

# Decolonizing history education

Historical thinking on intercultural contacts versus a Eurocentric regime  
of truth

# La colonisation visait à "partager sa culture aux peuples d'Afrique", estime François Fillon

- ▶ “For 500 years, Europeans have attempted to recreate the world to their image and resemblance.” (Bart De Wever, *in identity*, p. 73)

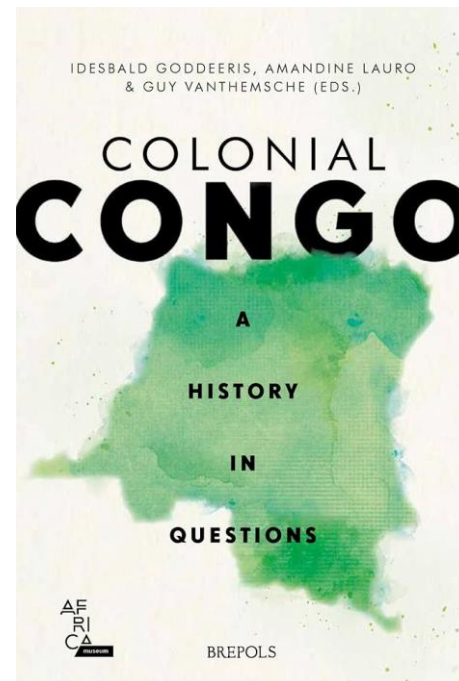


HOME › 8 (2020) 8 › KANT – A RACIST?

## Kant – a Racist?

Kant – ein Rassist?

BY ZORN, DANIEL-PASCAL ON AUGUST 21, 2020



Certain essential traits of the colonial system remained recognizable throughout the 75 years of Belgian rule:

- Violence
- Racism
- Greed
- The ambition to transform the “native” and the colonized society.



The VRT

### Heisa on stereotypical advertising for Oerwoudfuif

Author Dalilla Hermans does not think it is possible that Hansbeke’s scouts will continue to use a stereotypical image of a black person to advertise their annual Oerwoudfuif. She calls it “a textbook example of how to push black children and young people again in the corner of “joy one-word from the jungle”. She also does not understand that Scouts and Guides do not intervene in Flanders.

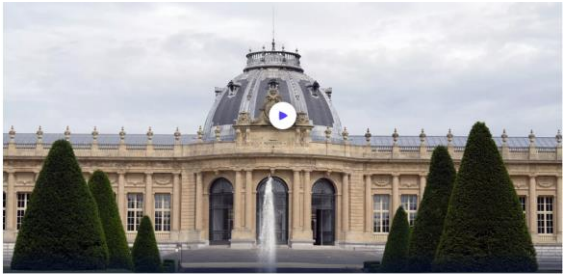
## Africa Museum under fire after ‘blackface’ at African Party: “Someone should have performed”





**Dries Van Langenhove**  
February 11, 2019 at 5:37 PM · 🌐

Moet just niks.



### United Nations Working Group: "Belgium must apologize for atrocities during colonial past"

A United Nations expert group calls on Belgium to apologize for our colonial past and the crimes that took place during that “dark chapter” in Belgian history. This was shown in the presentation of the interim findings of the expert group, which was on fact-finding mission in our country last week.

# Opinion: How ‘woke-thinking’ threatens to turn the neck around the curve

Learning about diversity and solidarity in the academic or democratic community does not start with law, but in talking together about difficult, painful things.

**Saro Lozano Parra** 6 July 2021, 12:00



### CHECK: No, historian Goddeeris (KU Leuven) does not want to ban old comics, but strives for nuance

The Black Lives Matter movement causes a flow of mis and disinformation. VRT NWS checks the most notable statements and bundles all checks in the overview below.



# Colonial past

- ▶ Focal point of (heated) debate
  - ▶ Very different interpretations and representations
  - ▶ Sensitive history:
    - ▶ Left - right
    - ▶ Majority group - minoritized groups
  - ▶ Is not over: continues into the present
  - ▶ Uses and abuses in political and social discourse
  - ▶ Connected to identity politics: nativism & sense of belonging
- Also in history education



# Decolonisation and history education

- ▶ Not: decolonization in history education
- ▶ But: decolonization of history education



- ▶ “Self-hatred”
- ▶ Sowing societal discord
- ▶ Relativism (every interpretation is equal; everything is pure perspective)



- ▶ Better historical-scientific understanding
- ▶ History didactic understanding: attributing significance, agency, multiperspectivity ...
- ▶ Deconstructing processes of identity construction
- ▶ Wider sense of belonging

## Decolonization of history education

- ▶ Deconstruction of how colonialism shaped/shapes views of man(kind) and world
- ▶ Deconstructing master narratives and connected historical consciousness
- ▶ Letting go of colonial mindset
- ▶ Letting go an exclusive white perspective on past
- ▶ Reflection on relationship knowledge and power
- ▶ Reflection on complex continuing of past into present

# Overview

## Is decolonization of history education necessary?

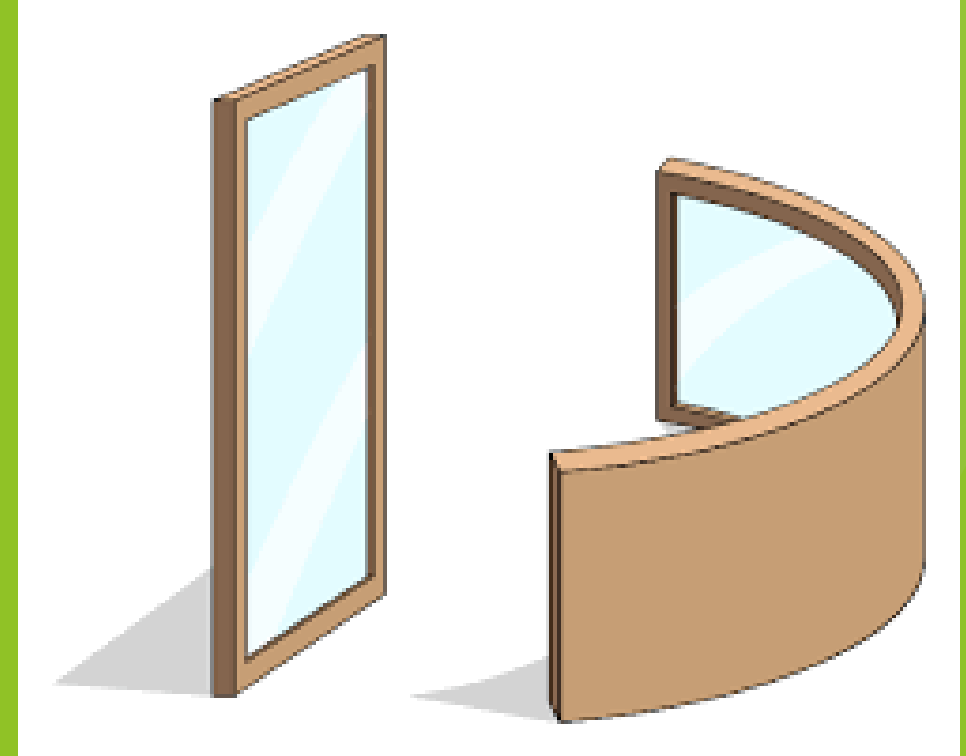
Scientific aspirations versus truth regime

Identity formation

## How to decolonize?

Historical thinking about intercultural contacts

## Between dream and deed: obstacles on the path of decolonization

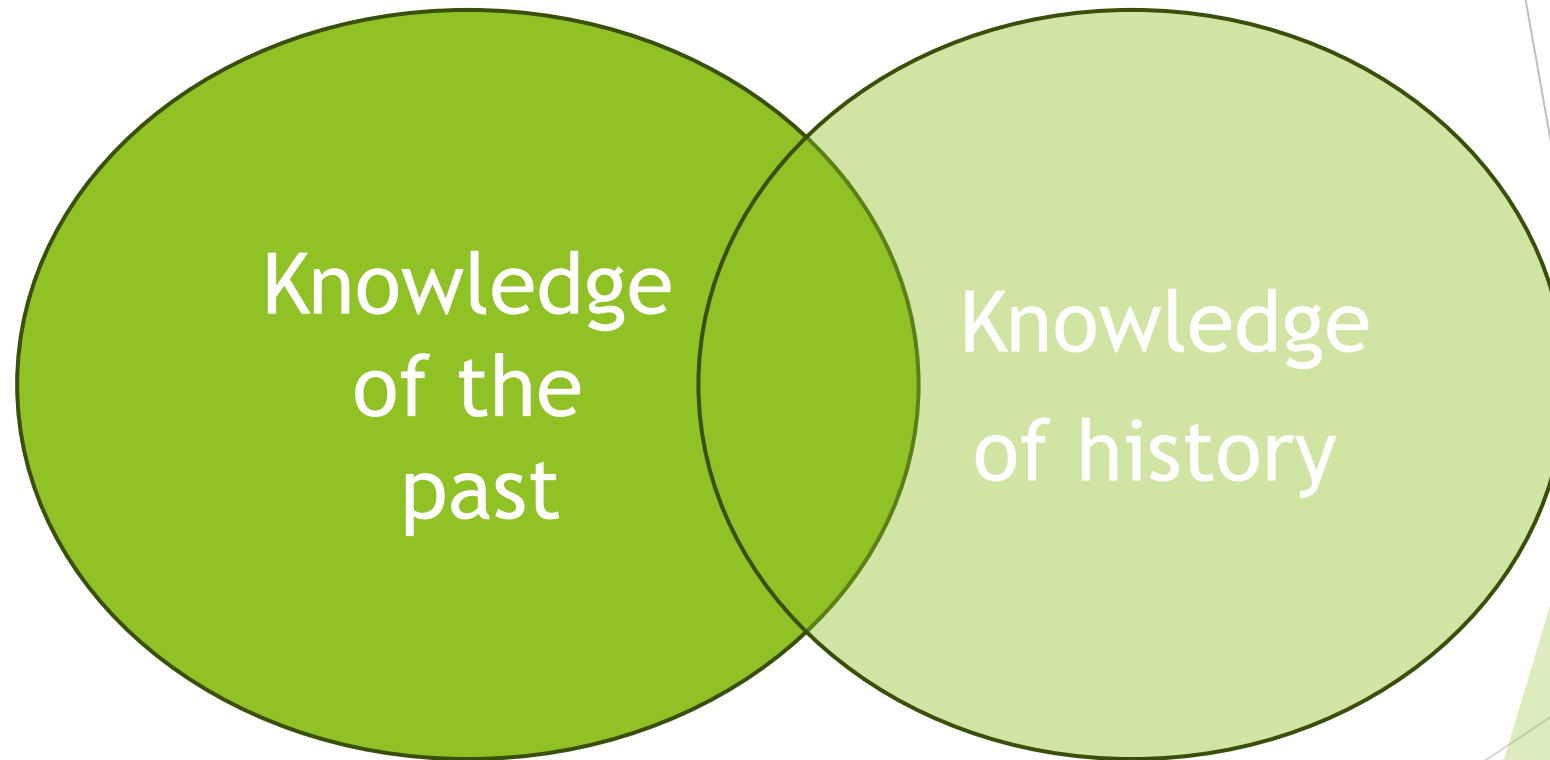


# Is decolonization of history education necessary?

Scientific aspirations versus truth regime

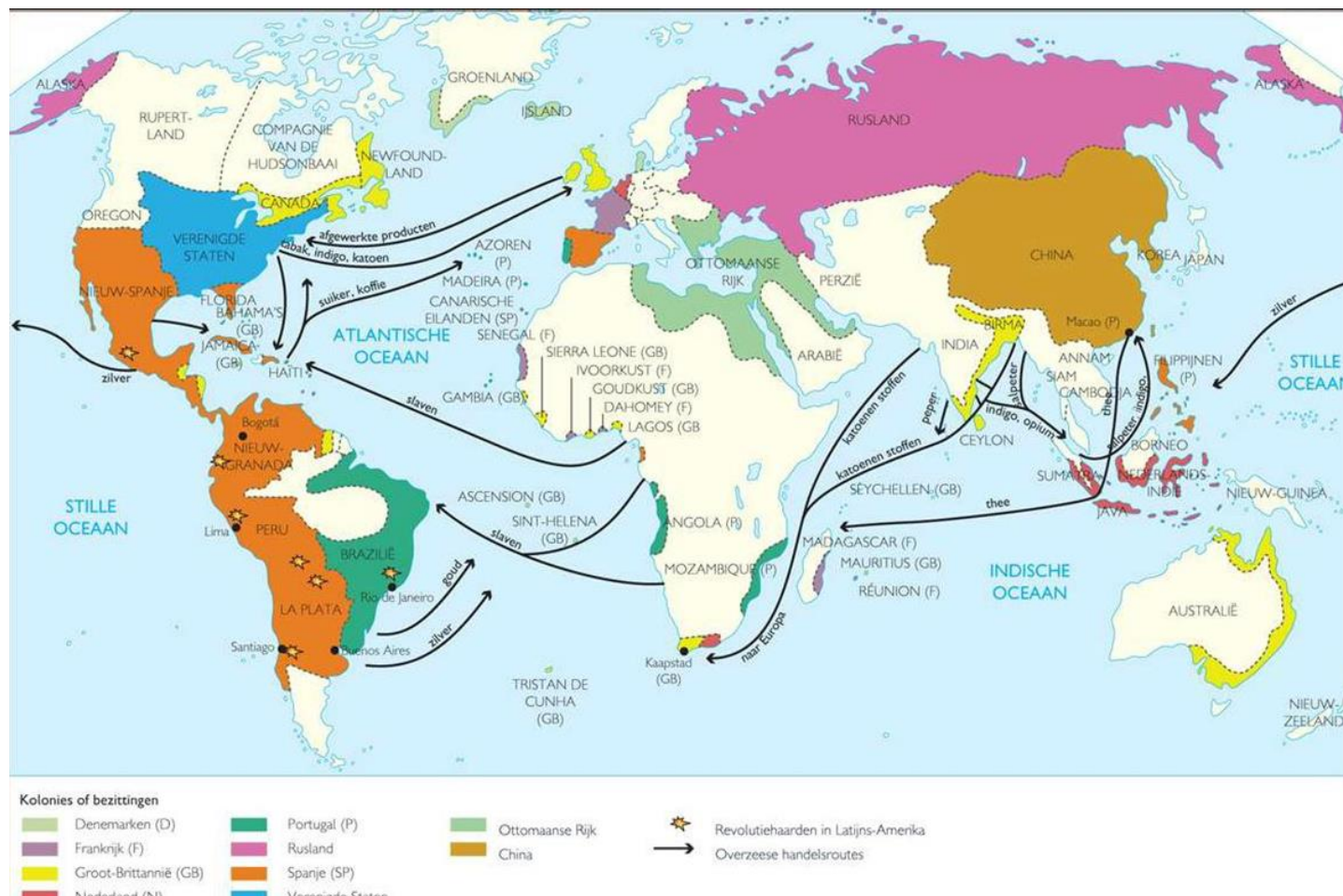


# Decolonization on two levels



# Knowledge of the past

- Predominant and one-sided focus on Western history



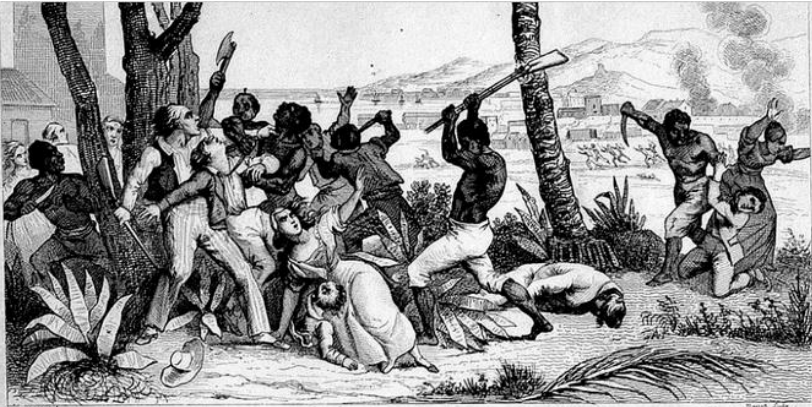
## 5. Oorlog

Proloog	119
1. Soorten oorlog (1500-1815)	120
Burgeroorlogen – zestiende eeuw	120
Dynastieke conflicten – zeventiende eeuw	122
Zeeoorlogen: zeventiende en achttiende eeuw	123
Oorlogen in en om kolonies: achttiende eeuw	124
2. Oorlogvoering: het Beleg van Oostende (1601-1604)	126
Aanvallen en verdedigen	127
Soldaten	129
Organisatie	130
Impact	131
3. De Amerikaanse onafhankelijkheidsoorlog (1773-1791)	132
Inspraak	132
Elgenheid	133
Strijd	135
Grondwet(ten)	136
4. De Franse Revolutie (1789-1815)	137
Assemblée nationale	137
Radicalisering	138
Terreur	139
Stabiliteit	140
Betekenis	140
5. Onderzoek: De Franse Revolutie verbeeld	142

- G2 De Verlichting  
*ICT-les: Verlichte despoten \**
  - G3 De Amerikaanse Revolutie en het ontstaan van de VSA
  - G4 De Franse Revolutie
  - G5 Onze gewesten: de Boerenkrijg  
*ICT-les: de Brabantse Omwenteling \**
- Overzicht deel G

# Knowledge of the past

- Western History as unique and universal, appropriation of values



Incendie de la Plaine du Cap . Massacre des Blancs par les Noirs.

The Haitian resistance against the horrific slavery was expressed in France.  
Drawing: Public Domain

“Few Western enlightened minds at the time were convinced that their revolutionary ideas applied to all the world's people. On the contrary, the apparent contradiction between financial interests and revolutionary ideals provided the fertile ground from which one of those other defining modern inventions could sprout: (scientific) racism (Fredrickson 2002, pp.64-68).”

“But the revolution did not only inspire black activists and thinkers. Many white activists, well-known abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson and Elizabeth Heyrick, were also influenced by the thinking and actions of the Haitian revolutionaries.”

“This is perhaps one of the most important lessons we can learn from the Haitian Revolution: that we must understand the history of the ideas that continue to shape our modern world, our universal values and norms, first and foremost as a global history. A history, moreover, that is not separate from the real struggles that oppressed people have waged for their own freedom and emancipation.”

Book extract, Koen Bogaert, *The Netherlands*

## ‘In the footsteps of Fanon’: Restoration for the Haitian Revolution

Koen Bogaert goes 'In the footsteps of Fanon' extensively on the history of slavery and colonialism. The current struggle for decolonization is not new, it is as old as colonization itself. Part of that history still ignored in history is the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). Not a footnote but a crucial part of the “Age of Revolution.” This is an excerpt from the book.

<https://www.dewereldmorgen.be/artikel/2023/02/13/in-het-spoor-van-fanon-eerherstel-voor-de-haitiaanse-revolutie/>



“The power of rulers over subjects differs essentially from the power of a lord over his servants and his slaves. It is neither paternalism nor despotism, it is neither a natural fact nor a divine institution; by nature all men are perfectly free and equal among themselves, without rank difference or subordination. No one can be removed from this state of freedom, equality and independence without his own consent. Freedom, however, has as its flip side obligation. The freedom of men (...) implies that they are under no other legal power than that established by consent and that they are not subject to the changeable, uncertain, unknown, and arbitrary will of any other man. Whenever the legislators take it upon themselves to alienate or destroy the property of the people, or to enslave the people under any arbitrary power, they bring themselves into a state of war with the people, who are consequently discharged from any further obedience and have the right to (...) defend themselves.” (from John Locke: two treatises of government, 1704)

- **According to John Locke, what does freedom mean?**

- **What may a people do against bad legislators?**

- **Explain why Locke had to flee from the Stuarts.**

“(...) This fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid”

Immanuel K (1965) *Observations on the Beautiful and Sublime*. Goldthwait JT (Trans.), Berkeley: University of California Press, pp: 110.

David Hume: *Of National Characters*

I am apt to suspect the negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are Negroe slaves dispersed all over Europe, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; though low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.[1]

Voltaire: *essay sur les mœurs*

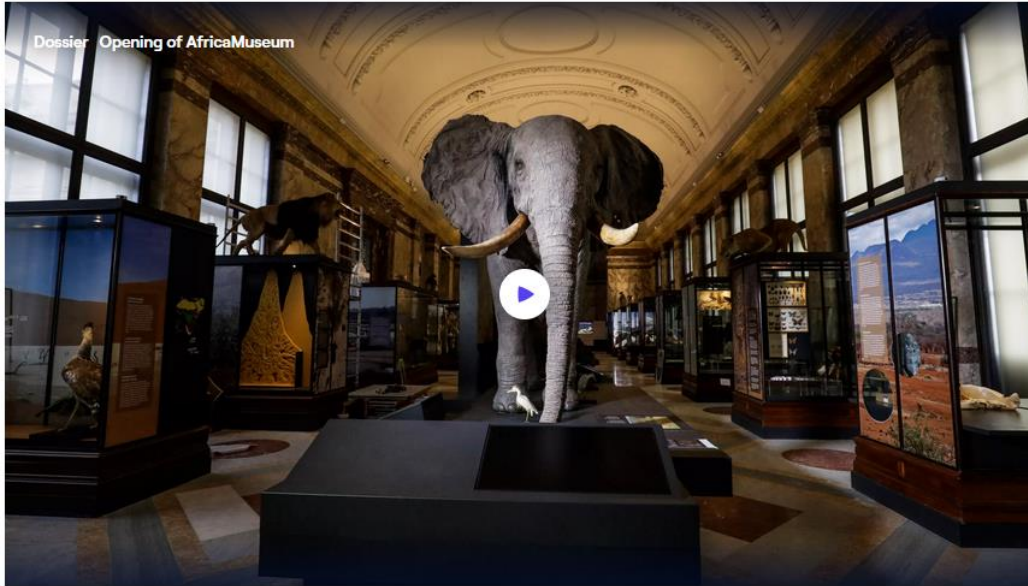
- ▶ «Leurs yeux ronds, leur nez épaté, leurs lèvres toujours grosses, leurs oreilles différemment figurées, la laine de leur tête, la mesure même de leur intelligence, mettent entre eux et les autres espèces d'hommes des différences prodigieuses »
- ▶ [E]t ils n'ont d'homme que la stature du corps, avec la faculté de la parole et de la pensée dans un degré très éloigné du nôtre. Tels sont ceux que j'ai vus et examinés»
- ▶ «[E]t on peut dire que si leur intelligence n'est pas d'une autre espèce que notre entendement, elle est fort inférieure. Ils ne sont pas capables d'une grande attention; ils combinent peu, et ne paraissent faits ni pour les avantages ni pour les abus de notre philosophie»

Voltaire: *Lettres d'Amabed, Septième lettre. D'Amabed.*

- ▶ «C'est une grande question parmi eux s'ils son descendus des singes, ou si les singes sont venus d'eux. Nos sages ont dit que l'homme est l'image de Dieu: voilà une plaisante image de l'Etre éternel qu'un nez noir épaté, avec peu ou point d'intelligence! Un temps viendra, sans doute, où ces animaux sauront bien cultiver la terre, l'embellir par des maisons et par des jardins, et connaître la route des astres. Il faut du temps pour tout»

# Knowledge of the past

## ► ‘Exotisation’ of non-Western societies



### It's time: AfricaMuseum reopens its doors after five years of renovation work

The AfricaMuseum is open. Today, guests could visit the renovated museum. The doors will open to the general public tomorrow. For five years, the museum in Tervuren was closed for renovation work. At that time, the AfricaMuseum underwent a metamorphosis: the historic building was thoroughly refurbished and the museum's collection was dusted off.

World looks at Tervuren with suspicion

## An elephant in the Africa Museum? You don't show any stuffed cows in Europe!"

## INHOUD

Inleiding	4	<b>D</b>	
<b>A</b>		<b>Heden–Blik op de buitenwereld</b>	107
<b>Heden–Eigen identiteit in een superdiverse samenleving</b>	9	<b>Verleden–Niet-westerse samenlevingen</b>	108
<b>Verleden–Over oude en nieuwe dingen</b>	10	<b>D1 De islam</b>	109
<b>A1 Even je geheugen opfrissen</b>	11	Ontdekplaat–De islam in Europa	
<b>A2 De middeleeuwen, het begin van een nieuwe samenleving</b>	20	Onderzoek: het gouden tijdperk van Mansa Moussa in Mali (14e eeuw)	118
Ontdekplaat–De Germanen		<b>D2 China en de Mongolen</b>	126
Onderzoek: een beeld van de middeleeuwen	25	<b>Overzicht–Heden</b>	138
<b>Overzicht–Heden</b>	30	<b>E</b>	
<b>B</b>		<b>Heden–Rechten en plichten in België</b>	139
<b>Heden–Wij leven in België</b>	31	<b>Verleden–De middeleeuwen van 900 tot 1450</b>	140
<b>Verleden–De vroege middeleeuwen</b>	32	<b>E1 De feodaliteit of het leenwezen</b>	141
<b>B1 Het Romeinse Rijk houdt stand in het oosten</b>	33	<b>E2 De opkomst van de steden in onze gewesten</b>	147
Ontdekplaat–De Hagia Sophia		Ontdekplaat–Kenmerken van steden	
<b>B2 De Franken, nieuwe heersers in het westen</b>		<b>E3 De vorsten strijden om de macht</b>	155
<b>B3 De Vikingen</b>		Onderzoek: de Normandiërs veroveren Engeland	170
<b>Overzicht–Verleden</b>		<b>E4 De Nederlanden</b>	177
<b>Overzicht–Heden</b>		De Guldensporenslag	188
<b>C</b>		Ontdekplaat–Wapens en belegering	198
<b>Heden–Safety first voor iedereen!</b>	62	<b>Verleden–Cultuur in de middeleeuwen</b>	201
<b>Verleden–Op stap door verschillende tijden</b>	63	<b>F1 Kerk en christendom</b>	202
<b>C1 De evolutie van de bevolking</b>	64	Onderzoek: misdad en straf	216
<b>C2 De Zwarte Dood, een middeleeuwse pandemie</b>	70	<b>F2 De kruistochten</b>	224
Ontdekplaat–De pest		Onderzoek: Arabische bronnen over de inname van Jeruzalem in 1099	233
<b>C3 Landbouw en voedsel</b>	77	Ontdekplaat–De kruistochten	
Ontdekplaat–Landschap		<b>F3 Romaanse en gotische kunst</b>	241
<b>C4 De standensamenleving</b>	84	Ontdekplaat–Cultuur in de middeleeuwen: bouwkunst	
Onderzoek: jong zijn in de middeleeuwen en de vroegmoderne tijd	93	Onderzoek: de Vlaamse Primitieven	249
Onderzoek: de vrouw in de klassieke oudheid en in de middeleeuwen	101	<b>Overzicht–Verleden</b>	254
Ontdekplaat–De vrouw in de middeleeuwen		<b>Overzicht–Heden</b>	255
<b>Overzicht–Verleden</b>	105	Woordenlijst	256
<b>Overzicht–Heden</b>	106	Mijn persoonlijk woordenboek	264
		Uitvouwbaar tijdlijn	
		Schema historisch denken	



# Knowledge of history

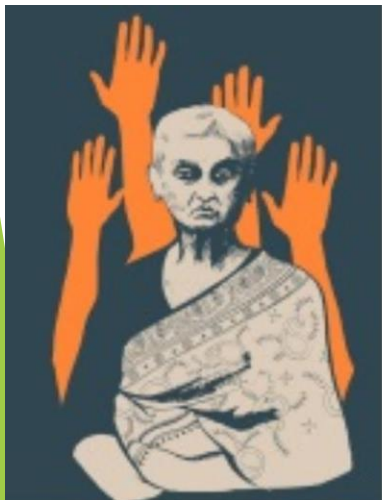
- ▶ One-sided focus on Western influence on the world
- ▶ One-sided attribution of agency



## CAN THE SUBALTERN SPEAK?

By Gayatri Spivak

In Hindi



## 1 HET BRITSE IMPERIUM: INFORMEEL EN FORMEEL IMPERIALISME

In de eerste helft van de 19de eeuw was de drang om nieuwe koloniën te verwerven voor een tijdje bekoeld. **De Europese mogendheden** kozen voor **informeel imperialisme**. **Groot-Brittannië** gaf het voorbeeld. **Het** beperkte zich in Latijns-Amerika tot informele politieke druk. Het was het **imperialisme van de vrijhandel**: **Londen** beheerste de markten in de periferie door een 'opendeurbeleid' af te dwingen. **Groot-Brittannië** was de onbetwiste leider in de wereld.

Rond 1870 veranderde de situatie grondig. Als gevolg van allerlei motieven [p. 89, 4] kozen de **Europese industriestaten** opnieuw voor **formeel imperialisme**. Ze veroverden koloniale imperia die ze door hoge tariefmuren veranderden in gesloten afzetmarkten (protectionisme). Rond 1900 had **Groot-Brittannië** het grootste imperium ooit [4]. De vloot was er de pijler van. De **Royal Navy** moest te allen tijde tweemaal zo groot zijn als de gecombineerde zeemacht van zijn twee voornaamste rivalen. Het was de enige vloot met een wereldomvattende actieradius [1]. Op alle scheepvaartroutes beschikte ze over bevoorradingsposten (steenkool) en steunpunten (havens) [4]. **Groot-Brittannië** was dus machtig én kwetsbaar. **Frankrijk** en vooral **Duitsland** waren geduchte rivalen.

## 2 HET HOOGTEPUNT VAN DE EUROPESE HEGEMONIE

In Afrika was de expansie van **Frankrijk** en **Groot-Brittannië** indrukwekkend [2a]. **Londen** verwierf in Oost-Afrika een rijk van Caïro tot Kaapstad [2b]. **Frankrijk** beheerste haast heel Noordwest-Afrika. De kolonisatie van Midden-Afrika gebeurde op initiatief van de **Belgische koning Leopold II** [p. 106-109]. **Portugal** bezat twee omvangrijke koloniën, Angola en Mozambique, naast het kleinere Guinee-Bissau. De bezittingen van de **andere Europese staten** – o.m. van Duitsland – waren veel eerder gering [2a]. **Kanselier Bismarck** verwaarloosde het voor Duitsland koloniale expansie na te streven.

Door de opdeling van Afrika kwamen nieuwe koloniale staten tot stand. Het aantal staatkundige eenheden in prekoloniaal Afrika bedroeg minstens tienduizend. **De kolonisatie** herleidde die tot enkele tientallen. Met de bestaande etnische verschillen werd geen rekening gehouden. Alleen al daarom was de opdeling van Afrika van historische betekenis.

Ook in Azië veroverden de **Europeanen** koloniale imperia. **Groot-Brittannië** beheerste heel Zuid-Azië [4]. **Londen** gaf het Indische subcontinent de status van onafhankelijk keizerrijk, met de koningin van Engeland als soeverein. Het was door zijn uitgestrektheid en zijn rijkdom en niet het minst door het cultuurpeil van zijn bevolking een ideale kolonie.

**Rusland** beheerste Noord-Azië en was een Aziatische mogendheid van eerste rang. **Moskou** begon met de aanleg van de Trans-Siberische spoorweg, stichtte Vladivostok, drong door in Mantsjoerije en verwierf de ijsvrije haven Port Arthur. Na de verovering van Annam en Tonkin beheerste **Frankrijk** Indochina. Ook **Nederland** veroverde daar een machtspositie.

## 3 OPPOSITIE TEGEN EUROPA'S DOMINANTIE VANWEGE ANDERE INDUSTRIESTATEN [4]

**Japan** groeide uit tot een moderne industriestaat, die rond 1900 een geduchte rivaal was voor de Europese mogendheden [p. 94-97]. Na de burgeroorlog (1865) werden de **VS** een industriële gigant die de Europese rivalen al vlug overvleugelde [p. 92-93].

**De VS** gaven de voorkeur aan **informeel imperialisme**. In Latijns-Amerika verdrongen ze rond 1900 **Groot-Brittannië** [5a, b]. In het Verre Oosten lieten de **VS** de Europese mogendheden niet langer de vrije hand. Ze verwierven invloed in Japan en China [p. 104-105]. **De VS** schrokken echter ook niet terug voor **formeel imperialisme**: in 1898 namen ze de Filippijnen als kolonie van Spanje over. Het einde van het Europese monopolie in de koloniale wereld was een feit.

- ▶ “The independence we demand should not be considered a gift by Belgium - we want to assert a right taken away from the Congolese people.”
- ▶ (Lumumba, 28-12-1958)





# Knowledge of history

- Predominantly Western sources and Western source types

- Based on 32, very disparate (and briefly contextualized) “sources”, only 2 of which are non-Western...

Op welke manier werd Congo op 30 juni 1960 onafhankelijk?

Deelvragen:

1. Op welke drie pijlers is de Congolese samenleving opgebouwd en welke rol speelden die pijlers in de samenleving?
2. Welke evoluties lagen aan de basis voor het onafhankelijkheidsstreven van de Congolezen?
3. Hoe zag de situatie in Congo eruit aan de vooravond van de onafhankelijkheid?
4. Op welke manier werd Congo onafhankelijk?
5. Wie waren de hoofdrolspelers in de onafhankelijkheidsstrijd?
6. Hoe verging het Congo na zijn onafhankelijkheid?
7. Hoe was de relatie België-Congo na de onafhankelijkheid?

Los de onderzoeksvragen op aan de hand van de bronnen. Noteer het antwoord op de verschillende deelvragen op een apart blad. Maak daarna een samenhangende synthese, die een antwoord geeft op de onderzoeksvraag. Gebruik daarvoor de tussentitels als kapstok om je synthese structuur te geven.

Niet alle bronnen zijn even makkelijk om te onderzoeken en ze geven vaak niet alle benodigde informatie. De bibliotheek en het internet kunnen je hier verder helpen. Let op dat je je bronnen correct vermeldt.

# Knowledge of history

- ▶ Use of West as the standard against which to measure other societies



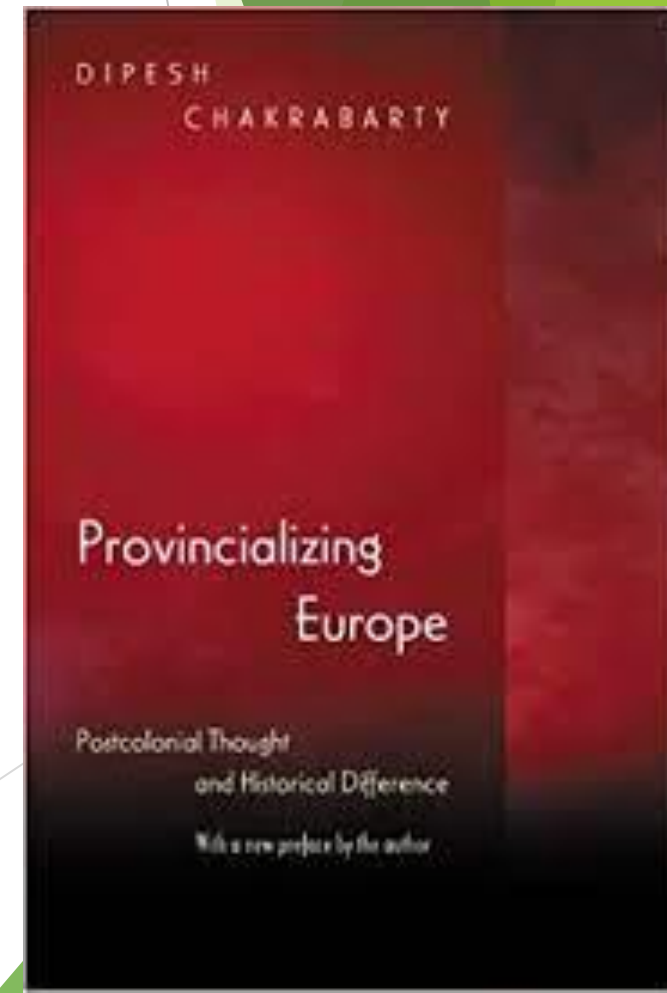
## I DE TOKUGAWA-TIJD, HET TIJDPERK VAN DE GROTE VREDE (1603–1867) [3]

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In 1850 was Japan nog een feodale staat. De keizer (mikado) had enkel

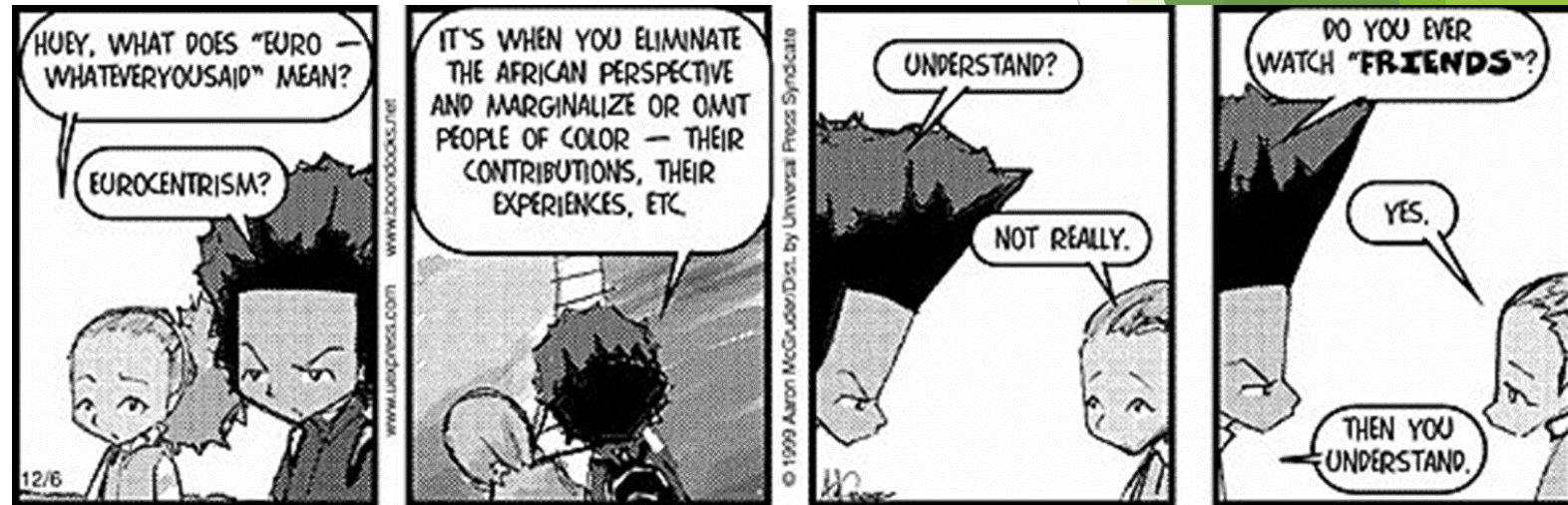
[In 1859 Japan was **still** a feudal state. The emperor (Mikado) only had]

- ▶ “How can it be explained that Japan was the only one in the world of non-Western cultures that managed to adopt Western techniques and build a modern economy?”



# Eurocentric regime of truth

- ▶ Stuart Hall: 'The West and the Rest'
- ▶ Charles Mills: 'white ignorance' → 'white normativity' → 'racial contract'
- ▶ In other words, need for :
  - ▶ Counter narratives
  - ▶ Alternative narratives
  - ▶ Connective narratives



# Is decolonization of history education necessary?

Identity formation



# Oriëntalisme

Edward W. Said



Vertaald door Wiecher Hulst  
met een voorwoord van Sinan Çankaya

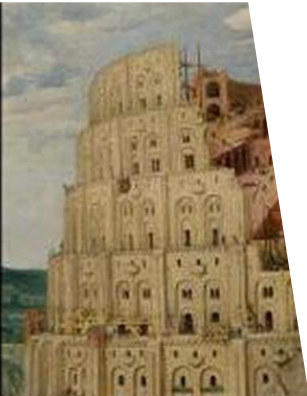


Paradigma

## HOME RULE

National  
Sovereignty  
and the  
Separation of  
Natives and  
Migrants

NANDITA  
SHARMA



**WE ARE HERE  
BECAUSE YOU  
WERE **THERE****

# History education and identity

- ▶ Man
  - ▶ = homo historicus
  - ▶ Builds its identity amongst others on a historical consciousness
- ▶ Eurocentric approach of the past:
  - ▶ Majority group: sometimes feelings of superiority
    - ▶ “They still consider religion there to be very important; we here have gained much more freedom.”
  - ▶ Minoritized groups: sometimes no sense of belonging, even: alienation
    - ▶ “History classes do not interest me. I feel very little connection to them. They are not about me or my ancestors. As a result, the history classes had little influence on me, affected me very little.”
  - ▶ Us - them thinking // in-group vs. out-group // nativism (who does (not) belong here?) // radicalisation
    - instead of an inclusive and democratic worldview

**JE SUIS PAS  
UN RACISTE J'AI  
UN AMI NOIR !  
JE BENT BEST MOOI...VOOR EEN  
ZWARTE VROUW  
YOU DON'T ACT LIKE A  
NORMAL BLACK PERSON  
- LIERT RITME IN JE BLOED**

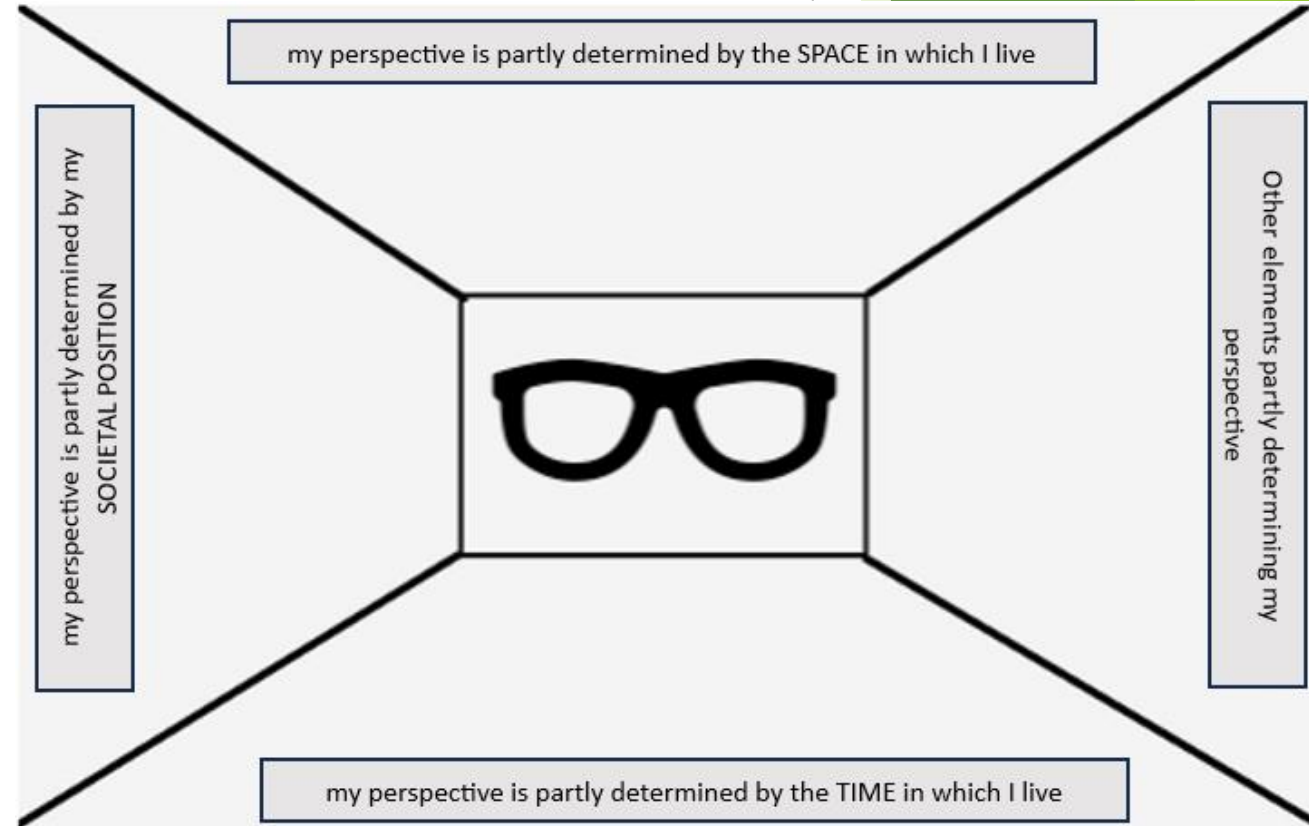
HET IS HIER NIET AFRIKA  
TU DIS QUE TU ES BELGE, MAIS EN VRAI, TU VENEZ D'AFRIQUE  
J'AIME TROP LES BLACKS ! YOU ARE SO ARTICULATE  
« L'AFRIQUE N'A PAS DE CIVILISATION  
AMAI, JE SPREEKT ZO GOED NEDERLANDS!  
OH! YOU DID BETTER THAN I EXPECTED  
LA NOURRISSURE CHEZ VOUS!

# How to decolonize?

Historical thinking about intercultural contacts

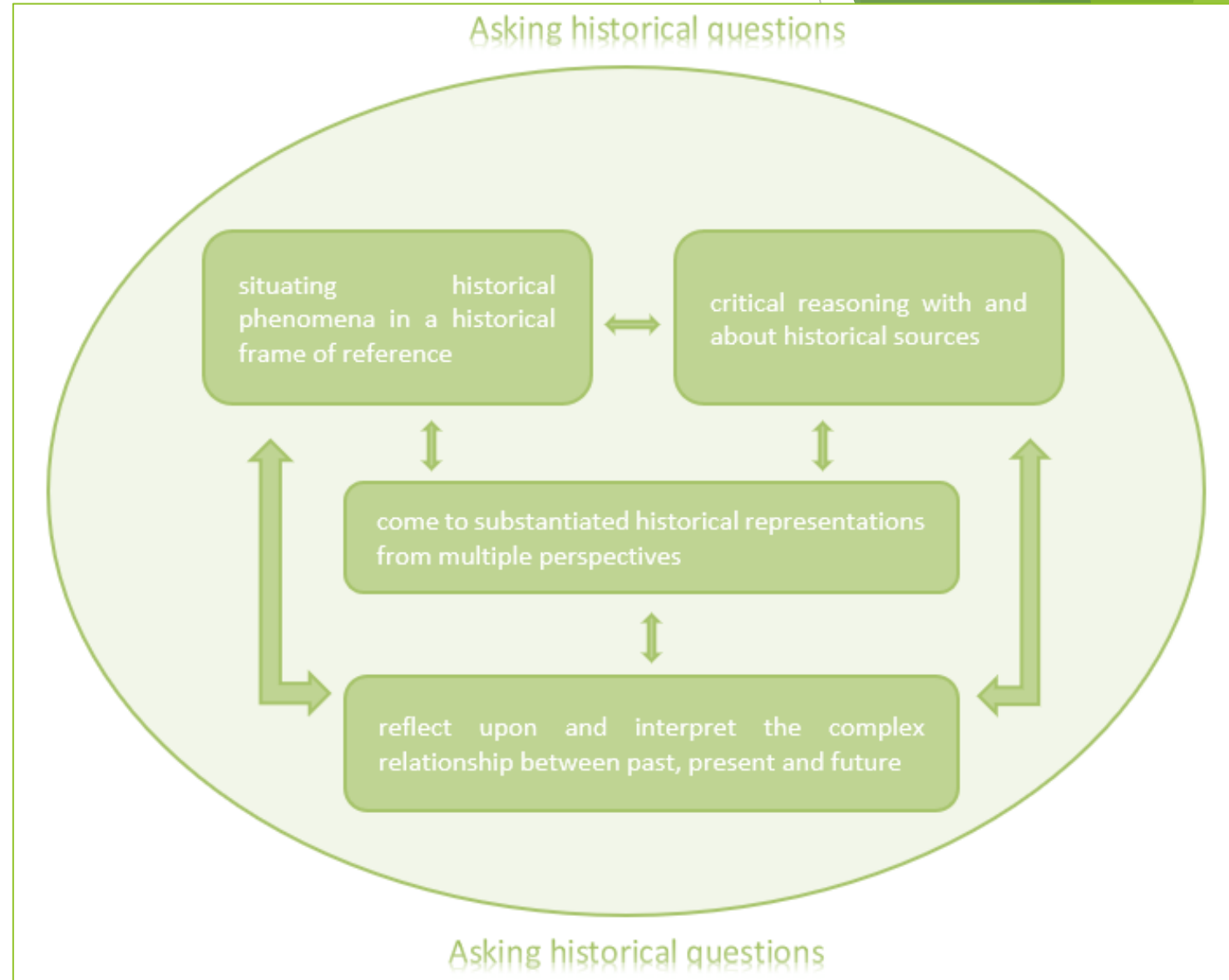
# Preliminary remarks

- ▶ Nuance to preceding:
  - ▶ No homogenization / generalization (no view of everyday practice, tentative evolution noticeable in textbooks)
  - ▶ Not imposing a 'guilt complex'
  - ▶ Continuous learning process
  - ▶ Quest / discovery
- ▶ In what follows: importance of positionality
  - ▶ No world history
  - ▶ Gradual construction/change, no revolution
  - ▶ No “cancel culture”
  - ▶ “Non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intelligere” [No mocking, no deploring, no cursing, but understanding]



# Historical thinking on intercultural contacts

- ▶ No plea made for: e.g.
  - ▶ Social justice perspective
- ▶ Plea made for: historical thinking
  - ▶ Disciplinary perspective
  - ▶ Connecting to recent history didactic findings and understandings
  - ▶ Connected to democratic principles and rule of law



# Asking historical questions

- ▶ Historical thinking begins with questions, allowing Eurocentric views to be questioned:
  - ▶ Big - small questions
  - ▶ Attitude
  - ▶ From descriptive over explanatory to evaluative
  - ▶ Variable complexity
- ▶ Questions about the past: e.g.
  - ▶ How did people in (parts of) Central Africa organize their society in the early 16th century?
  - ▶ One step further:
    - ▶ comparison Central African - Western European society
    - ▶ Histoire croisée (intertwined history): contacts between them (e.g. Congo kingdom - Portuguese kingdom)
  - ▶ Was British India's independence rather enforced by the colony or granted by the mother country?



# Historische vragen stellen

## ► Questions about the complex relationship between past and present: e.g.

- To what extent can colonialism help explain that the ten lowest ranked countries in the Human Development Index in 2021 are situated in sub-Saharan Africa?
- Take a substantiated position on whether late-19th century looted art should be returned to its countries of origin.
- Should the statues of Leopold II in Belgium disappear? Why (not)?
- To what extent is 'our' view of 'the other' and the world still determined by colonialism?

## ► Questions about history (representational issues, construction of historical knowledge): e.g.

- How plausible is the depiction of these Egyptian figures?
- What meaning did these objects have in the eyes of the spectators? What objects are the Western equivalent of these objects? What does the journey of these objects tell us?
- Are sources from written cultures more valuable than sources from oral cultures? Argue.

## → Questions are related to each of the building blocks :

- Historical frame of reference
- Sources
- Substantiated historical representations
- Complex relationship past - present



# Historical frame of reference

- ▶ Historical frame of reference with three dimensions
    - ▶ Time
    - ▶ Space
    - ▶ Societies (incl. societal domains)
  - ▶ Western periodization, but:
    - ▶ Limitations
    - ▶ Consequences
    - ▶ Alternatives
  - ▶ Attention to Western & non-Western societies
    - ▶ + intercultural contacts between them (motor of change)
    - ▶ + from multiple perspectives
    - ▶ Attention to (in)simultaneity (e.g., imperialism and Enlightenment)
- *Beyond eurocentrisme*
- *(but: “West” and “non-West” perpetuates existence itself of it... ~~ “identity frameworks)*

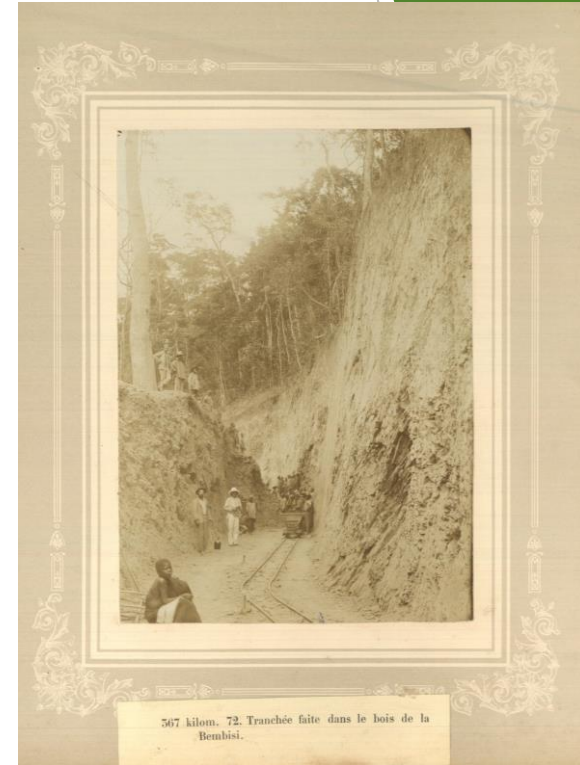
# Historical frame of reference

- ▶ Historical frame of reference
- ▶ No historical reference knowledge
  - ▶ “What is worth learning?” → generic historical key concepts
  - ▶ Choice (knowledge ~ societies) to teacher (and students?) ~ historical significance, interest, expertise ...
  - ▶ No canonisation
  - ▶ Is open to debate
- ▶ E.g.: Lumumba? Holocaust? Gandhi? WW I? WW II? Armenian genocide? Science Revolution? ...

# Critical reasoning with and about historical sources

Disclaimer: The photographs shown in this theme issue were in all likelihood taken without the consent of the non-European individuals depicted on them and in a context of coercion and oppression.

- Beware of colonial photos :



Given that these photos were taken without the consent of the Africans and Asians depicted on them, and given that some of the photos are actually dehumanizing: is it acceptable to show such photos, even if this is done in a scientific (and by extension an educational) context? In so doing, are we not once again doing injustice to the people depicted in the photographs?

Aren't we actually perpetuating a colonial narrative, via the display of colonial photographs?



# Critical reasoning with and about historical sources

Critical corroboration of sources



FEMMES BANGALA DANSANT

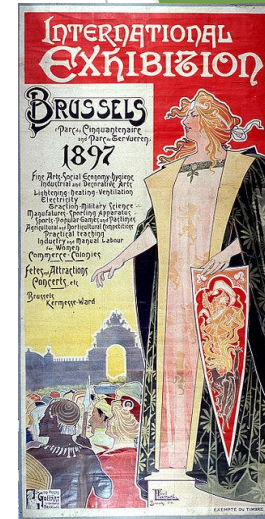
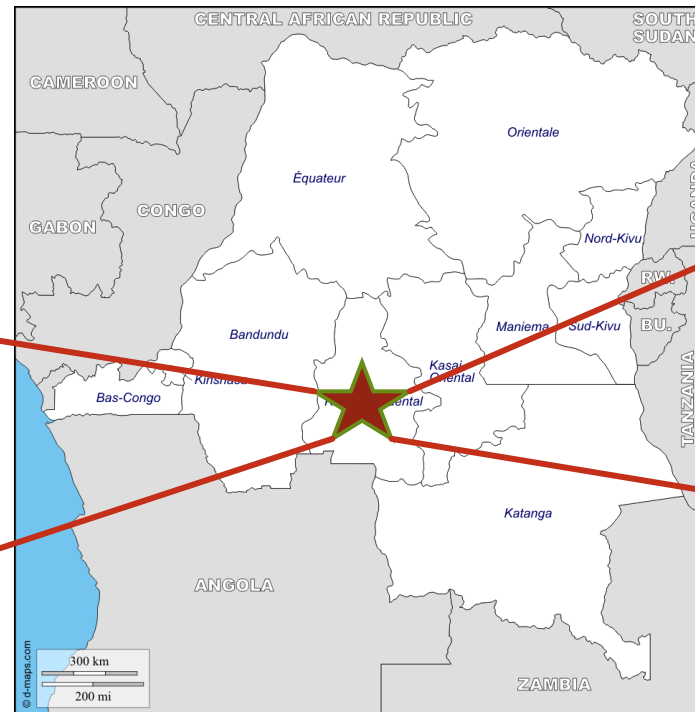




# Critical reasoning with and about historical sources

- Multitude of sources available: (polyphony/multiperspectivity) Example from lesson series on Congo for 12th grade secondary school: Congo before 1870 - the empire of the Kuba

“In my opinion, the locals were made up of witnesses. And so anything they told me - preferably unsolicited - about their experiences was very relevant.”  
(Jan Vansina, anthropologist)





## Our belongings

Imagine the time, energy and knowledge that went into creating these belongings, transforming raw material into something both useful and beautiful. These belongings were part of our ancestors' daily lives and were treated with care and respect. All of what you see in this gallery belonged to our ancestors.

"These belongings have been preserved and we now have this great opportunity to learn about them, but we need to be respectful and remember that those belongings are somebody's. Those people may not be here physically, but they're still here. We believe they're still here."

—čəmq'a:t LARISSA GRANT, 2014



Museum of Vancouver (Vancouver, 2020)

## Vancouver moving forward: a reconciliation process

"čəsnaʔəm: The City Before The City aims at 'righting history' by creating a space for Musqueam to share their knowledge, culture, and history and by highlighting the community's role in shaping the city of Vancouver."

—sʔəyəʔəq LARRY GRANT, 2014

The Museum of Vancouver holds over .500 belongings from čəsnaʔəm. In this exhibition, the Musqueam First Nation offers new understandings of this material culture. Collaborating with Musqueam has allowed the museum to critically examine its past practices. Early museum practitioners erased connections between Indigenous peoples and the history of the city. The museum wishes to highlight the deep connections between čəsnaʔəm and the Musqueam First Nation as well as Musqueam's presence in the city.

The museum hopes this exhibition will contribute to the larger conversation about reconciliation between Aboriginal and settler communities in Canada. The Museum of Vancouver invites Vancouverites, British Columbians and Canadians to engage in this process. However, reconciliation requires more than conversation. It includes the return of land, shared responsibility for the management of lands and resources and the revitalization of Indigenous languages.

# Come to substantiated historical representations from multiple perspectives

- ▶ Deconstruction of existing historical representations





# Ansichts- sache(n).

Ein Auftakt

In den letzten Jahren sind ethnologische Sammlungen in europäischen Museen stark in die Kritik geraten. Dem stellt sich auch das Humboldt Forum, «Ansichtssache(n). Ein Auftakt» untersucht grundlegende Sichtweisen, die zum Kolonialismus beigetragen haben oder durch ihn geprägt wurden – und die vielfach bis heute wirksam sind. Dabei wird der Kolonialismus als gesamtgesellschaftliches Geschehen erkennbar.

Die Installation widmet sich speziell den Spuren der Kolonisation in den ehemaligen deutschen Kolonialgebieten Kamerun, Namibia und Ozeanien. Fotografien und Schulbücher, Skulpturen und Interviews werden zum Ausgangspunkt, um die Blicke zwischen Kolonisator\*innen und ehemals kolonisierten Gesellschaften zu reflektieren. Bezeichnend für diese Sichtweisen ist die Unterscheidung zwischen einem «Wir» und «den Anderen».

Um den Fokus auf die Betrachtungsweisen selbst zu richten und im Sinne der aktuellen Diskussion um Restitution – also die Rückgabe von Objekten –, arbeitet die Installation weniger mit «Dingen» bzw. konkreten Sammlungsobjekten, sondern setzt auf Reproduktionen. Daneben lassen künstlerische Arbeiten kulturelle und institutionelle Sichtweisen bewusst werden.

In recent years, ethnological collections held by European museums have come under critical scrutiny. The Humboldt Forum seeks to meet this challenge head on. «Matter(s) of Perspective: An Overture» examines the underlying ways of seeing that contributed to colonialism and were in turn shaped by it – many of them still very much in place today. This allows us to understand colonialism as a phenomenon that touches on all aspects of society.

The installation focuses in particular on the traces of colonisation in the former German colonial territories of Cameroon, Namibia and Oceania. Photos, school textbooks, sculptures and interviews are the starting point for this examination of how the colonisers and the formerly colonised societies saw one another. Characteristic of these ways of seeing is the differentiation between «us» and «the others».

To shift the focus back to the act of seeing itself and in the interest of the current discussion on restitution – that is, the repatriation of objects – the exhibition focuses not on «things» or tangible objects from the collection, but on reproductions. Additionally, artistic works enable viewers to become aware of both cultural and institutional ways of seeing.

# Matter(s) of Perspective:

An Overture



# Come to substantiated historical representations from multiple perspectives

- Critical deconstruction: how to deal with sensitive topics?

ISRAELI NARRATIVE

## The War of Independence

### Background

The violent confrontations between Jews and Arabs in the land of Israel started in the early 1920s. For the most part, the Jews defended themselves against attacks by the Arabs. The Hagana was responsible for defense of the Jewish community, and sometimes British armed forces intervened to end the violence.

The Hagana was established in 1920 primarily as a regional organization; in each settlement its members were responsible for its own defense. Every Jewish resident of the land of Israel was eligible to join, the main condition being the person's ability to keep the organization's activities secret. At first the Hagana's limited mobility hindered its capability to carry out attacks. After the 1921 uprisings the Hagana expanded by drafting new members, conducting courses for commanders and accelerating weapons' acquisition. Armaments were purchased abroad or manufactured in factories located primarily in *kibbutzim*. The Hagana was under the authority of the elected governing institutions of the *yishuv* (Jewish community in the land of Israel.)

In 1936 there was an Arab uprising which called for liberation from British rule. They attacked British forces and Jews as well. In the course of the revolt the British recommended a solution: To divide the land into two states – Arab and Jewish (the Peel Commission Report). The Arab leadership rejected the proposal of partition. The *yishuv* leadership accepted the principle of partition but opposed the borders suggested by the commission.

At the end of World War II, in spite of revelations about the scope of the Jewish Holocaust in Europe and the murder of millions of Jews, Britain refused to permit the establishment of a Jewish state. In post-war Europe there were over 100,000 Jewish refugees who could not return to their homes, but the British refused to allow them to immigrate to the land

## Chapter 2

PALESTINIAN NARRATIVE

## The Catastrophe [*An-Nakbeh*] 1948

### Contents

- \* Historical background: Formative stages of the Catastrophe
- \* Events of the 1948 Catastrophe, including eye-witness reports
- \* Results of the Catastrophe, including eyewitness reports

### This chapter includes:

- \* Drawings of Naji Al-'Ali
- \* Partition map of November 29, 1947
- \* Ghassan Kanafani: *The Land of Sad Orange Trees* (a story)
- \* Mahmoud Mufleh: *Palestine: Thyme and Bullets* (a poem)
- \* Photographs of destroyed villages

### Glossary

### References

### Historical background: Formative stages of the Catastrophe

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181, which calls for the partition of Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish. This was the start of the countdown for the establishment of the state of Israel on May 15, 1948 and the 1948 Catastrophe, which uprooted and dispersed the Palestinian people.

The Catastrophe was: 1) the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1948 Palestine War; 2) their acceptance of the truce; 3) the displacement of most of the Palestinian people from their cities and villages; and 4) the emergence of the refugee problem and the Palestinian Diaspora.



# Come to substantiated historical representations from multiple perspectives

## ► Parallel histories:



### **HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT STUDYING A DISPUTED HISTORY?**

Don't shy away from competing narratives - seek them out, lay them side by side and challenge your students to immerse themselves in both and form their own judgement.

Parallel Histories offers a new way to study the history of conflict - history which is still contested, controversial and relevant.

Our teaching methodology challenges student to examine the source evidence and debate alternative interpretations before coming to their own view.

These are skills which not only help young people with the study of history but also prepare them to become active citizens in healthy pluralistic democracies.

# Come to substantiated historical representations from multiple perspectives

- ▶ Four approaches to intercultural contacts (Nicolas Standaert)
  - ▶ Transmission framework: from the point of view of the influence that the West exerted on another society
  - ▶ Reception framework: Study of the reaction of 'the other' to the contact with the West
  - ▶ Representation framework: examines how the West 'invented' 'the other', how the West created an image of 'the other'
  - ▶ Interaction- and communication framework: How did the West and 'the other' change each other as a result of the encounter?
- ▶ Hold different views on :
  - ▶ Perspective and focus
  - ▶ Agency
  - ▶ Historical sources
  - ▶ Representation of 'the other'
  - ▶ Homogeneity vs. diversity
  - ▶ 'the other' as such and the nature of identity (e.g. homogeneous vs. dynamic)



# Complex relationship past - present

- ▶ Collective memory
  - ▶ Uses and misuses of the past
  - ▶ Us-them thinking, in- and exclusion
  - ▶ Identity construction processes
- ▶ Are strong: Continuing historical representations: stereotyping, racism and discrimination
- ▶ Opportunities for dialogue, on sense of belonging and multilayered identity



## The Representation of Lumumba and his speech of June 30, 1960: Imped for controversy

On 30 June 1960, the Congo became independent. On this occasion, King Baudouin gave a speech, followed by a non-foreseen speech by Patrice Lumumba. In addition to an analysis of the content of both texts, it is discussed how they both use the past in an attempt to create a collective memory. Finally, the representation of the figure of Patrice Lumumba in different parts of the world is discussed at the start of the 1960s and today.

[Click here for the full teaching module.](#)

## Congo in the Belgian-Flemish and postcolonial Belgian-Congolese collective memory

What does the collective culture of remembrance look like and how can we explain it? To this end, we compare the existing national cultural memory of the Belgian colonial past with the Dutch and the German and with the (inter)national colonial historiography. Finally, we also explore what is going on in the postcolonial Congolese communication memory in Belgium about the colonial period by comparing the mainstream culture with the underground scene of hip hop music.

[Click here for the full teaching module.](#)



## Complex relationship past - present

- Divergent representations
- How to avoid relativism? (~ e.g., power relations)



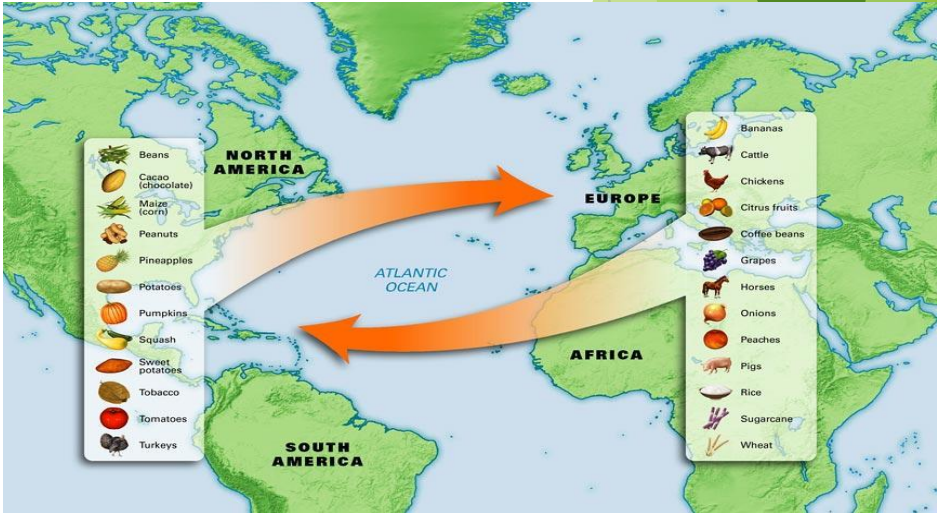
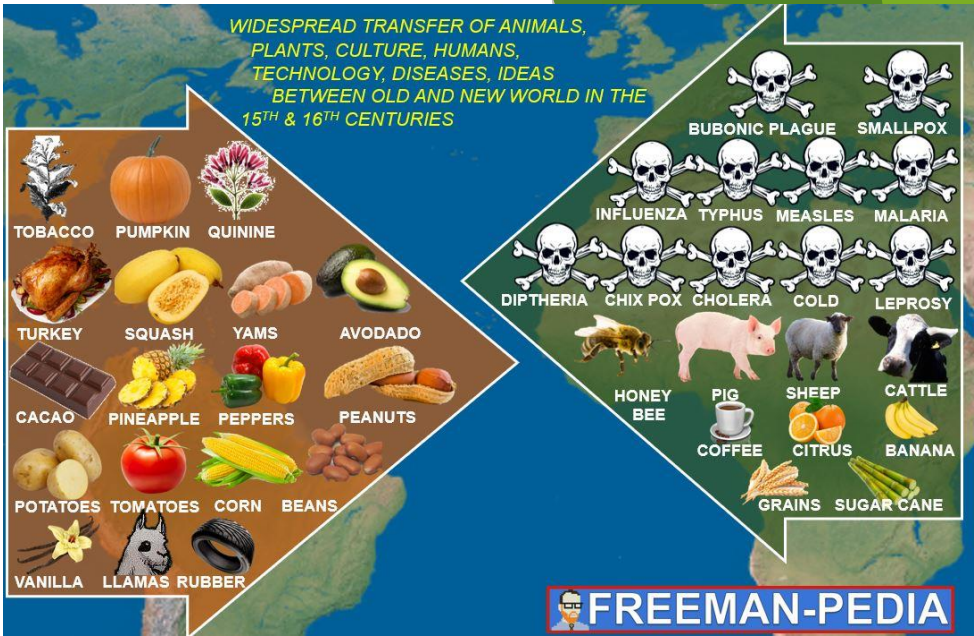
Fig. 2. This engraving appears in the book by Décadas. It represents, in a quite primitive way, the story of the fort called Natividad, which Columbus built on the island of La Española. When he returned on his second voyage, Columbus found the fort burnt and destroyed, and the men he had left behind had been killed. (Spanish textbook 4, p. 208).



Fig. 3. The Spaniards brought ferocious dogs an Indian is being attacked by a Spanish soldier's dog. (Mexican textbook 2, p. 151).

- 1. Look at the picture. What do people mean when they talk about the Columbian Exchange?
- 2. Does the Columbian Exchange confirm that the discovery of America is a pivotal moment in world history? Yes / no? On what do you base this judgment?
- 3. Look at the illustration. According to this illustration, which parts of the world were closely involved in the Columbian Exchange? Which ones much less or not at all? From what do you infer this?
- 4. According to this illustration, which parts of the world are closely involved in the Columbian Exchange? What difference do you see from Figure 1?
- 5. After answering question 4, would you like to adjust your answer to question 1? If so, record your adjusted answer here.
- 6. Which of the two images would you describe as rather “Eurocentric”? Why?
  - o Image 1
  - o Image 2
- 7. What message about Columbian Exchange is emphasized in this image?
- 8. Can you describe this depiction as Eurocentric?
- 9. Imagine you have to give a talk about the “Columbian Exchange”. Which image would you best use? Why?

Complex relationship past - present





# Complex relationship between past and present

[https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/civilization\\_and\\_barbarism/cb\\_essay.pdf](https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/civilization_and_barbarism/cb_essay.pdf)



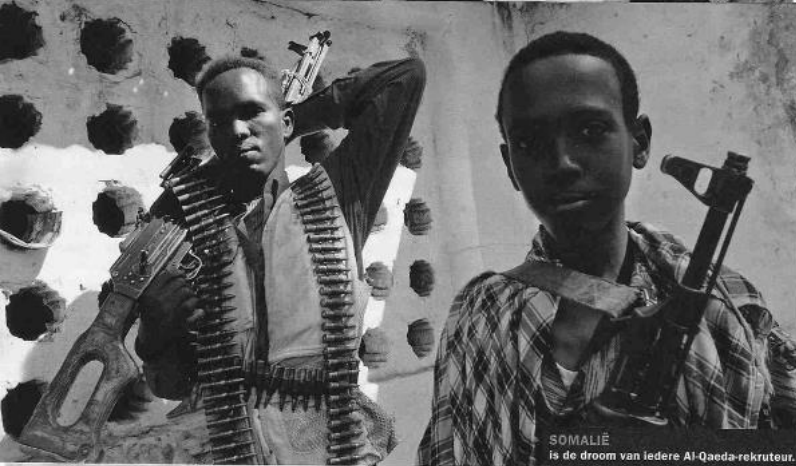
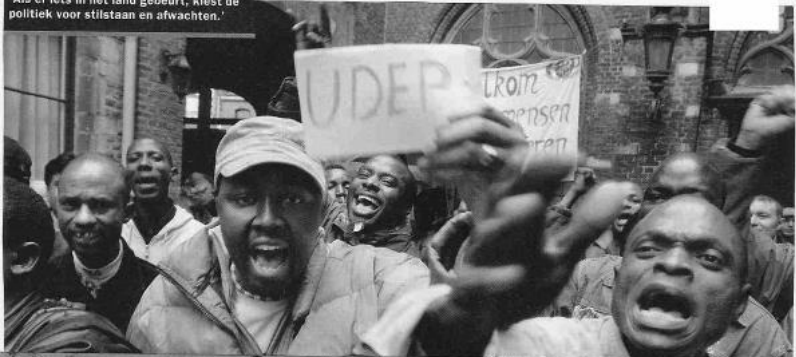
[cb27-004\_1900\_Judge\_BackUp\_000016]

[cb30-021\_puck\_1898\_Oct19\_cover\_1290728\_y]

*Pro-imperialist cartoons often depicted the West as literally shining the light of civilization and progress on barbaric peoples. In these details, the headlight of a modern vehicle (Judge, 1900) and starlight from a goddess of "civilization" (Puck, 1898) illuminate demeaning caricatures of China.*



**KERKBEZETTING**  
 'Als er iets in het land gebeurt, kloot de politiek voor stilstaan en afwachten.'



**SOMALIË**  
 is de droom van iedere Al-Qaeda-rekruteur.



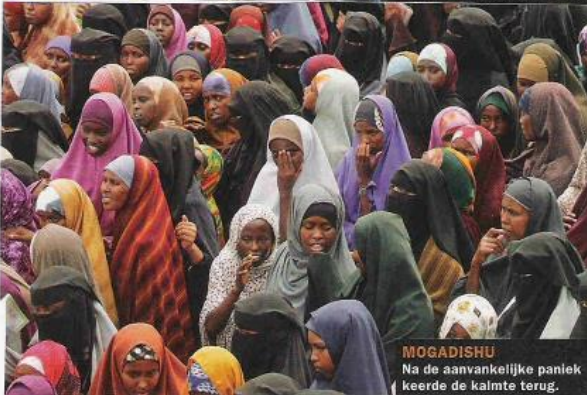
AP 25



**Help hongerend Afrika nu!**  
**Giro 555**  
 De Verenigde Staten  
 Den Haag



**BONOBO**  
 De voet van een mensaap heeft nog altijd veel van een hand.



**MOGADISHU**  
 Na de aanvankelijke paniek keerde de kalmte terug.



**NOORD-DARFUR**  
 Een rebel van het Nationaal Bevrijdingsfront in Umm Sidir.



**ONRUST**  
 De verkiezingsresultaten veroorzaken spanningen tussen de aanhangers van Bembo en die van Kabila.



**DERDE WERELD** 'Mensen worden vaak behandeld met ineffektieve of schadelijke producten. Dat kunnen we niet meer accepteren', zegt Artsen Zonder Grenzen.

## Hoe polio werd overwonnen

**1938** De Amerikaanse president Franklin D. Roosevelt, zelf poliopatiënt, lanceert een geldinzamelingsactie om het onderzoek naar de boeswijding van de ziekte financieel te ondersteunen. Jaarlijks telt Amerika nog 50.000 slachtoffers van polio.

**1948** De Amerikaanse viroloog Jonas Salk identificeert drie virusstammen die de ziekte veroorzaken.

**1952** Hij ontwerpt het eerste vaccin tegen polio.

**1955** Eerste vaccinatiecampagne in de Verenigde Staten.

**1961** De Amerikaanse viroloog Albert Sabin stelt een eerste vaccin op punt dat oraal kan worden toegediend.

**1966** Vaccinatie tegen polio verplicht in België.

**1988** De Wereldgezondheidsorganisatie (WHO) lanceert een campagne om de ziekte uit te roeien. Wereldwijd worden nog 350.000 gevallen geregistreerd.

**1994** Amerika is officieel poliovrij.

**2001** Polio is verdwenen in Azië en de regio van de Stille Oceaan.

**2002** Europa is poliovrij.

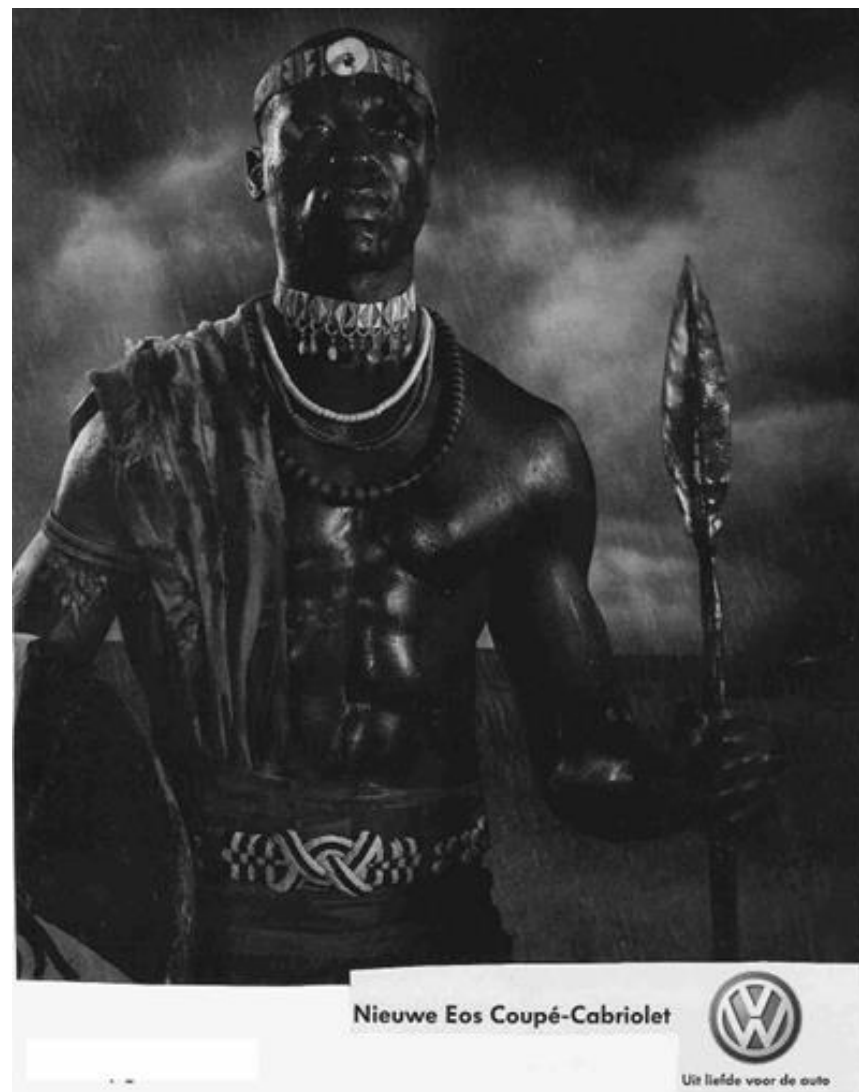
**2008** De WHO roept aan dat het virus in 2007 zal zijn uitgeroeid in Afrika.







Franse reclame  
voor Chiquita -  
jaren 1980



# Between dream and deed

obstacles on the path of decolonization

# Difficulties

## ► Knowledge

- Often small knowledge basis
  - Non-Western societies
  - Interculturel contacts
  - 'Identity'
- Limited availability of sources, also ~ language barriers
- Language and reality
- Epistemological gap

## ► Sensitivity and emotional tension

- Majority group: functioning of the regime of truth
- Minoritized groups
- !! Language and Image (representation)!!

- Democratic dialogue
- Structured academic controversy
- Socratic dialogue
- Dilemma-based approach

## ► Very little exemplary good practices





- ▶ Questions
- ▶ Reflection
- ▶ Debate