



# DECOLONISING THE PSYCHE

## THE POLITICS OF ETHNOPSYCHOLOGY, 1930–1980

### Researchers

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### Additional information

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### Description

How was the world-historical process of decolonisation linked to ideas of the human psyche, both in its individual and social dimensions? And how did the sciences of the mind respond to the end of empire? During the long moment of decolonisation, debates on the human psyche took place in a new key: was the psyche universally the same? Or was it culturally distinct? These questions – pondered by anthropologists, colonial psychiatrists, anti-imperial activists, and global mental health organisations alike – gained tremendous political urgency during the long process of decolonisation.

With a perspective from the history of science, the project examines how psychological experts conceptualised the psyche of people from the Global South. For that purpose, we reconstruct the history of the dialogue between anthropology and psychology across three different sub-disciplines: psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, and psychiatric epidemiology. A central hypothesis of the project is that ethnopsychology was a technique for attempting to come to terms with, and even to manage, the end of empire, all the while acting as a factor catalysing it. Thus, we aim for a more thorough understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of decolonisation and, especially, its impact on Europe.

