

“Set Alight to Her Husband’s House”: Teaching as Scholarship and Activism in the Gambian Archives*

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“It seemed to be a makeshift replacement for love, absenting oneself from stifling atmospheres, because love basically was a torrential storm of feeling; it thrived only in partnership with laughing generosity and truthfulness.”

— Bessie Head, *A Question of Power*

“The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed”

— Steve Biko Speech in Cape Town, 1971

In the middle of 1951, at the start of the rainy season, a woman-hunt was launched in the knotty mangroves on the shores of Bathurst, The Gambia. According to a letter sent by the Secretary of prisons, R.J.S. Pearson, to the Colonial Secretary, Ms. Haddy Dukeri had managed to escape into the marshlands where the Gambia River meets the Atlantic Ocean, but she was ultimately found and reconfined.² The missive penned by Pearson provides little insight into Ms. Dukeri’s plight and grave circumstances. The conditions of her confinement were deeply concerning even to colonial administrators all the way up to the colonial governor; nevertheless, little action was taken to remedy or even ameliorate the situation. What Pearson’s statement does not make known is that Ms. Dukeri was housed in a men’s prison, hundreds of kilometers from her family. Documents reveal that she was the only woman at Mile 2, at the time an all male facility, because a female prison did not exist. She was charged with a capital offence, the details of which will be outlined shortly. Dukeri’s case was not entirely unique in the broader context of female imprisonment in British colonial Africa.³ In many ways, this was a problem not exceptional to Bathurst, The Gambia, or British African colonies. Scholarship reveals that other territories and nations, including the United States, wrestled through the first three-quarters of the twentieth century with the issue of where and how to house

women convicted of crimes.⁴ Incarceration as a form of criminal punishment, in general, may not be particularly ancient anywhere in the world, moreover it does not precede colonialism in most parts of Africa.⁵

Ms. Dukeri's personal story and escape are unique in details, but yet also provide greater insight into the fraught history of gendered crime and incarceration. In particular, this case sheds light on acts of resistance by women in patriarchal societies as well as legal and cultural debates surrounding female criminality, imprisonment, and rehabilitation in British colonial West Africa. The carceral system for women essentially did not exist, yet women who committed acts deemed criminal by British officials had to be punished and managed in some fashion. As Angela Davis points out in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, "the prison is considered an inevitable and permanent feature of our social lives . . . In most circles prison abolition is simply unthinkable and implausible."⁶ Likely, this attitude about prison fit well into colonial imaginations, as virtually every location where Europeans settled in Africa, going back as far as the 1500s, was promptly outfitted with a building to house prisoners.⁷ For women in colonial Africa this often meant placement in prisons populated almost entirely by men. Dukeri managed to slip away from her confinement into the marshes and mangroves surrounding the prison. Why she chose to abscond and precisely how she managed to do so is not clearly documented, but quite easy to imagine. It must have been incredibly stressful precisely because she was housed in a all male facility. Furthermore her circumstances were exacerbated because she was isolated from those with whom she shared a common identity, not only in terms of gender, but also language, ethnicity, affinity, and sanguinity. The prison, so close to mangrove marshes, which provided easy cover, perhaps lent itself to an escapee. Because her perspective was not accounted for directly in the documents, this seemed a story well worth investigating with a student researcher. This escape was just one of many documented accounts of her challenges coping in prison. It is a story filled with drama and sorrow, worthy of attention, and recounted in documents kept not by the prisoner, but rather by court officials, guards, wardens, colonial officers, and doctors. For these reasons it had the potential to teach a new researcher about the ethics and power of giving

voice to the unseen and less empowered within society. It also seemed the ideal case study for learning about the challenges and real pleasure in reconstructing historical events from the bottom up. Haddy Dukeri's life story, pieced together through colonial administrative documents, portrays simultaneously the silences of history, the darkness of prison life for her personally, and aspects of what imprisonment might have been like for other women during the late colonial era in The Gambia.

Dukeri's life history provides insight not only into prison policy and practice, but also into issues of gender in prisons under colonial rule, as well as tensions across cultural, religious, and colonial legal institutions within Bathurst and the Gambia Colony and Protectorate. Though not the focus of this paper, cultural shifts taking place in twentieth century British Gambia are evident through Dukeri's case. Prior to colonization the territory had established and functioning legal, moral, and ethical systems that drew on local ideologies and paradigms, *sharia*, and then also incorporated British legal frameworks. Dukeri was imprisoned for capital offenses because she destroyed property identified in official and legal documents as her husband's residence. Known more widely in western African as hut burning, Dukeri engaged in a culturally accepted, socially sanctioned act of protest against her husband. Yet, the British did not support the continuation of demonstrations of discontent that involved property destruction. The Dukeri case highlights the very different systems of retribution, protest, crime, and punishment that existed between British and Gambian communities. It also reflects shifting gender dynamics and norms that were evolving in the early twentieth century as Islam became more solidly established and as the British sought to outlaw locally/regionally sanctioned dispute practices that destroyed property and endangered life.

The three main goals of this article are to use the Dukeri case to analyze the influences *Ufahamu* has had on the development of intellectual and activist paths of individuals like myself as well as the students I have gone on to train; second, to discuss mentorship and teaching as a type of activism that can benefit both U.S. and African constituencies; third, to present a historical case of female imprisonment as a means of examining both past and present social and political debates.

Intellectual Development and Mentorship

I learned about the Dukeri case twenty-two years after I began my intellectual development at UCLA. Dukeri's predicament was a prime example of what I gained from my education so many years earlier. As an undergraduate, I was very serious about my studies, but I also considered myself an activist interested in issues of social justice. I was a Political Science major, spent my free time in the Community Programs Office (CPO), which at the time housed the African Education Project, the Prison Coalition, Raza, MEChA, the Asian Pacific Health Corps (APHC), and a number of other community outreach and leadership organizations. I was part of the leadership of Prison Coalition for four years, tutoring youth incarcerated in a facility in Topanga Canyon. I also volunteered for the African Education Project mentoring youth in Compton. In my own intellectual development, I was mentored by Tim Ngubeni, a South African by birth and founder and long time director of the CPO, along with Victor Wolfenstein, professor of Political Science. I completed an honors thesis under the supervision of Wolfenstein on political prisoners and the uprising in LA following the Rodney King verdict.⁸ In my four years as an undergraduate, there were other faculty who also inspired a kind of academic and intellectual activism in me. Those influences came from Ned Alpers, Henry Jackson, Afaf Marsot, Marcyliena Morgan, Beverly Robinson, and Brenda Stephenson. These various influences, along with encouragement from an aunt, led me to apply to UCLA's PhD program in African History.

As an historian of Africa training at UCLA in the 1990s, I had the privilege to work in a supportive and provocative setting with Ned Alpers, Chris Ehret, Boniface Obichere, Sondra Hale, Edmond Keller, Deo Nkonyani, and the many visiting scholars who spent a semester at UCLA—Cynthia Brantley, Sheikh Nabahany, Kofi Baku, Oyeronke Oyewumi, and others. Not only did I serve as a teaching associate for some great lecturers and scholars at UCLA—Kevin Terraciano, Jose Moya, Boniface Obichere, Christopher Ehret, and James Gelvin—I also got to represent UCLA's African Studies Center as a program coordinator and teaching assistant for forty students in East Africa at the UONGOZI Institute. During my years as a PhD candidate, *Ufahamu* was a mainstay of the social scene. My peers, Lloys Frates and

Suzanna Wing were deeply committed members on the editorial board. One of my graduate school mentors, Sondra Hale, was a legendary founding member of the journal. They inspired me, and in my final years of graduate studies, I contributed minimally to *Ufahamu* when I wrote a book review and served as an editorial board member.

Ufahamu, which means ‘understanding’ in Kiswahili, served a critical role in our education. It was an outlet for our social and political action and our scholarly ideas, but it also enlightened us. My experiences at UCLA in political science, African studies and history, working with mentors, advisors, peers, and colleagues in the classroom and community greatly shaped my philosophy of teaching and scholarship. I learned that social engagement and application of intellectual ideas to real life situations and predicaments are as important as theoretical frameworks even in academia. I gained a deep understanding of the importance of spending time in Africa to understand Africa. I also came to recognize that while mentorship can come from any supportive individual, a more ethnically, gender, and racially diverse group of mentors is needed at the graduate and undergraduate level for students of all backgrounds. As an African American woman, I gained a great deal from mentors who were quite different from me socially, culturally, and economically; we should all be able to experience and benefit from mentorship provided both by those like us and those quite different from us.

Teaching Approach and Philosophy

Following my education at UCLA, a large, public R1 institution, I chose to teach at a small private liberal arts college exclusively for undergraduates. I made this choice largely because I wanted to mentor undergraduates in their research, professional calling, and community engagement. In the spring of 2011, I had the extraordinary opportunity to lead my undergraduates on a study abroad program and to teach at the university in The Gambia. I traveled there with seven American students to live and learn for a semester. I taught these Americans as well as Gambian students in my History Methods course and a seminar on African popular culture. In a country where the nation’s only university is headed by the very same individual who rules the nation as a result of

a coup instigated two decades earlier, one must be cautious in choosing topics for historical research. For obvious reasons, popular culture is highly political, but so too are queries into political and social leaders from previous decades. I decided to lead my History Methods course just as I do in the United States, in an archive. One adjustment I made in the delicate political climate was to give Gambian students a great deal of agency in choosing their own topics, as I wanted them to feel safe in the research they were pursuing.⁹

In the United States, I essentially choose the topics for my students who are relatively young—in their early twenties—as sophomores in a small liberal arts college, while Gambian undergraduate students tend to be in their late twenties and early thirties. The Gambians chose topics like the nineteenth-century *jihads*, the construction of Yundum Airport, or the founding of the University of The Gambia. The American students were interested in histories of sex tourism, prisons, gender, genital modification, and politics. One Gambian student came across a thin file on Florence Peters Mahoney, yet shied away from the topic, likely because of the subject's numerous connections to the previous leader of the nation.¹⁰ An American student came across an even thinner file on Haddy Dukeri, a woman who was being tried. Close to the end of the research project this student also came across documents unrelated to Dukeri, but that discussed hut burning more broadly and helped in broader connections in the research. Wherever I teach History Methods, my goal is always to teach students to read documents with an eye for the unseen or the story revealed in the unexposed. What I learned at UCLA is that the voices of the voiceless can be heard if the researcher listens carefully. The Dukeri case combined with the other topics students were investigating served as an incredible opportunity to train the class on the serendipity of historical research, the creativity of Africans as agents in their own lives, the power of resistance in the throes of oppression, and the various approaches to activism in scholarship and the real world. These projects exemplified all that *Ufahamu* represents—understanding that comes from interpretation, empathy, effort, and struggle (*jihad*).

My aim is to train students to be historians by digging in archives and to create new knowledge by writing up the most accurate reconstructions of the past based on available sources

woven together with their own analysis and interpretations. I learned through my courses, field research, and work with *Ufahamu* that doing research and publishing it to shed light on Africa's many histories is valuable and important.

As I transitioned into my role as a faculty member at a liberal arts college, this is precisely how I have mentored and trained my own students. I encourage them to engage Africa in ways they have never even considered; to learn to conduct historical research with primary sources whether about Africa or otherwise; to expose the unheard voices of the past; to commit to leadership on an issue they are passionate about and elicit social change in that domain; and to apply their skills and knowledge to their local, regional, national, and global communities. I have had a number of incredible mentees over the years, including one who completed a PhD in African history at UCLA.¹¹ The work of another student, Holly Belkot, who traveled with me to The Gambia and happened to discover the Dukeri file, serves as an excellent example of the types of research that my exposure to *Ufahamu* taught me to appreciate and inspired me to teach my undergraduates to pursue. In doing this type of challenging research, digging in the archives, reconstructing the past, and writing about it, students gain a confidence in their ability to do research and also to take on greater responsibility in their lives. About one third of these students, both from my courses in The Gambia and other courses I have taught in the United States, have gone on to graduate school and many others have been accepted for other great opportunities like the Peace Corps, Fulbright, or incredible jobs that have allowed them to be change agents in the very areas about which they are passionate.

In honor of *Ufahamu's* 45 years of ongoing contribution to activism and scholarship on troubling and uplifting issues significant to Africa and its Diasporas, a lightly copyedited version of the paper my student produced through her archival work in The Gambia is presented below. Belkot's careful research and engaged analysis demonstrate the wide influence *Ufahamu* has beyond Bunche Hall at UCLA. Students often lament the amount of time they have to put in to the research and writing for History Methods. Indeed, it is incredibly challenging intellectual work for them, yet research projects like the one veiled in the Dukeri files are also incredibly rewarding to students in terms of accomplishment and

knowledge gained. While Dukeri's story ends in a painful, lonely death, her resilience and effort to control her circumstances, even when she had little freedom, provides important lessons about the complexity of human agency. One can resist with self-valuation, self-definition, and self-reliance, or put another way, by rejecting the ideological justifications imposed on the oppressed by the oppressor and widely accepted by the dominant group.¹¹

Burning Down the House and Escaping Mile 2 Prison – Holly Belkot's Reconstruction of Haddy Dukeri's Acts of Resistance in Late Colonial Gambia¹²

Mile 2 Prison, in Banjul, The Gambia is set along the highway leading to the country's capital city. With painted stark white concrete blocks forming walls crested with barbed wire, the prison, which rests to this day near the mouth of the River Gambia, provides an ironic welcome along the graveyard lined coastal road leading into the former colonial stronghold. While these two signature landmarks—river and prison—sit outside the main entrance of Banjul's modern day ostentatious and imposing Arch 22, the boundary is complicated by the fact that the capital is not the population center, rather it is a political seat and symbolic location. The bustling sounds of traffic mix with calming sounds of waves lapping on the sides of the river as cars form lines at the imposing police stops required before entering Banjul from the Serekunda-Kombo region, the center of population settlement. This scene is reminiscent of the four centuries of an active and lively trade port. Banjul is indeed a site of great historical significance. It was the starting point of Atlantic trade in the 1440s, with African merchants and rulers gaining wealth and power from their maneuvering in the city. It also was the end point of the most heinous aspect of that system, the enslavement of people.¹³

In the early 1800s, both the British government and the abolitionists used Banjul and islands in the Gambia River to resettle West and West Central Africans of various ethnicities recaptured from slaving ships. Banjul was pivotal to British economic and colonial interests in Western Africa and to their efforts to rout French control of the entirety of that region. The British called it Bathurst, and the city continued to serve as an important locus of import-export business. Despite the bustle on its port side, in 1951, the road into Bathurst from the Kombo-Serekunda region was unpaved, and the prison sat amongst mangrove trees and marshy wetlands on two sides. It was in the midst of these very knotty mangroves, home to the wildlife that The Gambia prides itself on today, that the story of a female prisoner, Haddy Dukeri unfolded in the early 1950s.

Escaping Mile 2 Prison

Though the story began well before records detail, according to a letter sent to the Colonial Secretary in the middle of the year 1951 a woman-hunt was launched as Ms. Dukeri managed to escape from the concrete walls of Mile 2 Prison into the marshlands. R.J.S. Pearson noted, "I have the honour to submit this my report on an attempt [*sic.*] escape of the above mentioned Female Prisoner [Haddy Dukeri] on the afternoon of the 4th June, 1951, at approx. 5:30 p.m."¹⁴ The note from Pearson gives few details on Dukeri's own thoughts, situation, or condition.

A search was organized and Dukeri was relatively promptly recaptured.¹⁵ Indeed, Pearson's statement does not reveal that Ms. Dukeri was housed in a men's prison, and yet further examination of documents reveals that this female prisoner, charged with a capital offence was placed in an all male facility, because a female facility did not exist. In Many ways this was a problem not exclusive to The Gambia or Bathurst colony as scholarship reveals other territories and nations, including the United States wrestled with the issue of where and how to house women convicted of crimes in the twentieth century. Konaté notes that mixed detention was common in colonies and little attention was paid to female detainees.¹⁶ Ms. Dukeri's personal story and escape are particular, and yet also provide greater insight into the troubled history of female imprisonment.

On the one hand the conditions of her confinement were deeply concerning to governmental officials, colonial administrators, and hospital workers. This concern went all the way up to the colonial governor. Yet, the personal concern expressed by many did not translate to any action being taken to resolve the situation. Indeed the situation worsened over the months providing a critical context for understanding the situations of female prisoners in African colonies under British control. Little change could be enacted in this system dictated by bureaucracy. In particular, this case sheds light on legal and cultural debates surrounding female criminality, imprisonment, and rehabilitation in British colonial West Africa.

The prison system for women essentially did not exist and yet women who committed acts deemed criminal by British officials had to be punished and managed in some fashion, which often meant placement in prisons populated almost entirely by men. Her imprisonment provides insight into prison policy and practice, or lack thereof concerning women, as well as issues of gender in prisons under colonial rule, tensions across cultural, religious, and colonial legal institutions within Bathurst, and The Gambian protectorate. Clearly the

Dukeri situation reflects shifting gender dynamics and norms of retribution, crime, and punishment as the British sought to outlaw locally/regionally sanctioned dispute practices that destroyed property and endangered life.

Female Prisoners in Colonial Africa

Dukeri's case must be considered in the broader context of colonization, specifically British indirect rule, which greatly impacted systems of justice and punishment in Africa. It is vital to understanding prison and its historical role in this part of Africa. As Florence Bernault contends "Penal incarceration was unknown to sub-Saharan societies prior to the European conquest, when colonial regimes built prisons on a massive scale for deterring opposition and enforcing African labor."¹⁷ Though crime and punishment existed in various forms across Africa, consequences often involved labor, property destruction, or payment rather than exclusion from both productivity and society, with criminals locked in behind cement walls. Imprisonment in Africa, then, was a transplant imposed by imperial European colonizers. Further, it was a means of controlling the population to meet taxation and labor needs within colonial protectorates. Already an unfamiliar approach, facilities were furthermore largely located where colonial power was concentrated in coastal cities and towns.¹⁸ There was opposition to imprisonment as a means of penal punishment in colonial systems of logic and law, and Africans' disagreement with imprisonment as punishment could be considered one part of their continued resistance to colonialism.¹⁹ The early colonial period was a time of redistributive power, with a range of fluidity and overlap, which could be used as a tool to undermine colonial power, and also could serve as a trap to envelop those caught between or amongst power structures.

Meredith McKittrick points out that the 'competing colonialisms' created with the colonial courts, British creation of regulated customary courts in various locations, and missionary power unwittingly created a web of arbitrary systems imposing control over individuals and communities.²⁰ These structures overlapped, and left communities and individuals with the logic of the presiding system, which might appear capricious if the worldview of the deciding body did not mirror that of the offender and community. Amongst these competing means of power and control was the individual. Under the blended and often conflicting power of British rule, the church and colonial sponsored power structures such as "colonial chiefs" and "tribal leaders" renegotiated power and law. Importantly, women too found creative ways to use the

gaps between the systems to their advantage. Local and traditional laws, missionary ethics, and colonial regulations merged to create enough space for some to maneuver and make the multiple systems serve their own ends. Author Tapiwa B. Zimudzi argues that the 1940s and the early 1950s were a time of continued efforts by women to evade colonial laws and weaken the influence of patriarchal forces in the form of traditional leadership, colonial systems of power, as well as the assumed role of women under European conceptions of gender.²¹ However, the gaps also caused a confusing disconnect for many to negotiate between colonial legality versus what was culturally permissible out of British view. This can be demonstrated through women's understandings of their crimes, punishment, and conduct within the courts as well as in prison. Women often understood their crimes within the context of their own society.

Colonial laws brought in a different set of standards and perspectives on criminality, British officers targeted certain cultural practices for elimination, which heightened the sense of cultural threat; yet, this cultural imposition was a space for the colonized to manipulate and subvert colonial systems. The expansion of what was defined as criminality within the colonial sphere coupled with alienating forms of punishment led to tensions between community members, as well as between communities and the presiding colonial government, particularly when concerning family disputes or religious constructions of law and suitability. Often times the colonial state criminalized that which it sought to regulate, measure, and collect revenue from, which meant that much of what women saw as legitimate in their own culture came to be regulated and criminalized through colonial law. While little is written on women and criminal cases, a good deal has been written on how civil law intersected and negatively impacted African women's endeavors.²²

Dukeri's Case

In the case of Haddy Dukeri, there was no direct record of her arrest or court case, only of her imprisonment and hospitalization. She was tried and found guilty on the north bank of the River Gambia then was transferred to Banjul.²³ Her demise began to unfold with some certainty when "In Criminal Case No. 3 of 1951, before the High Court at Fass Lower Niimi District, Haddy, on the 21st day of January, 1951, was convicted of the offence of arson . . . and was thereupon by the said Court sentenced for this said offence to imprisonment with hard labor for four years."²⁴ In a later set of correspondence

from October of that same year, it is revealed that Haddy's charge was for the fact that she "burning down set alight to her husband's house."²⁵ The original charge was crossed out in court, and the reasoning for the alteration of the phrasing in the original document, was likely due to the fact that she had started a fire but that it was extinguished before much harm or damage resulted. The description of Dukeri's crime, arson, alluded to a broader trend of hut-burning found across the continent in many places and circumstances as a legitimate means of disputing injustice within circles of affines and kin. Thus, the addition of the charge that she "set alight to her husband's house."

While burning down a person's home might certainly seem to be cause for detainment and conviction, this was not necessarily the case during the early twentieth century and earlier in The Gambia. The Gambia was a small colony with limited resources that was firmly within the sphere of indirect rule. Administrators did not get directly involved in the activities and lives of colonial subjects, particularly when it came to civil disputes. Involving the colonial courts in a civil or domestic dispute was in no way the norm, particularly when the defendant was a woman committing an offense against her husband.²⁶ During the colonial administration of Bathurst and the Gambia Protectorate, all women outside of the Bathurst area were under the jurisdiction of their village chiefs, and thus under the purview of local traditional law. Only women within the Bathurst jurisdiction were subject to colonial law, though cases of familial concern were typically still handled under sharia law, at that time and place referred to as *Mohammadon Law*.²⁷ Though Bathurst had a fairly large Christian community at the time, Islamic *jihads* of Fodey Kabba and other leaders of the nineteenth century had augmented Islamic conversion. Sharia, Islamic law was well blended with local cultural and traditional norms of this largely Muslim religious community.

In domestic cases, sharia was commonly employed when a criminal act involved family members. Through negotiation people reached agreements, paid fines, and generally reestablished social order within the familial structure rather than criminalizing people's actions. Colonial law, however, created a new set of distinctions between criminal and civil law, and with them new punishments, particularly in urban arenas. In this context, Zimudzi notes that "criminal offences were regarded as being crimes against the state rather than against individuals. All of this was alien to the African legal institutions that often settled legal cases by payment of compensation to the victims of crime rather than through penalties

imposed directly by the state.”²⁸ This approach of punishing the criminal in a way that did not compensate the injured party was foreign and unwelcome by the families and communities affected. To further the divide between African and European practice, it was less the injury of human life and more the destruction of property and labor that made the practice of hut-burning a concern to the British colonial powers. Additionally, hut burning was a primarily female practice to assert dominance or public showing of disagreement, particularly against her husband’s actions or injustice, and it was practiced in many areas across Africa. The willingness and recognition of responsibility was alarmingly unfamiliar to the British High Court. This practice fell well outside permissible means within the European context of regulated means of objection and was a destructive force that needed to be dealt with in the law.

In cases of hut burning from other British Colonies, as well as other violent crimes, there is a distinct gendered pretext to the handling of the case. It should be noted that women’s involvement in violent and destructive crime has been well understudied: much of the legal scholarly work has focused on the contemporary status of women in customary and civil law, largely neglecting criminal cases of women from the colonial era.²⁹ Those that have studied violent women and crime in colonial Africa reject much of the gender stereotyping that women were not active agents in crime. They argue that judgments about one’s criminality should not be based on gender or sex, but instead that crime and violence by women was often committed well within the control of women and made through rational decision-making, just as criminal actions by men are controlled and rational.³⁰ Women who claimed knowing responsibility appear in court documents in British East Africa:

Revealing the capacity of African women to engage in willful violence, their *modus operandi* was to set alight huts in which their victims were sleeping after firmly securing the doors from the outside, making it impossible for the occupants to escape. The main murder-victims were husbands, lovers, and (for offenders in polygamous marriages) rival wives and their children.³¹

Though used only in the most extreme cases, this was a means assumed by many to be a rational act of violence to be enacted for particular offences of a man against a woman. These cases included a man failing to marry a woman to whom he promised himself, infidelity, abuse, and extreme disputes over

serious matter among co-wives or lovers of the same man.³² These disputes, and the subsequent actions of the women involved, in violent crime or otherwise, were community and familial concerns that were matters of kinship and order within the community, not a colonial legal concern in the name of justice. The close community ties and reliance on the marriage as an important bond across families meant that certain seemingly criminal matters were handled under Muslim Communal law to ensure communities remained intact.

The Cadi, or Sharia Law Magistrate, could not sentence anyone to prison, and those participating had to agree to follow the Cadi's decision. It was only in extreme cases that the Cadi handed cases over to the colonial governing legal system. This makes Haddy Dukeri of particular interest because, "It must have been an exceptional case to send a woman to jail . . . They [colonial governments] tried to avoid that as much as possible because, honestly, it was not economical."³³ It was not economical for a multitude of reasons, and in the case of women in prison, their prison labor was worth less than the cost to care for them, or worse yet for the colonial administrators, a prison labor task would need to be developed for the female prisoner, as was the case for Haddy Dukeri. Additionally it was not economical for the communities involved, as noted above, these 'crimes' were inter-familial and if not handled properly within the community could destroy not only property, but also the ties that bound families together.

Because there is no evidence in her file that anyone was hurt or killed when Haddy set fire to her husband's home, it leaves some room for speculation as to why her case was perceived as so heinous that the traditional and preferred means of adjudicating was forfeited and she was tried under colonial law. One possible reason for such a reaction is suggested in the work of Jonathan Spears, who contends that the British colonial government created and added laws against "repugnant practices" to local authority customs and practices. Local authorities were then left to responsibly impose and enforce the hodgepodge of indigenous, colonial, common, religious, administrative regulations and Christian practices that came to represent and encompass customary or "traditional law" in Britain's various colonies.³⁴ Along this line of argument, as well as in the mindset of indirect colonial rule with limited power outside of colonial seats and urban centers Bernault notes that the role of the colonial penal system was, in the words of Lugard, "bound solely by native law and custom, provided that the punishment is (a) not in excess of the powers conferred upon it and (b) does not involve mutilation or torture, and is not repugnant to natural justice and

humanity.”³⁵ Once again, there was no definitive measure for which situations the colonial justice system would certainly step in and usurp the purview of local or customary law, which leaves one to question the trial of Haddy Dukeri and her subsequent imprisonment.

Other factors of the time provide some context around Haddy’s history, which contributes greatly to her story and the circumstances around her trial and imprisonment. Haddy’s surname, Dukeri, in all of its various spellings is an indication that she was of the Serahule ethnicity. In the colonial period, the Serahule group resided primarily at the eastern end of the Gambia River in the Basse region. It is very likely that Haddy Dukeri was a part of one of the waves of internal immigrations/migrations from the north bank protectorate closer to the colonial capital, resulting from changes produced by WWII. In 1951, World War II had just ended five years earlier, and the effects were still felt in The Gambia in the form of unemployment, food shortages, and migration as people tried to recover from the massive pressure placed on the colonies to provide resources for the war effort.³⁶ During the war, the Allied navy used The Gambia’s Atlantic coast. The coastal region also supplied much of the nation with food during the war effort. Food shortages in the eastern regions, job availability with the colonial administration along the coast, and the perception of a better life in urban communities sparked a huge increase in the population of Bathurst through rural to urban migration.³⁷ Many of the women who ended up in Bathurst did so in an effort to relocate or reunite with their husbands who had shifted residence to urban areas for work, and it is quite possible that this was the case for Haddy Dukeri, likely a Serehule woman from Basse deep in the eastern interior.³⁸

While this context leaves many questions as to why she was in Bathurst for confinement and under what circumstances she arrived, it does at least provide some context to the situation of colonized Africans and women in Africa more specifically. Colonialism, while oppressive in many respects also opened an opportunity for ambitious and creative individuals to renegotiate spheres of power and dominance allowing for unprecedented changes in society and populations. Zimudzi notes that:

The growth of towns allowed such women, as well as those who ran away from their husbands or refused to get married, to exercise an unprecedented third option. Married African women could now lead autonomous lives with their husbands, far away from difficult or

uncongenial in-laws . . . However, the new sites that African Women moved to also generated pressures and conflicts, which resulted in some women becoming involved in violent crime.³⁹

These changes in society and redirection of population from rural to urban centers, in and after World War II, as well as the changes in society and women's freedoms, led to cultural and social fissures. This new dynamics created a situation, in which, locals were foreign within their home regions. These shifts led to an increase in crime and to what was contextualized as 'criminal.' The increase in crime also led to an increase and expansion of police forces, which may have increased the level of imprisonment as an added exponent.

According to the Cadi Records of The Gambia for the years of 1905 to 1915, the most common reason for a woman to burn down her husband's home was because he had taken another wife in Bathurst without informing his present wife, or, equally as common, the husband had attempted to take on a new wife, much to the existing wife's dismay.⁴⁰ While the colonial record does reveal a great deal about the colonial administrators concerns with Dukeri's predicament and mental state, no known records exist that directly capture Dukeri's views and/or add context to her struggle. It is only through records outside of her specific case that a likely context to her situation, as well as that of other female prisoners of the time, can be constructed. Women who endured the full extent of colonial legal process did so under particularly paternalistic circumstances; alternative methods were often deemed inadequate.

Women who were placed in British colonial prisons in West Africa for serious crimes were, in fact, few and far between due to the specific location and traditional legal practices in place. With few women in prison, those who were sentenced, regardless of their crimes, often lived a solitary life due to colonial inability to properly support female prisons and prisoners. Because many cases were handled outside of the colonial system by traditional means, and most crimes committed by women were considered to be domestic issues not violent crimes, family grievances that could be handled within the local community through a system of familial intervention. Punishment was less common and penalties like fines and payment for damaged property were the norm. Therefore those who were sent to prison faced a desolate situation of loneliness, separation, and fear because this form of

punishment was exceptionally rare until the later part of the twentieth century.

About five months after her incarceration and time spent in the prison, the Superintendent of Prisons requested a medical examination of Haddy on the June 1, 1951. Just four days before her attempted escape, the Medical Board at Victoria hospital in Bathurst examined Haddy in an effort to determine if she was insane. They “failed to find any evidence of insanity and in the absence of her medical history [could not] make recommendations about her custody during the remainder of her sentence.”⁴¹ Haddy made a desperate escape attempt into the mangroves to which the Superintendent of Prisons addressed a lengthy letter to an unknown recipient. The Superintendent’s memo provides insight into the life of Haddy at Mile 2 Prison and her slow painful deterioration. The Superintendent stated that while he and another Medical officer were inspecting the grounds, “she made a desperate appeal to both of us for help, stating that she had no money and would be[sic] (we) please let her go home.”⁴² Dukeri made reference to the idea of literally paying for a crime. The concept of financial compensation as reparation for criminal activity was not uncommon in The Gambia, but in stark contrast to colonial legal understandings of crime and punishment. In a similar case in British South East Africa, a woman with an understanding of the crime she had committed, murder, offered a challenge to the logic of sentencing individuals to death for murder. The woman, Myoti, argued, “Can I offer to pay compensation? My relations promised they would pay compensation on my behalf. By what I have done I have offended God, but why should I be hanged for it.”⁴³ The gap in understanding, culturally as well as legally, between colonial legal powers and African subjects resulted in confusion over the drastic nature of confinement and imprisonment, causing requests for alternative, local measures of adjudication.

The Superintendent later describes Dukeri’s escape as a “desperate affair” with no regard to how much danger she put herself in due to the wall, wire, barriers, and the mangrove swamps teeming with wildlife surrounding the area. He attributed all of these desperate and irrational actions of Ms. Dukeri “to the fact that she is not only undergoing her imprisonment under normal conditions, but to the added strain of being the only Female Prisoner.”⁴⁴ Indeed the strain of whatever family and marital matters had driven her to set her home aflame, compounded by her solitary confinement as the sole female prisoner among men, was exacerbated by faltering health issues. In her book, *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*, Bernault points out that, “Imprisonment may

not have carried a stigma but deprivation of liberty was certainly a severe form of punishment for many Africans because, as more than one report suggested, they were accustomed to living a close, communal life."⁴⁵ This deprivation of family and community, difficult under any circumstance, doubled the pain of imprisonment for those unaccustomed to life separated from community.

This issue of small numbers of female prisoners in the colonies was partially addressed in a short booklet entitled *Treatment of Offenders*. The section entitled "Women Prisoners" records:

The problems of segregation and of conducting effective training are often made particularly difficult by the very small numbers of women prisoner. "The problem in dealing with this type of prisoner," writes one commissioner "is the loneliness." There are prisons in Colonial territories whose accommodation is for one woman only and in many others the average number of offenders is so small that conditions akin to solitary confinement occur . . . The committee would urge that, except in cases of grave crimes some other expedient, such as probation or extra mural sentence, should be seriously considered before a woman is sent to prison.⁴⁶

Policy recommended against imprisoning women for economics and practicality, as well as paternalistic views about women committing crime. After Dukeri's escape, a memo was added to her medical file stating that the "Medical Officer in-charge of Prison to submit a special report on this prisoner each month."⁴⁷ Clearly, a vested interest was taken in this woman; she was assigned a matron to ensure safe guardianship, as well to keep a closer watch on how prison was impacting her psychologically. To compound the prisoner's situation, the matron in charge of her did not speak Haddy's language, thus resulting in further isolation, despite attempts to provide her greater support in an otherwise reclusive situation. Despite continued attempts to find her a pastime or activity to occupy her days, both Pearce and Dr. Carrol were concerned "that a long continual sentence under the prevailing condition may possibly lead to serious breakdown in the mental stability of this prisoner."⁴⁸ In an effort to involve Haddy and provide her a pastime, basket weaving as a prison industry was presented as a solution in the ongoing correspondence between seven prison officials. Unfortunately, with only one female prisoner, the endeavor was considered impractical and too costly. The

debate over how to handle this imprisoned woman created much discomfort and few solutions. Sara Berry aptly concluded that the colonial dilemma of control in conjunction with the maintenance of tradition as the formation of legitimate rule amounted to “hegemony on a shoestring.”⁴⁹ With limited resources, the colonial governments and local administrators and authorities on the ground colluded together to forge the semblance of colonial control. Colonial officials maintained a precarious hold over people’s lives. With dwindling resources after the costly Second World War, less funding was going towards administration of the colonies. While *hegemony on a shoestring* alludes to a much broader social construction of hegemony in indirect colonial governance, it also impacted administration on the level of prisons. Progress was often slow when funding was allotted for prison improvements or for programming; however, in this case, Miss Dukeri, and The Gambia more generally, were not primary foci of the British Empire post-World War II.

The administrators and prison officials in the late colonial era were still ill equipped to rightly manage a singular female prisoner. One member of the correspondence concerning Haddy’s very serious predicament and condition flippantly commented in October, “What we really need is another woman prisoner! She seems to be getting on a little better. I ask for a further report in 2 months.”⁵⁰ The update was unnecessary as the capacity to cope with managing the care and imprisonment of Dukeri immediately declined with her health.

Hospitalization

Haddy was transferred and admitted to the Royal Victoria hospital in Bathurst in October where she was to be treated for syphilis and her wavering mental health. The fact that Haddy had syphilis only contributes to building context around her short keep in Bathurst. The population explosion endured in Bathurst between the war years and the mid to late 1950s also contributed to a growing problem with venereal diseases, which presented quite a concern for the colonial government. The Chief Medical Officer in a hasty message to the Colonial Secretary described a serious need for supplies and staff to combat the growing issue in the colony. He noted:

First it is known and admitted that the incidence of V.D. is very high in a population far from static . . . It must be accepted that the standard of morality, as recognized by Europeans is low or non-existent. In consequence

names of contacts either cannot or will not be divulged by patients and not only is there [sic] unwillingness to disclose the name of a wife (or husband), and an even greater reluctance to reveal the existence of more than one wife.⁵¹

Prevalence of polygamy in the late colonial Gambia was a reality. The spread of venereal diseases would require some level of extramarital sex, even in polygamous situations. Either discovery of an extramarital relationship, a second marriage, or more simply, the contracting of syphilis may have contributed to the crime committed by Dukeri—the burning down of her husband’s home. Yet none of these factors seem to have been a concern to the prison officials, and whether or not the court had knowledge of any motives driving Dukeri and what they were remains unknown at this time.⁵²

After being released, Haddy returned to the hospital in November. She had been admitted to the Victoria Hospital with a stomach related illness, and because of continued deterioration, both physical and mental, prison personnel sought to end her labor requirement and minimize her sentencing. By November of 1951, after serving ten months of her sentence Dukeri refused to eat and would hardly leave her cell. Efforts were in place to end her sentencing entirely as she clearly could not function. The fact that she was far from home and family, in an unfamiliar environment with no one with whom she could communicate clearly, exacerbated the trauma of her experience. The fact that she was from up-country and probably had little contact with the British officials representing the colonial state before her imprisonment in Banjul likely gave her the confidence and courage to defy her imprisoners and one can reasonably assume contributed to her distress.

Several lasting issues remained concerning Dukeri’s release. The primary issue was having the governor repeal her sentence so that Haddy would be allowed to return home, yet “home” was also a concern. She could not return to the village where she had burned down her husband’s home; however, allowing her to move back to her parental home would remove her from the jurisdiction in which she committed her crimes. On November 30, a letter from the Governor stated:

And whereas the said Haddy Dukuray has undergone a part, that is to say 10 months and 9 days of the said period of imprisonment and it has seemed good to me to remit the remainder thereof. Now, therefore, I Percy Wyn Harris, Governor of the Colony of the Gambia, in exercise of the

powers vested in me by Article 14 of the Gambia Letter Paten, 1946, do hereby in the name and on behalf of His majesty grant unto the said Haddy Dukuray a remission of the remainder of the term of four years imposed by the said Court in respect of the said conviction.⁵³

Haddy Durkeri was remanded of her crimes and given assistance so that she could move back to her home village.⁵⁴ She was to be sent back to her matrilineal kinship because through her marriage, and subsequent destruction of it by burning down her husband's home, her kinship ties through her husband had been destroyed.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, Haddy was placed in Victoria Hospital just days before, and it was in that same hospital Haddy died on December 4, 1951, less than a year from her imprisonment. Listed in the correspondence as the primary and secondary cause for her death were, respectively, syphilis, and cardiac failure.⁵⁶ Some members of the correspondence issued apologies and questions after the fact as to whether earlier release or better care could have prevented her untimely death. Reassurances were made that little could have been done, and it is there that Haddy's story ends. Her file stops with a letter, unsigned by the Bathurst Prison Commission, with a departure date left empty never to be filled in.

Conclusion

Dukeri's life is condensed in a thin file among thousands in the National Archives in Banjul, far from her natal home up-country socially, culturally, and geographically. Bits of the end of Haddy's life can be reconstructed from the file. It reveals a story of one woman's individual experience within the West African British colonial prison structure, yet her story also serves as a narrative that sheds some light on others in her position. In particular, female prisoners have long been neglected globally. Her civil protest, arrest, solitary life in prison, and poor health, as documented by colonial officials, exist as a memorial to Haddy, but they speak out to an under-represented portion of the population in almost all respects. Ms. Dukeri was subject, prisoner, and woman, all of which under normal circumstances would have left her marginalized, ignored, and voiceless in a British colonial framework, yet her story struck a chord with prison officials of her day and with the students who became familiar with her case sixty years later. In fact, we could not ignore the haunting echoes of her pleas to return home or her revolutionary efforts to reclaim her own freedom by escaping confinement, taking her chances in the knotted mangroves and crocodile infested bogs.

Lessons Learned

Through this one case, students in the course were able to humanize the face of crime and to recognize how crime and punishment can be culturally constructed and grossly misaligned. Despite the fact that she had violated British colonial law and was imprisoned for it, the fact that Ms. Dukeri was dehumanized in an imperial and colonial system that lacked democracy and social justice did not go over well with those familiar with her case.⁵⁷ A deeper understanding (*ufahamu*) of humanity has finally given new meaning to the life, imprisonment, and death of Haddy Dukeri.

Notes

* I would like to thank Leslie Patrick for suggestions she provided on an early draft of this paper. Additionally, many thanks are due to all those in The Gambia who contributed to this project, in particular Hassoum Ceesay's generosity of knowledge and insight into sources in the archives.

¹ Superintendent of Prisons, RJS Pearce to Colonial Secretary A. R. Clark, 5 June 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 1, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.

² David Killingray, "Punishment to Fit the Crime?: Penal Policy and Practice in British Colonial Africa," in Florence Bernault (ed.), *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 97-118; Alan Milner, *African Penal Systems* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969).

³ Leslie Patrick, "Ann Hinson: A Little-Known Woman in the Country's Premier Prison, Eastern State Penitentiary, 1831," *Pennsylvania History* 67, no. 3 (2000): 361-375; James G. Fox, "Women's Prison Policy, Prisoner Activism, and the Impact of Contemporary Feminist Movement: A Case Study," *The Prison Journal* 64, no. 1 (1984): 15-36; Miranda Monster and Anthony Micucci, "Meeting Rehabilitative Needs at a Canadian Women's Correctional Centre," *The Prison Journal* 85, no. 2 (2005): 168-185; Lucia Zedner, *Women, Crime, and Custody in Victorian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lucia Zedner, "Women, Crime, and Penal Responses: A Historical Account," *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* 14 (1991); Kathryn Ann Farr, "Classification for Female Inmates: Moving Forward," *Crime and Delinquency* 46, no. 4 (2000): 3-17; Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Partial Justice: Women Prisons and Social Control*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990); Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

- ⁴ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la prison* (New York: Vintage, 1975); Florence Bernault (ed.), *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003).
- ⁵ Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 9.
- ⁶ Florence Bernault, "The Politics of Enclosure in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa," in Florence Bernault (ed.), *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 97-118; V.S. Naipaul, *The Loss of Eldorado* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1969).
- ⁷ Catherine Cymone Fourshey, "Agriculture, Ecology, Kinship and Gender: A Social and Economic History of Tanzania's Corridor 500 B.C. to 1900 A.D.," (PhD diss, University of California, Los Angeles, 2002).
- ⁸ Many thanks to the diligent work of the archives staff Basiru Manneh and Hasoum Ceesay.
- ⁹ Catherine Cymone Fourshey, "The Matter is a Bit Urgent" Education of Miss Florence Peters: One Gambian Fathers Petitions to the British Colonial Government 1948-1952, *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, [S.l.], n. 20, (Oct. 2012): ISSN 1530-5686. Available at: <<http://www.africaknowledge-project.org/index.php/jenda/article/view/1579>>
- ¹⁰ The students I have had the opportunity to teach and learn with about both history and Africa include Melissa Betts Hedges, Melissa Poinsett, Jessica Daly, Alison Dillon, Aileen Carlson Dreibelbis, Rebecca Swanger, Blaine Horrocks, Bridget Burns, Chris Baker, Jessica Johnson, Courtney Lippincott, Jan Michalko, Destiny Arturet, Rachel Fetrow, Hailey Gouza, Viulka Arias-Guzman, Holly Belkot, Whitney Rozelle McIlpatrick, Salvatore D'Angelo, Raven Blye-Branch, Alphonse Mendy, Dembah Baldeh, Karamo Sanneh, Lamin Touray, Habi Rani, Ariana Stowe, and Kelli Thompson Audi.
- ¹¹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 139.
- ¹² "Burning Down the House and Female Imprisonment in Late Colonial Gambia," was written for Catherine Cymone Fourshey's Senior Research class at Susquehanna University, Spring 2012. The version here has been reproduced with minimal copy-editing.
- ¹³ Charlotte A. Quinn, *Mandingo Kingdoms of the Senegambia* (London: Longman, 1972); Donald Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004); Arnold Hughes and David Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia, 1816-1994* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008); Tracey Lynn Carter, "The Role of the Griot in Gambian Politics," (PhD diss, UCLA, 2009); Marloes Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in The Gambia: The Tablighi Jama'at* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- ¹⁴ Superintendent of Prisons, RJS Pearce to Colonial Secretary A. R. Clark, 5 June 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 1, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ¹⁵ Superintendent of Prisons, RJS Pearce to Colonial Secretary A. R. Clark, 5 June 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 1, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.

¹⁶ Dior Konaté, “Ultimate Exclusion: Imprisoned Women in Senegal,” Bernault, *Prison and Confinement in Africa*, 157; James G. Fox. “Women’s Prison Policy, Prisoner Activism, and the Impact of Contemporary Feminist Movement: A Case Study,” *The Prison Journal* 64 (March 1984); “Meeting Rehabilitative Needs at a Canadian Women’s Correctional Centre,” *The Prison Journal* 85 (June 1, 2005): 168-185; Lucia Zedner, *Women, Crime, and Custody in Victorian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lucia Zedner Women, Crime, and Penal Responses: A Historical Account,” *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* 1991; Kathryn Ann Farr, “Classification for Female Inmates: Moving Forward,” *Crime and Delinquency* vol. 46 no. (January 2000): 1 3-17; Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Partial Justice: Women Prisons and Social Control*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990); Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).; Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Florence Bernault (ed.), *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003). 2.

¹⁸ More work on institutional infrastructure could be enlightening in regards to prisons, African resistance, and colonial relationship. See, for example, Coquery-Vidrovitch,, “Electricity Networks in Africa: A Comparative Study or How to Write Social History from Economic Sources,” in Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings (eds.), *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003); Andreas Eckert, “Regulating the Social: Social Security, Social Welfare and the State in Late Colonial Tanzania,” *The Journal of African History* 45, no. 3 (2004): 467-489.

¹⁹ Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005); David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005); Florence Bernault, “The Politics of Enclosure in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa,” in Bernault, 1-53.

²⁰ McKittrick, Meredith. “Faithful daughter, murdering mother: Transgression and social control in colonial Namibia.” *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 02 (1999): 265-283.

²¹ Tapiwa B. Zimuzi. “African Women, Violent Crime and the Criminal Law in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1952,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 3 (2004): 499-517.

²² Susan Kingsley Kent, Misty L. Bastian, Marc Matera, *The Women’s War of 1929: Gender and Violence in Colonial Nigeria* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock, *The Women’s War of 1929 A History of Anti-Colonial Resistance in Eastern Nigeria* (Durham,NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2011); Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, Nakanyike Musisi (eds.), *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002); Steven van

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²³ Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*.

²⁴ This is one of 3 documents where Haddy Dukeri is spelled Haddy Dukuray. Though no court documents were found, this is cited in a letter from the governor thus making it probable and accurate. Governor P. Wyn-Harris to Colonial Secretary A.R. Clark, 30 November, 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.

²⁵ Found in an ongoing correspondence file between seven prison and colonial officials. I believe the author of this specific quote to be from the Secretary of Prisons. 17 October 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia. The “burning down” crossed out is included in the original text.

²⁶ According to an interview conducted with Hossoum Ceesay, author of *Gambian Women: An Introductory History* as well as the former curator of The Gambia National Museum.

²⁷ Mohammadon Court Record Book: 1905 to 1915, Supreme Court of The Gambia Records. Found under Cadi records. A Cadi is a Sharia Law Magistrate.

²⁸ Zimudzi, “African Women, Violent Crime and the Criminal Law in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1952,” 503.

²⁹ Dorothy L. Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy (eds.), *“Wicked” Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001); Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, Nakanyike Musisi (eds.), *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002); Zimudzi, “African Women, Violent Crime and the Criminal Law in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1952,” 504.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 501.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 509.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Hassoum Ceesay, Interview with Author, 5 April 2011.

³⁴ Thomas Spear, “Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 13.

³⁵ Killingray, “Punishment to Fit the Crime?” in Bernault, *Prison and Confinement in Africa*, 99.

³⁶ See Andreas Eckert, “Regulating the Social: Social Security, Social Welfare and the State in Late Colonial Tanzania,” *The Journal of African History* 45, no. 3 (2004): 467-489.

³⁷ Venereal Disease Policy, 18 September 1945, Venereal Disease (Civilians) Policy, CSO 10/87, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.

³⁸ Hassoum Ceesay, Interview with Author, 5 April 2011.

- ³⁹ Zimudzi. "African Women, Violent Crime and the Criminal Law in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1952," 504.
- ⁴⁰ Mohammadon Court Record Book: 1905 to 1915, Supreme Court of The Gambia Records. Found under Cadi records. A Cadi is a Sharia Law Magistrate.
- ⁴¹ Medical Board at Victoria Hospital, 1 June 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁴² Letter from the Superintendent of Prisons, RJS Pearce, Stamped 9 June 1951. Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁴³ Zimudzi, "African Women, Violent Crime and the Criminal Law in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1952," 510.
- ⁴⁴ Letter from the Superintendent of Prisons, RJS Pearce, Stamped 9 June 1951. Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁴⁵ Killingray, "Punishment to Fit the Crime?" in Bernault, *Prison and Confinement in Africa*, 100-101.
- ⁴⁶ "Treatment of Offenders," published by the Colonial Office, June 1954, LAB 1/20, Treatment of Prisoners (Other Than Probation) National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁴⁷ Medical Board at Victoria Hospital, 1 June 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁴⁸ Dr. Carrol was a member of the Victoria Hospital Medical Board; Letter from the Superintendent of Prisons, RJS Pearce, Stamped 9 June 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁴⁹ Sarah Berry, *No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), ch 2.
- ⁵⁰ E.R.L., Member of the Correspondence, 17 October 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁵¹ Parenthesis in original document, Venereal Disease Policy, 18 September, 1945, Venereal Disease (Civilians) Policy, CSO 10/87, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁵² There was nothing in her file to suggest she was ever attacked or had contact with other male prisoners with whom she may have contracted the disease. It is also unknown if it was contracted before or during her time in prison.
- ⁵³ Govenor P. Wyn-Harris to Colonial Secretary A.R. Clark, 30 November 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁵⁴ Member of the Correspondence, 17 October 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.
- ⁵⁵ I am unsure of any other scholarship that would set precedence as to what her life in her home village would have been like had she had the opportunity to return. Important questions such as her ability to remarry or have access to land or a home remain unanswered.
- ⁵⁶ Member of the Correspondence, 17 December 1951, Female Prisoners, LAB 1/14, 15-16, National Archives, Banjul, The Gambia.

⁵⁷ Belkot went on to conduct senior research on female imprisonment in the United States. She developed a more complex understanding of gender-based inequality both domestically and abroad. Ultimately, Belkot went on to become a Fulbright ETA in Macau, China and then completed a Masters of Science in at Temple University in Globalization and Development Communication. She is currently completing an internship in Angola with Development Workshop. They work primarily on Land Tenure Security and other long-term development solutions for post-conflict areas.

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