

Editorial Foreword

TRUST Trust undergirds and permeates everything from personal relations to contracts to states. Without it, social life breaks down. These essays address how trust is made and breached; they show the kind of work that trust requires and how precarious it is. Despite the legal and institutional bulwarks designed to ensure and enforce it, trust almost always fails. Confidence weakens and trust, the “feeling that underwrites risk,” as **Johan Mathew** puts it, is replaced by litigation, fear, and force. Mathew’s essay, “On Principals and Agency: Reassembling Trust in Indian Ocean Commerce,” looks at specific commercial relationships in the Indian Ocean between principals and agents. Trust was developed between business partners even across wide social and ethnic divisions. But, as legal records of dispute reveal, it was hard to sustain. Mathew considers trust less as a freestanding feeling than as an assemblage of materials, networks, commodities, legal systems, persons, and sentiments. The removal of any of them might shake the frame, or tip it outright.

Sharika Thiranagama’s contribution, “Respect Your Neighbor as Yourself: Neighborliness, Caste, and Community in South India,” offers an ethnography of Kerala neighborhoods. What makes people neighborly? Put otherwise, how are spatially proximate neighbors converted into a *neighborhood*, a place where caste differences between Dalits and others are overcome—or at least mitigated by—trust? Thiranagama presents an intimate study of how respect, dignity, and commensality are made, earned, and given (or not) in everyday practices like food-sharing and gossip, among the most marginalized of groups.

In their “Colonial America Today: U.S. Empire and the Political Status of Native American Nations,” **J. M. Bacon** and **Matthew Norton** direct our attention to the trust doctrine of the U.S. government vis-à-vis indigenous groups, a formal arrangement that obscures the actual practice of the “impairment of sovereignty” of Native societies. They demonstrate that the U.S. treatment of Native peoples, far from being a unique or anomalous case, is better understood as typical of colonial imperial governance. In the United States, though, imperial governance and colonial domination are masked and misrecognized by the terms of trust. The trust doctrine implies, and in fact bears within it, a relation of impairment. Clarifying the actual colonial, imperial nature of this system of governance opens new political possibilities for its decolonization.

IDENTIFICATIONS Empires and nation-states invest heavily in affixing individual identities. Political subjects are often equally committed to resisting those assignments or expanding their repertoires of identification to affirm multiple roles, histories, and statuses. Onomastics, the tying of names to

discrete persons, is at once the most familiar and perhaps most powerful technique of tethering personhood to institutional structures of recognition. These two papers investigate the fluidity of naming practices through the uses of multiple or shifting names by the enslaved and marginalized. **Sarah Abel, George F. Tyson, and Gisli Palsson** examine slave records in the Danish West Indies, focused on St. Croix. Their essay, “From Enslavement to Emancipation: Naming Practices in the Danish West Indies,” demonstrates how slaves used multiple names different from those assigned to them by masters. Their multiple appellations pointed to ongoing diasporic affiliations with Africa, and roles outside of their lives as slaves. Additional new titles were taken to mark key rites of passage like manumission, a slave’s rebirth as a free person.

Alison K. Smith investigates nineteenth-century Russian peasants shifting uses of names, a habit that frustrated imperial authorities’ efforts to hold serfs in place and levy taxes. Her article, “Fugitives, Vagrants, and Found Dead Bodies: Identifying the Individual in Tsarist Russia,” suggests how itinerants, “vagabonds,” and runaways sometimes deliberately changed names. Others honestly did not know their patronyms or where they were originally from. Identity could nowhere be absolutely determined, yet this opacity hailed a host of new anthropometric efforts by the state to read bodies, including of the dead, to define, locate, and affix permanent human identities.

PEDAGOGIES OF RELIGION Religions are transmitted not only in ideas, stories, chronologies, and sacralized texts and sites, but also, perhaps especially, through the senses. Even texts are more than visual; they are possessed of heft and tactile persuasion. When recited, read, or sung, they take on voice and launch sonic waves that travel. Effective transmissions and transmitters of religious movements, sometimes called missionaries, become skilled adepts of the senses and the craft of materializing a message to form embodied dispositions. But they also master the inverse alchemy: transforming materials and bodily dispositions into systematic statements and institutional forms.

In “Pedagogies of Prayer: Teaching Orthodoxy in South India,” **Vlad Naumescu** studies the pedagogy of Syriac Orthodox communities, focusing on the education of children. How are complex metaphors like Jesus as “the bread of life” taught and made salient? Naumescu details the fraught dialectic between treatments of the text as an enchanted, almost magical object, and as a textbook-like guide to proper recitation. “Old” and “new” notions of religious pedagogy both remain in play. **Alice Yeh** takes us to early modern China, and the attempts by Jesuits to teach Christianity through fabric, a “textual-textile politics.” Her article, “The Hermeneutics of Silk: China and the Fabric of Christendom according to Martino Martini and the Early Modern Jesuit ‘Accommodationists,’” explores the concern over how much material mediating of the Christian was *too* much, an accommodation to local mores that deformed the religion beyond recognition. Thus, Jesuits were in general proscribed from wearing silk when proselytizing in China. At the same time, silk was necessary

to being recognized as bona fide scholar-scribes. Jesuits accommodated the message to incorporate silk—even converting biblical “fruit” into “silk”—and even donned silk garments as a textile strategy to win elites’ hearts, but always uneasily.

SONIC HISTORY In “Archived Voices, Acoustic Traces, and the Reverberations of Kurdish History in Modern Turkey,” **Marlene Schäfers** digs into shoeboxes. The boxes overflow with cassette tapes of singer-poets that Kurdish women of Anatolia use to make and maintain history, in what Nancy Rose Hunt called the “acoustic register.” Women take pride in their cassette “archives,” even employing that very term. These archives speak, but they also have material and visual force; they are both held and displayed. The cassettes fill dowry chests, are stacked on bedside tables, and guarded in post-disaster containers. They announce, both visually and aurally, a certain ownership of history. They are played in private homes or in collective gatherings, so their vocality fills spaces and socialities of varying scale. Their sound touches distinct affective as well as acoustic registers. The sonic histories give shelter from state narratives in which Kurds are erased. Schäfers notes sonic history’s key dialectic: Vocality is circumscribed by the speakable. To be heard requires a specific form. In that sense, gaining political voice is tied up with learning a disciplined voice.
