

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF GORÉE

# GORÉE

ISLAND OF MEMORIES



Unesco

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## ***PREFACE***

Scarcely have the lights of Dakar dimmed on the horizon than the launch puts in at the little harbour of Gorée. Half an hour has passed, just long enough for the sea-breeze to smooth away, as if by magic, the lines of fatigue from the faces of travellers Gorée, island of serenity, awaits us.

And yet Gorée holds memories of the infamous trade that once condemned thousands of the sons and daughters of Africa if not to death, then to an exile from which none returned. The rays of the morning sun turn the facades to bronze. Each has its story to tell, confusing all sense of where we are ; in a single narrow street we pass a building, a courtyard, a stairway, a door or a set of architectural features that remind us of Amsterdam, Oporto, Seville, Saint Tropez, New Orleans, Nantes, Brooklyn and perhaps even Damascus.

But if Gorée were merely a succession of architectural images, it would be but a stage set. It is more like a symphony, in which the military brass of its harbours, the harmony of its squares and the percussion of its naval quarters are orchestrated.

Today, the island is suffering from neglect, mutilation, overpopulation and idleness, but it yearns to live again. Like a ship still peopled by old seafarers, Gorée intends to set its own come.

By acquainting us with the island's history, its present problems and suggested ways of overcoming them, this booklet appeals to our memories and calls on each of us to help to safeguard Gorée, as part of the international campaign launched on 22 December 1980 by Mr Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco, on behalf of all the Member States of the Organization.

A special account has been opened at Unesco headquarters for financial contributions to the campaign. Readers who wish to offer their support should contact the Division of Cultural Heritage, Unesco, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

The authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this book and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of Unesco and do not commit the Organization.

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**Photo credits:** Cover, 6, 8, 10-12, 22-26 Unesco/Dominique Roger; 1-5 Guy Nicolas; 7, 13 Malick M'Baye; 9-21 Alain Sinou

Côte d'Afrique.

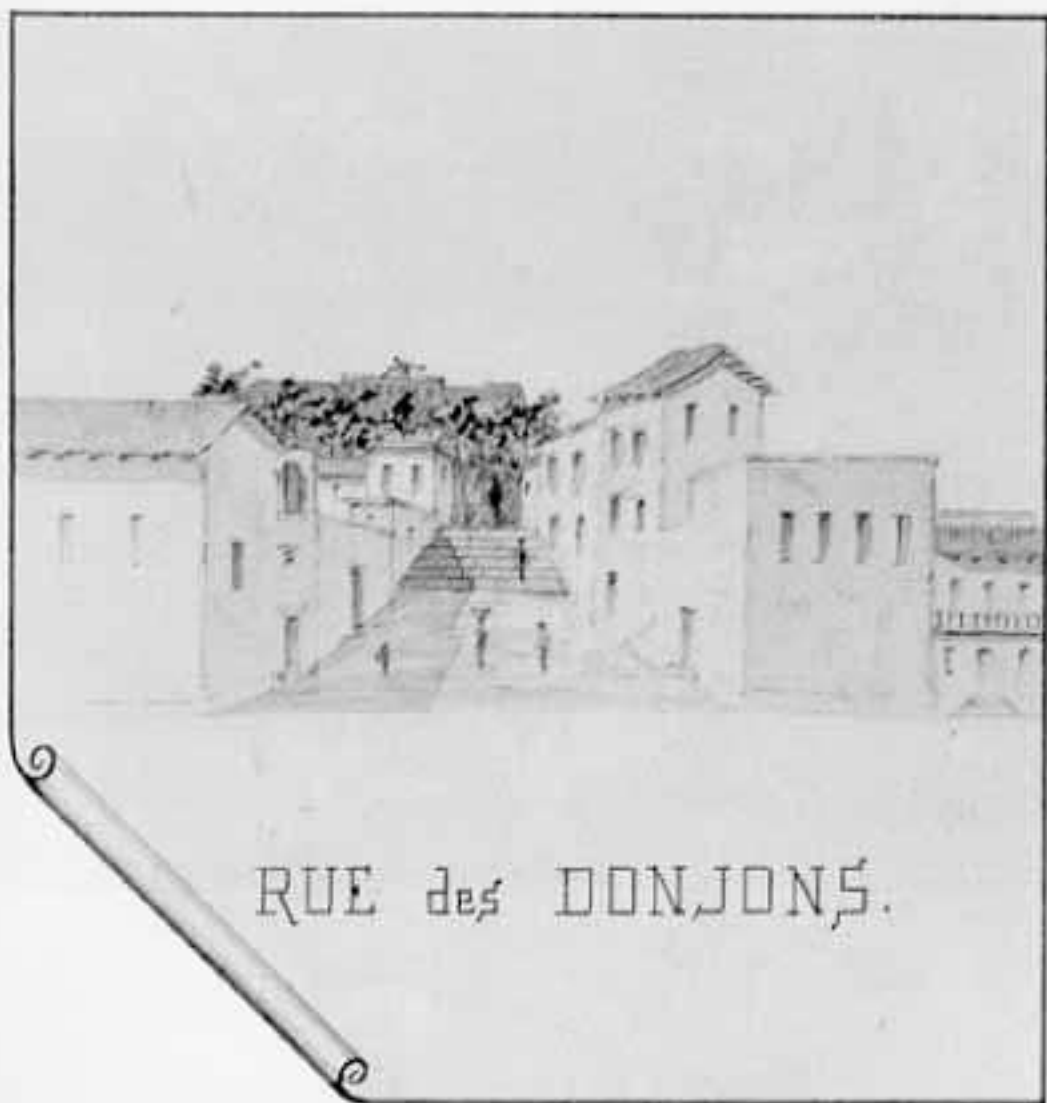
Vue de l'Île de Surtée.

par M. de la Roche.

1756.







RUE des DONJONS.

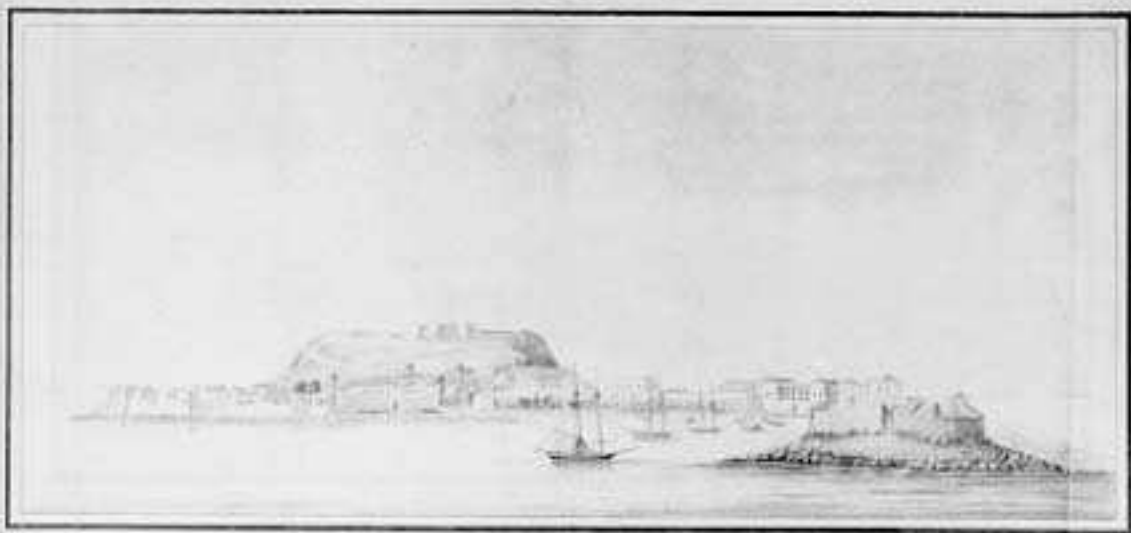


RUE ST-GERMAIN.



*Vue  
de l'île de Surée.*

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## **FOREWORD**

The history of Gorée as described in the chapter entitled 'Gorée, island of pioneers' was prepared by the Heritage Department of the Senegalese Ministry of Culture, under the direction of Mr Lamine Sy.

The description of the project for the safeguarding of the island of Gorée was written by Miss Françoise Descamps using documents prepared by the Bureau d'Architecture des Monuments Historiques under the direction of Mr Alassane Thiam, the plan of action for the safeguarding of the architectural heritage of the island of Gorée (August 1981) and the master plan for the safeguarding of the island of Gorée, approved in September 1982.

All the reproductions of old documents come from the French National Archives, Overseas Section, Paris. We wish to thank Miss Meunier, Chief Curator, for helping us to prepare this publication by providing free of charge various materials and illustrations.

## ***FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE ISLAND OF GORÉE***

APPEAL BY MR. AMADOU-MAHTAR M'BOW,  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO

Situated less than 4 kilometres from Dakar, in the centre of the roadstead formed by the south coast of the Cape Verde peninsula, the island of Gorée offers a safe haven for ships to anchor. This has made it, since the fifteenth century, a prize disputed by various European nations, which used it successively as a port of call or as a slave-trading post.

Called 'Beer' in Wolof, it was dubbed 'Goede Reede' by the Dutch and thus later came to be known as Gorée. Especially in the late eighteenth century, it presented the twofold aspect of a prosperous crossroads where traders, soldiers and officials lived in idyllic surroundings, and a warehouse for 'Black Ivory' with all its attendant suffering and misery.

This duality is to be found in the physical appearance of Gorée: the first impression is of the harmony of its natural setting, the classical lines of the fortifications and public buildings and especially the houses, tinted all shades of dusty pink, between whose arcades are seen glimpses of the blue of the sea and the greenery of walled gardens, sheltered from the Atlantic winds and bordered by colonnaded verandahs, horseshoe-shaped flights of steps and paths of polished basalt. Below ground level, however, a great many of these houses had slave quarters, where men and women, most of them young, were penned like cattle on their way to the plantations and workshops of the Americas.

In damp, dark cellars, or torture cells for any who rebelled, the deportees languished for weeks, waiting for the voyage from which there could be no return. And here, when they were put on board, each slave was branded with the mark of his owner. Then the slaves were crowded into the holds, where many were doomed to perish before they reached their destination.

But America, whose colonisation lay at the origin of this tragic deportation, was also to be the scene of the great struggles for liberation that would gradually put an end to it. The way was prepared by the triumph of the Haitian Revolution at Vertières in 1803, and the official abolition of the slave trade, proclaimed at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, had its effects on Gorée.

From 1822 onwards, educational institutions sprang up on the island. It became a centre for administration and schooling, and in particular it housed the federal teacher-training college of French West Africa, better known as the William Ponty Academy, which produced the trained African personnel who, in several cases, were later to contribute to the decolonisation of Africa south of the Sahara. Subsequently, Gorée underwent a long period of decline.

Nowadays, the island once again houses educational institutions for the training of national professional personnel, as well as the Université des Mutants, whose vocation is to evaluate and develop the most promising aspects of the various cultures of the world, in order to make them more receptive to the spirit of universal brotherhood and co-operation.

Thus, having been a bridge of sighs between Africa and the Black Americas, Gorée is gradually becoming a symbol of hope, towards which the descendants of those deported in earlier years are converging in increasing numbers, setting out on a kind of pilgrimage to find their roots, in company with all who seek historical foundations for a new solidarity among peoples.

From the suffering and the joy it has witnessed, Gorée has preserved a faculty for surviving ordeals and for absorbing unhappiness into the regular breathing of the ocean. Similarly, throughout its chequered history, Gorée has preserved an architectural unity which brings together the most dissimilar cultural components-Nordic and Mediterranean, Islamic and Christian-and combines them in a unity determined simultaneously by lack of space, exposure to the sea winds, homogeneity of building materials and, perhaps above all, the currents of a tormented history which made every dwelling both a warehouse for slaves and a defence position.

Gorée represents a happy symbiosis of past and present, history and everyday life, the harmony of visual forms and the dramatic imprint of bygone days. That is why it is now one of those rare places where the younger generation of Africa and the Americas can refresh their memories while at the same time renewing the sources of their inspiration. Such a place belongs to the living imagination of Africa and the Americas; but it belongs in equal measure to the minds of men the world over. It can become a place for meditation, spiritual reflection and contemplation, where those who are most aware of the tragedies of their history will gain a more real sense of justice and brotherhood.

However, the delicate balance of this historic site is threatened with serious deterioration, due partly to the sea, which is slowly wearing away and undermining the structures

of certain buildings, and partly to social or economic factors: the abandonment of part of the buildings which is speeding their decay, or, on the contrary, improvised renovation which alters the special character of the buildings and is in danger of disfiguring the site permanently.

The architectural heritage of Gorée, which has been placed since November 1975 on the inventory of Senegal's historic monuments, and since September 1978 on the World Heritage List drawn up by Unesco, must be saved. It must be saved as much to preserve the high cultural value of the island as to provide all its inhabitants with living conditions and activities that match their expectations.

At the request of the Senegalese authorities, and in co-operation with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Unesco has been helping since 1974 to prepare preliminary studies for the safeguarding of Gorée. A plan of action has since been drawn up.

This plan suggests a comprehensive approach to the action to be taken in connection with the preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of the islands monuments, It includes the safeguarding of all aspects of the architectural heritage which are of historical or artistic interest, and their development by their use for cultural purposes. But it is difficult for Senegal to bear the costs of such a project alone. Its government has therefore asked Unesco to provide direct assistance by making an appeal to international solidarity.

Therefore, on behalf of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, I am today launching a solemn appeal for the safeguarding and restoration of the island of Gorée.

I invite all Member States of Unesco and all peoples, governments, public and private institutions, international governmental and non-governmental organisations and foundations and funding agencies, to participate by means of voluntary contributions in cash, equipment or services, in the effort undertaken by the Government of Senegal.

I invite museums, art galleries, academies and libraries, and all institutions concerned with conservation and the promotion of culture, to organise exhibitions on the subject of the island of Gorée, the proceeds of which can go to the fund for safeguarding and restoring it.

I invite all intellectuals, artists and writers, men of religion and science, historians and sociologists, and professionals in the world of journalism, radio, television and the cinema, to help to open the public's eyes in all countries to the problems of the island of Gorée and urge them to join in these efforts.

I invite the children and young people of the world, and especially those in Senegal, Africa and the Americas, to

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collect contributions, organise competitions and participate in other activities to strengthen international action on behalf of the historic and cultural site of Gorée.

In the past, Unesco has already launched appeals for the safeguarding of famous monuments such as those of Nubia in Egypt and Sudan, Venice in Italy, Borobudur in Indonesia, Sukhothai in Thailand, Moenjodaro in Pakistan, and the monuments of Malta, Fez in Morocco and the Cultural Triangle in Sri Lanka. In March 1980, Unesco launched an appeal on behalf of the three monuments of Haiti which symbolize the victorious uprising of the African slaves and which, with the island of Gorée, constitute the two poles of a single painful memory: the beginning and the end of a dark night in history which was, indeed, a long one for the conscience of all mankind.

I am firmly convinced that the community of nations, which has already responded favourably to our earlier appeals, will once again wish to unite its efforts in order to preserve Gorée and bring back to it that hope shared by people everywhere.

*A. A. M' Bow*

Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow  
22 December 1980



## ***INTRODUCTION***

### ***The discovery of Gorée***

In the fifteenth century, Gorée was well known to seafarers as a port of call and landmark on a round-the-world sea route, largely because of the nature of the island and its position, and, tiny though it was, it became the link between ships and the nearby mainland.

The shape and geographical position of Gorée are of great importance, outweighing its major drawback the lack of water. The wells there produce only small quantities of brackish and undrinkable water, and there is just a token trickle of fresh water, the spring at the foot of the Castel. Water has always been brought from the mainland in casks, barrels, and by pipeline, making the island dependent on the neighbouring land.

Gorée was the essential port of call, a haven with a good and easily accessible anchorage, at the point where the route round Africa via the Cape of Good Hope met the transatlantic route to the Americas. It was isolated but near a rich and unknown land, it was uninhabited, and it thus offered a comfortable refuge from which to establish contacts and venture forth to discover new lands. Even the shape of Gorée favoured such settlement, since it is small extending as a curve of sandy earth behind its great black basalt rock and offering a natural sheltered anchorage. A small beach provides a landing-place on the island, the shores of which are covered with basalt shingle.

These geographical factors played an important role in the settlement of Gorée. It was in turn a port of call, a fortress and a commercial port, each of which role has left its mark

### ***Gorée as a refuge and a fortress***

Apart from a few marine enthusiasts, the modern traveller does not have the same first view of Gorée as in the past, when it could be seen from the sea in outline against the luxuriantly green backdrop of the mainland. Most people first view the island from Dakar, on the African coast. Its imposing

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Carte de l'Isle de  
Gorée, vue prise au vent de l'Europe

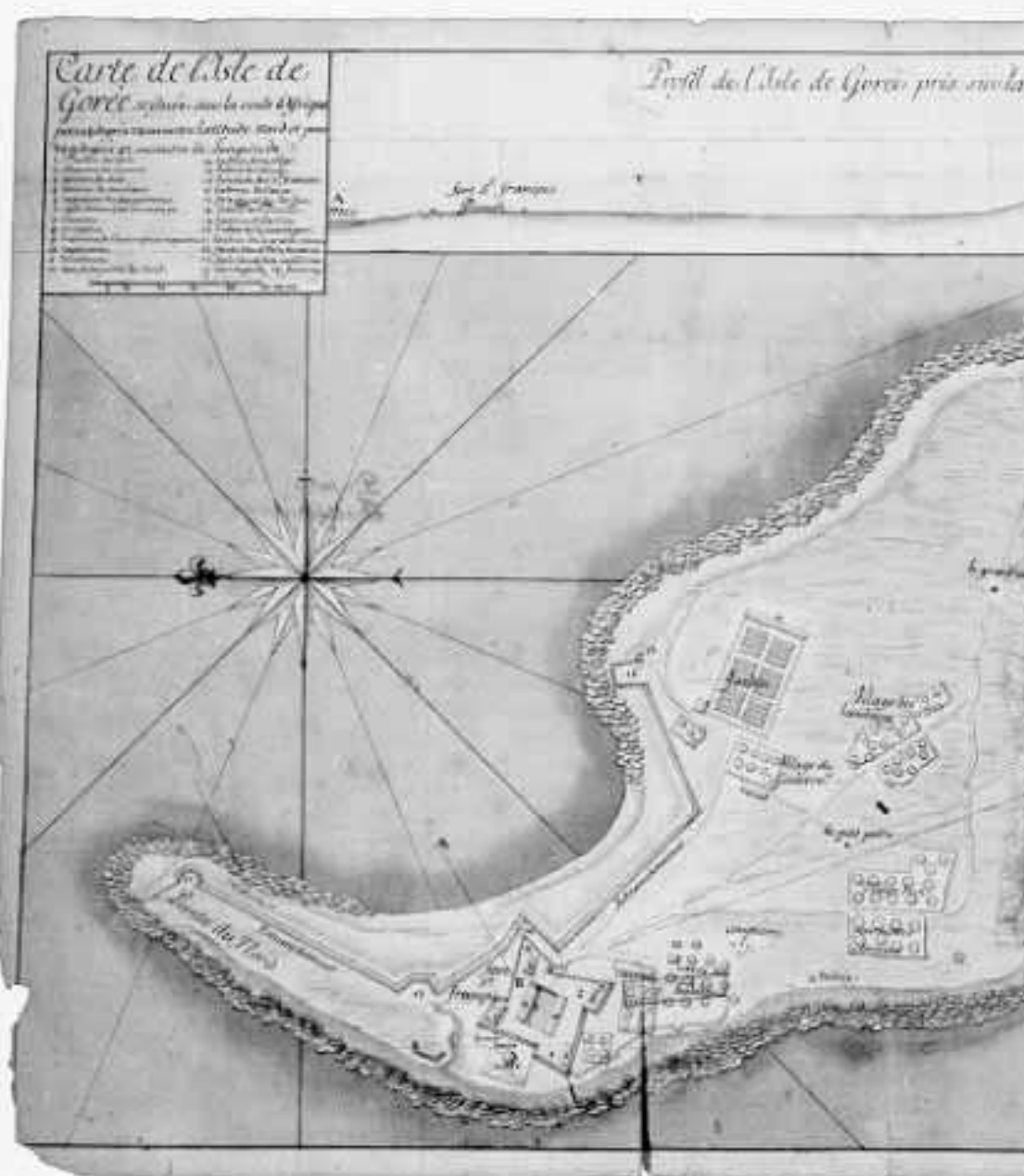
Longitude 17° 15' 00" Ouest Latitude Nord 16° 45' 00"

Noms des lieux et des édifices de l'Isle de Gorée	
1. Fort de France	11. Le fort de France
2. Le fort de France	12. Le fort de France
3. Le fort de France	13. Le fort de France
4. Le fort de France	14. Le fort de France
5. Le fort de France	15. Le fort de France
6. Le fort de France	16. Le fort de France
7. Le fort de France	17. Le fort de France
8. Le fort de France	18. Le fort de France
9. Le fort de France	19. Le fort de France
10. Le fort de France	20. Le fort de France

Profil de l'Isle de Gorée pris au vent

Fort de France

A





and defensive appearance is accentuated by the harsh geometric lines of rugged rock faces. Isolated by the stretch of water between it and the mainland, Gorée seems both close and distant, a refuge and a fortress.

This disconcerting duality is an integral part of the image of the island, combining as it does shelter and seclusion, haven and solitude. The enticement of the beach contrasts with the island's arid rocks. Hemmed in by the unalterable confines of the sea, Gorée seems to lie outside time and beyond measure. Past and present mingle to form a permanent contrast, for the peacefulness of the ochre facades and the courtyards, now flower-decked gardens, does not efface the oppressiveness of walls that are signs of slavery and the slave trade. Gorée has a dual nature and constantly fascinates with the lure of its mystery.

A single launch is the only link between Gorée and the mainland. At its leisurely pace it bears the visitor away from the hooting, shouts and all the hubbub of the modern city of Dakar. The short crossing to the island is a precious interlude of peace and quiet, a brief but intense experience of detachment. On landing, one is in another world, a world that belongs to the past, and images are telescoped: the opulent *signare*<sup>1</sup> side by side with the slave, and bales of tobacco from the Americas piled up on the quay. The island's abundant memories breathe from the walls of the town, for the buildings and their setting are inseparable. The island is like a black jewel box, displaying to advantage the soft pink and yellow tints of the stone building- box with steep sides, a mass of inaccessible basalt which can only be reached through one small sandy cove. The island's gentleness and austerity are two conflicting and concurrent features which are to be found throughout its history. They are indeed the very substance of Gorée

1. Formerly, a mulatress living with a European as his wife.

## ***GORÉE, ISLAND OF PIONEERS***

Since antiquity, there had been only indirect links between Europeans and Africans, with Arabs and Berbers acting as the necessary go-betweens. This situation changed in the fifteenth century, when European navigators began to explore the coasts of Africa. Between 1415 and 1482, Portuguese and Spanish ships followed the west coast as far as the mouth of the River Congo. In order to attack the Turks, at that time absolute masters of the Mediterranean, from the rear, the Europeans set out in quest of the mythical kingdom of Prester John and the almost equally mythical route to the Indies. Progress was slow. A landing was made in Madeira in 1418 ; in 1434 Cape Bojador was rounded; in 1439 the Azores were visited; Cape Blanco was rounded in 1441 and two years later Arguin Island was reached. Dinis Diaz arrived at the mouth of the Senegal River in 1444, bringing the rich and fertile Guinea at last into view. The name 'Palma' was given to the small uninhabited island to one side of Cape Verde-our Gorée-used by the Portuguese as a port of call on the southern route. The island nevertheless did not seem to have any natural gifts which confer special fortune on a human community. It was barren and extremely small. Despite these drawbacks, however, it was in an advantageous position on the African coast. Sheltered by the tip of the Cape Verde peninsula and lying less than 4 kilometres from the mainland, Gorée offered excellent anchorage for large ships. There they could be careened and enjoy facilities for taking on timber, and water. It was found that the hurricanes and tidal waves that so often troubled these seas never affected the gulf, where the sea was as calm as in the safest port.

Gorée long remained a port of call on the route to adventure. Through it passed explorers and missionaries who had set out in quest of the Orient, including Fernando PO, Vasco da Gama, François-Xavier and the poet Camoens, among others. At Gorée, ships were revictualled and repaired in preparation for the unknown. But contacts were already being established with the nearby mainland and the island was becoming the outpost of the Europeans in Africa.

## ***THE GREAT WAREHOUSE***

### ***An international prize***

Gorée is located in the bay off the Gape Verde peninsula, the largest, safest and best anchorage of all the bays on the West African coast. It lies at the meeting point of major shipping routes and was at the beginning of the shortest route to the West Indies.

The islands excellent position, magnificent roadstead and strategic importance on the major shipping routes was bound to attract European attention. For nearly three centuries, Gorée was a prize bitterly disputed by rival nations and changed hands seventeen times. In 1588, the Dutch seized Palma and renamed it 'Goede Reede', a name which persisted as Gorée. They built two forts on the island, beginning a long tradition of defensive works. The military function was foremost until the Second World War, with the entire defensive system being constantly overhauled, restored and improved by successive occupants. In the sixteenth century the two forts, square enclosures with bastions at each corner, were the main features of the island. There were also straw huts at one time. Inside the enclosure were several buildings containing storehouses, chambers and kitchens. In the northern salient a small isolated building housed the chapel. The chaplains room was another small construction in the western salient. In the eastern salient there was a small building which served as both guardhouse and refectory. The captains quarters consisted of two parallel rectangular buildings separated by a central courtyard.

The first fort was destroyed in 1629 by João Pereira-Corte Real, the Portuguese governor of the Gape Verde Islands. In 1630, the Dutch again seized Gorée. In 1645, a Portuguese-French coalition enabled the Portuguese to retake the island. The Dutch came back in force in 1647 and, except for a brief British occupation in 1664, occupied Gorée until 1677 when they were finally driven away by the French fleet of Count d'Estrées.

Under the Peace of Nijmegen in 1678, France was given possession of Gorée, wrested the previous year from the Dutch. Great Britain, interested in the slave trade to keep its American colonies supplied with labour, doggedly persisted in its attempts to seize control of the island from the French.

Hence it can easily be understood how Gorée changed hands so many times between 1678 and 1814. Following the fall of Napoleon, France was given control of the island under the Treaty of Paris.

That turbulent phase of the history of Gorée was also the heyday of the major trading companies. This was the time when new companies came into being, the purpose of which was to secure a monopoly of the trade for which Gorée was the fortified warehouse. They included the Dutch East India Company, the Merchant Venturers Company and the Compagnie Française du Cap-Vert et du Sénégal. The victory of Admiral d'Estrées gave France possession of the island for over two centuries, and the Compagnie du Sénégal--with its varying fortunes and subsequently the Compagnie Française des Indes (French East India Company) were the masters of Gorée until 1763, when it came under the direct control of the King of France. The Compagnie Française des Indes sought to secure for itself a monopoly of trade with the mainland African kingdoms of Cayor, Sine and Saloum. Alliance with the African princes had always been a decisive factor in the wars fought by the Europeans between themselves. It was equally so in commercial rivalry. The trade in hides and gum was centred on the coastal trading posts, as was that of gold, wax, ostrich feathers and cloth. The main posts were located at Rufisque, Portudal and Joal for trading respectively with Cayor, Poal and Sine. On them depended a whole system of posts and branches scattered through Gambia, Casamance, the Bissagos Islands, Sierra Leone and Gabon. The large number of such establishments, usually Portuguese in origin, testifies to the intensity and the early beginnings of trading. The rivers, as natural highways into the mainland, linked the trading posts to Gorée. The islands storehouses were crammed with goods from the mainland and with European merchandise. The proximity of the major rivers tapping the wealth of the African kingdoms was the making of Gorée. But the chief resource of the trading companies lay in the slave trade.

The Maison du Soudan



Front façade



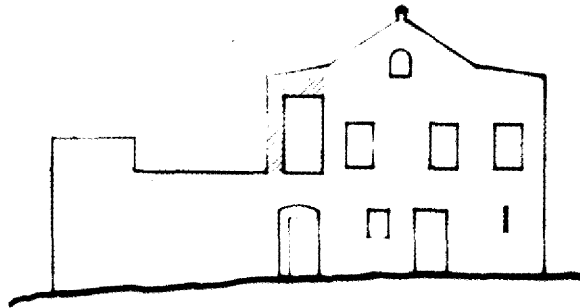
Rear façade

### *The slave trade*

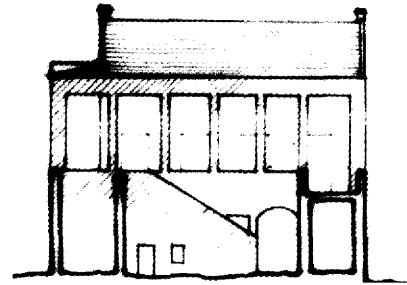
From the pioneering period of Portuguese occupation, slaves were included among the items traded between Europeans and Africans. They were abducted, purchased and sent to Portugal for employment as domestic servants and agricultural workers. When Islam lost Granada, its last bastion on the Iberian peninsula, the departure *en masse* of the Arabs, who had introduced sugar-cane into Europe, prompted Spain and Portugal to turn to imported labour in order to keep up the abandoned plantations. In addition, the discovery and subsequent development of the Atlantic islands boosted sugar-cane cultivation, with a consequent increase in the demand for labour. The uncertainties of abduction then gave place to trading with the African princes, and regular dealing in slaves was instituted.

As land for colonisation was discovered, sugar-cane cultivation increased. After the discovery of the Cape Verde

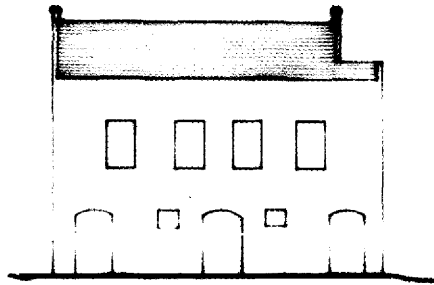
The Diouga Dieng house  
façades



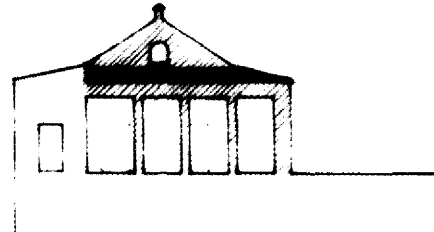
Rue de Dakar



Sea front



Rue des Batteries



North side



Islands, in 1466 the King of Portugal granted the first settlers a monopoly of the slave trade on the mainland opposite the archipelago. The appetite of the Portuguese traders was insatiable. On their southward march the captains discovered, between the Akobia and Volta rivers, a region particularly rich in gold, which they named the Mine. They set up a large trading post there in the hope of attracting to the coast all the gold to be found in the hinterland. From 1483 onwards, the Portuguese were fully able to trade with central Africa via the kingdom of the Congo, where another slave-trading centre sprang up in conjunction with the colonisation of São Tome after 1580.

With the establishment of sugar-cane plantations in the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Azores, the demand for African slave labour increased rapidly. A special department to supervise such labour was even set up in Lisbon. The Lisbon customs recorded 3,589 slaves between 1486 and 1493. Between 1450 and 1500 the Portuguese are thought to have bought some 150,000 captives in Africa.

Senegambia was thus the first region in Africa south of the Sahara to take an active part in colonising the Atlantic islands. According to some estimates it supplied at least a third of the slaves exported before 1600. Via Senegal, Saloum, the Gambia and Casamance, the slave traders moved far into the hinterland to encourage the local population to sell them human merchandise. The Cape Verde archipelago was developed by means of this slave labour. Up to the beginning of the seventeenth century, it is estimated that the archipelago received from 500 to 1,000 slaves a year, most of whom were exported via Gorée.

Senegambia was soon replaced as the main supplier of labour for the overseas plantations by the Slave Coast (present-day Gabon and Angola) which, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, supplied Brazil and the West Indies. But Gorée remained the active port where the slaves were assembled, branded and embarked for the Americas.

Emissaries went to the various depots before the agents, in order to invite African chiefs or local traders to go to the ports of call where the business was done. The boats bound for these ports were loaded with salt, 'guineas' or lengths of blue cloth, serge, tobacco, spirits, coral, guns, powder, ammunition and small glassware. At each slave post they stopped, waited and bargained. Once the price had been agreed, the sellers brought the slaves along one by one. The surgeon or purchaser examined their muscles, the line of their legs, the length of their arms and the number and whiteness of their teeth. To make sure that the captives suffered from no hidden infirmity, they were made to run, jump and speak in

addition to moving all their joints. Nothing escaped the vigilance of the purchaser.

The transport of the slaves to the Gorée depot was always preceded by a major sorting operation in which the slaves were divided into ethnic groups. According to Pruneau de Pommegorge, they were put in irons on purchase. 'The "collard" is an iron chain five to six feet long. One end has a flat iron collar which is fitted round the neck. It is bolted in such a manner that the captive cannot open it without a tool.' But rather than leave them in fretful idleness, the slaves were put to work during their stay on Gorée for, though chained, they could walk and use their arms.

Every day they were taken to work under the supervision of several interpreters and made to break and carry rocks for building, do earthwork, roll water barrels and unload boats and launches.

The women cooked and the children were given household tasks, but they were rarely kept chained. At night, all the captives were crammed together in the detention quarters belonging to the companies or private individuals. They had very little air and practically no light. In the morning they returned to the work sites. Recalcitrant captives were locked up behind strong bars, There they remained in the damp and darkness until the day of their embarkation when they were branded on the shoulder with the company's initials.

Being thus subjected to inhuman treatment, the captives led a particularly pitiable existence at the Gorée post. Any possibility of escape was removed by the precautions taken by the agents of the companies, the merchants or the local dealers. Yet for all the closeness of such supervision, it sometimes happened that their intolerable position prompted them to rise against their masters and try to recover their freedom by means of carefully prepared revolts. Furthermore, the instigators of the revolts seemed to have always belonged to the Wolof, Fulani and Serere ethnic groups, whose members were never appreciated as slaves by the traders. To these peoples as, of course, to all others, servitude was the supreme debasement and they refused to bear the dishonour attaching to slavery. This explains the terrible violence of the slave revolts, matched by the cruelty of company agents in dealing with them.

In October 1724, for example, a serious uprising of fifty-five slaves broke out on Gorée one afternoon at about four o'clock. They took the guard Gaspard by surprise, stabbing him several times. His cries brought the company agents rushing to his assistance and they found him covered in blood. The captives were armed with sticks, knives and two axes. To force them to lay down their weapons, the agents fired at them at point blank range, killing two and wounding twelve. The









others thereupon took refuge in the detention quarters. On their refusal to surrender, the entrance was blocked off until the next day, when it was made quite clear to them that if they did not immediately end their rebellion they would be burnt alive where they were. They decided to give in and immediate steps were taken against those regarded as the ringleaders, Two of them were shot on the spot while a third was stretched out on two pieces of wood and quartered in front of his dumbfounded companions.

Such cruelty did not snuff out rebellion. In 1755, a further uprising was attempted on Gorée by the prisoners of war who had been sold by the King of Sine. He had been at war with the King of Bawol. Although beaten on the battlefield, the King of Sine decided to take his revenge. During the night, when the victors were feasting and celebrating, the Sine warriors took them by surprise. Some Bawol generals, including Fara Kaba, were killed, Five hundred other warriors were taken prisoner and immediately sold to Gorée to rule out any possibility of retaliation.

Once on Gorée, the captives decided to rebel, in the hope of returning to their homeland. Their plan was that one third of them would, on the way back to the detention quarters in the evening, throw themselves on the guards, seize weapons from the soldiers' racks and kill the twelve guards. At the same time, another third would enter the fort and seize the armoury, the stock of weapons and the powder store. The remaining third were to massacre the whites so that nothing could thwart the plan and so that, once they were masters of the fort and of the island, they could all arm themselves with the guns and ammunition, carry off the finest, most valuable and least bulky merchandise and finally go down to the shore, board the longboats and cross over to the mainland

This plan was not even embarked upon, for a child who had overheard the conspirators alerted the commandant of Gorée. The commandant assembled the captives in the courtyard of the fort and asked the two leaders of the conspiracy whether it was true that they had decided to massacre the European population of Gorée. They replied that it was, while stressing that it was not out of hatred for the Europeans but simply so that no one could oppose their flight. They added that they were all ashamed not to have died fighting and since their attempt had failed they demanded to be killed because death was preferable to slavery.

This forthrightness was to no avail. By decision of the council of the company, the two ringleaders were 'cannonaded before the eyes of their terrified companions'. The others were put aboard a vessel from La Rochelle commanded by Captain Avillon.

These examples among so many others clearly show

that the Africans destined for the New World did not accept their appalling plight with resignation. The uprisings were perhaps few and far between, but they reflected the revulsion that slavery inspired in its victims. The struggle begun on the African continent continued in America where the runaway slaves, through their determination to cast off their fetters, made an active contribution to the abolition of the slave trade in the early nineteenth century.

According to some historians, the number of Africans deported to the New World and elsewhere between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries was between 15 to 30 million, to which must be added the incalculable number of those who died during abduction and trading. The total population deficit of the African continent is thought to have been 200 million people,<sup>1</sup> a huge figure which does much to explain the economic and demographic inertia of African societies. While we do not know exactly what proportion of the captives was dispatched via Gorée, it can be readily understood that the very name of the island was for more than two centuries synonymous with terror and bitterness. Gorée must therefore not be allowed to become a forgotten place, representing as it does a historical legacy common to all Black peoples. It bears the imprint of their crushed dignity, of their physical and mental suffering and above all, of their unvanquished hopes. It is also a symbol of that vitality which has enabled them, after five centuries of pillage, abduction, theft, rape and degradation, to preserve their essential identity. The existence of Gorée is a perpetual tribute to an aspect of the African that nothing has been able to destroy. Even though the Africans have agreed to forgive all the sufferings, they must not forget the humiliation undergone or cease to hear the lamentations of those who were shipped overseas.

1. *The African Slave Trade from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century*, Paris, Unesco, 1979 (The General History of Africa: Studies and Documents, 2).

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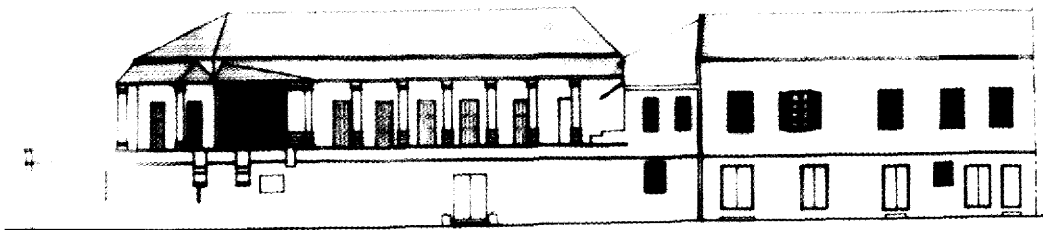




## *GORÉE THE FORTUNATE*

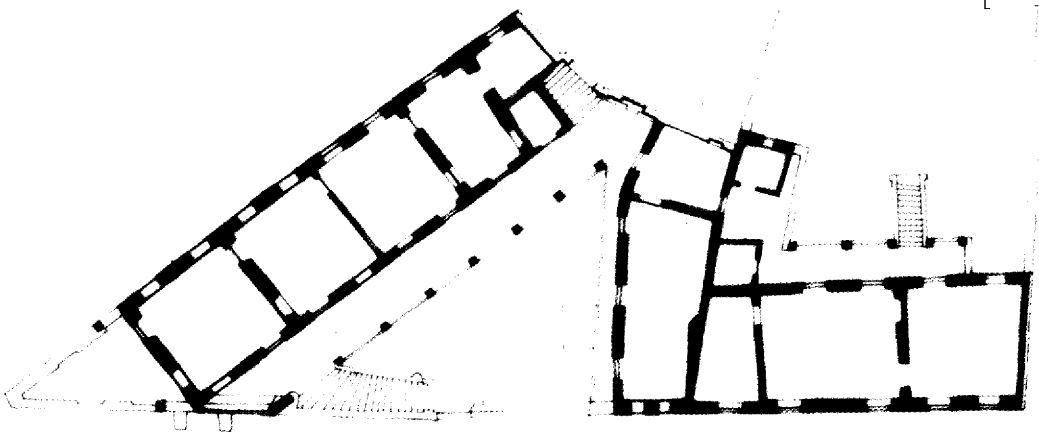
The history of contacts between Europeans and Africans can never be confined to the slave trade. A great many ties were established between them in the Cape Verde Islands, Upper and Lower Guinea, São Tomé, Príncipe and Saint-Louis, where new societies resulting from European and African interbreeding came into being. To that too, Gorée bears witness

The Victoria Albis house



Rue Malavois facade

First-floor plan



### ***Lancados and pioneers- first intercultural contacts***

From the Portuguese period onwards, Gorée was the scene of a conscious effort to spread a Christian faith which meant more than lip service, the sign of the cross' of Sunday observance being reflected in practical daily activity. This did not consist in subjecting tropical cultures, values and populations to the often artificial domination by Europeans, but involved a far more complex pursuit of accommodation, temporisation, tolerance, adjustment and an interpretation of values or cultures almost always accompanied by interbreeding.

From Gorée, the small Portuguese community migrated to Rufisque, Portudal, Joal, Porto Novo and Palmarin, where Portuguese-African groups eventually became well established, chiefly engaged in the slave trade. Some of them even settled in villages of the hinterland and acted as intermediaries in dealings between Europe and Africa. They were totally assimilated by the indigenous society, whose clothing and tattooing practices they adopted. They spoke the local language and practised the fetishistic rites of pagan ceremonies. These Portuguese, who were called *lancados* (adventurers), went inland to collect goods and take them down to the coast. Competition between European nations from the sixteenth century onwards enabled them to make substantial profits. They supplied the English, French, and even the Dutch, with large quantities of hides, buffalo, gazelle and other animals, ivory and wax, gum, musk, gold and slaves.

These Portuguese-African groups started to decline in the late seventeenth century. The Compagnie Française des Indes, under André Bruie, arrogated to itself a monopoly of trade in the area, whereupon the fortunes of Rufisque, Portudal and Joal went into irretrievable decline. After 1700, no mention is made of the Portuguese-Africans of Gorée, Rufisque and the 'Petite Côte'. The trade monopoly of the Compagnie had driven them away. Creole cultural hybridism did not disappear, however, even after the departure of the Portuguese. Between the Dutch, English and French on the one hand and the Africans on the other, the blending process was to continue even though each power had its own sphere of influence. In that nucleus of contact which was Gorée, influences met as in the past. Biological intermixing increased the number and closeness of social contacts, leading necessarily to the merging of cultural heritages. The mulattos and even the Blacks all had ties with two cultures, being integrated into European civilisation without breaking with their own ethnic group. On the island of Gorée, an original mestizo society had come into being which was to prove durable.

## *A mestizo society and its environment*

The fact that it was the seat of administration and centre of trade attracted to the island a sizeable population of Black freemen possessing a varying number of slaves. Side by side with them lived the agents of the company holding the trading concession, plus the garrison soldiers.

The difficult conditions of the tropics debarred European women from Africa, where tropical diseases, against which contemporary medicine was powerless, ravaged the immigrant population. Company agents and soldiers alike were obliged to find a wife or concubine among the local women, often among those who were slaves. These so-called 'native' marriages were automatically dissolved when the husband was repatriated or one of the partners died.

These temporary unions produced mulattos who managed to take handsome advantage of their situation at the crossroads, as it were, of the two races. Their ease of communication with both made them natural intermediaries between the companies, on the one hand, and the traders and chiefs of the interior on the other. The mulattresses, known as *signares*, owned many slaves and often several houses. In the mid-eighteenth century, according to Abbé Boilat, they were housed as in France. With the huge profits from the slave trade, straw huts were systematically replaced by stone buildings, which reduced the fire hazard.

The senior company officials and administrators settled on Gorée. Caty Louet, the *signare* of the Governor of Galam, Aussenac, was the richest landowner on the island, her concession exceeding 4,000 square metres. In 1767 she owned sixty-eight house slaves and had a spacious residence built, which today houses the Gorée dispensary. Anne Pépin, Victoria Albis, Hélène Aussenac and their rivals possessed two-thirds of the islands concessions.

Any ceremony, even a religious one, gave the *signares* a chance to make an ostentatious display of their wealth. The valuables used as adornments included 'gold jewellery from Galam, large earrings, massive wrist and ankle bracelets and superb gold chains that decked the ample bosoms of the town's opulent ladies.' So adorned, they paraded the streets of Gorée with dignified demeanour. The way of life of the free Black women was no different from that of the mulattresses, and both enjoyed showing off their finery. During ceremonies, they vied with one another in the opulence of their attire. Each decked out her female slaves in her most precious gems and jewellery; heaping everything on these living mannequins who then strutted about the streets, where such groups of slaves covered with gold provided a dazzling spectacle. These

captives often wore several million francs worth of ornaments. The mulatress who had achieved the biggest display was so proud that even her women friends could only approach her in accordance with the strictest etiquette; she was the queen of the town until dethroned by another mulatress.

Gorée society led a life that was both busy and idle, and sometimes refined. One governor, the Chevalier de Boufflers, wrote to France of his 'delightful stay' on the island. In general, Gorée was remarkably prosperous in the eighteenth century, when stone buildings became the rule and the now familiar landscape of the island was established. In 1748, the population of Gorée was 257, consisting of 60 French, 66 Black or mulatto islanders and 131 house slaves. Each part of the population had its own sector. To the southwest of the fort of Saint Francis were the *casernes des habitants* (barracks of the inhabitants); to the south, the village of Les Gourmettes with its Christians and literate and Christianised Blacks; and to the east of the village, the dwellings of the Bambara. A hospital, a barracks and a church were the main public buildings. The profits from the considerably expanding slave trade prompted a real flurry of building.

In 1763, after five years of British occupation, the return of the French, coinciding with the introduction of direct administration by the French Government, provided a further spur to building. Since the forts had been badly damaged, the officers and employees were lodged in private homes and the central administration set up in the residence of a rich *signare*, the Pavillon Saint Jean. Building proceeded everywhere, even at the expense of the fortifications. It sufficed that the houses built along the shore were fitted with loopholes commanding the sea. The island, which in 1763 had possessed only seven stone buildings, had fifteen in 1770 and eighty-one by 1784. Flat roofs of *argamasse*, a lime-and-sand mortar, and tiled roofs replaced thatched roofs throughout Gorée.

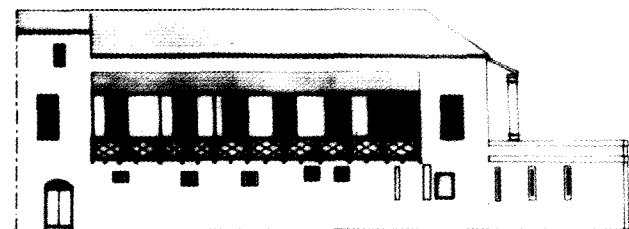
The first stone houses had been built of yellow marble from the north-west slope of the Castel hill, but that small quarry was quickly exhausted as a result of continued building. It was decided to use other materials, and the choice fell on the island's basalt. Before being shipped to the New World, the captive slaves were often put to breaking large pieces of basalt shingle with cannon-balls. They also learnt to make bricks with clay from Dakar. These are the materials of most of the ruined houses which can still be seen today. The mortar for the bricks was made of lime, powdered seashells and sand. With these rudimentary resources the inhabitants somehow managed to have houses built that were both functional and beautiful, for the builders obeyed certain rules of symmetry and order. The captives' quarters had begun to cover all the lower part of Gorée when Nicolas Pépin, the son



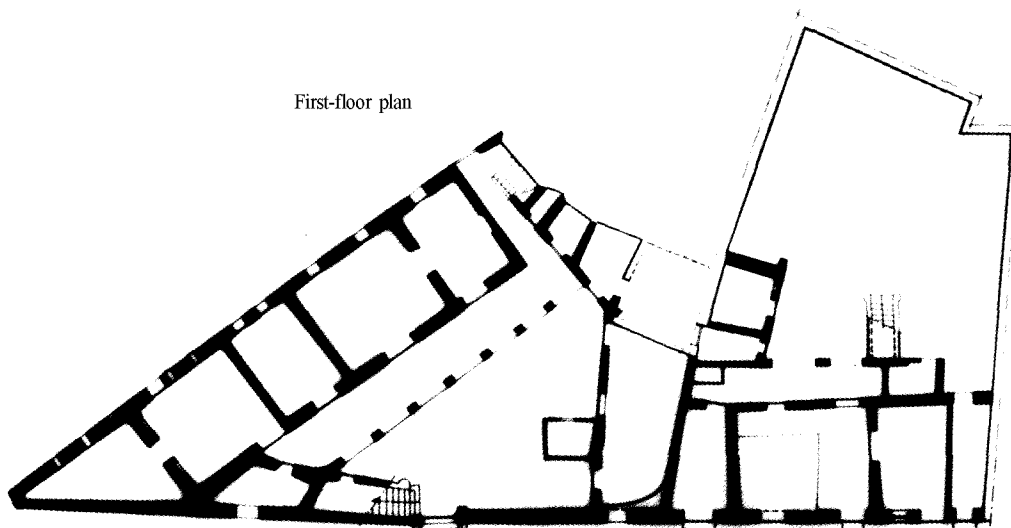
of a company surgeon and brother of a celebrated *signare*, had built the subsequently famous 'Maison des Esclaves', the prototype of Gorée's slave quarters.

In the nineteenth century, the island finally earned its name of 'Gorée la Joyeuse' (Gorée the Fortunate) when, after a long-drawn-out battle, slavery ceased to disfigure the island, and Gorée was no longer a sinister human warehouse. A period of readaptation was needed. Clandestine slave trading and the subterfuge of the indenture system prolonged the old ways for a while, but Gorée was soon able to find new sources of prosperity, its population peaking at 5,000 in 1832. The last stage of a long history came in 1848, with the abolition of house slavery and the indenture system. Gorée was then inhabited only by freemen and the island discovered a new vocation as a centre of instruction and culture. Religious congregations,

The Victoria Albus house



Rue Saint-Germain façade



First-floor plan

and subsequently the state, set up schools there. A practice which has continued until today as can be seen from the School of the National Order of the Lion (a secondary school for girls) and the Université des Mutants. Gorée also served as the base for the naval division responsible for stamping out clandestine slave trading, whose admiral lived in the Palais Roume. New administrative buildings were constructed and the island continued to grow in importance. According to one account, 'Gorée lies at the forefront of France's whole fleet on the coast of Africa, from Cape Verde to the Cape of Sierra Leone.' As a free port, Gorée saw its trade greatly expanded by the large commercial firms which established posts on the island. Shops and markets of every kind gave rise to bustling streets and the intense building activity went on unabated.

This is the period of prosperity to which we owe Gorée's complex and varied landscape ; a landscape influenced also by a society, with its European and African elements, which constructed an environment in its own image, both mild and harsh, opulent and tragic. Contrasted with the terrible bareness of the slaves' cells was the discreet refinement of the dwellings, with their carved wooden galleries, their tiled porches, their balconies, their verandahs and their airy upper rooms designed primarily to provide coolness and shade. Barely tempered by decorative mouldings, the sober façades with their shuttered windows looked on to cool narrow streets.

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## ***THE DELICATE BALANCE OF GORÉE***

The captivating charm of Gorée is evident to all. The island has overcome a tragic past and the visitor can now admire the beauty of its landscape, but the renowned calm of the island has gradually turned into a lethargy that nothing seems to have the power to shake. The prosperity of Gorée did not survive the major changes of the late nineteenth century. The mainland offered space and work for the people of Gorée, crammed together on their small island. The founding and development of Dakar marshalled both energy and capital. Paradoxically, Gorée owes its unaltered appearance to its decline, since for several decades it has remained unchanged by any new building. However, this decline is also the cause of the dangers now facing the island.

### ***The decline of Gorée***

Its success was paradoxically one cause of Gorée's decay, for the island was overpopulated. The Cape Verde peninsula offered the space needed for economic expansion and for regular supplies, something that Gorée with its close dependence on the mainland for subsistence had never known. In 1846, a petition from the notables of Gorée requested the governor of Senegal to order the occupation of the peninsula in order to give the population space beyond the narrow confines of the island, which seemed to condemn its inhabitants to forced idleness. In 1855 the French minister for the navy and the colonies authorised the occupation of Dakar, and on 25 May 1857 Protet took possession of the Cape Verde peninsula in the name of France. A fresh page in the history of Senegal had been turned.

The development of Dakar hastened Gorée's decline and the island gradually forfeited to the new capital all its administrative prerogatives. In the economic area the cultivation and marketing of groundnuts debarred Gorée, since the investment involved was beyond the means of its merchants. The new heavy and bulky commodities called for alternative means of transport, the railway, which attracted the

entire coastal trade, linking Saint-Louis to Dakar and completely bypassing the island. Gorée was even supplanted in its role as a commercial port, after the opening of the Suez Canal short-circuited the former sea routes to Asia, on which the island had for three centuries been an essential port of call. Transatlantic liners, also, took on coal in the vast port of Dakar rather than in the little roadstead of Gorée. The fact that Gorée is an island had once made its fortune, but became its undoing. From over 3,000 inhabitants in 1870, the population of the island dwindled to 1,300 in 1910 and 600 in 1931.

The decline of the island began to be reflected in its appearance, since no new buildings were erected to change the townscape and many once splendid dwellings were deserted and crumbling. Even worse, at the time of the terrible yellow fever epidemics which struck the island in 1859, 1878/ 79 and 1927/ 28, the contaminated houses were systematically demolished. Gorée fell into the semi-slumber from which it has never really emerged.

## ***A series of threats***

### ***The perils of the marine environment***

Like a ship at sea, Gorée is subjected to all the hazards of a difficult natural environment. The sea air corrodes metalwork, and the winds and tornadoes of the rainy season damage roofs, starting the process of dilapidation. Erosion by the sea is also eating away the foundations of the buildings along the shoreline. For instance, the former West Battery had been extensively undermined by the sea and, until the World Heritage Fund took action, was in danger of collapse. Though less spectacular, the daily deterioration of the buildings is equally serious. The flat roofs of *argamasse* mortar make heavy demands in terms of upkeep, as do the tiled roofs which are tending to take their place. The baked brick, or the lime and shell mortar used to bond the basalt blocks of which the walls are built, are exposed to sea spray now that their protective coatings have gone.

The key problem of Gorée's survival is therefore maintenance. The island indeed owes its current state of preservation to the fact that for centuries it was maintained by its inhabitants just as a ship is constantly strengthened, repaired and repainted by its crew. Careful maintenance, however implies a large, stable and motivated population, which is now far from being the case.



### ***The human problems***

Responsibility for the maintenance of each residence lies with a great many owners scattered throughout Senegal. The old Gorée families have split into numerous branches and most of their descendants have left the island and kept their joint ownership title-deeds. Those remaining on Gorée no longer have the funds or legal title to shoulder the burden of maintenance.

The new islanders' who have settled there occupy many of the buildings without any title. They earn little money and so are unable to do any restoration work of the premises they occupy. Furthermore, many of the present inhabitants are civil servants from Dakar who are accommodated in public buildings which were never intended to be used as dwellings. Another factor is that any abandoned administrative premises are squatted in by poor families, so that most of the buildings have a great many impecunious occupants. This overpopulation has resulted in numerous makeshift alterations which are harming the buildings as much as are the effects of time.

Despite the fact that many buildings are over-occupied, however, the essential problem of the island is depopulation.

Gorée has been unable to resist the attraction of Dakar. The growth of the Senegalese capital has drawn Gorée's population to the extent that there are now only 900 residents left on the island, but at the same time the amount of available housing has dwindled.

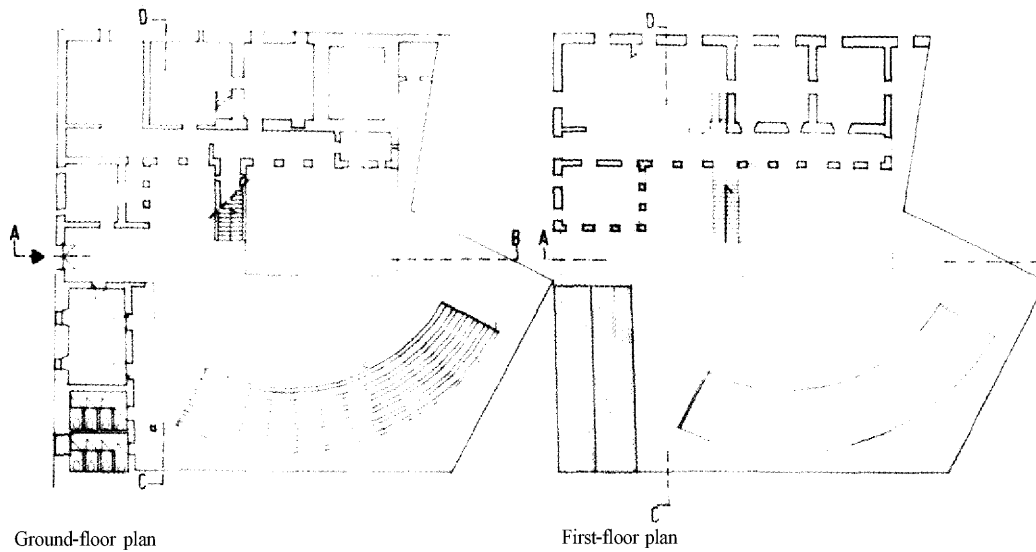
Gorée has become a suburb of Dakar and it has no substantial economic activity to retain its population. Tourism is today the island's only resource and the *Hôtel de l'Espadon* was, until its recent closure, Gorée's biggest business. However, tourism does not provide enough jobs as waiter, cook, shopkeeper, museum attendant, etc., for the island's working population. The civil service posts and the teaching and administrative jobs in the schools-rank second among the activities of the island-require higher qualifications and are filled by people from Dakar. The landing stage has therefore become the lifeline of an island which lives by the boat linking it to Dakar. Teachers and civil servants from Dakar travel to Gorée daily to work while the islanders go off to seek employment in the capital. The economic dependence of the island is total. Even fishing is a residual occupation, as supplies of fish now arrive via Dakar.

While the number of permanent residents on the island is tending to decrease, that of occasional residents is rising. As a suburb of Dakar, Gorée is in danger of becoming a ghost or

**The legal obstacles**

**A dormitory Island**

**Gorée, a ghost town?**

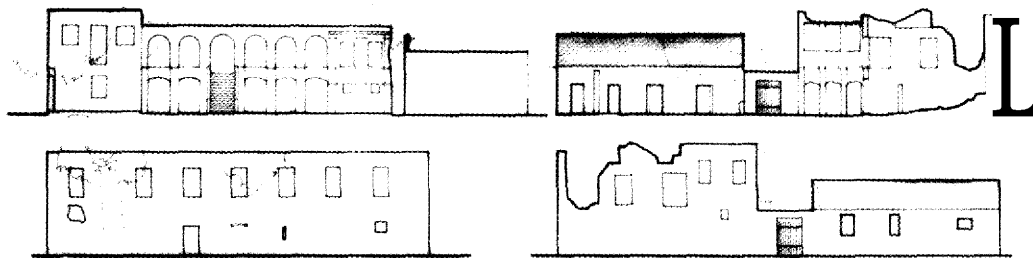


Ground-floor plan

First-floor plan

Section A-B

Section C-D



Rue Boufflers façade

Rue Malavois façade

The Angrand home

museum town. Secondary homes now account for nearly a third of the island's dwellings. They belong to a more affluent section of the community which keeps them in better repair than the permanent islanders do their own houses, but they are also under-occupied and lived in only intermittently. Being vast, and well-situated along the shore, the former slave quarters have attracted most of these occasional residents. Arbitrary restoration work is sometimes the price that has to be paid for the obvious care taken with maintenance.

The restoration of Gorée must therefore hinge on social and economic renewal, which is an ambitious but absolutely necessary project if the island is to be safeguarded.

## **PROPOSALS**

### ***Living today on a site of yesterday***

#### ***The population of Gorée***

Gorée once had up to 5,000 inhabitants; today there are barely 1,000. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the island has lost its population as a result of the emigration to Saint-Louis, Rufisque and then Dakar. A second wave of emigration occurred in the 1960s when Senegal became independent. In addition to the fact that the attraction of the Senegalese capital for the population of Gorée continued to grow during this period, the French military personnel living on the island made over their property to the government and left Gorée, which then lost its function as a military base. Two things softened the blow of these departures. First, migration from the rural areas, attracted by the growth of Dakar, people living along the banks of the Senegal River came to settle in the suburbs, in Pikine, for instance, and in Rufisque. Second, public servants settling on the island. 'This development went hand in hand with the establishment on Gorée of state institutions, such as the School of the National Order of the Lion and the Université des Mutants.

**Migratory  
currents**

There are thus among the people of Gorée two main groups:

The 'old Goréans', a Black or mulatto population, whose roots are inextricably intertwined with the history of the island.

They inherited most of the privately owned buildings, but many of the old families left Gorée during its decline, nevertheless keeping their titles as co-owners.

The new population of Gorée', of Toucouleur origin, resident on the island for thirty years or less. These people have small incomes, and most of them are public servants who were provided with accommodation on the island and were later joined by their families. This group is on the increase.

All the same, these long-term migratory currents do not fully account for all the population of Gorée. A new distinction must be made at this point between permanent and temporary residents, and the recent but important development of seasonal migration should be mentioned.

The charm of Gorée has attracted a new group of

islanders, People living in Dakar have bought secondary residences in which they live at weekends and during the summer. As they are better off than the local people, they have been able to carry out restoration work that would have been too expensive for their predecessors. This 'floating population, consisting of people who are totally captivated by Gorée, plays an important role on the island because of its vitality and its attachment to the landscape, whose characteristic traits it aims to preserve.

However, if the numbers of such people are not limited they could eventually empty Gorée of its substance to the extent of turning it into a museum-piece or a luxury dormitory suburb.

**The distribution of the population**

Almost the whole of the island, approximately 12 hectares, is built-up, taking into account the fact that the fortifications themselves occupy one-fifth of the surface area. The population is fairly evenly spread, but changes for the worse are occurring. The population density is varying increasingly from one area to the next as the permanent residents make way for the temporary inhabitants of the island. Some areas of the town are empty, as the people have left to seek work and accommodation in Dakar. New owners, who are temporary residents, settle in and carry out restoration work which, although it helps to preserve the distinctive characteristics of Gorée, leads to a much lower population density in the built-up areas. Thus out of 187 possible residential units, 75 are used as permanent accommodation and 23 as temporary dwellings.

Most of the restored buildings are former slave quarters, mainly situated in the northern part of the island, but they are under-occupied and empty for much of the year. On the other hand, there are a vast number of people on small incomes packed into buildings that are so old that they are in danger of collapse. The buildings that are most affected by over-occupation are the one-storey dwellings and the administrative buildings, whose internal arrangement is poorly suited for housing. There are 69 slave houses/ trading centres, 4 administrative buildings, and 27 one-storey dwellings. Most of the buildings are used for residential purposes, whether principal or secondary homes. Other uses are very limited.

***Function of the island's buildings***

*Commercial establishments:* Two hotel/ restaurants with facilities for a limited number of people; several small shops for tourists, selling clothes, souvenirs, and basic essentials; bars.

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*Schools.* School of the National Order of the Lion (secondary school for girls); elementary school; nursery school.

*Cultural establishments* Historical Museum; Maritime Museum; Maison des Esclaves (Slave House); Université des Mutants.

*Public services,* Post office; police station; community clinic.

*Religious establishments.* Church of St Charles Borromeo; the Mosque.

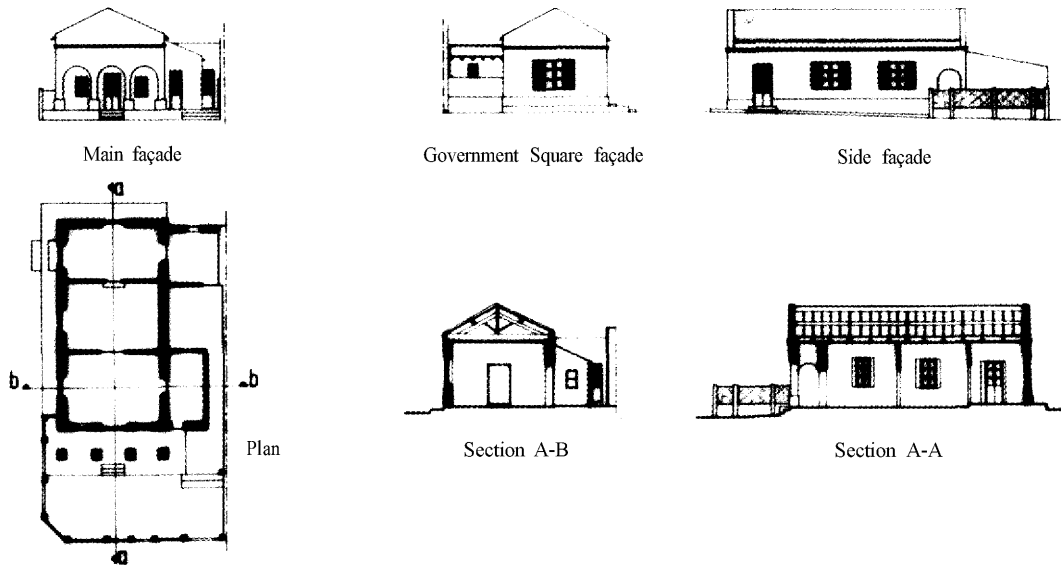
Cultural and tourist facilities clearly predominate, but they provide only very few jobs for the population of Gorée. Only a small number of the teachers at the elementary school originate from the island. The teachers and the administrative staff at the School of the National Order of the Lion and the Université des Mutants come in from Dakar every day.

Tourism and the small souvenir shop provide the majority of jobs open to the islands population, but this is not enough to guarantee the islands economic survival.

### ***The environment of Gorée***

Nowadays, the islands fundamental characteristic is its dependence on Dakar, the mainland capital, and this dependence has become part of the very landscape. The landing stage is the only way of reaching the island, since the piles of basalt rocks mean that boats cannot berth anywhere except in the port. All the life of the island begins there, the

The Harbour Master's house







Aerial view of the island (Photo:  
Dink Debusyn)

point from which the streets fill and the shops draw their business

A second distinctive characteristic is the military presence on the island. At both ends of Gorée are the barren areas of the two great forts. In the north stands the round, massive Fort d'Estrées, or North Point Battery, dominating the port; while in the south, perched on the flat-topped hill above the town, is Fort Saint-Michel, or the Castel. Between these two main features stretch the dense ramifications of the town. Government Square, separated from the beach by the Battery, is the hub of the town. It is the administrative, cultural and touristic centre of the island, and round it stand the former teacher-training college (William Ponty Academy), the youth club, the town hall, the police station, the women's hostel, the Maritime Museum, and the former Palais Roume (Hotel de l'Espadon).

### ***Survey of the heritage that preserves the collective memory***

Gorée's architectural heritage falls into two main groups. On the one hand there are the military structures such as the forts, batteries, ramparts and defences and on the other hand civilian buildings such as the slave quarters, trading houses and public buildings. The buildings on Gorée are to a large extent homogeneous in style, despite the damage wrought by time and the diversity and extent of the conversions and changes carried out during the island's history. This harmony reflects a felicitous union of the military and civilian environments, which often make contradictory demands but in this case are complementary.

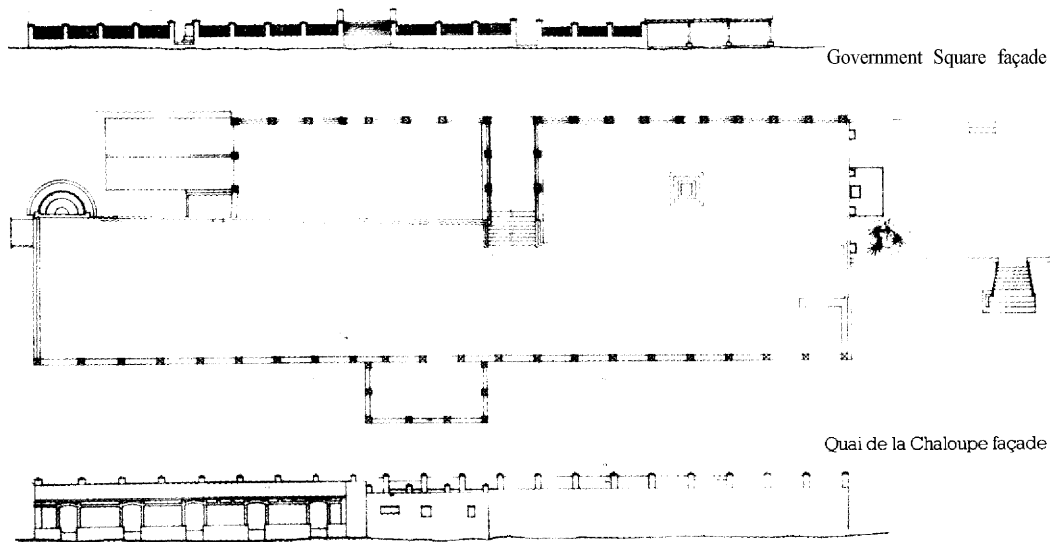
#### **Military structures**

The defences occupy approximately one-fifth of the island's surface area and form a panorama of the art of fortification from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. They include, for example, a crescent-shaped bastion and a round fort with casemates. In addition there exists a priceless artillery collection scattered throughout the island which could be reassembled *in situ*.

Fort Saint-Michel, or the Castel standing on the flat-topped basalt hill in the south, is now abandoned. Considerable funds would be required for its restoration; but the parts that remain could be improved by developing the landscape.

Fort d'Estrées, or North Point Battery, was erected on the northern tip of the island between 1850 and 1856 to control the entrance to the Dakar roadstead. It fulfilled its military function belatedly, when the Free French Forces attempted to





land in Dakar in 1940, after which it was turned into an annex of the capital's prison. It is a fine example of nineteenth-century military architecture and bears witness to a turning-point in Africa's history, the period when the slave trade was succeeded by the systematic colonization of the continent. Fort d'Estrées is one of the last examples of coastal fortifications from the age of wooden ships, before the major technological revolutions that ushered in armoured vessels. Inside the fort is a vast amount of space which could be used if a moderate amount of restoration work were carried out, and the Historical Museum of the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa (IFAN) is soon to be established there.

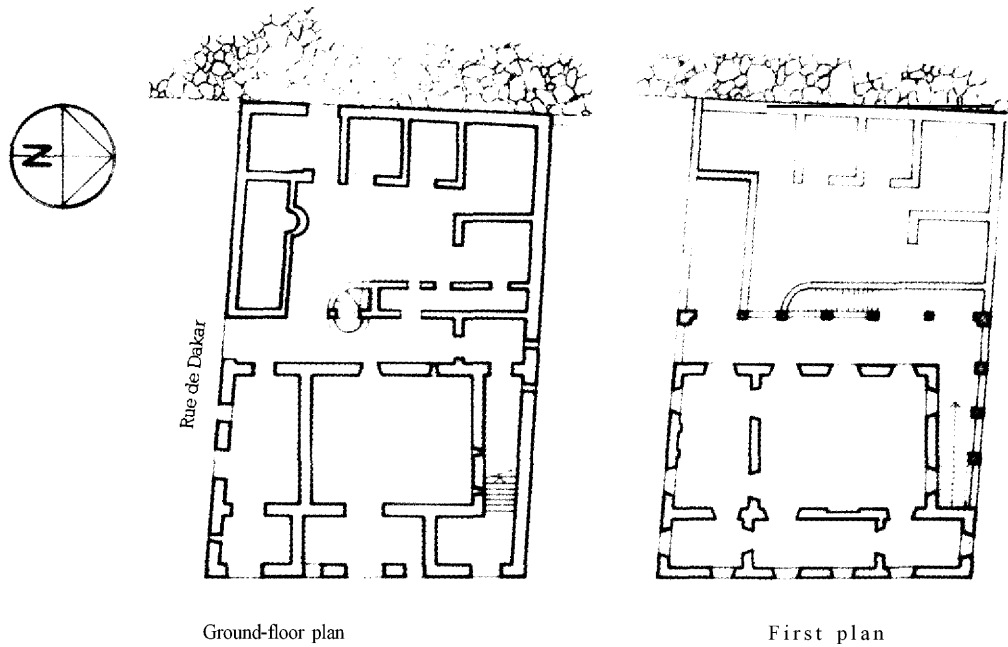
In addition to these two main parts of the defensive system there is the West Battery, a crescent-shaped fort dating from 1858, enjoying an exceptional view. Unfortunately it has been extensively damaged by marine erosion, which has destroyed part of the outer wall.

The walls of the port date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were modified to provide a promenade in 1875, but are today in a dilapidated state.

The real symbol of Gorée is the slave quarters, about a dozen of which are still in existence. The Maison des Esclaves (Slave House), restored for the International Festival of Negro Arts in 1966, provides a fine example. These quarters were built on the shore-ward of the veritable inhabited fortresses looking inwards to their courtyards, between the town and the sea. A broad covered porch leads into the inner courtyard around which the building stands. There are two storeys. The top floor housed the masters' quarters, with verandahs, balconies, high

Ramparts of the Quai de la Chaloupe

Civilian buildings



Ground-floor plan

First plan

The Diouga Dieng house

ceilings and wide, light, airy rooms typical of the eighteenth-century lifestyle. On the ground floor were the slaves' quarters with their dark, damp, low cells around which ran the watch gallery manned by the guards. On the side facing the sea, the loop-holed wall served as a rampart, and a door opened on to the shore.

Sheltered by the walls of the slave quarters are the 'concessions': single-storey houses dating from the same period as the slave quarters and dependent on them.

Private dwellings, which used to be the headquarters of trading companies established on the island also provide fine examples of Gorée architecture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They are two-storey buildings with verandahs and balconies—the verandahs fitted in the eighteenth century with arcades and in the nineteenth century with columned porticoes or projecting balconies protected by a sloping tiled roof, which became widespread in the nineteenth century, replacing the eighteenth-century verandahs. All these testimonies to the lifestyle of a prosperous and carefree society contribute much to the charm of the streets of Gorée.

There are four particularly noteworthy public buildings. First, the Church of St Charles Borromeo (1825-29) which is the oldest church still in existence in Senegal. Its facade, with an architraved peristyle and Doric columns, is typical of the neoclassical style. It still contains the

original interior decoration and furniture. Second, the nineteenth-century Mosque, which is considered to be the oldest permanent mosque in Senegal, enjoys a splendid situation on a terrace by the sea. There are also the former administrative buildings, including the governors palace, mostly dating from the nineteenth century, and the former military hospital, rebuilt in 1870.

A survey of Gorée's heritage cannot be confined to a list of buildings, however. It must, if it is not to misrepresent the islands specific nature, take account of the spaces as well as the built-up parts, that is, it must mention the streets, squares and everything that goes to make up the public areas. We must in this connection emphasise the mineral nature of the streets of Gorée, laid with shell sand or basalt-paved; its squares and terraces; its quays with their of large basalt blocks. The two springs on the island, which are still used, the baobabs, Africa's symbolic tree, and the palaver trees punctuate the public areas and are the focal points of social communication on Gorée.

The heritage of Gorée also displays original techniques, an architecture specific to the island, blending the skills of Europe and Africa. The balconies, verandahs and inner courtyards lend a homogeneity to the landscape of Gorée, as do the tiled roofs and the flat roofs of lime-and-sand *argamasse* mortar. The essential predominant ingredient in this architecture is basalt. This dark-coloured volcanic rock rough-hewn in large blocks with hammer and chisel, occurs abundantly on the island and has been used everywhere, in a variety of forms. It is the main material used for the islands fortifications, but it is also employed in the streets in the form of paving stones and steps. Large blocks of it form the terrace of the Mosque, the quays and the ramparts. In thin slabs and large pebbles, it is to be seen in the walls of private dwellings. The two forts and the courtyards of houses are also paved with slabs of trachyte, a purplish-grey volcanic rock from the Canary Islands. The eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century slaves, the real builders of the island, managed to work these difficult materials with hammer and chisel alone. The bonding was a lime mortar made of finely ground shells or crushed burnt brick. Red or pale ochre bricks are, together with basalt, the islands major building material. They were produced by the Saint-Louis and Podor brickworks, and used for doorways, windows and the loopholes of the forts. Private houses are mainly brick-built. All the walls on the island are whitewashed, and weathering has produced a wide range of predominantly red, pink or ochre tints symbolic of Gorée's landscape.

**An art of  
building**

## ***THE RIGHT TIME TO SAVE GORÉE***

Gorée has overcome a tragic past. It can now go further by becoming, in the words of Mr Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, 'one of those rare places where the younger generation of Africa and the Americas can refresh their memories... a place for meditation, spiritual reflection and contemplation, where those who are most aware of the tragedies of their history will gain a more real sense of justice and brotherhood. The time has now come to promote this new purpose for Gorée.

The Senegalese Government has consistently refused to sell off the artistic and cultural resources of Gorée and to sacrifice for immediate economic gain one of the important centres of African civilisation. In 1966, Gorée was selected to host the first International Festival of Negro Arts, organised by the Government of Senegal. Isolated restoration work was undertaken for the occasion. The Festival also drew the attention of the international community to the importance of Gorée in the history of African nations. Between 1971 and 1973, a mass of legislation was passed, defining the status of the historic monuments and laying down how they should be protected. A Bureau d'Architecture des Monuments Historiques (BAMH) was set up. In 1972, Senegal ratified the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which had been adopted by the General Conference of Unesco at its seventeenth session. In 1974, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) granted a loan to the Government of Senegal as part of a comprehensive project for the development of the 'Petite C&e' south of Dakar. The project provided that Unesco would carry out the preliminary studies for a plan of action. At the request of the Senegalese authorities, Unesco sent consultants to Gorée and Saint-Louis. In 1975, the Senegalese Government accorded formal recognition to the cultural significance of Gorée by including it in the inventory of Senegal's historic monuments. A master plan for the renewal of Gorée was adopted. In 1978, the island was included in the list of the cultural and natural heritage of mankind, established by Unesco. At its twentieth session the General Conference of Unesco decided to launch an international campaign for the safeguarding of Gorée. Under the IBRD loan of \$160,000, Unesco provided the

necessary expert services and equipment for finalization of the safeguarding plan. An expert architect/restorer resident on Gorée was appointed for two years, and two consultant architects went to the island to supervise work for four months. A report prepared by BAMH and the Senegalese Ministry of Town Planning on the preservation of the historic centre of Gorée was published.

In 1980, the Director-General of Unesco launched a formal appeal for the safeguarding and restoration of the island of Gorée: 'Thus, having been a bridge of sighs between Africa and the Black Americas, Gorée is gradually becoming a symbol of hope.' A sum of \$25,000 was granted by the World Heritage Fund to the Senegalese Government as emergency assistance for repairs to the West Battery, which was in danger of collapse.

In 1981, a plan of action based on careful preliminary studies was approved by the Government of Senegal. Under it, Unesco provided the technical services of two resident architects/restorers. This survey, architectural assistance and project management work was carried out in close co-operation with BAMH and IFAN.

A special account has been opened at Unesco to accept financial contributions for the international campaign for the safeguarding of Gorée. An International Committee for the Safeguarding of Gorée has been formed under the chairmanship of President L. S. Senghor.

### ***The safeguarding plan: a heritage to save and an island to revitalize***

#### ***Objectives and action***

The objectives of the safeguarding plan are to preserve and develop the architectural heritage of Gorée and to revitalise the island socially and culturally. The idea behind the plan is to prevent Gorée from becoming either a dormitory suburb or a museum, and it takes account of the natural and architectural as well as the social and economic features of the island. In this respect, an understanding of the key problem of population movements on and off the island was essential before any initiative could be taken. There is thus a close link between restoration and economic development. Indeed, safeguarding can contribute to development and development is the surest guarantee of the safeguarding of Gorée. Action is therefore needed at three levels:

Action is needed locally to improve the daily life of the islanders by developing social, health, educational and economic activities and facilities. On this hinges the very survival of the island, since local activities and facilities alone can keep Gorée's population there and stop them from leaving. What is particularly needed is to limit the islands dependence on Dakar by ensuring as great a degree as possible of self-sufficiency in food. Furthermore, the safeguarding plan will succeed if the people are closely associated with the restoration work and with the organisation of activities, and if local initiative is encouraged.

Nationwide action is needed to make the whole country aware of the outstanding value of Gorée's heritage.

Action is also required internationally, since the safeguarding plan emphasises the importance of alerting international opinion. The Black world in particular--the African continent and the Black Diaspora alike--must be made aware that in Gorée it has one of its tap-roots. As an important place in world history, Gorée can also become one of the great centres of the dialogue of cultures and of worldwide understanding.

Three main types of action are provided for. These are preservation of the architectural heritage, functional rehabilitation and technical assistance for private initiative.

**Preservation of  
the architectural  
heritage**

Direct action by the state will involve buildings selected for their architectural interest, their capacity to house new activities and the form of their tenure (nearly all the buildings belong to the Senegalese State or to public institutions). Action is to take the following forms: removal of additions and accretions; restoration of period facades; consolidation; re-opening of bricked-up doors and windows; reconstruction of missing parts, and so forth.

*The Palais Roume.* Built in 1864 as the residence of Governor Roume and badly damaged in 1940, the Palais Roume subsequently became a rest home for the French navy, a printing works and then the Hotel de l'Espadon, which closed in 1981. It is near the shore, with one façade looking on to Government Square and the other overlooking the Dakar roadstead. It is built in the colonial style with arched verandahs and balconies, but underwent some clumsy restoration work shortly after the Second World War. The use of too much reinforced concrete, which is very vulnerable to sea air, has resulted in damage to the decorative mouldings and even to the load-bearing structures. Neglected and with only sparse facilities, the hotel is being restored.











*The Maison du Soudan.* Built in the eighteenth century as the headquarters of a trading firm after which it is still called, the Maison du Soudan accommodated the Malian students of the William Ponty Academy and subsequently the Malagasy artillery battalion. With its two verandahs and its semi-circular staircase, this building is of great architectural interest. When restored, it will house studios for artists.

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Estimated cost of work</i>	69,160,000
<i>Estimated cost of equipment</i>	10,000,000

*The former William Ponty Academy* was built in the latter third of the eighteenth century by the merchant Lafitte and it continued as a trading house until the early twentieth century. In 1913 it was used for the first teacher-training college in French West Africa, the William Ponty Academy, whose distinguished former pupils include Felix Houphouët-Boigny, Modibo Keita, Hamani Diori, Hubert Maga and Mamadou Dia. It possesses a fine facade overlooking Government Square, adorned with a loggia of semi-circular arches on square pillars. When restored, it will house a cultural centre.

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Estimated cost of main part</i>	131,740,000
<i>Estimated cost of right wing</i>	20,000,000
<i>Estimated cost of equipment and furniture</i>	<u>65,000,000</u>
Total:	216,740,000

*The former convent school* was built in 1772 and was used as slave quarters before becoming the headquarters of the naval administration from 1817 to 1864. It subsequently became the convent school of the Congregation of St Joseph of Cluny, through which passed many of the islands girls. The present occupants could be rehoused locally.

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Estimated cost of restoring main buildings</i>	134,540,000
<i>Estimated cost of equipment</i>	<u>35,000,000</u>
Total:	169,540,000

*The Victoria Albis house.* This is a fine two-storey house dating from 1777. It possesses two superimposed arcaded galleries and its two main blocks are set on the sides of a triangular courtyard and garden. One of the two buildings stands like the prow of a ship at the corner of the rue Saint-Germain and rue

Malavois. It used to be the home of Victoria Albis, the famed eighteenth-century *signare*, before housing the law courts and, since 1950, the IFAN Historical Museum.

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Estimated cost of work</i>	55,125,000
<i>Estimated cost of work</i> <i>on ruined Jules Basse house</i>	3,000,000
<i>Estimated cost of equipping and</i> <i>furnishing Victoria Albis house</i>	<u>15,000,000</u>
Total :	76,125,000

*The Hortala house.* This former trading establishment still has something of the warehouse about it, with, for instance, the three large double ground-floor doors opening on to the street. Worthy of note is the very fine basalt wall of the large room where provisions were stored.

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Estimated cost of renovation</i>	32,000,000

*The Diouga Dieng house.* These former slave quarters are built on land granted by the Chevalier de Boufflers in 1787. A distinctive feature of the facade giving on to the courtyard is the regular pattern of the colonnade of an L-shaped verandah, which is covered by a sloping tiled roof. The flat roof offers a magnificent sea view. The building is to house a documentation centre on the slave trade and the Black Diaspora.

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Estimated cost of work</i>	69,120,000
<i>Estimated cost</i> <i>of constituting documentation</i>	25,000,000

*The ramparts of the square.* In the early eighteenth century, Andre Brie, the general manager of the concession, had an entrenchment of basalt shingle constructed and equipped with seven cannon to defend the Bay of Gorée. It was later altered and the number of cannon increased to twenty. In front of it was a moat 5 metres wide and 2 metres deep, running along the entire edge of the beach. The Battery subsequently underwent several more alterations. In 1875, the military engineers handed it over to the community, whereupon the artillery was removed and it became one of the favourite promenades of the islanders, the Promenade Canard. Shops were opened along the ramparts, and in the garden a monument was erected to the memory of the doctors and pharmacists who died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1878.

The two gardens, the statue of Blaise Diagne, the public fountain, the little market and the women's centre complete the pleasant and lively aspect of this part of the town.

The restoration of the ramparts, which have had to be underpinned, has recently been completed. Alterations are to be made to the Promenade Canard, since excavations have revealed traces of former fortifications. A market is to be built above the former hauling-slip in order to maintain healthy commercial activity in the heart of Gorée.

The estimated cost of work is as follows

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Rebuilding of ramparts</i>	10,000,000
<i>Modernization of harbour-master's office</i>	5,600,000
<i>Building of public lavatory</i>	1,500,000
<i>Shops</i>	4,800,000
<i>Installation of first-aid post</i>	2,750,000
	<hr/>
	24,650,000
<i>Equipment</i>	5,000,000
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Total:	29,650,000

*The open-air theatre of the former Angrand House.*

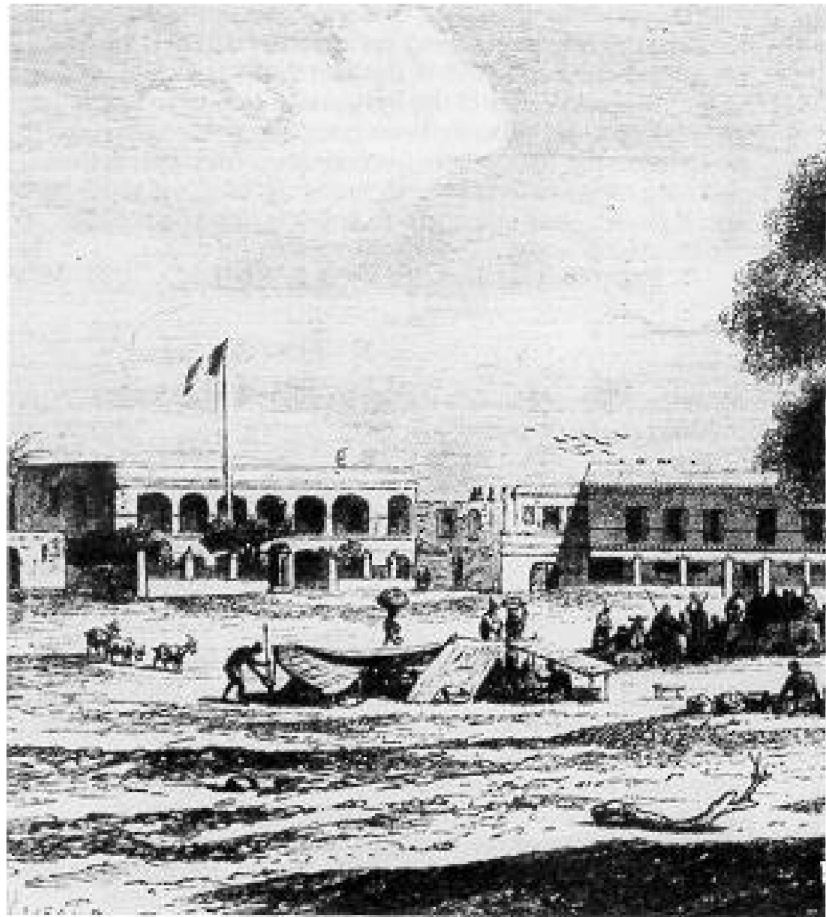
This grand residence was built in 1777 by Jean Estouphan de Saint-Jean for his wife, the wealthy *signare* Marie-Thérèse Rossignole. The heirs removed the tiled roof in 1924 and vegetation subsequently crept over the walls, speeding up the decay of the building and giving it the appearance of a charmingly picturesque, nostalgic ruin. Tiers of seats were set up in the courtyard for a stage, with boxes and spotlights. The aim of this restoration will be to check the decay while retaining the picturesque character of the open-air theatre, and to improve the stage equipment.

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Cost of work</i>	25,000,000
<i>Equipment</i>	20,000,000

*The former convent house (Pavillon des Soeurs).* This house was built between 1847 and 1851 by decision of the fortifications committee and is at present used to accommodate the staff of the Hotel de l'Espadon. It could, after the necessary alterations be used as a youth hostel.

	<i>CFA francs</i>
<i>Estimated cost of work</i>	45,220,000
<i>Estimated equipment cost</i>	8,000,000
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Total:	53,220,000

Government Square and market-place, Gorée [Drawing by E. de Bérard]



In the longer term, renovation work could be carried out on the following: the Town Hall, built in 1787; the fortifications; the Church of St Charles Borromeo; the Mosque; the former hospital, which is to accommodate the students of the Université des Mutants; and the Maritime Museum housed in the former premises of the Compagnie Française des Indes.

A gift from the Lions Club of Dakar has enabled the first stage of work to be completed on setting up a nursery school in the part of the communal school formerly used as teachers' accommodation. The estimated cost of the scheme is 50,000,000 CFA francs.

Projects are under consideration concerning sewage-treatment facilities and the installation of an incinerator for household refuse.



It is planned to establish a vast educational and cultural complex, bringing together, with some modifications, existing cultural institutions under one roof. The centrepiece will be the North Point Battery (Fort d'Estrées), which the Senegalese Government decided to make available for cultural activities in 1977, when the annex of Dakar prison which it housed was abolished. After quite modest alterations, the fort will now house 'the IFAN Historical Museum. It is undergoing restoration (IFAN/ BAMH) as the only fortification on the African coast which can be restored to its original state, armaments included. The islands other two museums-the Maison des Esclaves and the Maritime Museum-will have their displays modernized and their collections put in order. A museum concerning the slave trade combined with an archives centre

**Functional  
rehabilitation**

on the Black Diaspora will occupy the Diouga Dieng house when it has been restored. A cultural centre is to be opened in the former William Ponty Academy and a youth hostel in the Pavillion des Soeurs. The Maison du Soudan will house a number of artists studios, and the Hortala house will contain shops and craftsmen's workshops. In addition, the former hospital will be used to provide more accommodation for the Université des Mutants.

**Technical assistance  
for private initiative**

As a third type of service, it is planned to provide architectural assistance for private initiative. The restoration work detailed above concerns buildings owned by the Senegalese state, but it is just as important to assist the islanders in preserving the general appearance of Gorée when they undertake individual, small-scale alterations themselves. For this work, they can request help from BAMH and Unesco's associate experts.

***First operations carried out***

The plan of action drawn up in connection with the IBRD funds provided for three operations: modernization of the port, road repairs, and renovation of the Hotel de l'Espadon. The modernization of the port was begun in June 1981 and completed in November. The work consisted of repairs of the landing stage, development of the port area and halting marine erosion by restocking the beach with sand. The sand ballasting of roadways and reconstruction of the basalt-paved areas were also carried out. The work was done by small teams using light equipment, since the narrow streets rule out heavy plant. As well as bringing about practical and aesthetic improvements, the work provided employment for a large number of islanders. The community of Dakar itself renovated the street lighting system. Work on the Hotel de l'Espadon is in progress.

The consolidation of the West Battery, for which the World Heritage Fund made an exceptional allocation of \$25,000 as emergency assistance, was carried out by BAMH. The work was completed in 1981.



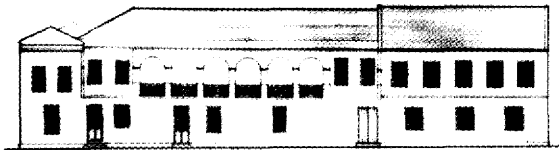
## ***EXCURSION TO THE ISLAND***

A visit to Gorée is a journey through space and time, which, of course, starts from the landing stage where the boat sets down tourists and islanders each day. One can see women returning from market, children on their way back from school and all the ordinary people of the island.

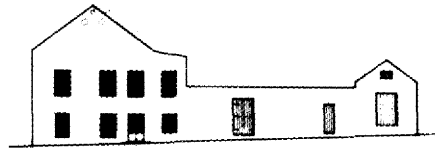
Walking along the shore and up the slope of the Chevalier de Boufflers, towards Fort d'Estrées or North Point Battery, one can admire on the way the richest trading houses of former times. The Maison Maurel et Prom, unfortunately stripped of its balconies, is now the post office. Opposite this house, as one sets off from the quay, there used to be a wooden pontoon to help the unloading of goods. Other interesting buildings include one that has been converted into a second home and another that now houses the Université des Mutants. The fort itself is undergoing alterations in order to accommodate the Historical Museum,

A walk along the Rue des Batteries, passing by the Rue de Hann, Rue de la Pointe, Rue de Dakar and Rue de Saint Joseph, brings one to the Rue du Gouvernement, passing successively from ruins to newly restored dwellings where the

The former Willam Ponty  
Academy-façades



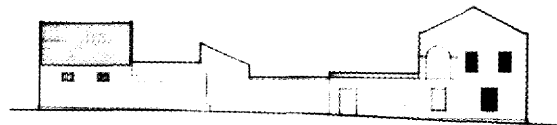
Government Square



Place de l'Hôpital



Rue du Castel



Rue des Puits

gardens have assumed an important place, creating an atmosphere of great calm.

Crossing Government Square, with the former ramparts and Promenade Canard on the left, and on the right the former residence of Governor Roume, leaving behind the former hospital, the William Ponty Academy, the former convent house and other buildings, one comes to the second part of the island, the *medina* which, to the right of the Allée du Castel, is still 'well ventilated'. To the left, the bustle and life of the former Bambara quarter is reminiscent of the time of 'Gorée the Fortunate'.

At the south tip of the island one can appreciate the calm of Gorée, but the districts immediately beneath the Castel seethe with life. Walking up the Castel, the tumult is gradually left behind and with a feeling of detachment one can look out over Dakar and the port, the majesty of the bay, and Gorée itself

One must not forget the islands places for meditation- the Mosque and its prayer area, at the foot of the Castel; the Church of St Charles Borromeo, in the upper part of the Rue du Castel; and the Maison des Esclaves, in the Rue Saint-Germain, of which its curator, Mr Ndiaye, speaks ably and with feeling.

Close by is the Historical Museum installed at present in the house of the rich *signare* Victoria Albis, at the corner of Rues Saint-Germain and Malavois, and temporarily open to visitors. The entire past of the island, happy and tragic, is brought back to life here.

As one glances from street to street and from stone to stone, full reign can be given to the imagination as the best guide to Gorée and its legends.