Murderous Economies: Sex Trafficking and Political Economic Change in Alexandria, Egypt, 1914-1921

Économies meurtrières : trafic sexuel et changements politico-économiques à Alexandrie (1914-1921)

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**MURDEROUS ECONOMIES:
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CHANGE IN ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT, 1914-1921**

ABSTRACT

In this article¹, I analyze the relationship between political economic change and sex trafficking in early interwar Alexandria. During World War I, the decline in foreign trade and migration had created new opportunities for local women in Alexandria to engage in part-time clandestine sex work to supplement their incomes. The reintegration of Alexandria into the world economy, combined with the removal of capital controls and trade restrictions, resulted in a sudden influx of foreign goods and populations, a surge in the circulation and price of gold, and rapid inflation. This enriched the colonial bourgeoisie, while simultaneously harming local businesses, thereby contributing to the rise of domestic sex trafficking networks and the murder of independent sex workers who were considered a threat to trafficking operations. The changing

1 I would like to thank the Women and Gender Studies Program at Manhattan College for inviting me to present a draft of this paper, and the many colleagues who attended my talk and engaged me in conversation about my work. I would also like to thank the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center at the CUNY Graduate Center for inviting me to workshop a draft of this article, as well as all the workshop participants who read the draft and gave me feedback, including Beth Baron, Zachary Lockman, Mandana Limbert, Sarah Ghabrial, Secil Yilmaz, Jeffrey Culang, Sam Dolbee, and CJ Kirkpatrick. I am also grateful to Santiago Slabodsky for his comments on the initial drafts of this paper, and to Relli Shechter for his comments on my discussion of the wartime economy at the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in November 2017.

political economy of Alexandria thus forced many women who had sold sex independently during the war into sexual servitude or death. By situating the investigation records of the murder case in the context of census records, trade statistics, and media reports, this study will analyze the effects of Alexandria's changing political economy on the lives of workers and will contribute to our understanding of the role of labor and political economy in the mass uprisings that culminated in conditional Egyptian independence from colonial rule in the early interwar period.

INTRODUCTION

The house on Makoris Street right behind the al-Labbān police station was in a coveted location. For lower middle-class Europeans who desired the protection of a European-controlled police force, proximity to a police station offered a semblance of safety. For working-class natives engaged in clandestine activities, it offered a degree of invisibility. For nearly two years after the end of the First World War, the four rooms on the bottom floor of the house on Makoris Street were subleased to several different families and individuals who were involved in Alexandria's sex trade, while the first floor was occupied by a Greek shopkeeper and his family, who allegedly had little contact with their ground-floor neighbors. The property manager, an elderly woman by the name of Laṭīfa Muḥammad al-Gamāl, learned about the illicit activity on the ground floor from inquisitive neighbors in October 1920, but when the male members of her family complained to an Italian officer in the al-Labbān Police Department, they were ignored. The al-Gamāl family decided to take the matter to civil court instead, and on October 30, 1920, they won an eviction suit and forced everyone in the building to leave.²

Given its prime location, the house did not remain empty for long. In early November 1920, less than two weeks after the eviction, an Italian man agreed to rent the entire house on the condition that the property manager install a new water and sewage system.³ The al-Gamāl family promptly obliged, and their nephew, Aḥmad Mursī, was tasked with the initial construction work – an odd choice, given his extremely poor vision. While Aḥmad was digging, his shovel struck a hard object, and he began to notice a foul smell emanating from the ground. He was unable to see the object, so he bent over, grabbed a hold of it, and tugged. Despite his poor vision, it did not take him long to realize that

2 Malaf Qadayyat Raya wi Sakina [The File of the Raya and Sakina Case], *Dhākirat Miṣr al-Mu'āṣara*, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, accessed July 10, 2014, pp. 204-206. This digitized collection contains 725 of the approximately 1,100 pages of investigative notes that exist for this case.

3 *Ibid.*, 203.

the object he had just unearthed was a human arm. Curiosity led him to dig a little further, until he had unearthed an entire corpse. Bewildered, he quickly covered the remains with dirt and turned to his family members for help.⁴

Although the police had previously ignored the al-Gamāl family, this time they listened carefully. On November 15, 1920, Aḥmad and his relatives appeared more than happy to disclose the secrets they knew about the house on Makoris Street to the investigating officer. They quickly revealed that prior to the eviction, Sakina bint ‘Alī had inhabited the room in which the corpse was found. She, in turn, had subleased the room from Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Samnī, who had lived there for two and a half years, and had allegedly been running the entire ground floor as a clandestine brothel. They claimed that neighbors had told them that al-Samnī had turned his home into a den of “thieves and prostitutes,” adding that he had even procured children for one of his male tenants.⁵ Al-Samnī had mysteriously disappeared shortly after he was evicted from the al-Gamāl residence at the end of October, and his whereabouts remained unknown throughout the legal proceedings. His wife, however, was immediately detained for questioning, as were Sakina and all of her current and former roommates, friends, and family members. The police then turned the case over to the state prosecutor without delay.

By that time, Sakina had become intimately familiar with the al-Labbān police station. She and her sister Raya had been questioned numerous times over the previous year about missing women who had last been seen with them, and they had managed to convince the police that they knew nothing of the disappearances.⁶ When questioned by the state prosecutor, Sakina persisted in her denial of knowledge about both the disappearances and the corpse found underneath her room, but Raya eventually broke her silence after learning that the police had also found a number of corpses beneath the floor of her room on ‘Alī Bek al-Kebīr Street.⁷ During the first few days of Raya’s initial testimony, the police detained twenty-two people for suspected involvement in the murders and unearthed a total of sixteen corpses from four rooms previously and currently occupied by Sakina, Raya, and their business partner, Amīna bint Mansūr. Another corpse that had been found in the street two months earlier was also attributed to this string of murders, bringing the number of murder victims to seventeen.

Although the state prosecutor had assumed from the beginning of the investigation that the murders were motivated by a desire to rob the victims of their jewelry, the suspects’ persistent denials and conflicting testimonies ensured that the investigation would continue for over two months, resulting

4 *Ibid.*, 198-199.

5 *Ibid.*, 199-204.

6 *Ibid.*, 131.

7 *Ibid.*, 325.

in over eleven hundred pages of investigative notes.⁸ These richly detailed notes reveal a far more complex picture than the state prosecutor's robbery narrative, which has been popularized in numerous Egyptian films, plays and TV shows, and etched into Egyptian pop culture as the tale of "Raya and Sakina".⁹ In contrast to popular narratives about the two women, the murder victims were not strangers whom the sisters had lured from the marketplace, but rather women who had been involved with them in the clandestine sex trade since the war. The majority were not formal employees of Raya and Sakina, but independent sex workers who paid them a commission each time they slept with a client in one of the sisters' clandestine brothels. The murder of these independent sex workers coincided with a growth in domestic sex trafficking networks across Egypt after the war. The details of the murder case suggest that traffickers sought young, unmarried women and girls who could be sold to brothels around the country, and that the freedom and mobility of independent sex workers was perceived as a threat to their business operations (Takla 2016). The attempts made by these networks to monopolize the sex trade by increasing their control over the movement and earnings of sex workers brought an end to the relative independence many clandestine sex workers had enjoyed in Alexandria's wartime economy. This murder case thus represents a fundamental shift in Alexandria's clandestine sex trade.

The transformation of the city's sex trade provides valuable insight into the way non-elites were affected by political economic change in Alexandria both during and after the First World War. Contrary to popular perceptions of the sex trade as an isolated "underworld," it was shaped by broader economic developments, and therefore affords an opportunity to study the effects of the global economy on the local population. Although important work has been done on the prostitution regulation system implemented by the colonial state in Egypt (Dunne 1996; Biancani 2012; Kozma 2017), little has been written about clandestine sex work due to the difficulty of finding historical materials on the subject. The reliance on colonial sources about the sex trade has also directed scholarly attention towards Alexandria's role in international sex trafficking, and has overshadowed its role in domestic sex trafficking within Egypt. Given that many of the women who engaged in clandestine sex work practiced multiple trades simultaneously, a study of unlicensed sex work in

8 The entire collection of investigative notes for this case is available on microfilm at the National Judicial Studies Center in Cairo, Egypt, along with nearly a thousand additional pages of police reports, depositions, and trial records.

9 For examples of cinema productions about Raya and Sakina, see *Raya wi Sakina*, a 1953 film written by Naguib Mahfouz; *Raya wi Sakina*, a 1985 theatrical comedy featuring Shadia, which became famous across the Middle East; and *Raya wi Sakina*, a 2005 television soap opera aired during the month of Ramadan.

the port city of Alexandria can offer us a rare glimpse into the informal economy and its relationship to the global economy. Furthermore, given the nature of sex work, changes within the clandestine sex trade can shed light on the changing role of gender and sexuality in the economy. As Hanan Hammad has argued in *Industrial Sexuality: Gender, Urbanization and Social Transformation in Egypt*, sexual coercion increased in the industrializing town of al-Mahalla al-Kubra in the interwar period both in relation to the coerciveness of industrial organization and as a response to the economic changes that posed a challenge to patriarchy (Hammad 2016). This article will build on these insights by highlighting the way in which the economic consequences of Alexandria's reintegration into the global economy after the war increased sexual exploitation and violence in the informal economy of sex work, leading to domestic sex trafficking and the murder of independent sex workers.

Based on evidence gathered from both the investigation records of the murder case and state records, this article argues that the colonial state's imposition of a centralized wartime economy marked by the British Army's monopolization of trade, resources, and male labor weakened large businesses and trafficking networks in wartime Alexandria, leading to the growth of a female-dominated informal economy. Businesses that depended on the movement of people and goods across borders suffered from the sharp decline in international trade, and sex traffickers were actively targeted by the colonial state. The limitations placed on the colonial bourgeoisie during the war created a space for local production and trade, which resulted in the growth of an informal economy characterized by the expansion of illegal markets, most notably the local clandestine sex trade. Independent sex workers became more prevalent during the war, and many worked with multiple brothels and set their own prices. The disempowerment of large businesses in wartime Alexandria thus granted more autonomy to workers, particularly those in the sex trade.

When World War I came to an end, the turn away from a centralized economy transformed Alexandria's sex trade. The reintegration of Alexandria into the world economy, combined with the removal of capital controls and trade restrictions, resulted in a sudden influx of foreign goods and populations, a surge in the circulation and price of gold, and rapid inflation. This trade and economic liberalization enriched the colonial bourgeoisie while simultaneously harming local producers and merchants in Alexandria. The influx of cheap foreign goods into Alexandria after the war was also accompanied by a renewed mobility of Mediterranean migrants, who enjoyed legal and economic privileges under the capitulations. This hurt local sex workers in the same way that the influx of European and North American goods hurt local producers in other industries. State support for licensed trade was also accompanied by a crackdown on illicit markets after the war, including a sharp rise in police raids against clandestine brothels. The reintegration of Alexandria into the world economy thus empowered the European-dominated licensed sex trade and led to increased exploitation in the informal economy of sex work.

When analyzed in the context of socioeconomic data from this period, the records of the murder case change our understanding of how the First World War shaped Alexandria. Although colonial reports argue that Egypt prospered during the war due to spending by British troops, historians have generally assumed that the war marked a period of suffering for the native population, and that this suffering was a key factor in the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution of 1919 (Tignor 2013; Anderson 2017). For Alexandria, however, which was home to the British army's base depot for its military campaigns in the Levant, the records of the serial murder case suggest that the most serious problems began after the war. As this article will show, it was at this point that the British implemented new policies to maximize the flow of capital from colony to metropole by increasing protection for its industries while simultaneously removing the financial controls and trade restrictions that had enabled the growth of small businesses in wartime Alexandria. The colonial state thus played an active role in the destruction of local businesses and the dominance of European capitalist interests in early interwar Alexandria. It was the reopening of Alexandria to speculative trade and the vagaries of the world market after the war that contributed to both the mass uprisings of 1919-1921 and the increased exploitation and murder of sex workers.

WARTIME CRISES AND ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

At the beginning of World War I, Sakina and her second husband, Aḥmad Ragab, arrived in Alexandria in search of work. Owing to a cotton crisis in the Egyptian countryside and the aggressive wartime tax-collecting policies adopted by the colonial state (Sālim 1984: 103-118), many more rural migrants arrived in Alexandria over the next couple of years, including Sakina's sister, Raya, and her husband, Ḥasab Allah. They were accompanied by refugees from neighboring countries, most notably Jews and Christians from Syria and Palestine escaping the increasingly aggressive nationalist policies of the Ottoman state during the war.¹⁰ Alexandria had long been known as a safe haven and a land of opportunity, and it was the destination of choice for those looking to escape hardship.

The war, however, unleashed a series of economic consequences that workers in Alexandria had not anticipated. In Egypt's major urban centers, the

10 See "The Flight from Syria: Refugees Escorted by Australian Troops", *The Egyptian Gazette*, January 8, 1915, 3; "Alexandria Refugees: Removal from Metropole Hotel", *The Egyptian Gazette*, January 13, 1915, 3; and "Refugees at Alexandria: Position of the Jewish Community", *The Egyptian Gazette*, January 14, 1915, 3. See also "The Refugee Problem: An Official Committee Meeting at Alexandria", *The Egyptian Gazette*, January 29, 1915, 5 for a discussion on the establishment of a committee to deal with the refugee problem in Alexandria.

outbreak of the war led to sudden food shortages and inflation that prompted waves of collective action against shopkeepers and mass looting in working-class districts.¹¹ One of the alleged perpetrators in the murder case, a neighborhood strongman by the name of 'Abd al-Rāziq Yūsuf, had a reputation for organizing such protests.¹² These wartime shortages were due to both the British Army's requisitions of grain and animal transport and its monopolization of shipping routes for military purposes, which caused a significant reduction in foreign trade throughout the war years. Port statistics for the period between 1913 and 1924 show that trade in Alexandria did not begin to approach pre-war levels again until after 1920:

Year	Number of Ships	Registered Tonnage
1913	1,932	3,718,660
1914	1,687	3,299,099
1915	958	1,576,756
1916	554	966,673
1917	346	641,060
1918	339	738,062
1919	726	1,330,702
1920	1,242	2,527,436
1921	1,468	2,776,193
1922	1,574	3,107,966
1923	1,766	3,729,446
1924	1,881	4,206,769

Figure 1: Table of the number of ships and tonnage arriving at the port of Alexandria between 1913 and 1924 (Table taken from Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, Annual Return of Shipping, Cargo and Passenger Traffic in the Ports of Egypt and Suez Canal Transits, 1924 (Cairo: Government Press, 1925), 3

11 "Egypt's Unemployed: Demonstrations in Cairo: Another Crowd Crying for Bread: Extraordinary Scenes in the Mousky This Morning", *The Egyptian Gazette*, September 1, 1914, 3;"The Disturbances in Cairo: Natives Charged with Pillaging Shops", *The Egyptian Gazette*, September 3, 1914, 4.

12 Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Serdāb al-Mūmisāt: Al-Waqā'i' al-Mu'alim 'Andama Tantashir al- Radhila Bayn al-Bashr* [*The Prostitution Underworld: The Disturbing Events that Occur When Vice Spreads*] (Cairo: Oscar lil-Nashr wil-Tawzī', 2010), 216.

Given that many industries in Alexandria were tied to the global market, the lives of workers employed in the formal economy became increasingly precarious at the beginning of the war. The number of jobs in factories and the cotton industry decreased dramatically, resulting in a sharp rise in the number of servants and day laborers in the city (Ilbert 1996: 784). As migrants and seasonal workers whose livelihood was dependent on the production and export of cotton, Şa'īdī men like Raya and Sakina's husbands were particularly affected by these wartime transformations. In September 1914, an Alexandria-based newspaper reported that the municipal government was forcing many unemployed Şa'īdīs to return to their villages, even going so far as to purchase railway tickets for them.¹³ The newspaper simultaneously called on the government to send these Şa'īdīs to the Suez Canal Zone town of Ismailia, where the presence of the British Army was producing a greater demand for labor.¹⁴ Some Şa'īdī men such as Aḥmad Ragab heeded these calls and began working as manual laborers for the British Army in order to avoid repatriation.¹⁵ The longstanding precarity experienced by migrants and seasonal workers increased significantly during the war, leaving the livelihood of many Şa'īdīs dependent on their providing services to the British Army. The surplus population that had been created by European capitalist exploitation in Egypt in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thus became exploitable labor for the British Army during World War I.

In response to both the wartime shortages and the needs of the British Army, the colonial state in Egypt implemented a series of economic policies to strengthen central state control over the country's resources. Although scholars have studied the effects of central state control over the economy in Egypt during World War II (Vitalis and Heydemann 2000), the creation of a centralized wartime economy during World War I remains understudied. This centralized wartime economy included price ceilings and export bans on essential foodstuffs, in addition to capital controls, such as regulating the price of gold and banning its exportation. When combined with the British Army's monopolization of shipping routes and the rapid decline in foreign trade, these colonial state policies weakened large businesses in Alexandria, which were dependent on global trade, and strengthened small, local businesses and independent producers, particularly those in the informal economy. The growth of the informal economy was accompanied by the informalization of labor and the expansion of illegal markets. The First World War thus marked a crisis of global capitalism that empowered local producers and traders in Alexandria and disempowered the colonial bourgeoisie.

13 *The Egyptian Gazette*, September 2, 1914, 2.

14 *The Egyptian Gazette*, September 4, 1914, 4.

15 Qadayyat Raya wi Sakina [The Raya and Sakina Case], National Judicial Studies Center in Cairo, Egypt, microfilm, 705.

The price ceilings on basic necessities had a particularly negative effect on European shopkeepers in Alexandria. According to a petition filed by the Greek Shopkeeper's Guild in Alexandria on August 28, 1914, these regulations disproportionately affected European shopkeepers who imported most of their products from abroad and faced a 10-30% increase in customs duties since the beginning of the war.¹⁶ These Greek shopkeepers argued that they were more adversely affected by the price ceilings than native shopkeepers because their customers were primarily upper class natives and Europeans who sought higher quality products than the majority of the population. They claimed that since native shopkeepers typically sold lower quality items that were less expensive than the products they sold, the government should create a different set of price ceilings for European and native shopkeepers.¹⁷ Despite their protests, the central government did not oblige, and the centralized wartime economy temporarily halted the longstanding commercial advantages that European merchants had enjoyed under the capitulations.

In addition to price controls, the colonial state also implemented capital controls to regulate the movement and price of gold during the second half of the war. At the beginning of the war, Britain and its colonies went off the gold standard, and the price of the British gold pound (also known as the sovereign) was fixed at 97.5 Egyptian piasters.¹⁸ During the first two years of the war, however, people who attempted to sell their gold in Egypt received prices well below this value (Sālim 1984: 95).¹⁹ Citing this economic injustice as the rationale behind their decision, the colonial state implemented a system of hallmarking gold and silver in June 1916 that included the standardization of prices.²⁰ Although the system of hallmarking was allegedly intended to alleviate the suffering of the population, it created new hardships for those who had

16 Mukātabat Lajnat al-Tamwīn bi Sha'n al-Shakwa al-Muqaddama min al-Baqqālīn al-Arwām bil-Iskandariyya [Supply Board's Report Regarding the Complaint Presented by Greek Shopkeepers in Alexandria], September 29, 1914, Cabinet of Overseers and Ministers, Egyptian National Archives.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Wizārat al-Māliyya, Maṣlaḥat 'Umūm al-Iḥsā' al-'Amiriyya, *Al-Iḥsā' al-Sanawi al-'Ām lil-Qatr al-Miṣrī li-Sanat 1921* [Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, *Yearly Statistics for Egypt for the Year 1921*] (Cairo: Government Press, 1922), 279.

19 Some newspapers from this period attributed the low prices to new state regulations against the melting of gold. See *The Egyptian Gazette*, September 2, 1914, 3.

20 Mashrū' Qānūn 'An al-Tamgha Yusrī 'Ala al-Ajānib wil-Waṭanīyyīn wi Yaqḍa bi Tamghat Jamī' al-Maṣūghāt al-Dhahabiyya wil-Fiḍiyya 1916 [Legal Decree about Hallmarking which Applies to Foreigners and Nationals and Requires the Hallmarking of Gold and Silver Jewelry], Cabinet of Overseers and Ministers, Egyptian National Archives. This archival document also cites the impurity of gold coming from Germany and Austria as one of the main reasons for the fall in the price of gold in Egypt.

already obtained adulterated gold and could no longer sell it legally. To further increase central state control over gold, the Egyptian Minister of Finance, Yūsuf Wahba, introduced new legislation in October 1916 banning its export from Egypt. Wahba referred to capital controls in Europe as a model to be emulated, noting that the demands of the war necessitated similar controls in Egypt.²¹ The attempt to increase colonial state control over the identification and circulation of precious metals contributed to the creation of a command economy during the war.

Central state control over the Egyptian economy manifested itself in control not only over capital and goods, but also over labor. In 1917, the British Army initiated a recruitment/conscription campaign in Egypt in an attempt to secure able-bodied men to serve as manual laborers for the Allied Forces on various war fronts. Whereas the army had hired ‘voluntary’ manual laborers like Aḥmad Ragab during the first half of the war, the 1917 campaign marked a turning point in that the British Army called on local authorities to take men from their families forcibly when it could not meet its quotas for laborers (Goldberg 1992; Anderson 2017). Given the further reductions in foreign trade in 1917 and the limited employment opportunities for dock and transport workers in Alexandria, it is unclear whether unemployed workers perceived their involvement in the Labor Corps in 1917-18 to be more coercive than the dire circumstances they faced at home. Coercion was not embedded in the recruitment/conscription campaign but rather in the broader structure of colonial exploitation in Egypt, which had turned these men into a surplus population and left them dispossessed and displaced. Given the fact that working for the British Army was one of the few sources of regular employment for urban workers during this period, men in Alexandria were also likely to have been aware of the monetary benefits of this position. It is thus not surprising that Raya and Sakina’s husbands served in the Egyptian Labor Corps in 1917-18 along with *fitiwwa* who had difficulty finding employment during the war, such as ‘Urābī Ḥassān (‘Īsa 2002:146). Increased central state control over native labor and resources during the second half of the war made the question of voluntary versus forced recruitment irrelevant.

Although the wartime economy hurt the colonial bourgeoisie and workers who had been employed in foreign-owned industries, it created economic opportunities for natives who had some capital or means of production. The drastic reduction in foreign trade due to the British army’s monopolization of shipping routes contributed to the growth of native industries and domestic commerce. Beinín shows that a number of domestic industries expanded in Egypt during the war, including “textiles, olive oil pressing, tanning, grain milling, food processing, furniture making, and iron founding” (Beinín 1981:

21 Mashrū’ Marsūm bi-Mana’ Taṣḍīr al-Dhahab 1916 [Legal Decree Prohibiting the Export of Gold 1916], Cabinet of Overseers and Ministers, Egyptian National Archives.

19), leading to the formation of a national bourgeoisie. Census records support this observation by showing that the number of people employed in manufacturing throughout Egypt grew from 281,416 in 1907 to 423,109 in 1917 (Beinin and Lockman 1988: 38). The wartime economy was also characterized by a significant expansion in domestic commerce. While European merchants protested against the new import taxes levied during the war, Egyptian merchants found that they opened up new economic opportunities for them that had previously been foreclosed by the advantages granted to European merchants under the capitulations. Census records thus show that the number of people employed in commerce in Egypt grew from 161,210 in 1907 to 280,562 in 1917 (Beinin and Lockman 1988: 38). This evidence suggests that the wartime economy was marked by the growth of domestic industry and commerce in Egypt.

According to the picture that emerges from the investigation records of the Alexandria serial murder case, the most significant expansion of industry and commerce in Alexandria occurred from below. Evidence from the case suggests that the massive reduction in both imports and exports granted new opportunities for small businesses, leading to the growth of the petite bourgeoisie and the increasing informalization of labor. For example, Raya's neighbor, Ramaḍān al-Naggār, was an independent carpenter whose workshop expanded to include a few workers over the course of the war. His wife, Fāṭima bint Muḥammad 'Abd Rabbu, was a domestic servant who became a broker and began employing native children to work in the homes of European families ('Īsa 2002: 486). Muḥammad Khafāga, one of the *fitiwwa* of al-Labbān who grew up in the working class neighborhood of Ḥāret al-Farahda, started a small dairy business.²² Many of these small businesses tapped into the informal economy rather than hiring permanent workers. For example, Anīsa bint Muḥammad Raḍwān, one of the murder victims who had worked as an independent tailor at the beginning of the war, eventually began working for a textile company under a putting-out system ('Īsa 2002: 349). Merchants also relied on women like Sakina's neighbor, Sayyida bint Sulaymān, to peddle their goods in the streets and marketplaces.²³ The way in which industry expanded in Alexandria under wartime colonial policies thus created new opportunities for the petite bourgeoisie, while simultaneously pushing a growing number of workers into the informal economy.

Census records from this period provide further indications of the increasing informalization of labor in Alexandria during the war. They show that the percentage of the population employed in Alexandria increased from 60.60% in 1907 to 69.07% in 1917, and that this rise in overall employment corresponded to a 10% increase in the number of day laborers and domestic

22 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Serdāb al-Mūmisāt*, 183.

23 Malaf Qadayyat Raya wi Sakina, 712.

servants in Alexandria. Thus, whereas day laborers and domestic servants constituted 43.91% of Alexandria's working population in 1907, this category of workers grew to 54.05% of the working population in 1917, as indicated in the table below:

	1907		1917	
Total	319,266		384,811	
Unknown and inactive	125,521		119,013	
Active population	193,745		265,798	

	1907	% active pop.	1917	% active pop.
Agriculture	16,724	8.63	5,620	2.10
Extraction / mines	541	0.27	119	0.04
Industries	32,895	16.97	41,920	15.77
Transport	20,123	10.38	24,019	9.03
Commerce	18,823	9.71	29,672	11.16
Public Administration	9,252	4.80	9,250	3.50
Professions	8,101	4.18	8,200	3.08
Private means	2,204	1.13	3,333	1.25
Domestic workers and day laborers	85,082	43.91	143,665	54.05

Figure 2: Table of occupations declared in Alexandria census records in 1907 and 1917 (Ilbert 1996: 784)

The vast increase in the number of day laborers and domestic servants suggests that the growth of domestic industry and commerce in wartime Egypt was accompanied by an expansion of the informal economy in Alexandria. The testimonies of witnesses and suspects in the Alexandria serial murder case indicate that as working-class jobs became increasingly rare, irregular, precarious, and insufficient to meet the costs of living over the course of the war, workers turned to a variety of informal and illegal activities to meet their daily needs, including street peddling, domestic service, the clandestine sex trade, and the unlicensed sale of food and drink. The increase in this category of workers also suggests that a greater percentage of the population was forced to work during the war, particularly women and children. It is for this

reason that Fāṭima the servant broker managed to accumulate significant wealth from employing large numbers of impoverished native children in al-Labbān as servants in the homes of European families. The colonial state's restructuring of Alexandria's economy to serve British military interests thus led to the expansion of the informal economy and the proliferation of clandestine markets. These markets were a response to the colonial state's increased control over the economy and the simultaneous neglect of workers and their families during the war.

THE GROWTH OF ALEXANDRIA'S CLANDESTINE MARKETS

When Aḥmad Ragab left Alexandria to work for the British Army at the beginning of World War I, Sakina attempted to support herself by peddling cheese and sugar cane.²⁴ It was not long before she discovered that she could not make a living from this trade alone and began to supplement her income with streetwalking (ʿĪsa 2002: 73). While roaming the streets and marketplaces, she became friends with a number of women who were engaged in similar activities. One streetwalker by the name of Nabawiyya, the wife of a Ṣaʿdī fisherman, soon became one of Sakina's closest friends, as did Zannūba the chicken dealer, who occasionally sold sex to her clients.²⁵ Since Alexandria was home to the British Army's Mediterranean base depot, the demand for both labor and leisure activities gradually increased throughout the war as soldiers and military supplies moved through Alexandria.²⁶ Clandestine sex work thus became a particularly lucrative activity for women in Alexandria.

Yet streetwalking as a married woman was not without its risks, particularly because Sakina's husband, Aḥmad, sometimes showed up unannounced during the short vacations he received from the army. These visits were a mixed blessing for Sakina, for although she risked having her husband learn about her clandestine activities, he would usually bring her as much as 12 pounds each time he visited.²⁷ If one compares this to the fact that her brother-in-law, Ḥasab Allah, could barely scrape together a pound a month working as a day laborer, Aḥmad's visits during the first half of the war left Sakina with a small fortune. However, this fortune did not last long, as Sakina claimed that after Aḥmad left Alexandria, she was usually forced to surrender her husband's money to the other members of her family, which left her in the same penniless predicament as before. Aḥmad's long periods of absence

24 Qadayyat Raya wi Sakina, microfilm, 705.

25 ʿAbd al-Wahāb, *Serdāb al-Mūmisāt*, 204.

26 "The Base Depots," The Army Service Corps of 1914-1918, accessed October 1, 2014, <http://www.1914-1918.net/asc.htm#depot>.

27 Qadayyat Raya wi Sakina, microfilm, 706.

eventually became a source of hardship for Sakina, and halfway through the war she demanded a divorce.

Throughout the war, Sakina continued to move from one clandestine activity to another, often engaging in several simultaneously. At one point, she joined a group that would take rotting horsemeat from a British military camp in Sidi Bishr and sell it in al-Labbān at low prices.²⁸ Although European newspapers in Alexandria complained that the colonial state's public health regulations were only being enforced in European quarters,²⁹ Sakina was imprisoned for selling rotten meat. Sakina's friend, Zannūba, was also known for selling poultry that had died of natural causes (known in Arabic as *fitīs*) to her friends and neighbors, most of whom consciously purchased it at reduced prices despite the health risks.³⁰ The trade in unsanitary meat increased in 1920, when an additional spike in the cost of meat prompted the central government to begin discussions about potential solutions to the meat crisis.³¹ The astronomical rise in the cost of protein-rich food sources during and after the war created a thriving black market in meat, which contributed to a growing public health crisis among the working poor.

The black market in food was accompanied by the spread of adulterated alcohol and the unlicensed bars and brothels that served it. As refugees, migrants, and soldiers continued to pass through Alexandria during the war, workers who could not find employment in the food and mechanical industries found that they could make a living from catering to newcomers and visitors, which led to the expansion of the service sector. Many of those who were new to the service sector did not have the resources to obtain licenses and shops, so they operated bars, cafes, and brothels informally out of private homes. This was made possible by the fact that rents only rose by 15% during the war, while the cost of basic food necessities rose by between 150 and 200%.³² Adulterated alcohol, referred to as *sokolanse* in Alexandria, further

28 *Ibid.*

29 "Impure Food", *The Egyptian Gazette*, January 2, 1917, 4.

30 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Serdāb al-Mūmisāt*, 164.

31 Madhkara min Wizārat al-Zirā'a 'An Mas'alat Ghilā' al-Laḥm bi Madīnatay al-Qāhira wil-Iskandirayya [Memorandum from the Ministry of Agriculture Regarding the Rising Cost of Meat in the Cities of Cairo and Alexandria], Cabinet of Overseers and Ministers, Egyptian National Archives.

32 "1918 Report of The International Association for the Repression of the White Slave Trade", 16, FO 141/466/1, The National Archives of the UK Government.

assisted with the reduction of operating costs.³³ Unlicensed venues were popular among clients because they remained open late at night, evading the military restrictions on operating hours, which the colonial state could only impose on licensed venues.³⁴ For this reason, Raya and Sakina operated a number of clandestine brothels in private homes throughout the second half of the war and its immediate aftermath. They were joined by Amīna bint Mansūr, who operated a hashish café managed by her nephew, a former butcher, on the floor underneath one of Raya and Sakina's brothels.³⁵ Amīna's husband, a former transport worker at the port, also sold *sokolanse* to neighbors from a makeshift bar he operated from his home.³⁶ Service work became the primary means of living for Alexandria's working poor.

The success Raya and Sakina enjoyed from opening a series of clandestine brothels throughout the war was largely due to the effect of the wartime economy on the licensed sex trade. Since 1882, the colonial state had implemented a prostitution regulation system that required sex workers to obtain licenses from the state and undergo weekly medical examinations (Dunne 1996). Although the stigma and harshness of the regulatory system had long incentivized women to engage in sex work covertly, especially those who sought to work temporarily or who could not obtain licenses due to their age or marital status, the attempts of the colonial military authorities to increase their control over licensed prostitution during the war further contributed to the expansion of clandestine sex markets (Takla 2017). In the interests of both social control and protecting soldiers from venereal disease, military officials enforced the regulations more vigorously against licensed sex workers in both European and native brothel quarters.³⁷ The imposition of martial law enabled the colonial regime to force licensed European sex workers to attend weekly medical examinations for the first time since 1886, and licensed native sex workers also became subject to a heightened degree of police harassment. Throughout the war, military authorities also put red light districts in Alexandria out of bounds to soldiers for months at a time, thereby harming the livelihood of

33 See "Report by the Commandant of the Cairo City Police, March 20, 1916", FO 141/466/2, The National Archives of the UK Government. According to this report, state inspectors found the percentage of adulterated alcohol to be 22%. See also 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Serdāb al-Mūmisāt*, 204. According to Raya, *sokolanse* was stronger than regular alcohol.

34 Ville d'Alexandrie, Séance de la Commission Municipale du 23 Janvier 1918, 11, Maṭbū'āt Section of Egyptian National Archives. Under martial law, the mandatory closing time was 9 p.m.

35 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Serdāb al-Mūmisāt*, 182.

36 *Ibid.*, 213.

37 "Report to the Commandant, Alexandria City Police, September 20, 1915", FO 141/466/2, The National Archives of the UK Government.

licensed sex workers.³⁸ These wartime policies made clandestine sex work a more stable source of income than licensed prostitution, creating a strong economic incentive for sex workers to practice their trade covertly.

The colonial regime's attempt to establish more direct control over the licensed sex trade was accompanied by more stringent policies against men who lived off the proceeds of prostitution.³⁹ With the imposition of martial law, the military authorities were able to crack down on both European and Egyptian men involved in the sex trade. Ibrāhīm al-Gharbī, who came from a slave-trading family and later became the most infamous sex trafficker in interwar Egypt, was banished to his hometown in Aswan in 1916 (Biancani 2012: 119). The military authorities also waged a number of legal battles against European *souteneurs* of various nationalities who had been active in the sex trade in Egypt.⁴⁰ When combined with the British army's monopolization of shipping and railway transport for military purposes, these policies contributed to a temporary decline in both international and domestic trafficking during the war. The opportunities for independent and informal production and trade created by the wartime economy thus empowered independent sex workers and clandestine brothel owners in Alexandria's sex trade.

The opening of a military camp near Sūq al-Gum'a in 1917 further contributed to the expansion of the clandestine sex trade in al-Labbān. The camp was established to prepare native men for service in the Egyptian Labor Corps, making it a site through which soldiers and native laborers passed regularly. Its proximity to the largest marketplace in al-Labbān made it a prime client base for sex work, and Raya and Sakina seized this opportunity to establish a clandestine brothel in the marketplace while their husbands were away serving in the Egyptian Labor Corps. Not surprisingly, this particular brothel became known as "The Camp," and it soon became the sisters' most successful enterprise (ʿĪsa 2002: 149). The brothel attracted soldiers of various

38 "Report by Major Hopkinson, Commandant of Alexandria City Police, March 19, 1916", FO 141/466/2, The National Archives of the UK Government.

39 *Ibid.*

40 See "Salvatore Spiteri for Living on the Earnings of Prostitution, 1913", FO 841/138, The National Archives of the UK Government; "Giuseppe Vassallo for Living on the Earnings of Prostitution 1914", "Giuseppe Mifsud for Living on the Earnings of Prostitution, 1914", "Alex Tanti for Permitting the Use and Smoking of Hashish, 1914", "Alex Tanti for Living Wholly or Partly on the Earnings of Prostitution, 1914", FO 841/146, The National Archives of the UK Government; "Pasquale Magri for Living Wholly or in Part on the Earnings of Prostitution, 1917", FO 841/168, The National Archives of the UK Government; "James Kelly Alias Hughes for Living on Proceeds of Prostitution, 1919", FO 841/186, The National Archives of the UK Government; and "Rex v. John Chas. Shalders for Living on Proceeds of Prostitution, 1921", FO 841/205, The National Archives of the UK Government.

nationalities, including British, Indian, and Australian, as well as native men who worked for the Egyptian Labor Corps. Raya became the primary procurer of sex workers for the brothel's large clientele, and it was her success in bringing a wide variety of women to work there that made her one of the best-known procurers in al-Labbān. In addition to procuring widows and divorced women, some of them under the age of 18, Raya also managed to procure married women from various social classes. Since clandestine sex work was one of the few work opportunities available to petit bourgeois women, Raya and Sakina's brothel became a fluid space where women of various social classes congregated. During the investigation of the murder case, Raya noted that at its height, "The Camp" had 22 sex workers, most of whom were technically self-employed because they owned the gold and clothing necessary to attract clients. These independent sex workers paid the sisters half of what they earned as a fee for conducting business at their brothel, and Raya frequently offered to give them a discounted commission rate if they agreed to come regularly (ʿĪsa 2002: 151 and 299). Given that Sūq al-Gumʿa was a popular place for streetwalkers, taking a commission from independent sex workers appeared to be a better business strategy than hiring sex workers and paying them wages. The sisters' decision to work with independent sex workers in the informal economy was thus a strategic way of navigating Alexandria's fluid spaces during the war.

According to Raya's testimony, one of the most striking features of "The Camp" was the relative absence of male involvement in the operation of the business. Although Raya and Sakina did employ a low-ranking police officer as well as a local strongmen to protect them and their sex workers from abusive clients, Raya spoke fondly of "The Camp" as a period during which she had complete control over her business and her profits.⁴¹ Although it is impossible to understand the full nature of the relationship between Raya and the sex workers at "The Camp" because most of them were murdered in 1920, the fact that her business was thriving during the war suggests that Raya did not need a monopoly over sex workers in order to profit. The new space for independent production during the war enabled Raya and Sakina's small business venture to thrive. Compared to the picture of the postwar sex trade that emerges from the records, the sex workers at Raya's clandestine brothels exercised a significant yet short-lived degree of independence and mobility during the war, suggesting that the female-dominated informal economy that had emerged in al-Labbān was characterized by a decrease in class and gender exploitation.

41 ʿAbd al-Wahāb, *Serdāb al-Mūmisāt*, 199.

MURDER AND SEX TRAFFICKING IN A LIBERALIZING ECONOMY

It was not long after the war that Raya and Sakina's business model began to change. Weeks into the investigation of the murder case, 'Aisha, one of Raya's youngest sex workers, revealed to the state prosecutor that Raya's business partner, Amīna, had attempted to sell her and another sex worker by the name of Samara to a licensed Greek brothel in Damanhour. The brothel owner returned the girls to Raya only because they were too young to obtain licenses.⁴² By the time of the sale, "The Camp" had been shut down, and Raya, Sakina and Amīna were operating their clandestine sex business primarily out of their homes. 'Aisha was a divorced teenager who had agreed to work for Raya as a sex worker because she needed to care for her sick mother and her previous job as a domestic servant had paid her far too little. Yet in addition to fulfilling her duties as a sex worker, 'Aisha was frequently instructed to perform manual labor and domestic service that had nothing to do with the original terms of her employment. Over time, she began to resemble an indentured servant – a radical departure from the independent sex workers that Raya and Sakina had done business with during the war.

Amīna's ability to sell 'Aisha and Samara was predicated on their inability to pay her back for the clothing and gold jewelry she had given them at the beginning of their employment. Sex workers were renowned for wearing particular forms of gold jewelry to attract clients, and these materials were thus considered essential for the performance of their duties. According to a gold dealer interviewed during the investigation, sex workers were known for wearing the thickest gold bracelets, and each time they accumulated more money, they would trade their bracelet in for a thicker one or buy a new piece of gold jewelry. Although this may have been seen as one of the best ways to safeguard the wealth they had accumulated, the ostentatious displays of gold on the sex worker's body also functioned as a symbol of their success, desirability, and social mobility. What set 'Aisha and Samara apart from the independent sex workers that Raya and Sakina had been doing business with was the fact that they were too impoverished to own the materials they needed to do their job, leaving them dependent on the resources of trafficking networks.

By the time 'Aisha and Samara entered the sex trade, it had become far more difficult to purchase gold than had been the case during the war. As previously mentioned, the colonial state had fixed the price of gold and banned exports of it during the war. The removal of capital controls after the war caused the cost of gold to skyrocket, making it increasingly unobtainable for non-elites. According to statistics produced by the colonial state in 1921, while the price of the British sovereign was 97.5 Egyptian piasters during the

42 *Ibid.*, 159.

war, it reached 178 Egyptian piasters in February 1920.⁴³ Commentaries on the statistics note that while people had hid their gold during the war, the surge in its price brought much of it out of hiding. This development was likely due to the renewed circulation of gold on the world market after the war, in addition to the fact that states actively sought to increase the quantities in their official reserves. Removing capital controls to incentivize people to sell their gold therefore served the financial interests of the British government while also increasing the dependence of sex workers on trafficking networks.

According to the testimonies of other suspects, 'Aisha and Samara were not the only sex workers that Raya and her business partners had attempted to traffic. Towards the end of the investigation, Sakina's third husband, Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Āl told the state prosecutor that Ḥasab Allah's brother had helped them procure women from Asyūt, one of the largest cities in southern Egypt. He was immediately hushed and scolded by Raya, and the state prosecutor did not follow up on his statement.⁴⁴ The numbers of women being trafficked may explain why the suspects bought a significant amount of gold in 1920. Assuming that this was a robbery case, the state prosecutor spent the majority of the investigation tracing the movement of gold to and from the suspects in the murder case, only to find that most of them had been buying gold rather than selling it. The official records of local gold transactions acquired by the state prosecutor indicate that between January 1918 and November 1920, Sakina and Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Āl sold gold jewelry only 3 times while purchasing it at least 28 times: 5 times in 1918, 5 times in 1919, and 18 times in 1920.⁴⁵ While it is possible that Sakina was engaging in gold speculation, it is equally possible that their network was also buying gold for the purpose of giving it to impoverished young women and children and selling them to brothels.

This shift in Raya and Sakina's business model after the war was not unique. In a commentary on the Egyptian Penal Code in 1919, a colonial judge by the name of A. C. McBarnet notes that "a recent case disclosed the existence of an elaborate system of trafficking in women extending its tentacles throughout Egypt."⁴⁶ McBarnet goes on to describe how the procurers deceived the women by pretending to be servants' registry agents and then sold them to brothels and individuals around the country, securing the involvement of local sheikhs by paying them a modest sum. The records of the

43 Wizārat al-Māliyya, *Al-Iḥṣā' al-Sanawī al-'Ām lil-Qaṭr al-Miṣrī li-Sanat 1921*, 279.

44 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Serdāb al-Mūmisāt*, 226.

45 Malaf Qadayyat Raya wi Sakina, 148-157.

46 A.C. McBarnet, *The New Penal Code. Offences against Morality and the Marriage Tie and Children* (Le Caire, Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1919), 381, FO 141/466/1, White Slave Traffic (1915-1927), The National Archives of the UK Government.

Alexandria serial murder case also reveal that a strikingly similar murder case had occurred in Tanta at exactly the same time. The state prosecutor decided to interview the primary suspect in the Tanta case, Maḥmūd ‘Allām, to determine whether there was a connection between the Tanta murders and the Alexandria murders. The interview revealed that Maḥmūd ‘Allām had also worked with a trafficking network that procured women from al-Mansūra for the sex trade while simultaneously murdering independent sex workers in Tanta. He told the state prosecutor that his boss seemed to have known about the murders in Alexandria before they were discovered by the police because he had once scolded him and his business partners, telling them, “You guys are failures. The good work is being done in Alexandria.”⁴⁷ Although Maḥmūd ‘Allām’s testimony suggested that there may have been a relationship between the Alexandria and Tanta trafficking networks, the state prosecutor did not investigate the connection any further, and Maḥmūd ‘Allām was the only suspect executed in the Tanta case.

The rise of sex trafficking networks after the war was due in part to a shift in colonial state attitudes towards the sex trade. In his report, “A Series of Laws Dealing with Prostitution and Venereal Disease,” Judge McBarnet calls prostitutes ‘forces of disorder’ and outlines proposed solutions for what he regarded as the alarming spread of prostitution in Egypt in recent years, ending with a grave warning about the efforts of “interested persons to convert Egypt into a pleasure center for the world.”⁴⁸ He also voiced his opposition to prostitution in the early interwar period on the grounds that it posed a threat to the strength and stability of the state, arguing that prostitution was ‘quasi-criminal.’⁴⁹ This shift in colonial state attitudes towards prostitution was accompanied by increased state surveillance and police raids of clandestine sex spaces, including occasional raids on bars where all the female patrons were rounded up and sent to a hospital to be checked for venereal disease (‘Īsa 2002: 309). This crackdown on the unlicensed trade made Raya and Sakina’s network dependent on the formal economy of sex work for survival, and so they began selling sex workers to licensed brothels, particularly European brothels, which had a greater chance of evading state regulation after the war. State policies thus directly contributed to the increased exploitation and murder of sex workers in the informal economy.

47 Malaf Qadayyat Raya wi Sakina, 55. “*Intum khā’ibīn fī ‘an al-‘amal al-ṣaḥīḥ wil-shughl al-tamām fī Iskandirayya.*”

48 See A.C. McBarnet, *Draft of a Series of Laws Dealing with Prostitution and Venereal Disease: “A Basis for Discussion”* (Cairo, The Nile Mission Press, 1919), 7-8, FO 141/466/1, White Slave Traffic (1915-1927), The National Archives of the UK Government.

49 *Ibid.*, 7.

The colonial state's economic policies after the war played an even greater role in the transformation of Raya and Sakina's business model. While inflation had worsened during the second half of the war, the relaxation of price controls and trade restrictions after the war ended contributed to deteriorating economic conditions. In 1920, the rate of inflation skyrocketed, and the cost of living index rose to 237, compared to its prewar level of 100 (Marsot 1977: 212). According to the 1921 statistics published by the Egyptian state, the cost of some basic food necessities such as beans and lentils nearly doubled between 1919 and 1920 alone.⁵⁰ The price of these necessities was also frequently higher in Alexandria than in Cairo during this period.⁵¹ These conditions provided traffickers with a rapidly expanding pool of impoverished laborers.

Unemployment also contributed to the creation of an exploitable pool of surplus labor for trafficking networks. The surplus pool of child labor produced by the cotton crisis of 1920 played a particularly important role in empowering traffickers. Although cotton prices were high in 1919, a sudden drop in demand in April 1920 caused them to plummet. The colonial state responded by drastically restricting the acreage of the 1920-21 cotton crop in an attempt to reduce supply and drive prices up the following year.⁵² Because children played a prominent role in the cotton industry, particularly in picking, pest control, and ginning (Goldberg 2004: 64), the restriction of acreage resulted in a surplus pool of child labor in the countryside that trafficking networks exploited. This stood in stark contrast to wartime policies, for whereas the British government had dealt with a cotton crisis in Egypt two years earlier by buying the cotton crop to prevent it from reaching enemy countries (Tignor 2013: 43), the resolution of the war brought an end to protection from the vagaries of the world market.

The crisis of 1920 also produced a surplus pool of labor in Egypt's major urban centers due to speculation in and overstocking of manufactured goods.⁵³ With the relaxation of trade restrictions and the reduction in tariffs after the war, merchants in Egypt ordered massive quantities of manufactured goods from European industries in late 1919 and early 1920. Colonial records note that merchants bought so much more than what could be consumed by the local population that a significant portion of the merchandise remained

50 Wizārat al-Māliyya, *Al-Iḥṣā' al-Sanawī al-ʿĀm lil-Qaṭr al-Miṣrī li-Sanat 1921*, 113.

51 *Ibid.*, 114.

52 "The Cotton Crisis in Egypt. From the British (Government)", Board of Trade Journal, June 23, 1921, in *The Economic World, Volume 108, January - June 1921* (Chronicle Publishing Company, 1921), 227.

53 *Ibid.*

on the docks at the Port of Alexandria throughout 1920.⁵⁴ This sudden influx of cheap goods into Alexandria drove the prices of certain products down and harmed local businesses, forcing them to cut costs by firing workers, adopting new technologies, lowering wages, and refusing to adjust for inflation. This in turn resulted in major strikes and uprisings among the working class throughout Alexandria from late 1919 until 1921 (Takla 2016: 191-228).

Among the most prominent witnesses who gave testimonies about working-class uprisings in early interwar Alexandria are sex workers, cigarette rollers, and butter factory workers.⁵⁵ In the cigarette industry, the importation of cheaper, machine-rolled cigarettes after the war pressured cigarette factory owners in Egypt to mechanize in order to lower production costs, leading to the termination of 1,076 skilled hand rollers in Alexandria and Cairo throughout 1920 (Shechter 2006: 90-91). These dismissals are perhaps the reason why Burg, a teenage girl who appears in the investigation records, attempted to make a living from collecting discarded cigarette ends for an independent cigarette maker (ʿĪsa 2002: 355). 1920-21 also witnessed a fourfold increase in butter imports into Alexandria, which drove prices down and had an adverse effect on workers in the Egyptian butter industry.⁵⁶ This may explain why Muḥammad Khafāga, a suspect in the murder case who owned a dairy business, became involved with Raya and Sakina's sex trafficking network. Native sex workers also suffered from the renewed migration of large numbers of Mediterranean workers into Alexandria. According to Egyptian port statistics, 10,227 Greek, 14,565 Italian, and 5,989 French passengers landed at the Port of Alexandria in 1920.⁵⁷ During this same year, over one-third of the licensed sex workers in Alexandria were foreigners, and the vast majority of them were Greek, Italian and French.⁵⁸ Because of the capitulations and the removal of wartime restrictions on European red light districts, these European sex

54 *Reports by His Majesty's High Commissioner on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan for the Year 1920* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1921), 20 and 36.

55 See *Minutes of Proceedings and Report of the Military Court of Enquiry into the Alexandria Riots, May 1921* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1921).

56 Institut International du Froid (Convention de Paris du 21 Juin 1920), *Monthly Bulletin of Information on Refrigeration (English Edition), Third Year - No 1, January 1922* (Paris: Head Office of the Institute), 244.

57 See Ministry of Finance, *Annual Return of Shipping*, 9.

58 Annual statistics for the Alexandria City Police show that there were 1,670 licensed sex workers in Alexandria in 1920, 608 of whom were of foreign nationality. Of the 608, 183 were Greek, 178 were Italian, and 116 were French. By 1924, the percentage of foreign women in the licensed sex trade had increased to over 40%. See police statistics reported in League of Nations, *Report of the Special Body of Experts on Traffic in Women and Children, Part Two* (Geneva, November 27th, 1927), 64.

workers enjoyed greater freedom of mobility and visibility in early interwar Alexandria, putting native sex workers at a disadvantage. As a consequence of Alexandria's reintegration into the world economy, Raya, Sakina, and their many business partners were all unemployed or irregularly employed after the war, and they became part of a surplus pool of labor in Egypt's major urban centers from which traffickers hired their procurers and assassins.

While the reintegration of Alexandria into the world economy involved the removal of economic controls that had protected the native population during the war, it was also accompanied by the continuation of particular wartime measures to ensure the flow of capital from Egypt to Britain thereafter. Colonial reports indicate that Egypt had generated a substantial amount of wealth during the war, and British officials argued that this was due to spending by British troops in Egypt (Tignor 2013: 43).⁵⁹ This wealth was highly coveted by Britain, and on January 6, 1919, *The Egyptian Gazette* reported that the Treasury Committee on the Production of Gold within the Empire had issued a report discussing the importance of maintaining Britain's gold reserves to meet foreign indebtedness, which required that Britain's exports exceed the value of its imports.⁶⁰ To augment Britain's gold reserves, the colonial state not only permitted the speculation in and overstocking of manufactured goods in Alexandria, but also continued wartime export bans on Egyptian products,⁶¹ thereby contributing to the creation of a large trade deficit in Egypt in 1920-21.⁶² Britain thus treated the Egyptian economy as a reserve fund from which it began to draw heavily after the war.

Owing to Alexandria's position as Egypt's primary port city, its native population felt this withdrawal of funds most strongly. As people and goods began to move through Alexandria in ways that maximized the outward flow of capital, non-elites became increasingly vulnerable to trafficking networks, which sought to profit from the negative repercussions of this financial drain. Just as the colonial state implemented policies to gain control over the informal economy, drain the country of wealth accumulated during the war, and create surplus pools of labor, traffickers began to gain control over the informal economy of sex work by eliminating independent sex workers, stripping them of the wealth they had accumulated during the war, and turning surplus pools

59 Although Tignor argues that this wealth was superficial and primarily in the hands of the elite, the investigation records of the murder case show that non-elites in Alexandria also accumulated wealth during the war.

60 "Gold Production", *The Egyptian Gazette*, January 6, 1919, 4.

61 See *Reports by His Majesty's High Commissioner*, 60.

62 See United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, "Egyptian Unfavorable Trade Balance", in *Commerce Reports Nos. 1-17, Volume 4, Twenty-Fourth Year, September, October, November, December 1921* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 1054.

of labor into indentured labor. This murderous economy was the product of the sudden reintegration of Alexandria into the global economy through the removal of wartime economic controls, a development that enriched the colonial bourgeoisie and facilitated the outward flow of capital. The murder of independent sex workers by trafficking networks in Alexandria and neighboring cities after the war thus represents the draining of wealth from local businesses and the death of independent production in Alexandria's early interwar economy.

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