

Key Concepts in Historical Geography. JOHN MORRISSEY, DAVID NALLY, ULF STROHMAYER, and YVONNE WHELAN. London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2014. Pp. xiv + 308, index. \$39.00 paperback. ISBN 978-1412930444.

Historical geography encompasses an expansive field within human geography. Any particular study of geographies of the past can at times inhabit many subfields of human geography. Consequently, historical geography does not lend itself well to a one paragraph definition or to a few theoretical maxims. Any new student of historical geography can find the variety of content daunting. Newcomers to the field would be well-served by a detailed overview of academic historical geography. With the publication of *Key Concepts in Historical Geography*, such an overview exists.

John Morrissey, David Nally, Ulf Strohmayer, and Yvonne Whelan served as joint authors for this text – a text that is part of a wider series by SAGE Publications focusing on the most important concepts in several of the social sciences. (Similar *Key Concepts* books exist for different sub-disciplines of geography, including political geography, urban geography, and economic geography.) The *Key Concepts* series editor prefaced that this historical geography text allows for deeper explanation than a dictionary, broader understanding than a monograph, and more background material than a textbook. This is an excellent description of the strength of content found in *Key Concepts in Historical Geography*.

The book is arranged in a logical structure with eight broad category sections: “Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies,” “Nation-building and Geopolitics,” “Historical Hierarchies,” “The Built Environment,” “Place and Meaning,” “Modernity and Modernization,” “Beyond the Border,” and “The Production of Historical Geographical Knowledge.” Each category is not a chapter by itself; rather, these sections contain three defined concepts each. For example, the “Historical Hierarchies” section contains entries covering “Class, Hegemony and Resistance,” “Race,” and “Gender.” Morrissey, Nally, Strohmayer, and Whelan each authored six chapters.

All 24 concept chapters (each about ten pages in length) include conceptual explanations paired with the related methodologies or applications of a given concept. For instance, Yvonne Whelan’s excellent piece over the “Landscape and Iconography” concept is separated into an introductory section that discusses the historical understanding of landscape from Sauer to Meinig, a section on new cultural approaches to landscape since the 1980s, a section addressing memory and identity from the 1990s (including a mini-case study on Dublin), and a conclusion section that addresses critiques of landscape studies while appropriately situating current research within academic geography. Throughout each chapter, relevant scholarship is mentioned – the “Landscape and Iconography” section identifies specific works by Cosgrove, Daniels, and Duncan when discussing new cultural geographies of landscape.

Yet, the text is not a monotonous literature review. Foundational pieces of scholarship and intellectual evolution of ideas are intertwined in this very readable book. A well-culled list of suggested readings follows each chapter. Perhaps most useful to historical geography students are each section’s concluding “key points” that succeed in providing clear, summary-style paragraphs of a chapter’s central ideas.

Several sections within this book deserve extra praise. The aforementioned example concept of “Landscape and Iconography” by Whelan is joined by the author’s companion pieces on “Conceptualizing Heritage” and “Performance, Spectacle and Power” – three vibrant concept chapters that give clarity to geographers working on place and meaning, often “at the boundaries between cultural and historical geography” (p. 9).

Another section, “Beyond the Border,” contains three persuasive concept chapters by Nally that address “big picture themes” for academic historical geographers (p. 10). While the

concept topics of “Globalization,” “Governmentality,” and “Nature-Culture” might typically be viewed through a twenty-first century lens outside of historical geography, Nally does admirable work to stress the historical (and historical geographical) relations of these important ideas.

An additional strong suit in this work is the final section of the book which focuses on the production of knowledge within academic historical geography. Strohmayr’s “Historical Geographical Traditions,” Morrissey’s “Illustrative Geographies,” and Morrissey’s “Evidence and Representation” collectively address “the conditions of possibility for historical geographical scholarship to emerge” (p. 11). These concluding chapters form an important step-back view of the meaning of “historical geography” that is valuable for new student and experienced researcher alike.

One strength of the four authors is their diverse academic background, with a variety of academic training in North America and Europe. The authors currently hold academic positions in Ireland and the United Kingdom, which serves well to represent the very strong academic tradition of historical geography in the non-U.S. English-speaking world. Additionally, the inclusion of four separate authors did not hamper the overall quality of the book through stylistic differences in writing or voice.

While innovative scholarship in historical geography (not to mention scholarship in historical GIS) is increasing, this work is not necessarily comparable to one particular research monograph within some portion of historical geography. Instead, this book works within a framework between textbook and encyclopedia. It is tempting to assume this text would be compared by students to the well-known work *The Dictionary of Human Geography* by Gregory and Johnston (2009), but the breadth and length of concept chapters in *Key Concepts in Historical Geography* is far greater than a dictionary. The best comparisons are the additional *Key Concepts* texts focusing on geography offered by SAGE Publishing.

No summary work can perfectly describe a discipline, and at times in *Key Concepts in Historical Geography* there exists an opportunity – paradoxically – for both “more” and “less” information in particular chapters. Furthermore, greater contextualizing of additional major works across even more subfields of human geography could be useful for positioning different aspects of historical geography. But these objections are slight, and likely borne out of the format. This scholarly, detailed overview is a commendable work.

In the introduction, the authors note that “an overarching methodological concern... is to ask geographic questions of the historical evidence that seeks to situate meaning in context” (p. 2). Any student or professional within historical geography would agree that this work similarly situates meaning in context for the wide-ranging field of historical geography. Both the format and intellectual approach to *Key Concepts in Historical Geography* are quite successful, and this book is a necessary volume for any current or future scholar of historical geography.

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