

Editorial Foreword

This issue brings together nine research articles grouped under four rubrics, spanning topics that range from imperial legacies in Spain and Iran to the politics of racialization across micro and macro scales, as well as frontier politics and the histories of possession and dispossession in the Ottoman world.

IMPERIAL TRANSLATIONS In “Epistemic Translation of Modernity: Negotiating Science and Technology under Semi-Colonial Conditions,” **Mina Khanlarzadeh** turns to the vexed question of semi-colonial sovereignty and specifically how Iranian intellectuals negotiated Western science and technology through creative acts of translation. Translation was not simply linguistic transfer but a set of practices ranging from adoption to refusal that shaped this unequal encounter, whose legacies play themselves out in particularly visible and devastating fashion in this historical juncture. **Yves Winter**’s essay is equally a study in imperial translations, violence, and erasures. In “Imperial Nostalgia as Patrimony: Shipwrecks and Treasures in the Colonial Museum,” Winter highlights how two recent Spanish museum exhibitions on the frigate *Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes* convert recovered colonial treasure into objects of national patrimony. Through a reading of the exhibits and the media and academic discourse around them, the essay emphasizes the ways that these displays translate and transform imperial histories into national heritage while bracketing questions of extraction, coercion, and slavery.

PALIMPSESTIC FRONTIERS Frontiers have been generative spaces to think about the nature and limits of state sovereignty. In his essay on contraband commerce and its role in shaping the Syria-Turkey border, **Emrah Yıldız** argues for a mode of territorialization that he terms *Kaçak* (contraband; literally “fugitive”) to explain the relationship between value, territory, and political reason/treason. “*Kaçak* Territorialization: The Syria-Turkey Border as a Palimpsest of Sovereignty” works across the practices of contraband merchants, investigative journalists, and state officials to show the historicity and dynamism of mobility (and arrested mobility) in the spatial production of borders and sovereignty. Moving from spatiality to temporality, **Alessandro Rippa**’s essay “When is a frontier? Nostalgia and Aspirations at China’s Borderlands with Burma and Laos” focuses on China’s borderlands with Laos and Burma and the Chinese migrants who lived and worked in these spaces. Rippa emphasizes how nostalgia for a vibrant, though transient, form of sociality was both about the past and the future and importantly shapes the frontier as a frontier.

SCALES OF RACIALIZATION The next three essays all foreground the work of race and racialization across scale and time. **Sam Holley-Kline** unearths the work of archaeological labor and the racialized ascription of that labor in early twentieth-century Guatemala. “How the United Fruit Company Racialized Archaeological

Labor in Guatemala, 1910–1953” turns to the close relationship between foreign archaeologists and the United Fruit Company in that era to show how broader political economies of race and labor conditioned the practice of archaeology, including the exploitation of Afro-descendant labor in the context of archaeological knowledge production. Staying with themes of labor and race, “The 1582 Registro de Mulatos and the Politics of Labor and Race in Early Colonial Cusco, Peru” by **R. Alan Covey and Emilio Ramirez** is a close reading of a 1582 register of the free Afro-Peruvian population of Cusco, Peru. Reflecting on municipal attempts at controlling the labor of free Afro-Peruvians, the authors pay close attention to the strategic representations of individual registrants and how these reflected tensions between the relative independence of skilled workers on one end and the silence of those who lived and worked in households of wealthy Spaniards on the other. Through this detailed examination, the article explores how a growing population of free Afro-Peruvian men and women navigated practices and policies that promoted racial inequalities and coerced labor based on race, class, and gender. The final essay in this rubric shifts location and scale to foreground the disavowals and yet persistence of racial biologisms within scientific research. **Alice Yao’s** “From Disorder to Distinction: Lactose Intolerance and the Racialization of Digestion in Postwar Medicine (1950–1980)” traces the journey of lactose digestion within shifting discourses on race, heredity, and population. From a racialized disorder to an ethnicized trait and finally a biomarker of distinct genetic ancestry, the changing status of lactose intolerance in Yao’s essay shows how medical researchers and anthropologists collaborated in postwar medical research on lactose digestion in ways that both disavowed race and preserved racialized assumptions about biological difference.

AGRARIAN REVOLUTIONS In “Constitutionalism of the Dispossessed: Land Occupations, Revolution, and the Political Economy of a Counterrevolution in the Ottoman Empire,” **Önder Eren Akgül** gives a view of the 1908 Ottoman constitutional revolution from the landscape of the Ottoman *çiftlik* (plantation). Attending to a series of land occupations that constituted a “constitutionalism of the dispossessed,” the essay showcases repertoires of rural revolution and their relationship to crises of the global economy, empire, and local ecologies. Constitutional revolutions and counter-revolutions were, as Akgül argues, tied to wider political-economic shifts and anxieties over rural disorder and the desire for order during a global wave of constitutional revolutions and counter-revolutions in the early twentieth century. Finally, **Nora Barakat’s** essay “Building an Ottoman National Economy” is a rethinking of the question of the national economy away from narratives of tariffs, protectionism, and import substitution to debates over agrarian policy in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the 1908 constitutional revolution. As her article shows, debates over the value of the land market, including who constituted an ideal landholder, amidst a broader context of imperial capitalism led to the emergence of protectionist land regimes within this extended imperial geography that encompassed Palestine and the Hijaz Railway. Her article emphasizes the colonial and postcolonial legacy of this land market, including the widespread experience of dispossession that shaped postcolonial Arab states and the Zionist settler colonization of Palestine.