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The Hostages

A Hidden History of Colonial Spoils

Author: Taina Tervonen

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"A generous, intelligent, compassionate reminder that no single truth exists and histories of subjugation and systemic racism resurface painfully in symbols."

To whom does the past belong? Taina Tervonen goes out in search of treasures stolen from Ségou in 1890 that then seemingly vanished into thin air. Restitution seems impossible. From France to Senegal, she follows the journey of these colonial spoils: a saber, jewels, and a child – Abdoulaye, the grandson of military and religious leader El Hadj Oumar Tall. She tells their story, through the words of those who, in one way or another, encountered these hostages: a jeweler, librarians, teachers, old guides, a Senegalese Khalif... as well as those who are no longer with us, whose voices speak through archives.
