

History, Heritage, and Colonialism: Historical Consciousness, Britishness, and Cultural Identity in New Zealand, 1870-1940 (Studies in Imperialism MUP)

Kynan Gentry



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History, heritage and colonialism offers an internationally relevant examination of the nexus between empire and colonial identity, by exploring the politics of history-making and interest in preserving the material remnants of the past in late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial society. It covers both indigenous pasts, and those of European origin.

Focusing on New Zealand, but also looking at the Australian and Canadian experiences, it explores how different groups and political interests have sought to harness historical narrative in support of competing visions of identity and memory. Considering this within the frames of the local and national as well as imperial, the book offers a valuable critique of the study of colonial identity-making and colonial cultures of colonisation, which to date have tended to focus almost exclusively on the idea of 'the nation', and given particular weight to so-called 'high' cultural forms such as art, literature and poetry. History, heritage and colonialism, by comparison, seeks to highlight the complex network of separate and often conflicting influences upon national identity, ranging from the individual, to the community, to the national, to the transnational. The study of colonial nationalism, furthermore, needs to be understood in relation to the importance of identity in so-called 'new nations', where parallel to conscious efforts to establish legitimacy through the identification of a distinct heritage, the cultural baggage of imperial ideologies typically saw settler societies view themselves as countries 'without history'.

Offering important insights for societies negotiating the legacy of a colonial past in a global present, this book will be of particular value to all those concerned with museum, heritage, and tourism studies, and imperial history, at undergraduate and postgraduate level, as well as among scholars in these fields. It will also be of interest to a wider public interested in heritage and the history of museums.

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