

Decolonizing Heritage

Senegal features prominently on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As many of its cultural heritage sites are remnants of the French empire, how does an independent nation care for the heritage of colonialism? How does it reinterpret slave barracks, colonial museums, and monuments to empire to imagine its own national future? This book examines Senegal's decolonization of its cultural heritage. Revealing how Léopold Sédar Senghor's philosophy of *Négritude* inflects the interpretation of its colonial heritage, Ferdinand de Jong demonstrates how Senegal's reinterpretation of heritage sites enables it to overcome the legacies of the slave trade, colonialism, and empire. Remembering and reclaiming a Pan-African future, De Jong shows how World Heritage sites are conceived as the archive of an Afrotopia to come, and, in a move towards decolonization, how they repair colonial time.

Ferdinand de Jong is Associate Professor at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Masquerades of Modernity: power and secrecy in Casamance, Senegal* (2007), and, with Michael Rowlands, editor of *Reclaiming Heritage: alternative imaginaries of memory in West Africa* (2007). He has published widely on the colonial archive and the need for its decolonization.

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Decolonizing Heritage

Time to Repair in Senegal

Ferdinand de Jong

University of East Anglia

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and



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Lord God, forgive White Europe! Léopold Sédar Senghor, 'Prière de paix'

Truly, there are sins for which no one has the power to make amends
and which can never be fully expiated.

Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

There is no inheritance without a call to responsibility.

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

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This book has taken a rather long time to write. Working on a decolonial perspective, I spent considerable time in conversation with the demons of our shared past. As the ghosts of empire keep on haunting us with their persistent presence, writing the present requires a reckoning with the past. Engaging this belated return of the colonial past, this book examines the narratives of progress as they were conceived in the context of empire. Undoubtedly, the colonization of time is one of the most spectral yet durable legacies of empire, a legacy materialized in its colonial heritage. Anthropologists contributed much to the making of colonial time, yet they were also among the first to critique the conceptualization of time in the constitution of our discipline. The discipline shared that epistemic concern with postcolonial literature as it set out to decolonize our minds – and to reconfigure relations between past and present. Examining the legacies of Léopold Sédar Senghor's *Négritude* philosophy and politics, this book investigates the ongoing project of decolonization in Senegal. Documenting the appropriation of colonial heritage, it demonstrates that the decolonial promise of *Négritude* continues to inspire Senegal's engagement with the past as a technique to repair the ravages of colonial time.

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This book is illustrated with the wonderfully evocative imagery of two photographers with whom I have had the privilege to work over the last decade. With a long-standing career in documentary photography, Senegalese photographer Mamadou Gomis remains one of Senegal's outstanding artists. His series 'Panafricanisme' documents the experiences of visitors to the House of Slaves on Gorée Island (Chapter 1). With considerable experience in Senegal, Judith Quax explores the vicissitudes of transnational migration in her sensitive work. In the two series published here, Quax documents the Fanal festival in Saint-Louis (Chapter 3) and the ruins of the *École normale William Ponty* and the University of the African Future in Sébikotane (Chapter 6). The work of both photographers depicts these atmospheric sites with a sense of respect for the ghosts that haunt them to this day.

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