

Editorial Foreword

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THE POLITICS OF CONVERSION Conversion from one to another of the Biblical religions makes for complex, various and unpredictable politics, as the first three essays of this issue illustrate. (See also Lucette Valensi, "Intercommunal Relations and Changes in Religious Affiliation in the Middle East [Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries]," 1997:251–69.)

Paul Werth reveals the curious destiny of the baptized Tatars of the Russian east, called Kräshens. Converted to Christianity by missionaries under the Tsars, over the course of time some regained the Tatar identity by embracing Islam, but others constructed a separate, Orthodox Christian identity which, in the early Soviet period, was reconceptualized in post-Christian terms as that of a secular nation distinct from the Tatars. New Soviet nationalities policy in the nineteen-thirties ended legal recognition of the tiny Kräshen nation, but a sentiment of difference from Tatars persists.

Irene Silverblatt elucidates the anxieties which lay behind the the Inquisition in Peru, through close study of the trial in 1639 of one Manuel Bautista Pérez. The persecution of New Christians not only brought Old World fears of crypto-Judaism to Peru but linked them to distinctly New World fears concerning contamination from conquered Indians and enslaved Africans, converging in a hybrid, unbounded fear-object. (Compare Serge Gruzinski and Nathan Wachtel, "Cultural Interbreedings: Constituting the Majority as a Minority," 1997:231–50.)

Selim Deringil reviews Ottoman records of conversions to Islam by Christians, and renunciations of Islam by those who had converted to it from Christianity—and who were liable to be put to death under Islamic law. The Ottoman state forbade the use of force in conversion and connived to evade use of the death penalty for apostasy from Islam, partly out of a wish to be thought modern by European powers, partly because of the intense extraterritorial meddling of European states in cases of conversion from Christianity to Islam. The author gives a comparative glance at conversion in Russia and Spain.

RACE IN BLACK AND WHITE The reproduction of blackness and whiteness are examined in the next three essays.

Aline Helg explores different inflections of the rising violence toward blacks in post-emancipation Cuba and the United States. Racial stereotyping centered on the image of the rapist and the witch. In Cuba it justified army suppression of Afro-Cuban political mobilization and subordination of blacks within a

white-controlled political system, while in the southern U.S. it justified lynching and promoted terror as a means to enforce conformity to Jim Crow social norms.

Tammy M. Proctor studies what happened when Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements, created to bring the empire home, went abroad—specifically to South Africa, where Scouting’s creator, Baden-Powell, had spent memorable years of a long military career and from which he had drawn so much of the poetics of Scouting. It is a fascinating story of trying to square the circle of racial segregation within a multiracial organization.

Antoinette Burton examines a highly public indiscretion committed by Lord Salisbury during the election of 1892, when he said that a British constituency would not elect a black man, referring to Dadhabai Naoroji, an eminent Indian Parsi running as Liberal candidate for Parliament. Naoroji won the election, thanks in part to Lord Salisbury’s speech. The scandal reveals the place of race in the ideological work of imperial democracy, and shows how the empire helped constitute domestic politics and society.

CULTURAL PROPERTY Mind-born property, which is expanding its scope and multiplying its kinds at a terrific rate these days, was not first invented by modern markets, according to the last essay, but its modalities vary under different kinds of political economy. (CSSH has published a number of notable pieces on forms of exchange, most recently Michael Taussig, “The Sun Gives without Receiving: An Old Story,” 1995:368–98; C. A. Gregory, “Cowries and Conquest: towards a Subaltern Quality Theory of Money,” 1996:195–217; and Heinzpeter Znoj, “Hot Money and War Debts: Transactional Regimes in Southwestern Sumatra,” 1998:193–222.)

Simon Harrison brings together evidence showing that Melanesians exercised property rights over all manner of cultural intangibles such as songs, dance forms, and sculptural styles well before colonial rule, and traded them like things for other, material objects. Property in such objectifications of culture flowed not from having been *made* by someone who was therefore its owner, but from having been *revealed* to the owner, and it circulated in the trading and gift-exchange economies of prestige. Under colonialism, cultural forms become property of a different kind: *kastom* (custom), the group’s distinctive cultural symbols as a heritage from the past.