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What made France into an imperialist nation, ruler of a global empire with millions of dependent subjects overseas? Historians have sought answers to this question in the nation's political situation at home and abroad, its socioeconomic circumstances, and its international ambitions. But all these motivating factors depended on other, less tangible forces, namely, the prevailing attitudes of the day and their influence among those charged with acquiring or administering a colonial empire. *The French Colonial Mind* explores these mindsets to illuminate the nature of French imperialism.

The first of two linked volumes, *Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters* brings together fifteen leading scholars of French colonial history to investigate the origins and outcomes of imperialist ideas among France's most influential "empire-makers." Considering French colonial experiences in Africa and Southeast Asia, the authors identify the processes that made Frenchmen and women into ardent imperialists. By focusing on attitudes, presumptions, and prejudices, these essays connect the derivation of ideas about empire, colonized peoples, and concepts of civilization with the forms and practices of French imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The contributors to *The French Colonial Mind* place the formation and the derivation of colonialist thinking at the heart of this history of imperialism.

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