

Session Summary: 21 January 2019

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The purpose of this session is to summarize the discussions on the three books by Pierre Nora, Suzanne Citron and Benoît Falaize that we analyzed during the previous session. We focused more on Benoît Falaize's text, whose approach seemed especially innovative and original, particularly in terms of the sources used.

Benoît Falaize bases his analysis on a wide variety of documents that attest to what material was taught in the classroom: colonial memoirs and texts, specialized journals, newspapers intended for teachers in the colonies, reports and instructions issued, as well as pupils' notebooks and copies. The historian thus sheds light on the educational mission of primary school teachers in the colonies.

In this context, the phrase and adage "Our ancestors the Gauls" is never, contrary to popular belief, at the heart of the syllabus. On the contrary, teachers pass on the principle of truth in history. During this period when scientific disciplines such as ethnology and anthropology were emerging, the preferred method was to teach history from the field. This means teachers employed whatever materials were available to them: images, objects, testimonials. These tools raised the students' awareness of historical heritage and its preservation. Furthermore, teachers prioritized a pedagogy based on empirical methods, using tangible and local experience, especially when speaking of exemplary heroes, sometimes favouring, it is true, figures from ethnic groups who supported the colonizers.

Additionally, history education in the colonies demonstrated a willingness to encourage children's imagination. In contrast to strictly scholarly history, teaching was oriented towards transmission of knowledge and emotions, with the intent to cultivate a sense of belonging to a local, then national, community and leaving room for the imagination deemed necessary by teachers for children's proper cognitive development.

Finally, the link with France is defined not by common roots, but by adherence to the values of the Nation, of the French Republic. This is how the journey of individuals, of people, and their adherence to the values of France are highlighted.

These authors provide us with tools, as well as different approaches, for questioning the narrative processes related to national history in Taiwan:

- Difficulty in uniting around a single narrative of the nation's journey (Suzanne Citron)
- Plurality of ways of reading the past related to ethnic and community withdrawal (Pierre Nora)
- Preconceived ideas and stereotypes on the content of history syllabi (Benoît Falaize)
- Issue of truth in history and the novelistic aspect of narrative elaboration (Pierre Nora)
- Issue of the role of emotion and imagination (Benoît Falaize et Pierre Nora)

¹ Benoît Falaize, *L'Histoire à l'école élémentaire depuis 1945*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016, Chapitre III, Le préalable colonial : l'enseignement de l'histoire à l'école élémentaire dans les colonies (1900-1962), p. 122.