



The Colonial Past in History Textbooks - Historical and Social Psychological Perspectives

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This book examines the evolving representations of the colonial past from the mid-19th century up to decolonization in the 1960s and 70s – the so-called era of Modern Imperialism – in post-war history textbooks from across the world. The aim of the book is to examine the evolving outlook of colonial representations in history education and the underpinning explanations for the specific outlook in different – former colonizer and colonized – countries (to be found in collective memory, popular historical culture,

social representations, identity-building processes, and the state of historical knowledge within academia). The approach of the book is novel and innovative in different ways. First of all, given the complexity of the research, an original interdisciplinary approach has been implemented, which brings together historians, history educators and social psychologists to examine representations of colonialism in history education in different countries around the world while drawing on different theoretical frameworks. Secondly, given the interest in the interplay between collective memory, popular historical culture, social representations, and the state of historical knowledge within academia, a diachronic approach is implemented, examining the evolving representations of the colonial past, and connecting them to developments within society at large and academia. This will allow for a deeper understanding of the processes under examination. Thirdly, studies from various corners of the world are included in the book. More specifically, the project includes research from three categories of countries: former colonizer countries – including England, Spain, Italy, France, Portugal and Belgium –, countries having been both colonized and colonizer – Chile – and former colonized countries, including Zimbabwe, Malta and Mozambique. This selection allows pairing up the countries under review as former colonizing-colonized ones (for instance Portugal-Mozambique, United Kingdom-Malta),

allowing for an in-depth comparison between the countries involved. Before reaching the research core, three introductory chapters outline three general issues. The book starts with addressing the different approaches and epistemological underpinnings history and social psychology as academic disciplines hold. In a second chapter, evolutions within international academic colonial historiography are analyzed, with a special focus on the recent development of New Imperial History. A third chapter analyses history textbooks as cultural tools and political means of transmitting historical knowledge and representations across generations. The next ten chapters form the core of the book, in which evolving representations of colonial history (from mid-19th century until decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s) are examined, explained and reflected upon, for the abovementioned countries. This is done through a history textbook analysis in a diachronic perspective. For some countries the analysis dates back to textbooks published after the Second World War; for other countries the focus will be more limited in time. The research presented is done by historians and history educators, as well as by social psychologists. In a concluding chapter, an overall overview is presented, in which similarities and differences throughout the case studies are identified, interpreted and reflected upon.

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