



Empire's Children: Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies

Emmanuelle Saada

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Europe's imperial projects were often predicated on a series of legal and scientific distinctions that were frequently challenged by the reality of social and sexual interactions between the colonized and the colonizers. When Emmanuelle Saada discovered a 1928 decree defining the status of persons of mixed parentage born in French Indochina—the *métis*—she found not only a remarkable artifact of colonial rule, but a legal bombshell that introduced race into French law for the first time. The decree was the culmination of a decades-long effort to resolve the “*métis* question”: the educational, social, and civil issues surrounding the mixed population. Operating at the intersection of history, anthropology, and law, *Empire's Children* reveals the unacknowledged but central role of race in the definition of French nationality.

Through extensive archival work in both France and Vietnam, and a close reading of primary and secondary material from the Pacific islands and sub-Saharan and North Africa, Saada has created in *Empire's Children* an original and compelling perspective on colonialism, law, race, and culture from the end of the nineteenth century until decolonization.

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