. Instead, Europeans focused on inculcating Christian morality in the societies of Uganda, with varying degrees of success, and significantly interfering with what they viewed as African women's most dangerous weapon—her unbridled, corruptive sexuality.

Autonomy and Status

Ugandan women's experiences with the many aspects of daily life had the potential to take many forms, but the foundation shared by all of these sections is that they were ultimately a reflection of women's power in society, political, economic, or otherwise. As with the other areas already discussed, women were not the dominant sex in pre-colonial Uganda, but there were multiple outlets through which women could nevertheless gain representation and exercise a greater degree of autonomy. However, the colonial government utilized formal institutions to impose its own values upon the local population with remarkable efficiency, resulting in a state in which women lacked both

parity with men and any alternative outlet through which they could counterbalance this unequal status.

In pre-colonial Uganda, the best predictor of power for a woman was the family into which she was born. For those born into powerful families, the opportunities to secure personal wealth or acquire land were far more prevalent. The higher the rank of a woman's family within society, the more power she was granted: "Kiganda political ideology, for instance, insisted that there were three kinds—the king, the queen mother, and the king's sister—with the former ruling and the latter two enjoying, within the dominant male ideology and its constraints, such prerogatives as having the right to commute a death sentence" (Obbo 1986, 180).

Royal women seem to have been particularly imbued with personal agency, and most especially in the case of the queen mother, or *namasole*, and the queen sister, or *lubuga*. Both of these women, despite other restraints on their behavior, "wielded considerable informal political power [such as knowledge of state secrets and participation in military campaigns] through their lineage positions" and the *lubuga* in particular possessed many of the same powers as the king, "for example, she controlled land throughout the country with estates in each district, and she had her own courts and her own chiefs with the same titles as those of the king's chiefs" (Tripp 2000, 31-2). In the pre-colonial context, no one regarded these customs as especially peculiar, because in keeping with "the idea that women 'naturally' did some kinds of work and men 'naturally' did others, a gendered system of political power was based on the idea that some aspects of governing were the appropriate responsibility of women and others were the appropriate responsibility of men" (Hanson 2002, 220).

The privileges enjoyed by female members of the royal family were of course disparate from the experiences of most Baganda women. In general, women experienced a decline in status between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the most important development of the time period was the fact that "women themselves became important objects of exchange," representing male wealth and female commoditization, which aptly illustrates the expectation of inequality that colored so many experiences (Musisi 1991, 771).

Elsewhere in Uganda, the formal structure of the Ganda kingdom provided "limitations on the power of the king; a fundamental element of this structure was the balancing power of the queen mother" (Hanson 2002, 221). Both the king and the queen mother had numerous powers, among which were the ability to appoint ministers, own and allocate lands (which were exempt from the king's taxation), and collect taxes. These provisions "gave [the queen mother] a material base independent of the king" and relieved her of the dependence upon men that most other women could not avoid (Hanson 2002, 222).

In some societies, such as the Iteso, the political roles that women occupied were also spiritually tinged. While all men and women were able to attend and participate in regular clan meetings, the most prestigious position a woman could hold was that of *apolon ka etale*. As an expert on the rituals that governed the clan's taboos, the greatest responsibility attached to this role "was to ensure that newly married women were initiated into the clan taboos; this in effect gave her control of the women and children in the clan" (Tripp 2000, 33). Another unique position of power that an Iteso woman could

attain was as a foreteller, a particularly interesting role. Tripp 2000 describes the uniquely

privileged foreteller role as follows:

> "Before and after going to war, the Iteso warriors would consult with a foreteller,
> who would advise them on what rituals to perform. Foretellers not only predicted
> the outcomes of wars, fishing and hunting expeditions, and other future events,
> they also had spiritual powers to heal the sick and to prevent witchcraft directed at
> an individual. With this ability to predict the future, they were able virtually to
> control the military leaders of the nineteenth century" (33).

These positions of power available to women, although experienced within a

system that was ultimately patriarchal, ensured that women were not reduced to a silent

or marginalized minority, especially when additionally taking into consideration the

informal influence that women wielded within the family structure. For the common

woman, gender roles were not nearly as inflexible as is frequently asserted, and instead in

instances of cross-cutting class divisions and gender divisions, "the latter commonly were

breached by members of the lower classes: 'it was not uncommon for peasant women to

participate in the male side of the division of labor and vice versa'" (Schoenbrun 1993,

45).

It has become clear over time that pre-colonial Ugandan societies, for the most

part, valued women's contributions to public life. The perception that women have

always been relatively powerless is something of a colonial construction, a twofold

exercise in external bias and circular thinking. First, Europeans who recorded their

observations of indigenous societies were already armed with their Victorian

understanding of women as largely powerless, and their descriptions of Ugandan society

were forced through their own preexisting gender paradigms, which left many aspects of female power unacknowledged; second, male African writers in the colonial period had personal motivations (i.e. consolidating male dominance by undermining women) for suggesting that women's powerlessness predated colonialism, and they were able to retroactively insinuate male dominance "by writing books and memoirs that reduced women to purely domestic actors" (Schoenbrun 1993, 45). Thus, even when women were not being written out of pre-colonial history altogether, their rights and contributions were frequently misrepresented. Early accounts of women as powerless or subjugated were accepted as fact, which had an unfortunate impact on how Ugandan women were (or, rather, were not) integrated into colonial power structures.

The defining characteristic of colonialists' attitudes towards gender is the certainty with which they felt women did not belong in the public sphere. They quickly set about reforming Ugandan institutions or simply replacing them altogether. Traditional roles like that of the *lubuga* were eliminated outright and women were almost totally excluded from colonial forms of governance. One feature of British indirect rule in Uganda was the promotion of the *Lukiiko* to the main governmental body of the protectorate with regular meetings attended by chiefs, where previously it "was made up of an irregular conglomeration of notables and chiefs and had met sporadically in the past" (Tripp 2000, 32). Although female chiefs in Ankole were common at the end of the nineteenth century, women were almost totally excluded from British iterations of the same leadership roles. In fact, only one female chief was ever appointed to the *Lukiiko* by the British administration. Because governmental structures were entirely dominated by men, this allowed for and encouraged the codification of sexist laws that left women at an

institutionalized disadvantage, such as those regarding adultery—legally speaking, any sexual relationship a woman had outside of marriage was adulterous, but a husband's extramarital sex partner must also be married for the behavior to be considered adultery (Tamale 2004, 5). These types of double standards were rampant in colonial Ugandan law, and some persist even today.

Not every society in Uganda had women in positions of political power, but there was also no society that failed to provide its female population with some type of outlet for expression. This, therefore, was the next area to which the British turned their attention. Missionaries were of course party to and, in most cases, approving of laws that pushed women out of public spheres and relegated them to the home.

Among other divisions—including Christian vs. non-Christian, black vs. white, male vs. female—the colonial government implemented practices that ultimately encouraged and exacerbated class formation and created further societal cleavages, which by necessity complicated interpersonal relationships and added further gradations of status to the existing social hierarchy. Multiple colonial laws refocused the economy exchange of goods and services, and the resultant shift towards a cash-based economy negatively affected women, who had few avenues through which to earn a cash income, which was exacerbated by the relegation of women to a domestic role that effectively removed them from the public sphere.

Although Uganda was known as "The African Pearl" because of its ideal economic potential, but women were largely excluded from reaping the economic benefits, despite their contributions to the colony's productivity (Sorensen 1996, 613). Another serious barrier to economic independence was the inability of women to own

land outright. While this was problematic in its own right, it was especially detrimental to women who did not seek to enter a traditional male-female marriage: "Women have few options [besides] marriage since all and is patrilineally inherited, and they are, therefore, not able to establish their own agricultural production" (Sorensen 1996, 611). Even female agricultural work—which was pre-colonially the domain of women—within the bounds of their fathers' and husbands' properties did not remain unaffected by colonial intrusion.

Clearly delineated gender roles to be adhered to, imported from England, impacted women's roles in the family as well as their day-to-day activities within the labor force. Eager to use fertile land such as that of Busoga to its fullest potential in order to maximize profits, the Europeans introduced cash crops such as cotton and coffee, which started to replace traditional (and no less essential) food crops such as cassava and millet (Sorensen 1996, 613). The prior female dominance in agriculture, however, did not carry over to the cultivation of cash crops, despite the fact that it had been "recognized to be a sound principle of household management to…respect her special rights" to farming (Sorensen 1996, 613). Instead, men dominated both the cultivation itself and the sale of the harvested crops at market. This transition was one of the first signifiers of the Ugandan transition from traditional subsistence economies to capitalism.

One feature of this transition was the institution of a tax system that required cash payments, which encouraged (or perhaps coerced) the prevalence of cash crops, one of the few means by which rural Ugandans could generate cash. Capitalistic ideology, with its strong emphasis on individualism, significantly affected gender relations in the economic realm, as an 'every man for himself' mentality quickly developed, out of both

necessity and opportunism (DeLancey 1992, 91). Women were at an inherent

disadvantage due to the nature of

> "The new value system of colonialism: men's work was 'modern' and women's
>
> was 'traditional' and 'backward.' Therefore, the deterioration in the status of
>
> African women was bound up with the consequent loss of the right to set
>
> indigenous standards of what work had merit and what did not" (Rodney 1972,
>
> 227).

> When it came down to the decision between supporting women's rights to better

treatment from the colonialists and ensuring their own financial security, the financial

security seemed to take precedence for African men. The complicity of Ugandan men in

the codification of female subjugation was a turning point for the development of

women's rights, as it all but guaranteed that women would have to deal with systemic

inequality and underrepresentation.

Zimbabwe

Introduction

Zimbabwe provides an interesting contrast to Uganda. The two countries had

many similar pre-colonial traits, including the fact that the large majority of their

populations were Bantu, providing a good basis for comparison of the two states and a

study of their divergent histories (Saidi 2010, 26). In spite of their commonalities, the

indigenous populations of the two countries received their colonizers very differently,

creating subtle differences in their administration and ultimate consideration (or lack

thereof) for women's rights. With the exception of a smattering of prior isolated

missions, Christianity arrived in Zimbabwe in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The missionaries' evangelizing efforts were notably less successful than those in Uganda, but the influence of missionaries and of Europeans as a whole, nevertheless, profoundly affected the Zimbabwean population.

It can be stated almost without doubt that the overall effect of colonial intrusion was negative for the women of Zimbabwe. As made perfectly clear in the literature review, European colonial-era culture did not look favorably upon women. In attempting to successfully colonize Zimbabwe, Europeans felt "a powerful inclination to rail against 'the dead weight of the female influence' in African culture and to identify women as the primary force retarding the civilizing mission (Burke 2005, 66). The following analysis will highlight some ways in which women experienced small gains, but one can reasonably argue that these gains were offset by the institutionalized disempowerment of women throughout the colonial period.

In order to demonstrate this point as clearly as possible, my study of the evolution of women's rights in Zimbabwe will be divided into sections that will approximately mirror those of the literature review. Following a brief overview of the history and demographics of Zimbabwe, I will first address some aspects of indigenous culture, including gender attitudes toward rituals, sexuality, and education. This will then be contrasted with the same topics as they evolved under colonial rule. The second section will encompass women's power and autonomy in Zimbabwe, beginning with pre-colonial experiences and ending with the colonial administration of women's voices and representation within the public sphere. Specifically, power will be examined through a discussion of rights within marriage and labor and employment rights. Finally, I will

examine the religious beliefs of both indigenous Zimbabweans and the Europeans who colonized them, attempting to develop a greater understanding of the interplay between religious credos and governmental administration. Each of these sections contributes to a better understanding of the conditions of women's lives around the turn of the twentieth century, and this comprehensive examination will elucidate the most important contributing factors of the precipitous decline in women's rights that accompanied the arrival of colonialism.

Pre-Colonial Zimbabwe

Contemporary Zimbabwe is located on 150,872 square miles of land and is home to approximately 12,619,600 residents (Central Intelligence Agency 2012). Despite its large land area, relatively few ethnic groups are found within Zimbabwe's borders—the Shona and the Ndebele are the two largest ethnic groups, comprising 70% and 20% of the population, respectively. Numerous smaller ethnic groups account for the remaining 10% of the population, including the Venda, Tonga, Shangaan, Kalanga, Sotho, Ndau, and Nambya. As is the case with Uganda, much of the current knowledge of Zimbabwean history is reliant upon oral histories and European colonial accounts, meaning that existing knowledge is far from precise.

Colonial interpretations of Zimbabwean history were no doubt colored by the colonizers' prejudices toward the population and particularly towards the women. According to colonial records, administrators found the women "indolent, lazy, slothful, immoral, frivolous, savage, and uncivilized," in addition to being "extraordinarily inferior to the [indigenous] men," who were not looked upon particularly favorably themselves (Schmidt 1991, 735). What can be clearly inferred from the current records of

Zimbabwe's history is that neither the indigenous population nor the colonizers was wholly responsible for the unequal treatment of Zimbabwean women throughout history. In fact, "indigenous and European structures of patriarchal control reinforced and transformed one another, evolving into new structures and forms of domination" (Schmidt 1991, 734).

Patriarchy predated the European presence in Zimbabwe. If anything, this patriarchy merely evolved in ways that would be mutually advantageous to all (males) involved. In almost all other areas, colonizers were actively antagonistic to African men, but the issue of women unified the two camps: "The control of women's and children's labor by older African men was central to the establishment and consolidation of colonial rule in Southern Rhodesia" (Schmidt 1991, 734). While African men were happy to scapegoat women for their own gains, the colonial regime derived even more advantage from the arrangement, as it "both advanced its own project and mollified a potentially powerful opposition force—namely, African men" (Schmidt 1991, 735).

Rituals

In Zimbabwe, as was often the case in other places affected by the imposition of colonialism, the large-scale societal changes implemented made themselves most prominently known in the ways they affected day-to-day life. Rituals are one such example—although the larger societal goal was to create a moralistic, Christian nation, one consequence was the significant decrease in the number of permissible ritual practices.

Pre-colonial Zimbabwean societies were undoubtedly patriarchal in nature, but there, nevertheless, remain many outlets through which women could exercise power,

one of these powers being administration of rituals. Women, for example, held positions of power as midwives, visionaries, and healers. These roles afforded them dominion over the customs that held sway over these areas of society that affected the entire population. The position of diviner/healer, predicated upon the notion that control over physical health implied some sort of otherworldly communication, allowed women input on matters of both health and future events. In addition to their advisory function in these capacities, women were frequently accorded great respect within the role of spirit medium.

While diviners worked within the private sphere, spirit mediums were relied upon to perform in public, formal ceremonies. Spirit mediums had the ability to foresee future misfortune, but were additionally "highly regarded for their wise advice and frequently played the role of mediator in family disputes," and these roles generally required that spirit mediums "be among the most intelligent and upstanding members of the community, for it was believed that people were selected as mediums on the basis of their moral qualities" (Schmidt 1992, 24). A woman who occupied the role of spirit medium frequently had privileges and authority that they would not have experienced outside this role. On the whole, for "a society in which women occupied structurally subordinate positions, spirit possession provided them with an unusual degree of status and allowed them to exercise authority, both inside and outside the ritual context" (Schmidt 1992, 25).

These types of ritual practices—which Europeans viewed as being in direct conflict with the more straightforward, monotheistic spiritualism of Christianity—were swiftly targeted as missionaries and other colonizers settled among the Zimbabwean people. In some instances, rituals were not targeted in their own right, but due to practices

incorporated into the rituals, such as the production of alcohol. Beer brewing, for example, was viewed negatively both for its religio-moral implications and for the relative economic power that it imbued to both men and women. However, the restrictions that were imposed in an attempt to limit this economic benefit had significant effects on women. By heavily legislating both production and sale of beer, administrators "not only interfered with an important source of income for African women, and through them their households, they threatened one of women's major rituals roles, that of brewing beer to honors the ancestors" (Schmidt 1988, 77).

In addition to the disapproval of the colonial administrators, beer brewing drew the ire of missionaries, albeit with somewhat different motivations. The resulting restrictions included bans on numerous Zimbabwean ceremonies that increased the common woman's social standing. The missionaries viewed these ritualistic activities as direct offense to God, so they harshly punished those who violated these directives. On top of this, diviners/healers and spirit mediums, "both men and women, were also threatened with expulsion from mission grounds, along with anyone who sought their services" (Schmidt 1988, 77). Where previously these women had input and the ability to guide activities that pertained to their predictive and ritualistic powers, they were now entirely excluded from these processes. Their prior roles had been eliminated, but no new roles were established to counteract the loss of representation, which significantly disempowered women.

Education

Unlike the highly rigid structures of colonial Europe, Zimbabwe lacked a formal education system. Rather than being sent to school, children learned experientially, most often from family members. Grandmothers, in particular, played an important role in the educational process. With their mothers away tending the crops on a daily basis, children relied upon the next closest woman in their lives to socialize them properly. In educating her grandchildren appropriately, a grandmother "taught the children accepted manners and social roles and instilled in them the values of their culture and the importance of their history" (Schmidt 1992, 23). Because most labor and practical skills were already divided upon gender lines, everyday education was often similarly segregated, as socialization was intended to reinforce preexisting conventions (as opposed to encouraging independent exploration). Family elders taught girls "the knowledge and skills related to women's work in agriculture and the home and the modes of behavior and demeanor considered appropriate for good wives, mothers and daughters-in-law" (Gordon 1996).

European educators who developed schooling for Zimbabwean girls instituted curricula that were similar to pre-colonial teachings, despite their motivations differing radically from those of indigenous grandmothers. Interestingly, colonial education early on did not have a particularly radical effect on girls' lives and education, leaving much of this responsibility to their families, since it was actually the case that "the colonial state's education policy and practice ensured that most African girls were unable to acquire and complete formal education (Gordon 1996). In any event, the education that was available to Zimbabwean girls from missionaries was markedly different than that for boys, with its strong spirit of "implied domesticity" (Schmidt 1992, 154).

Aside from what they viewed as practical considerations, the obvious bias that missionaries had against girls was evidenced by their unwillingness to legitimize female intellectual capabilities. One priest at the Chishawasha mission described Shona girls as "'totally devoid of seriousness, both of mind and character,'" while another described them as "volatile and feather-headed" and insisted that the women themselves could never be educators, because "'they would not be listened to with any respect, even by the natives themselves. Their efforts to instruct would only be laughed at'" (Schmidt 1991, 736). Despite this unabashed prejudice, education (female or otherwise) was considered the missionaries' domain for decades. As long as they stayed within parameters established by the colonial government—namely, that students be taught only those skills "that were quite compatible with the needs of colonial capital and the state"—missionary educators were otherwise given significant latitude to utilize their educational monopoly as they saw fit (Schmidt 1992, 122). To wit, in 1920, more than a quarter of a century after colonization, the fact remained that "African education in Rhodesia was exclusively a missionary enterprise" (Berman 1974, 41).

The policies and methods regarding girls' education were, naturally, spiritually based. Having left the physical control of girls and women to the colonial state, the "missionaries took charge of the spiritual and ideological domains," which they interpreted within the educational framework as imparting knowledge regarding "their duty to stay at home, cooking and cleaning, raising healthy Christian children, and respecting and obeying their husbands" (Schmidt 1992, 122). There was strong emphasis on separate curricula for boys and girls, whose futures were viewed as fundamentally different. As one Jesuit priest described it, "'[t]he whole atmosphere of a girls school

should emphasize the home, family and the child.' The girls' loyalty was 'family loyalty'" (Schmidt 1992, 131).

Despite being excluded from traditional scholastic pursuits, girls could expect an education featuring any or all of the following: "'Catechism, reading and writing,' …needlework and washing and basket making…sewing, basketry, bead work, mat making, pottery, wood carving, vegetable gardening, Kimberley brick making, and thatching" (Schmidt 1992, 137). The overarching message of this type of educational system was to make quite clear to women "that 'they were not to compete with men in life,'" but instead to keep them "in their 'natural' state, and at the same time [mold] them into mission-educated Christians" (Schmidt 1992, 135). Europeans could only perceive of indigenous women within the context of the patriarchy, which held that the most important way in which education could benefit a young African women was through an education in home economics, which they anticipated would "'raise the Native to a higher state of civilization and mental development'" (Burke 2005, 66).

One striking feature of girls' education for many years was the conspicuous lack of exposure to or training in English, as girls were instead educated in their native languages. This was, unsurprisingly, entirely on purpose. European educators felt that it was unnecessary for girls to learn English, given that they were only ever going to be homemakers. Moreover, it was thought that knowledge of English would enable students, both male and female, to enter the formal economy and compete with white settlers for employment. As a result, very few boys were instructed in English and almost no girls at all. In addition to the assumption that girls simply were not bright enough to learn English, there was a further sexist overtone that was used to rationalize the decision to

restrict English language learning, which accounted for the discrepancy in boys' and girls' education in the language. With the common perception of African women's rabid sexuality, girls were prevented from learning English

> "'[B]ecause it was believed that if they did, they would definitely go and work and become prostitutes.'…It was precisely to prevent such communication—and the possibility that it would allow women and girls independence of action—that lay behind the missionaries' rationale that African women would learn their indigenous language only" (Schmidt 1992, 136).

> So prevalent was this mindset that "as late as the 1940s pupils at the Chishawasha girls school were not learning English" and the few who were permitted to learn the language "were not immune to the overall emphasis on domestic education" (Schmidt 1992, 135).

The relationship between education and the family unit inevitably morphed over time and "grandmothers lost important educative functions as mission schools became increasingly widespread," and this one major change fundamentally affected the way students viewed themselves in relation to the state and altered students' ability to intellectualize the colonial narrative and its core beliefs about Zimbabwean society (Schmidt 1992, 89). This formal relegation of girls to the lower strata of education, in combination with Zimbabwean societies' preexisting patriarchal tendencies, allowed for gender imbalance in learning, in terms of both length and quality of education. Girls frequently began school later than their brothers, spent fewer years in school, attained lower levels of education, and even when "they were in school, they tended to have more

domestic obligations than their brothers, and thus, less time to devote to their studies"
(Schmidt 1992, 143).

Sexuality

Given the development of gender stratification that had already taken place by the
time of European arrival, it is unsurprising that Zimbabwean peoples such as the Shona
placed a high emphasis on sexuality, and particularly female sexuality. People were a
"vital social resource" in Shona society due to the strength and security that higher
populations implied. Because female reproduction was a fundamental component of a
man's ability to expand his circle of support, Shona men were inordinately preoccupied
with the perceived "potency of female fertility and sexuality" (Schmidt 1992, 14).

Women's irreplaceable position within the reproductive process, in combination
with men's general vulnerability to female sexuality, created the perception that
"women's sexual powers were both wonderful and dangerous" (Schmidt 1992, 26). Male
dominance informed the development of sexual mores such that, by the nineteenth
century, women were subjected to an almost total denial of their agency within the
marriage process. Schmidt (1992) cites the analysis of Lévi-Strauss, who described the
transactional nature of marriage thusly: "Marriage is not established between a man and a
woman, where each owes and receives something, but between two groups of men, and
the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange" (17). This objectification
was facilitated by a Shona woman's lifetime status as a legal minor, with rights of
decision-making simply transferred from a woman's father to her husband upon
marriage.

The primary function of marriage was to produce children who would carry on the family (patri)lineage. In order to formalize the groom's rights to any children produced by the marriage, there was a payment of bridewealth to the bride's family. This transition denoted the official beginning of the marriage, at which time the wife assumed her position in the new family, where she had the lowest status of anybody. She was thus subordinated to her husband and also compelled to perform the lowliest of tasks, as dictated by her official inferiority to the family's males as well as her husband's mother, sisters, and senior wives. A new wife, considered little more than a vessel for future kin members, was subjugated to the point that "she referred to her husband's sisters as *vene* (owners) and related to them accordingly" (Schmidt 1992, 17).

While women were often able to exercise informal influence within their marriages, the Europeans who arrived in Zimbabwe at the end of the nineteenth century focused on the aspects of Shona marriage that aligned with their preconceptions of women, such that the institutionalization of marriage focused on the constraints on female agency and ignored the informal aspects of the husband-wife relationship. In spite of the relative lack of female freedom that was already standard in Zimbabwean societies, colonizers were nevertheless suspicious of female sexuality and regarded it as the source of the indigenous population's failings.

This was a key source of unity for Zimbabwean men and European colonialists, as "both groups were obsessed with controlling African women's mobility and sexuality," and for the Europeans, this extended so far as to blame the indigenous women "for most of the perceived ills of African society, including adultery, venereal disease, divorce, the male labor shortage, and general contempt of law and order" (Schmidt 1992, 98). While

African were more interested in reasserting their authority over women and their roles, the Europeans "were concerned with obtaining cheap African male labor," for which they were willing to pass laws instituting "the regulation of African women's sexual practices to achieve this objective" (Schmidt 1991, 413). This is but one way in which the country's developing capitalism served to disempower women. In this instance, "the ideological basis for the domestication of African women masked the broader economic objectives of colonial capital and the state" (Schmidt 1991, 396).

To that end, it seemed not only acceptable but also necessary to rein in female sexuality in a way that would make it easier for the colonialists to achieve their ends. Colonial officials wrote reports of the crisis of adultery that "'threaten[ed] to upset the peace of the native races under [British] control,'" the solution for which was to allow African men to exert greater control over their wives, without which one official suggested "'the whole existence of a nation' may be placed in jeopardy" (Schmidt 1990, 632). The proposed solution for this perceived calamity was the Adultery Ordinance of 1916. In an attempt to eradicate African women's "moral laxity," the Ordinance "rendered adultery between African men and married African women a criminal offense punishable by a fine of 100 pounds or one year's imprisonment with hard labor" (Schmidt 1991, 396). The colonial government hoped that the threat of such punishment would encourage African men and women to curb their sexual behaviors and that African men would be encouraged to migrate in search of labor where previously the fear of their wives' adultery in their absence might have given them pause.

However, the migratory nature of the type of labor the colonial government wanted the indigenous populations to participate in also had ramifications that they had

not foreseen, including those of a sexual nature. One such ramification was the rise in the rate of sexually transmitted infections, which the government again attributed to women, despite the numerous factors that had caused the increase. Among other descriptions of African women's sexual tendencies and accusations of wantonness and lack of hygiene, one colonial commissioner judged women's ability to regulate their own sexuality thusly: "The women, though wielding immense power over the men, are many centuries behind them in civilization and absolutely unfit to be granted any measure of freedom for the present as their instincts are almost purely animal" (Schmidt 1991, 393).

This particular perspective, when applied in the instance of a high sexually transmitted infection (STI) rate, made it quite easy to identify women as the culprits. This mindset was also relatively easy to cultivate in African communities, as "Africans in Southern Rhodesia, like those in many other African countries in the past and the present, refer to sexually transmitted diseases as 'women's diseases'" (Jackson 2002, 206). Attempting to quash these outbreaks, women became the targets of a series of intrusive laws, one often worse than the next. One of the more alarming examples of the type of scrutiny under which women marginalized is the practice of *chibeura*. Beginning around 1920, women who traveled between towns (married or otherwise) were subjected to compulsory venereal disease examinations, often being examined monthly. If a woman was found to be without a clean bill of health or otherwise suspected of sexually deviant behavior, she was likely chased out of town. A woman who submitted to *chibeura* found herself at a local clinic, where a doctor (most frequently a white, male doctor) would instruct her to open her legs so that he could visually inspect her for signs of disease. Although these exams officially were designed to target "'bad' or 'loose' women and

their supposed diseases, and thus were rhetorically directed at *mahure* (prostitutes) and single women from outside, all women who were not 'grown-up women,' e.g., quite old, were examined" (Jackson 2002, 206). These incredible violations, whose practices were not officially terminated until 1958, are but one example of the ways in which women's sexuality was harshly policed. Jackson summarizes the significance of *chibeura* thusly:

> "The compulsory venereal disease examinations imposed on single African women who traveled to urban and industrial spaces in colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia) are an example of how gender violence and violation were formalized as official state policy" (191).

While the negative assumptions about female sexuality were somewhat predictable, the codification in law of these prejudices is somewhat perplexing, although this is to say nothing of the harshness of the laws. In every instance of colonial attempts to remake African culture into something more compatible with conventional Christianity, the rights and privileges previously granted to women were replaced by strict regulations and a pattern of mistrust. Women were cut off from traditional rituals, denied equal educational opportunities, and generally punished for their sex, all in the name of what the colonizers termed "customary law." By all accounts, women found their lives changed by colonization, and not for the better.

Autonomy and Status

Every issue that was legislated or right that a woman found compromised was based on the fundamental question of power. Women's access to power has always been contested, but never more so than during the first decades of colonization, where each party—government, missionaries, African men, women themselves—were vying for

influence on female autonomy. As previously discussed, Europeans' struggles to force African social systems into their preexisting frameworks caused some distortion in their descriptions of the true nature of African politics and women's rights in general prior to colonialism. Nevertheless, it is clear that in the pre-colonial period, patriarchy dominated the political scene, but there were a number of ways in which women could gain representation and exert political influence.

One way in which Africa's pre-colonial period differed from European expectation was the fact that religion and politics were heavily interrelated and in some cases indistinguishable from one another. Within this politico-religious system, "women held offices that were decidedly political, even within the limitations of Western concepts," with some women in Mashonaland, for example, even attaining the position of headwoman (Schmidt 1992, 91). Of course, the number of headwomen in comparison to the number of women who lacked formal leadership roles is an indication of the limited nature of Zimbabwean women's political power. Moreover, in spite of their impressive authority within the community, it was still the case that their positions were "mediated by men[:] they were powerful by virtue of their relationship to powerful men; they did not obtain positions in their own right" (Schmidt 1992, 29).

In addition to the few leadership positions available, witchcraft and spirit possession were other common tools that afforded higher status to otherwise relatively voiceless women. These roles, because they existed within the context of societies that took spirits' authority very seriously, frequently became methods to advance female autonomy. Although witchcraft was viewed negatively, it was nevertheless treated with great respect, and by "transforming instruments of their oppression into weapons of their

own, [women] claimed the title of witch and challenged their accusers to defy them"

(Schmidt 1992, 19). Purely through fear mechanisms, women who were thought to be

associated with the supernatural were treated cautiously and afforded privileges that

would not have otherwise been granted them, such as a greater ability to exercise

authority. As part of the considerable power that status as a spirit medium lent them,

"whether in a state of possession or not, mediums generally commanded great respect in

the community," one perk of which was "relief from the daily drudgery of work and the

tensions of life as outsiders among their husbands' kind" (Schmidt 1992, 25).

These roles certainly granted women noteworthy power and their importance

should not be undermined, but it must be reiterated that

"Such roles were not representative of women in nineteenth century Shona

society. Rather, they were anomalies in an extremely patriarchal society, having

attained positions that conferred status and prestige usually reserved for men.

Such women represented one end of the spectrum. At the other extreme were

women at the very margins of society, captives, hostages, and pawns. The

experience of the vast majority of women lay somewhere in between" (Schmidt

1992, 29).

The crucial aspect of European influence on women's power, then, was that even

these relatively few roles were eliminated and women's presence on the political scene

went from modest to nonexistent.

The other indicators of female autonomy, labor roles and economic power, were

in fact constructed in a relatively egalitarian fashion. Although labor was certainly

divided on the basis of sex, the theory was one of complementary jobs rather than an

especially hierarchical structure. Zimbabwean women, by virtue of their sex, were considered most fit to tend crops and grow the family's food. The reasoning was that "as the initial producers of life, women were expected to sustain it through the provision of nourishment" (Schmidt 1992, 44).

Although women were mainly tasked with food production in addition to general household duties, they retained a degree of mobility in terms of self-determination of labor. Because of the lack of formal institutions to standardize labor, for example, "at the turn of the twentieth century, the agricultural division of labor between Tonga men and women was extremely flexible," a fact that only changed after "'the comparatively strong position of Tonga women was undermined with the imposition of colonial authority'" (Schmidt 1988, 46).

For a culture that could hardly conceive of a societal lack of formal structures, it seemed only natural to tailor their imposition on previously independent societies an exercise in patriarchal framework building. In the political sphere, women were assumed to have no role at all and "African women were 'invisible' to the colonial authorities," who had already "accepted the idea that women were perpetual minors in society" (Schmidt 1992, 91). This mentality lead to the near-extinction of women in public political roles. The number of headwomen, for example, decreased drastically once the power of their appointment was transferred to British authorities, who simply failed to "recognize the right of African women to rule" (Schmidt 1992, 91).

Instead, the British understood women only as subservient homemakers, since "according to their Victorian Christian ideals, good mothers stayed at home raising their children according to Christian values," a mentality which "corresponded neatly to the

needs of the colonial state and the European-dominated economy" (Schmidt 1992, 129).

Of course, the women they discovered when they arrived in Zimbabwe did not

correspond so neatly with their image of a proper or civilized woman. In order to mold

these women to be more cooperative with the colonial government's aims, "colonial

officials and African patriarchs sought new ways to control African women that were not

only compatible with, but would actually enhance, the performance of the capitalist

economic system" (Schmidt 1992, 97). Because it formed such an integral part of daily

life, the ability to dictate women's status within the economy was an important source of

control for the colonial government. They were therefore motivated to use this to their

advantage, and "colonial officials reasoned that…as long as women were totally

dependent upon their husbands' access to land and cash income, their behavior could be

kept in line" (Schmidt 1991, 395).

To that end, "missionaries promoted male-dominated farming by introducing

plows, oxen, new agricultural techniques, and seeds to men alone," which forced women

into "an uncharacteristically subordinate role" (Schmidt 1988, 46). By all appearances,

Europeans not only discounted women's roles in economic production, they also seemed

not to acknowledge their existence at all. For example, despite the fact that the men who

participated in migratory labor practices were often married with families, "the wages

paid, housing provided, and rations issued to African men were based on employers'

assumptions about what a single man needed to survive; it was assumed that families left

behind could fend for themselves and possibly even supplement the workers' food"

(Schmidt 1991, 390).

The most significant impact of the preference shown to men in development of agricultural commodities was that a rift occurred separating the types of crops grown by men and women. Because cash crop farming was introduced almost exclusively to men and cash crops were financially lucrative, "African men became the most important export crop producers, while women continued to produce food crops to sustain their families" (DeLancey 1992, 90). Simply put, African women were doing just as much work as men, or more, but did not find their statuses or financial security at all improved by their work in mostly thankless roles. With men doing the only formally recognized agricultural labor, "the state marketing board paid their husbands for their cash crops, and…the men then decided how much to give their wives. If women complained about the lack of money, they were beaten" (Gordon 1992, 211).

In addition to contending with their constantly evolving economic status, women were simultaneously undergoing attacks on their social status. As Europeans further decreased their perceived credibility, "African women suffered the loss of political and ritual roles and were ousted from high-prestige professions that became increasingly male-dominated" (Schmidt 1992, 86). In order to justify this systematic rejection of female power, the colonial government instituted numerous policies under the guise of 'customary law,' which was a mostly fictional repackaging of pre-colonial social and political structures.

Intending to regularize the highly subjective nature of Zimbabwean decision-making, "state officials consulted an array of 'legal experts,' invariably chiefs, headmen, and elders—men who had a stake in reasserting control over women. Senior men took advantage of this opportunity" (Schmidt 1991, 407). Even putting aside its highly

artificial nature, it was additionally problematic that "while custom had been both flexible and sensitive to extenuating circumstance, 'customary law,' now written in stone, was not" (Schmidt 1991, 408). These new laws were used as the justification in divorce and custody decisions that overwhelmingly favored men, which became powerful pressure for African women to submit to colonial authority. The colonial government benefited doubly from these policies, as the "regime both advanced its own project and mollified a potentially powerful opposition force—that of chiefs, headmen, and other senior men" (Schmidt 1992, 99).

This pronounced objectification of female value also altered the function of the bridewealth in marriage rituals. As bridewealth payments evolved to mostly consist of cash transactions, the stakes were raised with regard to possession of the bridewealth. There were two significant changes that resulted from this. First, a deserted husband who might previously have desired the return of his wife was now more likely to simply demand return of the bridewealth payment. Second, "when native commissioners began to prescribe divorce and the return of bridewealth as a remedy for women's desertion or adultery, families began pressuring their daughters to remain in potentially life-threatening situations" (Schmidt 1991, 409).

As colonial policies became more impactful, women found themselves with less power, less political influence, and severely restricted economic potential. In most instances, the colonial government actively chose to sacrifice women's rights in favor of political and economic interests. Women in pre-colonial societies functioned within a framework in which they had relatively little formal power but considerable informal influence. Colonial rule, in some ways, was the mere substitution of one patriarchal

system for another, but it was significantly more oppressive for women and had extensive ramifications for female autonomy in the long term.

Conclusion

In order to draw any meaningful conclusions from the preceding case studies, it is necessary to compare them and attempt to distinguish the countries' similarities and differences, both theoretically and practically. In the pre-colonial era, both Zimbabwean and Ugandan societies placed a strong emphasis on family structures and the social interdependence among the collective community. This is particularly evidenced by the education customs that relied on mutual fulfillment of the collective obligation to prepare the next generation to lead. With the introduction of colonialist policies, of course, people were put under tremendous pressure to turn inward and behave individualistically. Causing further problems for women was the traditional understanding in both societies that women were the property of men; marriages, for example, were social and economic transactions arranged among male elders. It was a short leap to allowing the colonial governments to legally marginalize women, although one unintended consequence was that this set a precedent regarding facile legislation of daily life, by which men would also be affected.

The differences between Uganda and Zimbabwe are somewhat striking, given the apparent similarity of their basic foundations. Although both colonized by Great Britain, the administration they experienced pertained to each country's unique considerations. In Zimbabwe, for example, Cecil Rhodes' involvement in the country's founding pushed the focus more towards economic development and maximum use of the country's resources, human or otherwise. Ugandan colonialists were similarly committed to exploiting

Uganda for economic gain, but they did not encounter the same prospects that Rhodes did in the gold belt of which Zimbabwe was a part. In order to profit optimally, the colonialists required a cash-based economy, native Zimbabweans manning the gold mines, and strong dominance over the country they had entered. The Europeans achieved optimal profit by instituting a tax system that forced Zimbabwean men to travel in search of labor that would pay them the cash they needed to relieve their tax burdens. Women suffered as a result of these economic machinations. The colonialists were eager to facilitate their own monopoly over the economic market and found that excluding women from the marketplace effectively eliminated a significant portion of potential economic competitors. Zimbabwean colonial administrators cited morality and civilization in justifying their harsh laws for women, but this merely masked the true motivations that drove colonial efforts to subordinate women.

Without the intense economic incentives that spurred Zimbabwean colonialists, Ugandan colonial development relied more on the efforts of Christian missionaries, who focused much more on the creation of traditional family structures and religious-driven moral interests. Whereas administrators in Zimbabwe aimed to eliminate women from the economic and political discourse, Ugandan administrators intended for indigenous women to be molded into ideal Christian wives who could serve in subordinate yet complementary roles for their husbands.

Missionaries in Uganda had also established themselves more successfully with indigenous populations prior to colonialism than was the case in Zimbabwe. Thus, colonial administrators encountered and had to incorporate the missionaries' expectations and interests when formulating policies concerning the native Ugandan population.

Women were consequently bound legally to the expectations of morality that European

Christians had for them. These narrow expectations precipitated the formation of the

Uganda Divorce Act, which modeled women's Biblical inequality and enforced stricter

prerequisites for woman-initiated divorce. Economic incentive far outpaced moral

concerns in terms of the basis of female inequality.

In general, given their preexisting predilection for sex-based hierarchies, pre-

colonial Zimbabweans societies did not require the influence of Christian morality to be

convinced of the validity of patriarchy. As Zimbabweans became more familiar with the

competitive aspects of capitalism, they found further incentive to disenfranchise women

and embrace the individualism that informs capitalistic pursuit of wealth. Women

experienced reduced power and status, owing to the self-reinforcing economic system

that favored men to the deliberate detriment of women.

Ugandan and Zimbabwean historical narratives followed a similar pattern,

although the particulars of each case revealed back-stories that indicated the major

differences between each country's experiences with colonialism. Uganda's remarkable

receptivity to Christianity gave the missionaries significant influence within the colonial

framework; and morality—particularly female morality—formed the cornerstone of their

attempts to cultivate a civilized society. By contrast, Zimbabwean women experienced a

decline in status due to the combination of preexisting patriarchal beliefs and colonialist

economic concerns. In any event, these varied motivations manifested themselves in very

similar ways, and Ugandan and Zimbabwean women endured a shared experience of

systematic disenfranchisement that was political, social, and economic in scope. What

must be considered next, then, is whether or not these different methods of

transformation impact the strategies that must be employed in improving women's rights in the present day.

In pursuit of this end, I have compiled a comprehensive analysis of two British African colonies and the ways in which women were subjected to long-term societal disequilibrium. I addressed Uganda and Zimbabwe separately, including a before-and-after perspective on education, sexual mores, religiosity, politics, and more. My initial hypothesis was that pre-colonial African societies were egalitarian and that women's present inequality directly resulted from the imposition of colonialism since the 1880s. What I discovered instead was that patriarchy, although casual, was familiar to pre-colonial Uganda and Zimbabwe. Rather, the steady worsening of women's status that took place was the result of the closing of legal loopholes that had previously empowered women to exercise influence outside of the formal sphere. Sporadic societal biases became official governmental policy, to the significant detriment of women.

This power loss was helped in no small part by the influx of Christian missionaries and their extensive conversion efforts, which further spurred the development of complex patriarchal structures. By conflating piety with female subjugation, laws that put women in their 'rightful places' hardly seemed optional, and colonial governance thereby worked in conjunction with the Church to regulate female behavior. This research adds valuable context to the existing literature, which is largely fragmentary and fails to analyze the interplay between missionaries, the colonial state, and the indigenous populations. Where previously the literature almost exclusively dealt with only two of these groups at a time, my research ties together the numerous areas of interest in colonial history and creates a more balanced understanding of women's status

at the time. It would be productive to apply this new perspective to current women's experiences in Uganda and Zimbabwe. Future research might attempt to discern the potential success, for example, of using economic arguments to broaden Zimbabwean men's perspectives on women's rights issues; a similar hypothetical would suggest that appealing to Christianity and a sense of morality would be most successful in improving women's rights in Uganda.

Women's rights throughout the globe have improved dramatically within the last century, but they are by no means assured and require academia's continued attention. Particularly in countries like Uganda and Zimbabwe, women's rights are perpetually in flux and have evolved in differing ways since the arrival of British colonialism. The two countries share some historical similarities, but the key to improving women's equality and developing supportive institutions in Uganda and Zimbabwe is respectfully enacted policy change that reflects each country's colonial history and acknowledges their unique identities. The women of Uganda and Zimbabwe, who have long been denied their rights to equality, deserve careful analysis that will provide them with the best opportunities to empower themselves.

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