

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Origins of Racism in the West

Is it possible to speak of western racism before the eighteenth century? The term “racism” is normally only associated with theories, which first appeared in the eighteenth century, about inherent biological differences that made one group superior to another. Here, however, leading historians argue that racism can be traced back to the attitudes of the ancient Greeks to their Persian enemies and that it was adopted, adjusted and reformulated by Europeans until the dawn of the Enlightenment. From Greek teachings on environmental determinism and heredity, through medieval concepts of physiognomy, down to the crystallization of attitudes to Indians, Blacks, Jews and Gypsies in the early modern era, they analyse the various routes by which racist ideas travelled before maturing into murderous ideologies in the modern western world. In so doing this book offers a major reassessment of the place of racism in pre-modern European thought.

MIRIAM ELIAV-FELDON is Professor of Early Modern European History at Tel Aviv University. Her previous publications include *Realistic Utopias: The Ideal Imaginary Societies of the Renaissance* (1982), *The Protestant Reformation* (1997) and *The Printing Revolution* (2000).

BENJAMIN ISAAC is Fred and Helen Lessing Professor of Ancient History at Tel Aviv University. His books include *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (1990), *The Near East under Roman Rule* (1998) and *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (2004).

JOSEPH ZIEGLER is a senior lecturer at the Department of General History, University of Haifa. He is the author of *Medicine and Religion c. 1300: The Case of Arnau de Vilanova* (1998).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by

Miriam Eliav-Feldon,

Benjamin Isaac

and

Joseph Ziegler



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America
by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521888554

© Cambridge University Press 2009

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2009

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-88855-4 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
1. Introduction	
BENJAMIN ISAAC, JOSEPH ZIEGLER, MIRIAM ELIAV-FELDON	1
2. Racism: a rationalization of prejudice in Greece and Rome	
BENJAMIN ISAAC	32
3. The invention of Persia in Classical Athens	
H. A. SHAPIRO	57
4. Racism, color symbolism, and color prejudice	
DAVID GOLDENBERG	88
5. Early Christian universalism and modern forms of racism	
DENISE KIMBER BUELL	109
6. Illustrating ethnicity in the Middle Ages	
ROBERT BARTLETT	132
7. Proto-racial thought in medieval science	
PETER BILLER	157
8. Physiognomy, science, and proto-racism 1200–1500	
JOSEPH ZIEGLER	181
9. Noble dogs, noble blood: the invention of the concept of race in the late Middle Ages	
CHARLES DE MIRAMON	200
10. The carnal knowing of a coloured body: sleeping with Arabs and Blacks in the European imagination, 1300–1550	
VALENTIN GROEBNER	217

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi	Contents	
11.	Was there race before modernity? The example of 'Jewish' blood in late medieval Spain	
	DAVID NIRENBERG	232
12.	Religion and race: Protestant and Catholic discourses on Jewish conversions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries	
	RONNIE PO-CHIA HSIA	265
13.	Vagrants or vermin? Attitudes towards Gypsies in early modern Europe	
	MIRIAM ELIAV-FELDON	276
14.	The peopling of the New World: ethnos, race and empire in the early-modern world	
	ANTHONY PAGDEN	292
15.	Demons, stars, and the imagination: the early modern body in the Tropics	
	JORGE CAÑIZARES-ESGUERRA	313
	<i>Index</i>	326

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Illustrations

- | | | |
|---------|---|---------|
| 3.1 | Persian King or satrap with attendants. Florence, Museo Archeologico 3845. Attic black-figure neck-amphora, c. 520 BCE. Photo: Soprintendenza Archeologica per la Toscana, courtesy M. Iozzo. | page 59 |
| 3.2 | Departure of a Greek hoplite. Side B of the amphora in Fig. 3.1. Photo: Soprintendenza Archeologica per la Toscana, courtesy M. Iozzo. | 60 |
| 3.3 | Croesus on the pyre. Louvre G 197. Attic red-figure amphora attributed to Myson, 500–490 BCE. Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux. | 61 |
| 3.4 | Greek hoplite fighting a Persian archer. Basel, Antikenmuseum + Sammlung Ludwig BS 488. Attic red-figure cup, c. 520 BCE. Photo: Museum, courtesy V. Slehoferova. | 62 |
| 3.5 | Greek fighting Persian. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1911.615. Attic red-figure cup, c. 480–470 BCE. Photo: Museum, courtesy M. Vickers. | 64 |
| 3.6 | Athena holding prow ornament of Persian ship (<i>Aphlaston</i>). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 25.189.1, Purchase, 1925. Attic red-figure lekythos, c. 470–460 BCE. Photo: Museum. | 67 |
| 3.7–3.8 | Greek preparing a sexual attack on a Persian. Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe 1981.173. Attic red-figure oinochoe, c. 460 BCE. Photos: Museum. | 68 |
| 3.9 | Three herms. Louvre 10793. Attic red-figure pelike, c. 460 BCE. Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux. | 71 |
| 3.10 | Amazon on horseback; on the cup, mounted Persian killing a Greek warrior. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 21.2286. Attic red-figure rhyton, c. 450 BCE. Harvard University – Boston Museum of Fine Arts Expedition. Photo: copyright Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. | 73 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii	List of illustrations	
3.11–3.12	Persians battling Greeks. Louvre CA 3825. Fragmentary Attic red-figure rhyton, c. 450 BCE. Photos: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.	74
3.13	Persian king with attendants. Louvre, Campana collection 11164. Attic red-figure pelike, c. 440 BCE. Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.	75
3.14–3.15	Persian king with attendants. Stockholm, Historical Museum V294. Attic red-figure squat lekythos from Cyprus, 440–430 BCE. Photos: Museum.	76
3.16–3.17	Persian and attendant. Tübingen University S./10 1365. Attic white-ground lekythos, c. 440 BCE. Photos: Museum, courtesy B. von Freytag.	77
3.18	Entertainment for the Persian king. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 158. Attic red-figure bell-krater, c. 400 BCE. Photo: Museum.	79
3.19	Bendis and Themis. Tübingen University S./10 1347. Attic red-figure skyphos, 430–420 BCE. Photo: Museum, courtesy B. von Freytag.	80
3.20	Dancer performing the “oklasma.” Athens, National Archaeological Museum 12683. Boeotian red-figure calyx-krater, c. 400 BCE. Photo: German Archaeological Institute, Athens (Hans R. Goette).	81
3.21	The Judgment of Paris. St. Petersburg, Hermitage O.28 (St. 1807). Attic red-figure calyx-krater, c. 400 BCE. Photo: Museum.	82
3.22	The Darius Vase. Naples, Museo Nazionale Archeologico inv. 81947 (H 3253). Apulian red-figure volute-krater, c. 340–330 BCE. Drawing after C. Aellen, <i>A la recherche de l'ordre cosmique</i> (1994).	85
6.1	Franks and Muslims. <i>Grandes chroniques de France</i> . London, British Library, MS Royal 16 G. VI, fol. 171v.	133
6.2	Anti-semitic caricatures. Exchequer Roll for 1233. Kew, National Archives, E 401/1565 (Receipt Roll for 1233).	134
6.3	The Jewish poet Susskind. “Manesse codex”. Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol. 355.	135
6.4	Maurice, the black saint, Magdeburg cathedral.	136
6.5	Black men amongst the saved and the damned. Hans Memling, <i>Last Judgment</i> . The National Museum, Gdańsk. Photographer: Ryszard Petrajtis.	138

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

List of illustrations	ix
6.6 “Greek, Saracen and Latin notaries” in the Kingdom of Sicily. <i>Liber ad honorem Augusti</i> , Peter of Eboli. Burgerbibliothek, Bern, MS 120. II, fol. 101r.	140
6.7 Anglo-Saxon and Norman hairstyles. Detail of the Bayeux Tapestry – 11th century. With special permission of the city of Bayeux.	142
6.8 Slavs (“Wends”) and Saxons. Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 164 (Sachsenspiegel), fol. 24.	144
6.9 Depiction of Mongols. London, British Library, MS Royal 19 D. I (Marco Polo), fol. 78v.	147
6.10 Depiction of Muslims. London, British Library, MS Royal 19 D. I (Marco Polo), fol. 65.	147
6.11 “Plinian” (monstrous) races. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2810 (“Livre des merveilles”), fol. 29v.	148
6.12 The Irish king Dermot MacMurrough. Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS 700, fol. 56.	149
6.13 Robert fitzStephen and Richard fitzGilbert. Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS 700, fol. 64v.	150
6.14 Irish and English warriors in the 1390s. London, British Library, MS Harley 1319 (“Creton”), fol. 9.	151
6.15 Inauguration of an Irish king. London, British Library, MS Royal 13 B. VIII, fol. 28v.	152
6.16 Two Irishmen in a coracle. London, British Library, MS Royal 13 B. VIII, fol. 29.	153
6.17 Colonialist imagery. London, British Library, MS Royal 13 B. VIII, fols. 28v–29.	155
6.18 Irish internecine savagery. Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS 700, fol. 39.	156
15.1 Frontispiece. Antonio de Leon Pinelo, <i>Tratado de las Confirmaciones Reales de Encomiendas</i> (Madrid, 1630). John Carter Brown Library.	317
15.2 Casta image from “Of Spanish and Albino: A Throwback.” Pedro Alonso O’Crouley, <i>Idea compendiosa del reino de la Nueva Espana</i> [1774] (Mexico City, 1975).	324

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Notes on contributors

ROBERT BARTLETT is Wardlaw Professor of Mediaeval History, University of St Andrews, Scotland. His recent publications include *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (2008) and *The Hanged Man: A Story of Miracle, Memory and Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (2004). *The Making of Europe* (1993) was joint winner of the Wolfson Literary Award for History.

PETER BILLER is Professor of History, University of York. His research interests are the medieval history of heresy, inquisition, proto-racial thought, and medicine. His recent publications include *The Measure of Multitude: Population in Medieval Thought* (2000); 'A "Scientific" View of Jews from Paris around 1300', *Micrologus* 9 (2001); *The Waldenses 1170–1530: Between a Religious Order and a Church* (2001); 'Black Women in Medieval Scientific Thought', *Micrologus* 13 (2005); and 'Goodbye to Waldensianism?', *Past and Present* 192 (2006).

DENISE KIMBER BUELL is Professor of Religion at Williams College (Williamstown, MA, USA). She is the author of *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (2005) and *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (1999). Her current work explores early Christian ideas of agency and transformation in relation to negotiations of difference among humans and between 'human' and 'non-human'.

JORGE CAÑIZARES-ESGUERRA, Alice Drysdale Sheffield Professor of History at the University of Texas, is the author of the award-winning *How to Write the History of the New World* (2001) and *Puritan Conquistadors* (2006). He is also the author of *Nature, Empire, and Nation* (2006) and co-editor with Erik Seeman of *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000* (2006). He is currently studying historical narratives of Atlantic colonization understood as the fulfillment of prefigurations in four different types of texts (nature, the Bible, the classics, and indigenous sources).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Notes on contributors

xi

MIRIAM ELIAV-FELDON teaches early-modern European history at Tel Aviv University. Her research interests include Renaissance utopias, pacifism and peace plans, and post-Reformation heresies. She is now working on impostors and the development of means of identification during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

DAVID GOLDENBERG is Cohen Professor in Jewish Religion and Thought at the University of Cape Town and a Visiting Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. His research interests are in the field of Judaism in Late Antiquity, and his recent publications include a chapter on Josephus's 'Mosaic Constitution' in *The Lost Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Outside of Scripture*, ed. Louis Feldman, James Kugel and Lawrence Schiffman (forthcoming) and 'Babatha, Rabbi Levi and Theodosius: Black Coins in Late Antiquity', *Dead Sea Discoveries* 14 (2007).

VALENTIN GROEBNER teaches Medieval and Renaissance History at the University of Lucerne, Switzerland. His books include *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Middle Ages* (2005) and *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe* (2007). He is currently working on medieval and modern narratives of organ transplantation.

BENJAMIN ISAAC is Fred and Helen Lessing Professor of Ancient History at Tel Aviv University. His books include *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (1990), *The Near East under Roman Rule* (1998) and *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (2004). He is a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and of the American Philosophical Society. He was awarded the Israel Prize for History in 2008.

CHARLES DE MIRAMON is a researcher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Centre de Recherches Historiques, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), working in an interdisciplinary group on medieval scholasticism. He specializes in canon law and is now working on a book on the legal revolution of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. His publications include a work on the 'semi-religious' and on conversion to religious life (*Les donnés au Moyen Âge*, 1999) and he is co-editor of a volume on the history of heredity (*L'hérédité entre Moyen Âge et Époque moderne: Perspectives historiques*, 2008).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii Notes on contributors

DAVID NIRENBERG is Professor in the Committee on Social Thought and the Department of History at the University of Chicago. His work focuses on the co-production of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic cultures: that is, on how these cultures each constitute themselves by inter-relating with or thinking about the others.

ANTHONY PAGDEN is Distinguished Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles. His most recent publications include *Peoples and Empires: Europeans and the Rest of the World, from Antiquity to the Present* (2001); *La Ilustración y sus enemigos: Dos ensayos sobre los orígenes de la modernidad* (2002); *Worlds at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle between East and West* (2008); and as editor *The Idea of Europe from Antiquity to the European Union* (2002), all of which have been translated into numerous European and Asian languages. He is currently completing a book on Enlightenment and Cosmopolitanism.

RONNIE PO-CHIA HSIA, Edwin Earle Sparks Professor of History at Pennsylvania State University, was elected in 2000 to the Academia Sinica (Taiwan) and is currently researching the history of Sino-European relations from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. His books include *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540–1770* (1998) and recently he edited the *Blackwell Companion to the Reformation World* (2004).

H. A. SHAPIRO is the W. H. Collins Vickers Professor of Archaeology in the Department of Classics, The Johns Hopkins University. A scholar of Greek art and archaeology, he is the author of *Art and Cult under the Tyrants in Athens* (1989) and the editor, most recently, of the *Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece*.

JOSEPH ZIEGLER is Senior Lecturer at the Department of General History, University of Haifa. He is the author of *Medicine and Religion c. 1300: The Case of Arnau de Vilanova* (1998). He is currently studying the rise of physiognomic thought c.1200–c.1500.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

'Racism in Western Civilization before 1700' was the title of the Howard Gilman International Conference held at Tel Aviv University on 13–15 December 2005. The present collection of essays is based mostly on the lectures which were delivered during those three days. In the organization of the conference and in the preparation of this volume we incurred many debts of gratitude to participants, sponsors, and to persons who assisted us in various ways.

First and foremost we are very grateful to the distinguished scholars, from Israel, Europe and the USA, who made the effort to come to Tel Aviv and to contribute knowledge and new insights to the discussion on the origins of racism in the West. Some of them, for different reasons, chose not to submit an article for publication, and thus we should like to take this opportunity to thank them here for their active participation and valuable contribution: Joseph C. Miller from the University of Virginia, Mechal Sobel from the University of Haifa, Paula Fredriksen from Boston University, as well as Gideon Bohak and Ehud Toledano from Tel Aviv University. We are also most grateful to David Nirenberg, who had been unable to attend the conference yet agreed to offer us the important essay included in this volume. In addition we wish to express our thanks to our colleagues who served as chairpersons of the conference sessions and offered many comments and valuable insights of their own: Shulamit Shahar, Gadi Algazi, Ron Barkai, Maurice Kriegel, Irad Malkin, Margalit Finkelberg and Ora Limor. The good will and efficient organizational skills of Ms. Ronit Spiegel, Head of the President's Office, and of Ms. Ayelet Triest, were major components in ensuring the success of the conference.

The generous financial support of the Howard Gilman Foundation, allocated to us by the then President of Tel Aviv University, Prof. Itamar Rabinovich, and the additional funds granted by the Dean of the Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Shlomo Biderman, by Mrs. Beverley and Dr. Raymond Sackler, by the Tel Aviv University School of History, as well as by the Fred W. Lessing Institute of European

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88855-4 - The Origins of Racism in the West

Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv Acknowledgements

Civilization, the S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, the Morris E. Curiel Institute for European Studies, the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, and the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism, made the conference possible and also helped with financing some of the costs of the present volume.

Finally, we should like to thank warmly Mr. Michael Watson and the editorial staff of Cambridge University Press, whose encouragement and meticulous work on the texts were invaluable.