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Project Title: A History of Prison Architecture and Punishment in Colonial Senegal

Institution: South Carolina State University

Project Director: Dior Konate

Grant Program: Awards for Faculty

“Lock Up”: A History of Prison Architecture and Punishment in Colonial Senegal

By examining the history of prison buildings in colonial Senegal, “Lock Up” will add a new dimension to the processes and motives behind the production of particular architecture styles in colonial Africa, and helps insert Africa into a more global history by providing a uniquely comparative study of colonialism, architecture, and punishment. Anyone who lives in or visits Dakar, Senegal’s capital, and drives along its beautiful seashore towards the city’s downtown could not miss a striking building: the prison of Dakar, the country’s largest penitentiary, also known as *100m2* because of its square shape. Built in 1924, it was one of the thirty-six penitentiaries built in Senegal during French rule. Facing the Atlantic Ocean, the Dakar prison embodies the essence of prison architecture in colonial Senegal as it became the ‘classic model’ of prison in Senegal from 1924 until 1960, when the control of prisons was transferred to independent Senegal. However, it did not serve as the model for the first prisons built in the early 19th century, which were designed with architectural forms that expressed anything but imprisonment. It is the role that prison architecture played that is the focus of this book project.

The architecture of a building reflects its function; prisons are no different. This study explores the history of prison architecture in Senegal in the 19th and 20th centuries as a way to illustrate the connection between penal architectural forms and punishment. It builds on the growing recognition that the prison, like the school and the army, played a crucial role in shaping the social and political control of populations in colonial Senegal, and deepens that understanding by illustrating French policies of punishment and the programs of prison architecture as well as the political contexts that gave their efforts meaning. Prisons were created in colonial Senegal at a time when new penitentiaries emerged in France; yet, the emergence of the prison in nineteenth-twentieth centuries Senegal followed a rather different path than in France, especially regarding the construction of well-crafted penal structures. Introduced in Senegal in the early 19th century, prisons were integral to France’s colonizing efforts, and became a key element in the mechanism of colonial repression. However, the thirty-six prisons built from 1817 when France regained control over Senegal to 1960 when the colony became independent, revealed poorly designed architectural structures characterized by the absence of cellular or panoptic designs, which were evident in France during the same time. The panoptical prison, which emphasized the expressive power of architecture to control inmates’ behavior, was never the dominant architectural style of prisons in Senegal, despite French’s efforts to build one in the province of Thies as early as 1906.

Prisons in colonial Senegal were identified only by letters of the alphabet or by their geographical location. The two largest penal camps were called penal camp A and C. Built in locations far away from populated areas; their forms revealed a hybrid architecture that was based on designs often transferred from France or from non-French African colonies and on styles that the French considered suitable for their colonies. In Senegal, the French developed a few acceptable standards for prison construction. Early prisons were architecturally simple, as they were not initially intended for incarceration. Up to the early 1920s, in many parts of the colony, old military and defensive posts erected during the wars of conquest in the 1850s-1890s were converted into prisons that reflected little architectural imagination (3F). In 1924, inmates at the Diourbel prison slept in horse stalls due to a lack of space (3F) and in the district of Sédhiou in southern Senegal, grass or clay huts with thatched roofs served as detention centers until 1909, when a section of the town’s military camp was turned into a prison (3F). The first penitentiary school for young offenders, created in 1888 and was housed inside the Catholic Mission in the province of Thiès was built in the style of a convent (3F). Built near road and railway construction sites, penal camps were torn down and rebuilt every time a work site was opened or closed. Their facilities varied as grass huts, metal barracks, and abandoned buildings were often used to accommodate their populations. Moreover, during French rule, there were no prisons for female inmates who were incarcerated in separate quarters in the same buildings as male inmates. It was after the construction of the Dakar prison in 1924 that the French erected facilities specifically designed to be prisons. Yet, the Dakar prison was not built on a large scale. Instead, existing prisons were extended, renovated, and expanded to accommodate a growing inmate population. The continual reshaping of colonial prisons in Senegal altered their forms by creating complex and sometimes undefined architectural styles that showed little evolution and imagination. So

'Lock up' tries to identify what was unique about the architecture of colonial prisons in Senegal and how it fitted into the French's larger architectural and urban project designed to control and discipline certain segments of the populations and to segregate Europeans from Africans. While this study is concerned with prison buildings, it cannot be reduced to matters of architectural design alone. Indeed, prisons facilities were designed within a wider political, social, and economic context, in which many changes occurred. Budgetary constraints, colonial health policies for disease prevention, labor issues, and racial segregation aimed at separating African and European inmates, were critical factors that influenced prison architecture in colonial Senegal. These factors limited the functionality of prisons and had a negative impact on African inmates who were used to living in societies characterized by the absence of penal confinement. Africans never adapted to colonial prisons, and developed strategies of resistance against imprisonment, due largely to badly designed and built prisons. Given all these problems, the study argues that in colonial Senegal, the French were more concerned with repression than with discipline and rehabilitation of prisoners because the prisons that they designed and built were not intended as therapeutic devices that targeted the soul of the inmate like in France, instead they were designed to position his 'body as a political entity in colonial context' (Pierce and Rao 2006).

Prison architecture has been and continues to be a topic of debate for architectural theorists, historians, and other scholars. From Cesare Beccaria (1764) to Jeremy Bentham (1791) to Michel Foucault (1979), scholars have studied punishment. For the past four decades, a considerable amount of literature has investigated the emergence of the prison in Europe and in North America, mainly the connection between architecture, the organization of space, and the use of power to control inmates' behaviors (Evans 1978; Spens 1993, Finzsch and Jütte 1996, Johnston 2000, Foucault, 1979). As its central question, this study asks if these connections really did exist in Africa since, African prisons had never been the focus of such scholarship. It addresses three main themes. First, it analyzes prison buildings and their changing architectural forms throughout the colonial period in order to understand how the French used prison architecture to control Africans. Second, it describes the connections between the internal layout of prison spaces and punishment to show how the design of prisons expressed the notions of punishment and reforms, and how inmates adapted to prison conditions, undermined them or re-appropriated the spaces in which they were incarcerated. Third, the study discusses the legacy of colonial prisons in independent Senegal. It will show that different architectural styles in various time periods gave prisons in colonial Senegal their originality. It will also demonstrate that their hybrid forms and the existence of numerous prison facilities as described above made discipline impossible.

This study is based on extensive archival research using materials that included administrative reports, inspection records, plans, maps, drawings, and inmates' letters. Although many researchers such as David Arnold (1990), Anand Yang (1987), Peter Zinoman (2001), Florence Bernault (2003), Anderson (2007), and Dikkoter and Brown (2007) and others have evaluated the history of colonial prisons in Africa and elsewhere, prison architecture is the one function that has not been explored. Building on this growing scholarship on colonial prisons, this study contributes to the development of new methodological and theoretical tools for the broader study of imprisonment and architecture in Africa. It also argues for a departure from traditional studies of architecture in colonial Africa, which has focused on specific types of buildings such as schools, hospitals, churches, monuments, and dwellings, rather than prisons. Though quite historical, this study draws on insights from architectural studies, sociology, and criminology. While Nezar AlSayyad's edited book on colonial architecture and urbanism as forms of domination (1992), Gwendolyn Wright's analysis of the politics of designs in French colonies, Thomas Markus' book on the connections between buildings and power (1993), and Foucault's work on discipline and punish (1979) have influenced this study, the work of Norman Johnston (1973 and 2001) and Robin Evans (1978) have had even a greater influence on my work. 'Lock Up' is concerned with architectural forms and since I am an African historian, of Senegal in particular, with no design and architectural history experience, the scholarship of Johnston and Evans has allowed me to immerse myself in the literature of architectural terms, theories, movements and architectural history.

This study addresses an interdisciplinary scholarly audience, so it should be of great interest to scholars in fields such as the history of imprisonment, colonial architecture in Africa, and the architecture

of incarceration. This study will also add to my student's knowledge of African history and the history of punishment. It will also be of significant benefit to my institution, as it will add another dimension to the themes taught in its criminal justice program, one of the most vibrant programs at the University. The history of imprisonment in Africa is a growing field that is not new for me as I am one of the few trained African historians specializing in that area of inquiry. So it is my explicit intent in this study to make the field accessible to a wider audience. The materials for this study, which had already been collected at Senegal National Archives in Dakar, are in French, my first language. The final product of this study will be a book. Based on my dissertation at the University of Wisconsin, the book will undergo substantial revision in preparation for publication. It is organized into three parts, totaling seven chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion. I plan to hold this award part time (academic semesters) and full time (summer) for at least ten months from March 2013 to December 2013. No new chapters will be added to the outline, but to make substantial revisions to at least five of the book's seven chapters (one through five); I plan to travel to Senegal to interview inmates and prison officials. The revisions will entail further study in archives and libraries in Aix-en-Provence (France) and at Columbia University's Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, in New York City. The chapter outline of the book is as follows.

Introduction: African Prisons and History

The introduction discusses the theoretical basis of the book, introduces the reader to the history of architecture and punishment, and provides an overview of imprisonment in Senegal as well as a brief chapter outline.

Part I: Penal Politics in Colonial Senegal

Chapter 1: Prisons and the Penal State in Senegal (19th and 20th Centuries) retraces the emergence of prisons in Senegal and explores the legislation that consolidated the penal system, French policies on imprisonment, and the indigenous methods of punishment.

Chapter 2: Prison Location: Controlling Men and Enforcing Labor, (ca.1840- ca.1950) describes the geographical layout of prisons throughout the colony and shows that the prison was a metaphor for spatial order intended to secure the territorial space and to enforce labor.

Part II. Prison Architectures and the Penal Experience

Chapter 3: Penal Designs. This chapter discusses prison designs in order to reconstruct the diversity and evolution of penal architectural forms from the 19th to the 20th twentieth centuries, the designers and builders of prisons, and the impact of budgetary constraints on prison construction.

Chapter 4: Within Walls and Behind Doors: Architecture, Communication, and Discipline, analyzes the physical spaces created by the architecture of prisons and how they affected communication, surveillance, discipline, and the organization of life behind bars.

Chapter 5: The Failure of Rehabilitation and Reform (1892-1947) charts the attempts by French colonial authorities to equip prisons with rehabilitation services and the confused reform policies adopted by consecutive colonial governments.

Chapter 6: African Responses to Prisons, (ca.1836- ca.1960) this chapter looks at the impact of incarceration on inmates and how they transformed prisons due largely to badly designed prisons. This chapter uses prisoners' letters to demonstrate that power engenders a radical response that cannot be repressed.

Part III. Post-colonial prisons in Senegal

Chapter 7: The Legacy of Colonial Prisons in Senegal, 1960s-1990s. This chapter will investigate the difficulties in re-appropriating colonial prisons faced by independent Senegalese authorities and how the colony's legacy accounts for the current crisis of the penal system.

Conclusion: Using a brief discussion of the roles of the media, politics, and religion in shaping popular representations of prisons in Senegal, the conclusion will reflect the main themes of the book and will summarize their implications for the architectural history of punishment in Africa and for historical theory and method more broadly.

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Primary Sources

This study relies mainly on archives from the governments of French West Africa and the colony of Senegal. All archives are housed at the Archives Nationales du Sénégal in Dakar. They are divided into series and each contains a big number of files. I use these following series.

Series: *2G: Rapports périodiques (1895-1960)* provides annual, monthly, and weekly reports on the economic, political, and administrative affairs in French West Africa.

Series: *17G: Affaires politiques en AOF (1920-1958)* contains monthly and annual reports on the political affairs in French West Africa.

Series: *21G: Police et sûreté en AOF, (1825-1959)* deals mostly with public security and the enforcement of laws by police officials and officers.

Series: *4P: Urbanisme, habitat, bâtiments et voiries (1900-1959)* contains information on major construction projects, regulations and norms of construction, urban planning programs, and maps and plans of prisons.

Series *6 M: Justice indigène 1838-1954* contains sources on criminal and correctional cases in Senegal, trial cases, and court deliberations.

Series: *3F: Prisons, 1840-1960* is an excellent source for prisons in colonial Senegal. It contains over 200 files with information on the creation and evolution of the prison, penal policies and practices, detention conditions, annual reports, maps, plans, and drawings of prisons. Additional archival research will be conducted at the Archives in Aix-en Province (France) during the grant period.

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