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Racial Formations in Africa and the Middle East: A Transregional Approach

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Project on African Social Research

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The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see http://www.pomeps.org.

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The Program on African Social Research (PASR) was founded to center African knowledge production within social science research globally. We do this by creating opportunities for junior scholars based in Africa. By providing access to international networks, we work to help junior scholars improve their research and to create opportunities for mentoring and meaningful collaborative possibilities. For more information, see https://www.pasiri.org/.

Racial Formations in Africa and the Middle East: A Transregional Approach

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Race, racialization and racial formations have become an increasingly popular conceptual framework for research on the Middle East and Africa.[1] A framework based on racial formations has opened the door for important comparative insights and new understandings about the mechanisms and legacies of marginalization and exclusion across regions which share deep historical connections but are too often treated in isolation from each other. From conflicts in Israel/Palestine, labor exploitation in the Gulf, the legacy of slavery in the Arabic-speaking world and Indian Ocean, and nationalist disputes in Ethiopia, Sudan and elsewhere, the Arab and African worlds are rife with seemingly racialized political conflicts, institutions, and identities.

Yet despite the obvious appeal of the racial frame for both actors and analysts, and the increasing global ubiquity of the framing, does it provide superior analytical traction for capturing the myriad tensions in a region shaped by conflicts over numerous other identity categories including religion, caste, gender, sexuality and class? What analytical purchase is gained by viewing these social processes and political struggles through the lens of race? What political work is done by mobilizations adopting racial formations as a framework for understanding the constellation of power relations, identities and institutional structures across very different contexts?

In February 2020, the editors of this volume organized a POMEPS workshop that explored the origins of the disciplinary divide between the study of Africa and the Middle East, examining issues that span both regions (i.e., cross-border conflict, Islamist politics, social movements and national identity, and Gulf interventionism.)[2] In February 2021, we convened another workshop, sponsored by POMEPS and the newly-founded Program on African Social Research (PASR, pronounced Pasiri) centered on racial formations and racialization across the two regions. Both workshops centered around the need for a genuinely transregional scholarship, one which rejects artificial divisions between ostensibly autonomous regions while also taking seriously the distinctive historical trajectories and local configurations of power which define national and subregional specificities. The workshop brought together nearly two dozen scholars from across multiple disciplines to explore the historical and contemporary politics of racial formation across Africa and the Middle East.

The concept of racial formations moves beyond simplistic or essentialist understandings of race. In their classic work, *Racial Formation in the United States* (1986), Michel Omi and Howard Winant defined racial formation as "the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings."[3] Racialization is a process, then, deeply rooted in power relations and social dynamics, with racial formations emerging through cultural and political contestation rather than following naturally from skin color, phenotypical difference, or ethnic origin. Essays in this collection thus look at how racial formations in Africa and the Middle East were shaped by forces as different as slavery, colonialism, family and "tribal" ties, religion, genealogical discourses of purity and belonging, post-colonial state-building, and recent migration flows.

This project aligns with multiple projects recently launched at American universities looking at race and racism in the MENA region, but with subtle differences in purpose

and scope. By focusing exclusively on the Middle East or on Africa, some of these initiatives risk reproducing the long-standing Saharan and Red Sea divides that we aim to transcend. Pasiri's mission, in part, is to interrogate how Africa and the Middle East are configured and connected, how the border between the two regions is contingent, shifting, and constructed in competing ways by different political actors and scholars. The case for looking at racial formations comparatively across the Sahara and the Red Sea is obvious. North Africa's main ethnicities extend deep into "sub-Saharan Africa." If one is interested in racism and social norms in the Arabic-speaking world, it is worth recalling that Arabism stretches beyond the confines of the MENA region into northern Nigeria, Chad, Somalia, the Swahili coast and Zanzibar. Likewise, if one is interested in slavery in Berber/Amazigh societies, Amazigh identity and nationalism stretch into the Sahel - into Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Nor can the Gulf and the littoral areas of Eastern Africa be meaningfully separated from the Indian Ocean, given their long interconnections.[4]

Our framework of *transregional comparative racial formations* examines how difference – from skin color to language to ancestry – forms the basis of exclusionary practices and state oppression. Looking at anti-black racism in Egypt, Yasmin Moll and Bayan Abubakr each show in this volume how the configuration of Egyptian national identity led to the erasure of the Nubian population of upper Egypt. Yet though marginalized by both colonial racial logics and post-colonial developmentalist dreams, Nubia remains a vibrant memory for those displaced from their ancestral homelands. Positioned as a living fossil of Egypt's pre-Islamic past, both authors show how Nubians are symbolically celebrated by the state even as they experience racism and economic marginalization.

A key contentious issue running through the study of racial formations is the question of "Blackness" and the centrality of dark skin to the broader questions of cultural marginalization and prejudice. A debate has arisen around the definition of "race," with some scholars rejecting the expansion of the concept beyond black/Black people or those of sub-Saharan descent, arguing that this stretches "race" to the point of losing specificity, blurring it into a by-word for ethnicity, while others contend that it is the current usage of Blackness that treats being black like it is an (historically coherent) ethnicity.[5] The essays in this collection show that racial formations take shape around various forms of difference. Colorism infuses many racial formations described in this volume from Yemen and Turkey to the Sahel and the Gulf, but in others the cultural markers of race are not primarily skin color. The racialization of Kurds in Turkey or of Palestinians in Israel shows clearly the availability of other markers for essentialized difference. In her essay, Efrat Yerday reflects on the treatment of Israel's Ethiopian Jews in comparison with that of Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews. Phenotypical differences reinforced by racialized logics contributes to their political and economic marginalization from the Israeli national imagination. Israel's positioning of itself as the global refuge for Jews across the diaspora seemingly does not extend to those who fall on the "wrong" side of the national color line, revealing the complex interplay between racial and religious identification.

There is also a temporal dimension to racial formations. A transregional comparative racial formations framework can and must operate historically, tracing how the category of "race" was introduced and institutionalized by colonialism across the regions (say by the French in Algeria and subsequently in the Sahel, or by the British in Oman and the Swahili coast.)[6] Close attention to the historical process of difference-making helps us see similar processes operating in real time, for example assessing how the current global wave of xenophobia and populism is affecting migrant workers in Africa and the Middle East (whether it is Sri Lankans and Filipinas in Lebanon, Ethiopians in Saudi Arabia, Somalis in Kenya, or Nigerians in South Africa) who are facing mistreatment, racialized violence and occasionally mass deportation.[7] These essays thus adopt a race-critical lens to look at these questions and to examine more broadly how state oppression and human difference (whether coded as racial, ethnic or caste) operates in, inter alia, Nigeria, Israel, Mauritania or Madagascar.

Finally, racialization is coproduced at the global, regional, national and local levels. It is simultaneously a product of global efforts to categorize all of humanity into discrete and bounded types as well as a hyper-local phenomenon that maps onto micro-level disputes within communities and even families. As such, conflicts over which interpretation of race is "correct" or should be privileged remains highly contentious. Workshop participants debated at length whether frameworks and concepts (like "racial formations" and "racecraft") that grow out of a North American intellectual-political milieu can be appropriately deployed in African and Middle Eastern contexts, or if local categories grounded in a specific context would prove more useful. No consensus emerged on this question. Some authors adopt a comparative approach that explores the meaning of key identity categories while others drill down into specific cases to reveal how concepts often positioned as universal are creatively adapted to give new interpretations to localized conflicts.

Colonial Legacies and the Afterlives of Slavery

In her study *The Predicament of Blackness* (2014), Jemima Pierre meticulously traces how norms of global white supremacy disseminated by colonialism continue to shape politics and social relations in contemporary Ghana.[8] This theme runs through the collection. Sean Jacobs, for instance, interprets the peculiar racialization of Muslims in Cape Town, South Africa as a colonial holdover. Dutch colonialists drew slaves from Southeast Asia, India, the Indonesian archipelago, and southern Africa. The southern African slaves were often Muslim, yet were labeled as Black, while slaves from Indonesia, perhaps because their ranks included clerics, who began to build the first madrasas, would be viewed as Muslim. The association of Islam with the Malay and colored population would be reinforced by apartheid policy and persists to this day in Cape Town.

The afterlives of slavery entwine with the legacies of colonialism across Africa and the Middle East. In 1905, the French colonial governor Ernest Roume outlawed slavery and the slave trade, by decree, throughout French West Africa. In French-controlled territories, colonial administrators would officially abolish slavery (including in Morocco in 1925) but tolerated existing slavery practices and did not emancipate slaves. Paul Silverstein shows how in southeast Morocco, the French would divide the Berber/Amazigh and Haratin/Iqablin groups along racial lines, as "white" autochotones/natives and "black" allochtones respectively, while not disturbing the former's indentured exploitation of the latter. Reformist policies since independence and the increased migration of the Haratin have re-ordered social relations, but racial tensions still exist between the Imazighen and Haratin, often surfacing during electoral campaigns around the distribution of economic and political resources.

The *Amazigh-haratin* situation that Silverstein delineates in Morocco's southeastern oases is reminiscent of the *haratin-beidan* dynamic and labor hierarchy of Mauritania, but it also bears parallels to the situation in central Chad with the Arabic-speaking Yalnas. After slavery was abolished, the Yalnas, a formerly indentured or enslaved community located in the "former slave reservoir" in the Guéra region of Chad, were recognized by French colonial administrators in the 1910s as a distinct group, given land and two "chef de cantons" as political representatives. Yet in the 1990s, decades after independence, with new land policies and increasing desertification, the dominant Hadjiray began disputing the Yalnas's right to land as a colonial fabrication. Highlighting their alleged slave origins, the Hadjiray began calling them "Yalnas," a stigmatizing label that the subordinate group has been trying to shed.[9] How slave descent, genealogy and historical appellations are used as a political tool to exclude groups from citizenship rights is, as described below, also a cross-regional phenomenon.

Labeling Difference

Various essays in this collection show how labeling (and identification) – whether it is done by scholars, activists or partisans to a conflict – is an intensely political act that defines categories, sets boundaries and hardens norms. When regimes impose racial or ethnic categories – or

criminalize racial or ethnic identification (as the Rwandan government recently did[10]) it has dire consequences for activists on the ground. As Bendetta Rossi has argued in her work on "slave descent" in Niger and northern Nigeria, scholars must study the relationship between labels and practice, to understand why some people carry certain labels while others drop them: "When do slave descendants themselves reclaim their slave origins? When do politicians mobilize collective legacies of slavery as part of their political strategies? And what are the consequences of framing social, political, and economic relations in terms of slave and free descent?"[11] Sabria Al-Thawr does precisely this in her discussion of the impact of the Yemen conflict on the country's marginalized groups – the *muhamasheen* (black Yemenis), *abid* (former slaves) and *akhdam* (servant group), describing how warlords will deploy a particular label to delegitimize an adversary or mobilize a group to the frontline. Gokh Alshaif, in turn, looks at the different strategies of self-identification adopted by black Yemeni activists: the Movement of Free Black People, founded in 2005, for instance, casts its struggle in explicitly racial terms. The *muhamasheen*-led organization, Ahfad Bilal (Grandchildren of Bilal), on the other hand, makes a genealogical case, claiming a link to Bilal, a former slave of Abysinnian origin who became the closest confidant of the Prophet Muhammad. Akhdam Allah (Servants of God) emphasizes the community's economic exclusion and religious piety.

A recurring theme in this workshop was the question of "endonyms" and "exonyms," that is internal names for a population (or language or place) versus names imposed from outside. As Ann McDougal discusses in an essay on the legacies of slavery in Morocco and Mauritania, she was reminded by informants that the *haratin* was not a self-identifier, but rather a designation imposed by Western observers.[12] Parisa Vaziri shows how the study of slavery in the Indian Ocean context has been distorted by the implicit and explicit comparison to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Even well-meaning applications of racialized language and conceptual frameworks derived from the North American experience can produce deeply misleading interpretations of the social meaning of local practices. When, then, should scholars use race, ethnicity or caste to designate difference? Can the (capitalized) American categories of Black and White be used to understand racial hierarchies in the Sahara?

The essays in this collection define "race" in numerous ways. Some use the term in the broadest sense to connote human difference, and racialization, in Foucauldian terms, as a process whereby states create and re-create differences ("caesuras") within human populations to manage these populations. Others defined race as (anti)blackness; or involving specific phenotypes and physical characteristics. Deniz Duruiz shows how modern Turkish national identity was explicitly associated with whiteness, and the historical exclusion of the Kurds was based on racial stereotypes of Kurds as physically different and behaviorally deficient. Others understood lineage as a racializing device. Amélie Le Renard and Neha Vora, on the other hand, contend that "race" is a more useful concept than "ethnocracy," because it can elucidate the workings of racial capitalism in the Gulf's stratified economies and show how value is extracted from laborers of differing backgrounds. Yet racialization is not only a top-down process driven by state power: as scholars from Frantz Fanon to Leith Mullings have argued, but there is also "racialization from below" – as the cases of Israel, Mauritania and Tunisia show, wherein racially conscious movements lobby for new categories and the expansion or elimination of old ones.[13]

In recent years, caste has made a comeback as an analytical tool, being used to understand the situation of African Americans, the subjugation of the slave-descent Bantu Jareer in southern Somalia,[14] or the *jiyaado* of Upper Casamance region of southern Senegal.[15] In examining how race and caste interlink, Diana Kim suggests looking sideways, rather than vertically at how untouchability is produced. By looking horizontally within a caste-like system, one can observe the distinctions between different "inheritances of stigma," based on untouchability vis-a-vis legacies of enslavement. Such an approach, Kim argues, shows how in Nigeria, the untouchable Osu were unlike the enslaved Ohu, who were free from pollution narratives; while in Korea, the Baekjeong of Korea were ostracized

from other communities, a fate different from that which befell the slave-descended Nobi. Sabria Al-Thawr's study of social and tribal hierarchies in Yemen most closely tracks the concept of caste, while Denis Regnier's piece on Madagascar shows how pollution narratives surrounding the formerly enslaved Betsileo people does not justify wholesale social exclusion, but sharply regulates marriage between the free-born and slave-born.

Impossible Citizens

The intersection of migration, racialization and citizenship is a central issue in this collection. The migration of "Arab" Zanzibaris to the Gulf following the Zanzibari Revolution of 1964, and attempts at naturalization, show the malleability of racial categories as different Gulf states defined Arabness (and Africanness) in divergent ways. The Omani state would define Arab-Omani through lineage (*nisba*) and blood descent, though without adopting a "formal color bar." From the state's view, there were three categories of Arab-Omani – "pure" Omanis who never left Oman, Zanzibari Omanis who traveled to East Africa but did not intermarry, and Zanzibaris who traveled to East Africa and did intermarry. Acquiring Omani citizenship through marriage though was arduous, especially for women. As Nathaniel Mathews writes, "marriage to someone of Omani descent was itself not enough to immediately guarantee a non-Omani woman, especially one from East Africa, the same legal route to citizenship as a woman of Omani descent."

In the UAE, Zanzibari returnees deemed not "African" enough to stay in East Africa, also had to prove an "Arab" bloodline to gain citizenship. As Noora Lori and Yoana Kuzmova show, the UAE's constitution defines the Federation as an "Arab nation," even as the rulers of its constituent Emirates have divergent understandings of who is Arab. Abu Dhabi's definition, for instance, is centered on genealogy to a greater extent than other states – with Zanzibaris facing more obstacles to gaining citizenship than persons of Omani, Qatari or Bahraini origin. Curiously, the migratory and racial hierarchies of the Gulf, seem to have spread to other parts of the Middle East. The *kafala* system, where migrant workers from Africa and Asia have a sponsor, has now reached the Levant. As Sumayya Kassamali explains, the Lebanese civil war spurred a large outmigration (with almost forty percent of the population leaving), creating a demand for foreign workers. Lebanese migration to the Gulf, in turn, coincided with the arrival of Asian workers to the Arabian Peninsula, and would create the perception of domestic foreign servants as a status symbol. As female domestic workers began arriving from Sri Lanka and the Philippines, a new racial formation would emerge in Lebanon, the *Srilankiyye,* a catch-all category for all Asian workers regardless of their nationality.

As with the Algerian and Moroccan protest movements, the Sudanese revolution would expose tensions between national identity, citizenship and racialization. Zachary Mondesire contends that, in 2019, when Sudanese protesters hoisted the flag of independence (the blue, yellow, and green *tricoleur*), it was to draw attention to the marginalized populations from peripheral regions and neighborhoods who for reasons of language, lineage or phenotype are denied basic rights and state services. The Sudanese independence flag with its pan-African colors (resembling the flags of Rwanda and Tanzania) was also raised by protesters to highlight Sudan's racially fraught relationship to South Sudan and to the wider Arabic-speaking world.

External Actors and Racial Formations

Another recurring theme was the political reconfiguration or re-mapping of Africa (and its relationship to the Middle East) as a result of external interventions by Western powers, Gulf states and increasingly, China. As Wendell Marsh observes, the collapse of the Libyan regime and the spread of war into the Sahel has prompted "a disciplinary moment" wherein northwest Africa in general and the Sahara-Sahel in particular, have become a "unit of securitization." The Sahara, in particular, has emerged as a space of concern, requiring scholars to "think trans-locally, across a geographic, intellectual, and racial divide long assumed to exist in the material world." Yet how to

theorize and evaluate the role of external actors – the United Nations, development agencies, NGOs, American universities and foundations, Western-based diaspora movements (African-American, Jewish American, Middle Eastern American) – in inciting and shaping the discourse around racism in Africa and the Middle East? How can local actors address questions of racial exclusion and inequality when the demand for a racial politics is coming largely from outside?

Nathaniel Mathews makes a related point in discussing the importation of American-derived frameworks to the Gulf: "Western social frames exert an influence on the formal presentation of the history of slavery in the region, making it key to 'remember' the institution in a widespread and general way. The ongoing paradox is that high-level discussions about race, racism and diversity can occur in Gulf universities with little to no attention to the class politics of the convening itself, or the low-wage labor that sustains such discussions." Neha Vora and Amélie Le Renard reinforce this point by highlighting the many ways in which racial hierarchies structure the production of knowledge about the Gulf region. Ironically, some Gulf states have begun memorializing the Indian Ocean slave trade (with Qatar building a massive slavery museum) in part to placate Western criticism of the kafala system.[16] But as Parisa Vaziri asks in considering the tensions between Trans-Atlantic and Indian Ocean historiographies: "Without a demand for a politics of justice, for whom then, is historical recovery necessary and good in the Indian Ocean context?"

As the recently passed anti-racism law of Tunisia (the first in the MENA region, and second in Africa), and the ongoing pan-Maghrebi anti-racism awareness campaigns show, [17] local scholars and activists in both regions are working against overwhelming odds – braving repressive regimes and Western intellectual intrusion – to address the legacies of slavery and ongoing racism against migrant workers and other minorities. As new identity movements and anti-racism campaigns arise on the African continent, it will be interesting to see how activists and scholars decide to embrace the categories of caste, ethnicity or race, or if new concepts and frameworks will emerge. The career of octaganarian Egyptian scholar Hilmi Sharawy is a telling one. He spent decades – as a state official and then as an academic – trying to decolonize "African Studies" in Egypt, dismantling departments and research centers built by the British, while also countering "proselytizing" Arab nationalist approaches to Africa that foist "Arabism" on African languages, heedlessly treating pre-Islamic Africa as a *tabula rasa*. As Zeyad el Nabolsy points out, Sharawy would make it his life's work to counter the "civilizing mission" discourse adopted by the Egyptian regime.

The Political Work of Racialized Framing

The adoption of racialized frames can be as much political as it is analytical. This can be seen clearly in the racialization of discourse surrounding Palestinians in Israel, as Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Abigail Bakan demonstrate. Viewing the Israeli occupation and domination of Palestinians through a racial lens helps to validate the arguments for viewing Israeli domination over Palestinians as a form of Apartheid.[18] It also allows for creative, and politically effective, reframing of the nature of the conflict. In May 2021, Palestinian protestors in Jerusalem challenging the seizure of houses in the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah effectively appropriated "Black Lives Matter" framing to appeal to American public opinion. By portraying their struggle against Israeli settlers and state expansion as a form of civil rights rooted in struggles for racial equality, Palestinian activists were able to sidestep longstanding obstacles to their search for Western allies and win over substantial new public support from American progressives.

Ultimately, what these essays demonstrate is both the value and limits of the racial frame for understanding identity-centric disputes in Africa and the Middle East. Despite being developed to explore the binary logic of racial conflict in the West, racialization and racial formation provide considerable intellectual traction when applied to regions outside North America and Europe. From the legacies of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade to the emergence of new racial orders produced through labor

migration, taking racial formations seriously opens up new ways of conceptualizing and thinking through politics in both regions. Yet, these essays also reveal the fraught terrain of comparison. The essays conceptualize race, ethnicity and caste in substantively different ways that expose the dangers of concept creep, anachronism, and limits of applying a racialization lens on spaces where the concepts have very different historical antecedents and contemporary resonances.

Endnotes

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[10] "Rwanda has banned talking about ethnicity," *The Economist* (March 2019)

[11] Benedetta Rossi, "African Post-Slavery: A History of the Future" Rossi, Benedetta. The International Journal of African Historical Studies; New York Vol. 48, Issue (2015)

[12] E. Ann McDougall, "Living the Legacy of Slavery ," *Cahiers d'études africaines*, pp. 957-986 2005. See also E. Ann McDougall avec la collaboration de Mohamed Lahbib Nouhi, "Devenir visibles dans le sillage de l'esclavage :: la question haratin en Mauritanie et au Maroc" *L'Ouest Saharien* 10 & 11 (August 2020)

[13] Frantz Fanon, *Frantz Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox, Revised Edition, (New York: Grove Press 2007); Leith Mullings, "Race and Globalization: Racialization from Below," in eds., Manning Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones, Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2008)

[14] Mohamed A. Eno, "Racial and Caste Prejudice in Somalia," *Journal of Somali Studies* (January 2014) pp.91-118; Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (Random House 2020)

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The Seduction of Comparisons:
Untouchability beyond Caste in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East

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Comparative and historical studies of countries with caste or caste-like societies have animated some of the most impassioned debates about method, politics, and morality when studying non-Western countries within Anglo-European academic traditions. During the mid-20th century, heated disagreements centered on whether the Indian caste system had parallels outside of South Asia. Caste was widely understood as a form of social hierarchy that was quintessentially Indian, peculiar to Hinduism and Vedic culture.[1] Yet, many also saw analogues in other parts of the world. The Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal famously applied the language of caste to race relations in the United States in *The American Dilemma* (1944), while the British-trained anthropologist Arthur Hocart's *Caste: A Comparative Study* (1950)—encompassing Sri Lanka, India, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Egypt, ancient Rome and Greece—prefigured a spate of comparative studies that identified caste-like groups in so-called "traditional" societies of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, civilizations with descendants of slaves, and other countries with rigid stratification orders tied to lineage, religion, and notions of ritual purity and pollution.[2]

The question of whether caste was capable of 'traveling' beyond India struck at the heart of several overlapping concerns for social scientific and humanistic inquiries into the lives of others. At one level, it was a matter of how to recognize whether an empirical phenomenon was unique or not and the validity of cross-national comparisons for understanding its nature, causes and consequences. At another level, there were worries about both essentializing Indian society and overly India-focused or U.S.-centered analyses that risked reading the cultures, societies, and histories of relatively less-studied countries through the lens of Indian caste or American race. "Caste-like" operated as a euphemism for "similar to India," while there was a U.S-centeredness to high-profile debates over the applicability of caste to race, which took the American experiences with chattel slavery and its legacies as the obvious referent.

And then there was politics. Comparative inquiries into caste were often about lower castes, marginalized and subject to acute discrimination. Drawing parallels across so-called "outcastes," "pariah castes," "despised minorities" or "untouchable" people were scholarly acts tied intimately to solidarity politics, namely, efforts to build coalitions for anti-discrimination and activist struggles for dignity.[3] Identifying and describing commonalities across those most disadvantaged had normative implications, ranging from generating empirical bases on which to build collective advocacy and reasons to empathize with putative strangers, to risks of essentializing the experiences of others, misrecognizing similarities for equivalence, as well as vying against facile Orientalist biases and paternalistic regard toward a seemingly archaic form of stigma.

Let us call it the seduction of comparisons: *the appeal of drawing analogies, making parallels, and looking across place and time that are inextricably tied to both explanatory and emancipatory impulses.* Today, we continue to grapple with many of the challenges that mid-20th century scholars faced when comparing durable inequalities that are caste-like, entwined with racialized difference, skin color, and class across the world. Such challenges resonate loudly in public discourse as well. Ongoing discussions, both laudatory and critical, of the American author Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (2020)—that placed India, the United States, and Nazi Germany side-by-side—represent a recently more visible, but hardly new, endeavor to talk and think comparatively about what many recognize, but struggle to articulate, as a seemingly stubborn and peculiarly insidious form of social hierarchy.[4]

This paper makes a case for embracing, but not succumbing to, the seduction of comparison. Specifically, it puts forth two suggestions for ways to rethink caste and caste-like societies comparatively, from an Asianist's perspective in conversation with scholars of the Middle East and North Africa.[5]

First, we can begin by focusing squarely on untouchability. With the Indian caste system as a tacit benchmark case, comparative inquiries into whether and why caste-like societies exist elsewhere tend to focus on whether or not they have groups similar to Dalits, the 'outcaste' or lower-most group that experiences untouchability. Oft cited examples include the experiences of African Americans in the United States and Burakumin in Japan as well as lesser studied groups such as the Baekjeong of Korea, the Osu of Nigeria or the *Muhamasheen* of Yemen.[6] If the Dalit condition is inextricably tied to the Brahmin—whether following M. N. Srinivas' account of Sanskritization as positive emulation by lower castes of the customs, rituals, ideology, and ways of life of twice-born castes or, Sundar Sarukkai's phenomenological understanding of untouchability as intrinsic to Brahmins and "supplanted and outsourced to" Dalits—then the Burakumin's plight is entangled with the revered place of the Emperor in Japanese society, the Muhamasheen in contradistinction to the Hashemites, African Americans as inseparable from the privileged white in the United States.[7]

Now, consider an alternative perspective that looks sideways, rather than vertically, at the place of an outcaste in their respective communities and societies. And relax the presumption that what happens in the life of an individual deemed "untouchable" necessarily makes sense in reference to someone higher up in a social hierarchy. Does untouchability still exist without caste?[8] Are there historical events and institutions that are meaningful to and, indeed, consequential for that person, which are not necessarily linked to those comprising the upper strata or prefigured by a caste system's abstract dictates? Suggestive answers to these questions emerge affirmatively from efforts to historicize, rather than presume, how individuals become members of a group defined as untouchable; and what lived experiences and learned histories shape the ways by which people adhere to, act upon, or disavow names and group identifications as marginalized, minoritized, or disadvantaged.

For instance, the Korean sociologist Joong Sup Kim's pioneering works spotlight the Baekjeong, not necessarily in reference to the high-born of Korea, but by looking horizontally at within-group rivalries and alliances among those who identified as members of this untouchable group.[9] He elucidates the complex lifeworlds of people whose degraded labor and narratives about touching taboos were within, but not determined by, the caste-like hierarchy of *shinbun* that once stratified Korean society. In this POMEPS Studies collection, Gokh Alshaif's research on Yemen shows lucidly that in contradistinction to how non-Muhamash Yemenis regard the untouchable Muhamasheen as Black Yemenis, there are "gradation[s] of Blackness and antiblackness" within the bottom-most category of the Fifthers (*khums*) they occupy.[10] Alshaif demonstrates how this gradation is mobilized in different ways for different people, ranging from efforts to racialize the nature and causes of their exclusion (as opposed to claiming class or heritage-based marginalization) to reconstructing alternative narratives about origins and genealogy to those that treat them as permanent outsiders to the Yemeni body public. By looking sideways, rather than top-down or bottom-up, such approaches center attention on the dynamic making of an untouchable group on its own terms of self-interpretation, rather than subsuming this process within the maintenance a caste-like system in its entirety.

Second and relatedly, often outside the Anglo-European academy, there are rich yet underappreciated studies by local scholars, genealogists, and non-academic specialists of people deemed untouchable.[11] When looking sideways at their place within caste-like societies, distinctions become clearly visible between inheritances of stigma based on untouchability vis-à-vis legacies of enslavement. For instance, in Korea, the Baekjeong, who were ostracized from communities, were unlike the enslaved Nobi who belonged formerly to the government or private citizens as property.[12] In Nigeria, the untouchable Osu were unlike the enslaved Ohu who did not have value in ritual and religious practices and were free from pollution narratives.[13] It is easy to run roughshod over such differences. However, what may seem like fine distinctions among people consigned to the bottom of a caste-like society are instantiations of larger histories of enslavement

and constructions of ascriptive hierarchies that are densely interwoven but not necessarily the same as slavery.

Many of the contributions to this POMEPS Studies collection provide invaluable analytical frameworks for taking such micro-level variations seriously, while more broadly rethinking how to compare people whose lived experiences and memories are part of, but not subsumed by, the caste-like societies they inhabit. For instance, based on sustained ethnographic research of the Betsileo, a slave descent group residing in southern Madagascar, Denis Regnier's study underscores how for this group, pollution narratives citing uncleanliness do not necessarily serve purposes of wholesale social and spatial exclusion, but more selectively regulates marriage between free- and slave-born people.[14] In addition to elucidating context-specific ways that discourses of uncleanliness manifest for people who are not deemed untouchable per se, Regnier's argument that such marriage discrimination against slave-descent was shaped by imperfect processes of 19th century slavery abolition provides a nuanced approach of linking the intimate lives of a small community of 5,000 Betsileo peasants to downstream effects of French colonial rule in Madagascar. Parisa Vaziri's contribution on slavery in the Western Indian Ocean world and Bayan Abubakr's approach to contextualizing the place of dark-skinned, non-slave Nubian laborers in Egypt amidst a broader "Afro-Arab world" also helps reorient the geographical scope and temporal scales on which scholars may situate the thought-worlds of people, whether those with lived experiences and/or inherited memories of enslavement, racialized difference or acute discrimination tied to genealogical narratives bolstering ritual and corporeal pollution.[15] These, among many others, offer welcome frameworks for grappling with the seduction of comparisons: not necessarily something to simply resist, but rather to confront explicitly, as a way to rethink units of analysis, political and normative implications to making analogies, as well as what motivates our own commitments to explaining and understanding the lives of others.

[1] Oliver Cox. (1948). *Caste, Class, & Race: A Study in Social Dynamics. Monthly Review Press; M. N. Srinivas (2003)[1952]. Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India. Oxford University Press; Louis Dumont. (1980) [1966]. Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications. University of Chicago Press.*

[2] Gunnar Myrdal. (1995) [1944]. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy. Routledge; Arthur Hocart. (1950). Caste: A Comparative Study. Methuen. Also see Davis et al. (1941). Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class. University of Chicago Press; Gerald Berreman (1972). "Caste in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Organizational Components," pp. 275-276 in Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality, edited by De Vos, G. & Wagatsuma, H. University of California Press;* Claude Meillassoux. (1973). Y a-t-il des castes aux Indes? *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, *54*, 5–29.

[3] For a critique of solidarity politics and alternative comparative analytics, see Antonio Tiongson, (2019). "Asian American Studies, Comparative Racialization, and Settler Colonial Critique," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *22*(3), 419-443, here 437-438.

[4] Isabel Wilkerson. (2020). *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents.* Penguin Random House. For powerful reviews see, among many others, Charisse Burden-Stelly. "Caste does not explain race," *Boston Review*, December 15, 2020. http://bostonreview.net/race/charisse-burden-stelly-caste-does-not-explain-race; Hazel Carby. "The Limits of Caste," *London Review of Books*, January 21, 2021. https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n02/hazel-v.-carby/the-limits-of-caste. On earlier debates, see Appadurai, A. (1988). "Putting Hierarchy in Its Place" Cultural Anthropology, 3(1), 36-49. On the resurgence of the caste-class debate in the 21st century, see Yengde, S. (2021). "Global Castes," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

[5] Gratefully, I have benefited from conversations with, and the works of, participants at the POMEPS-PASR workshop (February 25-26, 2021) on racial formations in the Middle East and Africa. In this POMEPS Studies issue, for admirably insightful discussions of comparisons in the study of race in African Studies, see Alden Young and Keren Weitzberg; comparative approaches to racial relations in Gulf Studies, see Noora Lori and Yoana Kuzmova.

[6] Untouchability manifests through practices of endogamy, residential segregation, avoidance of commensality, symbolic and physical violence that invoke notions of impurity and contamination. For a conceptual definition and typology, see Diana Kim. "The Comparative Politics of Untouchability." Working paper available upon request.

[7] M. N. Srinivas (2003)[1952]. *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. Oxford University Press; Sundar Sarukkai. (2009). "Phenomenology of Untouchability" *Economic and Political Weekly*, (September 12), 39-48. On Japan, see Ian Neary (2010). *The Buraku Issue in Modern Japan: the Career of Matsumoto Jiichirō*. Routledge, especially 173-174. On Yemen, see Aisha Al-Warraq. (2019). *The Historic and Systematic Marginalization of Yemen's Muhamasheen Community*. Sana'a Center Analysis.

[8] I paraphrase Natrajan (2009) who asks, "[w]ould the annihilation of untouchability also annihilate caste? "Or, how can caste exist (in essence alone) without untouchability (its existence)?" See Balmurli Natrajan. (2009). "Place and Pathology in Caste," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(51), 79-82, here 81.

[9] Joong Sup Kim. 2013. *Pyeongdeung sahoereul hyanghayeo: Hanguk Hyungpyungsawa Ilbon Supyungsaeui bigyo* [Towards Social Equality: Comparing Korea's Hyungpyungsa and Japan's Supyungsa]. Jisik Sanupsa.

[10] See contribution by Gokh Alsaif in this issue.

[11] S. N. Ezeanya. (1967). "The Osu (Cult-Slave) system in Igboland," *Journal of Religion in Africa*,1, 35–45; Jae Young Kim. (2017). "Iljae gangjumgi Hoseo jibangeui Hyungpyung Undong" [Social Equality movement of Hoseo during the Period of Japanese Occupation], *Chungcheong munhwa yeongu*, 18(6), 81-123.

[12] Bok Rae Kim. (2008). "Nobi: A Korean System of Slavery," *Slavery and Abolition*, 24(2), 155-168.

[13] Daniel Offiong. (1985). The Status of Slaves in Igbo and Ibibio of Nigeria. *Phylon*, *46*(1), 49–57.

[14] Denis Regnier. (2019). "Forever Slaves? Inequality, Uncleanliness and Vigilance about Origins in the Southern Highlands of Madagascar," *Anthropological Forum, 29(3), 249-266. Also see contribution by Regnier in this issue.*

[15] See contributions by Parisa Vaziri and Bayan Abubakr in this issue. On the colonial politics of transnational comparisons for multi-site empires, see Diana Kim. (2020). *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition across Southeast Asia. Princeton University Press*, 21-26.

No One's Memory: Blackness at the Limits of Comparative Slavery

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> "If it is true that historical knowledge demands that its object be isolated and withdrawn from any libidinal investment come from the historian, then it is certain that the only result of this way of 'putting down' [*rédiger*] history would be to 'put it down' [*réduire*]." [1]

In this paper, I reflect upon a series of patterns in Indian Ocean slavery historiography. My claim is that historiography's inheritance of disciplinary authority about the *truth of race* is unearned, unthought. In cataloguing the recurring tropes of comparison between Indian Ocean slavery and its putative foil, Atlantic slavery, I argue that repeating comparisons express a stewing tension between Indian Ocean and Atlantic slavery historiography. This tension can best be understood as an incontrovertible debt that Indian Ocean slavery history bears to Atlantic slavery. This debt appears in various forms, in veritable signatures, and is rarely, if ever interrogated or addressed by those who reproduce, manage, and deflect it.

The debt I am speaking of appears most tellingly in the disavowal of racial blackness in Indian Ocean slavery historiography. Disavowal is never simple, never self-evident, not amenable to empirical proof or disproof. The disavowal of racial blackness is disguised. It appears as historicist indignation, in charges of anachronism, ahistoricism and other typical, ultimately moralizing tropes that hinge on the distinction between "good" and "bad" scholarship—for example, between the ethical, objectively accurate conclusions of historians, and the unethical, ahistorical claims of contemporary black studies; at other times, between the *choice* to conflate Africanness, blackness, and slavery, and the choice to treat these terms in their originary autonomy and referential plenitude, as if conflation rested simply upon poor, individual decision-making and bad scholarly practice.

The specters of anachronism and ahistoricism, which underlie attitudes toward disciplinary authority and capacity for knowledge-production, was, unsurprisingly a theme running through the February 2021 POMEPS-PASR conference discussions. Although mental habits prime us to presuppose the fundamental, even indisputable commensurability between slavery and history, I suggest the need to reinterrogate this assumption, as well as the full range of its consequences. For history is not just one among other genres of disciplinary discursivity. It is the genre entrusted with ultimate truth-telling capacity. In what follows, I will argue that Indian Ocean slavery historiography paradoxically depends upon 1) figures of lack and 2) distance from racial blackness in order to establish its own legitimacy and aspirations to objective truth-telling. By contrast, I will suggest that in exhibiting and repeating its own lack and in its almost obsessive self-distancing from racial blackness, Indian Ocean historiography only shows how deeply racial blackness saturates the very tools it has its disposal to think slavery at all.[2]

The Poverty of History

Archival paucity is a ubiquitous trope in Indian Ocean slavery scholarship. I know that field specialists may protest against this homogenization of Indian Ocean slavery research (such a broad field, as if it could really be generalized). My own research focuses primarily on the relationship between the slave trades from East Africa to Southwest Asia, and undeniably there are profound differences between the legacies resulting from this particular history and those that resulted from trans-Saharan slavery. Yet the one thing that unites this otherwise entirely heterogeneous body of work that falls under the heading of Indian Ocean slavery is a certain lament about lack of information, the raw data of the archives. Here is a random sampling of citations from a range of studies which bear witness to this agony. We have trouble "reconstructing the Indian Ocean slave trades" due to the "paucity of archival sources."[3] "[A]rchival materials

on the Arabian Peninsula are almost entirely lacking," impeding an understanding of the "antiquity of African agricultural slavery."[4] Administrative fragmentation makes "archival research a formidable task to any serious scholar."[5] "[M]otley archiving practices" scatters history.[6] Despite the inexistence of specialized slave cargoes, even Arabic documents "captured aboard slaving vessels in the Indian Ocean…yielded little useful information."[7] Unlike the trans-Atlantic slave ship, which was a regulated unit of transport…the trans-Saharan caravans were ephemeral."[8] Quantitative estimation of the trade is "impossible" due to the "limited nature of extant records."[9] Another random sampling of studies could have been chosen.

Overemphasizing the lack of information that exists about Indian Ocean world slavery is necessary. It is necessary because it throws into relief the questionable generalizations that *have* thus far been made about it: the supposedly debunked but notorious and in truth unrelenting "good-treatment thesis"; Indian Ocean slavery's benign nature, and other forms of romanticization that cast as shadow effect a general disinterest in knowing more. Gentle, seamless histories are unfashionable. We know this story. On the other hand, such stress on historical dearth is unwarranted, because to accentuate paucity is in part to undermine the extent to which all historiography is impoverished by historiography's very conditions of possibility: selectivity and contingency. Like archaeological finds, historical narrative depends on chance. Terms that supply a sense of destitution belong to a telos that begins and ends with history's predetermined totality. In the context of Indian Ocean slavery, the presumption of teleology is shaped by the often unimaginative, and in truth, deceptive terms of comparison.

As Anjali Arondekar suggests in her reading of "invocations of lack, absence, and paucity" in the colonial archive, the discourse of archival absence is able to be "wrenched from its doomed associations and cast into a different teleology of knowledge production." For the discourse of archival paucity and absence, paradoxically reaffirms the archive as "site of recovery and legitimacy."[10] It does so because paucity is the sign of a lack, and assumes that information about the past could and *should* exist as evidence, that historical recovery is an intrinsically desirable and worthy, even an unquestionably morally good, operation. What are the "processes of subjectification made possible (and desirable) through the very idiom of the archive?"[11] What are the conditions of possibility that lead to the assumption that we must look to the archive for the *truth* of slavery. Is there a truth of slavery? And if so, what suggests that this truth is located in history? What is the sense of "location" managed by this commonsense formulation? And finally, who is looking for which truth, *why* are they looking, and who is managing, policing the distinction between truth and its other?

Racial Blackness

In the 1960s historical recovery, and access to history, constituted an important element of the Black Power and Civil Rights movements. Black scholars' access to historical archives, as well as to the arena of historical research, fundamentally transformed the way that we understand the history of Atlantic slavery today. If one looks at the development of academic discourses on the history of transatlantic slavery, for example, one inevitably finds parallels between historiography on Atlantic slavery (the early 1900s), and the early to present historiography on Indian Ocean slavery. For, though much older than Atlantic slavery, scholarship on Indian Ocean slavery is also much newer, dating back only as recently as the 1970s and 80s—apart from fragmented and dispersed observations across the 19th and 20th centuries. Thus, just as the study of slavery in Ancient Rome and Greece accelerates only in the wake of slavery in the Atlantic world, despite a millennial gap in time, and is thereby inflected by it, so too does a much older history of Indian Ocean slavery appear only in the wake of Atlantic slavery history, suggesting forms of continuity that are forbidden from articulation in the otherwise ubiquitous logic of comparison.

The first historiographies of slavery in the Americas emphasized paternalism, good-treatment and benignness, before these adjectives were fiercely contested and

overhauled by the revisionist historians of the postwar era. Ulrich Phillips' *American Negro Slavery* (1918) for example, argued against the economic character of American chattel slavery, emphasized the paternalistic, as opposed to violent nature of American slaveholders, and stressed the socially beneficial character of slavery; for years Phillips' scholarship remained the unquestioned touchstone for the truth of slavery, before the effects of a new cultural anthropology and Civil Rights-inspired postwar revisionism overhauled the racist substratum of extant transatlantic slavery historiography. Politically-incensed revisionist efforts on the subject of Atlantic slavery are today our unchallenged (or infrequently challenged) historical truth.[12]

It is not so much that transatlantic history became political for the first time in the postwar era, but that this history's intrinsic politicism, as well as its intrinsic racism, was brought to light. By contrast to the unambiguously political drive that transformed Atlantic historiography in the 1950s and 60s, as Indian Ocean slavery scholars have claimed (though especially in light of recent formations of Black Southwest Asian and North African coalitions, this claim now needs revisiting),[13] no such political exigency fuels the study of slavery in the Indian Ocean context, either in the past or present: "the study of slavery in the Ottoman Empire has suffered from the lack of an interested, engaged constituency."[14] According to the most conservative scholars, there should not even be an "engaged constituency" constituted by racial injury. The difference from the transatlantic slave trade is theorized across multiple settings, as is the denial of political exigency. In the early 2000s, John Hunwick mused about the lack of a "black consciousness" in North Africa: "former slaves have become so successfully integrated into these Arabo-Berber Muslim societies that they have no cultural need to explore their remote past or to question their present social status."[15] (It remains usually unstated and unclear what criteria historians use to measure "consciousness" and "understanding," and what such unarticulated criteria, necessarily limited by demands to perception, necessarily foreclose.)[16] Do "the descendants of Africans in the Indian Ocean world consider themselves to be African in any sense at all?"[17] Abdul Sheriff writes on the Western Indian Ocean generally: "slaves and their descendants [were] integrated into a society not fundamentally based on racial purity but on cultural integrity."[18]

In the absence of Black consciousness, then, in the Indian Ocean, we get black disappearance, or more precisely, black non-existence: for blackness does not exist, has apparently, never existed, not as a self-avowed identity, the reports of historians, anthropologists, and indeed "laymen" over and over reaffirm. This is an important, if unresolved, observation. But, it leads to a further, equally important question, which historians themselves seem reluctant to ask. Without a demand for a politics of justice, for whom then, is historical recovery necessary and good in the Indian Ocean context? The answer is implied by these verdicts: *no one*. The positive value of absence here indicates the political neutrality, thus, the real objectivity, of Indian Ocean historiography. Indian Ocean slavery is not only different from Atlantic history because of the nature of its forms of enslavement; it is different because it is historically objective and politically neutral. By contrast, Atlantic slavery's modern inheritance in black studies has radicalized, twisted, or thwarted the intrinsic objectivity of historical neutrality, historical specificity. In order for history to be what it is, a portal to truth, it must be an intrinsic good, an end in itself. Archives for the sake of archives. This ensures that the import of the return to the archives remains unavailable to us as a question.

In short, if Atlantic slavery is dominated by the torsions of an "enormous interest" in the "African diaspora," as Indian Ocean scholars complain, what by contrast, *is* precisely the point of the historiography of Indian Ocean slavery? For according to historians' own claims, the legacy of slavery in the Indian Ocean is, apparently, no one's legacy. The pathos of archival paucity, by an inverse logic, reaffirms, every time it is invoked, the evidentiary goodness of the archive, its spiritual plenitude, foreclosing access to and more importantly, neutralizing the meaning of our acts of return. Once racial blackness is safely out of sight, *what are we looking for?*

The lament for the nonexistent archive in Indian Ocean slavery is supplemented on the one hand by exasperation with the concept of racial blackness on the other. Another random sampling of citations: Slavery studies "is still largely dominated by the Atlantic slave world,"[19] the Indian Ocean experts complain. "Slavery in various forms, configurations, and usages has existed in most societies…Yet…one paradigm has dominated the debate on slavery around the world."[20] The "enormous interest" in the "African diaspora in the Americas" has "*obscured*… that vast exodus of enslaved human beings to the lands of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and South Asia."[21] Scholars have "generally carried New World paradigms of slavery" to the Indian Ocean context, where "those exemplars are largely inappropriate."[22] "The tendency among scholars of slavery is to think of the western Indian Ocean through the logic of the Atlantic."[23] The "'Atlantic model'" creates "a bias…reinforced by its fervent quest to identify and study the African diaspora."[24] The "Atlantic model" disseminates an "Afro-centric focus in the historiography of Indian Ocean slavery" that is "overwhelming and overpowering."[25] Interest in Indian Ocean slavery, complains a prominent historian of the field, "has been shaped largely by debates within Atlantic slave history."[26]

Again, a comparative logic sutures Atlantic and Indian Ocean slavery, this time, not only along the lines of the archive's comparative abundance or poverty, but in terms of the hegemony of racial blackness, which is not only "out of place," but deranges Indian Ocean slavery's nonracial truth. This means that, despite the purported lack of an "engaged constituency," that is, despite the supposedly absent politics of slave descendent consciousness in the Indian Ocean, *another kind* of consciousness infects it—consciousness of blackness. The historian's task is to immunize, defend against this infection. But what is this infection and where is its source? If the tenor of our conference discussion is any indication, black studies is itself partly to blame for the global diffusion of an infection that creates a disconcerting and unethical conflation of blackness with "slaveness," Africanness with blackness, and that therefore ignores not only the historicity of Africa, in all its profound internal differentiation, but the profound differentiation of the forms that Africa has taken elsewhere, in diasporas not confined to the purportedly parochializing borders of the United States, the constraining boundaries of the North American academic hegemon and its neoliberal modes of knowledge-production and knowledge-reification.

Enfleshing slavery, racial blackness refuses to release slavery to a transparent and objective historiographical account of itself. Racial blackness arrests the machinations of historical realism in its tracks, prevents the objective historian from doing the serious work of history.

On a sympathetic reading, I am able to interpret this otherwise peculiar disavowal through the terms that were articulated during our conference discussion. Why, an interlocutor wondered after my presentation, was I conflating blackness with slavery, given the prevalence of other (non-African) forms of slavery practiced in the Indian Ocean—the largely Central Asian mamluk system for example? Another interlocutor asked about my understanding of racial blackness, in its distinction, for example, from Africanness. The scholarship on Indian Ocean slavery history seems to suggest, as do these interlocutors' valid questions, that the conflation of (racial) blackness, Africanness, and slavery merely originates with good or bad faith, an ethical or unethical, responsible or irresponsible choice that is available to be made. My attention to the way that the language of transatlantic slavery, as of racial blackness, haunts, grips Indian Ocean slavery suggests not that historians are trying, but not trying hard enough, to exorcise racial slavery from nonracial slavery, to exorcise blackness from the figure of the transracial slave, but rather, that the problem of racial slavery, and therefore, of racial blackness, is *built into* the study of slavery in general. If this were not the case, we would have to explain what holds together the coherence of Indian Ocean slavery as a disciplinary subfield to begin with, if not the very abstraction of the figure of the universal "slave" that is itself the inheritance of modern racial slavery. The figure of the universal slave itself emerges inside the very process that distorts Africanness

into racial blackness. If this distortion reappears in the efforts to narrate Indian Ocean slavery, it is less the effect of scholarly malpractice, and more the symptom of the way this distortion structures the very tools we have to *think* slavery in the first place. As the historiography *of* the historiography of comparative slavery indicates, modern slavery is a legacy of premodern slavery; but it is equally, if not *more so* the case, that premodern slavery is the legacy of modern slavery. Slavery annihilates causality. Though historians of Indian Ocean slavery are capable of identifying some of these problem, their implications are left suspended or subsumed into the implicit belief, perhaps wish, that it is possible to deactivate, to simply remove racial slavery from its mediating role in the very structures and frameworks that render thought possible in the first place.

My observation that racial blackness haunts the Indian Ocean does not hinge upon the imposed ascription of a foreign identity to population groups that otherwise choose to be named and identified differently. Rather, this observation emerges out of a close reading of historians' *own* symptomatic objections against an infiltration which they struggle, unsuccessfully, to defend against. These objections are not, as it is commonly thought, and was commonly rehearsed during our conference, merely variations on the historian's righteous defense against ahistoricism. Indeed, the "critical conceit" of ahistoricism "fails to address the *materiality of the ahistoric*," and is an impoverished response to a problem that runs deeper that history.[27] Racial blackness is a historical process that is irreducible to history itself, and that historians of other slaveries cannot think their way outside of because it conditions the very tools they have at their disposal to think slavery at all. At the same time, the misidentification of this profound analytical impasse, divested of its force and recast into convenient and familiar terms that are themselves mobilized on the very horizon of historiography's laws, moves us nowhere closer to understanding the legacy of Indian Ocean slavery—*in its relation* to transatlantic slavery—as a mode of violence that has ultimately led, as so many papers in our conference observed, to our *global*, anti-black present.

The "devalorization of racial blackness" as Sylvia Wynter reminds us, is itself "a function of another more deeply rooted phenomenon…the devalorization of the human being itself."[28] We have to wonder whether historiography in itself possesses the tools to shed light on this formulation. If it does not, I wonder again, what exactly is the historiography of Indian Ocean slavery positioning itself to shed light on?

Endnotes

1 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman : Reflections on Time* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 30.
2 For an elaborate analysis of precisely this problem, please see Sara-Maria Sorentino, "So-called Indigenous Slavery: West African Historiography and the Limits of Interpretation," *Postmodern Culture* 30, no. 3 (2020).
3 Richard B. Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), p. 7.
4 Benjamin Reilly, *Slavery, Agriculture, and Malaria in the Arabian Peninsula* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015).
5 Markus Vink, "The World's Oldest Trade": Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Jun., 2003), p. 134.
6 Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton, *Slavery and South Asian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. xii.
7 Matthew Hopper, *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. ix.
8 Richard Jankowski, *Stambeli: Music, Trance, and Alterity in Tunisia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 50.
9 Gwyn Campell, *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p. ix.
10 Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 11, 7.
11 Arondekar, *For the Record*, 7.
12 Robert William Fogel, *The Slavery Debates: 1952-1990* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003). This sentence deserves a caveat, for of course, the history of transatlantic slavery does remain fiercely contested in certain of its aspects.
13 For a survey of such recent coalitions in North Africa, see Eric Hahonou's contribution to this issue. See also the work of the Collective for Black Iranians.
14 Ehud Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), p. 158.
15 John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, "The Same but Different: Africans in Slavery in the Mediterranean Muslim World," *The African Diaspora in the*

Mediterranean Lands of Islam, edited by John Hunwick (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2002), p. ix.

[16] I am thankful to Afifa Ltifi for this important insight.

[17] Edward Alpers, The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean: A Comparative Perspective," in *The African diaspora in the Indian Ocean*, edited by Richard Pankhurst and Shihan de Jayasuriya (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), p. 19.

[18] Abdul Sheriff, "The Slave Trade and Slavery in the Western Indian Ocean," in *Facing up to the Past: Perspectives on the Commemoration of Slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe*, edited by Gert Oostindie (Ann Harbor: University of Michigan Press), p. 44.

[19] Campell, *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*.

[20] Fatima Harrak, " '*Abid al-Bukhari* and the Development of the Makhzen System in Seventeenth-Century Morocco," in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38, no. 2 (2018), p. 280.

[21] J.O. Hunwick, "African Slaves in the Mediterranean World: A Neglected Aspect of the African Diaspora," in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, edited by Joseph Harris (Washington: Howard University Press, 1993), 289 [my emphasis].

[22] Gwyn Campell, *Africa and the Indian Ocean World from Early Times to circa 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 255.

[23] Pierre Larson, *Ocean of Letters: Language and Creolization in an Indian Ocean Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. xvii.

[24] Gwyn Campell, "The Question of Slavery in Indian Ocean World History," in *The Indian Ocean: Oceanic Connections and the Creation of New Societies*, edited by Abdul Sheriff and Engseng Ho (London: Hurst & Company, 2014), p. 124.

[25] Andrea Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India: 1772-1845* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 18.

[26] Gwyn Campell, "The Question of Slavery in Indian Ocean World History," p. 124.

[27] Sara-Maria Sorentino, "So-called Indigenous Slavery: West African Historiography and the Limits of Interpretation," *Postmodern Culture* 30, no. 3 (2020), 7, my emphasis.

[28] Sylvia Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Désêtre: Black Studies Toward the Human Project," in Not Only the Master's Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice, edited by Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (New York: Routledge, 2006), 119.

Essentialism, secrecy, and the fear of losing 'clean' status:
Insights into the legacies of slavery in Madagascar

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More than twelve decades after its colonial abolition (1896), slavery is still a very salient and sensitive issue in Madagascar. Slave descendants are often stigmatized and suffer from various kinds of discrimination, yet their actual condition and the social implications of being of slave descent differ greatly from one region, or social group, to another. People of free descent, on the other hand, are often very cautious of not doing or saying anything that could lead others to think that they might have slave, 'unclean' origins because this could have long-lasting and detrimental effects on them and their descent group. I start this paper by focusing on the Betsileo of the southern highlands of Madagascar, among whom I studied a slave descent group during long-term ethnographic fieldwork and subsequent field visits.[1] I briefly describe and analyze the situation in which I found them, and highlight the issue of social essentialism, i.e. the belief that certain social categories (here, the category of slave descendants) mark fundamentally distinct kinds of people. In the second part of the article, I explain how the legacies of slavery still strongly shape social life in Madagascar, leading to secrecy, fears of losing status, vigilance about origins, and, in some contexts, to racialization.

Essentialism among the Betsileo

Prior to my ethnographic study,[2] some accounts had already stressed the poverty and subaltern position of slave descendants among the Betsileo, who were described either as land-poor peasants making a living as sharecroppers on the land of their former masters or as destitute migrant laborers being exploited by free descent families.[3] I chose to focus, by contrast, on a local descent group of people who, in spite of being regarded as slave descendants, possessed land and cattle and were not in an obviously inferior socio-economic condition. In fact, they were even among the richest families by local standards. Yet, despite their relative wealth in land and cattle, they were unanimously considered by the free descent families as 'unmarriageable' people because they were *andevo* – i.e., 'slaves.' Having checked that 'mixed marriages' (i.e., marriages between free and slave descendants) had been indeed very rare, if not inexistent, since the initial settlement of the region, I decided to try to understand why people were so reluctant to marry slave descendants.[4]

People of alleged slave descent in the southern highlands are often referred to as *olo tsy madio* or *olo maloto* (i.e., 'unclean people' or 'dirty people').[5] The simple fact that free descent families, who form the vast majority of the population, call slave descendants 'unclean people' might seem a sufficient reason for not marrying them.[6] Across cultures, ascribing a kind of 'uncleanliness' to a social group is indeed a powerful way to keep it outside the pool of potential marriage partners, and such an ascription often goes hand in hand with social and spatial exclusion forcing outcasts to live at a distance from 'clean' and superior people. In Beparasy, however, I was struck by the fact free and slave descent households lived together in the same villages, and often had excellent social relations with each other. They collaborated on a daily basis and engaged in various collective tasks in connection with agricultural work or ceremonial activities such as family gatherings or funerals. Sometimes these excellent relations were made even stronger and officialized through a ritual of 'blood bond', during which two individuals (e.g., a free and a slave descendant) promised a life-long, indefectible mutual support.

Asked about slave descendants, free descendants often denied any real social difference, stressing that slavery was 'a thing of the past' and that nowadays all people living in Beparasy have similar socio-economic status. 'There are no nobles, no commoners and no slaves anymore,' I was told, 'only poor peasants who try to make a living on their land.'[7] This situation has been analyzed as a 'fiction

of equality' among the Betsileo,[8] which makes it possible for people to live together because talking about slavery is discouraged – because one can be fined an ox for publicly saying that someone is of slave descent – and the equality of the members of the community is regularly stressed in the local leaders' speeches. But if this kind of 'egalitarian discourse' has some strength and value in daily life, one could ask, why doesn't it lead sometimes to 'mixed marriages' between free and slave descendants?

The main reason that free descent families do not allow their members to marry slave descendants is because they apply a principle of hypodescent and ascribe the most inferior social status (i.e., slave status in this case) to the offspring of 'mixed' couples. In other words, the children of these unions will always be considered as unclean by free descent families, and since they are unclean the children won't be allowed to be buried with their kinsmen in the ancestral tombs (*fasandrazana*). This is an extremely serious issue for the Betsileo (and for the Malagasy in general) since being reunited at the time of death with one's family and ancestors is of paramount importance for all the societies of Madagascar. From the point of view of a free descent family, accepting a marriage with slave descendants would therefore mean accepting the idea that the descendants of the couple will never be reunited with their free descent kinsmen and ancestors in a tomb. They will have to be 'abandoned' to the slave descent group, which will bury the children in their tombs. In consequence, someone explained to me, in the case of such a marriage the couple's descendants will be 'lost' (*very*) forever for the free descent family. This prospect is deemed totally unacceptable for free descent families and constitutes the strongest reason why a marriage with a slave descendant should be avoided at all costs.

The other main reason why free descendants refuse to marry slave descendants is that free descendants perceive the status of slave descendants as 'irredeemable,' They explain that there is nothing to do about it, slaves will remain slaves forever.[9] For free descendants, it is not conceivable that a child born from a mixed couple could become a 'clean' person because she has been raised, for example, by a 'clean' family in a free descent village. And they categorically deny the possibility of changing someone's status by ritual means, even though such cleansing rituals were commonly used for manumission in the pre-colonial period and are still performed to cleanse various kinds of pollution today. In the past these rituals allowed the 'transformation' of a slave into a free person and thus of an unclean individual into a clean one.

The free descendants' view bears the signature of psychological essentialism.[10] They essentialize the social category of 'slaves' and think that slave descendants have a hidden essence that makes them what they are and cannot be changed. If free descendants today seem to strongly essentialize slave descendants, was it already the case in the past? As I have just explained, there is historical evidence that in the precolonial era, people could move from the status of a slave and unclean person to that of a free and clean person, provided they could be cleansed with the appropriate ritual. In other words, it seems that free people did not essentialize slaves as their descendants do today. Clearly, a shift in thinking about 'slaves' has occurred. But when did it occur, and why?

This shift in the way people construe slave status, I argue, is a consequence of the colonial abolition of slavery. However, the French abolition decree did not meet the requirements of a ritual able to transform unclean people into clean persons. As a result, I suggest, many people in Madagascar – and in particular in the Bestileo region – continued, in the aftermath of abolition, to view the newly liberated slaves as 'unclean' persons who had been improperly freed. They avoided marrying them, and even avoided marrying the former slaves who did not stay on their former master's estate, started to cultivate land from scratch and resumed living a free life as independent peasants in the colonial era. In consequence, former slaves had no other choice than marrying other former slaves. Their endogamous practices in turn fueled and reinforced the prejudice against them. Free people, on their side, increasingly relied on a number of cultural practices (such as funerary speeches and pre-marital investigations) which made sure they keep and constantly update their 'memory

of origins', i.e. folk sociological knowledge about people's village of origin and genealogies, allowing an ascription of clean or unclean status to any potential marriage partner.[11]

Secrecy about slavery and fears of losing 'clean' status

The social implications of the stigmatization of slave status in Madagascar are various and wide-ranging. The construal of slave descendants among Malagasy groups such as the Merina, the Betsileo, the Zafimaniry, the Betsimisaraka, or the Tanôsy is far from being identical because it is the outcome of different local (albeit interrelated) histories. In urban, multiethnic, and more "politically conscious" Antananarivo, as in the Malagasy diaspora and the media, the representation of slave descendants is also different. To make sense of these differences Regnier and Somda have tried to provide some analytical tools. [12] They have highlighted in particular three processes that account for the ways slave descendants are viewed in different Malagasy contexts. While the Makoa tend to be ethnicized as a group with "external" histories of slavery (i.e., as people whose ancestors were forcefully brought from continental Africa to Madagascar), southern Betsileo and Tanôsy slave descendants tend to be essentialized as people whose servile history is "internal" to the island and even to their ethnic group. In the capital Antananarivo and among the diaspora, the most salient aspect of the problem is an increasing racialization—arguably a specific case of essentialization that draws on both internal and external aspects—of the differences between "slaves" and "nonslaves," since in these contexts Malagasy people with dark skin and frizzy hair are often implicitly assumed to be of slave descent.

Another important implication is the widespread secrecy or relative 'silence' about slavery on the island.[13] I have already mentioned that among the Betsileo talking about slavery is discouraged, and people can be fined an ox by the communal assembly (*fokonolo*) for publicly saying that an individual or a family is of slave descent. It is considered a grave offence since it amounts to insulting people's ancestors. As a result, when free descendants discuss the slave status of other people they do so in very discrete ways and 'safe' locations, using many euphemisms.[14] But this silence or secrecy has an important consequence insofar as it allows the perpetuation of 'fiction of equality,'[15] an ideology dissimulating the true nature of the inequal social order, i.e. the statutory superiority of free descendants over free descendants, and making it difficult for slave descendants to escape this inferior status.

Their difficulty is reinforced by the fact that these differences in status are deeply inscribed in the social and spatial geography, both in rural areas[16] and in the capital Antananarivo, where divisions between free and slave status groups had political significance[17] and still permeate the representations of poverty and insecurity.[18] A recent study has also highlighted how the legacy and idiom of slavery shape the economic conditions and everyday power relations between employers and domestic workers, who often run the risk of 'sliding down' and being labeled and treated as 'slaves,' even if they are not of slave descent.[19] In my own work among the Betsileo, I have stressed what I called the very sensitive 'vigilance about origins' that is often exerted by free descendants, in both formal occasions (e.g., speeches at funerals) and everyday communication, because they constantly need to update their folk sociological knowledge in order to avoid mistakenly engaging in marital alliances with slave descendants.[20] This is partly because, I argued, by marrying slave descendants they and their descent group would become a group with 'unclear'(*tsy mazava*) origins and status, which in practice is equivalent to being labelled 'unclean'(*tsy madio*, i.e. 'slave') since other free descent families would become in turn reluctant to marry them. The point made by Gardini, from a different perspective, is equally important since it shows that free descendants of low socioeconomic status, such as domestic workers, always need to be 'vigilant' in not giving reasons to others for thinking of them as *andevo* and behaving towards them as if they were 'slaves.' The economic migrants described by Evers,[21] for example, seem to be stuck in a situation where free descent families systematically ascribe them slave status, no matter what they do or say, and no matter what their ancestry (*raza*) actually is.

Conclusion

The discrimination against slave descendants in Madagascar is usually not framed as a racial issue, even though racialized views are becoming increasingly common, especially in the urban context of Antananarivo and within the diaspora. Historically, the relations between status groups have more often been discussed by scholars in terms of 'caste' rather than of 'race,' even though the concept of caste, while not entirely relevant, appears to be problematic when applied to the Malagasy context. Whether or not the seemingly peculiar stigmatization of slave descendants observed in Madagascar is similar or easily comparable to cases of slavery-related social discrimination found in continental Africa and the Middle East still remains much of an open question.

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Endnotes

1 My initial fieldwork in Madagascar took place during 25 months from 2008 to 2010 and was followed by three shorter visits between 2012 and 2015. I studied a small community of Betsileo peasants (circa 5,000 people) living in a mountainous and remote region of the southern highlands, which I shall call here Beparasy. I dedicate this article to the memory of Pier Larson and David Graeber, two great scholars of Madagascar who untimely passed away last year.

2 Regnier 2021; see Scupin 2021 for an extensive review.

3 On slave descendants among the Betsileo, see Kottak 1980 and Evers 2002. Slavery has probably existed in Madagascar since the earliest period of the island's human settlement but for historical reasons that would be too long to explain here it increased dramatically in the 18th and 19th centuries, leading to a period that the historian Pier Larson called the "age of enslavement" (Larson 2000). The French annexed Madagascar in 1895 and abolished slavery in 1896, liberating perhaps as many as 500,000 slaves in a total population of about three million Malagasy.

4 The mixing through marriage of two very different ancestries (*raza), i.e. free and slave ancestries, is the initial wrongdoing that sparked the series of events leading to the 'disastrous ordeal' carefully described and analyzed by David Graeber in his Lost People: Magic and the Legacy of Slavery in Madagascar (2007).*

5 The term 'caste' is sometimes used to describe the different social groups that made up pre-colonial Malagasy society (e.g., nobles, commoners and slaves) and still have importance today. Given that some of these groups were endogamous, descent-based and that ideas of uncleanliness were also present, they seem indeed to be 'caste-like'. Nonetheless, I prefer to use the Weberian term 'status group', mainly because 'caste' evokes the South Asian context where a complex hierarchical system of many castes and subcastes is based on occupational differences and is justified by religion. These features are not clearly present in the Malagasy context, and therefore it seems to me that the use of 'caste', while not entirely irrelevant, would obscure my account rather than illuminate it.

6 Among the Betsileo, slave ancestry is never framed as a racial issue and people's phenotype is never used as a clue to infer 'slave' status.

7 Nobles (*hova), commoners (olompotsy) and slaves (andevo) were the main status groups in precolonial Bestileo society.*

8 See Freeman 2013.

9 Regnier 2019.

10 See Regnier 2015, 2021. Psychological essentialism has been explored in the last decades by cognitive, developmental and social psychologists (see Gelman 2003).

11 Regnier 2019, 2021b.

12 Regnier and Somda 2019.

13 Somda 2009.

14 As I recall in my book (Regnier 2021a, chapter 2), conducting research on this topic has therefore been quite challenging and took quite a lot of time since free descendants were, at first, very reluctant to discuss issues of slavery and slave descendants with me.

15 Freeman 2013.

16 See for example Somda 2014.

17 Jackson 2013.

18 Gardini 2015, 2020b.

19 Gardini 2020a.

20 Regnier 2019. This vigilance and the need for a social memory of 'origins' are further exacerbated by the naming practices of the Malagasy. Since the transmission of a patronym is not obligatory and names can be changed (Regnier 2016), it is not possible to track down someone's clean or unclean status through his name.

21 Evers 2002.

Islam, Race and Cape Town

Sean Jacobs, The New School

In South African racial politics, Islam is rarely seen by its practitioners or by outsiders as an "African" religion. It is seen as coloured and Indian. This is particularly the case in Cape Town, where Islam is most visible as a religion. A note on racial terminology: Coloured in South Africa is a distinct racial category, developed during colonialism and legislated under apartheid, and is not just a question of skin color. It denotes "mixed" or "creole" racial identities and in everyday use means a separate identity from black or African. Some coloureds are descended from slaves brought from East Africa and the Indian Ocean, while others are descendants of slaves brought from Asia. Others are descendants of mixed marriages or illicit unions between whites and blacks. Some coloureds are the offshoots of or claim lineage from Khoikhoi or San. Though Indians' ancestors arrived in South Africa as part of slavery, the larger waves of Indian migrants arrived as indentured labor in the 1860s and later as traders. The importance of this case study is that it points to the importance of non-black slavery in South Africa in forming Islamic identity and thus seems like a critical contrast to other papers in the volume, in terms of arguments for racialization or racial formations beyond the black/white divide made in several of the Middle East focused papers.

Though Muslims only constitute less than two percent of South Africa's population and in Cape Town between 5 and 10 percent of the city's inhabitants, they are a visible minority. Crucially, South African Muslims are "integrated into South Africa's political and cultural identity, serving in the government at senior levels, operating vocal media outlets, and engaging with the state on matters of law and culture."[1] In Cape Town, specifically, Muslims have left their mark on the city, whether in cuisine, politics, music, theater as well as architecture and the urban landscape. Cape Dutch architecture is infused with influences from Batavia and East Asian traditions (whether that be the influence of slavery or religion, or both). Downtown Cape Town is dotted by mosques and six kramats (burial places of holy men) are situated around the mountains that ring the city as well as on Robben Island, where political prisoners were sent (some of the earliest political prisoners on the island were political exiles from Indonesia). The result is,

> there are few other countries as alert to Islamophobia or as instinctively and inclusively protective of its Muslim citizens as South Africa. There's a confidence that Cape Muslim communities have about being simultaneously Muslim *and* South African, an ease in those identities that comes from a deep sense of belonging and historical entanglement.[2]

Ebrahim Rasool is a former antiapartheid activist and was Premier of the Western Cape province (one of South Africa's nine provinces) after Apartheid and South Africa's ambassador to the United States from 2010 to 2015. In 2014, Rasool told an interviewer,

> South Africa has been this wonderful laboratory for Islam, which has found a high point under democracy and freedom – for Muslims to perfect the art of integration without assimilation and isolation; for Muslims to live with the wonderment of many identities and not a single religious identity. I mean, which other country would have Hashim Amla as the captain of their cricket team or Nizaam Carr coming off the reserves bench for the [Springbok national] rugby team? These are symbols that are so taken for granted in South Africa … but do you know how it rocks the world of eight million American Muslims and 1.5 million French Muslims?[3]

These characterizations hold much truth, but at the same time they may obscure that the South African identity embraced by most South African Muslims is a coloured or Indian – and significantly not an African – identity. In short, this outcome is the result of dynamic interactions

between state imposed segregation and people's constructions of their own identities in ways that are both inclusive and exclusionary.

Muslims and Slavery in South Africa

Nearly 8 out of 10 Muslims in South Africa are considered coloured. Indian Muslims make up about 20% of South African Muslims; these Indian Muslims, who started arriving in the mid-19th century, are largely concentrated in the provinces of Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal. Smaller numbers of Muslims are black South Africans (i.e. Zulu, Xhosa speakers, etcetera) or newer immigrants from the rest of Africa (especially West Africa and the Horn of Africa) and parts of South Asia. This predominance of coloured or Indian Muslims contributes to the popular belief that Islam came to South Africa from the Indonesian archipelago and India with slaves and later indentured workers or "passenger" Indians.

One effect of seeing Islam as coloured and Indian is that black Muslims in South Africa are usually seen as converts only.[4] But the view that Islam is not black is at odds with Islam's origins in South Africa. Islam arrived in South Africa with slavery. For the next 180 years or so, slavery became the dominant economic and social system in the Cape Colony. In its initial form, Islam was actually a creole identity, attracting many converts from among the enslaved people, who were quite diverse.

Slavery in South Africa does not fit the neatly racialized assumptions about the relationship between blackness and slavery predominant in other contexts. Between 1652, when the Dutch first established a colony at the Cape, and 1808, approximately 63,000 slaves were imported to the Cape (Shell 1997). The majority of slaves (26.4%) were imported from other parts of Africa, particularly Southeast Africa; another 25.1% were brought from Madagascar, 26.1% came from India and 22.7% came from the Indonesian archipelago. The African slaves came mostly from what is now Mozambique and Madagascar. These slaves were black Africans; the slaves from Madagascar and Africans were often described together as black, mostly in negative terms.[5]

In contrast to the popular belief that black Muslims are 'converts', many of the African slaves arrived as Muslims. Worden has argued that "both the south Asian and African components of Cape slave history have been obliterated in public memory and in heritage representations," though it could be argued that the African components of slave history has suffered more from this amnesia.

Racializing South African Islam

One distinction between the slaves brought from Southeast Africa and those from Indonesia and other Dutch colonies elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, was that the latter group included clerics, royals and political exiles (e.g. Sheikh Yusuf of Macassar banished to the Cape in 1694 who is commonly seen as the founder of Islam in South Africa). The new arrivals from Indonesia and the Indian Ocean started the colony's first madrassas during slavery and later built its first mosques. (Tuan Guru, or "master teacher," a prince from Tidore in the Ternate islands of eastern Indonesia started the first madrassas.) They also transcribed the Koran and produced other, mostly religious, literature. This is how they came to invent Arabic-Afrikaans. (Contrary to Afrikaner nationalist propaganda, Afrikaans is not a white language; the first scripts in Afrikaans were religious treatises and madrasa handbooks.)

A key feature of Islam that may have attracted many slaves to Islam during the 18th and 19th centuries was the fact that in contrast, to Christianity - which discriminated against its black and brown converts - Islam "welcomed slaves into the fold, treated them with kindness, and offered them the dignity of a proper funeral."[6] Islam also offered literacy. "The madrasas accepted slaves and "free blacks" alike and offered one of the only educational options available to children from these communities."[7] Basically, Islam treated all believers as equal.

While the Dutch were not tolerant of other religions (early Islam was mostly practiced in secret), Islam flourished under the British, who took over the colony in the early 19th century and abolished slavery. The first mosques were built under British rule. The British, like the Dutch before

them, vigorously policed racial boundaries, thus further entrenching these identities.

By the 19th century, the collective noun "Cape Malays" were used to describe the Muslim slaves. As Gabeba Baderoon (2011) points out, "Cape Malay" meant both "Muslim" and "slave." Even Khoi converts to Islam were considered Malay. Everyone, including European visitors to the colony, noticed this. Gavin Lewis, in his book-length study of coloured identity and politics, noted that "as late as 1976 a Christian missionary in Cape Town noted that "all Muslims, even those of English or Scottish blood, are indiscriminately called Malays."[8] This is an important distinction from how the term Malay came to be used later. Over time, Malay began to be associated with "coloured," the new category for people of "mixed race" that would become codified first under colonialism and then under white "self rule" (1910-1948) and which became law under Apartheid after 1948. In fact, among the many sub-categories of "coloured" codified by Apartheid (Griqua, Cape Coloured, etcetera), one of these was "Malay."

Colonialism and apartheid in South Africa were quite vigorous in how they policed the "races." In the process, slavery also came to be associated with an Asian past.

Constructing Muslim Identity in Cape Town

Even if coloured Muslims were involved in identity making of their own or displayed racist attitudes, they did so within the bounds of state-enforced racial categories and segregation.[9] At the same time, the state was an active agent in constructing Muslim identity in Cape Town.

The best way to illustrate this is to look at the role of I.D. Du Plessis. He was a journalist, academic and later, first a commissioner and then secretary and adviser for Coloured Affairs to the government. He was also a member of the Broederbond, the secret organization that advanced Afrikaner nationalism through the state, universities, business, and churches. Du Plessis thought of himself as an ethnographer of "Malay culture" and from the 1930s onwards, he began to publish his "studies" on the culture and cultural contributions of Malays. Du Plessis was particularly interested in promoting Muslims who lived in the Bo-Kaap (Upper Cape) or Malay Quarter, a part of the inner city. As a result, the Bo-Kaap was spared the Group Areas Act, which uprooted black and coloured communities across the city. Du Plessis also used his influence and energies to promote "Malay Studies" as an academic discipline. (He did not succeed in this regard, however.) Outside of these academic and formal pursuits, Du Plessis also encouraged and funded the establishment of "Malay Choirs," all male ensembles (like barbershop quartets) that sang "old Dutch songs." Some sources also credit him with publicly defining what is meant by "Malay cuisine." All this was aimed at emphasizing the uniqueness and separateness of "Cape Malays," but also to direct Muslim political expression.

Crucially, Du Plesssis was not alone in this. He worked with local imams who acted as his informants. For these imams, the state was protecting Islam and its worshippers. The effect was to orientalize Islam at the Cape and in South Africa, by emphasizing its roots in Indonesia at the expense of Africa.[10]

After the Nationalists took over power in 1948 and implemented Apartheid, they worked hard to "divide and rule" black communities. One of these was to convince Muslims that they could only thrive as a minority group because of special government protection. Not surprisingly, despite the activism of some radical Muslims like Dr Abdullah Abdurahman (who founded the African People's Organization at the start of the 20th century), his daughter Cissie Gool (who associated with communists and was one of the few black city council members before apartheid stripped what limited vote coloureds and blacks had) or the work of prominent members of the Trotskyist Non-European Unity Movement (like Ali Fataar), Cape Muslims weren't particularly radical about South Africa's colonial and apartheid politics. The scholar and cleric, Faried Esack, for example, writes about the 1940s:

> Although there were prominent and widely respected Muslim personalities involved in politics, Islam did

> not play a direct role in their thinking, nor did they appeal to their community to work for a just society on the basis of Islam.[11]

As a result, post-World War Two, white public and official opinion developed a view of Islam as "law abiding." They weren't entirely wrong. The Muslim religious authority in Cape Town, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), established in 1945, was accused of being quiescent and avoiding a direct confrontation with Apartheid. When some Muslims organized under the Call of Islam in the early 1960s to oppose forced removals, white members of parliament were shocked by the protests as they had a stereotype of Muslims as apolitical and law abiding. Muslim clerics, like Iman Abdullah Haron who sought a more explicit association with black resistance (like the Pan-Africanist Congress of Robert Sobukwe) was isolated by the MJC before his murder by apartheid police in Cape Town in 1969. (Haron's funeral caught the MJC by surprise; 40,000 people turned up to mourn him.)

Muslims and the opposition to Apartheid

Opposition to Apartheid gained new impetus from the mid to late 1970s. This is the period that saw the development of movements propagating black consciousness (and in the process reimagined black resistance to apartheid as not based on ethnic blocs as coloured, Indians or Africans). In the 1980s, the United Democratic Front would revive the leftism associated with the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. A fair number of Muslims served in the leadership of these organizations. However, young Muslims, who joined these movements were mainly radicalized by external events: the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (some young South African Muslims went to fight with the Mujahideen) as well as the Palestinian struggle: By the mid-1980s, "among the Muslim community in the Cape, Palestinian scarves and white fezzes have become symbols in the anti-apartheid struggle."[12]

These developments were of course not unusual for political Islam at the time. The slogans of the Iranian revolution became commonplace, so did "Arafat scarfs," as the checkered Palestinian scarves were also known. Esack identified three main tendencies among Muslim resisters of apartheid: One, the Muslim Youth Movement (centrist and more focused on proselytization, with links to visiting Pakistani and Indian clerics); two, Qibla (which while linked to the local PAC,repeated slogans, often in Persian, of the Iranian Revolution, like "One solution, Islamic Revolution"); and, three, the Call of Islam. Of the three, only the smaller Call of Islam directly engaged with the largest mass movements of black people like the UDF, the trade union movement COSATU or civic associations. Basically, Islamic identity became the people's way of entering the anti-apartheid movement. However, emphasizing Muslims' duty to oppose injustice, de-emphasized South African Muslims' stake in the anti-apartheid struggle as workers and black people.

This seemed especially incongruous with Muslims' daily experiences:

> Muslims have always been subjected, in varying degrees, to the same oppression and exploitation faced by their 'racial' compatriots. 'Coloured' Muslims have experienced the same hardships as their 'Coloured' brothers and sisters under the Group Areas Act. The harsh labour conditions in the textile factories of the Western Cape and the trauma of not having a clearly defined position in a society where apartheid demands that all groups have an identifiable role, has been a formative feature of the Coloured Muslim experience.[13]

The end of apartheid predictably led to a reconfiguration of Muslim identities as it did other South African identities. On the one end, like Islam elsewhere, South African Islam became more in line with the Global Ummah. Historically, coloured Islam was locally specific in some of its cultural practices and rituals (often incorporating Shia rituals), but it increasingly referred to South Asian or Saudi theology. Political Islam also featured via the anti-crime group, PAGAD, in the mid to late 1990s, though it faded quickly.[14] At the same time, there was a move to connect coloured

or Malay Muslims with Indonesia.[15] This took the form of some official and unofficial efforts from Indonesia on the one hand and on the other hand, work by local historians and cultural entrepreneurs to promote those linkages above all else and to excavate that part of slave history only.[16] It is unclear how much of this was in opposition to Islam as an "African religion" or was a reflection of racial attitudes towards blackness in the Muslim community, but it did have had some effects to not see Islam as an African religion. It may also explain why many black Muslim immigrants from other parts of Africa or other black South African Muslims haven't fully found a home in South African Islam.[17]

I want to end with a story about a friend that I think illustrates some of these dynamics about Islam and race in Cape Town very well.

Kholofelo (Kholo) Molewa is a black Muslim South African. A businessman and philanthropist, he is originally from Johannesburg but made Cape Town his home after moving to the city for university studies. Most casual observers would classify his wife as coloured, but she sees herself as black and culturally coloured and or Muslim. They have two children.

In May 2018, during Ramadan, he gave a talk on "racism in Islam" at the Claremont Main Road Mosque.[18] It's worth emphasizing the place of that mosque within Cape Town Islam and why it is not unusual that Kholo spoke there. The Claremont Main Street Mosque is situated in a white suburb of the same name to the south of the city in the shadow of the Table Mountain range. It was built in 1851. Most of the worshippers had deep roots in the area and older ones had direct experiences of forced removals when Claremont was declared a white group area in the 1950s. They were, however, allowed to still worship at the mosque. In the 1980s, the mosque became associated with the Call of Islam, which was allied to the United Democratic Front and the ANC. The mosque's imam, Rashied Omar, is an academic and well known for his progressive approach to faith. Kholo's invitation to speak was not unusual at the Claremont Main Road Mosque and speaks to debate and inquiry within the community and how - at least for some - there are public spaces to question and critically probe racial identities and tropes. (On a separate occasion at the mosque, Kholo gave a talk about Black Lives Matter and its South African application.)

Kholo's talk was in response to violent clashes a few weeks earlier between residents of two working class neighborhoods in the city, Mitchell's Plain and Siqalo, over land and housing. Mitchell's Plain happens to be Cape Town's largest coloured township. Siqalo, which is situated on the edge of Mitchell's Plain, is a squatter community that is mainly Xhosa speaking.[19]

As Kholo reminded his audience, the clashes had dominated the news and one media outlet referred to it as "race war." Worse, rumors and "fake news" about the violence abounded on social media. Alarmingly, voice-notes containing racist messages circulated over WhatsApp in which coloureds denounced black Siqalo residents as criminals and opportunists. In one voice note, a male voice urged coloured Mitchell's Plain residents to fight back against "the black people," "crush" and "trample" them and encouraged others to spread this message to "every mosque, every church and every neighbour."

Mitchell's Plain residents weren't shy to talk to local media. Kholo was especially taken by one clip which made the rounds on social media. In this, a black reporter from local network, ENCA, interviews a group of coloured women, whose heads are covered ("in doeks"). The women are joined by an older man from Mitchell's Plain. The group is "visibly" angry. The man speaks over the women and describes how his fellow Siqalo neighbours fear hard work and how "these people," whom he identified as being from the neighboring Eastern Cape province were land invaders." In this, he was merely repeating an offensive talking point by a local, white-led opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, which refers to black residents of the city as "refugees" and "immigrants."

What struck Kholo, however, was that the old coloured man - "who incidentally looks like my father's uncle" -

framed his contempt for his black neighbors "within the language of Islam." To the old man, Siqalo residents "don't know how to lift themselves up by their bootstraps because they lack *sabr* [patience]" while he "because of his Islam, … managed to [work] his way out of poverty." Even worse, the coloured women agreed with the man, by intermittently saying "Allahu Akbar!"

This led to a revelation for Kholo:

> Two main things struck me as the elderly gentleman spoke. One, a personal musing, the other more an oblique political wondering. Firstly I wondered where this man - with whom I share a faith – would locate *me* [Kholo's emphasis] within his overall worldview. Would my Islam exempt me from an indictment that references not only my character but also indeed my spiritual worth? Or would my blackness automatically discount my *belonging* to the Ummah? And therefore putting me out of reach of its benefits?

Which is how Kholo ends on a personal note:

> I have a young son, whose very identity is located within all the strands of "blackness" and "colouredness" and "malayness" – that define and ill-define the Cape's rich cultural milieu. But sometimes in a fit of South African fatalism, I often wonder *when* he'll be called the K-word for the first time (and not necessarily by an Afriforum type [a white rightwing social movement] but by a member of *his* community) … And when those moments come, my hope is that perhaps by then we would have completely reimagined this notion [of] the Other – as especially it relates to determining the borders of blackness - whereby an older Harun [his son's name] does not have to live in a world perennially plagued by angst and fatigue when it comes to race, being asked to pick 'sides' where there are essentially none.

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Putting Northwest Africa in its place

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Recent literatures in the history of Islam in Africa, the securitization of religion, and the anthropology of mobility and migration of the Sahara and Sahel have emphasized the necessity to think beyond the normative geography that separates the study of West and North Africa. The circulation of ideas, people, and goods through and across the Sahara, shared theological and legal traditions as well as Islamic religious forms juxtaposed against those of the Muslim East, connections among people and communities throughout history, common experience under regimes of colonial domination, and even anti-colonial solidarities are cited as examples of a trans-Saharan regional coherence.[1] The argument has had to be made because of racial logics and geographic tropes that have been foundational to area studies, and indeed to modern knowledge. In the older configuration, the Maghrib belongs to either the study of the Arab Middle East or a White Mediterranean while the Sahel and the rest of West Africa belong to the study of Black Africa.

While this recent trend in academic writing is well-founded and often well-argued, a project critical of metageography (the spatial structures that order knowledge of the world) should not search for a more authentic, absolute region somehow uncontaminated by the raciality of modernity as a kind of pre-racial space of meaning. Rather, geo-social regions should be understood as being historical: they are made and unmade by the agencies implicated by human activity in an environment. If Northwest Africa should be thought *now*, it is not simply because of a transcendent origin story of circulation, connection, or commonality that makes the region coherent as these literatures seem to imply, but rather because of the structuring of geographic space in and by the conjuncture. In other words, regionalization is an ongoing historical process whose dynamics in the present inherits from the past and makes that history legible. The history of the present, then, becomes an effect of tool of critical inquiry.

This short paper describes Northwest Africa as a region through conjunctural comparison. In a longer version of this paper, I explore four disciplinary moments in which Northwest Africa has been available or not for critical thought. I use the phrase disciplinary moments here to describe not so much a phase or period that is easily demarcated one from another. Rather, disciplinary moments are characterized by dominant paradigms that render something more or less thinkable. They are neither flat, continuous nor instant, but constellations that coalesce around a set of ideas, approaches, or research practices — some of which may have come from other moments but that have been recomposed or have taken on new meaning in the changed context — that correspond to a certain conjuncture.

The first disciplinary moment is typified by the founding of disciplinarity at the turn of the century, when the Du Bosian color-line structured much of social thought. The second reflects the establishment of Area Studies in North America after the Second World War, when geo-strategic interests provided the financial support and institutional imperative to create new academic spaces to complement disciplinarity and to work out the applicability of modernization theory. Third, the end of the Cold War and the attendant critique of Area Studies reflect the border-crossing preoccupations of globalization. Finally, the fourth disciplinary moment, in which we find ourselves, is an emergent moment of regional containment, when the region – northwest Africa in general and the Sahara-Sahel in particular — becomes a unit of securitization. In all cases, we may track these various disciplinary moments and their effect on thinking northwest Africa above and below the Sahara by attending to how scholars have understood the place of the Sahara and its function in defining space. These framings might be summarized as follows: the Sahara as barrier, the Sahara as bridge, and the Sahara as a space of concern.

This essay focuses on the fourth disciplinary moment, of securitization that recomposes previous research and is currently emerging as the moment of regional containment. If previous moments were defined by conjunctures in which the Sahara appeared as either a barrier or a bridge, this disciplinary moment is defined by the appearance of the unit "Sahara-Sahel" as a space of concern.[2] The Sahara-Sahel appears as a space unto itself, that is, as its own space of economic production and social reproduction, not simply a thoroughfare or a barrier.[3] However, the Sahara-Sahel does not correspond to a single political claim to sovereignty, as a single territory. It features competing claims to sovereignty. Politics in the Sahara is seen from the hegemonic perspective as an insurgency which must be securitized through metrics of risk, warning, threat and, of course by military presence and state and civil society strategies of de-radicalization. The Sahara becomes a space of concern in this disciplinary moment because of the gathering of interests in making the space a matter of fact, a unit of urgent attention and analysis.[4] In this moment, the Sahara no longer just connects North and West Africa as a trans-region through which people, goods, and capital move; it is emerging itself as a discursive-cum-material object made through the gathering of forces, institutions, actors of various stripes that make it globally important.

Here the literature on the politics of the securitization of northwest Africa generally and of Islam in the region in particular, brings us to the defining features of the conjuncture which composes the space. The militarization of the Sahara-Sahel began with the season of Arab Revolt, continued with the fall of the Qadhafi government in Libya, and peaked with the ongoing Mali crisis which began in 2012. This literature tries to make sense of the new equation by either assessing the level and possibility of insurgency or more critically by questioning the conflicting interests and forces implied under the discourse of the "War on Terror."[5]

Forces, Features, and Processes of the Conjuncture of Containment

Clearly, this literature closely follows conjunctural developments. How might we define the emergent conjuncture of northwest Africa more explicitly? Speaking in more global terms, Nina Glick Schiller paints a vivid picture of our planetary conjuncture by citing "the increasing denial to migrant and racialized populations of the right to have rights, the global securitization and prison-industrial and detention center industry, the corporate financialization of loans to the poor and the debt-collection industry, the ongoing seizure of rural lands and the housing of the urban poor, and the multiple additional forms of accumulation through dispossession that lead to economic and social displacements."[6] Responding to the call for decolonizing Anthropological theory, Glick Schiller makes a case for situated theory, as "these global processes have their own particular local configurations as multiscalar networks of differential power reconstitute local histories, confront particular struggles, and are narrated within specific religious, cultural, and national traditions." Putting northwest Africa in its place in the current conjuncture, then, requires making an account of the emergence of Morocco as a player in the Sahara-Sahel, the extent of dispossession throughout the space, climate change, and what is sometimes referred to as the migrant crisis.

First, Morocco appears committed to replacing Libya's role in African Affairs, particularly by its diplomatic, security, financial, and educational activities in West Africa. Qadhaffi was an idiosyncratic, inconsistent leader who tried to develop an African base as a counter-power to Western hegemony after Soviet dissolution by flooding money into African institutions, making strategic investments around the continent in energy, infrastructure, and hospitality, and supporting insurgent politics beyond his country's borders and brutally repressing a democratic one within. In contrast, Muhammad VI has successfully presented himself as a promising partner for global order committed to security and economic growth. Moroccan banks and real estate companies have made themselves a necessary part of the West African business landscape. Meanwhile, the state has made the case for its entry into the African Union and the regional political-economic and military body the Economic Community of West African States despite the long-standing respect African

governments have held for the Western Sahara's claim to autonomy.

Also of vital importance is Morocco's spiritual security doctrine and the related discourse of heritage preservation.[7] As the leader of all Sufi orders in Morocco, Mohammad VI claims to be a steward of a moderate mystical tradition that can serve as a bulwark against violent extremism. Local Moroccan culture is packaged as a moderate tradition of toleration to be preserved and encouraged in face of alien, radicalizing influences such as Salafism. Similar discourses of the national character of Islam that must be defended against Islamist violence and treated as a partner for global capital are also abundant in francophone West Africa, in particular in Senegal which shares a partial Tijani Sufi identity. This shared discourse is evidence of the circulation of religious symbolism in the conjuncture.[8] But it also conditions the possibility for Morocco's emergence. Assuming a leadership role in mobilizing state religion, a controlled, defined take on what Islam is and what it should be for the social engineering of governance projects, Morocco has committed itself to the training of African Imams, particularly in West Africa. At the same time, its potential role in ECOWAS if eventually accepted could signal a more muscular presence. Taken all together, these developments have made Morocco a central player in West Africa, even if other regional players, notably Nigeria, has pushed back against such a shift.

The second conjunctural feature is large-scale land-grabs, natural resource extraction, and other forms of accumulation by dispossession, also known as the new scramble for Africa.[9] This is part of a global phenomenon in which capital seeks increasingly expansive paths and mechanisms to extract value through an integrated process of privatization, financialization, and militarization. The expropriation of land — the necessary means of sustaining life for over half of the population — represents the related production of a surplus population that cannot be integrated into the economy in any meaningful way and the expansion of the real and virtual spaces of capitalist accumulation, even as the new terrains are subordinated and marginalized within that space.[10]

The attack on the developmental state by global financial institutions during the period of structural adjustment in the early 1990s involved the abandonment of a nationalist development project by many African elites in return for their own enrichment. The discourse celebrating African entrepreneurship and a rising Africa has since given way to an insatiable liberated capital determined to maximize profit margins through theft. One glaring example of this is the Senehuile case in Senegal. The food shortages and sky-rocketing prices during the global food crisis of 2008 made apparent both the value of cultivatable land and the international competition for it. Senegal, once nominally socialist, changed the land regime during President Abdoulaye Wade's push for liberalization with a 2012 law. The result was that agricultural land that had once belonged to collectives of peasants in villages was claimed by the state and quickly leased to multinational enterprises. In the Senehuile case, some 20,000 hectares of wetland reserves were leased to an Italian multi-national for growing biofuel crops. Resistance by the local population, which had not previously been using the land, as it was a nature reserve, forced the government to scale down the sell-off and revealed the multinational chronic illegality in the form of fraud, embezzlement, and corruption. Two people were killed in protests associated with the case. This dispossession, and resistance to it, is but one example of a large-scale process occurring throughout northwest Africa. One salient feature of this process is an increasing income inequality, which has wreaked havoc on social relations of all kinds. Furthermore, the competition for access to land by local and multi-national actors is exacerbated by the further desertification of the region and increasing vulnerability to climate change.[11]

Third, the so-called migrant crisis is a another defining process of the conjuncture that makes northwest Africa necessary to think. Global in scale, the migrant crisis might be understood generally as a conflict between the free movement of people across borders as a political expression versus the desire of states and supranational coalitions to contain and manage populations of risk (of political violence, economic and demographic instability in the global north, of epidemics).[12] [13] In northwest

Africa, the migrant question is an important axis of regional integration as Fortress Europe has contracted the policing of its projected borders farther and farther south to Morocco and Mauritania. Increasing numbers of migrants from West Africa who have been pushed off the land without being integrated into urban economies find themselves stuck in North African countries as they seek to migrate to Europe, exacerbating racial tension and forcing the question of the historical and contemporary political-economic relationships between the two zones.

In sum, in addition to the literatures the history of Islam in Africa, the anthropology of mobility, and the politics of securitization, putting northwest Africa in its place calls for thinking trans-locally across a geographical, intellectual, and racial divide long assumed to exist in the real material world. Where these literatures have established connection, circulation, mobility, what is needed is a simultaneous comparative and connective view. The basis of this comparison is multiple and complex but can be summarized as the conjuncture that has brought northwest Africa together. Such conjunctural comparison highlights the role of Morocco in regional and continental politics and business, large-scale dispossession particularly land-grabs, climate change and the migrant crisis.

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Anti-Black Racism and Slavery in Desert and Non-Desert Zones of North Africa

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There is a geographic dimension to slavery and anti-Black racism in the Arab world. Black-White relationships differ in Saharan zones versus northern non-desert zones of Maghrebi countries, largely based on the historical roles in economy and society that enslaved Black Africans and their descendants have played in the two zones.[1] Slavery was crueler and more brutalizing, and contemporary anti-Black racism has been harsher in the southern Saharan zone than along the Mediterranean. Slavery has also lingered in the Saharan zone until the present day. Demographically, Blacks in the Maghreb are concentrated in southern desert regions.

In the southern zone, such as the oases of Southern Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, we find Black populations that reach as high as 75% of the population. That number is probably higher in Mauritania and among the nomadic (Amazigh/Berber) Tuareg who roam the Sahara across state boundaries. Unlike in northern areas of North Africa, where enslaved blacks were largely exploited as household servants and concubines, in the Saharan zones they were central to the economy. Indeed, a (Black) slave mode of production emerged in the Sahara, and the slavery in the area—which has not yet completely ended— is brutal, hereditary, chattel slavery in which Black people are treated as property. In the Saharan zones of North African countries, slave labor not wage labor dominated, and as Mosley Finley has noted, "Slavery is transformed [into a more exploitative and brutal version] …when slaves play an essential role in the economy."[2]

In general, the majority White Arab and Amazigh (Berber) populations are concentrated in northern coastal areas. In comparison to the Sahara, far fewer Blacks have settled among them.

In the northern zone, enslaved Blacks were exploited as domestic servants, concubines and porters, and even as elite praetorian guards under Morocco's Moulay Ismail (1672-1727). Across northern Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya domestic, household slavery predominated. Master-slave relations tended to be face-to-face and relatively more humane than the hereditary chattel slavery found in the vast Sahara. In northern parts of North Africa, enslaved Blacks were not mere property to be worked to death like farm animals while undertaking the difficult tasks of farming and herding in a desert. Often, they lived with the family. The Black concubinage that took place was largely socially accepted (It occurred most frequently among the elite), and the children of such unions were typically recognized as free.

While meaningful, the relative mildness of slavery and anti-Black racism in northern zones of North Africa can be exaggerated. Black concubinage was often a matter of repetitive rape. The children of White slavers with Black concubines were sometimes sold on the slave market. Noted historian, L. Carl Brown, was probably too positive about contemporary White-Black relationships in northern parts of the Maghreb when he asserted that:

> "Color prejudice has always been relatively weak in northern zones of North Africa. Miscegenation has always been socially accepted and no color bar to marriage developed in the area; intermarriage has been at most a mesalliance. There was never anything approaching segregation by color. While northern Africa is not color-blind, it is hardly color conscious. In many of the most fundamental social relations, a northern African is more likely to distinguish and discriminate on the basis of religion, language, or way of life than on the basis of color. In Northern Africa, there is nothing taboo about color.[3]

In Brown's view, resistance to social mobility was the main prejudice Blacks faced in non-desert areas of North Africa: "the economic and social position of the Black man best explains any aspects of the black white relationship there."[4] Whites in northern zones of the Maghreb are accustomed to seeing Blacks at or close to the bottom of the socioeconomic scale.[5] That point is made vivid, as Brown acknowledges, by the fact that the most common words in Arabic for a Black person is *'abd,* which means slave, and *Khadim,* which means servant.[6]

In contrast to Brown's rosier assessment, a contemporary observer of Black-White relations in all parts of North Africa (Saharan and Mediterranean) could reasonably assert that despite some differences between the two zones— across both— Negrophobia is common, interracial marriage is a taboo, and racial discrimination is pervasive.

This essay compares and contrasts slavery and anti-Black racism in Northern and Saharan zones of North Africa. It argues that slavery and anti-Black racism has been and continues to be harsher in Saharan zones. In the Sahara, a slave mode of economic production emerged on the backs of enslaved Blacks. When slavery dominates economic production, it takes a crueler form. In the Sahara, brutally enforced, racialized, hereditary, chattel slavery emerged. In contrast, in northern zones of the Maghreb, enslaved Blacks were mainly exploited as domestic servants and concubines, in warmer, face-face interactions. Post-slavery, racial discrimination has likely also been milder in northern zones than in Saharan areas. Slavery itself has lingered in Saharan areas.

Desert Slavery versus Domestic Slavery

The labor of enslaved Black Africans made the Sahara habitable. The initial wells and irrigation in the Sahara were dug and operated by slave labor.[7] Enslaved Blacks dug and tended wells, excavated and maintained the underground channels of foggara, irrigated gardens, cultivated dates, and tended flocks.[8] The arduous and relentless work to irrigate in a desert included digging channels tens of feet into the sand, with the risk of being drowned under it.[9] The oases across the Saharan zones of North African countries, still reveal remnants of a racialized slave mode of production. The same is true for parts of the Sahara loosely controlled by states.

Historically, the slavers in the Sahara have been Islamicized Arabic-speaking, Arab-Berber, self-identified Whites; and Islamicized relatively darker-skinned, Tamazight-speaking Berber Tuaregs, who also self-identify as White. In the 17th century, these nomadic herders imposed themselves on sedentary Black Africans in the Sahara after desertification and access to camels made them strong enough to establish their rule and control of the labor power of enslaved Blacks:

> "Progressive desiccation of the Southern Sahara after the sixteenth century allowed Arabo-Berber pastoralists to attain an increasingly dominant position vis-a`-vis 'Black' African agricultural peoples in areas along the southward moving ecological frontier of the desert. Increasing aridity gave pastoral groups a number of tactical advantages in competition for control over resources with sedentary communities, whose inhabitants were forced to either migrate further to the south, or to enter into subordinate relationships with pastoral overlords. The desert edge region that had once been controlled by large medieval states based in the lands to the south of the desert such as Ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhay disappeared and were replaced by much more localized political formations in which power often lay in the hands of Arabic- or Berber-speaking groups based either along the desert edge or in the southern confines of the desert itself." [10]

North Africa's Whites came to look upon Blacks as an abject race of slaves and treated them accordingly.[11] Tuaregs utilized superior arms, transport, fear, intimidation and their knowledge of the vast Sahara and control of Saharan resources to rule and exploit enslaved Blacks (*Ikelan*).[12] Under rising nomadic power, both Arabic speaking and Berber/Tamazight speaking pastoralists began to use racial identity as a more explicitly ideological

justification of their position of domination over sedentary communities.[13] The common feature in the emerging color-coded schemes of social status and identity in the Sahara was the negative and servile connotation of blackness.[14] Thus, in the period just prior to European colonization, 'race' functioned primarily as a legitimization of domination and enslavement of people defined as 'Black.[15] Along these lines, local Arabo-Berber intellectuals in the Sahara rewrote the history of relations between their ancestors and 'Black' Africans in a way that made them, in addition to rightful slave masters of Blacks, the bearers of Islamic orthodoxy and holders of religious authority.[16]

In the 17th century, within parts of the Sahara—almost all of Mauritania and northward to southern Morocco—a caste-like racial hierarchy emerged as the dominant form of sociopolitical organization.[17] At the top, were the Beydannes (The Whites) led by white Arab warrior tribes and their associated white Berber clerical tribes, though the vast majority of Berbers in this part of the Sahara Arabized and proclaimed their shared whiteness, after they were conquered by Arab tribes from the East centuries ago. The Whites "own" long-Arabized and Islamicized enslaved Black Africans Abid (Slaves). Former or freed enslaved Blacks are called Haratines. They also may be called Black Arabs. In the mix, in Mauritania are Black sub-Saharan African ethnic groups who have maintained their languages and have never been enslaved by the Whites (Beydannes).

Historically, a slave mode of production characterized this area of the Sahara. Unlike the domestic slavery most common in the northern parts of the Maghreb, slavery in this desert zone was more of a racialized chattel slavery. It was characterized by harsh agricultural work, in a desert, imposed on Black people. Most other work was also done by enslaved Blacks. They herded animals, collected dates and gum Arabic. They also fetched water and firewood in addition to performing all domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Black female slaves were forced to become concubines – they were repetitively raped – and their offspring were born unfree, even if white 'masters' were the fathers of their children. Concubines could not improve their own status through intimate ties with slave masters.[18]

Enslaved Blacks in this Eastern portion of the Sahara, ranging northward into southern Morocco, were considered animals that white masters could force to submit to all sorts of work and services.[19] They were forced to work without pay. They were bought and sold, rented, given away, or loaned.[20] They needed permission to marry, and families were routinely broken up to the economic advantage of slave owners.[21] They could literally be worked to death without consequences for their masters.[22]

Farther west in the Sahara, including in southern Algeria and Libya, a similar racialized hierarchical form of social organization emerged. Semi-nomadic herding Tuaregs—lslamicized but not Arabized Berbers—enslaved Black Africans over the centuries that they call *Iklan* (the slaves). Different Tuareg groups are ranked above the *Iklan.* At the top are the warrior *Imajeghan* (ruling nobles who claim to offer protection to their dependencies). Below them are the *Ineslemen* (Islamic marabouts) and then the *Inaden* (artisans). The *Imghad* (vassels) are stationed just above the *Iklan* (slaves).[23] The majority of the *Iklan* are descendants of Blacks taken during raids just south of the Sahara.[24] Historically, enslaved Blacks played an essential role in the Tuareg economy. The *Iklan* worked primarily on oases controlled by their 'owners.'[25] They also shared communal work projects (irrigation in a desert).[26]

In contrast to the racialized, descent-based, chattel slavery of the Sahara, domestic slavery predominated north of the Sahara, nearer to the Mediterranean. Enslaved Blacks were not treated as pure property/chattel, brutally coerced for free labor. The majority of enslaved Blacks were domestic servants, porters, guards, and concubines that shared their "masters'" household. The enslavement of Black Africans served as a source of prestige for the wealthy as much as a free labor supply. Concubinage could turn enslaved Blacks into a part of the slave master's family, including recognition of offspring of these unions, who are born free (and are considered legitimate children of their father with full rights of name and inheritance), and the improvement in social status of their enslaved Black mothers who are in general freed, and become *umm walad* (mother of the child). In contrast, Black concubines in southern Saharan zones are exploited sexually by White masters to produce

new slaves to carry out grueling desert agricultural work. Neither mother nor child are freed.

Contemporary Slavery and anti-Black Racism in Desert and non-Desert Zones of North African Countries

The two zones today, as in the past, reveal different dynamics of slavery and anti-Black racism. Within the Sahara, an astonishing amount of slavery continues to operate. While illegal, in practice, due to reasons discussed below, socio-economic relations in parts of Mauritania and other parts of the Sahara continue to mirror the racialized, hereditary, chattel slavery of the past.[27] Mauritania is often cited as the country currently with the highest percentage of enslaved people within its borders in the world: out of 4.5 million citizens approximately 450,000– 900,000 Black Arabs and *Haratines* are enslaved today in Mauritania and enslaved Blacks remain essential to the Mauritanian.[28] Very few own land, yet they continue to do virtually all of the country's (desert) agricultural work, for their 'masters,' without pay.[29] Even if 'fathered' by a White man, children of enslaved Black women are not free, they are exploited as slaves. The life conditions of enslaved Blacks in Mauritania have changed little since their ancestors were enslaved by ascending nomadic white Arab-Berbers beginning in the 17th century.[30]

Ignoring the numerous times slavery has been abolished in Mauritania under the French and under post-Independence governments, the Mauritanian white elite and the state institutions they control (including the police, security sector, and judicial system) refuse to end slavery. They get away with it for several reasons. They control most of the economic resources in a resource poor environment, fleeing in a vast desert could be catastrophic. They lie to a largely disinterested international community and largely prevent Haratines from traveling or speaking to foreigners.[31] They sustain ideological control over freed and enslaved Black Moors/Arabs through the country's official interpretation of Islam—Mauritania is an Islamic Republic—that declares that Blacks are meant to be slaves to their white Arab masters of Arabic and Islam.[32] Their servitude is following God's will. Making up 40 percent of the Mauritanian population, significant support from the country's Black Arabs/Moors, sustains the dominance of minority white Arab-Berber Moors. Control is aided by deliberate efforts to deprive Blacks, in their sphere, of education.[33] They utilize state security institutions to torture Blacks seeking the end of their servitude.[34] The judicial system refuses to prosecute slavers.[35]

This racialized socioeconomic hierarchy, including racial terms and enslavement, extends north-ward into southern Morocco. The oases in the Sahara of southern Morocco operate socially in a fashion similar to Mauritania. An Arab-Berber elite dominates the descendants of their former Black slaves, *Haratins*. Much of their existence is dissimilar from that of a free people. Most remain dependent on their former slave-owners' families. They work in the fields of palm groves and as herdsmen.

However, the Moroccan monarchy is more a creature of the Northern zone, and its history of domestic and government/military slavery, so actual chattel slavery is much less likely in the contemporary Moroccan Sahara. Slavery is certainly not essential to the Moroccan economy, nor is it defended by the Moroccan state, as it is in Mauritania. Still, there may be remnants of racialized chattel slavery in the oases of all the Maghrebi countries and it may remain significant among the Tuaregs.[36] The French, during the colonial period (which ended in the late-1950s and early 1960s), in North Africa tended to exchange turning a blind eye to slavery for social control and intelligence from slave masters about distant—from the Mediterranean coast–areas in the Sahara.[37] The feminist Moroccan scholar, Fatima Mernissi, and the renowned Moroccan author of fiction, Tahar Ben Jelloun, reported black enslaved girls being brought into their homes as concubines and servants in the 1950s.[38]

The lingering influence of desert chattel slavery has made anti-Black racism stronger in the Saharan zone of North African countries than in the northern zone of domestic slavery. First, there are more Blacks there due to centuries of a (Black) slave mode of production in the desert, and they are more likely to be viewed as servile. As a recent case revealed, national identity cards of Blacks in southern Tunisia include the name of the family who once owned their ancestors.[39]

Partly due to an influx of clandestine sub-Saharan Black migrants seeking passage to Europe or better life opportunities in North Africa, anti-Black racism in the northern zone of North African countries seems to be increasing.[40] The contempt for people with black skin has increased. In the streets of northern North Africa, Blacks are assaulted by a range of racial insults. As noted, long ago in the Maghreb, the Arabic word designating slave – '*Abd* , pl. '*Abid* – in daily language, took on the meaning of a black person or black people. To attack the humanity of Black Maghrebis, the Arabic word for servant, *Khadim* pl. *Khuddam*, also became a common collective noun for black people, especially Black women.

Blacks in northern (and Saharan) zones of the Maghreb are also peppered with more country-specific racial insults. *Haratine*, signifying the slaves and 'freed slaves'of Arab-Berber whites

in Mauritania, is a general pejorative that connotes subordination in Morocco. Moroccans also utilize the racial slur, *Azzi*. *Kahlouch*, a perjorative for a Black person (*Khal* is Black in Arabic) is most frequently hurled at the innocent in Algeria. In Tunisia, *Chaouachine* is a term for black people forged to designate an immediate category between the free and the enslaved. As a racial epithet, white Tunisians utilize *Oussif*, meaning servant, maid, slave. The opposite of *Oussif* is *Horr*, which means free and designates a white person.

Across the northern zone of the Maghreb, Black people are frequently called, to their faces, *qird* (monkey), *khanzir* (pig), *akul lahmi albashar* (cannibal), and *hayawan* (animals).[41] They may be greeted by the sounds monkeys make, guera; guera. The color of some olives inspires the racial insult *zeitoun*. The color of the candy bar snickers, has turned the word 'snickers' into a racial epithet.

To summarize, due to the historic, primary economic role of enslaved Blacks in the desert zones of North Africa, slavery and anti-Black racism has been crueler and more pervasive in the Sahara than nearer to the Mediterranean. Domestic slavery in the north has ended and contemporary anti-Black racism nearer to the Mediterranean is probably milder than in the Saharan zones where most Blacks live and where hereditary chattel slavery lingers.

Endnotes

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Blackness, slavery and anti-racism activism in contemporary North Africa

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In this essay, I look at racism and race formation in North Africa through the lenses of contemporary African anti-racist activism opposing race-based discrimination, and more specifically racism against Blacks.[1] African anti-racist activism is understood here as a variety of collective actions initiated by African nationals to fight against racism and racial discriminations in their home country and beyond. This comprises organized forms of mobilization, awareness raising, education and sensitization, advocacy work, violent as well as pacific activities that are meant to help bring changes about racism, slavery and its consequences over time.

The mobilizations of North African nationals against racism in their country emerged in the early 2010s in the context of a broader challenge to and destabilization of authoritarian regimes (the so-called 'Arab spring'). This context is important to situate the quasi-simultaneous birth of anti-Black racism in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Libya. The social movements that shook North African political regimes constituted a critical event and a turning point for anti-racist activism. Before 2011, the issue of racism was rarely discussed in public debates. The 'culture of silence' characterized not only Moroccan society but the general attitude vis-à-vis overt racism in all North Africa.[2] Everyday whisperings and gossip about the social origins of black nationals contributed to produce, maintain, and reproduce racism over time, while national authorities failed to address systemic racial discriminations (by both private and public institutions) as a public problem. Although the seeds of dissidence were already there, the 'Arab spring' created the conditions for it to grow and flourish. The Arab spring opened up a window of opportunity to contest existing political orders and to make citizenship related claims about the 'unspoken' issue (at least in the public sphere) of racism against Blacks in North Africa.

While the immediate political context matters, it is equally important to adopt *a longue durée* historical perspective to better understand North African anti-racist activism. This allows us to connect racism to the history of slavery. Anti-racist activists often explicitly associate racism in contemporary North Africa to the legacies of slavery, which has played an important role in the social political and economic structures of these societies. Between the sixth and twentieth century, sub-Saharan individuals were captured, enslaved, and traded over the Sahara. Slaves, sourced from different places in sub-Saharan Africa (including areas corresponding to nowadays Niger, Mali, Chad, Sudan, as well as northern parts of actual Nigeria, Benin, etc.), were destined for locations north of the Sahara Desert, the Mediterranean shores, and the Middle East.[3] According to Austen's estimates for the period situated between 1700 and 1880 alone, Egypt received 800,000 slaves, against 400,000 in Libya, 515,000 in Morocco, 100,000 in Tunisia, and about 65,000 in Algeria.[4] There is a consensus among scholars that the historical exchanges between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb and the rest of the Arab world deeply affected the ways in which Blackness is represented and associated with slavery in this region today.

North African traders and consumers benefitted from another important source of slaves constituted through the Barbarian (Berber) slave trade.[5] According to Davis, slavery pirates from the Ottoman provinces of Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli alone captured and enslaved 1 to 1.25 million Europeans who were sold on various North African slave markets between the sixteenth and the middle of the eighteenth century. The independent sultanate of Morocco and other raiders and traders of the Ottoman Empire also enslaved and traded Europeans they had captured through raids until the 1830s.[6]

Though these estimates should be taken cautiously, there is no doubt that both black and white slaves were simultaneously present on North African slave markets and that slaves played significant roles in the society as servants and concubines in domestic settings as well as shepherds and laborers. The possession of slaves manifested power, generated economic benefits, and brought social prestige to slave owners. Surprisingly, the Barbary slave trade, which had a major impact on the economy of the region, appears to have left little influence on how whiteness is perceived today. Oblivion or intentional collective amnesia? How has Blackness been associated with historical slavery whereas whiteness has been disconnected from it? How should we understand the process through which slavery in North Africa was racialized in this particular way that conflates Blackness and slavery?

In this essay, I understand race as a contested concept that shapes relations among citizens and between citizens and state institutions in contemporary North Africa. In the North African context, discourses about race relate to Blackness and conflate with slavery. Blackness is a socially constructed category, volatile and fluid, used by social actors (including state institutions) to define citizenship rights. The concept of Blackness encompasses race, skin-colour, ancestry and culture. It is often opposed to Arabness. Thus, defining who is black and who is not translates into the question of who is entitled to particular rights. Anti-racist activists in North Africa are more particularly concerned by racism against black nationals (hereafter referred to as anti-black racism) since Blackness has become a criterion for discriminatory practices. Thus, the existence of anti-racism organizations in North Africa is closely related to the historical legacies of the ideology of slavery and its detrimental sociopolitical consequences for people of slave ancestry or more generally black people (including sub-Saharan migrants and other black people whose ancestors have never been enslaved). African anti-racist activism emerged in contexts where the stigma associated with Blackness and its ascribed connection to slave status is particularly tenacious.

Today in post-slavery North Africa, as we shall see, this stigma often impedes people's access to social mobility (f. ex. through jobs and marriage) as well as their access to land property, inheritance, political representation or religious positions. Here, post-slavery refers to the connection (denoted by the dash) made by social actors between the past and the present. In North African contexts, slavery (as a system of economic, social and political structures of inequality) has vanished (at least in most cases) and is commonly considered as something that belongs to the history. However, the 'post-' suggests that it is in fact not yet over, that slavery continues to shape contemporary social practices and govern-mentalities (here as mentalities of government) in North Africa. Post-slavery bridges the past to the present.[7] Thus, I argue that the understanding of race formation and race-based discriminations in North Africa requires the acknowledgment that slavery still matters. Race formation in the region is intimately related to the history of slavery and its memorization.

This article addresses the contribution of anti-racist movements to the formation and transformation of race in North Africa. I first map out the emergence of anti-racist organizations country-by-country and show how they engage with local, national and regional politics. Then, I describe and analyze the challenges identified by leaders of grassroots organizations, their goals, claims, values, ideas and political strategies and tactics. The conclusion offers a regional analysis and highlights the complexity that emerged out of the conflation of race, Blackness and slavery in post-slavery North Africa.

Given the gaps and limitations of data available in many countries, the results below should be interpreted cautiously. It is likely that national or local anti-racist associations, committees, organisations or movements are overlooked because all activists or activist groups are not active on the internet, reported by media, registered as formal associative organizations, or studied by scholars. Thus, the anti-racist initiatives presented hereafter have been active in the fight to eradicate racial discrimination and the legacies of past slavery. These non-governmental

responses to race-based discrimination reflects the collective agency of groups of stigmatized people to resist racism as a phenomenon enacted in mundane practices and deeply rooted in the history of slavery. These expressions of activist citizenship are lively in all North Africa, including Western Sahara, Algeria, and Morocco. The following sections look more closely into the responses at the national level in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

Tunisia: a black revolution in the revolution?

In the early years of Tunisian independence, Slim Marzoug, a black Tunisian intellectual, campaigned against discrimination against black Tunisians. In 1962-1963, Marzoug called for black Tunisians' self-determination and attempted to create a political party of black Tunisians in the South of the country.[8] However, the government soon repressed and eradicated this initiative. In 1968, Marzoug was arrested and sent to a psychiatric hospital for thirty-five years.[9] Beyond this early attempt to address racial discrimination, anti-racist activism in Tunisia was discreet or quasi-inexistent before the Jasmine revolution that shook the country and led to the ousting of Ben Ali's regime in January 2011.[10]

After the revolution, two associations created by black Tunisians played an important role in the Tunisian anti-racism landscape: Adam and M'nemty. Adam, founded in 2012, aims at increasing awareness among black populations in the South of Tunisia and improving their social condition (through the promotion of education) as well as to bring the subject of racism in the media (television, press, social media). The association M'nemty (or 'my dream' by reference to Luther King's speech) – created in 2013 by Saadia Mosbah, a black female Tunisian anti-racist activist – fights against racial prejudices, physical violence and discrimination against black Tunisians, but more generally embraces an anti-racist agenda that also concerns African immigrants in Tunisia (who share similar issues of verbal and physical violence).

Through protest, advocacy, public debates on TV, social media communication, petitions, and conferences, these two organizations have been particularly active in promoting the criminalization of racism on the political agenda.[11] On 9th October 2018, the Tunisian Parliament passed a law to criminalize racial discrimination, making racist speech unlawful. Under this law, offenders can be jailed for one month and fined 1000 dinars for using racist language. On 21st July 2020, the Council of Ministers approved a decree for the creation of the National Commission for the Fight against Racial Discrimination in charge of implementing the 2018 law. This legislation was welcomed as a cultural revolution, although activists also acknowledged that a lot remains to be done to change a conservative society. By promoting racism as a public problem in Tunisia, anti-racist activists have contributed to shaping Tunisian public policy and laws to protect the rights of a discriminated group.

Tunisian anti-racist associations explicitly link the issue of racism to the history of slavery.[12] Anti-racist activists support individuals and families who fight in court in order to get rid of reference to their slave past in birth certificates and identity papers provided by state institutions.[13] For many black Tunisians today, the term "*atig*" in their names (which means "liberated by," followed by the name of the former owner of their ancestors) denotes the status of a freed slave. They see this bureaucratic practice as derogatory and denounce the "institutionalization" of racism. They point out this practice as a barrier to getting jobs in post-slavery Tunisia.[14] M'nemty also denounces the segregation of 'black' pupils from 'white' ones in school transport in the village of El Gosba, in the governorate of Medenine (southeastern Tunisia), a separation enforced by the national transport company since 2000.

The slave past not only impedes the everyday life of black Tunisians but it also taints their memory for posterity as their burials in 'slave cemeteries' apart from other cemeteries acts as a reminder of a society segregated from birth to death.[15] Offended by these post-mortem segregationist practices, black Tunisian activists have organized to contest them in court and claimed equality by protesting against its persistence.

In July 2020, Tunisia black activists and other Tunisians voiced their opinion in protests related to the US Black Lives Matter movement,[16] showing their opportunism and tactical skills next to strategic long-term strategies to address anti-Black racism in the country and beyond. In less than a decade, anti-racist activists have successfully engaged with the issue of racism in the public sphere by simultaneously contesting the broad acceptance of anti-Black racism in Tunisian society and the lack of legal framework to fight against it. The attention paid to law reminds us that law matters (even not fully implemented) in the strategies of activist organizations which fight against racism and racial discrimination.

Black Egyptians against racial discriminations

Recent anti-racism movements in Egypt attest that race plays a significant role in the current transformation of the society and legal framework. In Egypt, where a significant proportion of the population is black, black Egyptians are treated by the majority group as an inferior minority group. There is evidence of lasting human rights violations against Nubian and Bedouin populations, including forced relocations and arbitrary violence against peaceful protesters by state actors. Individuals are subjected to racial discriminations and varying degrees of daily verbal offenses (either related to their Blackness or their assumed servile status) by fellow Egyptian of light skin color.

As in other North African countries, black anti-racist Egyptians mobilized under the form of "counter-racism" movements, mainly active on the internet (Facebook, Twitter, and blogs) and especially initiated by members of the Nubian community.[17] For example, the blog 'Brownie' was created in 2007 and 'Black in Egypt' was launched in 2013, two years after the revolution.[18] Both blogs denounce Egyptians' deep-seated anti-Black racism, although Brownie focuses mainly on the case of the Nubian population forcibly displaced from their ancestral land in order to build the Aswan High Dam on the Nile. In media and public or private newspapers, Nubians are often portrayed as servants, drivers, gatekeepers and sometimes as slaves.[19]

Interestingly, Brownie started four years before the revolution, showing that the revolution provided an opportunity for existing claims that needed a favorable context to flourish and expand. Following the 2011 revolution, members of the Nubian community engaged in the process of rewriting the country's constitution. In 2014, they obtained an official recognition of the Nubian ancestral land, the right to return to that land within 10 years, and the ban of discrimination against Nubians.[20] Activist bloggers in Egypt have been demanding better political representation, representation in the law and the media.[21] Egyptian bloggers remind their readers about the historical role played by Nubians in the history of Egypt but they also document everyday humiliations, physical violence and racial discrimination against black Egyptians and black people in Egypt and the Arab world.

Activists protesting against the absence of implementation of the law have organized protests opposed by police forces. In 2017, police forces arrested about 30 Nubian activists, including Gamal Sorour, a prominent Nubian activist, who died in prison, while others were victims of judicial harassment. Like elsewhere, Egyptian activists are opposed by conservative forces (especially in the press and on social media) as well as governmental reaction.

Anti-Black racism in Egypt is met by a strong opposition from the mainstream population, media, and governmental bodies. As in Tunisia, activists deplore the pervasive character of racism in Egypt and its denial on the part of a majority of the population and the authorities. Considering slavery's late disappearing in Egypt,[22] the quasi-absence of explicit reference to it in debates about race in the Egyptian context is quite surprising. The issue would require a thorough investigation as it appears to stand as an exception in the North African context.

Slave markets, race and Blackness in Libya

Although slave markets are underground activities (which take place both physically and on the web, where black domestic slave workers are put on sale), their rebirth in post Gaddafi's Libya is not a surprise for attentive

observers of Libyan society. The chaotic situation in Libya after the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011 led to a critical situation regarding slavery and other human rights abuses. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported in April 2017 that many Sub-Saharan migrants were trafficked and sold as slaves after being detained by smugglers or militia groups.[23] In 2011, black Libyans and migrant workers were arrested, tortured, extorted, exploited and often killed by militias and rebel groups. A special unit under the label "the brigade for purging slaves, black skin" ransacked and torched the homes of Tawergha residents, raped women and stole possessions.[24]

Dark skinned people in Libya are indistinctly called '*abid*' (meaning 'slave'). Armed groups and military units do not only traffic immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, but also fellow Libyans from the south of Libya. For example, black Libyans (e.g. Tawarghans who are descendants of former slaves emancipated from slavery during Italian rule (1911-1943) and Tebu indigenous populations in the south of Libya) are targeted by militias.[25]

Black Libyans such as Tebu people, or 'non-Arab indigenous populations' as they call themselves, were victims of Muammar Gaddafi´s brutal Arabization campaigns. Many members of these communities were deprived of citizenship, which prevented them from getting healthcare, education and employment.[26] Tebu have organized under "National Tebu Assembly" to promote their culture and language, to provide education in their own language as well as to denounce widespread racism in Libya.[27]

Conclusion

Anti-racism movements in post-slavery North Africa emerged recently in various contexts of political liberalization, evolved in different trajectories, developed specific narratives of resistance, and eventually engaged into identity politics and citizenship struggles. Contesting decades of daily humiliations perpetuated by rumors, whisperings, verbal abuses in public spaces and slurs on social media, North African activists have been voicing opposition to racism in the public sphere and bringing it forward as a public problem requiring specific policies. Anti-racist activists shed light on North African black nationals who are systematically marginalized economically, culturally, politically and socially. Pointing out that black nationals are mistaken for black Sub-Saharan Africans (migrants, students, refugees) and often called "abid," "wasif" (which literally means "slave" in Arabic) or other derogatory labels, anti-racist activism reveals that racism in North Africa is deeply rooted in the memorization of slavery.

Racism and the rise of anti-racism protest are also present in Western-Sahara, Morocco and Algeria. However, in these countries too, both slavery and racism are silenced (and even repressed). Most victims of Black racism live in marginalized areas of the country and face discrimination related to either their skin color or their slave past.[28] In Morocco, anti-racism activists such as "Africa Morocco," which gathers black Amazighs, try to raise awareness in public settings, alter language and educational policy, discuss slavery, ethnic and national identities, and propagate new norms to define racism.[29] In 2014, a coalition of associations launched the national campaign "My name is not a negro" which gave public visibility to the issue of racism in Moroccan society.[3031]

In the Algerian context, the election of Khadija Ben Hamou as Miss Algeria in 2019 prompted racist attacks on Facebook and Twitter denigrating her skin color as well as the shape of her nose and lips.[32] Very interestingly, this bitter discussion on social media revealed the extent to which Blackness is debated and contested among the North African population and how its negative connotation is questioned.

In the whole North African region, the process of "othering" or "alienation" is imbedded in past differences[33] opposing light-skin masters to dark-skin slaves (systematically omitting the history of white Europeans enslaved by Maghrebians until the 1850s). This categorization and hierarchization based on race

situate black people as socio-culturally, esthetically, and genetically inferior human beings. Here, the ideology of slavery is conflated to the ideology of racial hierarchy. A common denominator among these movements is their (explicit or latent) reference to Arabness. Thus, the duality between Arab and Non-Arab populations is translated in racial terms as the cases of the contested election of Miss Algeria 2019 and the self-identification of Southern Libyans show. These conflated ideologies legitimize a form of stratified citizenship in which a majority of light-skin nationals can enjoy privileges whereas black people (both nationals and foreigners) have very limited rights and suffer from systemic disadvantages and abuses.

In most North African countries, cultural representations associated to Blackness entail race-based discrimination and restricted opportunities for social mobility (with limited access to education, jobs and spouses), economic exploitation, marginalization (even after death as the case of Tunisian anti-racist movements reminds us) as well as forms of segregation.[34] Yet, in other cases (Libya, Egypt) representations associated with Blackness have led to increased exposure to violence (including violence perpetrated by state institutions), enslavement practices and other forms of exaction.

Black North African populations are not bare victims or silent objects upon which racial discourses are constructed. They actively engage with and participate in the elaboration of racial categories. As much as light-skin individuals belonging to majority groups stigmatize Blackness, North African activists of slave descent and other black activists tend to cultivate and reinforce race formation because their strategic choices to mobilize supporters and claim equity are often based on racial categories.[35]

To the questions of how the conflation of Blackness and slave status can be understood in North Africa; how Blackness, in this particular region and cultural contexts, came to be associated with servility and inferiority while Arabness has been promoted as a superior status; and how various ideologies of slavery merged in discourses and social practices to promote a common (although contested) hierarchy of races, I suggest three hypotheses or pathways for further research. First, what defines who is enslaveable (and who is not) does not depend on social attributes related to race, skin color, gender, or inferiority, but to a person's or a group's inability to secure protection from threats in a particular point in time and space. Second, the history of colonization in Northern Africa serves as a false proof that Arabs were superior to indigenous Berber and other African populations; the subsequent history of European conquest of North Africa proved that white Europeans could pass from the status of slaves to that of dominant colonizers. This more recent development might have erased the association of Whiteness and enslaveability. Third, the study of Blackness in North Africa allows us to uncover the construction of Arabness as an identity that requires Blackness as its antithesis, in as much as the aristocrat needs to maintain the idea of the slave in order to maintain self-esteem, status and associated privileges. In other words, I would argue that the maintenance of the moral and sociopolitical order in Northern Africa requires the deployment of racial discourses and identities. Race, skin color and the history of slavery are integral components of the North African construction of difference that shapes a stratified citizenship in which those who claim to be Arab enjoy a range of privileges, those ascribed the status of black nationals are denied the access to these privileges, and those black non-nationals are maintained at the lowest level of rights and consideration in the society.

Endnotes

[1] I – the author of this article – do not fit with either the category of white nor black people. As a light-brown male of Euro-African origins in his fifties, I bear the ambiguity of my look, which, in a North African context, makes me seen as someone of Maghrebian ancestry. The present article relies mainly on secondary sources and to a lesser extent on personal observations during my short stays in Algeria and Morocco, as well as my knowledge of contemporary anti-slavery movements in West African contexts (where I have conducted extensive fieldwork). I believe that my positionality matters as much as the positionality of the reader of this article because the article addresses the issue of the racial categories through which we tend to see (and be seen by) the social world that surrounds us. I invite the reader to think about his/her own identity while reading this essay. American understandings of race, slavery and post-slavery may lead to misunderstandings about the North African racial post-slavery context. To add to the complexity of the North African context, to my understanding and in what follows, all nationals from Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt or Libya are Africans. They live on the African continent and are politically connected to African transnational institutions. Nonetheless, Africanness (the quality or condition of being African), is also a contested identity in the whole North African region as many Arabs consider themselves as non-African people. This said, not all North Africans are black. The reader should therefore not equate African with Black. In political discourses, black nationals are constantly reminded their belonging to Africa by opposition to an explicit or implicit Arabness.

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[3] Andrews, K. (2013). *Resisting Racism: Race, Inequality and the Black Supplementary School Movement*. London: Institute of Education Press.

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[12] About the association of Blackness to slave ancestry see also Ltifi (2021) in this special issue.

[13] https://www.babelmed.net/article/9298-le-combat-de-saadia-mosbah-contre-linvisibilite-des-tunisiens-noirs/ accessed on 06-02-2021

[14] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-rights-race-trfn-idUSKBN2741GY accessed on 11-02-2021

[15] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAltGt_-k3s accessed 11-09-2020

[16] https://www.facebook.com/BBCnewsafrica/videos/2643326055989288 ; https://minorityrights.org/2020/07/29/black-spring-tunisia/ accessed on 07-10-2020

[17] About race formation in Egypt and the case of Nubians, see Moll

[18] https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/features/2015/7/23/being-black-in-egypt consulted on 07-10-2020

[19] See Ahmed Sukarno, Nubia and Nubians in Movie and Egyptian Television (Al-Nüba Ü Al-Nubïn fï A- Sïnïma Ü Al-Tïlïfïzïün Al-Masrï) unpublished paper, presented at the Conference Nubians between Resettlement and Development. See also Wealth, Business and Slaves in Al-Hüdabï Family (Al-thrüah Ü Al- business Ü Al-Abïd fï ′ailate Al-Hïdabï), Al-Fagr New Paper, issue no. 196, 30 March 2009, in which the newspaper mentioned that Al-Hüdabï Family used to have Nubian slaves.

[20] https://togetherwedefend.org/defenders/seham-osman accessed on 07-10-2020

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[26] http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/11/spring-bursts-among-toubou-libyas-desert/ consulted on 06-10-2020

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[31] https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/shadows-of-slavery-part-two-race-colour-and-origins-in-northwest-africa-an/ consulted on 06-10-2020
[32] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46810367 consulted on 06-02-2021
[33] Fanon F. (1952). *Peau noire, masques blancs,* Paris, Seuil.
[34] About segregation in Morocco see Abu-Lughod, J. L., (1980), *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
[35] Menin L. (2020). "Introduction. Slavery and the Racialization of Humanity: Coordinates for a Comparative Analysis." Antropologia (Milano) 7.1 N.S. (2020): 7–32. Web.

The Racial Politics of the Amazigh Revival in North Africa and Beyond

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This paper interrogates the liminal ethno-racial category of Berber/Amazigh as it develops in colonial North Africa and comes to be reinvigorated in the postcolonial Amazigh revival. With a particular focus on the southeastern oases of Morocco where I have pursued ethnographic research since the early 2000s, it sketches the colonial military, administrative, and scientific logics which divided "Berber" (or *Amazigh*) "autochthons" and "Haratin" (or "*Iqablin*") "allochthons" along racialized lines as "white" and "Black" respectively, and the consequences of such a divide for local social relations and their transformations in the wake of Moroccan independence and the increased social mobility of Haratin/Iqablin. It particularly examines how questions of race continue to haunt contemporary activism around Amazigh culture, language, and land—where a discursive embrace of Berber Africanity remains in tension with ongoing local struggles between those of Amazigh and Haratin background over economic and political resources. These relations—differently figured in rural oases, urban North Africa, and the diaspora—are increasingly framed, particularly among the younger generation, by a global racial discourse on "whiteness" and "Blackness" that variously includes or excludes Haratin/Blacks from Amazighness and Imazighen from Blackness. At stake is how different racial projects and desires coalesce and compete across North Africa and beyond. The case presented here is intimately connected to the broader Saharan racial dynamics outlined by Stephen J. King and Wendell Marsh in their contributions to this volume, and by E. Ann McDougall in her broader work.[1]

Race and the Imperial Imagination

Much has been written on the role of racial classification in the consolidation of French rule in North Africa.[2] The literature has focused on divide-and-rule strategies built around a postulated ethno-racial and ecological divide between sedentary/rural Berbers and nomadic/urban Arabs. This heuristic dichotomy functioned relatively well in nineteenth-century Algeria, with Arabic and Berber speakers, on the aggregate, respectively occupying the urban plains and rural mountains. Racial difference thus seemingly mapped directly onto the physical landscape, with the latter naturalizing the former. Moreover, such spatial markers substantiated a temporal ideology that posited the relative autochthony of Berbers, protected in their mountain redoubts from the urbanizing and civilizing impositions of successive Phoenician, Roman, Punic, Arab, and Ottoman invaders. If French colonial officials understood their own "civilizing mission" as an historical recapitulation of the Roman imperium,[3] they nonetheless ethically legitimated the project as a means to liberate their authentically Mediterranean (if not proto-European) Berber subjects from the ravages of Arabo-Islamic despotism.

In what has become known in the scholarship as the Berber "myth" or vulgate,[4] colonial ethnologists supplemented geographic and archaeological arguments for Berber indigeneity with psychological and sociological claims of Berber compatibility with secular modernity, and thus as potential allies and eventual *évolués*. They reinvigorated Ibn Khaldun's theory of tribal *'asabiyya* to emphasize a Berber mode of communal solidarity independent of palace or mosque structures. They pointed to village assemblies and customary tribunals as incipient democratic institutions.[5]

If, in the eyes of Western observers, Berbers manifested a primitive independence that bordered on violent anarchy, this made them simultaneously less susceptible to the imputed religious fanaticism and fatalism of Arabs. Early military scholars like General Daumas noted that Algerian Kabyle Berbers "have accepted the Koran but they have not embraced it," noting their worship of saints and reliance on *marabouts*, as well as their inconsistencies in observing daily prayers, Ramadan fasts, and prohibitions

on alcohol and pork.[6] With Islam constituting for the Kabyles but a "superficial varnish, a simple stamp… a feeble imprint,"[7] their potential transformation into laborious colonial subjects was understood to be comparatively unencumbered. Throughout the colonial period officials attempted to reinforce the separation of Arabs and Berbers through diverging educational policies and separate administrative and legal regimes, with Berbers subject to customary tribunals rather than the shari'a courts that administered Arab civil life in urban areas.

Such a racial taxonomy required much ideological and bureaucratic labor to supersede the heterogeneous material and cultural realities that administrators actually encountered whether in urban or rural zones. Even the most isolated mountain-top village had been connected to cities and coastal ports through centuries of economic and religious exchange. Sufi brotherhoods crisscrossed North Africa with lodges and properties in both cities and marginal villages; in many cases they constituted the bases for trans-local political movements.[8] Pilgrimage not only organized annual mass departures to distant holy lands, but also knitted together the North African landscape in smaller scale ritual festivals and individual pursuits of *baraka*. Berbers, Arabs, Jews, Black populations, and other ethno-religious groups shared in these spiritual journeys, innovating religious and linguistic creoles in the process.

In like fashion, networks of trade stretched across the entire region. Merchant families settled across the landscape. Villagers frequently sold their labor in the cities or in neighboring regions during harvest times, and vast numbers of rural folk became permanent migrants as a result of drought or upheaval. If endogamy functioned as a normative practice to maintain group boundaries, polygamy, concubinage, and matrimonial strategies multiplied unions between lineages and even ethno-linguistic groups.

As a result of centuries of such mobility, exchange, and de facto exogamous marriage, French colonial officials did not actually encounter pristine ethno-linguistic or racial groups firmly bounded and easily identifiable by language, physiognomic traits, cultural practices, or psychological dispositions, but rather populations with complex social inter-relations living for the most part in vast multilingual contact zones or heterogeneous cities.[9] This is not to claim that the distinction French military scholars drew between Arabs, Berbers, and others was entirely arbitrary or the pure figment of an Orientalizing gaze that imputed a Eurocentric racial taxonomy on an amorphous landscape. North African populations by no means embraced fluid or hybrid identities in a postmodern sense. Although many shared a general Islamic ideology that foregrounded a community of faith over social rank, class, ethnic background, or racialized diacritics, they nonetheless accumulated genealogical capital and fetishized origins as strategies of distinction. Through topoynms and teknonyms, groups traced their honorable ancestry (or *asl*) to a renowned place or famous forebear, ideally to the Prophet or to one of his companions. Through naming, conversion, and marriage practices, rural Berber-speaking families assimilated themselves into Arabness or sought to purify lineages from what they considered to be lowly categories of people as marked by religion, skin color, or profession.

In other words, the French racial ideology was itself everywhere in dialogue with indigenous modes of social classifications and worldviews that distinguished themselves through and from various societies of others. As Moroccan historian Chouki El Hamel has described in *Black Morocco*, the Moroccan social landscape was marked by "zones of cultural exchange, borrowing, mixing, and creolization as well as violation, violence, enslavement, and racially segregated zones" in which any "definition of race in the Moroccan context is fluid and flexible and resists facile analyses such as those by scholars and traveler observers."[10] It is in the confrontation and collusion of these different modes of classifying that relatively mutable and internally heterogeneous ethnic and racial categories became ideologically segmented, materially instantiated, and semantically fixed.

Slavery and Oasis Social Hierarchies

One site where this dialogical dynamic of racial classification can be seen in stark relief is on the Moroccan

pre-Saharan frontier. On the southeastern margins of the French Protectorate, the pre-Saharan oases were not "pacified" until the early 1930s, a good twenty years after the establishment of French rule in Morocco. Until then, they were the epitome of the historical *bled es-siba*, the "land of dissidence," inconsistently subject to the administrative reaches and tax collection of the Moroccan central state (or *makhzan*). While successive sultanates—including the current 'Alawi monarchy in power since the 17th century—traced their origins to the southeastern valleys, their authority over the frontier regions remained primarily limited to the mediation of local big men or the occasional military expedition.

In these regions a simple Arab-Berber dichotomy imported from Algeria proved grossly insufficient for colonial officers to account for a social complexity comprised of both Arabic and Berber-speakers, Muslims and Jews, lighter and darker-skinned peoples, nomadic and sedentary populations, and a host of other overlapping and amorphous groupings reckoned by occupation, descent, and tribal affiliation. Administrators explained this complexity as characteristic of a contact zone between more defined northern "white Africa" and southern "Black Africa," the latter a racial-cum-spatial category borrowed from the Arabic *bilad as-sudan* ("land of the Blacks")—itself borrowed from classical Greek texts.[11]

In particular, French military ethnologists and later Indigenous Affairs (AI) officers struggled over the origins and sociopolitical situation of the darker-skinned populations called "Haratin," and more generally over the treatment of Black populations. In general, Protectorate officials justified their de facto tolerance of widespread slavery encountered in Morocco—condoned by Islamic jurists as long as those enslaved were ostensibly not Muslims—through a myth of Islamic societies as relatively color-blind. Clearly such claims to a raceless Morocco begged a number of questions, including the historical conflation of "Blacks" (*sudan*) with "slaves" (*abid*) (and ongoing conflation of them with formerly enslaved peoples) and their continued occupation of the lowest social ranks in rural communities, as Chouki El Hamel, Mohammed Ennaji, John Hunwick, E. Ann McDougall, Eve Powell Trout and others have amply demonstrated.[12] While "Haratin" in pre-Saharan oases communities were distinguished from recently enslaved Africans (Ismakhan) by appearance, occupation, and freedom of mobility, these dark-skinned agriculturalists were nonetheless for the most part reduced to servile roles as sharecroppers for the dominant pastoral Berber-speaking tribesmen (Imazighen) and Shurafa notable lineages, and the objects of local racial prejudice.[13]

Moreover, "Haratin" were generally treated as *enslavable*. In 1699, Mawlay Isma'il—over the objections of certain jurists who argued for their sanctity as Muslim subjects—justified the forced conscription of Black populations across Morocco into his "slave army" (*jaysh al-'abid*) on the basis of the faulty claim that all were of slave origin, if not runaway slaves themselves, and thus naturally subservient.[14] While the name "Haratin," likely derives from the Berber color-term *aherdan*, meaning dark or reddish, many in the oases even today understand it as Arabic for "freedom of the second order" (*hurr thani*). Until recently, those so called had only secondary access to land and water rights, and no political representation in local tribal assemblies or customary tribunals. Most were forced to sharecrop the fields and trees owned by pastoral tribes, working for one-fifth of the cultivated grains, dates, and olives in a relationship known as *khumas*. Through ritual sacrifice, these darker-skinned families further entered into formal relations of clientelism (*wala'*) with given "white" lineages, seeking their protection from the insecurity of war and drought. As with manumitted slaves, these patron-client relations have tended to endure even after the termination of the formal sharecropping contract, such that to this day Imazighen and Shurafa in the oases point to their Black neighbors as "our Haratin."

Indeed, for Berber-speaking pastoralists, the capacity for armed warfare and centuries of "resistance" to Arab and French invaders constitutes the primary index of their *asl*, the insurance of their honor, and the condition of possibility of being noble "Imazighen"—an ethnonym embraced by recent activists and commonly translated

as "free men"—in direct contrast to dependent ("Black," settled, agrarian) populations denied the use of arms. Through their installation of formerly dissident "white" tribal leaders as local *qa'id*-s and *shaykh*-s according to a general policy of indirect rule, French AI officers further sutured the equation of martial qualities with tribal identity and the racial boundaries of Berberness. Assumptions that the lack of autochthony, autonomy, and *asl* of so-called "Haratin" derived from their skin color influenced the economistic interventions of French indigenous affairs officers and postcolonial urban Morocco authorities. Like Egyptian *fallahin*,[15] "Haratin" were treated as natural manual laborers, as potential *homo economicus*, but outside the sphere of politics.

Thus, in spite of their ideology of republican equality and their self-presentation as emancipators of the effective enslavement of Morocco's Black populations, French administrators prioritized local order and did not attempt to reform oasis social hierarchies.[16] Yet, under pressure to address systematic labor shortage in colonial cities and the metropole, they turned initially to Black sharecroppers rather than to Imazighen and Shurafa disinclined to relinquish their local social status and oversight of their agricultural patrimony. The former—already alienated from both stable property ownership and their own labor power—broadly embraced the possibility of earning migrant wages,[17] and large numbers left throughout the 1940s particularly for Casablanca where they established a semi-permanent community of manual laborers.[18]

In contrast to Imazighen who later garnered permanent posts in the military or post-independence Moroccan administration, "Haratin" emigrants across generations maintained closer ties to their natal oases and were able to translate their accumulation of migrant economic capital into local social and political capital—what many have characterized as their final "emancipation."[19] In particular, they used their remittances to purchase land from Imazighen and Shurafa. These developments, as Hsain Ilahiane has shown, have helped produce a "sense of community" and "ethnic consciousness"[20] among former sharecroppers. In much of the Drâa, Ghéris, and Ziz valleys of southeastern Morocco, these former racialized sharecroppers—locally known as and referring to themselves by a variety of names including "Iqablin" ("people of the Qibla/Southeast"), "Issuqin" ("people of the market"), and "Drâawi" ("those from the Drâa valley)—now constitute the majority of the population. Local politics has become a "Black" and "white" affair, with elections contested by candidates who are racially defined, and positions of local authority (e.g. *muqaddam* [neighborhood official] or *amghar n wamman* [irrigation superintendent]) racially bifurcated.

Nostalgia, Cultural Activism, and a New Old Racism

This racialized political transformation has provoked widespread cultural-cum-racial anxiety among "white" Berber speakers of formerly notable lineage, and to a great extent spurred the rapid growth of an Amazigh cultural movement beginning in the early 1980s. Originally organized by students in Rabat as a salvage anthropological operation to collect Berber folklore, oral poetry, music, and performance traditions in the hopes of garnering the official recognition of Amazigh culture, the movement has taken on multiple local ramifications in the southeastern oases where cultural associations have flourished. The Ghéris valley town of Goulmima has been a key site in the history of the Amazigh revival, particularly in the wake of the arrest of seven local activists in 1994 for brandishing banners written in the Berber Tifinagh alphabet demanding the teaching of Tamazight in the schools (in solidarity with the ongoing Kabyle school boycott). Their arrest produced international outcry and forced the government to relax its Arabization policies, leading to Mohammed VI's eventual creation of the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) by royal decree in 2001. Beginning in the mid-1980s, local Ait Morrhad (Imazighen) schoolteachers have traveled to remote mountain villages to record the repertoires of octogenarian poets; others hurriedly transcribe the oral history of the older generation; and still others have fought for the preservation of traditional architectural forms and the protection of the Ait Morrhad's remaining collective lands from eminent domain requisitions by the state or their sale to private investors.[21]

If these activists embrace the national and transnational dimensions of the Amazigh revival, many are simultaneously nostalgic for an "old order" of local pastoral honor and moral rectitude. They look on in horror as they see landless Ait Morrhad so financially destitute as to have to sharecrop themselves. Others bemoan what they see as an increasing number of thefts in the oasis attributed to Iqablin youth no longer respectful of the social control once exerted by Ait Morrhad elders. In contrast, younger Iqablin are more than happy to have escaped what they see as the petty tyranny of Ait Morrhad big men. They are suspicious of Amazigh activists whom they accuse of trafficking in Berber culture to support narrow Ait Morhad tribalism. "You can't trust them, Paul," one Aqabli woman explained to me. "They are foxes (*uccen*). They talk about culture and community, but they only care about themselves." Other Iqalblin have become adepts of new Islamic piety movements that had spread across the oasis and appreciate the increase in local mosques as a sign of a future open, post-racial morality.

In contrast, some Ait Morrhad interlocutors deride Iqablin for betraying their cultural heritage and importing a foreign Islamist political ideology into an oasis historically characterized by ostensible heterodox traditions and incipient secularism.[22] One the one hand, local Amazigh activists avow universalist principles of equality, claim "Africanity" as an element of Amazigh and Moroccan identity, and lionize Sahelian Tuareg for having preserved their Amazigh authenticity and taken up arms in the fight for an Azawad homeland. On the other hand, they liken their Iqablin neighbors to flies (*izzen*) and resent them for filling the oasis with black bodies. "Paul, if you were to return to Goulmima in 100 years, you wouldn't find a single Morrhadi. Only Iqablin. It's in their nature." With their means of local social mobility increasingly blocked, it is many Ait Morrhad who now feel imprisoned in a home they no longer recognize.

Conclusion

To a great extent, postcolonial racial dynamics in North Africa have emerged transformed from a racialized colonial encounter through which Berber-speaking tribesmen have sought to maintain their autonomy and nobility threatened by "Arabo-Islamic" urban incursions, on the one hand, and their dependence on "Black" agrarian labor, on the other. Through the Amazigh revival, they have broadly embraced their colonial representation as indigenous noble savages at the very moment that their autochthony is called into question through the progressive "emancipation" of Black "Haratin" with stronger historical claims to autochthony in a given oasis valley than the formerly pastoral Amazigh tribes whose "protection" they no longer require.

But this century-long set of racialized tensions cannot fully encompass the complexity of present racial dynamics in the region which have always been more fluid and instable than colonial or activist projections have projected. The Black and Amazigh Moroccan diasporas are now far-flung, with Italy, Sweden, Australia, Canada, Dubai, and the United States occupying newly prominent places on the Moroccan cognitive map. Satellite and Internet media connect oasis residents into networks of activism, fandom, and flirtation whose boundaries are no longer so easily definable by the contours of empire. While local matrimonial strategies and exchange relations retain a certain durability and continue to outline group boundaries, these do not constrain identification and belonging in quite the same way as thirty years prior. Rather, we have to also account for the work of larger discourses and stylistics of race and class emerging from the American "ghetto" or the French *banlieue* or the Brazilian *favela* in reformulating, reifying, and unbundling local inclusions and exclusions. Settled communities of sub-Saharan transmigrants in North African cities demand inclusion in national polities—as A. George Bajalia beautifully shows in his contribution to this volume—mooting older racializing frames without eliminating the inequalities and exclusions which continue to go with them.[23] It remains to be seen whether the Amazigh revival can transcend these global racial polarities and unambivalently embrace Black Berber-speakers as part of an inclusive political culture.

Endnotes

[1] See E. Ann McDougall, "Living the Legacy of Slavery: Between Discourse and Reality," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 179-180 (2005): 957-86.

[2] See Edmund Burke III, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Jane Gross and David McMurray, "Berber Origins and the Politics of Ethnicity in Colonial North African Discourse," *POLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 16 (2) (1993): 39-58; Patricia Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonia Algeria* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995); Philippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin, *L'Algérie des anthropologues* (Paris: François Maspero, 1975); Paul A. Silverstein, "The Kabyle Myth: The Production of Ethnicity in Colonial Algeria," in *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures*, ed. Brian Keith Axel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 122-55.

[3] Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007); Paul A. Silverstein, "France's *Mare Nostrum*: Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of the French Mediterranean," *Journal of North African Studies* 7 (4) (2002), 1-22.

[4] Charles-Robert Ageron, "La France a-t-elle un politique kabyle?" *Revue Historique* 223 (1960): 311-52.

[5] Eugène Guernier, *La Berbérie, L'Islam, et la France* (Paris: Editions de l'Union Française, 1950); Emile Masqueray, *Formation des cités chez les populations sédentaires de l'Algérie* (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1886).

[6] Eugène Daumas and M. Fabar. *La Grande Kabylie. Etudes historiques*. Vol. 1 (Paris: Hachette, 1845), 77.

[7] Anonymous, "La politique berbère du Protectorat," *Algérie française, renseignements coloniaux* (July 1924), 216.

[8] Emile Dermenghem, *Le Culte des saints dans l'Islam maghrébin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954); Michaux-Bellaire, Edouard, *Les Confréries religieuses au Maroc* (Rabat: Imprimerie Officielle, 1923).

[9] On "contact zones" as spaces of "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination," see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4. On multilingualism and colonial ideologies of language purity in southern Morocco, see Katherine Hoffman, "Purity and Containment: Language Ideologies and French Colonial Native Policy in Morocco," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50 (3) (2008), 724-752.

[10] Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 5, 97.

[11] John Hunwick, "The Same But Different: African Slavery in the Mediterranean Muslim World," in *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam*, ed. John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2002) , xix; Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 54.

[12] El Hamel, *op cit.*; Mohammed Ennaji, *Soldats, domestiques et concubines. L'esclavage au Maroc au XIXe siècle*. (Casablanca: Eddif, 1994); John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2002); McDougall, *op cit.*

[13] For ethnographic discussions of the Haratin and their stratified, interdependent, patron-client relations with other oasis residents, see El Hamel, *op cit.*, 109-113; Remco Ensel, *Saints and Servants in Southern Morocco* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); and Hsain Ilahiane, *Ethnicities, Community Making, and Agrarian Change: The Political Ecology of a Moroccan Oasis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004). Abdellah Hammoudi characterizes these relations as those of caste. Abdellah Hammoudi, "Segmentarité, stratification sociale, pouvoir politique et sainteté. Réflexions sur les thèses de Gellner," *Hespéris-Tamuda* 15 (1974), 147-80.

[14] El Hamel, *op cit.*, 155-84; Fatima Harrak, "Mawlay Isma'il's *Jaysh al-'Abid*: Reassessment of a Military Experience," in *Slave Elites in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study*, ed. Miura Toru and John Edward Phillips (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000), 177-96; Hunwick and Powell *op cit*, 42-3.

[15] Aaron Jakes, *Egypt's Occupation: Colonial Economism and the Crises of Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

[16] Mohamed Salahdine, *Maroc: tribus, makhzen et colons. Essai d'histoire économique et sociale* (Paris: Harmattan, 1986), 225-6).

[17] Jean Bisson and Mohamed Jarir, "Ksour du Gourara et du Tafilelt. De l'ouverture de la société oasienne à la fermeture de la maison," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 25 (1986), 341; Mohamed Naciri, "Les ksouriens sur la route. Emigration et mutation spatiale de l'habitat dans l'oasis de Tinjdad," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 25 (1986), 359; Paul Pascon and Mohammed Ennaji, *Les Paysans sans terre au Maroc* (Casablanca: Editions Toubkal, 1986), 71.

[18] By 1950, 13% of the total number of immigrants to Casablanca were Haratin from the southeastern oasis, a figure massively out of proportion with their general representation in the Moroccan population. Rita Aouad-Badoual, "Esclavage" et situation des "noirs" au Maroc dans la première moitié du XXe siècle," in *Les Relations transsahariennes à l'époque contemporaine*, ed. Laurence Marfaing and Steffen Wippel (Paris: Karthala, 2004), 352.

[19] Abdellah Herzenni, "Eléments de stratification sociale dans une oasis du Sud: Angherif, region de Tata," in *Le Maroc: espace et société*, ed. Abdellatif Bencherifa and Herbert Popp (Passau: Passavia Universitätsverlag, 1990), 14.

[20] Ilahiane, *op cit.*

[21] Paul A. Silverstein, "The Local Dimensions of Transnational Berberism: Racial Politics, Land Rights, and Cultural Activism in Southeastern Morocco," in *Berbers and Others: Shifting Parameters of Ethnicity in North Africa*, ed. Katherine Hoffman and Susan Gilson Miller (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

[22] Paul A. Silverstein, "Masquerade Politics: Race, Islam, and the Scales of Amazigh Activism in Southeastern Morocco," *Nations and Nationalism* 17 (1) (2011), 65-84; "In the Name of Culture: Berber Activism and the Material Politics of "Popular Islam" in Southeastern Morocco," *Material Religion* 8 (3) (2012), 330-53.

[23] See Hisham Aidi, "National Identity in the Afro-Arab Periphery: Ethnicity, Identity and (Anti-)Racism in Morocco," *POMEPS* (2020), https://pomeps.org/national-identity-in-the-afro-arab-periphery-ethnicity-indigeneity-and-antiracism-in-morocco

Disarticulating blackness or the semantics of (anti)blackness in Tunisia

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> *Some ten years ago I was astonished to learn that the North Africans despised men of color. It was absolutely impossible for me to make any contact with the local population. I left Africa and went back to France without having fathomed the reason for this hostility. Meanwhile, certain facts had made me think. The Frenchman does not like the Jew, who does not like the Arab, who does not like the Negro*[1].

It was in 2004 when the black Tunisian Affet Mosbah[2] penned her timely "Etre Noire en Tunisie", or "On Being Black in Tunisia", a first person account on the predicament of anti-blackness that continues to resonate in the discourse of black-rights activists of the contemporary AfroArab world.[3] Published in the pan-African *Jeune Afrique*— a magazine that was **ironically** founded in Tunisia by the French Tunisian journalist Bechir Ben Yahmed (1928-2021)[4]—the entry had particularly amplified the double bind of belonging and alienation that impinged the social ontologies of black women: too black to be Tunisian, yet black enough to be readily displaced into an undifferentiated sub-Saharan African plane, often interpellated with the political misnomer "Africa". The latter's consistent misnaming rests, precisely, on an internalized North/sub-Saharan Africa divide wherein the "darkest Africa syndrome"[5] continues to give the idea of "Africa" the cognitive coherence of a primordial stable site of blackness, as if Africa was a country and not a continent wherein Tunisia is itself located.[6] Articulating the irony of this collective black plight, Affet writes:

> […] here [in Tunisia], a black is a *'ucîf* ("servant", "slave" and, by extension, "black"). My fellow [black] Tunisians regularly hear "Congo" or "Senegal" hurled at them, as if we cannot be both black and Tunisian! The insults are compounded when the "victim" has the misfortune of being a woman—for the streets of Tunis stink with words so gritty to hear that it's best to be accompanied with a man— a paradox in this country that, in 1956[7], had "emancipated" women with the promulgation of the Personal Status Code.[8]

Affet's testimony catalogues, inter alia, a fraction of the maze of the semantic allegories of blackness and the concomitant genealogical and geographical imaginaries black Tunisians instigate in the national psyche and parlance. At once anachronistic and functional, such formulaic fixtures of the like of *ucif* or "Congo"— to borrow from Albert Memmi[9]— are "called forth and maintained" by unresolved local/global inherited histories and social transformations and/or inertias. They have been produced already by trans-Saharan slavery, its resilient epistemes and the hegemonic racial world making set in motion by racial slavery, European predatory imperialism, the rise of a capitalist world economy and its adjunct white supremacy that compounded its afterlives. These histories, however, do not follow a linear teleology that would explain the longevity of this lexis; rather, they spiral to precede, overlap, and sometimes outlast one another without the assurance of the dormant causality of one particular universalism.

To amplify such historical processes, I obliquely attend to them by foregrounding this taxonomy and its protracting breadth that seeks to articulate, index, and capture the layers of meanings that black Tunisians have come to embody interchangeably with the idea of blackness and Africa at the contemporary moment. I proceed by amplifying the present-day meanings taken to be intrinsic to this lexicon and the bodily experiences they historicize to show how blackness, as subjected to interspersed racialization processes, operates from within this northern shore of a continent that is presumably older than race, blackness[10] and even the "idea of Africa".

Slavery Epithets and the racialization of Slavery:

While racialized referents of "Congo" and "Senegal" signal the still hegemonic epistemes of racial world making, '*ucif* denotes another enduring and competing one: the haunting traces of a trans-Saharan Arab slavery, which—even though it preceded and outlasted[11] trans-Atlantic slavery's historical span and episteme—remains eclipsed as an explanation of black racialization by the overwhelming scholarly attention that has been paid to the trans-Atlantic world. The epithet '*uçîf* that means a domestic servant and a second-class position in classical and modern standard Arabic, respectively, reifies a primary mode of enunciating blackness as an ontological category in modern day Tunisia. Marshalled through a (pre)modern semantics of black slavery and servitude, this mode configures blackness through a devious lexical retroversion wherein slavery and its derivative sociopolitical categories become racializing vectors that subsume blackness under a transhistorical captivity, social and structural antiblackness. Without evoking a chromatic blackness, *'ucif*, *'abd* (slave), *shûshān* (native-born blacks of slave or mixed lineage/legal status descent) and *khādem*[12] (domestic servant) are often used to designate a social blackness that often accrues universal meanings that compete with the sociohistorical experiences they originally documented. Notwithstanding the meticulous socioeconomic categories, they came to rehearse, diachronic transformations of this nomenclature had rendered the epithets '*ucif*, '*abd*, *khādem* and *shûshan* synonymous with a phenotypical and a genealogical blackness, where new biological racial meanings and an ahistorical blackness-slavery-nexus are maintained.

Racialized referents of '*ucif,* abid (plural of 'abd), shûshān and khādem, often taken to be interchangeable, have transposed onto the modern Tunisian vernacular not as cryptic anachronisms, devoid of meaning, but rather as derogatory epithets, used to deride blackness as a primary signifier of slave descent. When considered within their sociohistorical context, these terms perhaps denote the primarily socioeconomic categories of slavery and servitude that they came to particularize within Ottoman Tunisia's tributary mode of production (1574-1957). While '*ucif* and *khādem* distinguished the servile position that enslaved and manumitted black sub-Saharan Africans have come to unevenly occupy in ottoman Tunisia, *'abid*, or slaves, was the term used to refer to the then recently enslaved West Africans,[13] of the first half of the 19th century. The etymologically mystified *shûshān*, on the other hand, denoted the liminal category of native-born blacks who, despite their *de jure* freedom, remained encumbered by their said ancestral coercion into slavery.

This nomenclature, and the linguistic subtleties it enfolded, came to develop distinctively from the two asymmetrical slavery models that produced their own naming grid of "renegades", "assirs" (captives) and "mamluks" (owned) which often diverged from the black slavery model that cohered with racial slavery in Ottoman Tunisia. The latter grid of categories did not consistently index the phenotypical difference upon which the nomenclature was based; rather, they marked the disparity in origin, the inner political and economic girds of the type of slavery that produced these unequal subordinate groups and their position within the mode of production they were destined for. The precarity of black enslaved and manumitted social conditions, unlike Georgians, Circassian and Northern Mediterranean enslaved subjects, rendered slavery's meaning more in coherence with a global hegemonic definition of racial slavery.

This antiblack taxonomy emerged particularly in opposition to the *Ahrār* (singular *Horr*),[14] or the freeborn subjects who were often understood to be theoretically not available for enslavement. As the anachronism *horr* subsists in the modern-day vernacular use, its modern meaning gives both a premodern sense of superior descent as well as a new one of an epidermal whiteness. Albeit unevenly, *Ahrār* and *horr* have become more and more obsolete today as the term "white", (or *abyadh singular and bidh*. plural) has come to replace them. On Geneviève Bédoucha's account, shûshān, for instance, have come to include free non-blacks in the southwestern oasis of Mansûra, who, for marrying free black women, were downgraded to the category of *shwashin*[15] *(plural of shûshān)* through the generations that followed. This hence

shows the diachronic transformations that render *shûshān* into a verb of a racial and a genealogical declassification process, wherein one's free status, simply by way of its proximity to blackness, as a signifier of slave descent and social inferiority, is genealogically downgraded and blackened despite what is often taken as a phenotypical incompatibility.[16]

Similarly, '*ucif*, has transmuted into varieties of racializing idioms such as in the case of the derivative expression of "*twasfan*" or "becoming '*ucif*", or to gain a derided darker hue, characteristic of the historically enslaved black Tunisians. Becoming '*ucif* and *shûshān* hence, renders obvious the phenotypical and social blackness that superimpose on the terms that have become alienated from their original linguistic subtleties. While colorist meanings of the term remain implied, the color word black remains disarticulated.

As these terms have accrued new meanings, black Tunisian bodies have become racialized in the process through a multitude of pseudo racial ideas that explained their social exclusion, condemnation to endogamy and the general stagnation and deterioration of their socio-economic status.

Anachronisms of Descent and their Racial Undertones

Cultural idioms abound in modern Tunisian vernacular to racialize what they take as black fixed genetic traits that overlay existing proto-racial genealogical paradigms. *'Ucif*, for instance, became evocative of pseudo-eugenicist ideas in expressions like "*ucif sham snana*" (a 'ucif who smelled his pungent body odor) alluding to the black Tunisian strong emotionalism, excessive merriment, arrogance, or anger. The idiom hence racializes what is already understood as a stable biological trait of a foul body odor responsible for triggering an excessive temperament attributed to blackness, or rather a black slave descent. In the southeastern town of Gabes, where lies a larger concentration of black Tunisians and where the palm drink "*legmi*" is a prized delicacy, the idiomatic expression " '*ucif 'ucif wa kenn shkhakhou legmi*" [a servant remains always a servant even if he urinates palm drink], is one wherein a black slave descent is understood to bypass the unthinkable extra-human possibilities that might absolve the group in question. This, among many discursive tropes, as opposed to "*horr* (free, also white in this context) *yabka* (remains) *horr* (white/free) even when life/fate betrays him" allude to the rigidity of these genealogical structures of descent that racialize slavery and freedom as unalterable hereditary features that one can pass on trans-generationally.[17]

The expression of "*Rye 'abid*", (the reasoning of slaves) is another eugenics-inflected idiom in Tunisia that describes what is often understood as a pathological predilection to failure in black people. "'*Abid 'andhom 'irk msakkar*", ("slaves have a dysfunctional vein in their brain") is yet another one that explains black feeblemindedness. The trope perfectly coheres with Ibn Khaldun's conclusions, shaped by the geoclimatic determinism of his premodern spacetimes, about black nations of sub-Saharan Africa. "*Al-Irk dassess,*" ("race[18]is insidious") invokes ancestral immorality whenever intermarriage is encouraged. All these racializing tropes commune with the hegemonic episteme of racial blackness and the afterlives of its biological racism, especially in the expression "Kahla[19] tsaffi el-damm", (black women purifiers/cleansers of blood). Unlike the old stereotype of African American women's susceptibility to Syphilis, black Tunisians women are often seen as healers of Syphilis in popular culture, where men believed that performing sexual intercourse with their enslaved black concubines, could rid them of this infection. Consider the trope of black women promiscuity and the historical practice of former masters who, were encouraged to copulate with black women to break what they believed was a curse of infertility. Black women are often seen as capable of healing "the sufferer, satisfy[ying] lust, dispel[ling] ills due to cold and damp, and eas[ing] back and joint pain."[20] In the realm of the metaphysical and spiritual world, the "picturesque expression of *ettayer el eïn*"[21] ("to make the evil eye fly away"), shows how black Tunisians are demoted to the category of non-humans, for they are paradoxically endowed with an extra-human capacity to repel the evil eye that is posing threat to white-adjacent Tunisians. This expression is dehumanizing in

so far as it reduces black Tunisians into objects, similar to fetishizing totems used to repel evil spirits in vernacular culture. Over time, racialized through pseudo-racial meanings of hereditary proclivity to failure, moral decadence,[22] promiscuity, and the capacity to manipulate the spirits world and diseases, have become normalized as natural characteristics of black people in popular imaginary.

Materiality of Race

Suppressed from the official memory and historiography, slavery remained a sociopolitical taboo despite its haunting specters that incite to its discourse. Its semantic signposts and attached cognitive meanings on black Tunisians' official patronymic last names, national identification cards, village and street names, burial sites and the violent idioms of invisibility and inferiority of the daily discursive and behavioral performances, never ceased to subsist. The afterlives of such event have equally shaped the material socioeconomic condition that haven't drastically changed upon the so-called vanguard abolition (1846), as the absence of an emancipation project, gave in to their subordination as domestic workers,[23] agricultural laborers as sharecroppers, wedding ceremonies' minstrels and extras. Hence, black former slaves emerged doubly free; free to "exchange their labor, yet free from material resources,"[24] suffering a social inferiority by way of their slave descent, a starkly low schooling rate, poverty, endogamy, political and cultural underrepresentation and even a spatial segregation in rural and urban peripheries.[25]

For a long time in the southern town of Qibilī (Kibilli) in the Nefzaoua region, masters opposed black *khammasah's* (sharecroppers) ownership of material resources, as well as the dissolution of the sharecropping institution, for "who will tend to the oases then"?[26] For fear of the disruption of the economic productivity of the town, the historically slave-holding elite of the region became openly antagonistic to the black labor transfer to the metropole, as France initiated the recruitment of immigrant labor in the 1960s. Opening the doors of immigration for black Tunisians, meant, particularly, increasing *khammassah's* chances for upward socioeconomic mobility, enabling their access to the means of production of the time.[27] Today, Qibilī remains an exceptional town in comparison to the rest of the South, as the historical black "labor-drain" to France and later to countries of the Gulf, had ultimately led to major material improvements for its black population, upending the racist social structure through oasis-land ownership, and international money transfer to their hometown.[28] As they became landowners' black descendants of sharecroppers in neighboring el-Manchia, took—what the Tunisian scholar Mohammed Jouili called their "symbolic revenge" from the historically slave-owning elite—by refusing to sell their newly owned lands to non-black locals of the region.[29]

Black Tunisians activism, conceptions of race and black consciousness:

Despite these colluding histories that produced black Tunisians' "lineage" and "geo-cultural" displacement,[30] the group had never articulated what could easily map onto a political black consciousness. As they broke their silence about the sociopolitical inequalities and the taboo of racism, its engendering memory of slavery and sustaining pseudo-racial genealogical grammar, the emphasis on dignity and their right to fully belong as Tunisian citizens, remained paramount.[31] Unified around the happenstance of a black phenotype that exposes them to varying degrees of anti-black antagonism, black activists languaged their demands with the explicit recourse to the Tunisian revolutionary motto of "bread, freedom and national dignity", recalibrating it to vehicle their demands for a dignified life and what it unfurled from economic, political, and social amends, on the eve of the 2011 uprising. The claim to a dignified belonging within the national body politics, had particularly played out the ambivalent culture of denial and the empty discourse of tolerance it kept wielding against the resurgent minority. Black Tunisians' disavowal of race, supplemented with the direct condemnation of slavery semantics and paradigms, capitalized on such denial and discomfort around opening the dredges of the past to anchor themselves as rightfully belonging citizens who had equally pledged to close the

chapters of the past, granted that antiblack practices get properly attended to.[32]

As they continue to face racism, black Tunisian activists continue to disavow the political language of "race" despite the racial vocabularies used to express their grievances about existing prejudice. The disclaiming of race, is often substituted by the preferentiality to antiblackness, loosely translated to *mûādāt al-sawād* معاداة السواد as a growing solidarity with the itinerant Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and the recognition of the global antiblack condition is finding place within their discourse of activism. The absence and/or unintelligibility of a political diasporic pronouncements, however, neither wholly imply the validity of black Tunisians' transnational genealogies nor does it leave unchallenged diaspora's underlying intellectual paradigms that continue to mandate an expressed desires for home return; an outward reaching forced displacement out of Africa; or the adherence to a common consensus on what defines blackness and/or Africa etc., Black Tunisians' phenotypical alignment with negative semantic of slavery and the imposing racial meanings and idioms and the symbolic and material social working they inflict upon them, thrusts them into a condition of an imposed and a forced diasporization, where their displacement, as epitomized by their consistent misrecognition, underrepresentation and often geo-temporal displacement through tropes of "genealogical isolation"[33] and phenotypical incompatibility with what constitutes being Tunisian, render them diasporic both from within Tunisia and the continent of Africa, diasporic from within and without.

Endnotes

1 Fanon, Franz. *Black Skin White Masks*. (Pluto Press, 1959),76.

2 Affet Mosbah is the sister o the black right's organization M'nemty's founder Saidiya Mosbah and the Tunisian singer and composer Slah Mosbah, known for his scathing criticism of what he understands as state institutional racism.

3 Mosbah, Affet. Etre Noire en Tunisie. Jeune Afrique. 2004. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/112359/archives-thematique/etre-noire-en-tunisie/

4 It remains ironic that *JeuneAfrique* was founded in a country that continues to dissociates from the continent of Africa in its constitutional self-representation and where most Tunisians refer to almost every black person with the third person French referent "Africain(e.s)". Even the late Tunisian president Beji Caid Essebssi, called sub-Saharan Africa "Bilad-al-ûçifân"(country of the servants) on a broadcasting program on Hannibal TV before his last election.

5 Hassan, M.Salah. "The Darkest Africa Syndrome and the Idea of Africa: Notes Toward a Global Vision of Africa and Its Modernist Practice",in *Diaspora memory place,* ed.Salah Hassan and Cheryl Finley (Munich: Prestel, 2008),130.

6 The material and symbolic reflections of these Tunisian discursive idiosyncrasies caught the attention of the Egyptian Helmi Shaarawy, who worked as an expert in AfroArab cultural relations at the Arab League Educational Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) in Tunis (between 1982-1986). In his autobiography *An Egyptian African Saga*, Shaarawy noted Tunisians' distance from Africans and Africa's affairs. "I thought that the country that originally held the name *Ifriqiya,* since the Roman times and until the Arab conquests, would be more attuned to Africa's affairs and to Africans themselves. I was however surprised with the realization that I was the only one concerned with the African question [,...] and that Africans for them [Tunisians],ie., aljamaa Hazouma ("those people") meant those black people residing in the South [of the country] and from whom I met the only ambassador who, before having the chance to properly know, was immediately sent to Cameroon"?[this is my own translation of the excerpt]. Shaarawy, Helmi. Sirā Masriyā Ifriqiyā.(Dar Alaïn lil-Nashr, 2019), 413. For more on Shaarawy and the North Africa, sub-Saharan divide, read Zeyad El Nabolsy's contribution on Helmi Shaarawy.

7 This is not an error of commission from Affet. She is only ironically alluding to the promises of independence, hence the date 1956 and the concomitant proverbial family law. The law was promulgated in 1956 but only came into effect in 1957.

8 My own translation of the excerpt from: Mosbah, Affet. Etre Noire en Tunisie. Jeune Afrique. 2004.

9 Memmi, Albert. *Racism. (University of Minessota Press: University of Minessota Press, 1999),21.*

10 In his *Disturbing the Peace*, Bryan Wagner claims that "Africa and the diaspora are older than blackness. Blackness does not come from Africa. Rather, African and its diaspora become black during a particular stage in their history…Blackness is an adjunct to racial slavery… Blackness is an indelibly modern condition". Wagner, Brayan. *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery*. (Harvard University Press,2009), 1.

11 Mauritania is perhaps the world's last country to abolish slavery in 1981 the last to criminalize its continuing practice in 2007. See Esseissah, Khaled. "'Paradise Is Under the Feet of Your Master': The Construction of the Religious Basis of Racial Slavery in the Mauritanian Arab-Berber Community." *Journal of Black Studies* 47, no. 1 (January 2016): 3–23.

12 Often used in the Southeast, the descriptor khādem (servant) is used to describe a female-gendered black person today. Khādem, is often used by the older generation that continues to use an outdated lexicon of slavery and servility, reserved mainly for black-skinned people.

[13] Montana, Ismail. "The Bori Colonies of Tunis",in *Slavery Islam and Dispora, ed. Paul E.Lovejoy. (Africa World Press, 2009), 155-156. See also, Montana, Ismail. The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia, (University Press of Florida, 2013), 99. They were mostly of Kanuri and Hausa-descent, also referred to as the "Sudan -Tunis". This is the wave that was ultimately declared "illegally enslaved" in 1846, for it was difficult to differentiate them from the legally free(d) black populations that preexisted them in Ottoman Tunisia. See Montana, Ismail. "The Bori Colonies of Tunis",in Slavery Islam and Dispora, ed. Paul E.Lovejoy. (Africa World Press, 2009), 155-156..*

[14] Mrad, Ines. « Esclaves noirs, Esclaves blancs dans la Tunisie du XIXème siècle : de l›affiliation fictive

[à] la primauté du phenotype », in *Résistances et mémoires des Esclavages Espaces arabo-musulmans et Transatlantiques*,ed,. (Karthala, 2014),56-61.

[15] Bédoucha, Geneviève. "Un Noir Destin : travail, statuts, rapports de dépendance dans une oasis dans le Sud Tunisien »,in *Le Travail et ses Représentations*, ed. M.Cartier, (Paris : Edition des Archives Contemporaines, 1984),77-122.

[16] Schmitz, Jean. « La Question Noire à Partir du Nord ou Sud-Sahara »,in *Noirs au Maghreb : Enjeux Identitaires,* ed.Stéphanie Pouessel,ed. Olivier Lservoisier and Salah Trabelsi, (IRMC et Karthala,2012),130.

[17] Ibid,.

[18] The translation of the term "irk" expands beyond the contemporary meaning of the term "race". "Irk", in this example, signifies origin, roots and one's genealogy, which aren't often taken to be as racialized as would the word "race" evoke.

[19] Similarly to *Kahlouch* (diminutive of black), Kahla is another derogatory term used for black Tunisians.

[20] Ennaji, Mohammed. *Serving the Master: Slavery and Society in Nineteenth-Century Morocco, (St.Martin's Press: New York,1999), 34.*

[21] "The dark pigmentation of the blacks also seems to constitute an effective "scarecrow" against the "jnun" [spirits] in Maghribi popular magic. The presence of a Negro in a family meeting is regarded as brining good luck, and in the Tunisian Sahel, one invites a Negro to attend marriage ceremonies for the express purpose of "making the evil eye fly away".[…]Their power to protect them from the spirits is considered so strong that it is enough to make an image of a Negro out of cardboard, wood , bronze, or stone, and place it in a conspicuous place on a wall, for example, to obtain the same result", (as quoted in Jankowsky, 2010,p18). See, Jankowsky,Richard. *Stambeli: music. Trance, and Alterity in Tunisia*, (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[22] See Ghokh's contribution on Yemen's Akhdam where she makes a strong case of the different racializing tropes wielded against Akhdam, where, similarly to the Tunisians context, immorality becomes racialized as a hereditary, unalterable feature of this group.

[23] See Tremearne

[24] Hartman, Saidiya V. Scenes of Subjection: Terror Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997),115.

[25] Mrad, Ines. De l'esclavage a la Servitude : Le cas des noirs de Tunisie. Cahier d'Etudes Africaines, 41 P.936

[26] Abdelhamid, Maha et al. *Etre Noir, ce n'est pas une Question de Couleur*. (Nirvana, 2017), 47-48.

[27] It was during the 1960s-1970s when black Tunisians from Gabes, Zarzis, Kibilli and other southeastern towns, immigrated in large waves to Europe. Compared to the smaller number of black Tunisians of the North, these groups had immensely benefited from immigration, for they managed to secure material goods, own land and exceed, in their economic status, even those who were still seen as genealogically superior to them. See, Mrad, Ines. « De l'esclavage à la servitude : Le cas des Noirs de Tunisie (From Slavery to Servitude:»Blacks» in Tunisia) », *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, (2005),944.

[28] Ibid,. See also, Abdelhamid, Maha et al. *Etre Noire n'est pas Une Question de Couleur: Rapports d'Enquête : Les Representations du Racisme chez les Noirs de Tunisie*, (Nirvana, 2017), 48.

[29] Juwaylī, Muhammad, and Tahar Labib Djedidi. *Al-Ṯha'r Al-Ramzī: Tamās Al-Huwīyāt Fī Wā'āt Al-Janūb Al-Tūnisī.* (al-Qāhirah: Markaz al-Buhūth al-'Arabīyah wa-al-Ifrīqīyah, 2008).

[30] Jankowsky, Richard.C.*Stambeli: Music Trance and Alterity in Tunisia*. (The Uiversity of Chicago Press, 2010), 16.

[31] Perhaps M'nemty remains one of the few organizations that focuses on disinterring the history of slavery, Tunisia's black history and heritage. Despite the consistent allusion to transnational, diasporic connections, black Tunisians remain cautious about embracing the language or race and blackness in the country. For more on black Tunisians' history of civil society activism, see,. Mrad,Ines. "Les mobilisations des « Noirs tunisiens » au lendemain de la révolte de 2011: Entre Affirmation d'une Identité Historique et Défense d'une Cause Noire », Politique Africaine 4, n.140 (2015) : 61-81.

[32] The case of Hamdan el Deli's patronymic last name change in October 2020, shows how black Tunisians want to do away with the legacy of slavery, with a modest interest in confronting its history or the material workings that continue to affect them at the contemporary moment. Only in 2018 that Tunisia became, the only North African country to penalize racial discrimination, yet, the social and historical events that scaffolded anti-black violence remained at the margin of interests for black-rights' activists.

[33] Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, (Harvard University Press, 1982), 5.

Waiting and Working:
Shared Difference and Labors of Belonging in Immigrant Tangier

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Even as the numbers of migrants waiting in North Africa to continue their journeys to Europe continue to grow, the social and political consequences of this time spent "en route" remains marginal to conversations around migration across the Mediterranean. There is a focus on migrants' movement through space, with a focus on origin and destination, presumed to be Europe, but not much attention paid to the time in between. Rather than centering on how borders regulate, impede, and allow or not, migratory flow, and what happens when European borders are crossed, this intervention builds from another of the predominant phenomena to which borders give rise: waiting.

In Morocco, this time spent waiting fosters new claims to belonging and political identity as would-be migrants to Europe become immigrants to Morocco. Languages are learned in ways that speak to sedimented histories of labor migration across North and West Africa. Religions are adopted, and abandoned, and emergent forms of community transcend political, religious, and ethnic boundaries. As these socio-cultural consequences of waiting accumulate over time, they also lead to political shifts such as Morocco's "open regularization" residency program in the latter years of the last decade, as well as the recent debate over opening voting in the 2021 national general elections to all registered foreign residents of the Kingdom.[1] These phenomena exist parallel to the growing racialized and xenophobic violence directed at immigrants, which also has transformed as West and Central Africans in Morocco are seen less as passers-by and more as potential residents. When seen through the lens of waiting, understanding the growth and transformations of migratory dynamics and border politics in the region means paying more attention to this time spent "en route" and its consequences beyond just the regulation of access to spatial territories.

Often immigrant or "migrant" labor in North Africa and Middle East is rightly understood in the context of the racialized and gendered domestic work,[2] agricultural labor;[3] and contractual and ostensibly temporary work is unequally structured through privileges of certain passports.[4] While this is also the case in Morocco, it nonetheless worth paying attention to the ways in which some of the categories around which this labor is organized change over time spent waiting. In the account above, while language and religion are markers of exclusion, they are also mutable categories that can change both in form and in relative importance in circumstances where neighborliness or perhaps even nascent class solidarities drives the division and organization of labor. Without romanticizing such communal sentiments as the grounds for a restructuring of the labor market, we can also see how what marks exclusion in some instances is the grounds for inclusions in another.

In some ways, this work forms a complement to Amélie Le Renard and Neha Vora's piece in this collection. As they react to how scholars have mobilized analytics such as "ethnocracy" to move beyond conceptualizations of migrants and nationals in the Gulf region, they also point to how such terms collapse "nationality with ethnicity, religion, language, class, phenotype, and a range of other factors that impact how people experience life in Gulf cities." In their work, such factors become embodied racial categories. Here, similarly, nationality is a category of belonging, and difference, that falls to the background when superseded by other communal sentiments that emerge along the lines of religion, language, and class in a community of immigrants already racialized as marginal to Moroccan socio-cultural imaginary. However, in the ethnographic accounts below, markers of religion, language, and class as icons of difference that can – and in some instances do – change over time spent waiting.

Scholars have struggled with the conceptualization of waiting in the active present tense. Anthropologist Ghassan Hage, for instance, proposes to see waiting as a type of "active passivity" which is revelatory of broader dimensions of seemingly isolated socio-cultural practices and processes.[5] More specifically, migration studies has begun to evoke the social effects of liminal waiting to discuss migrant life asylum and detention centers.[6] However, these invocations of waiting time tend to focus on waiting as parenthetical of a broader journey, a sort of time out of time that is stuck in space. Victor Turner notably discussed this sort of "betwixt and between" of liminality in association with the production of communal sensibilities, which he called *communitas.*[7] Even so, very often the conceptual usages of liminality in discussions of borders and migration focus on this spatial in-between without much regard for the lasting social, subjective, and communal transformation that occur during this time.

This paper draws on long-term ethnographic research in order to query the ways in which difference and belonging, and their markers, shift over time as migrants and immigrants "wait" in Tangier, Morocco. The scene of this waiting is in the suburban Tangier neighborhood of Msnana, where immigrants from different backgrounds, religious, ethnic, linguistic, and including recent Moroccan immigrants from the countryside to the city, gather and find a form of shared difference and thus, belonging. This waiting is not empty or passive, or even just liminal, but active, ongoing, and eventful. Three forms of difference will appear in these scenes below, which describe the events surrounding a 2018 Eid al-Adha celebration in the Tangier neighborhood of Msnana. Forms of ethno-national, linguistic, and religious difference come to the fore throughout these events, but also refract into other idioms of belonging in a "shared difference" forged during this time spent waiting and working; and working while waiting.

The discussion of difference in this paper also sits within the context of racialized difference. This is not to say that it is background material, but rather that it is a precondition for the other idioms of belonging and "shared difference" that I discuss below. Across Morocco, Black immigrants to the country encounter racialized forms of violence and exclusion enacted by the State as well as everyday citizens. Other scholars of migration in Morocco have outlined the racialization of the country's border and migration regulations, especially with regard to how (potential) illegality is marked, policed, and tied into local class politics.[8] What I outline here, however, queries the interplay of various dynamics of difference once racialized exclusion has already produced the figure of the "Black African migrant" as a category outside of normative belonging in Morocco. This category reduces the heterogenous types of belonging and difference at work among immigrants to Morocco into one racialized subjectivity. Rather than constructing an argument grounded in that category, instead I will examine the interplay of three forms of difference – ethno-national, linguistic, and religious difference – as they come into constellation among immigrants to Tangier from both other parts of Morocco as well as West and Central Africa.

Labors of the Eid in Msnana

The suburban Tangier neighborhood of Msnana has become one of the most popular neighborhoods for immigrants to Tangier, both from other African countries as well as from the Moroccan countryside. It is close to several industrial zones, and to the public Abdelmalek Essaadi University. Initially, it was popular among young people who had moved to Tangier for university or to work in factories of the industrial zones, both from Morocco as well as from other parts of West and Central Africa. Today, the neighborhood still includes these workers and students, as well as other recent arrivals who came to Tangier for work, school, and often with intentions of continuing on to Europe.

One example can be found in the ground floor unit of a building owned and self-constructed by an Italian-Moroccan family, where Maria and her daughter Sara live and operate a small dry goods store. Leaving her abusive husband in Ivory Coast, Maria brought her daughter Sara to Morocco in 2014 with the intention of going on

to Europe. Through the Spanish church in Tangier, she found part-time work cooking for Moroccan families and working in café kitchens, although she eventually started spending more time running her shop in her Msnana home. Tangier's Spanish cathedral dates back to the city's international days in the early 1900s but has now become home to the Catholic charity *Caritas*. Religious charities such as Caritas have come to be key forces in both mediating between migrants and immigrants in Morocco, and the Moroccan government in its various local and national iterations. While the church shelters migrants within its confines when police conduct raids in Msnana and Boukhalef, they also work to find temporary employment for migrants who chose to stay, at least for the time being. However, their mission, both religious and social, is not without its opponents in the migrant community. Some migrant leaders take issue with how Caritas and the Spanish church administration seems to selectively maintain care for some and set others up with illegal apartments and rent-plans that are impossible to pay with the job opportunities they furnish. Individuals such as Maria then turn back toward the migrant community in order to find other formal and informal labor opportunities.

A few days before Eid al-Adha in 2018, I was invited to Maria's house by members of an informal immigrant and migrant run association that was planning an all-day Eid celebration for residents of Msnana. In Morocco, as in other countries, it is common to celebrate the feast with an animal sacrifice, communal meals, and distribution of food to neighbors and to those in need. The neighborhood mosque is frequented by both immigrant and Moroccan Muslim residents of the neighborhood. The mosque, around the corner from Maria's home, is led by a Senegalese imam, who performed the sacrifice of the two sheep bought with donations from bourgeois Moroccan, French, and American residents of Tangier. Maria's place had two stove top burners and a refrigerator in a small nook, and a sitting room with shelves with cushions on the floor and dry goods for sale along the wall closest to the front door. On the morning of the Eid, the entire space had been transformed by Maria and her 11-year-old daughter to serve as kitchen that would accommodate 10 people working. The association sponsoring the event, *Voie des Migrants,* had previously dropped off more small gas cannisters connected to individual burners to cook on, as well as bins for washing, plastic cutting boards, knives, and piles of rice, tomatoes, garlic, peppers, and onions for gumbo. Several other women from Ivory Coast, around Maria's age, in their mid-thirties, sat on the cushions and were already peeling garlic and onions when the *Voie des Migrants* team, myself included, made it to the house with the sheep from the mosque around 9:00 in the morning.

Although my own ability to help was considered rather meager, I was invited inside to help peel garlic. After debating with young Sara the best way of peeling garlic, I was eventually given permission to peel in the way I knew best, or at least I felt most comfortable. Having been denuded of any pretense of how helpful I was going to be in this whole process, I settled into the rhythm of chatting with Sara and tackling some 200 heads of garlic that remained to be peeled. Although we started speaking in French, Sara quickly picked up on the Arabic inflection of my French pronunciation and started speaking to me in the Tangier dialect of Moroccan Arabic, or Darija. She seemed just as comfortable speaking in Tanjawi Darija as French, telling me that most of her friends in the neighborhoods are Moroccans, and they all speak Moroccan Arabic together. "*Ana tanjawia daba*," she said, as her mother laughed in the corner. "I have no idea what she is saying to me half the time now," Maria said to me. "She said, I'm from Tangier now," I replied. I asked Maria if she felt the same sort of belonging in Tangier that her daughter did, and she scoffed. Her response, that maybe she felt like she belonged in the neighborhood, but not in the rest of the city, was echoed by her friends. The reason why? Maria felt that in the neighborhood, no one cared that she practiced Christianity.

Indeed, the majority of the people doing the work of cooking for over 300 people in the neighborhood on a major Muslim holiday were Christian. There is a typical manner of celebrating Eid in Morocco. It is not monolithic, but many who choose to celebrate the feast do so with a

specific set of dishes, elaborately prepared and cooked over the course of a week, after the customary distribution of a third of the meat to neighbors, and a third to those in need. This was different. Here, neighbors, some without the means or occasion for this sort of feast otherwise, came together to celebrate in a way that emerged from the diverse practices and needs of that neighborhood, and to distribute food throughout the community. Some volunteered to do the work of cooking for the Eid, and others were able to be paid for their labor through the *Voie des Migrants* association. It was a celebration, and it was also a job, done by neighbors for neighbors, performed with the recognition of a sense of belonging in that place.

As we finished cooking, we started packaging the stew into tinfoil to-go containers and handing them out to the men and women who began to line up outside of Maria's house. This home was already well-known in the neighborhood as the best place to buy highly caffeinated cola nuts and West African spice packages anyway, and it didn't take long for everyone around the block to see, hear, and smell, what was cooking there. Moroccans, Cameroonians, Senegalese, and Ivorians in the neighborhood all waited in line, together to get a helping of stew and, by mid-afternoon, over 300 meals had been given out and everyone was sitting around in a post-gumbo daze.

Conversions in the Labor Market

Some weeks later, when I returned to Maria's house and picked up the conversation with her about how she practiced her faith in the neighborhood, she went outside and called out to an older Cameroonian man sitting on a stoop down the street. The pastor, as she introduced him, leads the local Protestant church out of an apartment he has rented next to his own. The pastor, in his 50s, came to Morocco in 2010 with his wife and 3 children, planning to continue on to Spain. Eventually his wife, a son, and a daughter left without him on a smuggler's boat, and he stayed behind with his oldest daughter who had enrolled in Tangier's nearby Abdelmalek Essaadi University. I asked the pastor if he would leave if he had the chance. The pastor replied that he did have the chance, and he chose to stay. He stayed, he continued, because he saw that many young people arrived in Morocco having seen horrors. In his estimation, these young people, especially Christians, had no guidance in Morocco; no spiritual, social, or community leader to keep them from losing themselves in the midst of what they had seen and done, and what they were planning to do. Thus, he chose to stay, eventually receiving some support from a Protestant group in Ivory Coast who sent him money to rent a new apartment and two young men as acolytes to help him run the new church out of the unit next door. While relations with Moroccan neighbors started out a bit tough, the seeming permanence of the church and the community smoothed out these relations over time. The biggest concern of Moroccan residents of Msnana, it seemed, was that the church members would try to convert young Moroccans to Christianity. In reality, the pastor shared, conversion most often goes the other way.

This reflected other stories of conversion about which I had long heard. Most commonly, these conversions from Christianity to Islam seemed to happen with young men looking for temporary work in Tangier before continuing on to Spain. While much is made of the shared religious heritage between Muslim West and Central Africans and Muslim North Africans, in reality it does not often seem to make much of a difference among immigrant and migrant residents of Morocco. Shared religious beliefs do not eliminate racism, and racist stereotypes about these new residents of Morocco are pervasive. However, in the case of conversions, the newly Muslim immigrant seemed to be more readily accepted, especially with conversions done at the request of a Moroccan employer. Most specifically, this seemed to happen at the request of Moroccan men who run the affairs of funerals, burials, and cemeteries. Washing and preparing bodies for funerals and digging graves, especially in the Tangier suburbs, has become an economic market run by Salafi Moroccan men. This is to say, the enterprises themselves are run by Moroccan men who adhere to a certain traditionalist interpretation of Islam. Much of the daily labor grave digging and body washing is being done by young migrant men who are looking to accumulate money quickly to buy passage on a

smuggler boat heading across the Strait of Gibraltar. Many of the converts that I have met are quick to admit their initial reasons for conversion may have included economic motivations, but also quick to emphasize the seriousness of their commitment to Islam.

Parallel to this however, we see the experiences of Maria and even the construction working "squatters" of Boukhalef, migrant men from West and Central Africa who construct suburban apartment buildings even as they live in them. Such persons found their inclusion in a micro-communitarian level because of their labor and shared class position, and not because of shared religious practices. The inclusion is nonetheless a precarious one, and it should be noted that inclusion and integration may not even be a goal of all migrants and immigrants in Morocco. Waiting time, after all, was often still oriented toward movement to Europe for both Maria and for the construction-site dwellers of Boukhalef. Within this reluctant immigrant community, however, persons such as this found themselves inhabiting neighborhood roles reactive to their religions, but not determined by them. As seen above, Maria's Christianity became a determining factor in her temporary position as coordinator and head chef of the Eid meal. The pastor's role as religious guide for the young Christians of Msnana is a position demanding of constant spiritual and social attention from him, but nonetheless he waited in line to receive an Eid meal like all of Maria's other neighbors. Maria's doubts about integration were directed toward the broader context of Tangier and Morocco. At the level of the neighborhood, as the events surrounding the Eid demonstrated, integration was not a major concern. In Msnana, varying types of difference became the grounds for inclusion.

Conclusion

The gathering of the Msnana community for the Eid would not have looked the ways it did without the waiting work that takes place in homes and in schools. For Sara, her participation in a Moroccan public school led to her confidence and comfort in Moroccan Arabic, setting her apart from many of the immigrant adults she knew in the neighborhood. Her knowledge of Arabic and her claims of being "from Tangier now" show another side of how the social tense of waiting can mark belonging and difference. This waiting time worked differently for Sara than for her mother, and their accesses to forms of community in Msnana, and Tangier more broadly, fell along different angles as a result. Maria's preparatory waiting-work meant accumulating capital, through mobilizing the social relations she made while waiting, with advocates, and with community leaders. That meant working with *Voie des Migrants* to prepare for the Eid, as well as maintaining a shop at her home. However, for Sara, regardless of whether or not it was her choice to stay in Tangier with her mother, her relationship to her neighborhood was marked by a sense of belonging and the right to speak the language associated with that belonging. This right gives another dimension to her claim, that "I'm from *Tangier* now." It is not only that she claims she has become Tanjawi, through her time there and her knowledge of Moroccan Arabic. It could also be an aspiration that Tangier could look and sound like her: "*I'm* from Tangier now."

This paper has argued, perhaps aspirationally, that fruits of these ongoing labors of belonging are more than parenthetical to the main event of migration. Rather than simply seeing them as temporary by-products of a time in between origin and destination, this intervention asks how the communal sensibilities that form during this waiting time, these ways of being in common through shared difference, may endure beyond the event of waiting to cross a border into Europe. More broadly, we may also ask, what are their consequences for the marking of belonging and difference in Morocco, religious, linguistic, ethnic, or otherwise? As pointed out by both Abdourahmane Seck and Wendell Marsh in this collection, certain socio-cultural and religious bridges between West and North Africa – what Marsh calls Northwest Africa – span the historical record and the contemporary period. They are also, as both point out in different ways, increasingly racialized. Today, the category of "migrant" in Morocco has become a racial category. However, when considering the category of "immigrant" to Morocco, language, religion, and class all appear as salient factors in forging belonging

and difference as well. This process speaks to what Mezzadra and Neilson call "the multiplication of labor."[9] As they see it, through the enactment of international border and migration regulations, labor is no longer divided solely by skill, but by various other categories such as those outlined above. This intervention modifies this notion of "multiplication" in order to suggest that these factors are also mutable and subject to change during time spent waiting in Morocco. The growing presence of West and Central African immigrant workers in North African countries such as Morocco demands that we make sense of the labors and languages of belonging and difference emergent in these communities. These languages and labors draw on such socio-cultural bridges, but also exceed it in ways that speak to the reality of a changing Moroccan social fabric. Whether or not these communal sentiments speak to the emergence of what may be called a diaspora remains to be seen. Nonetheless, the ongoing work of staying put in Tangier, and making do in Msnana, necessitates ways of being in common. Here, waiting and working at the border means accumulating habits and idioms of shared difference across regional and national borders stretching from the Sahel to Mediterranean, composing an ongoing event much greater than the sum of each individual border crossed.

Endnotes

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7 Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co, 1969).

8 Lorena Gazzotti, "(Un)Making Illegality: Border Control, Racialized Bodies and Differential Regimes of Illegality in Morocco," *The Sociological Review* 69, no. 2 (March 1, 2021): 277–95, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026120982273; Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen, "Contained and Abandoned in the 'Humane' Border: Black Migrants' Immobility and Survival in Moroccan Urban Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38, no. 5 (October 1, 2020): 887–904, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820922243.

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Helmi Sharawy's Critique of Racial and Colonial Paradigms in Egyptian African Studies

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This paper seeks to understand how conceptions of essential differences between "Egypt" and North Africa more broadly on the one hand, and "Sub-Saharan Africa" on the other hand have informed African studies in Egypt. It is commonly claimed that most Egyptians do not think of themselves as Africans; in this paper I aim to explore how this popular self-understanding has both informed African studies in Egypt and has been affected by academic discourses. I discuss the colonial and racial origins of modern African studies in Egypt. I also emphasize the significance of the existence of a counter-hegemonic discourse which is exemplified in the life and work of Helmi Sharawy. Helmi Sharawy is today the head of the Arab African Research Center in Cairo, and he was politically active during the Nasserist period as a liaison between Nasser's government and the various African liberation movements which established offices in Cairo during that period. What is especially significant about Sharawy's life and thought is that his critique of Egyptian African studies was developed outside of the academy; it was the product of his autodidactic impulses combined with his immersion in political struggles. I argue that we can identify in the work of Helmi Sharawy, a critique of surviving racial and colonial paradigms in Egyptian African studies. I relate this critique to discussions of racism in Egyptian society.

Autodidacticism and African Studies in Egypt during the 1950s and 1960s:

Attempts to seriously study African social and political thought (and African political and social movements) faced tremendous obstacles within the Egyptian academy during the 1950s and 1960s. For example, when Sharawy proposed a study of Nnamdi Azikiwe and the national liberation movement in Nigeria as a project for his M.A. thesis, he was met with mockery by faculty members.[2] It was not in the Egyptian academy but rather through his involvement with the African Association that Sharawy was able to engage seriously in the study of modern African political and social thought.[3] It was there that he was able to make sustained contact with other Egyptians who shared his interests. For example, the former Egyptian ambassador to South Africa would periodically give lectures on the apartheid system to attendees at the African Association. In addition, some Egyptian academics who showed interest in African studies attended the Association's meetings: Mohammed Riyad and Qawthar 'Abd-al Rasool, along with Al-Shater Bosili, and the journalists Mohammed Haki, and Reda Khalifa.[4] Some academics had banded together in order to transform the Institute for Sudanese Studies (founded in 1947) at Cairo University (then King Fuad University) into the Institute for African Studies and Research in 1958.However, Sharawy argues, that this institute continued to be a bastion of colonialist anthropology until very recently.[5] Other Egyptians who took an interest in African studies include Abdel Malek Ouda,[6] as well as the poet Abdu Badawi, who aside from editing *Nahdatu Ifriquiah* [Africa's Renaissance],[7] wrote on the contribution of Black thinkers to "Arabic civilization."[8]

Much of the interest in African studies (meager as it was) in the 1950s was driven by a kind of imperialist stance towards the rest of the African continent. For example, Hussein Mouenes, who published *Misr wa Risalatiha* [Egypt and her Message] in 1955, conceived of Egypt as having a civilizing role on the African continent.[9] In his book Mouenes portrayed the rest of the African continent as the passive recipient of Egyptian civilization, and Egypt as instantiating a primarily "Pharaonic" and "Mediterranean" civilization.[10] Even in Nasser's *Philosophy of the Revolution*, Africa is identified as a second circle for Egypt after the circle of Arabism.[11] At this early post-revolutionary moment, Nasser still conceived of Egypt's

role in Africa in paternalistic terms that simulated the rhetoric of civilizing missions: "we cannot in any case abandon our responsibility in aiding, as much as we can, in the spread of light and civilization into the depths of the virgin jungle."[12]

The above statement, at least from the standpoint of Mohammed Fayek, who served as the head of the presidential office for African Affairs under Nasser, did not represent Nasser's mature views on Egypt's relations with the rest of the continent.[13] Nonetheless the quotation shows that even for the Egyptian political leadership that had attempted to amplify the country's African identity during the 1950s and 1960s, there was still a lingering discursive gap, whereby it was difficult to develop a language that did not draw on Egypt's imperialist past in the Sudan (and beyond). Sharawy also thought that the "three circles" model, as articulated in Nasser's book, did not in fact correspond to reality. He argues that in the 1950s, the "African circle" was even strategically primary relative to the "Arab circle."[14] This is perhaps a case where theory was not keeping up with practice. It must be noted, however, that some Arab discourse continued to refer to the three circles model in an uncritical manner, at least until the 1980s.[15]

Helmi Sharawy and other contributors to *Nahdatu Ifriquiah* such as Abdu Badawi consciously attempted to counter such discourse. They were aware that the cultivation of "African studies" in Egypt was in principle compatible with a revival of the imperialist dream of an Egyptian African empire which had animated some Egyptian national leaders since the nineteenth century. Thus, they were careful to write and translate articles that would present other parts of the continent as equal partners with Egypt in the anti-colonial struggle.[16] Sharawy's first contributions to the magazines included articles on African journalism and newspapers (specifically the *West African Pilot* in Nigeria, the *East African Standard* in Nairobi, *The Argus* in South Africa, and *Rhodesia* from Harare),[17] as well as articles on African sculpture and African music, and the Mau Mau movement in Kenya.

Even though the Egyptian state was actively supporting anti-colonial liberation struggles on the African continent during the 1950s (and through the 1960s), there was nonetheless a more or less complete dependence on European and American texts for information on the various countries of the continent. For example, Mohammed Fayek—who in his capacity as the head of the presidential office for African affairs regularly made appearances at the meetings of the African Association—was reduced to circulating copies of John Gunther's *Inside Africa* and Lord Hailey's *African Survey* to the young members of the Association to help them with their studies.[18] Sharawy was later employed by Fayek as a researcher for the presidential office for African affairs in 1959, and it was through this work that Sharawy would come to meet and develop personal relationships with key figures in various African liberation movements.[19] Sharawy had to study modern African political philosophy and political theory in order to be able to coordinate with the leaders of African liberation movements, and in order to understand the context of debates regarding violent and non-violent paths to independence, e.g., it was in this context that he first read Fanon in the 1960s.[20]

The Critique of "Arab Sophistry" in Arabic African Studies:

Sharawy has been and continues to be a strident critic of the paradigm that has dominated research in Arabic on African studies. He has been very critical of what he calls *al safsata al 'Arabiya* ["Arab sophistry"] in the study of African languages. He has criticized the manner in which Arab authors have frequently overemphasized the influence of Arabic as a language on other African languages, perhaps the paradigmatic case here is the manner in which "Arabism" is frequently foisted onto Swahili.[21] Sharawy has argued that Arab authors who obsess over demonstrating the influence of Arabic on other African languages have undermined the possibility of scientific studies of the interactions between Arabic and other African languages. He argues that instead of understanding the spread of the Arabic language on the continent in a concrete way that takes into consideration

specific conditions in different parts of the continent in different historical periods, as well as the manner in which Arabic was also influenced by the languages that it encountered, Arab researchers have, for the most part, confined themselves: "to emphasizing the Arabic origins of terms in some African languages such as Swahili and Hausa, etc….this has transformed the sociology of language into studies in cultural hegemony."[22] Of course, the issue of language expresses a more general paradigm whereby: "many Arabic writings, in history and literature, still cling to studying these issues [i.e., issues regarding cultural interactions between Arabs and Africans], through the standpoint of the bearers of a civilizing mission, due to the spread of Islam and Arabism on the African continent, such writings remind African intellectuals of European writings on the white man's civilizing burden."[23] A good example of this discourse is Jamal Zakaria Qassem's claim that "Arabic was the language of culture in Africa."[24] Even if we provide a charitable interpretation of this claim by interpreting it as a claim about Ajami manuscripts, it is still clear that it conveys an attitude of superiority.

This paradigm is also instantiated in Abdelkader Zebadia's claim that "Islam played a major civilizing and social role in sub-Saharan Africa" and that "Islam introduced them [Africans] to the outside world."[25] Note that this claim echoes the claim made by colonialist European ethnographers who often claimed that prior to the introduction of Islam, there was no "religion" in Africa in the strict sense of the term.[26] Abdel Rahman Abuzayd Ahmed has argued that "the orientalists and imperialists strove to establish a 'model' of Islam, similar to the Christian one, by emphasizing its 'civilizing message' and the issues of violence and slavery, both of which had a great impact upon African societies. We, however, as Arabs or Muslims, failed to formulate a historical model of Islam distinguishable from the Christian one."[27] While the manner in which Ahmed formulates this claim can be criticized insofar as it does not take into consideration the agency of those Arab researchers who have helped to construct and maintain this "model" of Islam; it is nonetheless helpful in understanding why this model or paradigm developed in an imperial context where the Victorian image of Christianity as a civilizing religion was countered by the construction of a model that depicted Islam as an equally imperial and civilizing religion.

Sharawy argues that this paradigm involves the adoption of the view that, prior to Islam, Africans were "peoples without history." The focus on Islam as a mediating agent in African-Arab relations also leads to the neglect of the fact that Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula and Africans from North-East Africa were engaged in sustained economic, political, and cultural interactions long before the rise of Islam.[28] Moreover, Sharawy engaged in critiques of the monolithic view of "African cultures" that has characterized the work of many Arab researchers in African studies. Instead, he argues for the recognition of cultural diversity on the African continent as a function of both space and time.[29]

Sharawy also does not have much patience with Arabo-centric defensive approaches to the study of historical interactions between Arabs and Africans. In particular, he takes issue with what he takes to be the culturalism of Arabo-centric historians. For according to Sharawy, they implicitly posit an unchanging Arab cultural essence which is then invoked in explaining Arab history. Moreover, such culturalism, because it does not take into account what we can call the material determinants of culture, ignores the transformations that take place in culture through social, economic, and political transformations. Sharawy argues that while Arabo-centric historians obsess over "Arab and Islamic" cultural influences on "African culture" (which is treated as a monolith by them), they completely neglect the important role of "Black Africans" in the development of "Arab culture": "we are prone to forget that there are other African cultures which were brought to the Arab countries with the millions who were brought from across the continent [through the trans-Saharan and East Indian Ocean slave trading routes], and from amongst them were Antarah, al-Jahiz, and others."[30] He also points to cultural influences on popular cultural practices such as the "Zār", and the pentatonic scale in music.[31] Sharawy recognized the importance of engaging in a critical examination of the "classical Arabic heritage" regarding descriptions of

African social formations south of the Sahara, and not attempting to simply re-cast this heritage for use today (especially with respect to its analytical framework).

One should connect these debates about different paradigms for the study of Arab-African interactions to issues pertaining to policy formulation. Sharawy's frustration with proselytizing approaches to the analysis of the history of Arab-African cultural interactions also stemmed from his experiences as a liaison between the Egyptian government and the various African liberation movements that set up their offices in Zamalek. Sharawy was very critical of what he understood to be the conservative and "religious" nature of the Egyptian bureaucracy during the 1950s and 1960s. For example, he notes that even though the 1956 policy paper which laid out Egyptian policy towards other parts of the African continent was more progressive than previous formulations (e.g., it abandoned the "three circles" discourse of Nasser's 1955 *Philosophy of the Revolution*, and the explicit "civilizing mission" discourse), it was also characterized by a concern for proselytization. On the cultural front, the policy paper called for "an expansion in the number of cultural and proselytizing missions, especially from al-Azhar in order to attempt to contribute to the spread of Islam in Africa."[32] It seems that the leaders of al-Azhar were primarily concerned with securing converts, whereas the Egyptian government, especially the presidential office for African affairs, was more interested in securing political alliances with progressive African liberation movements (i.e., those movements whose outlooks corresponded to the more radical stance of the Casablanca Bloc). Sharawy thus accused al-Azhar of aligning itself with religious authorities which were socially and politically reactionary.[33]

Sharawy emphasizes the importance of a critical examination of depictions of Blackness in the "classical Arabic heritage/corpus." Especially insofar as he argues that representations of Blackness in the classical Arabic heritage probably reflect representations at the popular level (even if they do not correspond to them with exactitude): "several of the written classical texts such as al-Jahiz's defense in his "Fakhr al-Sudan 'ala al-Bidan", or the confused image [of Black Africans] in Ibn Khaldun's work, usually reflected popular images which can be analyzed using different methodological approaches."[34] Sharawy points to the importance of Arab researchers engaging in an analysis of epics because he conceives of epics as expressing popular memory (including racial and racist stereotypes).[35] Thus, he points to the "Epic of Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan" as a potentially fruitful object of research in relation to understanding representations of Blackness in Arab popular culture. Sharawy's concern with popular culture stems from both his past academic interests and research in folklore studies, and from his analysis of the failures of the Bandung era governments.[36]

Sharawy is conscious of the fact that answering the question of why do Egyptians not conceive of themselves as being African, requires the critical study of the relationship between Egypt and Sudan, especially in relation to the manner in which the Egyptian state's imperialist ambitions in Sudan, since Mehmed Ali's conquest of the Sudan in the 1820s, has influenced Egyptian perceptions of Sudan (and of "Blackness" in general).[37] For example, Sharawy has written on "the formation of the image of the Sudanese in Egypt" by way of analyzing the writings of prominent Egyptian intellectuals during the period where Egyptian national consciousness was being formed, e.g., Al-Tahtawi.[38]

Sharawy is at pains to answer the following question: why did the Pan-Africanist discourse enacted at the governmental level of the Bandung era Egyptian state fail to leave significant traces on Egyptian identity at the popular level? I.e., why do Egyptians not see themselves as Africans? Sharawy admits with disappointment that "unfortunately, Egyptian society did not display any real development at the level of its political and religious culture with respect to Africa during this period".[39]As Afifa Ltifi's contribution to this issue shows, the same disengagement from "Africa" is to be found in Tunisia and other North African countries as well.

While Egyptian governmental discourse was generally

progressive (although not without echoes of the imperialist past) in relation to African affairs, this discourse did not have any significant impact on schooling or cinema for example — one only needs to look at Egyptian cinema today in order to see that the Pan-Africanist Nasserist period has had very little impact in terms of undermining negative depictions of "Black Africa" and "Blackness" in general, even at the level of academic discourse (note that most of the progressive "Africanists" worked outside the academy).[40] In terms of analyzing this failing, Sharawy points to a lack of coordination between the governmental bodies responsible for the formulation and carrying out of African policy on the one hand, and the governmental bodies that were responsible for media policy, educational policy, and so on.[41] This diagnosis should be kept in mind when making policy recommendations about how best to combat racism in Egyptian society today.

Endnotes

1 All translations of texts cited in Arabic are my own. I wish to express my gratitude to Afifa Ltifi for her helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper, as well as to the other participants at the "Racial Formations in the Middle East and Africa" workshop for their insightful questions.

2 Helmi Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya [An Egyptian African Story]. Ed. by Reem* Abou-el-Fadl (Cairo: Al-Ain Publishing, 2019), 84. Reem Abou-el-Fadl has translated excerpts from Sharawy's autobiography: Reem Abou-el-Fadl, "From *An Egyptian African Story",* Asymptote, January 2021: https://www.asymptotejournal.com/nonfiction/an-egyptian-african-story-helmi-sharawy/

3 The leading figure behind the African Association at the time, Mohammed Abdel-'Aziz Ishak, was interested in making the association a center for serious study of African affairs. However, the Association, founded in 1955, also had a vital political role, for it also served as a coordinating office for all the African liberation movements that had set up offices in Cairo. For a history of the African Association in its context, see Reem Abou-el-Fadl, "Building Egypt's Afro-Asian Hub: Infrastructures of Solidarity and the 1957 Cairo Conference," *Journal of World History* 30, no.1-2 (2019):162-174.

4 Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], *93.*

5 Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], *149.*

6 Abdel Malek Ouda, "Mouqa' Ifriqiya fi al-Nashat al-Fikri al-Misri" [The Position of Africa in Egyptian Intellectual Activity], *Al-Kitab al-'Arabi* 46 (1969):9-14.

7 This was a monthly magazine that was produced by the African Association. In general, the magazine published articles by Egyptian intellectuals and academics on African affairs, as well as translations of texts written by key authors from other parts of the African continent and the diaspora.

8 Abdu Badawi, *Al-Suud we al-Hadara al-'Arabyia* [Black People and Arab Civilization] (Cairo: Dar Quba', 2000).

9 Hussein Mouenes, *Misr we Risalatiha* [Egypt and her Message] (Cairo: Matba'at Dar al-Kutub we al-Watha'eq al Qoumyia, 2011 [1955]).

10 Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], *93.*

11 Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Falsafat al-Thawra* [Philosophy of the Revolution] (Cairo: Madbouli, 2005 [1955]), 79.

12 Nasser, *Falsafat al-Thawra* [Philosophy of the Revolution], 79.

13 Mohammed Fayek, *Abdel-Nasser we Al-Thawra Al-Ifriquiah* [Abdel-Nasser and the African Revolution] (Cairo: Dar al-Faloga, 2019 [1984].

14 Reem Abou-El-Fadl, "Qira'a fi Fikr Helmi Sharawy" [A Reading of Helmi Sharawy's Thought]. In *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], 523 - 605.

15 Yusuf Fadl Hassan, "The Historical Roots of Afro-Arab Relations," *The Arabs and Africa,* ed. by Khair El-Din Haseeb (London and Beirut: Routledge and Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1985), 42. Ahmed, Ahmed Youssef, "Ahmed Youssef Ahmed," *The Arabs and Africa,* ed. by Khair El-Din Haseeb (London and Beirut: Routledge and Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1985), 111.

16 Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], 94.

17 Sharawy is probably referring to *The Herald* when he talks about the newspaper "*Rhodesia*".

18 John Gunther, *Inside Africa (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955). Lord Hailey, An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956 [1938]).

19 Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], 117.

20 Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], 197.

21 Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], 175.

22 Helmi Sharawy, *Al-Thaqafa we Al-Muthaqafoun fe Ifriqyia* [Culture and Intellectuals in Africa] (Cairo: Al-Hai'a al-'ama lel Kitab, 2016), 81.

23 Sharawy, , *Al-Thaqafa we Al-Muthaqafoun fe Ifriqyia* [Culture and Intellectuals in Africa], 81.

24 Jamal Zakaria Qassem, "Jamal Zakaria Qassem."*The Arabs and Africa,* ed. by Khair El-Din Haseeb (London and Beirut: Routledge and Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1985), 47.

25 Abdelkader Zebadia, "Abdelkader Zebadia."*The Arabs and Africa,* ed. by Khair El-Din Haseeb (London and Beirut: Routledge and Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1985), 80.

26 T. N. O Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: African Universities Press, 1987), 14.

27 Abd Elrahman Abuzayd Ahmed, "Abd ElrahmanAbuzayd Ahmed."*The Arabs and Africa,* ed. by Khair El-Din Haseeb (London and Beirut: Routledge and Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1985), 79.

28 Helmi Sharawy, *Al-'Arab we Al-Ifriqyiuon Wejehen le Wejeh* [Arabs and Africans Face to Face] (Cairo: Dar Al-Thaqafa Al-Jadeeda, 1984), 21.

29 Sharawy , *Al-Thaqafa we Al-Muthaqafoun fe Ifriqyia* [Culture and Intellectuals in Africa], 12.

30 Sharawy , *Al-Thaqafa we Al-Muthaqafoun fe Ifriqyia* [Culture and Intellectuals in Africa], 13.

[31] Sharawy , *Al-Thaqafa we Al-Muthaqafoun fe Ifriqyia* [Culture and Intellectuals in Africa], 13. It should be added that debates about the origins of the pentatonic scale have been the subject of much study in the Maghreb. This point was communicated to me by Hisham Aidi.
[32] Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], 126.
[33] Sharawy 2019, 142-143
[34] Sharawy , *Al-Thaqafa we Al-Muthaqafoun fe Ifriqyia* [Culture and Intellectuals in Africa], 29.
[35] For an example of how popular mythical histories have been used to justify the oppression of some groups of Black people in the Arab World, see Gokh Amin Alshaif's contribution in this issue.
[36] Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], 52,85.
[37] For a discussion of Sudanese perceptions of Egypt, see Zachary Mondesire's contributions to this issue.
[38] Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya* [An Egyptian African Story], 278. The importance of this project has also been recognized recently by some American scholars, e.g., Eve M. Trout Powell's *A Different Shade of Colonialism (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2003).*
[39] *Sharawy, Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya [An Egyptian African Story], 144.*
[40] See Bayan Abubakr's and Yasmin Moll's respective contributions in this issue.
[41] Sharawy, *Sira Misriyya Ifriqiyya [An Egyptian African Story], 250-251.*

The Contradictions of Afro-Arab Solidarity(ies):
The Aswan High Dam and the Erasure of the Global Black Experience

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Nubian displacement is a known consequence of the construction of the Aswan High Dam (1960-71). Centering this displacement in histories of Afro-Arab solidarity, however, sheds new light on the hydropolitics that shaped the dam's construction as well as on the contradictions abound in Bandung-era politics. The displacement happened while Egypt was flourishing as a central site of pan-African politics, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Third World solidarity project. Throughout this period, a number of Black intellectuals, radicals, musicians, and writers related to Egypt—real and imagined—through the shared history of struggle in the histories of Atlantic slavery and colonialism. The expulsion and resettlement of Nubians, however, is not typically contextualized in this moment of radical internationalism. This is peculiar considering that these histories of forced displacement are ultimately a history of the "afterlives" of slavery in Egypt, and a manifestation of the anti-Black logics that situate Nubians as one of the nation's peripheral "others."[1]

In addition to the displacement of Nubians, regional legacies of slavery in the Afro-Arab world include the ongoing slave trade across Niger, Ghana, Gambia, and Nigeria through Libya and the Mediterranean, "modern" slavery in Sudan, Egypt, and Mauritania, and the *kafala* system.[234] Anti-Blackness and its enmeshment in north, west, and east African trade routes defined by slave labor and the slave trade are foundational to the histories of Africa and the so-called Middle East. To not acknowledge these histories in the recounting of Afro-Arab solidarities is to ignore the particular conditions of local racial discourses for the sake of narrating a universal subaltern experience. Where do Black communities indigenous to the Arabic-speaking world fit into what Alex Lubin refers to as the "geographies of liberation" that emerged through the making of an Afro-Arab political imaginary from the 1850s to the present day?[5]

Nubia and the formation of modern Egypt

The displacement of Nubians was fundamental to the formation of the modern Egyptian state.[6] Nubia historically existed and still exists in the land stretching from Aswan in modern-day upper Egypt to Dongola in modern-day northern Sudan. Mohammed Ali Pasha, the Ottoman governor and *de facto* ruler of Egypt between 1805-48, dispatched his forces to conquer the Funj Sultanate (which included Nubian lands) and northern Sudanese riverine regions in 1820. He sought to eliminate a potential Mamluk threat in Dongola, find oft-rumored gold, and acquire enslaved people to build his modern army.[7]

Although slavery and the slave trade between modern-day Egypt and Sudan existed in earlier periods, closer attention should be paid to this historical moment. Ali Pasha's campaign took place during the advance of French, Ottoman-Egyptian, and British imperial ambitions in Africa, the centralization of the Egyptian state, and the formation of popular discourses on belonging and non-belonging in Ottoman Egypt.[8] Black enslaved people were transported to Egypt in caravans on routes from Darfur to Asyut; Sennar to Isna; the White Nile region; Bornu and Wadai through Libya and the Western desert; and the East African coast (via the ports of Massawa and Zayla) through the Red Sea.[9]

Regional enablers of the slave trade, which included but were not limited to *jallaba* merchants, jurists, religious scholars, and the ruling elite, justified the enslavement of Black people through the racialization of Blackness as a paucity of civility, history, and worth. This was part of a long and established legal and intellectual tradition of anti-Blackness spanning northern and western Africa and the slave trading routes that comprised it. Aristotelian theories about the climate's effects on the body, deterministic Khaldunian theories of history, and economic and political

factors steering African slave trading routes towards the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Gulf Peninsula, and the Indian Ocean supported what John Hunwick has referred to as a "religious ethnography," a logic that equated the darkness of an individual's skin with unbelief throughout the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.[10] Over the course of the nineteenth century in particular, these beliefs were augmented by the rise of Darwinism and the evolutionary sciences. Although there existed an array of counter-discourses to this racializing logic, anti-Blackness was far too enmeshed in political economies and social hierarchies of north, west, and east African slave trading routes to be seriously threatened or delegitimized by them.[11]

Thus, by virtue of their Blackness, Nubians, despite not having been subjected to enslavement themselves, joined (primarily) western and southern Sudanese communities in serving as an immediate "other" to the postcolonial Egyptian racial identity. The trade of enslaved Africans was *de jure* abolished in Egypt in 1877 and again in 1895.[12] It was in this supposed post-abolition Egypt, however, that "the employment of dark-skinned non-slave domestic laborers was associated with the prestige of slave ownership."[13]

Late nineteenth-century Egyptian nationalist discourses and debates were a means by which stereotypical, racist caricatures of "Blackness" could be performed, invented, and reified. Early nationalists accordingly sought to distance Egypt and Egyptians from these ideas of "Blackness" to help substantiate the claim that Egypt was worthy of independence from colonial rule. Eve Troutt Powell understands this as part of the "colonized colonizer" dynamic that existed between Great Britain, Egypt, and Sudan; with Egypt occupying an intermediary position in Great Britain's colonial scheme. Colonized yet itself a polity able to colonize, the Egyptian state mobilized these ideations of Blackness to lay claim to Sudan and assert itself as a modernizing force that measured up to other "civilized" nations.[14] Mainstream nationalist and anti-colonial discourses largely relied on colonial frameworks to demand decolonization, and the sovereign state internalized the racisms inherent to these grammars while also perpetuating those indigenous to Egypt. The enslavement of African peoples, the racialization of Nubians, and the colonization of Sudan shared a particular logic of anti-Blackness. Left unprocessed, the afterlives of slavery, colonialism (experienced and performed), and systemic racism seeped into the foundations of the modern Egyptian state.

Demarcating the Border, Displacing Nubians

The 1899 Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Agreement formalized the border between modern-day Sudan and Egypt. Territories south of the twenty-second parallel were designated as being part of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. This border was drawn in the middle of several Nubian villages, and Nubian communities were consequently divided across the nascent nation-states. At the same time, Great Britain's heightened control over the Nile Valley sparked their desire to regularize and control the flow of the Nile to increase the amount of water available for cotton cultivation. Basin irrigation could not sustain Britain's extractive economic policies nor Egypt's population, which almost doubled between 1850 and 1897.[15]

The British fulfilled their desires by building the Aswan Low Dam between 1898-1902, at the first cataract near Aswan. The dam's retention of water submerged cultivable Nubian land, forcing the affected Nubian communities to leave their ancestral homes and move upstream. The dam was raised in 1912 and again in 1933, propelling the dam's flooding farther into historic Nubia. Within this thirty-five-year period, fifteen Nubian villages were forced to abandon their livelihoods and relocate upstream, farther away from Old Nubia.[16] Between 1963-1964, the final and most monumental displacement took place with the construction of Aswan High Dam and its adjacent Lake Nasser (the dam's reservoir). The Egyptian government forcibly displaced Nubia's remaining forty-four villages shortly after the dam's first construction stage was completed in 1964. According to the 1960 Egyptian census, this displaced around fifty thousand Nubians—the entirety of soon-to-be submerged Nubia's population.[17] Nubia was wholly and completely uprooted in the making of the Aswan Dams.

Nasser formally announced the Aswan High Dam project during the nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956. Together, these projects functioned as the exercise of postcolonial hydropolitics, or "water nationalism," a term Jeremy Allouche uses to describe how "water bodies, landscapes, and infrastructures became naturalized as part of the nation-state imaginary, ignoring the marginalization of certain spaces and populations."[18] The construction of the Aswan High Dam embodied the promise of the future of the nation (already emboldened by the nationalization of the Suez Canal); Nasser referred to the High Dam as the "dam of glory, freedom, and dignity" that would "eradicate the dams of humiliation and indignity." The dam would thus continue along the trail blazed by the Suez Canal and symbolize the free, self-governing, and self-reliant nation-state of Egypt. On the day its construction was announced, Nasser emphasized that "the [Suez] canal was dug with our souls, our skulls, our bones, and our blood…but instead of the canal being dug for Egypt, Egypt became the property of the canal." He remarked that Egyptians would "never repeat the past."[19]

The High Dam submerged Nubian homelands in both southern Egyptian and northern Sudan. In 1963, displaced Egyptian Nubians were relocated to Kom Ombo, a city around fifty kilometers north of Aswan. The Sudanese government forcefully resettled forty-thousand Sudanese Nubians from their ancestral homes in Wadi Halfa, located on the border between Egypt and Sudan, to Khasm al Girba, located along the south-eastern border between Sudan and Eritrea.

The dam's consequences rippled throughout the diaspora. As "the ability of the Nubian land to support the population diminished, the reliance on remittances from the urban offshoots increased."[20] The dam's violence, however, did not just manifest through forced, physical displacement and its economic consequences. To be made to exist in a country that is built on the violence of your community is, in and of itself, a form of violence. To experience the destruction of your ancestral homeland as the nation's *raison d'être* is a form of violence. This is a visceral force that operates beyond the nation state framework. The construction of the dam separated and divided Nubian communities, their kinship networks, and the cultures that had lived between modern-day Egypt and Sudan for centuries. Furthermore, Nubians were not adequately compensated for their livelihoods lost in the building of the dam, and the cities they were forcibly relocated to lacked the necessary infrastructure needed to support fifty-thousand displaced persons. Nubians were displaced and neglected by the Egyptian state in the name of the Aswan High Dam and the manifestation of mainstream Egyptian nationalism.

This promise of decolonization had global resonance. It inspired Langston Hughes to write his character Simple as being so affected by the victory over the canal in a column in the *Chicago Defender* titled "Simple's World of Black and White," that he declared that "the Suez is the same as mine, since it belonged to my boy Nasser who is the Adam Powell of Egypt."[21] Egypt was at once a global symbol of liberation and local participant in violent anti-Black infrastructures. Egypt positioned against the colonial order, equivalent in stature to the African American struggle for liberation, was far more flattering (and visible on a global scale) than Egypt as a state still reckoning with its own traumas, contradictions, and inherited and locally invented technologies of violence. This imagining of Egypt as a site of a singular historical experience, however, is reliant on the idea that the world is dichotomously divided into subjugated and subjugators, oppressed and oppressors. This bidirectional understanding of power continues to shield the violence done unto Nubian communities through the construction of the Aswan High Dam from global scrutiny.

Preserving Nubia

The ethnographic and archeological projects initiated before and after the construction of the Aswan High Dam focused more on the loss of Nubian antiquities and relics than they did on the forced displacement of Nubians from their ancestral lands and heritage. In doing so, these works helped to frame the dam's construction as a necessary enterprise for state development rather than a violent

force against Nubian communities that was part of Egypt's histories of state-sanctioned anti-Blackness.

This was the case with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) "International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia (1960-1980)." UNESCO's initial 1960 request to the global community to support the campaign garnered a fair amount of aid and support, but not enough to fulfill the scope of the project. The appeal itself was an ode to a romanticized, ancient Nubia on the verge of ruin, and UNESCO made it clear that this ideation of Nubia, as the site of a long-gone civilization rather than the present lands of an indigenous population, was the only Nubia that would be "saved" by the campaign.[22] UNESCO later revised the appeal to include the following:

> In return for the international assistance given, the Government of the United Arab Republic is offering not less than fifty per cent of the finds excavated in Nubia, authorization to carry out further excavation in other parts of Egypt, and the cession of precious objects and monuments, including certain Nubian temples, for transfer abroad. The Government of the Sudan, for its part, is offering fifty per cent of the finds from excavations to be made in its territory.[23]

According to UNESCO's 1958-1961 Director-General Vittorino Veronese, Nubian heritage no longer belonged to Nubians, but was a "treasure of the universe [that was] entitled to universal protection."[24] Following the publication of this iteration of the appeal, forty-seven UNESCO member states contributed over forty-million dollars to the campaign's twenty-year run. The bulk of the funds came from the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, and Italy. Unsurprisingly, the campaign's most lucrative "saves"—the temples of Debod, Taffa, Dendur, Ellesvia, and Kalabsha Portico—were given to museums in Spain, the Netherlands, the United States, Italy, and Germany, respectively. UNESCO sanctioned and created a platform for what Ariella Aïsha Azoulay refers to as the "kernel of imperialism's archival modus operandi" to legitimize the theft of Nubian relics from Nubian communities. The UNESCO appeal, as well as the nation-states enabling the organization's approach, violated "existing forms of being-together and of inhabiting the world through the separation of objects from people and their transformation into embodiments of foreign classificatory categories that determine the fate of their displacement, extermination, exploitation, appropriation, or preservation."[25]

Although UNESCO identified the relics as elements of Nubian heritage, they described them as if they were not the belongings and livelihoods of *living* Nubian communities. This was largely due to the fact that researchers associated with the campaign "relied on the notion of 'salvage anthropology,' which saw the Nubians as a traditional, tribal group on the brink of change and whose identity needed documentation lest it be lost forever."[26] Key to the erasure of indigenous groups and their rights is their forced displacement from the objects that symbolize their relationship to their lands. This allows for a distinction between the "past"—defined by archeologists, engineers, museum curators, and ethnographers—and the "present." The relics came to belong to the "world" and became part of an imagined universal heritage the moment Egypt became a nation-state.

It was at this moment that Egypt's formally outlined borders became the most significant determinant of an individual's relationship to the lands within them. Nubians could not be "of Nubia" in a way that was recognizable to the international landscape of the 1960s. Nubia was not a recognized sovereign entity and therefore did not exist. By all means and figures, Nubians were either Egyptian or Sudanese. This rendered Nubian artifacts—whose owners were alive and present—part of an ambiguous ancient past so removed from the "modern" idiom of world order that they became part of universal history. The concept of the "universal" operates to flatten the contours of history to fit into modernity's logics in such a way that communities which exist outside its temporality are violently denied their entitlements to their legacies and their right to reject the nation-state's monopoly on subjectivity. Thus, when Nubia and its artifacts are relegated to the ancient world,

the reparations and rights owed to Nubians are more easily dismissible. UNESCO and the Egyptian government's respective approaches to the displacement of Nubian communities were mutually-reinforcing. UNESCO was able to facilitate the global looting of valuable Nubian monuments and the Egyptian government was bolstered in its efforts to dictate and police the ways "Egyptians" could identify themselves with "Egypt."

Black Nationalists, Malcolm X and Nubia

Given the layers of dispossession and anti-Blackness at play in the displacement of Nubians between 1960-1971, it is ironic that the zenith of Malcolm X's political ideology is often imagined as having been reached during his 1964 pilgrimage to Mecca and trips across Africa and the so-called Middle East, and in particular Cairo. It was in Mecca that the Malcolm X depicted by Alex Haley first reckoned with the transformative and unifying power of Islam. It was there that he prayed side by side with Muslims "whose skin was the whitest of white, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, and whose hair was the blondest of blond."[27] To Malcolm, this practice symbolized the oneness of humanity, and in turn, represented the oneness of God. He saw what he referred to as an "eastern" Islam that protected the societies that were its oases from the evils of racism. He believed that this Islam had the potential to function as a fundamentally anti-racist ideology that could engender true brotherhood, understanding, and recognition between white and non-white communities in the United States. Islam was the praxis of anti-racism.

The power of this "eastern" Islam was so totalizing that in Cairo, Malcolm wrote that "there were people of 'all complexions, but…no 'color' problem—one family, yet all shades…I met thousands of people of different races and colors who treated me as a human being.'" He declared the city an '"example for [the world]."'[28] In Malcolm's eyes, Islam was the world's most powerful antidote to the problem of the color line. He attributed anti-Black racism in the lands of "eastern" Islam only to "where, and to what extent that … area of the Muslim world has been influenced by the West."[29] This idea was originally expressed to him by Abdul Rahman Hassan Azzam, an Egyptian diplomat and the first secretary-general of the Arab League.

As Hisham Aidi has noted, Cold War neoconservative politics were profoundly influenced by Black nationalists' embrace of the struggle for decolonization in the Arab world.[30] Bernard Lewis, prominent orientalist and scholar of Islam, wrote that the Islamic beliefs "which [Malcolm] had acquired prevented him from seeing the 'Alabama-like quality' and 'Southern impression' of Arab life."[31] Published in *Race and Color in Islam* in 1971, this view was a product of Lewis' staunch support for the state of Israel following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and argument that Islamic civilizations were inherently anti-Black and racially discriminatory. Accordingly, he failed to realize that it was not Malcolm X's zeal for Islam that was clouding his judgment, but his inability (or reluctance) to expand his analysis of race and power to encompass the historical trajectory of Afro-Arab racialisms.

This analytical framework persists in the present commemorations of Malcolm X's trips to the Arabic-speaking world. In 1992, David Graham DuBois contextualized Malcom's trips to Egypt as being shaped by "the mass accumulation of human beings of color [in Egypt], in which white folks are a minority—a precise and distinct minority." "[This] brotherhood, the oneness of experience" was of the most "important things to an African-American" at the time.[32]

Nubia and the Afro-Arab World

DuBois' emphasis on the "oneness of experience" invites us to consider the limitations inherent in current historiographical framings of Afro-Arab political solidarities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These histories are important and critical in their own right. But in rigidly focusing on the legacies of colonial subjugation shared by modern-day African and Arab nation-states, the intertwined histories, and intellectual genealogies of African American and Palestinian struggles for liberation, and dominant ideologies and

grammars of Third-Worldism, they obscure the historical reality and lived experience of Afro-Arab peoples and communities. In these analyses, it is not an "eastern" Islam that forms the bridge of solidarity uniting the two distinct regions, but the external oppression wrought by white supremacy and Western imperialism. [33] Inherent to this logic is the separation of two discrete, fixed and unchanging worlds: a majority Black and "African" one; and an "Arab" one. But there are communities that transcend the racial, geographic, and sociopolitical boundaries of these imagined African and Arab worlds.

Further, the narrow focus on Euro-American forces and technologies of power diminishes the legacies and logics of the anti-Black racisms that are indigenous and fundamental to the formation of the Afro-Arab world. By "Afro-Arab" world I do not mean the countries existing in between the disciplinary borders of the fields of "Middle Eastern" and "African" studies—oftentimes characterized as being limited to Sudan, Tanzania, Djibouti, and Somalia and sometimes including Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco—nor am I referring to the Afro-Arab "political project" generated by Third World intelligentsia. [34] Rather, I am invoking the layered histories of both regions. What is conventionally thought of as the Arab world could not exist without its ties to the African continent, and vice versa. To separate these worlds would be to neglect the histories of the slave trade, migration, and enslavement as well as the intellectual traditions and cosmologies shared throughout Africa and West Asia.

Historicizing betwixt and between the fields of Middle Eastern and African studies is of the utmost urgency and is necessary to excavate the histories that are lost in the artificial bordering of the Afro-Arab world. Aimé Césaire's 1956 letter to Maurice Thorez declaring his resignation from the French Communist Party is useful for articulating the stakes of this project. He wrote: "I am not burying myself in a narrow particularism. But neither do I want to lose myself in an emaciated universalism. There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the 'universal.'" This dilution is a key to the historicization of Afro-Arab solidarities. The nuances of local histories have been sacrificed in attempts to articulate the ties that bind subjugated peoples and spaces to one another. This helps to narrate the history of a "universal" subaltern experience largely shared by non-Western and/or non-white nations and peoples as the most formative and disastrous event of violence. Local histories are diluted and written off as inherently secondary to and less important than the event of Western imperialism. This approach enables a global parochialism that cannot accommodate the multiplicities of Blackness and the global Black experience. The local lens of hydropolitics has offered a history that is nuanced and illustrative of the ways that racism operates as a technology on multiple levels, and the fact that it must be analyzed within the context of each one.

If we are able to hold on to the fact that multiple, competing, and sometimes contradictory axes of power can exist in a single space and understand that the identities of oppressed and oppressor are never fixed and always historically contingent, we can see more fully how the displacement of Nubian communities was able to take place amid the articulation of Afro-Arab solidarities and present more clearly the multi-layered nature of violence in a space as dynamic as the Afro-Arab world. In propagating the notion of an emaciated subaltern universalism, we silence the complexities present in the lived experience of Afro-Arabness and Africanity in the Arabic-speaking world. We must reconfigure and interrogate our current geographies of liberation.

Endnotes

[1] Saidiya Hartman defines the "afterlives as slavery" as the historical condition of "Black bodies still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that was entrenched [by slavery] centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment. I, too, am the afterlife of slavery" (Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route, 24).

[2] "Sudan and modern slavery," Human Rights Foundation, May 1, 2007, https://humanrightshouse.org/articles/sudan-and-modern-slavery/ (accessed Jan 20, 2021).

[3] Hussein al-Badri, "'Ubūdiya ma ba'ad al-alifīa: mushahadat wa dhikrāyat 'an akhir ma'aqil al-'abīd fi Mi'r" [Slavery after the millennium: views and memories of the last strongholds of the slave trade in Egypt], *Vice Arabia*, August 13, 2018, https://www.vice.com/ar/article/bj3v7q/ةقيقلالأا-دعبء-ام-دبيع-صرم-في-ةيدوبعلا-ل-قاعم-رخآ-ن-ع-ت-ايركذو-ت-ادهاشم (accessed Jan 20, 2021).

[4] Seif Kousmate, "The unspeakable truth about slavery in Mauritania," *The Guardian*, January 18, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jun/08/the-unspeakable-truth-about-slavery-in-mauritania (accessed Jan 20, 2021).

[5] Lubin defines the "geographies of liberation" as being defined by: "the recognition across continents, across national borders, and across religious beliefs of contending with shared conditions of colonial violence, even while local and regional differences in language and power ultimately make the comparisons appear arbitrary…comparative histories of colonialism produce an analytic that exposes something important and productive about the colonial world as well as the desire of the oppressed to undertake its refashioning." (*Geographies of Liberation: The Making of An Afro-Arab Political Imaginary*, 9).

[6] See Ali, Idris. *Dongola: A Novel of Nubia*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998; Mossallam, Alia. "Hikāyāt Sha'b: Stories of Peoplehood, Nasserism, Popular Politics and Songs in Egypt 1956–1973," PhD diss., Department of Government, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012; Emam Sakory, Fatma. "Being Nubian in Egypt, and in the constitution," *MadaMasr*, December 23, 2013. https://www.madamasr.com/en/2013/12/23/opinion/society/being-nubian-in-egypt-and-in-the-constitution/. These works center the Nubian reality of displacement to narrate the relationship between Nubia and modern Egypt. In doing so, they reveal how the displacement of Nubians was the first step towards the erasure of Nubian culture and language on a national scale and the homogenization of what it means to be a modern Egyptian.

[7] Emanuel Beška, "Muhammed Ali's conquest of Sudan (1820-1824)," *Asian and African Studies* 28, no. 3 (2018): 32.

[8] By "belonging" and "non-belonging" I am referring to conceptions of identity that existed outside of the frame of the nation-state and nationalism, which became more of a widespread framework towards the latter half of the nineteenth century. Adam Mestyan's *Arab Patriotism: The Ideology and Culture of Power in Late Ottoman Egypt* (Princeton University Press, 2017), details the way that Muslim and Arab patriotism, in the 1830s-60's and the 1870s onwards, respectively, informed popular discourses on belonging that preceded (but could also exist alongside) nationalism.

[9] Gabriel Baer, "Slavery in Nineteenth Century Egypt," *The Journal of African History* 8, no. 3 (1967): 441.

[10] John Hunwick, "Islamic Law and Polemics over Race and Slavery in North and West Africa (16th–19th Centuries)," *Princeton Papers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle East Studies*, 46.

[11] For instance, Ahmed Baba (d. 1627), the celebrated Timbuktu jurist, refuted the equation of Blackness with slavery in his fatwa *Mi'rāj al-'uūd ilā nayl 'ukm majlūb al-sūd* [The Ladder of Ascent Towards Grasping the Law Concerning Transported Blacks]. This decree, however, was not of the majority opinion. Later writers in the Sahel ensured that their writings conflated adherence to normative Islam to lineage. Bruce Hall notes that in many Arabic documents written in the Sahel, the term "Blacks" (*sudān*) was used in direct contrast to the word for "Muslims." (*A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960*, 58.)

[12] The institution of slavery itself was not abolished by the Anglo-Egyptian Convention of 1877 or 1895.

[13] Elizabeth A. Smith, "Tributaries in the Stream of Civilization: Race, Ethnicity, and National Belonging among Nubians in Egypt," Ph.D. diss., (New York University, 2006), 61.

[14] See Eve Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Great Britain, Egypt, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (UC Press, 2003).

[15] Claire Cookson-Hills, "The Aswan Dam and Egyptian Water Control Policy, 1882-1902," *Radical History Review* 116 (2013): 62-63.

[16] Nicholas S. Hopkins & Sohair R. Mehanna, *The Nubian Ethnological Survey: History and Methods* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 5-9.

[17] Hussein Fahim, "Basic Information on the Newly Settled Nubian Community in Kom Ombo, Upper Egypt: Report Prepared for the Egyptian General Organization for Land Reclamation (EGOLR)," (Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo, 1974), 22.

[18] Jeremy Allouche, "State building, nation making and post-colonial hydropolitics in India and Israel: Visible and hidden forms of violence at multiple scales," *Political Geography* 75, (2019): 6.

[19] Gamal Abdel Nasser, "The speech given by President Gamal Abdel Nasser in Alexandria on the 4th anniversary of the revolution 'Nationalizing the Suez Canal'" July 26, 1956, *Bibliotheca Alexandrina*, http://nasser.bibalex.org/TextViewer.aspx?TextID=SPCH-495-en (accessed Feb 1, 2021).

[20] Nicholas S. Hopkins & Sohair R. Mehanna, *The Nubian Ethnological Survey: History and Methods* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 10.

[21] As cited in Vaughn Rasberry, *Race in the Totalitarian Century: Geopolitics in the Literary Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 2016), 211.

[22] Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and kharyssa rhodes, "The Study of Race and Racism in the Nile Valley," in *Race and Identity in the Nile Valley: Ancient and Modern Perspectives* eds. Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and kharyssa rhodes (Red Sea Press, 2004), xiii-xx.

[23] Vittorino Veronese, "UNESCO Launches a World Appeal: Save the Treasures of Nubia," *The UNESCO Courier*, February 1960, https://en.unesco.org/courier/february-1960 (accessed February 2, 2021).

[24] As quoted in Roger-Pol Droit, *Humanity in the Making: Overview of the Intellectual History of UNESCO, 1945-2000* (UNESCO, 2005), 132-133.

[25] Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (Verso Books, 2019), 174.

[26] Samantha Allen, "Nubians and development, 1960-2015," Master's thesis, (The American University in Cairo, 2014), 21.

[27] Al-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, "Letter from Mecca," *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley* (Random House, 1964), 391.

[28] Stephen Tuck, *The Night Malcolm X Spoke at the Oxford Union: A Transatlantic Story of Antiracist Protest* (University of California Press, 2014), 11.

[29] Al-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley* (Random House, 1964), 385.

[30] Hisham Aidi, "DuBois, Ghana, and Cairo Jazz: the Geo-politics of Malcolm X," in *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics* eds. Olivia U. Rutazibwa and Robbie Shilliam, (Routledge, 2018), 428.

[31] Ibid. Also in Bernard Lewis, *Race and Color in Islam* (Harper and Row, 1971), 3.

[32] Carol Burger, "In Cairo, an Expatriate Black American Recalls Malcolm X," February 10, 1992, *The Christian Science Monitor*, https://www.csmonitor.com/1992/0210/10111.html (accessed Jan 22, 2021).

[33] For example, see Adeyoe, Akinsanya. "The Afro-Arab Alliance: Dream or Reality?" *African Affairs* 31, no. 301 (1976): 511-529; Feldman, Keith P. "Towards an Afro-Arab Diasporic Culture: The Translational Practices of David Graham Du Bois." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* no. 31 (2011) 152-172; Lubin, Alex. *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary*. Raleigh: North Carolina, 2014; Fischbach, Michael R. *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019.

[34] Azeb, Sophia. "Epilogue: From Antigua to Algérie: The Particularity and Promise of the Afro-Arab." *Post45 Contemporaries*, September 2020, https://post45.org/2020/09/epilogue-from-antigua-to-algerie-the-particularity-and-promise-of-the-afro-arab/.

Narrating Nubia: Between Sentimentalism and Solidarity

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In 2011, Dina Shaaban, then a naive twenty-year-old, now a seasoned community organizer, stumbled upon a Nubian cultural festival while promenading on Cairo's corniche. As she tells it, this chance encounter catalyzed her Nubian awakening. Why did she know so little about the history of her people, whether ancient or modern? How could she empower young Nubians like herself to learn more about their distinctive traditions and languages? And what resources and strategies could she marshal to effectively and affectively narrate Nubia with all its nuances to fellow Egyptians whose first reaction to her darker skin is that most exclusionary of small-chat queries, *So where are you from?*

To narrate Nubia is to dwell in the inadequacies of that question. Nubia subverts the conventional, political, and scholarly assumptions that separate the Arab world from Africa, that distinguish "North Africa" from "sub-Saharan Africa," for the lived realities of Nubian Egyptians refuse to map onto any neat axes of culture, history, or economy. In postcolonial Egypt there were and are Nubian pan-Arabists and Nubian pan-Africanists, Nubian Islamists and Nubian communists, Nubian revolutionists and Nubian statists.

Nubians are currently Muslim, once Christian, pharaonic almost a millennium before the coming of Christ, black to be sure, but also brown and wheat, speaking languages related but non-mutually intelligible, performing rituals and building houses internally diverse in form and function yet still classifiably unique to outsiders.

Dina's response to the complexity of narrating this Nubia against its submerged pasts and racialized presents was to form the Nubian Knights. This initiative seeks a public space in Cairo for Nubian cultural expression through festivals, concerts, and seminars. Since 2015, I have been collaborating with the Knights to create a documentary film about and for their cultural activism, which aspires to the collective flourishing of a community marginalized by the dispossession of dams and the injury of racism. This activism punctures the nationalist myth of an ethnically, racially, and linguistically homogenous Egypt, a narrative whose dominance pushes Nubians to the margins of the very idea of Egypt even as it cruelly assimilates the sacrifice of beloved Old Nubia as our singular "gift" to the nation. Our film recenters the Nubian community from objects of anthropological knowledge to co-creative conspirators in its production.

We do so through crisscrossing the archaeological and ethnographic research on Nubia's material and social referents with the memories, engagement, and resourcefulness of those for whom Nubia is above all an embodied home. To do so, as we will see, is to braid sentiment and solidarity. Taking these entwinements seriously requires narrating Nubia as less a self-evident and transparent horizon of political and epistemological possibility and more as a situated struggle with shifting stakes. Our Nubian narrations will sound both harmonious and cacophonous notes, grate with cruelty and soar with grace. Knowledge production about collective memory, like collective memory, is inherently complicated and contentious and demands not just a disciplining politics but a disciplined ethic to make it responsive to shared yet different adversity across time and space.

Dina with the Nubian Knights, Cairo 2017

Displacing Nubians

In 1960, then-Vice President Anwar Sadat paid an official visit to the fifty thousand Nubians about to be resettled an hour's drive north of Aswan in one of the "reclaimed" desert areas. "If the Nubian people are leaving their smaller home of Nubia for the prosperity of the republic and the realization of the great hopes pinned on the High Dam," he told them, "then the bigger home, their own country, will open its arms to welcome them in one of the new districts in Kom Ombo. There they will find stability, prosperity and a decent life."[1]

What Nubians found instead was the copiousness of their tears, the multitude of their tribulations, and the relative insignificance of their lived present to their material past. A well-publicized and funded international campaign spearheaded by UNESCO saved most of Nubia's ancient temples from meeting their end in the watery grave of Lake Nasser, the water body formed by the dam. The anthropologist Robert Fernea, who led a joint Egyptian-American ethnographic survey of Old Nubia, remembers passing the soon to be "saved" Nubian monument of Abu Simbel on a boat trip down the Nile and thinking: "What are we coming to ... when millions of dollars are spent to raise a monument of stone and scarcely a fraction of that is spent on the thousands of people who must go the way of the monument?"[2]

Families arrived to incomplete resettlement houses, scorpions, and snakes in makeshift tents. The very young and the very old died first, with the mortality rate almost doubling. The houses, once built, were not the spacious models from the blueprints, but cookie-cutter cheap in monotonous rows. While the forty-four villages of Egyptian Nubia of old languidly stretched out over 350 kilometers from the First Cataract at Aswan all the way to the Sudanese border town of Wadi Halfa, resettlement Nubia was crammed, no blue ribbon of river to behold or swim in. The government distributed farmland only five years after resettlement, forcing a double displacement as more Nubians emigrated to stave off starvation. Nubians took to calling themselves *al-mankubin,* the afflicted, a pitiable people forced out of their paradise of a palm-lined Nile villages with little hope of redemption in this desert Valley of the Jinn, another, more accurate, name for Kom Ombo. Old Nubia only remained in the dirt some had filled their pockets with as they left their village, in the memory of lips kissing farewell its soft earth. The high price Nubians paid in lives, property, and intangible heritage "for the prosperity of the republic" is erased from the official historiographic celebration of the Aswan High Dam as the crowning achievement of the postcolonial state.[3]

Pain's possibility

The loss of Old Nubia, a homeland historically spanning the Sudanese-Egyptian border, catalyzed the "Nubian Awakening," *al-sahwa al-nubiyya.* This literary, musical, artistic and linguistic renaissance voices a self-conscious Nubian identity stressing a prestigious ancient past, a shared present predicament, and a common struggle for a more just and inclusive future.[4] The alchemy of agony is such that the collective experience of losing Nubia made the Matoki speaking Kenuz in the north, the Mahas speaking Faddica in the south, and the Arabophone Allaqat sandwiched in between, who typically did not inter-marry and communicated with each other in an Arabic lingua franca, see themselves as more similar than different. Through song, story, and social memory, Nubia lives on as an affectively embodied place – "inside us," *gowana,* Nubians young and old insist. A deep yearning, *hannin,* for a lost land knits together these cultural productions.

Indeed, to be Nubian is to be nostalgic. Nubia is a land that becomes more idyllic the longer its palm trees, houses, and graves sleep under the water, a land where no one hated, no one hungered, and everyone died as they lived: peacefully. Old Nubia was, according to everyone who never saw it, simply fantastic – and I mean that both in the sense of terrific and great and in the sense of fanciful and improbable. Its memory is fervently kept alive across generations through deliberate and casual reminiscence, through the photographs of the anthropologists' salvage ethnography and their savvy remediation on Facebook

posts and WhatsApp digital chains from Alexandria, Egypt to Alexandria, Virginia. Both burden and gift, the past is entrusted to each new generation as a strategy of resilient resistance, of pain as possibility.[5]

Photo from the Ethnographic Survey of Egyptian Nubia 1961-63 archive, Rare Books and Special Collections Library at the American University in Cairo

My Nubia

Growing up, I was taught to say I am from Kushtmna Sharq whenever asked by a fellow Nubian about my origin, this despite that I never lived there, my mother never lived there, my grandmother never lived there and her mother, my great grandmother, never lived there. We lived instead in Cairo and Damanhour, later in Manama and Dubai, later still in San Francisco and Washington, DC. But the old village of Kushtmna Sharq, and its resettlement namesake, is where I will always be "from" to other Nubians, despite my non-Nubian Swiss father.

On the 40th anniversary of the resettlement in 2004, I went to Kom Ombo as a journalist writing a story but also, I would learn, as a daughter of Nubia coming home.6 While the magazine photographer checked into an Aswan hotel with Nile views, I had to stay in my great uncle's cramped house in the village, my bedroom overlooking dust and mudbrick. After chaperoning me during the day to interviews about the history of Nubia, in the evening after supper, my uncle presided over a makeshift classroom consisting of a battered box of faded photographs and letters so that I could learn the history of our own family in Nubia.

The last person in my family to speak fluent Matoki, the language of the Kenuz, was my great grandfather, who went by Ma'atouk, a nickname meaning "the spared one," gifted to him by grateful parents who had already lost a child. At the turn of the century, Ma'atouk left behind his sons and wife in his speck of a village to make a living in the glittering capital. In doing so, he became part of a continuing northward emigration propelled by the successions of dams reducing local arable land and means of subsistence in Nubia.

My maternal great-grandfathers, Eweisna, late 1940s

Like my great grandfather, many of these emigrant men did in the north the work their mothers, sisters and wives did in the south, cooking and cleaning, and also guarding the city's grand villas and buildings. While the dams created whole villages made up disproportionately of women and children – and with that the inevitability of a high divorce rate – Ma'atouk stayed married to my great grandmother Saliha, who herself never travelled further north than Aswan. All five of her sons, however, would eventually leave Nubia.

One of these sons was my grandfather Yusif. At ten years old he moved to his father's Cairo home since there was no schooling available locally beyond the elementary level. His best friend from the village moved with him and by the 1930s, they had both finished high school and earned advanced certifications in accounting. This set up

Yusif for a professional career in the Red Sea office of an international petroleum company. The steady paycheck enabled him to marry a pretty girl named Zaynab. Zaynab was from Quesna, a small Delta town of cotton and potatoes, and the youngest daughter of a fellow Kenuz Nubian who went by Salih. This man, another of my great grandfathers, was a postal office employee who had married a Moroccan-Egyptian woman from Damanhour, a provincial town between Alexandria and Cairo. Salih, having traveled most of the north through his postal job, settled with his family in Quesna because the climate suited his asthma.

Zaynab was educated and urbane enough to keep up with her husband's ambitions for class mobility, a lady who could mingle after the tennis game with the wives of Yusif's colleagues or lounge at the beach in Ras Ghareb outside their company housing. Yusif bought his bride a small but stylish apartment in the then-desirable neighborhood of 'Abdin, walking distance to the king's palace but also more importantly to the apartments of the other Nubian families and the dozens of Nubian community associations in Cairo. While it was not always easy being a conspicuous minority, my grandparents like other Nubians across Egypt's urban centers worked hard to keep alive a sense of togetherness that could have easily dissipated in the daily grind of city life. Most importantly, Yusif's daughters, born at the cusp of the 1952 revolution, would all graduate from university even if none would see Old Nubia before it drowned.

My family's upward socio-economic trajectory during this period was not idiosyncratic. By the 1970s, the number of Nubians working in white-collar jobs outstripped those laboring as servants and the average Nubian's level of formal education was higher than that of the average non-Nubian Egyptian.7 Nevertheless, media depictions of Nubians invariably place them in subordinate class positions. One of the only filmic representations of Nubians in the first half of the 20th century was the recurring character of "Othman" the butler and doorman, played in blackface by the famous comedian Ali al-Kassar.8 "Othmana" has become a common racist slur against

Left: My grandparents on their wedding day, 1949
Right: My mom posing with her sisters for a studio portrait, Cairo, 1959

black-skinned persons. This conflation of blackness with servitude is of course part of wider racialized logics within the region. Like in Rabat or Beirut, the average promenading racist in Cairo or Alexandria taunts all Africans he encounters, whether South Sudanese or Somali, Nigerian or Nubian, as *'abid*, slaves.

The grain of nostalgia

Racism distills perceptible difference to a noxious amalgamation of classified phenotype, stereotypic facial features, and simplified histories, into the essentially inferior and other. Such racist logics are fractal, reiterating insidious patterns at every scale, including within the Nubian community itself with its slave-owning histories.9 Even after generations of having lived among and as Nubians, slave descendants are still surreptitiously pointed out at weddings and funerals as not "really" Nubian. *How do you know? Look how black she is. See how African he looks.* The "question of internal racism," one Nubian activist friend put it to me, is a critical one and must be addressed for both its historic and ongoing lived injury. Many Nubians of an older generation shrug and sigh that in the end everyone lost Nubia and desires its return, including its most wretched, the enslaved. Nubia, like America, is most capacious and most exclusionary, a paradox enabled,

unlike America, not by the continually deferred promise of declared ideals, but by the irreversibility of historical vanishing.

My habitus as a scholar is to read against the grain of Nubia's nostalgic chimeras with the unflinching eyes of history and politics. The record shows that when Nubia drowned in 1964 most Nubians were already diasporic and calling northern cities and towns home for generations. And it also reveals that some, perhaps many, of the Nubians still in their southern villages welcomed the government resettlement as a chance for more equitable access to the two big Es of postcolonial promise: Electricity and Education.10 In addition, even as Nubians continue to struggle for a collective right to resettle around Lake Nasser, the closest they could ever get to Old Nubia without drowning, few individuals I know plan to actually live in a place where the basic infrastructure of paved roads and indoor plumbing and the lifestyle infrastructure of cafés and cinemas are yet to be built.

But, still, what if instead of dismissing out of hand Nubian nostalgia, we attend to its capacity for regeneration?11 While longing for an alternative past usually facilitates retrograde conservatism, perhaps nostalgia can also be the basis for an alternative politics of recognition and inclusion.12 Indeed, the insight that yearnings for the past are never merely about what has passed but also about what is to come is not an original one. Nostalgias are the other sides of utopias, which are not inherently farfetched but can be realistic and doable.13 What needs more attention is how to be more self-consciously selective about what we yearn for. Far from being at the mercy of our memories, we can shape them to be the resources we need for the future we want. Perhaps then sentimentalism and solidarity can mutually fortify across power-laden divides.

Strategic sentimentalism

Ancient Nubia has for centuries figured in the literary and intellectual heritage of Black Americans, serving as inspiration and evidence of resistance to the dominant narratives of white supremacy.[14] These trans-oceanic links continue to this day. When police shot an unarmed Black teenager in Ferguson and got away with it, Nubians in Aswan posted on social media that #BlackLivesMatter. The US protests, in turn, galvanized local discussions about anti-black racism in the Arab world, further energizing Nubian activism. Nubians bestowed on Black protestors the honorific of *kandaqa*, denoting the powerful ancient Meroitic queens who were symbolically claimed by Sudanese of all ethno-linguistic backgrounds in their own uprising the year before. And later amidst America's 2020 uprising against racist state violence, a friend in Kom Ombo told me, after the police detained Nubian children in November 2020, "We can't breathe."[15]

Protest by Nubian community activists outside People's Assembly, Cairo 2011

While Nubia as sentiment might be irreducible, Nubia as solidarity connects across contention. To narrate Nubia is to trust that nostalgia – multiple and contested – can show a way out, however tentative and fragile, of the present's entrenched impasses. This includes the impasses of my anthropological knowledge. The film I am producing with Dina and the Nubian Knights has become part of a larger collaboration with colleagues in archaeology and anthropology to decolonize these historically colonialist disciplines.[16]

Already four decades ago one Egyptian anthropologist, whose fieldwork straddled in time and space Old and New Nubia, complained to the agency funding his research that it was all "meaningless and a sad waste of money, time and effort" unless ways could be found to make ethnographic

knowledge useful to the community and responsive to their specific concerns.[17] Early in our collaboration, Dina shared that the film is most valuable when it enables her to demand from non-Nubian Egyptians that they know who she is as a Nubian, just as she knows who they are. But Dina also knows that her narrative of what it means to be Nubian is neither universal nor static. Like Dina, I want to remain sensitive to how Nubians' concerns — our concerns — vary greatly across generation, region, class and gender, to how Nubia is differently brought into being through the contentious, cacophonous at times and harmonious at others, creativity of those who claim its future as their own.[18] And this requires remaining strategic in our sentimentalism.

Endnotes

1 Fahim, Hussein. 1983. *The Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and Years of Coping*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, p. 36. While Sadat is sometimes identified as of Nubian descent, his mother was Sudanese from al-Kawahla, near Dongola but not Nubian.

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3 Mossallam, Alia. 2012. "Hikāyāt sha'b - Stories of Peoplehood: Nasserism, Popular Politics and Songs in Egypt, 1956-1973." PhD thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

4 For literature and music, see, for example, Abbas, Fatin. 2014. "Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and Nubian Diasporic Identity in Idris Ali's Dongola: A Novel of Nubia," *Research in African Literatures*, Volume 45, Number 3, pp. 147-166 and Regan Homeyer. 2020. "Sounding the Nile: River Politics, Environment and Nubian Musical Expression," MA thesis, University of New Mexico. For an overview of recent political mobilizations, see Janmyr, Maja. 2016. "Nubians in Contemporary Egypt: Mobilizing Return to Ancestral Lands," *Middle East Critique*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 127–146.

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7 Geiser, Peter. 1986. *The Egyptian Nubian: A Study in Social Symbiosis.* American University in Cairo Press.

8 Alon, Tam. 2020. "Blackface in Egypt: The Theatre and Film of Ali al-Kassar," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* DOI: 10.1080/13530194.2020.1714427

9 Smith, Elizabeth A. 2006. "Place, Class and Race in the Barabra Cafe: Nubians in Egyptian Media." In *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*, edited by Diane Singerman and Paul Amar, 399–414. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

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11 Agha, Menna. 2019. "Nubia Still Exists: On the Utility of the Nostalgic Space" *Humanities* 8, no. 1: 24. https://doi.org/10.3390/h8010024

12 Mondesire, Zachary. 2021. "Race after Revolution: Imagining Blackness and Africanity in the "New Sudan" *POMEPS Studies 44.*

13 Vincent Geoghegan, "Remembering the Future," *Utopian Studies* 1, no. 2 (1990): 52–68.

14 This even as Malcolm X on his 1964 visit to Egypt may have strategically ignored Nubia's imminent demise for black-brown solidarity against Euro-American imperialism. See Bayan Abubakr, "The Contradictions of Afro-Arab Solidarity(ies): The Aswan High Dam and the Erasure of the Global black Experience" *POMEPS Studies 44.*

15 Other Nubians emigrants to the United States, however, refuse the comparison of their experience to that of Black Americans as inapt. In Hussein, Naglaa F. Mahmoud, 2014. "Identity Politics of Color, Nation and Land in the Literature of Nubian Egyptians, with Special Reference to Muhammad Khalil Qasim's *Al-Shamandoura,*" p. 40

16 https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/nubia/

17 Fahim, Hussein. 1977. "Foreign and Indigenous Anthropology: The Perspectives of an Egyptian Anthropologist," *Human Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 1: pp. 80-86

18 Silverstein, Paul. 2021. "The Racial Politics of the Amazigh Revival in North Africa and Beyond" *POMEPS Studies 44.*

Race after Revolution:
Imagining Blackness and Africanity in the "New Sudan"

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The problematic of race generally, and the questions of Africanness and Blackness in particular, are difficult to resolve in contexts without an ontological referent to Blacken the marginalized, displaced, or exploited subject. To what extent do individuals who, due to phenotype, would be racialized as Black in the United States, become or remain Black without juxtaposition to individuals racialized as white?[1] The post-revolution context of Sudan raises important questions about blackness and Africanness that reveal the ways aesthetics and phenotypic difference tends to overdetermine relations of domination which U.S.-centric analyses identify in terms of race. In the contemporary Sudans, how might we understand who is Black, how racialization occurs, and the signposts that harness the qualities of an abstract experience of *Blackness* globally to lived experience in historically, materially, and spiritually constituted time and space?

Racial concepts such as Blackness are certainly porous and expand to relegate ever-more marginalized communities into conditions of captivity and depravation. *Black* nevertheless signifies a phenotypic roadmap ostensibly allowing theorists of race to identify conditions of domination globally. While Atlantic Ocean framings of race highlight the afterlife of European slavery, grafting this frame universally onto all geographic contexts tends to frame race primarily as a question of displacement, as the study of minority communities visibly *out of place.* The conditions signified by *Blackness* in Atlantic contexts—captivity, depravation, death—also exist in Black majority societies. Therefore, this paper asks: who is Black when everyone is Black?[2]

Who is Black when the color-word *Black* is not used to describe people who have darkly pigmented skin? How, with what ideological material, and why does identification as *African* become important—politically and otherwise—within the geographic limits of continental Africa? In this POMEPS collection, historian Gokh Amin Alshaif draws our attention to the construction of Blackness in Yemen at the intersection of skin color and narratives of family origin differentially placed along a hierarchy of genealogical value.[3] Her analysis recalls that of Harry Garuba, who revisits the oft-cited Fanonian understanding of Back subject formation in order to draw attention to what Fanon discounts.[4] Garuba argues that when Fanon asserted that as long as the Black man "remains on his home territory, except for petty quarrels, he will not have to experience his being for others," he discounted how the category of race, once discursively set in motion, would map onto, be translated into, and come to be coarticulated with local conditions.[5]

Building on a position that acknowledges both the centrality and shortcomings of somatic difference to contemporary conceptualizations of race, this paper argues that racial ideologies emerged through artwork during and since Sudan's recent, and still unfinished, political transition. The myriad depictions of Sudan's original independence flag highlight two racialized discourses. On the one hand, the appearance of the flag reveals an imaginative Africanness as a strategy of racial geopolitics that disrupts Sudan's relationship to the Arabic-speaking world. On the other, it compels one to grapple with the resonance between Sudan's assertion of Africanness and the analogous desire for racial dignity that ideologically drove popular support for South Sudan's secession from Sudan.

While art appeared throughout Khartoum in multiple forms—notably in theatrical performances in Sudan's national theater in Omdurman or at book fairs outside the national museum dramatically portraying popular exasperation with the regime of the former National Congress Party (NCP) and the violence of the uprisings to oust it—the most striking and commonplace examples are the wall murals that lent creative depth to the urban

architecture itself. In much of this visual art, the past—both ancient and modern—represents a source for insufficiently tapped vocabularies of communal identity as alternatives to the desire for proximity to the Arabic-speaking world linked to what Noah Salomon has called the "normative framework" of politicized Islam "that far exceeded the state."[6] Depictions of Sudan's tri-color blue, yellow, and green independence flag indexed an act of racialized refusal to reject the concept of *Arab identity* from what it would now mean to be Sudanese. In doing so, it drew critical attention to Sudan's racially fraught relationship to both the Arabic-speaking world and to what is now South Sudan.

After Gaafar Nimeiry came to power in a 1969 military coup, he replaced the independence flag in 1970 with the tri-color black, white, and red flag that invokes the aesthetic geopolitics of Arab nationalism linking Sudan to Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, etc. This choice arguably foreshadowed Nimeiry's political transformation and the more substantive recasting of Sudan's geopolitical place-in-the-world. The independence flag does not figure in the state's contemporary representation of itself. The erasure of the independence flag calls into question the reconcilability of the very axis of racial differentiation, Arab/African, that has characterized so much of Sudan's contemporary history. The former flag resembles the current flags of Rwanda, Tanzania and multiple other flags of an Africa articulated through racial-geographic vocabulary like *south of the Sahara* or *sub-Saharan* which conveniently conceal the ostensibly homogenous dark-complexioned map it interpolates in our collective imagination.

The flag of Sudan at independence.

Many protestors waved the independence flag throughout the 2018-19 uprisings both within Sudan and within Sudanese communities around the world. Their excavation of the original flag resonates with South Sudan's decision to create a flag almost identical to Kenya's. The South Sudan flag stands as a reference to Kenya's central diplomatic role in the lead-up to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. This includes the work of Kenyan politicians such as the infamous Daniel Arap Moi as well as the multiple Kenyan cities that provided asylum for southern rebels throughout the second civil war. In addition to political solidarity, there is a racial cartography implicit in the visual homage to Kenya that relocates South Sudan outside of an inhospitable Arabic-speaking world in which, because of an individual's accent, complexion, or both, one may not be recognized as an Arabic speaker even if one is.[7] Instead, it locates South Sudan within the Christian and English speaking orbit of Kenya that seemed to welcome them with figuratively open arms.

Both flags, South Sudan's and Sudan's re-emerged original flag are rejections of the red, black, and white flag indexical of much of the Arabic-speaking world. This not meant to romanticize the use of either flag as the celebration of a monolithic African identity. South Sudanese analysts have been cynical towards South Sudan's relationships with Uganda and Kenya as elite-driven financial projects that simply replace one destination of extraction for another.[8] My ethnographic research in Sudan, South Sudan, and Kenya has also illuminated the popular understanding of a racial geography within which the concept of African racial dignity comes to life as an embrace of shared ethnicity (such as the Luo and other ethnic groups than span South Sudan's borders with Kenya and Uganda) and the rejection of the aspiration towards *Arab* as a concept of identity. The specter of the Kenyan flag in South Sudan's can be read as an acceptance that Arab identity is often only available to darker-skinned people with explanation and as an aspiration, tethered to religious commitment, the Arabic language, and claims to particular ethno-geographic heritage.

While a fuller analysis of the constitution of Arab identity vis-a-vis language, geography, and religion calls for its

own space of analysis, it is perhaps important to reflect on the contested availability of the Arabic language to South Sudanese and the unavailability of Arab identity. The fall of long-time president Omar Al-Bashir represented the end of an era of Pan-Arabism that led to, for example, the relatively straightforward granting of Sudanese citizenship to Syrian refugees in contrast to the myriad bureaucratic hurdles and expenses faced by Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees and the impossibility of dual citizenship for South Sudanese nationals.[9] Arabic was the national language of Sudan pre-partition, yet racialized language ideologies that associate the Arabic language with phenotypically fair-skinned people has rendered Sudanese, and other phenotypically dark-skinned Arabic speakers, as undesirable visitors throughout the Arabic-speaking world. This form of racism is particularly acute if they are unable or unwilling to speak in a normative (read urban) dialect of Egypt, the Levant, or the Gulf. This dynamic, where one's speech engenders a racialized skepticism of one's belonging, also shapes and has shaped the experience of southern/South Sudanese in Khartoum (albeit tethered to hair texture, height, and the comparative darkness of one's skin). The fall of Al-Bashir opened the door to reckoning with the Arabness of Sudan as youth activists raised important questions about identity with, and belonging to, the Arabic-speaking world at both the interpersonal and geopolitical scales.

The still ongoing transition in Sudan began with uprisings in late 2018 in urban centers outside of Khartoum, namely Atbara and Gedarif. Nisrin El-Amin and Zachariah Mamphilly reminded us that what was insurgent at the time was more than what the international media described as popular dissatisfaction with the prices of bread, fuel and other basic commodities.[10] This perspective obscured not only the ways working-class communities had been mobilizing against recent austerity measures but also the larger demand for the overthrow of the then ruling NCP regime. The phrase popularized by anti-government uprisings elsewhere in the Arabic speaking world in 2010 and 2011, "*As-sha'b yurīd asgat a-nizam* (The people want the regime to fall.)" inspired what would become the initial slogan of the Sudanese uprisings,"*tasgūt bas* (Just fall.)". Protests continued even after the military ousted Al-Bashir, refusing the rule of the Transitional Military Council (TMC). The original negative demand would give way to the positive call for "*madanīyya* (civility)," which indexed both the administrative desire for civilian rule and an affective yearning for a new quotidian experience devoid of oppressively conservative public order laws.

Madanīyya gave life to a demand not simply for a political transition but a new imagination of how the state would feel in the daily lives of its citizens. The new artwork that appeared on walls and bridges throughout the city refashioned spaces of Khartoum into experimental domains of an alternative public sphere. Noah Salomon has drawn attention to the political possibility immanent in the murals depicting the ancient civilizations in what is today Sudan.[11] Images of the pyramids at Meroe, ancient deities, references to the ancient kingdom of Kush and to Sudan as the home of the origin of civilization permeate the artistic expression that still peppers various neighborhoods of Khartoum. Anecdotal references to Sudanese people as "*ashāb al-hadāra* (the owners of civilization)," are perhaps on their way to becoming as common as the everyday claims to Egypt as "*ūm a-dunya* (the mother of the world)." Salomon's attention to material culture provides tools to think through the place of Kush as a site of political and popular solidarity and a vehicle for the remembrance of those who lost their lives in the process of uprooting a longstanding government. Nostalgia for a past beyond living memory can be productive; it may widen the range of resources available to imagine political community.

I focus on how the Sudanese independence flag represents a related source of ideological material with which to recast both the imagined political community of Sudan itself as well as through what idioms it engages continental and global discourses on the racialization of nation-states themselves as variously African, Arab, or otherwise. The productive nostalgia linking the ways people draw from the ancient and modern past could be no clearer than in the mural declaring: "We demand Sudan's exit from the Arab league, we are negroes, the sons of Kush." The

mural goes on to demand the closure of the border with Egypt and to claim Sudanese ownership of the contested Halayib triangle along the coast of the Red Sea at Sudan's easternmost border with Egypt.

Photo taken by author.

Multiple murals link the independence flag to freedom, as a term in both English and the Arabic language and as a concept expressed allegorically. The flag, though abstracted, remains recognizable in the top-down order of the blue, yellow, and green bands. It appears as a pair of wings or as a meat grinder crushing chains into the pattern of the flag, or as a book on which "Freedom" is inscribed in the flag's colors. The questions these examples raise are then: freedom from what? Is this desire for freedom limited to national borders or do contemporary experiences of Sudanese citizens in the Arabic-speaking world—bearing in mind the complex history of slavery—conjure a desire to *get out*, as it were?

Amélie Le Renard and Neha Vora remind us, in this POMEPS collection, that "terms that reference nationality are not merely neutral descriptors of passport belonging—they code a regime of value" in which communities, individuals and their interior and exterior characteristics occupy differential places in a global hierarchy.[12] Their intervention draws attention to the significance of race at the scale of geopolitics wherein national categories become *racial* categories. Bearing this in mind, what racializing work does waving this flag accomplish? If the act represents the desire for connection to an Africa that Sudan has either ostensibly lost or been unable to articulate more fully, do such invocations conjure demands for material assistance to Sudan's *own* African, ever-marginalized and insufficiently Arabized peripheral communities?[13]

Photo taken by author. "Freedom" in both English and the Arabic language.

On the one hand, as protests and sit-ins have erupted in Darfur and eastern Sudan since Al-Bashir left office, one could read the invocation of this flag as bourgeois symbology that, not unlike toppling statues of slave traders/owners in the global North, leads to little or no substantive change to structural inequality. With another, less cynical interpretation, one could argue that the reanimation of the former flag is a refusal of the Arabic-speaking world centered in the Levant, the Gulf and Egypt (notwithstanding the ways Egyptian laborers have been historically disparaged throughout the Middle East), in order to recast Sudan as definitively African and to challenge the incessant mockery of Blackface in Arabic-language media, the disbelief that Sudanese (and South Sudanese by extension) speak and write Arabic, and the forms of super-exploitative labor that characterize so much of the experience of Blackness in the Arabic-speaking world.

Returning to the question of how we identify Blackness when skin color does not provide an easy roadmap, let us reflect on the racial irony immanent in the invocation

of Sudan's Africanness via the independence flag. The reanimation of this flag during the recent uprisings has appeared less than a decade after South Sudan's secession. However disappointing its independence may now be, southern grievances were articulated *on those very terms:* the capacity to be African and non-Arab, to be non-Muslim, to be free from the confines of a mono-lingual and mono-religious relationship to the state. While we cannot ignore the significant role of George W. Bush's government, the U.S evangelical right, and their global north partners in making real South Sudanese independence; we can neither lose sight of the long-standing autonomous desire from southern Sudan for self-government as redress for the forms of religious, linguistic, and geographic racialization that marginalized—and Blackened—southerners in Sudan before and after separation (specifically in barring dual citizenship). As such the reemergence of the tri-color flag provides a platform to reflect on race broadly in the now two Sudans and on a nation-state's place-in-the-world within a global racialized order of nation-states.

The 2020 signing of the Juba peace agreement between the Transitional Sovereignty Council and rebel groups in the west and south of what is now Sudan resonates with the productive nostalgia that reanimated the original independence flag. New council positions have been assigned to leaders of political organizations that represent the political and economic interests of Sudan's racially marginalized communities: the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), the Darfur-based Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudan Liberation Movement for Justice (SLMJ). To be sure, minority representation in government does not necessarily lead to material change for the minoritized communities from which the representatives hail, yet the productive nostalgia that brought new life to the independence flag seems linked to a multicultural vision of Sudan, one which failed to make unity attractive to South Sudan during the transitional period of the 2005 CPA, such that communities traditionally racialized as non-Arab will figure more prominently in the state's representation of itself.

Endnotes

[1] Recent anthropological inquiries into the study of race have centered white supremacy as the foundational logic of global inequality (Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre 2019). While we must continue to pay attention to the material affects of anthropology's racializing gaze on the Other, we must also attend to American anthropology's role in the cultural *construction* of whiteness as a typology for human difference that provided the means for undesirable European immigrants to assimilate into the early 20th century United States (See Baker 1998, Anderson 2019)

[2] This question has implications for examining difference in myriad contexts where skin color is not a salient modality of racial difference.

[3] Alshaif, Gokh Amin. 2021 *Black and Yemeni: Origin Myths, Imagined Genealogies, and Resistance.* POMEPS, Racial Formation in the Middle East and Africa. POMEPS Studies

[4] Garuba, Harry. 2008. "Race in Africa: Four Epigraphs and a Commentary." *PMLA* 123 (5): 1640–48.

[5] Ibid. p 1641.
Fanon, Frantz. 2008. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York; [Berkeley, Calif.: Grove Press ; Distributed by Publishers Group West. p. 89

[6] Salomon, Noah. 2016. For Love of the Prophet: An Ethnography of Sudan's Islamic State. Princeton University Press. p. 5

[7] What I am drawing attention to is the racialization of the Arabic spoken in South Sudan and the South Sudanese accent in other national dialects. Both Arabic-speaking world and that the dialect of Arabic spoken in Juba is largely unknown—and likely imperceptible as Arabic—to many in the Arabic speaking world.

[8] Nyaba, Peter Adwok. 2019. South Sudan: Elites, Ethnicity, Endless Wars and the Stunted State. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mkuki Na Nyota Publishers.

[9] With secession, determining who was "southern" amongst those in Sudan became a question of geographic belonging. Paternal heritage from the three historical regions of southern Sudan (Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria, Upper Nile) disqualifies you from Sudanese citizenship. Only residents of, or those descendant from residents of, Abyei (the still contested border region of the two Sudans) are eligible for dual citizenship.

[10] Elamin, Nisrin, and Zachariah Mampilly. n.d. "Analysis | Recent Protests in Sudan Are Much More than Bread Riots." *Washington Post.* Accessed December 28, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/12/28/recent-protests-in-sudan-are-much-more-than-bread-riots/.

[11] Salomon, Noah. 2020. "What Lies Beneath the Sands: Archaeologies of Presence in Revolutionary Sudan." POMEPS Studies 40, 31-39.

[12] Le Renard, Amélie and Neha Vora. 2021 Interrogating Race in Gulf Studies. POMEPS Studies

[13] Here I refer to areas such as Darfur and South Kordofan (Nuba Mountains) that have been the subject of campaigns to institute Arabic/Islam in place of local languages, religions, elements of ethnic community, etc. This of course maintains relationships of dominance over these places.

Racial tropism in Afro-Arab relations. Notes based on some ordinary incident

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In prologue: a question

Why and how does "race talk", so politically incorrect in an intercultural community of faith, nonetheless continue to imbue the consensual discourse of cousinhood and brotherhood of Afro-Arab relations?

Africans and Arabs: ambiguities of an intercultural community of the same faith

When it comes to considering Afro-Arab relations, there is what we may call a 'bridge imaginary' that is translated through a constant production of archives that concern scholarly literature, popular statements, routes, and even reciprocal influences that these two communities might have maintained for a long time. The materials and corpus that rhythm my contribution cut out in this imaginary two main assertions, each of which represents a determining axis in the production of Afro-Arab community or fraternal discourse:

- The celebration of an intercultural community with a shared faith
- The sharing of a Third World or South-South political condition

From each of these statements of convergence or consensus, I attempt to question the asperities or dissonances that cross them, whether in a filigree or crude manner. Within this logic of counterpoint, I set the scene with two telling vignettes taken directly from various persistent forms of oral culture.

The first is a story of singing miracles and pilgrimage, which I witnessed surprised and joyful ten years ago.

> In the popular district of Yoff, a fisher village located in the northwestern part of the Senegalese capital, a voice rips the air and comes closer. It is that of a *baay-faal*, a member of a sub-branch of the *Murid* brotherhood. One may consider the *baay-faal* as both a mendicant order and a service corps of order for the *Murid Community*. A passing *baay-faal* is never without entertainment, but it remains, after all, trivial for the inhabitants of the country. Yet for this *baay-faal*, something was unusual. He was not asking for alms by reciting a *qasida* of the founder of the Sheikh or singing the name of the founder of the sub-branch. He was singing the odyssey of the pilgrimage to Mecca of one of the most popular *caliphs* of the *Murid* brotherhood, the *sheikh* Fallou Mbacké (1888-1968). In his voice that rose and fell, shifting in pitch and tone, one could almost relive the gesture of his hero, seeing him literally talking to the dead, to the *jinne* and the angels. Hearing him speak to the Prophet; watching him solve mysteries and edify the scholars of Mecca; joining him in the prayers he led; admiring him in his polite way of foiling the plans of the Meccans who, seduced and helpless, wanted to keep him with them and not let him return to his homeland. In a word, the Black hero "astonished" the "Arabs."

The second, more recent, takes place in Essaouira, Morocco. In a meeting that addresses migration and diasporas, but which intends above all to celebrate the fresh breeze of royal recognition of the African roots (also) of Morocco's identity.[1]

> After the inaugural session, coffee break: a gentleman came in my direction, just for *small talk*. I was soon to understand that he knew Senegal and had stayed there. The customary *salamaleks* with a couple of words in Wolof. Then, the crux of the matter. His

point: the unacceptable behavior of the "Lebanese" in Africa. In a few minutes, work and social relationships were discussed. And not much was forgiven or recognized to them. Then, to mark the "frank comradeship" between Moroccans and Senegalese, my new friend said, about the girls of my country: "We, at least, when we get them pregnant, we marry them!"

While the vignette literally depicts a battle of precedence between Blacks and Arabs, the second one proceeds, entirely, from the remains of imaginary uses of Black Women's bodies reducible to concubines. More broadly, these two vignettes introduce us to the ways in which ideas of "Africanness" and "Arabness" are dialectically linked. They are also enlightening, in that they haunt the intellectual, cultural, and political construction of relations between two spaces well-versed in the arts of celebrating their shared Islamic faith and South-South solidarity.

Speaking Race in an intercultural community of faith and political destiny

"La religion en partage, la "couleur" et l'origine comme frontière. Les migrants sénégalais au Maroc [The religion shared. "Color" and "Origin" as a border. Senegalese Migrants in Morocco]" is the title, both revealing and beautiful, of an article by Mahamet Timéra published in 2011.[2] The author points to the central problem of social relations formed in the community of Islamic faith that aggregates Blacks and Arabs. He shows how the confraternal relationship claimed is always caught up by the memories of Black slavery and the contemporary problems of "statutory servitude" which prolong them in the socio-economic and symbolic architectures of Arab and Maghrebian societies.

Nazarena Lanza has addressed these aspects, particularly those of the construction of borders, by color and origin, in a book chapter entitled, "Les domestiques sénégalaises au Maroc [Senegalese domestic servants in Morocco]."[3] In addition to describing the imaginaries and practices that surround domestic work in Morocco, the author's work uses numerous interviews with members of Moroccan communities in Senegal. The author distinguishes here two phases: a first one which goes back to the second half of the 19th century to the 1950s, and a second one which goes from the 1950s to the present day. She notes, particularly in the second phase, the existence of a break in the culture and mechanisms of integration of Moroccans in Senegalese society with the arrival of new generations of traders who, unlike the first, no longer take women in the host communities and are more reluctant to engage in social and cultural integration.

A young shopkeeper confided to her, "*I've been living here for ten years but, beyond appearances, I don't feel integrated. I don't want my children to grow up here because it's not a real Muslim country. I can't accept that my daughter goes to a club, and here it's impossible to prevent it, because there is too much freedom. Besides, everyone drinks, smokes... Morocco is not the only place where people don't drink, but at least it is not considered so normal.*"[4] In the same vein, one of his interlocutors, a young student, told her: "*I've been living in Dakar for 3 years, but I've never had Senegalese friends. I prefer to stay with the Moroccans, because it's easier with them, we have the same habits.*"[5]

These passages are of genuine interest for the discussion because a few years later I had to do some fieldwork with these same communities and meet some of the actors that Lanza had interviewed. But the harvest of my interviews was made of a completely different content. Most of my interlocutors had only spoken to me of "privileged relations" based on religion and confraternal obedience, between two "fraternal countries."[6]

The figures that emerge both in these extracts and in the hilarious or sorrowful features of the shared sketches, form the heart of a racial and symbolic battle over the representation of Islam. Who represents Islam and who cannot represent it almost by nature? The syntagms, "Arab-Islamic cultures" on the one hand, and, on the other hand, "black Islam" open, in this perspective and in their impossible conjunction, a field of confrontation whose stake is in the hierarchical principle that binds a Center

holding the monopoly of legitimacy *vs* a possibly accessory Periphery. This divide implies most interestingly here an idea of a division of tasks and prestige between the "Black Africans" and the "Arabs."

In a symposium organized in 1988 on the theme "Africa and Arab-Islamic culture", the Director General of ISESCO, in his opening address, suggested the following: "*The Arab-Islamic culture is distinguished by its great capacity for assimilation. It gives as much as it receives. It gives to Africa the basic principles of Islam and the rules for the healthy building of society. It borrowed from Africa the sense of good, love and peace.*"[7] Without overly forcing the interpretation, it is difficult not to hear under these lines, the cliche of the *good sava*ge that Jean Jacques Rousseau has defined as innocent, who comes to clash with another cliche, the *ferocious Arab* whose temper must be softened. Like the burden of the white man, the African Black Muslim is here the object of an unceasing mission of Islamization and Islamic education that is the duty of the Arab Muslim Man to undertake.

African authors, such as Amar Samb (1972), have shown that the idea of African (intellectual) contribution to the mission of propagating Islam is to be thought, above all, as a form of identity affirmation, even a racial one.[8] This awareness of a divide built on the idea of race is strong and structuring. The sources that feed it draw their materiality from various historical and temporal sequences, ranging from the question of slavery in Islam to the history of Western domination of the rest of the world. The problem that I pose is therefore that of reciprocal or mutual definitions, charged with identity assignments that are more often negative than positive, which can be identified as repetitions of formulations carried by the racialist and racist anthropological imagination that accompanied Western domination of the world. Certainly, the Afro-Arab relationship precedes the arrival of the West and is already the bedrock of the production and circulation of multiple modalities of mutual and reciprocal definitions. However, and this is the hypothesis defended here, the westernization of the world order carries with it recompositions of narratives through which self-images and those conveyed of others are modified and repositioned on the basis of patterns that are not necessarily continuities of the ones that prevailed before.

For my part, I have shown that Sufism phenomena and its popular appropriations have constituted some mystical world in which radical responses have been constructed to challenge and reverse the centrality claimed by Arab-Islamic culture.[9] The adventures of the pilgrimage of *Sëriñ* Fallou, sung by the young *baay-faal*, are ultimately intended to show a bedazzlement of Arab-white in the face of the prodigious gift of the Holy Black. But it is less this astonishment, which is the end aimed by the song than, rather, something else. Indeed, what is most at stake here is the proof that Allah, in a way, has decided the debate between "Arab Muslims" and "Black African Muslims." In this circulating imaginary, the predominance of Sufi Islam in Africa can no longer be the consequence of a pagan breeding ground on which Islam would have been grafted, but a project of faith that encompasses a political action of reconfiguration of the cartography of proximity with Allah and of the representativeness of his privileged community.

Turning now to the issue of Afro-Arab relations from a more secular perspective, I would like to engage the following questions: what have the great phases or great moments of the decolonization movements and the emergence of the Third World renewed or recomposed in the discourses and imaginaries that structure Afro-Arab's relations? I would like to answer this from a perspective of International and South-South Cooperation between African and Arabic World that Samir Amin speaks of in terms of "experience" (we can infer historical). He approaches it by posing an important question: "*Does this experience initiate a different mode of cooperation, from a perspective of strengthening the "collective autonomy" of the Third World vis-à-vis the North? Or is it merely an extension of traditional North-South relations*?"[10] For Amin, despite promising postulates, this cooperation, though far from being negligible, ended up being a simple cog in the wheel in the accompaniment of the "logic of the global system", becoming, in doing so, a "partner - despite him perhaps - of the "creditors" of the third world."[11]

One can be surprised here by the erasure or absence of what would represent a specific marking supposed to highlight the exceptional character of the relationship that one seeks to praise. Elsewhere, I have analyzed, the Senegalese reception of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit held in Dakar from 9 to 11 December 1991.[12] What was supposed to be a "feast of friendship" turned into a source of emotions and resentment… The absence of the great leaders of the Arab world made the host President, Abdou Diouf, say, "Africa will remember for a long time." Diouf added: "*Arabs in general should consider the Blacks more. There is a problem there and I do not want to go so far as to use the expression of cultural contempt. We respect the Arabs more than they respect us. This sixth OIC Summit illustrates this.*"[13] The editorialists urged African leaders to get out of what they called the "alienating aid" that binds them to Arab countries. A columnist for the national weekly *Wal Fadjri* wrote: "*The investments of the Arab oil countries in parts of the world populated by Muslims are insignificant compared to the mass of money they inject in the developed countries. Of course, this is where the best profits are made. (...). But these Arab countries are also members of the OIC, which is developing an attractive phraseology of religious solidarity and economic cooperation. This could not be reduced to a few "Arab-something" banks, the construction of a few cultural centers (...) or Arab schools. Still less to the carcasses of sheep sacrificed during the pilgrimage to Mecca and returned sometime later to poor countries in the form of donations offered by the Saudi Arabian authorities.*"[14]

In conclusion: a short leaflet

In this paper, I sought to interrogate the problem of "dissonance" in an intercultural community of faith that is quick to exhibit the consensual rhetoric of cousinhood and confraternity. The corpus mobilized for this purpose consists of both ordinary interactive situations and discourses carried by scholarly or political elites. In these materials, the idea of Arab or Black race is what is at stake in both the unitary discourse and that of the quarrel. This is what I call here a racial tropism or "race-speak" in the Afro-Arab relationship. In investigating this topic that carries an order of "oppositions and hierarchies" as Etienne Balibar would say, the problem I invite to finally reflect on is what answers can be thought of, from the Afro-Arab relationship, to what Balibar has also called the "return of race", detailing what is at stake: "(...) is the return of race the continuation of yesterday's history, or the beginning of a mutation of the structures of hatred, which it would be important to measure in order to give back to the idea of humanity the capacity to overcome its deficiencies and surpass its limits?[15]

Endnotes

1 See the Speech of the Throne, July 30, 2014, by King Mohamed VI.
2 Timéra, Mahamet., « La religion en partage, la « couleur » et l'origine comme frontière », Cahiers d'études africaines, 201, 2011, pp. 145-167.
3 Lanza, Nazarena., « Les domestiques sénégalaises au Maroc » pp.119-145 in *D'une Afrique à l'autre. Migrations subsahariennes au Maroc*. Michel Peraldi (Dir). Editions Karthala, Cjb, Ciss, 154 p.
4 Speech of the Throne, July 30, 2014,, p.123. In French in the Text. My translation.
5 Speech of the Throne, July 30, 2014, In French in the Text. My translation.
6 Seck, Abdourahmane. « Sénégal-Maroc : usages et mésusages de la circulation des ressources symboliques et religieuses entre deux pays « frères » » in S. Bredeloup, *Afrique et développement*, Volume XL, No. 1, 2015, pp. 159-181. Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique (CODESRIA), 2015.
7 Isesco (Publications)., L'Afrique et la culture arabo-islamique, Imprimerie Najah El Jadida, Casablanca, 245 p. 1988. In French in the Text. My translation.
8 Samb, Amar. Essai sur la contribution du Sénégal à la littérature d'expression arabe. Dakar, IFAN, *1972*
9 Seck, Abdourahmane., *La question musulmane au Sénégal. Essai d'anthropologie d'une nouvelle modernité*. Paris, karthala, 2010.
10 Amin Samir., Préface à l'ouvrage de Charbel Zarour, *La coopération arabo-sénégalaise*. L'Harmattan, 1989, p.110, p. 7. My translation
11 Idem
12 Seck, Abdourahmane., *La question musulmane au Sénégal. Essai d'anthropologie d'une nouvelle modernité*. Paris, karthala, 2010.
13 Le Monde, November 10th, 1991. Quoted in Seck (2010), p. 199. My Translation
14 Walf-Fadjri, n°290, 1991. Quoted in Seck (2010), p. 200. My translation
15 Balibar, Étienne., « Le retour de la race », in *Mouvement*, La Découverte, 2007/2, n°50, pp.162-171

Interrogating Race in Gulf Studies

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This paper aims, first, to explore the shortcomings that have derived from ignoring race in Gulf studies, and second, to suggest that centering the region in race and ethnic studies, which tend to favor American exceptionalist and Atlantic Ocean framings, has the potential to deepen our understanding of global race hierarchies, the transnational historical intimacies through which they emerge, and their contemporary localizations. Before making our argument, we would like to present the perspective from which we speak. We have both been conducting ethnographic research in the Arabian Peninsula for over a decade, Amelie in Riyadh and Dubai, Neha in Dubai and Doha. In our projects we have worked with a range of residents with various nationalities, income levels, and histories in the region.

The GCC states are heavily reliant on immigrant labor at all levels and in many cases, citizens constitute a small proportion of the total population; in the UAE and Qatar this is less than 15%. For immigrants there is no real pathway to citizenship; they are tied to employer-sponsored short-term renewable visas and can only sponsor immediate family members if they earn a certain level of income. Nevertheless, there are vibrant diasporic communities across the Gulf. Gulf citizenship laws, state rhetoric, and early social science scholarship have resulted in naturalized ideas of Gulf populations as comprised of two distinct groups: Arab citizens and immigrant workers. Citizens are often portrayed as a homogenous indigenous group, while "migrants" are perpetual outsiders: fleeting and foreign. Ethnographers and immigration scholars in the generation before us were critical of this framing and interested in how power produces categories of identity and belonging; they began using the term "ethnocracy" to describe the ways that state, employment, and social structures create hierarchies of privilege based on ideas of essentialized national groups.[1] Ethnocracy as an analytic has allowed scholars to move past normative analyses of residents as "nationals" or "migrants" and instead consider how these statuses are co-produced within relationships of power. Indeed, we have utilized ethnocracy quite often as a shorthand for Gulf hierarchies in our earlier work.

However, we have come to see that ethnocracy is also a limited framework for understanding difference and inequality in the Arabian Peninsula. It continues to define identities primarily as passport-based; it also collapses nationality with ethnicity, religion, language, class, phenotype, and a range of other factors that impact how people experience life in Gulf cities. And most of all, terms that reference nationality are not merely neutral descriptors of passport belonging—they code a regime of value through which human bodies, their abilities, characteristics, and inherent place in society are implied: as this essay explores, they are in fact *racial* categories. We have come to see in our more recent individual and collaborative work that race and racialization are much needed analytics for the study of the region both historically and ethnographically, as a way to analyze how multiple legacies of colonization and slavery are reassembled within current social hierarchies. Here we present a few observations regarding what the lack of a racial analysis has meant for Arabian Peninsula studies:

1. **Race is the primary technology through which transnational actors accumulate capital in the Arabian Peninsula. Ignoring race naturalizes a stratified immigration and labor structure that extracts value through racial capitalism.**

In the Arabian Peninsula, like everywhere else in the world, nationality, language, gender, and race mediate one's ability to migrate, the jobs they can get, and their compensation. Today's *differentiated* transnational labor networks are effects of intersecting histories of colonialism and racial capitalism.[2] In the Arabian Peninsula, however, labor and migration systems appear to be starkly divided by nationality due to state restrictions on permanent residency and citizenship. This means that an immigrant worker's daily life is circumscribed by the passport they

hold, and the relationship of their home country to the Gulf country where they reside. Those with so-called "strong" passports, like the US and the UK, do not need to obtain visas to enter Gulf countries, and thus their mobility is less restricted. Passports also appear to set "market value" for salaries. Australian and Canadian immigrants get paid more than Filipinos and Indians, for example. State officials, residents, employers, and economists all claim that workers are paid more or less based on their earning power in their home countries. Such arguments echo the "abstract liberalism" of color-blind racism.[3] This form of differentiation appears normal in a world where we naturalize nation-states and markets—but this is fundamentally an effect of racial capitalism and specifically its manifestations across the Indian Ocean. Scholars have long documented how transnational capitalism leverages racial and gendered technologies in flexible accumulation practices—utilizing the "nimble fingers" of docile Asian women to make computer parts, for example, or using white foremen to police brown workers in the maquilas at the US/Mexico border.[4] Construction companies in Dubai that assign different forms of semi-skilled work and management to different national groups, and house workers separated by religion and language so that they are less likely to organize, are not utilizing practices that are outside of common racial technologies of late capitalism, or exceptional to the Gulf States.[5] While some work on the history of the region has explored the connections between imperial racism and nationality differentiation in the labor force,[6] there is still an overwhelming lack of racial analysis when it comes to contemporary immigration, employment, and segregation in Gulf cities, resulting in an ongoing naturalization of nationality-based hierarchies and exclusions.

2. Ignoring race has also kept us from fully exploring the colonial history of the Arabian Peninsula and its relationship to contemporary forms of identity and difference.

Official, media, and academic discourses often reproduce the idea that there was nothing in the Arabian Peninsula before oil. In normative histories, British protectorates are presented as limited in scope and different from "real" colonization (even though colonization and imperialism have taken various forms all over the world and should not be essentialized), and as having no material consequences on Gulf states and societies—societies that were, according to the stereotype, very limited in numbers, and had primitive lifestyles and social organizations. Since the 2000s, various works have challenged this representation and highlighted how imperialism has contributed to shaping Arabian Peninsula societies. In the United Arab Emirates, for instance, the British protectorate led to the choice of one ruling family over a specific territory. In other words, power was territorialized.[7] While Saudi Arabia was not formally colonized, a treaty signed in 1915 between Ibn Saud and Great Britain conceded sovereignty for protection; a second treaty, in 1927, declaring Ibn Saud's complete independence, did not avoid strong forms of dependence on Great Britain until 1945, when Saudi Arabia became, to some extent, "America's Kingdom."[8] The development of industrial imperialism, in which white men were constructed as experts in charge of developing the country, is crucial to understanding current racialized hierarchies of nationalities, especially on the job market. Beyond direct, territorial colonization, the global, long-lasting effects of European and North American imperialisms around the world have consequences that justify using a postcolonial lens: for instance, they had a crucial impact on the definitions of skills on globalized jobmarkets, and on racialized labor stratification techniques to prevent organizing, in the Gulf and elsewhere.[9] Protectorates, industrial imperialism, and the global coloniality of knowledge have had long lasting effects on who is considered as skilled, and which skills and which universities and forms of knowledge are valued in Arabian societies.

3. The production of the Gulf national is a racial project that has required invisibilizing the history and afterlives of both slavery and migration.

Gulf states work hard to police boundaries between citizens and non-citizens. This has required the purification of the Gulf national through romantic

tropes of Arab Bedouin ancestry, heritage projects, the development of a ubiquitous national dress, and investment in narrow versions of language and culture education. The result is an imagined community purified of its multicultural, multilingual, and multiracial pasts and presents—a community that requires ongoing violences and erasures to maintain. Until recently academic scholarship has been rather complicit with state projects in representing Gulf nationals as a homogenous Arab group, when on-the-ground experiences with Gulf nationals quickly belie this presumption. Gulf nationals range in phenotype from whitest to darkest with a range of facial features; intermarriage for men is rather common as it is in many Muslim-majority societies, so many Gulf citizens have non-Gulf citizen mothers; Gulf citizens speak a range of languages and often their first language is not Arabic;[10] and many Gulf families are transnational across the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian Ocean, and the horn of Africa. In addition, there is a long history of African slavery in the Arabian Peninsula; Zanzibar and Oman have had a long imperial connection; and merchants have settled in the region from both the Eastern and Western Indian Ocean. Many Gulf citizens have ancestries in current Iran.

Works on Blackness in the Gulf are still under-developed, while such a focus would reveal much about the legacies of slavery, structural racism, and the interlocking of race, class, gender, and nationality.[11] Religious difference is also part of the racialization of Gulf nationals. In Bahrain for instance, Frances Hasso has shown how discourses legitimizing the suppression of the 2011 mass uprising had racialized Shia protesters, especially by accusing them of being sexually deviant.[12] Gulf citizens grow up deeply aware of hierarchies that are rooted in these legacies, such as class, sect, tribe, ethnicity, skin color, maternal origin, language, culture, and a range of other factors which are fundamentally about divergences from an idealized pure Arab Gulf national identity. Race is an important concept to re-interrogate how nationality and Arabness are constructed, and how difference and hierarchy is constructed among national citizens.[13] It participates in class formations among them and is central to understanding governmentality, forms of securitization, and surveillance by Gulf states.

4. **Ignoring race contributes to Orientalism and exceptionalism as normalized ways of knowing the Gulf.**

While Orientalism reifies a divide between West and East, modern and traditional, liberal and illiberal, progressive and savage, representations of the Gulf include, notably, the tropes of hypermodernity and inauthenticity, which is why we chose to talk about "exceptionalism" in a book we have co-written with Ahmed Kanna.[14] Among other exceptionalist representations, racializing, proto-orientalist stereotypes about "nationals" in the Gulf are sometimes uncritically reproduced in social science. For instance, some works about the nationalization of jobs give voice to managers in the Gulf asserting that "nationals are lazy," analyzing it not as racist allegation, but as a factor explaining why nationalization policies do not have better results. More generally, we observed that in many academic circles, generalizing stereotypes about Gulf nationals as ostentatiously rich, hypocritical, exploitative, or sexually frustrated were commonplace in casual conversations. Similarly, a focus on the "kafala" system of migrant sponsorship as somehow the root cause of labor exploitation in the Gulf, and "modern-day slavery" as a condition that is exceptional in the contemporary world to the subaltern Gulf migrant, reproduces Orientalist representations at the expense of investigations into how Gulf labor conditions are produced in a transnational context and how exploitation is enabled by global racial hierarchies.[15]

5. **Ignoring race has engendered a lack of reflexivity about researchers' statuses, perceptions, and privileges, especially as whites or/and as Westerners.**

The researchers whose works have been published as books in English by Western publishers, and who are internationally recognized, are mostly based in Western European and North American universities, hold Western passports, and for the most part are white. Most of them (especially until the 2000s) have not analyzed their relation to Gulf societies, and presented themselves as objective outsiders, a discourse about one's position that is also

common among white/Western residents of the Gulf. Such positioning has gone with an ignorance of structural privileges that Western residents, and especially white Western residents, benefit from. These privileges have contributed, in many cases, to making fieldwork and international publishing possible. While migration studies have been an important subfield of Gulf studies, white immigrants have only recently been studied within the field, and we are two of the scholars who have written the most on this topic.[16] While white immigrants are a very small minority population, they nevertheless occupy professional positions in which they play crucial roles in the reproduction of social hierarchies, often as recruiters, consultants, and decision-makers. Far from being outsiders to Gulf societies as they often present themselves, they participate in implementing scales of salaries depending on nationalities, which, as we have argued above, are actually racial categories designed to both suppress worker organization and extract maximum labor value.

Having outlined the major shortcomings of not centering racial analysis within Gulf studies, we would like to conclude by suggesting three dimensions that make Gulf societies particularly interesting for race studies.

1. **The Gulf is a globally relevant place to study the rapid circulation and sedimentation of racial categories.**

As various works in race and migration studies have shown, racial schemas - the way in which we associate people with racial categories - vary according to national contexts, and immigrants in particular often develop specific reflexivity on racial categories since they have experienced them in several contexts.[17] Gulf societies have the highest rates of immigration in the world, and people are constantly moving in and out of Gulf cities, bringing with them ideas about difference and belonging that not only impact localized categories but also change immigrant perceptions which they then bring back to their home communities. In Amelie's work on Western privilege in Dubai, she studied how French passport holders living in Dubai interrogated what is Westernness and what is Frenchness, and how their questioning differed according to the position they had occupied in French social structure, as whites or nonwhites.[18] Some nonwhite French people defined themselves as bicultural, a self-categorization that is not so common in France where universalist republicanism, and more or less explicitly, cultural assimilation, remains the norm. Few talked about the racism they experienced in Dubai, and the ones who did so tended to minimize it. As for French white people, living in Dubai nevertheless led them to elaborate a discourse about egalitarian, liberal Westernness, through which they distanced themselves from middle and upper classes with non-Western backgrounds. Though the majority of Western passport holders in Dubai were not white, most of them, in an implicit way, still associated Frenchness with whiteness, which demonstrated the solidity of national racial constructs. In Neha's research in Education City, Doha, she observed how nonwhite faculty found outlets to express the racism they experienced in the US once they migrated to Doha, and many preferred Doha as a location of racial comfort vis-a-vis the West even as they were frustrated by white supremacy that continued to structure their everyday lives within US branch campuses. White North American faculty and administrators, on the other hand, similarly to Amelie's white French interlocutors, presented themselves as liberal, tolerant, and civilized in relation to other (nonwhite) national groups. This was despite perpetuating stereotypes that made Qatari and non-Qatari students feel deeply marginalized and choosing forms of racial segregation in their social, leisure, and residential lives.

2. **The region is also an ideal place to study how nationalities are racialized in the broader framework of racial capitalism.**

Which processes contribute to the racialization of nationalities on global job markets and in specific diasporic locations? In the United States, "Latinx" as a racial category does not allow us to understand the specific ways that Mexican immigrants experience exclusion and violence, and politicians on the left and the right as well as everyday residents know that "Mexican" signifies much more than

a passport or a geopolitical territory. In the Gulf states, a parallel argument can be made for the term "Indian," which is commonly used as a pejorative category that encompasses a range of immigrants from South Asia (and even beyond) as well as characteristics that are supposedly associated with their physicality, intellectual capacities, sexual proclivities, criminality, and hygiene. Indians are the most ubiquitous national group in the Gulf and range from the most subaltern to the most wealthy. They live in every part of every Gulf city, work in pretty much every profession, and have long histories of settlement and longstanding diasporic communities. In some cases, Indians have obtained Gulf citizenship, and in many cases, especially in Dubai, Indian merchant communities have enjoyed special relationships with Gulf rulers. Indian and other South Asian languages are commonly spoken even by those who are not from South Asian backgrounds, and South Asian foods and cultural products are consumed by all Gulf residents. As Neha has shown in her research, the Gulf is inextricably intertwined with South Asia.[19] Yet despite this ubiquity, Gulf residents (even Indians themselves) use "Indian" as a pejorative to connote certain types of unwanted people, behaviors, and affects--which are fundamentally about class and labor ("Indian" operates as a racial marker similarly to the way "Srilankiyye" circulates in Lebanon to reference migrant female domestic workers, even though Sri Lankan nationals no longer populate that employment category, as Sumayya Kassamali discusses in her paper in this volume). The question of how nationality is racialized is understudied everywhere but is particularly important to understand in the Gulf context.

3. The contexts of the region also reveal how race is gendered and sexualized.

Just as certain racial identities in the Gulf are naturalized onto certain occupations and class statuses, they are also deeply mediated by gender and sexuality. And only certain immigrants are able to legitimately perform sexual identities or construct family formations. The stereotype of the Indian or Nepali male construction worker, for example—a perpetual "bachelor" regardless of his age or marital status—is due to the fact that construction workers cannot migrate with family members and are also subject to highly regulated living and work conditions that are designed to remove them from the social fabric of Gulf cities. Their presence in public and semi-public spaces is thus suspect, and they are portrayed as sexually deviant and potentially criminal elements. Government policies and middle and upper classes share imaginaries of workers as potentially dangerous and maids as potential prostitutes, which justifies constraints on their intimacies.[20] The construction of whiteness in the Gulf, on the other hand, is associated with stereotypical heteronormativity, especially in areas that communication campaigns present as safe and family friendly. Racialization among citizens, and especially the construction of Blackness, also leans on sexual stereotypes, as Amelie could observe during her research in Riyadh in the 2000s.[21]

Studying race and racialization in the Gulf, we hope we have shown here, is a project that is not only necessary for regional studies but is also incredibly relevant for understanding larger contemporary patterns such as US imperialism, transnational family formation, international job markets, and citizenship regimes.

Endnotes

1 Longva, Ahn Nga. 1999. *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait*. Routledge.

2 For a discussion of racial capitalism, see Kelley, Robin D. G. 2017. "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?" *Boston Review* January 12, 2017: http://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism (accessed February 9, 2021); Lowe, Lisa. 2015. *The Intimacies of Four Continents.* Durham: Duke University Press; Robinson, Cedric. 1983. *Black Marxism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

3 Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2014. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. Fourth Edition. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefields Publishers; Cosquer, Claire. 2018. "Faire nation hors les murs. Dynamiques migratoires, construction du groupe national et blanchité dans l'expatriation française à Abu Dhabi." PhD diss., Sciences Po Paris.

[4] See for example Ong, Aihwa. 1987. *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline*. SUNY Press; Fuentes, Annette and Barbara Ehrenreich. 1983. *Women in the Global Factory*. South End Press.
[5] See Sumayya Kassamali's paper on Lebanon in this conference.
[6] Khalili, Laleh. 2020. *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula*. London: Verso; Vitalis, Robert. 2006. *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier. Stanford:* Stanford University Press.
[7] Kanna, Ahmed. 2011. *Dubai: The City as Corporation.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
[8] Vitalis 2006.
[9] Khalili 2020.
[10] Many children in the Gulf learn the language of their live-in nannies, who are usually immigrants from Asia or Africa, before or in conjunction with Arabic.
[11] See Gokh Alshaif's paper in this conference.
[12] Hasso, Frances. 2016. "The Sect-Sex-Police Nexus and Politics in Bahreïn's Pearl Revolution." In *Freedom without Permission: Bodies and Space in the Arab Revolutions*, ed. Frances Hasso and Zakia Salime, 103-37. Durham: Duke University Press.
[13] See Noora Lori and Ioana Kuzmova's paper in this conference.
[14] Kanna, Ahmed, Amélie Le Renard, Neha Vora. 2020. *Beyond Exception: New Interpretations of the Arabian Peninsula*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
[15] For more on kafala's history and interconnectedness with transnational racialized labor hierarchies see Al Shehabi, Omar Hesham. 2019. "Policing labour in empire: the modern origins of the Kafala sponsorship system in the Gulf Arab States. *British Journal of Middle East Studies.* Published online 27 Feb 2019: https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2019.1580183; Fernandez, Bina. 2021. "Racialised institutional humiliation through the *Kafala*." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Published online 03 Feb 2021: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1876555. See also Sumayya Kassamali's essay in this volume on kafala in Lebanon.
[16] See Le Renard, Amélie. 2021 (2019). *Western Privilege: Work, Intimacy and Postcolonial Hierarchies in Dubai*. Stanford: Stanford University Press and Vora, Neha. 2018. *Teach for Arabia: American Universities, Liberalism, and Transnational Qatar*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
[17] Roth, Wendy D. 2012. *Race Migrations: Latinos and the Cultural Transformation of Race*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
[18] Le Renard, Amélie. 2021 (forthcoming). Western Privilege: Work, Intimacy, and Postcolonial Hierarchies in Dubai. Stanford University Press.
[19] Vora, Neha. 2013. *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora.* Durham: Duke University Press.
[20] See for example Bristol-Rhys, Jane, and Caroline Osella. 2016. "Neutralized Bachelors, Infantilized Arabs: Between Migrant and Host Gendered and Sexual Stereotypes in Abu Dhabi." In *Masculinities under Neoliberalism*, ed. A. Cornwall, 111–24. London: Zed Books; Buckley, Michelle. 2015. "Construction Work, 'Bachelor' Builders and the Intersectional Politics of Urbanization in Dubai." In *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf*, ed. O. AlShehabi, A. Hanieh, and A. Khalaf, 132–50. London: Pluto Press; Lori, Noora. 2011. "National Security and the Management of Migrant Labor: A Case Study of the United Arab Emirates." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 20, no. 3–4: 315–37; Mahdavi, Pardis. 2016. *Crossing the Gulf: Love and Family in Migrant Lives*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
[21] Le Renard Amélie. 2014. A Society of Young Women. Stanford University Press.

The *Kafala* System as Racialized Servitude

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As is well known to both scholars of the Middle East and readers of global news, migrant labor in Jordan, Lebanon, and most of the Arabic-speaking countries surrounding the Persian Gulf is governed by a set of regulations referred to as "the *kafala* system." The word *kafala,* usually translated as "sponsorship," references the fact that a foreign worker's residence and employment in a given country is directly tied to their sponsor or *kafeel* – something often used to explain the high levels of abuse associated with this system. Scholarship on the *kafala* system, in turn, has particularly emphasized its centrality to the development of exclusionary regimes of citizenship in the oil-rich Gulf. And while a growing body of work has attended to new forms of belonging that have emerged from decades of temporary foreign labor in the region, as well as agentive spaces of resistance, it has yet to adequately foreground the question of race (see also Vora & Le Renard in this collection).[1] Historicizing the development of the *kafala* system in Lebanon, a context where "*kafala*" is specifically associated with female African and Asian migrant *domestic* labor,[2] points to its inextricability from processes of racialization. In particular, the development of the term *Srilankiyye* – literally meaning "Sri Lankan" but used to refer to all female migrant domestic workers, regardless of country of origin – suggests ways in which scholarship can attend to local terminology in order to better understand the new social hierarchies that have emerged in the aftermath of regional labor migration.

Histories of Domestic Labor in Lebanon

Upper-class households in the areas that make up present-day Lebanon have long relied on outside help to perform domestic labor. Leaving aside the extended histories of domestic slavery under the Ottoman Empire,[3] well into the twentieth century, domestic service was arranged through local relations between well-off families and the poorer members of local villages, including those from what is today Syria. Rural families from Mount Lebanon would place their daughters in the homes of the wealthy, where, in exchange for household labor, the girls would be educated and socialized into the gendered practices of the elite, often increasing their chance at upward mobility through marriage.[4] In contexts where wages were offered, they were often paid directly to the girls' fathers.[5] Elizabeth Thompson notes that in 1922 over 22,000 peasant women were recorded working as domestic help in the homes of their wealthier neighbours in the region, and families whose income had collapsed due to the decline of the silk industry in the region sent their daughters to work inside homes in Damascus and Beirut.[6] In the years after Lebanese independence in 1943, they were joined by Palestinians, Egyptians, and others fleeing regional turmoil for the economic haven that was supposed to be Lebanon.[7] Leila Fawaz records a woman telling her that as late as the 1960s, Druze and Christian women in Lebanon would refuse to work in factories or hospitals in Beirut, leaving such unrespectable jobs for the Kurds and the Shias, but would prefer the socially acceptable position of working inside the homes of wealthy Christian families.[8]

It was during the Lebanese Civil War that the demographic composition of these arrangements began to change. Egyptian and other workers from the region quickly fled the climate of militarized insecurity and returned home. Palestinians, unable to flee and centrally implicated in the war, became targets of heightened suspicion and distrust. In the words of one elderly Lebanese woman, "During the civil war the Palestinians became so strong, we stopped asking them to come for housework because we were afraid of them."[9] Syrian workers, meanwhile, both male and female, faced mass expulsions from those areas that fell under the control of Christian militias during the war, something John Chalcraft identifies as the most important factor that caused the shift towards Asian labor in Lebanon.[10] At the same time, the civil war saw approximately 40% of the Lebanese population leave the country between 1975-1989, subsequently increasing the

demand for foreign workers to fill their place.[11] Lastly, global economic crises of the 1970s led to a number of Asian countries, particularly the Philippines and Sri Lanka, introducing policies aimed at exporting their female labor force in order to reduce unemployment and increase national remittances.[12] The post-1973 oil boom in the Arabic-speaking countries surrounding the Persian Gulf made it an especially attractive destination for such migrant labor, both from South and Southeast Asia as well as from Lebanon. The confluence of these many factors provided the backdrop for the shift in Lebanon's domestic service sector.

The earliest evidence of migrant domestic workers coming to Lebanon involves small numbers of women from Sri Lanka and the Seychelles Islands entering the country in the 1970s.[13] Despite the ongoing war at the time, even today people recall Filipina and Sri Lankan women entering the country during the 1980s – something that is also reflected in novels written about this time period by Lebanese authors.[14] But migrant domestic labor only expanded into a widescale social phenomenon after the end of the war in the early 1990s, as money for reconstruction started flowing into the country. This expansion is specifically understood to be associated with wartime Lebanese migration to the Gulf, where Lebanese migrants witnessed the Asianization of the workforce in the aftermath of the discovery of oil, as well as a growing demand for, and social status associated with, domestic servants.[15] In fact, I was told over the course of my fieldwork, many returnees simply brought their migrant domestic worker back to Lebanon with them. A key intervention of my own research is therefore to place the *kafala* system at the center of the account of Lebanon's postwar neoliberalization. And a curious aspect of this story is the development of a new term to refer to migrant domestic workers in Lebanon: *Srliankiyye.*

Srliankiyye: The Racialization of Migrant Domestic Labor

Sri Lanka was the first major country of origin for migrant domestic workers arriving to Lebanon en masse after the end of the civil war. *"Srilankiyye,"* Arabic for 'female Sri Lankan,' is a seemingly neutral term that connotes nationality and gender through the use of a recognizable Arabic adjectival form. Yet, in contemporary Lebanon, *Srilankiyye* is a term used to describe migrant domestic workers of *all* countries of origin. Its derogatory definition is more akin to "maid," yet its usage captures a uniquely gendered, racialized, and classed subject position that other vernacular terms for domestic worker (such as *amile, khadime, saani'a,* or *shagghile*) do not. I argue that the term *Srilankiyye* points to one of the key sociocultural transformations effected by the expansion of migrant domestic labor in Lebanon over the last four decades: a new form of racialization.[16] More than simply a shift in popular language usage or a new racist slur, *Srilankiyye* indicates a new subject, and a new form of subjectification, in the social landscape. Moreover, taking a cue from the framework of racial capitalism, it also reminds us that the economic developments of the last century are inextricable from their reliance on various *racial* logics.

Drawing upon decades of scholarship linking race, slavery, and black critiques of Marxism, the analytic framework of racial capitalism points to the inextricability of capitalist growth from what Cedric Robinson has called hierarchies of human worth.[17] This body of work historicizes the emergence of racial ideologies and identities alongside the gendered structures of capitalism, both those of production and *re*production.[18] By situating the expansion of African and Asian migrant domestic labor in relation to the broader socioeconomic changes that took place in postwar Lebanon – and, in conversation with a growing interdisciplinary emphasis on the analytic relevance of *race* in scholarship on the Middle East (such as the many papers included here) – I understand the *kafala* system as productive of new structures of racialization, or what Jodi Melamed refers to as 'social separateness.'[19] Here, I refer not to an isolated process but a fully intersectional one; a racialization that is itself always already gendered and classed.

Of course, the *kafala* system is not an isolated phenomenon. There are multiple genealogies through

which we might understand the gendered racialization of (South/Southeast) Asian and (Sub-Saharan) African subjects in contemporary Lebanon. Alongside those of domestic slavery and servitude under the Ottoman Empire cited above, we might think of the racist discourse surrounding Senegalese troops sent to Lebanon under the French colonial mandate;[20] the movement of ideologies from fascist Germany and Italy into Lebanese political party-militias;[21] the economic and political ties with the development of the Gulf oil industry; popular associations between beauty and white skin on the one hand, and the perfect seaside tan on the other; or the many instances of cultural consumption that brought racial representations to Lebanon from the region and abroad. Unfortunately, such precise research on the production of racial hierarchies in modern Lebanon remains to be done. Here, the writings of Eve Troutt-Powell on colonial narratives pertaining to Sudan within 19th and 20th century Egypt, or Robert Vitalis on the effects of American Jim Crow legislation on the development Saudi Arabia's oil industry, or Chouki el-Hamel on gnawa music in Morocco, are all exemplary.[22] These works remind us that neither can we simply transport Western analytic concepts of race into the region, nor can we isolate the question of race in the region as a purely local one.

The Case of the Lebanese *Kafala* System

Despite these multiple genealogies of difference, returning to Lebanon indicates what might also be unique about the *kafala* system. Rather than assuming that racialization takes the same form across time and space, the emergence of *Srilankiyye* as social category points us to a specific kind of racialization that has emerged out of the migrations, wars, and labor practices of contemporary Lebanon.

Research on migrant domestic labor around the world has long emphasized its place in what feminists have called 'the international racial division of reproductive labor,' in which racialized women from the global south leave their own families behind in order to care for the families of a mostly northern female elite.[23] Lebanon, as well as countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, or Saudi Arabia, remind us that racial hierarchies are rarely neatly aligned along the divides of North/South. However, a peculiar paradox characterizes the story of Asian and African women in Lebanon: they were perceived as more trustworthy than the women that came before them due to their status as *total outsiders*. What this suggests is that they entered a country recovering from civil war already marked as the ultimate foreigners. The modes of recognition and legibility that were available to them are thus inextricable from the immense factionalism, suspicion, and social polarization of the war. This is especially the case given their demographic isolation within the larger Lebanese population.

Although Lebanon's population is only estimated at six million, it has long been identified by its demographic divisions. It is a country in which sectarian religious divisions are enshrined in government and law, membership in families has been described as preceding membership in the state,[24] and which has historically received multiple migrants and refugees, including the Armenians (who hold citizenship) and the Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, and Sudanese (who most certainly do not).

While frequently ignored in discussions of the Lebanese polity, African and Asian migrant workers offer an additional layer to the country's exclusions. Ever since the 1990s, thanks to a combination of factors including local policies restricting foreign employment, the only South/Southeast Asian and Sub-Saharan African subjects one is likely to encounter in Lebanon are migrant workers. This is what makes it possible to strip *Srilankiyye* of its national referent and reinscribe it with the designation of migrant domestic worker. It is important to remember that this was not always the case, in a country that was formerly a central node in networks of Third World Solidarity as well as the headquarters of the Palestinian Revolution. For example, Lebanese author Hala Kawtharani writes of a fictional character that becomes fascinated with his mother's account of Beirut in the 1950s and 60s: "a time when the faces of many colours from many lands walked al-Hamra Street and all the languages of the world could be heard."[25] Today, however, such international diversity is most evident – both in literature and in life – in the many

countries of origin that make up Lebanon's hundreds of thousands of migrant workers. Hence the *kafala* system has produced a near perfect synonymity between the category of racialized foreigner, and the category of domestic servant.

Over time, as domestic workers came to serve as status symbols of an emergent Lebanese middle class, a set of formal and informal practices were consolidated around both their difference and their exploitability. According to the most recent studies, less than 50% of Lebanese employers give the domestic worker her legally-entitled day of rest each week.[26] Of these, a further half forbid her from leaving the house alone on this day. One out of five employers lock the worker inside the house *at all times*. Over 93% of employers confiscate the worker's passport upon her arrival. 40% refuse to pay the woman's salary in full at the end of every month, instead paying irregularly, upon request, upon termination of the contract, or not at all. Women frequently report being forced to work 10, 12, even 18 hours a day, with few breaks, for years on end. One-third of employers are said to beat their domestic workers. And in 2017, it was reported that two domestic workers were dying a week in Lebanon, as a result of either suicide, failed attempt at escape, or murder.[27] Despite both formal and anecdotal evidence about the mistreatment of domestic workers prior to the *kafala* system, both the nature and the quantity of these deaths remains unprecedented in earlier records. Together with the demographic shift from women and girls from the region to those foreign to it, this suggests that the *kafala* system has introduced a racialized subjection that is novel in the history of the Lebanese domestic sphere. This can be explained by neither culturalist explanations nor simply the globally recognized vulnerabilities of domestic labor. Instead, conceptualizing the *kafala* system as introducing a new hierarchy of human worth into the private and public spaces of postwar Lebanon is the first step towards both understanding these violences, and imagining a future without them.

Endnotes

1 For example: Attiya Ahmed, *Everyday Conversions: Islam, Domestic Work, and South Asian Migrant Women in Kuwait* (Duke University Press, 2017); Omar al-Shehabi, "Policing Labour in Empire: The Modern Origins of the Kafala Sponsorship System in the Gulf Arab States." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2019): 1–20; Andrew Gardner, "Ethnography, Anthropology and Migration to the Arabian Peninsula: Themes from an Ethnographic Research Trajectory." Gulf Labour Markets and Migration. Gulf Research Center, 2014.

2 Technically speaking, the *kafala* system in Lebanon also encompasses male migrant labor that does not perform domestic service but can be found in sectors such as sanitation and waste management. In addition, at various times aspects of the *kafala* system have also been applied to Lebanon's large community of Syrian migrant workers as well as its many refugees. However, both in popular usage as well as in local and international legal-political discourse, *kafala* in Lebanon is synonymous with migrant domestic labor, and refers specifically to the large numbers of African and Asian women that travel to Lebanon annually under this framework. I therefore use the term in the same manner.

3 See Stephan Conermann & Gul Sen (eds.), *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire* (Bonn University Press, 2020)

4 Ray Jureidini, "In the Shadows of Family Life Toward a History of Domestic Service in Lebanon." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 5, no. 3 (2009): 74-101; Elizabeth Thompson *Colonial citizens: republican rights, paternal privilege, and gender in French Syria and Lebanon*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)

5 Jureidini, ibid.

6 See Thompson, Note 5

7 See Jureidini, Note 5

8 Leila Fawaz, "Sumaya: A Lebanese Housemaid." In *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, edited by Edmund Burke III and David Yaghoubian, 352–63. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)

9 Jureidini, 94

10 John Chalcraft, *The invisible cage: Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009)

11 Paul Tabar, "Lebanon: A country of Emigration and Immigration." *Institute for Migration Studies* (2010): 7.

12 For more, see Grete Brochmann, *Middle East Avenue: Female Migration from Sri Lanka to the Gulf* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993) and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

13 Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Migration in the Middle East and the Mediterranean" Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration, 2005; Nalya Moukarbel, *Sri Lankan Housemaids in Lebanon : A Case of "Symbolic Violence" and "Everyday Forms of Resistance."* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010)

14 See for example Rabih Alameddine, *The Hakawati* (Knopf, 2008)

15 See al-Shehabi (Note 1); Moukarbel (Note 13)

[16] It is important to note that this language pattern of conjoining nationality and profession pre-exists the *kafala system and is not exclusive to migrant domestic workers; the masculine word for Egyptian (Masri), for example, can be used to refer to gas station attendants, due to the presence of large numbers of Egyptian men in this line of work, and the case is similar for Sudanese (Sudani) as a term for building concierges. However, Srilankiyye has shown a capacity for abstraction that exceeds the stereotype – hence it is possible to describe a Filipina or Ethiopian woman as Srilankiyye in a way that is not quite the case when it comes to Masri or Sudani. Although this emerges from demographic shifts in who makes up the domestic labour market (versus gas station attendants or building concierges), I argue it is precisely these sociohistoric changes that have produced the term Srilankiyye as a category rather than simply an adjective with varied connotations. It is also for this reason that the term has become recognized as more of an insult than a descriptor, something that is not the case for Masri, Sudani, or other comparable national adjectives.*

[17] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Race and Globalization." In *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, edited by R. J. Johnston, 261–83. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002); Cedric J Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. (London: Zed, 1983)

[18] Robin D. G. Kelley. "What Is Racial Capitalism and Why Does It Matter?" November 18, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--gim7W_jQQ&feature=youtu.be

[19] Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism." *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 76.

[20] See Thompson, Note 5

[21] See Sune Haugbolle, "The historiography and the memory of the Lebanese civil war" [online] *Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, 25 October, 2011. http://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/historiography-and-memory-lebanese-civil-war

[22] Eve Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism (University of California Press, 2003); Robert Vitalis, America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier (Stanford University Press, 2007); Chouki El Hamel, Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam (Cambridge University Press, 2013)*

[23] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor." *Signs* 18, no. 1 (1992): 1–43.

[24] Suad Joseph, "Political familism in Lebanon." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 636, no. 1 (2011): 150-163.

[25] Hala Kawtharani, "The Thread of Life". In Iman Humaydan (ed.) *Beirut Noir*. (Brooklyn: Akashic Books, 2015), 95

[26] See Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Without Protection: How the Lebanese Justice System Fails Migrant Domestic Workers." (New York, 2010); International Labour Organization (ILO), Regional Office for Arab States, "Intertwined: A Study of Employers of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon." (Beirut, 2016); KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation. "Dreams for Sale: The Exploitation of Domestic Workers from Recruitment in Nepal and Bangladesh to Working in Lebanon." (Beirut, 2014.)

[27] Su, Alice. "Slave Labour? Death Rate Doubles for Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon." *IRIN*, May 15, 2017. https://www.irinnews.org/feature/2017/05/15/slave-labour-death-rate-doubles-migrant-domestic-workers-lebanon

Who counts as "People of the Gulf"? Disputes over the Arab status of Zanzibaris in the UAE

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This paper[3] begins with what seems like a descriptive question about a group: are Zanzibaris "Arabs" who count as "people of the Gulf"? The question is of critical importance to people of Zanzibari descent in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), because this designation historically underpinned their access to Emirati citizenship.[4] We contend that this designation is not exclusively (or even primarily) determined by group characteristics. "Arab" and "people of the Gulf" are not simply categories determined by shared attributes like language, religion, customs, territory, ethnicity, phenotype, genealogy, or nationality. Instead, "Arab" represents a *claim to authenticity*–one that must be recognized by the political entities that have monopolized the authority over a territory and its inhabitants. As Gulf states consolidated in the late twentieth century, ethnic minorities on the Arab side of the Persian Gulf were increasingly pressured to perform and prove Arab identity to fit into the racial hierarchy codified in new citizenship regimes. As Al-Dailami argues, minorities must claim "being Arab as opposed to Persian," and such claims are "necessitated by, and increasingly encoded within, the postcolonial state-building projects of the Gulf at particular historical watersheds."[5] In this chapter, we draw upon the experiences of Zanzibaris to highlight the African minorities that have been largely neglected in discussions of national identity in the Persian Gulf. We illustrate the competing pressures they faced to self-identify or be identified as either "Arab" or "African," and the stakes of falling into one category or another. In so doing, we tie contestations over the "Arab" status of groups to political allegiances and the shifting balance of power accompanying state formation in the Gulf.

In so doing, we heed calls by political scientists to shift from the study of interactions between groups ("race relations") and adopt a "comparative racial politics" framework that foregrounds politics by connecting race to the state, sovereignty, and political competition over territories and populations.[6] In addition to identifying the domestic politics that determine in-group parameters, we highlight the role of external actors and foreign relations, showing how external actors' racialized perceptions influenced group status and how organizations like the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) wielded the language of racial similarity to advance their humanitarian missions.

By reflecting on the contested status of Zanzibaris, we follow Vora and Le Renard's call (this volume) to show how racial hierarchy in the Gulf can deepen our understanding of global racial formations. Exploring the same period of displacement out of Zanzibar as Nathaniel Mathews (this volume), we center the politics undergirding regional racial hierarchies in what he terms the "overlap between an ethnic conception of citizenship and the logics of race" in Oman and the UAE. As Alshaif also shows in her study of the Muhamasheen in Yemen, the category of "Arab" is not a stable one, and the salience of skin color or genealogy intersect in dynamic ways at different moments in time. The tortuous incorporation of African people such as the Zanzibaris—or Ethiopian Jews in Efrat Yerdey's study (this volume)— exposes the racialized vision of the citizenry in states as outwardly distinct as the UAE and Israel. In both instances, foundational ideas about authentic belonging erected a presumption against the inclusion of African "returnees." The examination of these groups' Jewishness or Arabness wasn't an individualistic determination but a collective examination of the community, showing how people of African descent faced heightened scrutiny in national incorporation across the Middle East.

Data Sources

Our documentary sources include the British Records of the Emirates, UNHCR archives, and documents from Dubai Ruler's Court about displaced persons arriving in

Dubai 1967–2013. This archive originated as the records of William Duff, a British advisor to Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum (ruler of Dubai 1958 – 1990) and his successors. Duff held several portfolios, including refugee affairs. He was the principal UNHCR contact when thousands of Zanzibaris disembarked to Dubai in 1964-68 and continued in this role for the duration of his tenure, until the early 2000s.

Our reading of the records is guided by our legal advocacy for stateless populations in the UAE. From 2016-2019, Kuzmova led a project at the International Human Rights Clinic at Boston University's School of Law during which her team interviewed minorities who received Comoros passports from the UAE government, including Zanzibaris.[7] Since these interviews were conducted for the purposes of advocacy and resettlement options (rather than research), we draw upon these conversations to identify dates, trends, group dynamics, or differences between treatment of individuals in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, but refrain from quoting individuals.

Imperial Breakdown, State Formation, and Zanzibari Migration to the UAE

While minorities are largely absent from the dominant UAE historiography, Indian Ocean historians have shown the Gulf shoreline has always been ethnically heterogeneous. Populations from three continents circulated for centuries before decolonization swept the Indian subcontinent, Persian Gulf, and East Africa between World War II and the 1970s. Newly-minted nationality laws led to incorporation of certain residents as "citizens," while rendering others suspect for having a subversive bloodline that did not fit into the imagined "national" communities of these new states. We tie the persisting ambiguous legal status of the Zanzibari community in the UAE to this period of state formation, which led to the displacement of groups deemed not "African" enough to stay in East Africa, forcing them to prove they were "Arab" enough to be recognized as citizens of the Arab Gulf states.

Omanis had moved to Zanzibar during the Sultanate's eighteenth-century maritime expansion, and continued migrating to Zanzibar throughout the nineteenth century.[8] The first significant migration of Zanzibaris into Dubai and Abu Dhabi began in 1964 when they were violently ousted from political control over the islands and fled in ships back to the Arabian Peninsula.[9] Our discussion primarily focuses on Abu Dhabi and Dubai because they were the two largest population centers in the region, and their ruling elites (Al Maktoum of Dubai and Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi) were the most powerful brokers in the formation of the UAE federation. Of note, at the time when Zanzibaris first started arriving in large numbers, the UAE had not formed, and border demarcation between what would become the UAE in 1971 and the Sultanate of Oman was a work in progress (see figure 1).[10]

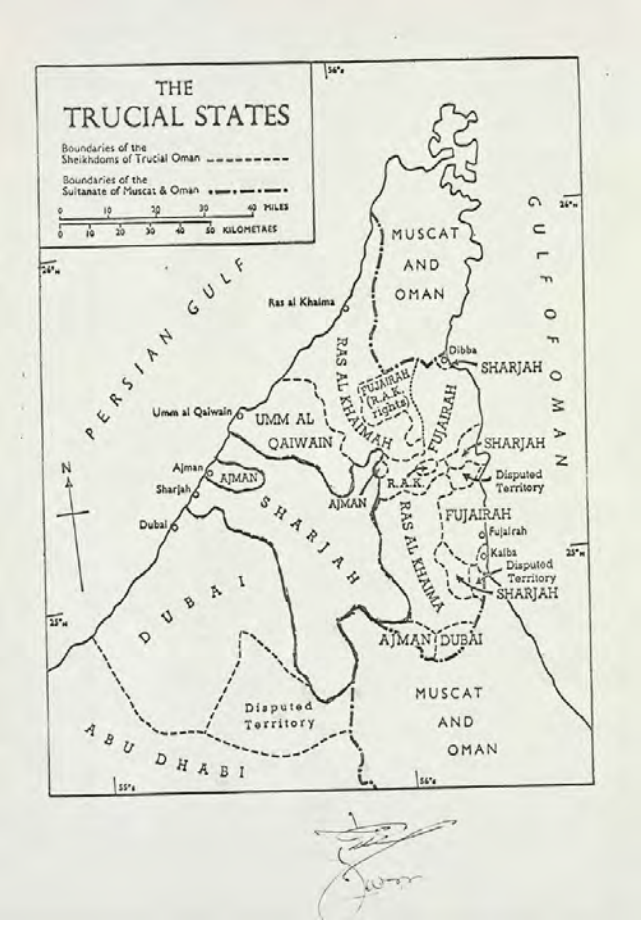

Figure 1: 1965 Map of Trucial States (Trucial Oman) and Sultanate of Oman and Muscat [11]

To be recognized as citizens by Oman, Zanzibaris had to trace their genealogies to specific Arab tribes. Often "sheikhs who had stayed in Oman played a key role in validating the genealogies of members who came back after three or four generations."[12] The "return" to Oman was not possible for those without Omani passports or tribal references that could validate their Arab status, and many ended up arriving at the port of Dubai where the local ruler, Sheikh Rashid, welcomed them as refugees. Others sought refuge and employment in Abu Dhabi over subsequent years.

"Returnees" from Zanzibar to Oman faced fewer hurdles after 1970 when Sultan Qaboos called upon the Omani elite abroad to return, "inviting them to contribute to the 'awakening' of the country."[13] Approximately 10,000 Omanis in Zanzibar moved to Oman by 1975, and their treatment reveals the malleability of racial categories, and the ways political elites strategically elevate or erase group differences when it serves economic or political objectives. The fact that "most of the expatriate Omani did not speak Arabic fluently" did not stop Qaboos from granting these elites Omani citizenship "as soon as they returned, without any consideration of the time their family had spent abroad."[14]

By 1975, around 3,000 Zanzibari refugees resided in the UAE, but under different regimes in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.[15] On the eve of the UAE's federation in 1971, UNHCR archives indicate Zanzibaris were no longer welcome to enter Abu Dhabi as refugees, and needed visas. As a result of the generous welcome the presumed Omani descendants received in Dubai, the 1970s saw more arrivals from Zanzibar (at times arriving there after a brief stay in Oman) who settled and were documented by the Zanzibar Association in Dubai. Many Zanzibaris first entered Oman and then settled in the UAE because it was difficult for them to prove Omani citizenship or in search of economic opportunities.[16] Populations of Zanzibari descent now form a large proportion of the UAE's stateless population.[17]

Zanzibari "Arab" Identity and Citizenship in the UAE: Key Actors and Competing Narratives

The categorization of Zanzibaris as Arabs was not simply a question of self-identification, or whether language, customs, settlement patterns, skin color, or genealogies marked them as "Arab." The breakdown of the Omani and British empires and shifting political objectives and perceptions of elites in East Africa and Oman all factored into how Zanzibaris were classified and, accordingly, where they could reside and what rights they could have. Abu Dhabi and Dubai had competing conceptions of whether Zanzibaris were Arabs who fell under the jurisdiction of the local rulers and would be granted Emirati citizenship (Dubai's view), or foreigners who needed residence permits and visas to remain in the UAE's territories (Abu Dhabi's view).

We summarize how the British, UNHCR, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai answered the question of whether Zanzibaris were "Arab" and "people of the Gulf," as well as how Zanzibaris negotiated these conflicting narratives of identity and citizenship over the past four decades.

British Authorities and the United Nations

British authorities had contradictory policies towards Zanzibaris, who were at times framed as "people of the Gulf" outside their jurisdiction and at other times as "foreigners" who fell under British jurisdiction.[18] As Arab nationalism gained traction in the 1960s, the British government was concerned with stymying pan-Arabism in the Gulf. This concern was reflected in insistence on curbing "illegal migration," with a more extensive system of residency permits and visas. As UNHCR Representative Leslie Goodyear explained:

The Zanzibari community continues to flourish in the country. It is growing slowly, thanks both to the arrival of new families directly from Zanzibar and the arrival in Dubai of Zanzibaris from other parts of the Gulf … who are dissatisfied in those areas. These latter cases are creating some difficulties for the authorities. During the recent Middle East War, there was an outbreak of demonstrations and riots, apparently instigated by a group of pro-Nasser traders, but physically carried out by Pakistanis and Baluchis ('the have-nots'). … The principal outcome of these events, which were not of a particularly serious nature, was to shake the complacency of many

of the resident British advisers and members of the Government. It has also enabled the British Political Agent to convince the ruler to be less generous in his treatment of illegal entrants and foreign groups generally and so has created some difficulties for the refugees.[19]

Thus, in one instance, the travel of Zanzibari families was securitized as that of Arab migrants of ambiguous status. At other times, Zanzibari families' entry into Dubai was barred precisely because they weren't considered "of the Gulf" and thus required to apply for entry visas to the British authorities. After an initial group of refugees arrived in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the UNHCR attempted to facilitate family reunification with relatives waiting in Zanzibar and Kenya. In this process, they met resistance from a British political agent reluctant to grant visas to family members before they received valid travel documents.[20] Here, family members (often African wives and children) were considered "foreigners" from Zanzibar and Kenya who fell under British jurisdiction (instead of that of local rulers) and would require visas issued by the British before arriving in the Trucial States. The British thus upheld administrative practices that entrenched racial divides even within the same family.

In the first years of the UAE, UNHCR persistently advocated for Zanzibari naturalization in the UAE as "Gulf Arabs returning home," but still took care to segment them on the basis of genealogies.[21] Having learned the new naturalization framework (drafted by a former head of the Lebanese Aliens Service), UNHCR surveyed Zanzibaris in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and determined that about ten percent in both groups did not report Arab ancestry. This small number of non-Arabs, according to UNHCR assessment, would be unlikely to access naturalization. In formal and informal communications UNHCR officials took care to describe the group as Arabs, or Zanzibaris of Omani origin. Because most did not speak fluent Arabic, the UNHCR proposed to provide resources for language courses and vocational training, even convincing Sheikh Rashid to send some members of the Zanzibari community to Beirut.[22]

Abu Dhabi vs. Dubai

Regarding UAE residency and citizenship, the degree to which Zanzibaris could successfully claim Omani origin and Arab ethnicity varied according to where they settled and from which ruler they sought recognition. Article 6 of the UAE's constitution defines the federation as an "Arab nation,"[23] but the rulers of its constituent emirates had competing understandings of who was "Arab." Abu Dhabi's vision of citizenship was more focused on Arab genealogy than those of other emirates.[24] This discord was reflected in the UAE's lack of a unified citizenship and immigration policy at its formation. Naturalization was stratified, with individuals becoming citizens first through their emirate of residency before gaining federal nationality.[25] The result is some groups (including Zanzibaris) gained citizenship from the rulers of Dubai, Sharjah, Ras al Khaimah, Fujairah, Ajman, and Umm Al Quwain but never received federal approval of their citizenship claims from Abu Dhabi.[26]

Zanzibaris were already in Dubai and Abu Dhabi when final arrangements were made concerning unification of the seven emirates. In 1969, the Trucial Council contemplated including "Arabs of Omani origin" with some tenure in the Emirates on the list of persons automatically recognized as citizens: "Any Arab of Omani origin not in possession of any other nationality, who has lived in one of the states of the Union, with the intention of settling, for a period of not less than three years at the date on which this law comes into effect shall be a citizen of the Union."[27] The British political agent explained an adviser to one of the rulers fell into this precise category of Omani descendants. The expansive inclusion of Arabs of Omani origin in the definition of the Emirati citizen was removed from the final version of the law.[28] Rather than citizens by operation of law, persons of Omani, Qatari, or Bahraini origin could be naturalized if they resided in a constituent emirate for three years immediately before applying for citizenship, and only when they could prove they had work and no criminal record. The causes for this change are unknown but suggest contestation among the drafters as to the status of Arabs of Omani origin.

Records from the Dubai Ruler's Court reveal how political allegiances were tied to ethnic identity. Rulers like Shaikh Rashid attempted to integrate minorities by documenting them as Arabs, in ways that echo efforts on part of Sultan Qaboos to facilitate the integration of Zanzibaris in the early 1970s.[29] In general, it was more challenging for Zanzibaris to be recognized as citizens by Abu Dhabi, although records suggest it was possible when an applicant could prove belonging to one of the recognized Arab tribes of the Emirates.[30] For example, in 1997, a refugee representative presented Duff with the names of several tribes whose members often received help from the Abu Dhabi Ruler's Diwan in naturalization matters, including with naturalization of refugees. So complete was their integration that their birthplace was changed to Al Ain.[31] Meanwhile, most Zanzibaris who sought naturalization from emirates other than Abu Dhabi have yet to be recognized as citizens by the federal government and are effectively stateless.

The contested status of Zanzibaris illustrates how inclusion is determined by whether a political entity recognizes a group as "Arab" and "from the Gulf." UAE naturalization policy structured inclusion as a patron-client relationship between emirate-level political authorities and individuals or groups seeking naturalization. However, this also meant inclusion was contingent upon the strength of their patron. As Dubai's power has waxed and waned since the 1960s, so have prospects for inclusion of Zanzibaris in Dubai.

Community and its dissolution: the Zanzibar Association

For Zanzibaris in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other parts of the Gulf, being recognized as "Omani" would mean legal residency and eligibility for citizenship, as was afforded to people from the Gulf states. Various Zanzibari groups asserted this origin despite being unable to show Omani passports or residency permits. As Mathews finds in his reading of UNHCR records, Zanzibari refugees in Saudi Arabia strategically positioned themselves as refugees of Omani origin to UNHCR officials. Addressing Saudi representatives, they argued, "it was not correct to claim there has been expulsion of Zanzibaris. The issue is one of expulsion of Omani Arabs of Zanzibar origin." Refugees in Saudi Arabia, although not legally Omani citizens, protested they have been granted the privilege to settle as Omanis and not as Zanzibaris or refugees from Zanzibar.[32]

The Zanzibar Association was founded in Dubai in 1964-65 to represent the interests of the fast-growing Zanzibari community in its dealings before the Ruler's Court and agencies like UNHCR. Archival sources tell of an organization with the mission to advance members' inclusion in Dubai. It elected officers, issued identity cards, and maintained a census. The identity cards were significant given Zanzibaris were treated as guests of the Sheikh of Dubai and afforded permits and land not readily available to other migrants.

Identity cards issued by the Zanzibar Association were convertible into passports prior to unification.[33] According to our informants, an assurance Zanzibaris would receive Emirati passports after 1971 was made by the Sheikhs themselves to the UNHCR early in the resettlement process when the UNHCR offered to supply Zanzibaris with UNHCR Convention Travel Documents. As one Zanzibar Association member recalls, Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi and Sheikh Rashid of Dubai informed High Commissioner Prince Sadrudin that Zanzibaris would receive UAE passports as they are "our children and we are bound to them historically by bonds of blood."[34]

Members of the Zanzibar Association asserted that regulations of the first law on Nationality and Passports identified them as eligible for citizenship. The fact that Zanzibaris operated through a government-recognized association meant they could procure special treatment, but naturalization was contingent on relationships with members of the royalty and on their ability to "prove to be of Oman or Yemen descent."[35]

In 1980, the Zanzibar Association President carried out a census of the Zanzibaris in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah at the request of Sheikh Zayed, president of the UAE. Results of this count were handed to the

authorities, but no federal naturalizations followed. In 1999-2000 Dubai Ruler Sheikh Maktoum issued naturalization decrees for Zanzibaris in Dubai. Zanzibaris were left only one step away from the final attribute to UAE citizenship, the *khulā'at al-qayd* (family book). The timing of when these decrees were issued is significant. By 1999, most of the Zanzibaris had already been in the UAE for at least thirty years, suggesting their naturalization was handled as non-Arabs, and not under the provision which allowed Arabs from the Gulf to naturalize after three years of UAE residence.[36]

In 2008-2009, as Zanzibaris awaited the *khulā'at al-qayd*, the federal government launched a registration campaign for persons without nationality in which Zanzibaris were told to participate. Like thousands of long-standing UAE residents without proof of nationality, they underwent an enrollment process which included numerous interviews and a DNA sample. At the end, they received registration cards that were later unwillingly traded for passports from the Union of Comoros, an archipelago federation about 500 miles farther southeast of Zanzibar.[37]

Zanzibaris only retained UAE passports, if they agreed to supplement them with the Comoros passports. These secondary Comorian passports were deposited with the authorities and Zanzibaris took UAE passports with two-year validity. In two years, Zanzibaris would appear with the expiring passports, pick up Comoros passports, and live with them as primary forms of identification until the UAE passports were renewed. After the Comorian passport scheme was curtailed in 2018, the expiration of Comoros passports entailed non-renewal of Emirati passports, and thus loss of health insurance, cell phone accounts, and employment.

In the 1990s, as Zanzibaris felt integrated in Emirati society, the Zanzibar Association had dissolved. Whereas Zanzibaris were, at least between 1964 and the mid-1970s, a group of some privilege that the Dubai Ruler welcomed, Abu Dhabi has subjected Zanzibaris to numerous naturalization interviews, during which, year after year, their files have been reexamined and put away. The Comoros passports presented a calamitous turn for the group, whose "Zanzibari" identity had largely been diluted as second and third generations born in the UAE grew up speaking Arabic and inter-marrying with Emiratis. Paradoxically, these true "people of the Gulf" find themselves farther from full incorporation than their grandparents were fifty years ago. Like those returning to Oman in Mathews' contribution to this study, members of the Zanzibar Association of Dubai, and their descendants, faced and continue to endure repeated probes into the authenticity of their claims to belong to the Gulf. The UAE federal government's issuance of Comoros Islands passports to this group effectively re-categorizes them as "African," and they have unwillingly (and artificially) become legal "foreign residents" despite their cultural and linguistic assimilation as Emiratis.

Reflecting on the Zanzibari case allows us to broaden our understanding of racial formations beyond the Transatlantic experience, while learning from the rich literature on race in the Americas. The secondary literature has tended to focus on the centrality of phenotype and a fixation with blackness in determining racial categories in the Americas, such as the "one-drop" rule in the United States, or attempts to create a spectrum of status based on levels of "blackness" in Brazil.[38] In the context of the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf, "the construction of "Arab" and "black" happens at the dynamic intersections of imagined genealogies and skin color," as Alshaif explains in her study of the Muhamisheen in Yemen (this volume). When it comes to the Zanzibari community, their belonging into the category of "Arab" changes at different moments of time and based on *which* political authority vouches for a group and how powerful that authority is. Members of the same group become "Arab" when they are "adopted" or written into a tribe by Abu Dhabi, and their "blackness" is ignored or minimized. Meanwhile, those who fall under the jurisdiction of Dubai are othered as "non-Arabs" with questionable genealogy, making characteristics like skin color more salient. At present, Zanzibaris and other East African minorities who may be construed as "black" are not the only ethnic minorities

who now carry an "African" status as Comoros Islands passport-holders. Persians, Baluchis, indigenous stateless groups (*bidun*), and children of Emirati women were all grouped together in the federal state's creation of an "other" category for those whose genealogy is being questioned.[39] This case helps show how racial categories underpin modern citizenship regimes and statehood, regardless of how salient skin color is in the formation of those categories. As the literature on racial formation in other parts of the world has shown, race is about power. And in all instances, racial categorizations matter because they are deeply connected to distributions of power, money, land, labor, and rights.

Endnotes

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[3] We thank Nathaniel Mathews for generously sharing primary documents on the treatment of Zanzibaris in the UAE.
[4] This term derives from the British Records of the Emirates and Order in Council agreements determining British jurisdiction over the Trucial states (the UAE's territories prior to independence). The "people of the Gulf" designation placed a population under the jurisdiction of local Trucial state rulers, while "foreigners" fell under British jurisdiction. The UAE was formed in 1971 as a federation of seven Trucial states: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, Umm Al-Quwain, and Ras Al-Khaimah. Lori, Noora. *Offshore Citizens: Permanent Temporary Status in the Gulf.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 49-96.
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[7] Lori, *Offshore Citizens,* 194-234, on the UAE government's issuance of Comoros Islands passports to ethnic minorities.
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[10] The British archives reveal that the latecomer to the UAE union—Ras Al Khaimah—which only joined the federation in 1972, made overtures to be incorporated into Oman in 1971. The records suggest that the border delineation was incomplete until at least the mid-1980s.
[11] Boundaries of the Sheikhdoms of Trucial Oman—Boundaries of the Sultanate of Muscat & Oman, 1965, found in "Sharjah oil concession," page 66, 1965 Jan 01 - 1965 Dec 31, FO 1016/844 /66, available at: https://www.agda.ae/en/catalogue/tna/fco/8/3145/n/2
[12] *Ibid*, 487.
[13] *Ibid*, 485.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] UNHCR, High Commissioner's Report to the General Assembly, 1 May 1975, A/10012, https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae68c6b4.html.
[16] Valeri, "Nation-Building and Communities in Oman," 491.
[17] *Ibid.*; Lori, *Offshore Citizen*s; Al-Barazi, Zahra & Yoana Kuzmova. "Trafficking in Non-Citizenship in the Gulf." In *Routledge Handbook on Citizenship in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Zahra Babar, Roel Meijer & James Sater, 2020, 349–377.
[18] Lori, *Offshore Citizens*, 66-77.
[19] 30 Jan 1968 Leslie Goodyear UNHCR report on visit to Iran, Dubai and Qatar to Mr. David Roberts, British Political Agent, Dubai, Records of Oman, 642 Fonds 11 Series 1 Box 182 6/2/Dubai Protection – Travel Documents.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] Leslie Goodyear, Report on Visit to Abu Dhabi and Dubai in Connection with Zanzibar Refugees 27 March 1974 – 1 April 1974, UNHCR File Ref. 656.UGA, Fonds 11 Series 1 Box 1292L Social Rights – Nationality and Naturalisation.
[22] UNHCR, High Commissioner's Report to the General Assembly.
[23] https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3fba182d0.pdf; accessed August 22, 2020.
[24] Lori, *Offshore Citizens*, 77-83.
[25] *Ibid,* 88-96.
[26] *Ibid,* 50-96, 160-234.
[27] From H.B.M. Political Agency Trucial States Dubai, Report of the Committee on Immigration, Nationality & Unification of Passports meeting in Umm al Qaiwain, 1-3 September 1969, FCO 8/993, https://www.agda.ae/en/catalogue/tna/fco/8/993
[28] Federal Law No. 17 of 1972 Concerning Nationality and Passports, Art. 5. https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3fba182d0.pdf; (accessed March 18, 2021).
[29] Mathews, this volume.
[30] See, e.g. Goodyear, "Report on Visit to Abu Dhabi and Dubai in Connection with Zanzibar Refugees."
[31] Al Ain is a town in the eastern region of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, on the UAE's border with Oman.
[32] Mathews, this volume.

[33] In a report from 1970, the UNHCR representative observed the Zanzibar Association in Dubai had learned a case-by-case approach to petitioning the authorities for passports is preferable to demanding that all Zanzibaris be issued passports. Universal documentation was left to the Association itself. "Temporary documents of one-year validity and not conveying nationality are issued liberally and, in fact, are used by all Zanzibaris in other Trucial States who could not get other papers." Goodyear visit to Trucial States, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, 25 March-5 April 1970.

[34] Correspondence on file with authors.

[35] Anonymous author. "10. Ugandan refugees in the United Arab Emirates." *Refugee Participation Network* (now "Forced Migration Review") 18 (Jan. 1995), available at http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/HTMLcontent/rpn1810.htm

[36] Article 8 of the Nationality and Passports Law provides for naturalization of persons not covered by Articles 5 and 6 and who "resided in a continuous and statutory manner in the member Emirates for a period not less than thirty years, of which twenty years at least after this law enters into force."

[37] AlBarazi & Kuzmova, 2020, 357.

[38] FitzGerald, David Scott and David Cook-Martin, *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.

[39] Lori, *Offshore Citizens*, 195-234.

East African birth and Omani ethnic descent: a social history of Omani citizenship 1970-1990

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This paper theorizes the post-1970 relationship between Omani ethnic descent and the Omani passport. Modern Gulf citizenships are based around the instrumentalization of the traditional concept of ancestry, or *nasab*, under new political conditions of the primacy of the passport. Although 'deficiency' in nasab has traditionally been associated with the dishonor of slavery, in the modern era the 'wrong' *nasab* can also negatively affect one's citizenship prospects.[1] As a category of analysis, race is most appropriately deployed to name the various colonial distinctions between European and non-European.[2] However, historian Jon Glassman has recently argued for understanding race, ethnicity and nation as 'cognate phenomena.'[3] Both race and nationality instrumentalize ancestry for political ends, producing similar kinds of cleavages and dilemmas. In Oman, as in most Gulf countries, ancestry is the basic criteria for the legal acquisition of nationality, which guarantees the right to a passport.[4] Full national membership as a citizen, while not based on skin color or phenotype, nevertheless functions in ways parallel to the processes of inclusion and exclusion in race, complete with misrecognition, misrepresentation, and 'passing' for Omani. The discourse about legitimate and fraudulently obtained nationality stem from the same psycho-social anxieties of decidability contained in racial governance.[5]

The use of 'race' as a category of analysis, rather than one merely of practice, is motivated by a desire to uncover labile categories of hierarchical difference and the social and legal processes that establish them. Anthropologists and historians of Gulf societies have demonstrated the ongoing importance of 'traditional' forms of social solidarity—lineage, descent and genealogy—to the Gulf region's modern modular national citizenship.[6] The issuing of a passport in Gulf states is predicated on providing proof of this ancestry, and legitimizes what Vora and Le Renard call "a regime of value through which human bodies, their abilities, characteristics, and inherent place in society are implied."[7] In the words of Noora Lori and Yoana Kuzmova, on the UAE, "The codification of national citizenship regimes led to the incorporation of certain residents as rightful "citizens," while rendering other populations suspect for having a subversive bloodline that did not fit into the imagined homogenous "national" communities of these new states."[8]

Omani citizenship was similarly structured around the consolidation of 'Omani' ancestry as the mark of legitimate citizenship. But this instrumentalization of descent was complicated by the central role of East African returnees in the making of the post-1970 nation-state. Returnees to Oman from Zanzibar and mainland East Africa had mixed nationalities and long histories of cross ethnic intermarriage. Though many migrants from Zanzibar to the Gulf were of Omani ancestry, Dubai was more open, and appeared to have better prospects before 1970.[9] But after the accession to power of the late Sultan Qaboos b. Said, in 1970, Oman became a more attractive place to emigrate, and the path to Omani citizenship broadened considerably and remained that way for a decade. Return was a bargain: curtailment of individual political rights and 'foreign' social and cultural elements, in exchange for a general social welfare package. Through the instrumentalization of descent, the Omani state obtained a class of highly educated East-African born citizens who played key roles in the modernization of the state.

My dissertation research in Oman, completed between 2011 and 2013, focused on collecting life histories of return to Oman from East Africa, 1970-1990. I conducted fifty such interviews of varying lengths, recording a small proportion of them as well. These interviews are far from a representative sociological sample of the returnee experience, but they do provide specific and valuable insight into the conceptual and ideological links between

ancestry, bureaucratic recognition and national belonging in the making of post-1970 Omani national citizenship. They are filled with details of returnees negotiating the politics of belonging in Oman in both official and popular registers. Authorities sometimes interrogated their paternal genealogy upon arrival, demanded they give up their Tanzanian or Kenyan passports. The Omani state made a concerted attempt to incentivize and encourage endogamous marriage to fellow nationals. Sometimes non-Omani family members (such as a spouse) were prevented from legally entering the country. The returnees were re-tribalized, taking on an official *nisba* as their surname if they didn't already have one. Many began wearing officially proclaimed Omani 'national' dress for the first time. They were also discouraged by other Omanis from speaking Swahili in public, and their relatively 'freer' attitudes to gender-mixing were condemned as alien to traditional Omani society. In this essay, I focus on the Sultanate passport as a symbol of Omani national belonging, the ways East African born returnees acquired it, and the relation between the passport and ethno-cultural discourses of Omani citizenship.

The political economy of citizenship, class and ethnicity in the Gulf

Citizenship is a relatively robust and exclusive privilege in the majority of Gulf states, differentiating a protected class in the labor market who are deserving of special welfare benefits because of their membership. As rulers bought legitimacy from the citizenry through generous social spending—free public education, salary as untaxed income, land grants, and free or low cost health care—national identity in the Gulf states was a clear route to upward economic mobility. Even though Oman's benefits are lower than neighboring Qatar and UAE, Omani citizenship has a 'higher' value in terms of economic benefits, than most other societies on the Indian Ocean rim.

The impetus for applying this race-critical lens onto the modern history of Gulf societies is driven by the economic and sociological developments in the region of the last half-century. The exploitation of oil and gas since the 1950s has driven global migration to the Gulf region from Africa and Asia.[10] Migration has shifted the ethnic makeup of these societies. In many Gulf states, non-citizen residents outnumber or closely parallel the total number of citizens. There are significant inequalities within the population of non-citizens. Mostly white wealthier Europeans and Americans who sign labor contracts with Gulf companies are globally mobile, while a second tier of relatively prosperous permanent residents from South Asia have been discussed as "impossible citizens, anthropologist Neha Vora's memorable coinage for the second, third or fourth generation Indian residents of Dubai, who are the emirate's largest non-citizen population.[11] Other non-citizens, short-term contract laborers from Africa and Asia, are immobilized in the labor market by non-citizenship and vulnerable to exploitation by what legal scholar Bernard Freamon calls the 'de facto slavery' of the kafala system.[12]

My personal knowledge of these contemporary demographic and economic realities comes from reflecting on my experience doing historical and anthropological research in Muscat, Oman, the country's capital. The first time I visited the city in 2007, I did not use a car to get around, but when I went back for my dissertation research in 2012, I decided to buy a vehicle. My blue Mitsubishi Galant was no match for some of the high-powered luxury cars and SUVs on the road, and it frequently broke down during my ten-month stay in Muscat. My residence on the western edge of the city, in the neighborhood called Mabailah, further highlighted my contradictory class position within the Muscat economy. I was unable to afford most of the apartments in the central neighborhoods where my interviewees, the Omani-Zanzibaris, lived. My street in Mabailah was populated by laborers from South Asia, especially Pakistan and Bangladesh. Vis-à-vis the enormous number of temporary migrant workers in Muscat, I was in a privileged position due to my economic clout and the freedom of movement afforded to me by an American passport. However, I was less prosperous than many of my interviewees, many of them wealthy older Omani citizens. Research interviews were conducted in people's homes, and, even in humbler middle-class abodes, were usually accompanied by an elaborate and generous

display of hospitality in which a servant or servants brought water, tea, juice as well as a selection of savory and sweet snacks, and fresh fruit.

The East African returnees and the Omani passport

Omani society is composed of a relatively more multi-ethnic and multi-lingual citizenry than many other Gulf countries, including many Omanis from East Africa who spoke Swahili in ethnically mixed Zanzibari households.[13] Omanis have a rich nineteenth and twentieth century history of trade, politics and empire in East Africa, that includes a long history of intermarriage to East African coastal families.[14] In Oman, this transregional history has served as a motif for the Omani vision of harmonious ethnic and religious pluralism among various religions and ethnicities. The Omani national museum emphasizes the exceptionality of this Omani national-cultural heritage, positing the anchorage of the national character in histories of maritime exchange and cosmopolitan intermarriage which are obviously evident in the ethnically diverse population of contemporary Muscat.

Returnees to Oman from East Africa have sometimes been considered by scholars to be a distinct 'ethnic group' from other Omani citizens.[15] However, there is no 'Zanzibari' *nisba*, only *nisbas* who went to Zanzibar.[16] In spite of their cultural and linguistic differences from Omanis who never left Oman, many Zanzibaris are part of prestigious lineages within the Omani tribal structure. In Zanzibar during the 1950s, the importance of Omani tribal *nisbas* in governance had faded with the rise of a nationalist movement that advocated a 'Zanzibari' territorial identity. In returning to Oman, Omani *nasab* took on a new instrumental importance. However, the post-1970 returnees differed in their approach to Oman's new regime of ethno-citizenship. Some embraced it as a natural extension of their Omani Arab identity.[17] Others emphasized the significance of the Omani passport itself as the foundation of their citizenship.[18] While most returnees obtained the passport legally, I focus below on liminal and extra-legal situations that demonstrate the analogous relationship of ethno-national citizenship to race.

In practice, East African born Arabs complicate the assumption of Omani ethnic purity present in vernacular understandings of Omani citizenship, even as they reaffirm its validity.[19] Third and fourth generation Arabs in East Africa had attenuated roots in the Omani homeland. They used the term 'return' as a metaphor for becoming an Omani citizen, rather than expressive of a living connection to Omani kin.[20] In her ethnography of Bahla, *In The Time of Oil*, anthropologist Mandana Limbert shows that East African born Omani women navigate the social complexities of Arab Omani fathers who died in East Africa, or non-Omani maternal ancestry.[21] Anthropologist Irtefa Binte-Farid similarly demonstrates how three categories of Omanis define what it means to be "truly" Omani: Omanis who never left Oman and consider themselves 'pure', Zanzibari-Omanis who traveled to East Africa but did not intermarry, and Zanzibaris who traveled to East Africa and did intermarry.[22] Binte-Farid observes that the category of 'purity' was very important to her interlocutors' conceptions of citizenship. In my own interviews, a Tanzanian-born man who received an Omani passport in 1983 opined, "We are pure Arabs—there is nothing for us in East Africa."[23] He and other returnees map "purity" onto a notion of Omani 'patria'.

In the 1950s and 60s, and continuing into the 1970s, tribal authorities would write 'recommendation letters' (called in Arabic *shahada*) for returnees, which were approved by the local *wali* of the district where the returnee claimed a kinship connection, and then by a committee of local authorities. In a system built on recognition through the sheikhs, the potential for slippage between bureaucratic and social recognition was large. As one returnee from East Africa put it, "the regulations were not so strict in those days. As long as someone from the interior claimed you as his relative, you were Omani."[24] What Efrat Yerday notes for Israel, is also true of Oman, "the examination of who belongs to the ethnic nation…does not derive from a structured and ordered set of laws. The negotiation takes place regarding a set of rules and ideological and normative perceptions."[25] These perceptions tended to confirm for my interviewees the validity of ethno-national thinking.

One of my interviewees told me his father saw an elderly man at the docks in Muscat who had disembarked with the refugees but who had no documentation of any sort. As my interviewee described it, his father recognized that this man was "a pure Omani"—he was dressed in the Omani traditional white robe, wore an Omani style turban, spoke Arabic, and had a very long beard. My interlocutor's father began putting pressure on officials to let the man in, even without documentation. In the context of my interview, my interlocutor meant to demonstrate the generosity of his father, but it also shows that there was an inextricable element of visual and auditory (via language) confirmation of belonging that buttressed, the formal legal procedures of obtaining citizenship documents.

Marriage to someone of Omani descent was itself not enough to guarantee a non-tribally descended woman a legal route to citizenship. Thus, anxiety over ethnic purity is expressed around these exogenous marriages of Omani men to non-Omani women (especially East Africans).[26] Omanis who had non-Omani or non-Arab wives often skirted immigration regulations to enable their families to join them immediately in Oman. Several returnees related illicit border crossings between the Emirates and Oman, bringing their wives in and out of Oman in the trunk of a car for lack of a legal status.[27] Another interviewee left his wife and six children in Tanzania in 1975, to come to Oman, traveling on a Tanzanian passport up to the airport, where he received an unstamped Omani passport after surrendering his Tanzanian document. He managed to arrange for his family to come to Abu Dhabi in 1977, from which point the family was forced to cross illicitly into Oman in order to be reunited with him, since his spouse did not have legal standing at the time.[28]

One Omani-born interviewee contrasted his East African-born wife's legal path to citizenship, by showing me a picture of his old Sultana of Oman and Muscat passport from 1979, while describing how in the 1970s "there was a lot of funny business with passports, people coming back and forth under the same five names…the government knew many Zanzibaris were in Oman illegally."[29] There are letters from the UK Mission in Geneva in August 1966, showing that a few Zanzibaris were using the repurposed passports of others to come to Oman. In one case, a man traveling with his two wives and four children was stopped because he presented two Omani passports, each with various combinations of spouses and children on them. He claimed he had lost his first passport, applied for a second, and then found the first again. Another two families were turned away after it was discovered that both fathers (who were traveling each with their wife and two children) were presenting another person's passport, in which they had altered the photograph.[30] As Will Hanley notes, "Fraudulent use is a mark of the value of papers."[31] Most illicit uses of the Omani passport were not done out of an attempt to "conceal" one's "true" national identity, but out of the search for security and opportunity.

In another case, a father wrote the names of his family members on the passport application (in the early 1970s, a single family could travel on one passport), but the *wali* made the family a part of one tribe when they considered themselves from another. In another story, a female relative, a grandmother, was listed under the passport of her son, and after the original passport holder died, the grandmother had to apply for an individual passport. Moments like these could allow other family members in East Africa to use the passport of deceased individuals, or those who had already entered, coming back under an assumed name. In certain situations, younger brothers might use the names of an elder brother listed on the passport. [32] One Omani returnee even applied to the court to change his official name, because he was legally listed under the name on the passport he had used to enter, the name of his brother who was already a resident there.

According to one of my interviewees, there was one sheikh of the al-Harthi tribal confederation who had a close friend in Zanzibar of non-Omani background. In the early 1970s, this sheikh signed off on a passport for his friend, and adopted him into the tribe, even though he was neither Omani nor al-Harthi. This adopted tribal person lived in the interior for many years. When the sheikh's son took over after his father's death, he found out his father's friend was charging people money to bring them to Oman,

where they would pose as his family members. He had begun paperwork to bring two children, who would pose as his sons, and then he planned to bring the mother as a maid, and the father somehow later. He promised them a route to the passport through his facilitation.[33] While it was impossible for me to confirm or corroborate every one of these stories, their repetition in various forms, and circulation in online message boards and WhatsApp conversations, indicated to me there were significant anxieties about the malign influence of 'fake' Omani descent on Omani national identity, anxieties which Omanis of mixed East African ancestry, non-Omani Arab ancestry, and even non-Arabic speakers of 'pure' Omani descent, could find themselves subject to.

By 1983, those of Omani ancestry remaining in East Africa found the possible paths to Omani citizenship narrowed. The new citizenship law of 1983 stated that the child born of an Omani mother and a non-Omani father outside Oman would no longer be given consideration for Omani citizenship.[34] That same year, there was also a temporary ban on marriage between Omanis and all foreigners, attempting to curtail the fiscal cost of citizenship expansion.[35] However, paths to citizenship remained open to East African-born Omanis. In fact, the Omani government sent a commission to East Africa in the early 1980s to verify identities pursuant to issuing a new round of passports. At the same time, they relaxed visa requirements for those in East Africa wishing to visit relatives in Oman.[36] The eventual closure of the citizenship path to East-African born Arabs of Omani ancestry, was not primarily motivated by anxiety over the fraudulent use of papers, but by declining oil prices 1981-1986, culminating in state spending outstripping state income in 1985-86.[37] By 1990, it had become difficult to impossible to easily obtain Omani citizenship on the basis of a descent-claim alone; one also needed a prolonged residence in the country.[38] Even then, many waited a decade or more to receive their citizenship.

From 1970-1990, the issuing of Omani citizenship evolved into a modern rationalized bureaucratic procedure. This increasingly rationalized character of state bureaucracy meant that citizenship post-1970 was linked more and more to state economic goals, without, however, eliminating the ethno-national demarcation of citizenship. This brings us back to the original question of the role of race in the making of modern Omani citizenship. The answer lies not in any physiognomic criteria for citizenship, but in the undecidability of 'liminal' cases.[39] Socially constructed, shaped by ideological instrumentalization of ancestry, and potentially subject to the threat of "trespass" by fraudulently obtained papers, modern citizenship in Oman generates similar cleavages, ideological anxieties, and dilemmas of undecidability as 'racecraft' in the Americas.[40]

Endnotes

1 See Razan Idris, "Is the Ex-Slave Equal to the Free Arab in Marriage: Debating Lineage, Race and Freedom in Mālikī Muslim History" Duke University B.A. thesis, 2018, 11
2 Barnor Hesse, "Racialized modernity: An analytics of white mythologies" *Ethnic and Racial Studies 30.4 (2007): 643-663.*
3 Jonathon Glassman, "Ethnicity and Race in African Thought" in William Worger, Charles Ambler and Nwando Achebe (eds.) *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African History*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019, 199-224.
4 Miriam Cooke, *Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the* Arab Gulf. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014, 31-49
5 David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.
6 Mandana Limbert, *In the Time of Oil: Piety, Memory & Social Life in an Omani Town*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, 144-147; Irtefa Binte-Farid, "'True'" Sons of Oman: National Narratives, Genealogical Purity and Transnational Connections in Modern Oman." in Marc Owen Jones, Ross Porter and Marc Valeri (eds.) *Gulfization of the Arab World*. Berlin, Germany: Gerlach Press, 2018, 41-56; Nadav Samin, *Of Sand or Soil: Genealogy and Tribal Belonging in Saudi Arabia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015; Noora Lori, *Offshore Citizens: Permanent Temporary Status in the Gulf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
7 Ibid.
8 Noora Lori and Yoana Kuzmova, "Who counts as "People of the Gulf"? Disputes over the Arab status of Zanzibaris in the UAE", this volume.
9 For example, more than a few Shirazis attempted to obtain asylum in Dubai after fleeing Zanzibar in the early 1970s.

[10] Omar alShehabi, "Histories of Migration in the Gulf" in Abdulhadi Khalaf, et al. (eds.) *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf.* London: Pluto Press, 2015, 7-8

[11] Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

[12] See Sumayya Kassamali, "the Kafala System as Racialized Servitude" this volume; see also Bernard Freamon, "Are the Persian Gulf city-states slave societies" *Aeon* 22 Jan 2021. https://aeon.co/essays/are-the-persian-gulf-city-states-slave-societies.

[13] J.E. Peterson, "Oman's Diverse Society: Northern Oman" *Middle East Journal* 58.1 (Winter 2004): 32-51; see also Ahmed al-Ismaili, "Ethnic, Linguistic and Religious Pluralism in Oman: The Link with Political Stability" *alMuntaqa* 1.3 (December 2018): 58-73.

[14] In fact, the region's historical links to East Africa stretch back many centuries longer. See John Wilkinson, "Oman and East Africa: New Light on Early Kilwan History from the Omani Sources" *IJAHS 14.2 (1981): 272-305.*

[15] See for instance Marc Valeri, "Identity Politics and Nation-Building under Sultan Qaboos", in Lawrence Potter (ed.) *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf*. London/New York: Hurst/Oxford University Press, 2013, 179-206, 200

[16] While al-Lawati is a distinct nisba within the tribal landscape of modern Oman, al-Zinjibari is not.

[17] Nathaniel Mathews, "The Zinjibari Diaspora, 1698-2014: Citizenship, Migration and Revolution in Zanzibar, Oman and the Post-War Indian Ocean", Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 2016, 224

[18] See Binte-Farid, 51

[19] For other imaginations of 'purity' and race, see Diana S. Kim, "The Seduction of Comparisons: On Untouchability beyond Caste in Korea and Nigeria", Denis Regnier, "Uncleanliness, inequality and essentialism: Legacies of slavery in the southern highlands of Madagascar" and Gokh Amin Alshaif, "Black and Yemeni: Origin Myths, Imagined Genealogies and Resistance", all this volume.

[20] For the economically motivated character of ethnic return migration, see "Introduction", Takeyuki Tsuda (ed.) *Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, 21-2

[21] Limbert, *Time of Oil*, 148-161

[22] Binte-Farid, 47

[23] I.S. 5

[24] I.S. 12

[25] Efrat Yerday, "Jewish Illegality: the caste of Ethiopian Jews between 1955-1975", this volume.

[26] In one revealing interview, an interviewee who grew up in colonial Zanzibar recalled her aunt, her mother's sister, as a rebel who had married a Shirazi, which according to my interviewee, "in those days "qabila" was everything and marrying a pure African was unacceptable.". I.S. 1, 8/11/2011. I.S.= Interview subject. All interview subjects have been anonymized in accordance with IRB regulations.

[27] I.S. 12; I.S. 13; I.S. 50.

[28] I.S. 12. For cases of long-term residents in India without citizenship, a concept he calls 'blurred membership', see Kamal Sadiq, *Paper Citizens: How Illegal Immigrants Acquire Citizenship in Developing Countries*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. For "permanent temporary status' in the UAE, see Nora Lori, *Offshore Citizens*.

[29] I.S. 7

[30] 30 August 1966 J.R.H. Evans to H.T. Jamieson, 15/DUB/ZAN, Fonds 11 Series 1 Box 256, UNHCR Archives, Geneva

[31] Will Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality: Europeans, Ottomans and Egyptians in Alexandria*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, 75

[32] I.S. 2

[33] I.S. 49

[34] In the 2013 Oman TV series "Min al-Sawāhil", one of journalist Muhammad al-Murjebi's interviewees in Fuoni, Zanzibar, complains bitterly about the failure of the state to grant him an Omani passport. There are a substantial number of stateless people of Omani descent also currently living in Burundi.

[35] Mandana Limbert, "Marriage Status and the Politics of Nationality" in Alanoud Alsharekh (ed.) *The Gulf Family:* Alsharekh, Alanoud. (ed.) *The Gulf Family: Kinship, Policies and Modernity*. London: Saqi Books, 2007, 172; for parallel prohibitions see Paul Dresch "Debates on Marriage and Nationality in UAE" in Paul Dresch and James Piscatori (eds.) In *Monarchies and Nations*: *Globalisation and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005, 149-50

[36] J.E. Peterson. "Oman: Three and a Half Decades of Change and Development" *Middle East Policy* 11(2): May 2004, 125-137,131; Khalid al-Azri, *Social and Gender Inequality in Oman: The Power of Religious and Political Tradition*. London: Routledge, 2013, 133

[37] Calvin Allen Jr. and W. Lynn Rigsbee II. *Oman Under Qaboos: From Coup to Constitution, 1970-1996*. London: Routledge, 2000, 126-7; Dermot Gately, "Lessons from the 1986 Oil Price Collapse" *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 2: 1986, 237-284.

[38] In the 2013 Oman TV series "Min al-Sawāhil", one of journalist Muhammad al-Murjebi's interviewees in Fuoni, Zanzibar, complains bitterly about the failure of the state to grant him an Omani passport. There are a substantial number of stateless people of Omani descent also currently living in Burundi.

[39] see the case studies in Benjamin Lawrance and Jacqueline Stevens (eds.) *Citizenship in Question: Evidentiary Birthright and Statelessness.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

[40] Barbara and Karen Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life. New York: Verso Books, 2014.*

Identity and War: The Power of Labeling

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This article explores the role of labels and identities in Yemeni society through investigating the social hierarchies in Yemen and expanding on the identity crisis before and during the current war. The current war has widened differences among social segments and contributed to complicating the Yemeni identity conflict. I highlight the role of the language and labels used by different fighting groups to legitimize their movements and delegitimize their opponents. Labels are hierarchically derived based on the social placements of the individuals and are weaponized to "other" those who lack patriotism and loyalty to Yemen. This is a form of racialization, which, in turn, justifies fighting for each group as a holy means to gain "rightful" control over the region. The extensive use of various labels in naming opponents on social media, banners in streets, media and TV talk shows provoke hate speech and further contributed to weakening an already torn up society and fragile social fabric.

Yemen has long been characterized by social and political inequality and social division within different races, languages, and religions.[1] Yemen is traditionally a highly stratified society, with various forms of exclusions faced by certain social groups such as historically marginalized *Akhdam* (servant group), mixed birth groups, women, and youth.[2] Purity of blood and being the ancestors of the prophet, in the case of *Sayyids*, has been perceived as a holy right to rule and control. The Zaidi ideology, similar to the Shiites, believed that rulers should be one of the Prophet's successors. These enduring structures of exclusion, I argue, meet the criteria for the concept of "caste," despite Diana Kim's warnings against conceptual overstretch in this collection. In the case of the *Muhamisheen* (see below) this caste-like system takes on a form of racialization.

Yemen's caste-like social system

Yemen's hierarchal social system and caste-like social stratification is usually represented as a pyramid, with the Hashemites or *Sayyids* (Master) class who represent the religious elite at the top of the pyramid. *Sayyids* claim their descent to the family of Prophet Muhammad and who historically have enjoyed certain political and social privileges at the top of the Yemeni social hierarchy. Then comes the *Ouda* (judges) families who represent the religious scholars, jurists, and state administrators.[3] The vast majority in Yemen are *qabâ'il*, (tribesmen) or warriors are arms-bearing people; a large segment work in agriculture. Lower in status are the *Bani Al-Khums* or *Mazyaina* (service providers), the artisans, butchers, barbers, and others who form a minority of the population and are socially stigmatized due to the nature of their manual and handicraft work. Non-*qabilis* traditionally occupied a lower rank on the social hierarchy ladder.[4] At the bottom of the pyramid are the '*abîd*, or slaves, and the *Muhamesheen* (marginalized), or *Akhdam* (servants).[5]

There are a few religious minorities in Yemen who are not visible in the media but are now being represented during the ongoing war as a result of the exacerbated persecution and discrimination. In addition to the marginalized people who have lived in isolation and discrimination for centuries, there is a small number of Jews who failed to immigrate to Israel in 1948 in Operation Carpet of the Wind, the Baha'is who were deported and exiled from Yemen in 2020,[6] the Ismailis, who are a Shiite minority who have always peacefully co-existed, and a Christian minority whose existence is not yet acknowledged.[7] There are no statistics about them or their presence, except for some publications by those living outside of Yemen.

The *Muhamesheen* share a history of persecution, isolation, and discrimination with the Yemeni Jewish minority. Neither of these communities is allowed to own land, intermarry outside of their communities, or participate in any public or civic actions including political engagement. They are also restricted to degrading jobs such as handicraft, silver jewelry work for the Jewish minority, and

shoemaking and street sweeping for *Muhamesheen*.[8] Tribal customary law labels these groups '*naqis*' (which translates to 'incomplete'). It signifies that these groups are weak, and are not allowed to carry weapons, and therefore should be protected under tribal law.

Women and girls and women from marginalized groups are at higher risks of various forms of violence including sexual violence as they are considered to be immoral. During the war, frequent harassment by armed groups at checkpoints and kidnapping was reported.[9] The concept of 'homo sacer' by Giorgio Agamben that discusses sovereign power and bare life can usefully explain how such a complex stratified society in Yemen may justify marginalizing and exploiting those at the bottom of the social ladder. *Muhameshat* women are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, a practice legitimized by a dehumanizing social saying '*al khadmah hallwat saydaha*' or 'the *servant* is the sweet of her master.'[10]

For centuries, the Yemeni tribes have played significant roles in the political, economic, military, and judicial scene in rural areas.[11] The tribal judiciary system has replaced the state system in areas with a strong tribal history[12] and even acts as an intermediary party between state and society in such areas.[13] Therefore, tribal affiliation is crucial in identifying loyalty and social capital.[14]

The tribal system, likewise, maintains the same social hierarchical pyramid that emphasizes inequality among its individuals. However, the Yemeni tribal system is a segmentary lineage society where certain structural principles apply to groups and individuals. In events that "follow the rules," all individuals that belong to the tribe should join, defend, and maintain *sharaf al-qabila* (the honor of the tribe) against opponents.[15] This is called *daie al-qabila* (the call of the tribe) that invokes a collective response and is obligatory to all who belong to the tribe. So, during the current conflict, answering the question of 'what is your origin', '*auysh aslak*', or 'what is your tribe' is a question about social and political identity and loyalty that could jeopardize people's lives.

Blackness and Purity of Blood

This caste-like system blurs into racialization with the discourse over purity of blood. A person born to a Yemeni father and an African mother is not classified socially as a 'Yemeni,' even if they possess Yemeni identification papers. Instead, they are called '*muwalad*'[16] which is a derogatory label that indicates being hybrid, not pure-blooded, a stranger and outsider. This was portrayed powerfully by the Yemeni novelist Mohamed Abduwali in his famous novel "They die Strangers"[17] where he narrated about the search of a nation, of citizens, of hope. As novelist Samia al-Shatbi observes, being *muwalad'* is like being 'half a human and half a ghost.'[18] *Muwaladeen* are not perceived to be pure; "an Arab who is not purely Arab."[19]

The *Akhdam* or *Muhamesheen* sect's historical accounts differ from their origin, and their ethnic race throughout the history of the Abyssinian occupation of Yemen.[20] Both *Akhdam* and *Muwaladeen* groups suffer from these stigmatized labels that indicate incompleteness and illegibility to be socially respected and to belong to society. The Yemeni Civil Status Law allows Yemeni citizens to hold more than one nationality, unlike the Ethiopian Personal Status Law.[21] During the war, some *Muwaladeen* who carry Yemeni nationality regret not holding another nationality that could have offered them more options. Meanwhile, *Akhdam* are exploited politically by labeling them as *Ahfad Bilal*[22] (descendants of the first Prophet prayer caller who is from an Ethiopian or Abyssinian origin) to attract as many to the battle fronts considering it a religious and national war and giving this sect a sense of belonging due to their participation in the war.

The purity of blood is not the essence of all forms of historical discrimination against these two groups. It is blackness. For example, if one is a mixed birth of a European parent or any other lighter skin color, he or she will not be perceived socially as *muwalad* or *Khadim,* which means the most salient factor here in determining this label is more the skin color and blackness. Social fragmentation is a geneagenetic issue at the intersection of race, ancestry, politics, and geography.

Failure or collapse of the National Identity

The 1990 unification between the two parts of Yemen was assumed to create a collective national identity with the birth of the new Yemeni unified state. However, instability was a feature of this state for 20 years. This instability only worsened with the attempts of separatists in the south and further north of Yemen. However, that was terminated by the emergence of the *Houthi* rebellion in 2004 and the retired soldiers' movement in 2007 in the south. The grievances were left unaddressed due to the political instability, corruption, war on terror, the exhaustion of the state from the six wars with *Houthis,* and the decline of oil revenue.

During the six rounds of war against the *Houthis* (2004-2010), the Yemeni government categorized Houthi fighters as 'terrorists', 'rebels', and 'Iranian Shiite pawns in the Arabian Peninsula.' The Pan-Arab media described the fighting in Sa'ada as a 'guerrilla war'[23] or an Iran proxy war. These labels legitimized military actions carried out by the Saudi-backed Yemeni government in the sixth round of war. The accumulation of this conflict in the past decade commenced with the popular uprising in 2011. The overthrow of the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh after 33 years and the initiation of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) gave the impression that the centuries-long instability in Yemen was merely political rather than a collective of entranced cross-political grievances united against an authoritarian regime. The failure of the NDC and the breakout of the war began another chapter of label and identity conflict. The war has been labeled lightly as a sectarian war and sometimes as a proxy war and extension for the Sunni and Shia regional conflict, but this does not tell the whole story of the war in Yemen.[24]

The umbrella of political and party loyalty was the basis for wealth and position sharing in the pre-war period that intersected with tribal loyalty in tribal areas. Now, sectarian affiliation in Houthi-controlled areas came to play a major role in determining the role of individuals in political life and in sharing political and material gains.

The Houthis, as a religiously driven political movement, could hypothetically share the fantasy of belonging to a larger *Ummah Islamiyah (*Islamic Nation) community with the Sunni *Islah* Party[25] and the Salafists. There are varied interpretations made by each group as to who belongs to the Ummah (Sunni Ummah and Shi'i Ummah). Such Islamic collective identity enables these groups to adopt a more holy project that is religiously more appealing to a diverse group of people to join. Consequently, the creation of a national political identity contributes to diminishing the political aspiration of Islamic political groups.

Identity Labeling and Legitimacy

Is the current Yemeni war a sectarian war or a war of identities? Some research tends to classify what is happening in Yemen as a war of identities while others label the conflict as a sectarian conflict to politicize religious identities within a regional conflict over influence and legitimacy. However, the emerging sectarian labels used by opponents such as '*dawaish*' (as extremist Sunnis) and *Majus* (pro-Iranian Shia) fail to tell the whole story of the current conflict in Yemen.[26] A closer look would reveal that conflicting parties use sectarian labeling to strip 'legitimacy' and claim the title of the sole and legitimate representative and authority for Yemenis. As Yemenis struggle to survive and adapt to the dynamics, the unstable conflict continues to impose greater restrictions every day. Traveling between one province and another has become dependent on the regional, political or tribal affiliation of those standing at the military checkpoints that have spread throughout the country and follow the geographical division of the conflicting parties. The place of birth has become a charge, and regional dialects have been weaponized as an accusatory tool that may subject their speakers to unlawful arrests in unknown prisons for years. Women have become afraid to travel alone, even in groups, due to the fear of violence perpetrated by certain military checkpoints that follow militant religious parties (Salafists and al-Qaeda) that pursue women who travel without a *mahram* (a male guardian). Travel outside Yemen has become dependent on the passport's place of issuance. In addition, the internationally recognized authority of

legitimacy has considered tightening the screws on citizens who travel for treatment and prevent their travel if their passports were issued in the governorates controlled by the Houthis.

Within the conflict of identities during the ongoing war, multiple new identities emerged that seek to gain the endorsement of the warring factions, as a means of achieving the right to lead as protectors and representatives of Yemen, much like the Houthis. The seven years' war awakened many conflicts that had been dormant for more than five decades, such as sectarianism, and regionalism.

Labeling is a political act that aims to identify the inclusion and exclusion of others.[27] In Yemen, labeling entails the act of pragmatic "othering" during the conflict to impose certain boundaries and social stigmas against opponents and empower actors. An example is using the label "*shaheed*" (martyr) by different fighting parties as a means to honor their supporters or those who join their fighting fronts. This takes the label away from its cultural and religious meaning. During the war, the label of "*shaheed*" has also been used as a victimization tool to shame and criminalize the killing of civil and military people by their opponents. Meanwhile, each group labels their martyrs as heroes and opposing martyrs as villains, mercenaries, or '*murtazak'*.

The emergence of a youth movement in the name of Yemeni nationalism (*Aqiyal*) sparked loud arguments between supporters and opponents, and a collateral battle has emerged for the ongoing war that is led by various intellectuals, researchers, writers, journalists, and political activists. The identity of the '*Aqyal*' evokes the history and links the land, geography, and history of the era of the ancient Yemeni kingdoms. "*Qayl*" means a king in the ancient Himyarite language. This identity confronts the so-called faith identity '*Alhawyah Al'emanya'* that *Ansar Allah* (the Houthi movement) established to empower religious authority over the Yemeni identity or any other national identity. On the other hand, the political forces that belong to the Yemeni *Islah* Party established a unitary identity "*wahdawya,*" which claims a unitary identity and the unity of the whole geographical territory of 1990 unified Yemen as an existential identity that could protect its political existence. In the South, the identity of the 'Arab South' has emerged, which also denies, as the authority of Ansar Allah, the unity concept with the North of Yemen and even adhering to any form of a Yemeni identity. The supporters of a new southern identity have been labeled as 'separatists' by the *Islahis* who call for a unitary identity. More recently, due to the military and political developments in the south and the liberation of the southern areas from the control of Ansar Allah in 2015, a new political structure was created in 2017 called the 'Southern Transitional Council.' As a 'self-styled southern government-in-waiting, this entity controls most of Yemen's four southern governorates, including the temporary capital, Aden.[28] However, this political structure is labeled by their opponents as 'UAE -back separatists' as a label that denies the reality of these political changes.English translation.

This discourse allows the higher social classes to claim and introduce themselves as holy groups that have "divine" privileges granted based on 'sacred lineage.'[29] In other words, utilizing a political function of descent,[30] being part of *Syadds* or religious elite means being part of the sacred descent which enable people to assume certain privileges even if they are not politically active or occupy certain positions. For example, Houthi authorities replaced government and military officials with Hashemite Zaidi cadres who were largely appointed for their sectarian identity rather than their expertise and merit.[31] Furthermore, intermarriage is not allowed, to maintain the purity of origin (*'irq*) and of the lineage (*as-salālah*). This maintains sacred social and material privileges of higher classes such as benefiting from an alleged right to distribute one-fifth (*Khums*)[32] of the country's revenues to those of a Hashemite origin or receiving the priority to occupy high political positions in a patron-clientelism system. However, while the Hashemite lineage used to be perceived as a privileged label, during the war it has become a hate label '*sulalli'* (belong to the Hashemite lineage*) or kahnoty* (sacerdotal) used in media by their opponents. Some of the consequences affected traveling

between territories controlled by the different military and political groups where those who hold last names that belong to the Hashemite families are sometimes attacked, arrested, and accused of being Houthi.[33]

Is Social Cohesion Attainable?

Labels impose boundaries and define categories. They are a means to construct our social world; to define norms in relation to others who bear similar or different labels.[34] Political labeling and counter-labeling processes produce varied unanticipated and significant implications on social cohesion. Social cohesion is concerned with the quality and nature of connections between people and groups, and this concept needs to be the focus of development efforts to address state fragility.[35] Furthermore, social cohesion is often weakened by perceptions of injustice and grievances among social groups. Creating an "us-versus-them" mentality exacerbates intergroup divisions.

This escalated and contested labeling further polarizes Yemen and weakens its social fabric leading. The war in Yemen has been labeled as a counter to Iran's influence presenting Houthis as Iranian proxies which have exacerbated the mentality of 'us' and 'them' and has led to further fragmentation. However, social cohesion has yet to be prioritized in the peace talks or peace interventions at the community level and is considered an afterthought that could be addressed after the end of the war. The emerging multiplicity of identities questions whether Yemenis are able to build up a collective national identity given the expansion of political fragmentation, separatist tendencies, and historical isolation of identities or the political divides.

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Endnotes

1 Considering Jewish minority who speak Hebrew language and Soqatri language (archaic yet living Afro-Asiatic and South Arabian language known as Socotri) that is spoken in some parts of Al-Mahara Governate and the archipelago of Socotra.
2 Colburn, 2021
3 Lackner, 2016; Al-Sharjabi, 1986
4 Salmoni et al, 2010
5 Christensen & Al-Thawr, 2019; Lackner, 2016; Al-Sharjabi, 1986
6 Human Rights Watch, 2020; Al-Monitor, 2020
7 See: Haber, Romy. "Facing Targeted Attacks, Yemen's Christian Minority Struggles to Survive." 2019. Global Voices. January 17, 2019. https://globalvoices.org/2019/01/17/facing-targeted-attacks-yemens-christian-minority-struggles-to-survive/#. & World Watch Monitor. "Christians in Yemen 'Persevering, Not Surviving." 2017 https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/christians-yemen-not-surviving-persevering/. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2001
8 Christensen and Al-Thawr, 2019
9 Gressmann, 2016: 11

[10] Sexual violence again women form *Muhamesheen* have been debated by human rights activists in media before and during the war due to frequents sexual abuse and rape incidents where perpetrator often escapes with punishment. See some media coverage for rape incidents: The *Muhamesheen* Union accuses the authorities of Taiz of complicity in the rape case of the child "Risalah". https://alsharaeanews.com/2021/01/24/49288/ . The rape of a *Muhamesheen* girl, and the police arrest the victim's family. http://www.ypagency.net/60535

[11] Marc et al, 2013; Bonnefoy and Poirer, 2009; Adra, 2016

[12] Gaston and Al-Dawsari, 2014

[13] Bonnefoy and Poirier, 2009

[14] Carter, 2017

[15] Dresh, 1989; Nevola, 2015

[16] Yemenis of mixed Yemeni Ethiopian descent whose ancestry mixed of Yemenis and Africans especially Ethiopians.

[17] '*Yamutun ghuraba*' ("They Die Strangers") illustrates African-Yemeni marriages and its connotation to a persistent social stigma. This novel was published in 1971 has been translated into several languages including English, French and German. The writer himself is of Ethiopian decent.

[18] Samia Al-Shatbi in his novel "One nose for two homelands" published in 2015 and another "lost in Ethiopia" in 2021, both novels discuss the suffering of *Muwaladeen* in Yemen.

[19] IOM, 2014

[20] Christiansen, & Al-Thawr, 2019, Al-Haj & Michael, 2016; Al-Hakami, 2010; Saif, 2005; Shajab,2002, Al-Sharjabi, 2001

[21] Nasser, 2016

[22] Bilal ibn Rabah, who was a slave brought from Al-Habsha land (Ethiopia), was one of the closest companion of the Prophet Mohammed and his prayers caller or *Muathin*. He was Using his name is purposeful as his case symbolizes the equality based on Islam. (Christiansen, & Al-Thawr, 2019).

[23] Salmoni et al, 2010

[24] Durac, 2019b

[25] Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated party in Yemen (Hamzawy, 2009).

[26] Durac, 2019a &b

[27] Sajjad, 2018

[28] Salisbury, 2021

[29] Sana'a Center, 2020

[30] Nevola, 2015

[31] Sana'a Center, 2020

[32] Articles 47 and 48 the "Zakat" law (approved by the parliament in 1999) contains an article that specifies allocating 20% of the country's revenues (a tax on natural resources and minerals extracted from the ground or the sea) to "*Ahl al-Bayt*"" or Banu Hashim but was never implemented. The Houthi movement/Ansar Allah amended this article recently to execute it as part of the Zakat taxation. This action causes a heated debate in media accusing the Houthis as being racist who try to exploit religious texts to take additional stakes. See Mahdi, Safia (2020). 'Yemen: One-Fifth of the Country's Wealth Among the Hashemites.' In Daraj. https://daraj.com/en/49725/, published on June 28, 2020.

[33] OHCHR, 2020

[34] Rosalind & Moncrieffe, 2007

[35] Marc et al,2013:3

Black and Yemeni: Myths, Genealogies, and Race

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At the time of this publication, the Saudi-led coalition's brutal war on Yemen has entered its seventh year. The region's wealthiest countries' assault on one of its poorest has wreaked broad and deep devastation, plunging Yemen into famine and transforming it into a site of unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Recent estimates suggest that at least thirteen percent or 3.3 million people are internally displaced, and eighty percent or 24.1 million of Yemen's residents are in need of aid for basic sustenance, such as food, water, and fuel.[1] The Saudi-led coalition's sea, land, and air blockade has starved Yemen, which imported ninety percent of its foodstuff prior to the war. Food and humanitarian aid have become weapons of war used by both the Houthis and Saudi-led coalition.[2] As a result, an entire generation of Yemeni children suffer from malnutrition or starvation. The targeting of Yemeni hospitals has destroyed the healthcare sector leaving the most equipped hospital in Yemen's capital with a meager sixteen available ICU beds[3]—just as Yemenis face cholera and a historic global pandemic.

The crisis has heightened existing disparities within Yemen as "even war discriminates."[4] Among the most affected are the *Muhamasheen*, a community of Black Yemenis who have long been subject to systemic and structural racism. On the outskirts of internally displaced camps, Yemen's *Muhamasheen* seek refuge. These Black Yemenis face coercive exclusion from these already marginalized spaces. Officials regularly expunge *Muhamash* names from aid distribution lists, depriving them from access to food distribution and UNCIEF grants specifically allocated for *Muhamasheen*.[5] They are forced to seek shelter in the public spaces of a dilapidated landscape from open farmlands to war-torn schools and buildings.[6] These people, teetering on the margins of the margins, have much to teach us about race, racialization, and the geopolitics of antiblackness.

The Muhamasheen

Scholars and human rights practitioners have described the *Muhamasheen* (s. *Muhamash*), or "the marginalized," as Yemen's "untouchables" echoing the conditions of Dalits in India.[7] Most reside in informal housing in urban and rural outskirts, with little access to basic infrastructure or services. *Muhamasheen* are regularly turned away from hospitals and schools, and violent crimes against them go unpunished.[8] Yemeni parents habitually warn their children to avoid the sun lest they resemble a "*khadim*," or "servant," the derogatory label that confines the *Muhamasheen* and that many Yemenis still use to name members of this community. Proverbs too remind one to "clean [a plate] after a dog [eats from it] but break it after a *khadim*." It is crucial we recognize this power over naming and the antiblackness imbued in the label of *khadim*. As Black feminists have long taught us, racism shapes the grammar of everyday life.[9] In this manner, the language of "servant" excludes the *Muhamash* from multiple categories: the Yemeni, the citizen, and the human.[10]

The *Muhamasheen* are not the only Black Yemenis or Black people residing in Yemen. The historical links between Africa and Yemen have a long and rich history. In the sixth century, Yemen was part of the Abyssinian kingdom of Aksum. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Najahid dynasty, which originated in Abyssinia, ruled Yemen's lowlands. The legacy of the Najahid lives on in the spaces and people of today's Zabid and Tihama. Links to the Horn of Africa continue well into the modern period. Yemen was a major route in the East African slave trade and slavery was not officially prohibited until 1962. African refugees, predominately Somalis and Ethiopians, long fled to Yemen before the current war. Ethiopian Yemenis and Eritrean Yemenis reside on both sides of the Red Sea, reflecting historical and contemporary roots Yemeni merchants and migrants established along its banks.

Despite this long history, African Yemenis, like other Black Arabs, face systemic racism.[11] The term "*muwalidin*" refers to any Yemeni of "mixed blood"; it is a derogatory term punctuating juridical and popular conventions delineating Yemenis of African parentage as "half-cast." Officials routinely deny Black Yemenis' biopolitical presence as well as their "Yemeniness."[12] A March 2014 Civil Status Authority decree forbade identity cards "for *muwalidin* born outside Yemen, *especially to those born in the Horn of Africa*, who do not have proof of Yemeni nationality."[13] The decree is careful to clarify that non-Black *muwalidin*, specifically those "born in the Gulf countries, Europe and Asia," are excluded from this policy.[14] These Black Yemenis face a persistent state and popular antiblackness, common to Black Arabs who continue to be called *abid* or "slaves" throughout the region.[15]

Even in this deeply racialized context, and the presence of other Black Yemeni communities, the *Muhamasheen's* "untouchable" position is distinct. But what does it mean to be "Black" or "African" in Yemen? African diasporic communities like the *Muhamasheen* reveal the dynamic and heterogenous links between the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian Ocean, and Africa. As Enseng Ho, Sebastian Prange, and Nancy Um show, Southern Arabia has long been a global anchor of East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia.[16] Additionally, Mandana Limbert reminds us that as late as the 20th century, the label of "Arab" itself was still being constructed and contested. She argues that it was a consequence of a new focus on the Arabian Peninsula as the source of "Arabness" and an intense reorientation away from the Indian Ocean that has "shaped and reinforced an ethnicized and even racialized notion of Arabness in the broader Arabian Peninsula."[17] While Limbert's focus is specifically on Oman, we see a similar racialization process unfolding in Yemen where *Muhamasheen* have lived as permanent outsiders for centuries.

The *Muhamasheen* and Yemen's place on the banks of the Indian Ocean invite us to rethink our categorization of territory and space. The origin myths and genealogical imaginations that structure *Muhamash* lifeworlds reveal complex intersections of race, class, skin color, and the constructions of Arabness and Blackness. Everyday *Muhamasheen* and *Muhamash* activists in turn reveal how language, genealogy, and origin are key sites of the struggle for racial and social justice.

Origin Myths and Genealogical Imagination

What can the *Muhamasheen*'s experience as one of many Black Yemeni communities reveal about race and racialization in Yemen and the Indian Ocean? How do we make sense of the *Muhamasheen's* position in Yemeni social hierarchy? Huda Seif, Delores Walters, and Muhammed Qassim al-Khayyat highlight different origin myths other Yemenis use to explain this group of Black Yemenis' marginalization and living conditions even when compared to other Black communities in the country.[18] The myth goes something like this: An East African king and his soldiers invaded pre-Islamic Yemen. "Indigenous" Yemenis ousted the conquerors and enslaved the remaining African soldiers, relegating them to the social fringes and derogatorily naming them "*Akhdam*" or "servants." Their specific African origin changes with each retelling. However, their centuries of continuous residence in Yemen remains consistent in each tale. Yet despite this, *Muhamasheen* remain permanent outsiders who are Black and "African" as opposed to Yemeni and Arab. These origin myths use the *Muhamasheen's* "Blackness" and "foreignness" as an indication, and explanation, of the community's immortality and impurity. The *Muhamasheen's* perceived immorality and impurity then makes legible the morality of non-*Muhamash* Yemenis. For instance, *Muhamash* women in parts of Yemen do not veil to differentiate themselves from elite "moral" Yemeni women; nor do elite Yemeni women veil in front of 'effeminate' *Muhamasheen* men as they would in the presence of non-*Muhamash* men.[19]

We can trace a relationship between genealogy and morality to the Mutawakkilite's social classes in Yemen. Prior to the 1962 North Yemeni Revolution, Zaydi Imams governed northern Yemen under the Mutawakkilite Kingdom. Yemenis became increasingly organized into a

strict social hierarchy that consisted of five social classes: one, the Saddah [religious class], two, the Qadis [the judges], three, the Shaykhs [tribal leaders], four, the Qabayil [tribesmen], and five, the *khums* [the Fifthers]. This social stratification took shape along genealogical lines. The more traceable the genealogy and the stronger the claim to a proximity to the sacred, the higher the rank and the accompanying political, social, and material power.[20]

Each social class has its origin myth. As Luca Nevola's work on Yemen and Andrew Shryock's work on Jordan show, ancestral claims and narratives do more than shape an imagined identity. "Genealogical imagination," determines your (im)morality.[21] The Saddah claimed links to the prophet Mohammed and occupied the highest rung in the hierarchy. They would become the ruling Imams, as prescribed in Zaydi Islam. The Saddah were constructed as wise, just, noble, and skilled mediators. Shaykhs and their tribesmen traced their genealogies to tribal confederations such as those of Hashid and Bakil. Their origin myths are replete with brave warriors fighting for justice and protecting the weak (*thu'afah*). Their descendants are constructed as masculine, honor bound, and trustworthy. The *khums* or Fifthers consist of groups with "untraceable" genealogies. Conventional wisdom posits these people as weak and "lacking origins" (*nuqqas al-asl*). These "lacking" people, or *nuqqas,* include the *muzayyinīn,* such as butchers and grocers, and other Black Yemenis, such as the descendants of enslaved and formerly enslaved people.

It is important to recognize the hierarchy that exists even within this fifth class with the *muzayyinīn* at the top, followed by those Black Yemenis believed to be descendants from formerly enslaved people, and at the lowest position the *Muhamasheen.* The *Muhamasheen's* origin myths are bereft of holy ancestors or brave Indigenous warriors. The *Muhamash* is constructed as foreign, violent, effeminate, sexually deviant, impure, and immoral. As such, police officers regularly dismiss violent crimes and sexual assault against *Muhamasheen* women who they posit as "naturally promiscuous." Today, common proverbs warn Yemenis not to "be fooled by a *khadim's* loveliness, it's in his bones you'll find his filthiness."[22]

The hierarchy within this fifth category reveals a gradation of Blackness and antiblackness in Yemen. It is a spectrum rather than a binary of race and racialization. Some *Muhamasheen* mobilize this gradation to claim belonging among other Black Yemeni communities. Indeed, African origin plays a role in constructing the "Blackness" of the *Muhamasheen* in comparison to other non-*Muhamash* Yemenis, who may not phenotypically differ. In this way, the presence of the marginalized and affectable Black subject provides a contrasting "other" on whose back the racialized Yemeni figure can claim some dignity.[23] Thus, Yemenis draw on imagined (im)pure genealogies to construct the "Blackness" of the *Muhamash*. The figure of the *Muhamash* is then mobilized to construct a contrasting "Arab-Yemeni" with equally dark skin. To be a *Muhamash* is to be Black. To be a Qabiyli, Saddah, or even a *muzayyin* is to be "Arab;" the two terms mutually exclusive while also always mutually constitutive. But how do we read "Black" in a context where pigment does not provide an easy roadmap?[24] The *Muhamasheen* show us that in Southern Arabia, the legibility of Blackness happens at the intersection of skin color and origin narratives.

North Yemen's 26th of September Revolution ousted the despotic Imams of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom in 1962; the promise of a new order was ubiquitous. Political power was redistributed across social divides. Some Fifthers took a share of the new republic's political power. However, the legacies of Imamate Yemen's genealogical imaginations continued to shape the lifeworlds of social classes, particularly that of the *Muhamasheen*. The revolutionary Yemeni state institutionalized *Muhamash* untouchability, limiting *Muhamash* employment to the sanitation sector. Even before the current war, the only government occupation available to most *Muhamsheen* was street sweeping, garbage collecting, or janitorial work. Unlike other government employees, and in contravention of labor law, the *Muhamsheen* work without contracts or basic protections. In this way, state official's selective application and suspension of law suspends the *Muhamash* as an extrajudicial figure, excluded from the category of the human. They are a people "on whom new forms of regulation can be exercised."[25]

Resisting and Reimagining Genealogy

Muhamasheen have sought to dislodge this web of genealogy, racism, and antiblackness. Some resist or diminish the importance of genealogy altogether. *Muhamash* activists like Mohammed Al-Qairai recast the struggle in global terms. A prominent member of the Yemeni Socialist Party from 1985 to 2008, Qairai founded the political group The Movement of the Free Black People in 2005. In naming themselves Black people as opposed to "marginalized," this movement highlights Blackness, as opposed to genealogy or class, as the source of structural exclusion.[26] The Free Black People Movement recasts the narrative from one of purity, morality, and ancestry to a global struggle against violent structural racism and the persecution of Black bodies and lives.

Others reimagine *Muhamasheen's* genealogy. The *Muhamash*-led organization Ahfad Bilal (the Grandchildren of Bilal) invokes a link to Bilal ibn Rabah, the formerly enslaved Black companion of the prophet Muhammad. Muslims recognize Bilal as the first Black man to embrace Islam. The prophet Muhammed entrusted Bilal with leading the first call to prayer from the Ka'ba; Bilal holds a revered place in Muslim imaginaries. Ahfad Bilal dismantle the tropes of heresy or immorality. They craft an alternative origin of bravery, piety, and proximity to the sacred. Ahfad Bilal also center the equality of Muslims regularly invoking the hadith attributed to the prophet Mohammad that, "there is no difference between Black and white [Muslims]—only in *taqwa* [level of piety]."

Nu'man al-Hudhayfi, the founder of another *Muhamash*-led movement called Akhdam Allah (or Servants of God) also emphasizes religiosity. Founded in 2013 during the transitional period after the 2011 uprising, Akhdam Allah re-appropriates the derogatory label of "servant" to challenge racism, move out of the margins, and claim space in the Yemeni social fabric.[27] Hudhayfi rejects the term "*Muhamasheen*" because of its elision of the marginalized urban poor and the "Akhdam." He argues that the label "*Muhamasheen*" also allows state officials to frequently dismiss international calls opposing Black Yemeni oppression by pointing to economic hardship as the decisive factor in their social condition.[28] "Using the term *Muhamasheen* does not serve our cause and its specifics," Hudhayfi explains, "Our cause will be lost and vanish within the issues of other marginalized groups in Yemen."[29] Instead, and like the Free Black People Movement, Hudayfi stresses race and racism as the source of Black Yemeni's discrimination.[30]

For some *Muhamasheen*, the elision of race and class is an opportunity to deny the significance of genealogy altogether. In this logic, the *Muhamasheen* are marginalized Yemenis, just like any slum dwellers. Rather than demand state restitution or special protection, these *Muhamasheen* draw on the rhetoric of citizenship, equality, and rights to demand equal access.[31] As a man named Ali explained, "We do not want any special rights as a minority. The minority status was imposed on us. I hope that one day we are seen as just Yemenis, and not *Muhamasheen* or Akhdam. What should count is that you are a Yemeni and a Muslim, and not your family background."[32] Ali and other *Muhamasheen* like him, demand inclusion not as a Black minority but as "Yemeni and Muslim." From this angle of vision, state agencies are vehicles for rights, integration, and inclusion.

Other *Muhamasheen* are critical of the promises of citizenship and the state. They point out that integration, sameness, and citizenship discount the structural, institutional, and social past and present of racism and exclusion. From this perspective, the Yemeni state cannot be a site of change and liberation. Indeed, the social landscape itself is structured around exclusion. Frustrated by repeated and failed attempts to realize equal citizenship, Nabil Al-Maktari reflects on the broken promises of the Yemeni Uprising,

Institutionalized by the government and normalized by the people, we are Arabs, Muslims, Yemeni citizens, like you. So why are we made to feel inferior? Why are we treated like slaves? I came to this [protest] square because I wanted to feel equality. Instead, I find discrimination in every corner. This is racism in its worst form.[33]

Maktari emphasizes here both commonality and difference. Despite his insistence of his Arab, Yemeni, and Muslim credentials, his history, class, status, and skin color mark him as an always already foreign outcast.

Enduring Legacies and the Yemen War

The Houthis' hold on northern Yemen depends on their hold of the Hudaydah, Sanaa, and Marib governates. In addition to being a source of power supply and oil production, Marib is a stronghold of tribal and sheikh led anti-Houthi resistance. Abdul-Malik al-Houthi has deployed *Muhamasheen* mercenaries to fight in Marib, paying some and coercing others.[34] Some claim that defeating tribal leaders with "*Akhdam*" is a psychological ploy to humiliate and defeat the resistance. Here then we see the long life of antiblack claims of the lowly, immoral, and effeminate foreigner.

Houthi mobilizes these tropes to threaten Yemeni tribesmen with the image of immoral and foreign fighters plundering their homes and honor (*sharaf*). This military strategy draws on *Muhamash* origin myths: just as their ancestors subjected and defeated "Indigenous Yemenis" in pre-Islamic times, so too would twenty-first century *Muhamasheen* humiliate Marib's shaykhs. Only this time, these fighters were not led by an African king, but a Yemeni Houthi and member of the Saddah class. In either case, the *Muhamash* stands as permanent outsider.

When *can* an "outsider" become a Yemeni? How far back must someone trace their genealogy before they can claim their Yemeni origin? The *Muhamasheen* of Yemen and Yemen's position at the brink of the Indian Ocean dismantles the territorial, conceptual, and disciplinary divides of the "Middle East" and "Africa." They reveal a more entangled history and present. The *Muhamasheen*, and the multitude of Black Yemeni experience, demonstrate racialization as a spectrum rather than a binary. The construction of "Arab" and "Black" happens at the dynamic intersections of imagined genealogies and skin color. The *Muhamasheen's* social history and their condition as permeant outsiders in a country they have resided in for centuries reveal both the durability and instability of racial and national categories.

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Erasure and Affect in Race-Making in Turkey

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In the 1990s, the war between the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Workers' Party) guerillas and the Turkish state and the ensuing military occupation of Kurdistan dispossessed most Kurdish families to such a degree that it became impossible for the majority to make a living depending solely on the resources of Kurdistan. Since then, many families from the lowlands of Kurdistan have been working as migrant farmworkers, and they constitute the majority of the rural labor force of western Turkey. Migrant labor is a primary site where the rural Turkish population encounters Kurds, who the Turkish state keeps under surveillance throughout their stay in western Turkey. These encounters mostly reproduce larger patterns of racialization and political violence and reinforce the racialized hierarchies of citizenship in Turkey.

Recent critical scholarship on the relationship between Kurdishness, Turkishness, nationalism, and racism in Turkey characterize the era between the foundation of the republic in 1923 and 1990s as the period of "denial," which refers to the denial of the existence of Kurds, while they identify the aftermath of the 1990s as an era of "recognition" coupled with the racialization of Kurds in Turkish public discourses.[1] In this article, I draw attention to two common elements underlying both of these eras identified as denial and recognition, namely, erasure and racial affect. In doing so, I invite not only seeing a continuity in the discursive construction of Kurdishness in both eras, but also attending to the constant transaction between state discourses and the forms they take as they circulate in social life.

Silencing Kurdishness

In 2009, I conducted interviews with over twenty Turkish farmers about migrant farmworkers in a cotton producing region of western Turkey. They said that before the "ones from the East" (a euphemism used for "Kurdish") came, migrant [Turkish] workers from the nearby western provinces did this job. There was a "cultural difference" between workers from the nearby provinces and "those from the East", they said, the ones from western provinces are "better in terms of culture", "those from the East do not understand a thing", and "they are barbarians."

Most farmers I interviewed avoided the word "Kurd" like the plague. They replaced the proper name Kurdish with "Easterners," called the Kurdish language an accent, and replaced the word "Kurdistan", the biggest taboo, with "the East." However, erasing these proper names did not break their association with the PKK, which the Turkish farmers saw as a terrorist organization. Moreover, it was not only the PKK militants that were terrorists in their eyes, but all the "Easterners" who were potential terrorists.[2] They said the Turkish state rightfully targeted them for surveillance, one did not know whether the ones from the East were "terrorists or what."

Kurdish is not only silenced while talking *about* Kurds. Kurdish workers themselves are literally silenced by Turkish farmers who forbid their speaking Kurdish on their farms and by Turkish locals around the farms who verbally and physically attack the workers. Many workers are harassed for speaking Kurdish on the phone or among themselves, beaten, and some are even killed. This silencing is not limited to the 1990s and early 2000s when the Kurdish question was just starting to be discussed more freely in society, but also continued even after the pro-Kurdish party (HDP - People's Democratic Party) won a historic percentage of votes in the June 2015 national elections with a political campaign that made Kurds more visible than ever in the history of the Turkish Republic. Ahmed, one of the workers I met in a village in İzmir that summer told me that he had met with the Turkish employer of his fellow Syrian workers the other day. He asked Ahmed where he was from, Ahmed told him that he was a Kurd from Mardin, and the Turkish employer said: "there is no such thing as Kurds" in Turkey. Ahmed kept

telling similar anecdotes, he also had a boss who forbid him to speak Kurdish in his presence. Ahmed stood up to him and said that he could not speak Turkish all the time. "Isn't it so?" he said to me, "Why shouldn't I speak [Kurdish]? But they don't understand..."

In such cases, Kurdish workers sometimes stood up against their employers, other times they bit their tongue and kept working for fear of losing their jobs or being reported to the military police with the allegations of "terrorism" since pronouncing one's Kurdishness could easily be equated to supporting "terrorism." The mid-2000s was a relatively liberal era of EU accession negotiations, the formation of the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq, intermittent ceasefires and peace negotiations with the PKK, and the conferral of limited cultural and political rights to Kurds,[3] the political success of which was attributed to the AKP (*Justice and Development Party*) government. While the forms of erasing Kurdishness from the public realm diversified at this time, the attempts of silencing, censoring, and rendering Kurdishness invisible were never fully abandoned. Moreover, every time the difference of Kurdishness was erased, it had to be accounted for in other ways, The colonial vocabularies of making racial difference (and sameness) were always present, may they be implicit and subtle like "better in terms of culture" or quite explicit like "they are barbarians."

Between Denial and Recognition

The scholars who make the distinction between denial and recognition argue that while the period of denial called for the policies of assimilation, oppression, and a "civilizing mission", the period of recognition put an end to the belief that Kurds would be assimilated into Turkishness. Instead, they were racialized as "the other" of Turkish identity through embodied racial stereotypes like dark skin, hairy bodies, short stature, and body smell and cultural and behavioral attributes like a natural propensity to violence, crudeness, hypersexuality, and gullibility. Mesut Yeğen, Cenk Saraçoğlu, and Murat Ergin argue that the racialization of Kurds (or discrimination and hatred against Kurds for Yeğen) became possible only after Kurdish identity was recognized rather than denied.[4] Dicle Koğacıoğlu argues that both paradigms have been present in both periods but the hegemonic paradigm was constructed through an assimilationist/developmentalist imaginary until the 1990s and through a racial/cultural imaginary after the 1990s.[5] Although Emel Uzun Avcı agrees with this periodization and argues that with the political reforms of the AKP government in the 2000s talking about the Kurdish question ceased to be a taboo, her research on the Kurdish question in the narratives of lay people shows that the elements of denial never fully disappeared from public discourses. After 2015, as the war between the PKK and the Turkish state escalated and the political reforms of the AKP government were reversed, the official discourse "turned back dramatically to the classical discourse of denial."[6]

In my research with farmers and farmworkers, it is easy to identify discursive elements from both periods characterized as denial (banning the speaking of Kurdish, avoiding the words Kurd and Kurdish and reinscribing it as "the East", calling Kurdish an accent, formulating the social difference of Kurds as a "lack of culture" and "barbarism") and recognition (associating Kurdishness with terrorism, racialized references to Kurds' having many children and lack of mental capacity as in "those from the East do not understand a thing" or being deceived by the PKK to support its cause). Not only do the discursive elements of signifying Kurdishness as racialized difference in the era of "recognition" come from the period identified as "denial" but also the precondition of that re-signification comes from the operation of erasure active in both processes. I argue that denial/assimilation and recognition/racialization are two modalities of "racial thinking"[7] and "race-making"[8] that have prevailed in the discourses on the relationship of Kurds to Kurdishness and Turkishness in the history of the Republic. In contrast to the periodization of moving from denial to recognition, I emphasize the continuity in race-thinking in both modalities by tracing erasure and racial affect.

The Turkish employer's response to Ahmed, "there is no such thing as Kurds" is a central discursive element

in what is called the Turkish state's "policy of denial" by both the Kurdish political movement[9] and critical scholars.[10] Historically, there was a brief period after the end of World War I (1918) and before the formation of the Turkish Republic (1923) that both the Palace and the newly-forming Turkish government lead by Mustafa Kemal promised to recognize Kurds' cultural rights and their right to autonomous self-rule.[11] It is with temporal reference to the armistice era (1918-1923) that the years between 1923 and 1990 is characterized as "denial" since in this periodization it looks like Kurds' political rights were first recognized and then denied. However, it is not only the principles of inclusion or exclusion that determined the place of the peoples of the Empire but also the ideologies, emotional and "affective dispositions" of the Young Turk elite such as trust, suspicion, and distrust of whole peoples (especially Christians of the Eastern provinces like Armenians and Assyrians), which led to mass deportations and genocide of the peoples considered to be "enemies" or "collaborators with the enemy." [12]

Unlike the non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, who the Young Turk government absolutely saw as obstacles to the creation of a homogenous nation-state and eliminated through mass deportations and genocides, Kurds, along with other Muslim ethnic groups were seen as assimilable into Turkishness, therefore into the nation.[13] There were Kurdish elites among the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress (the CUP), the governing body of the Young Turks that came to power positions with the Constitutional Revolution of 1907, and Kurdish people of all classes, who perpetrated and benefitted from the Armenian Genocide. However, as Ümit Uğur Üngör argues, there were also many Kurdish groups who resisted the genocidal acts and the Turkification policies of the CUP, which made not only the rebellious Kurds the enemy, but all Kurds potential enemies in the eyes of the governing elite. Thus, as early as 1916, much like non-Muslim populations, Kurds were subject to mass deportations from the Eastern provinces, separating the tribal chiefs from their people, and resettling the Kurds in Turkish villages or among the migrants that escaped from the violence in the Balkans resettled in the Eastern provinces, aiming to reduce their presence to mathematically calculated proportions of 5-10% through social engineering policies.[14] While the erasure of Armenians happened through their total annihilation through genocide, the erasure of Kurds was always partial, always incomplete. Its incompleteness constantly invited the colonial binary of "good Kurd" versus "bad Kurd,"[15] making *all Kurds* potentially "bad Kurds." Both the discourses and the affects of trust and distrust, and the suspicions of collaboration with the enemy towards entire peoples, first Armenians, then Kurds, formed the affective baseline for the racial collective psyche of the Turkish nation.[16]

Erasure and Racial Affect in the Period of "Denial"

1930s and 40s were characterized by more explicitly racist definitions of Turkishness that drew on anthropological, linguistic, and historical research[17] conducted to identify the Turkish race through white skin color, "blood types, bones, skulls, body types, hair and eye colour, and nose shape."[18] After the defeat of fascism in Europe, and the switch to a multi-party regime in the 1950s in Turkey, the Turkish state partially abandoned defining Turkishness through biological racial traits and explicit references to "the Turkish race." However, as Murat Ergin argues, the definition of Turkishness has always had a racial element to it, which is irreducible to the domains of ethnicity and nationalism.[19] Ergin underscores two racial elements in the definition of Turkishness. The first element is the idea of a timeless and immutable nature of the Turkish identity, through which citizens of other nations such as central Asian Turkic Republics, the European-born children of Turkish migrant families that have been living in Europe for generations, and the Turkish-speaking Bulgarian citizens are easily seen as belonging to the Turkish nation.[20] Along the same lines, Ayşe Parla argues that the Turkish-speaking migrants from Bulgaria are accepted into the Turkish nation as "racial kin" (*soydaş*) and identifies one of the most eminent affective dimensions of their belonging as "entitled hope" which "is firmly rooted in and relies on legal and historical structures of relative privilege."[21] Conversely, Jews, Armenians, and Kurdish citizens are considered as "internal others whose belonging is suspect."[22]

The second element that Ergin identifies in the racial definition of Turkishness is the fascination and preoccupation with whiteness and what is considered "European looks" such as tall stature, blue eyes, light skin in demarcating class, status, and culture. Kurds are excluded from this physical portrayal too since they are represented as dark skinned, short statured with short arms and legs, smelly bodies.[23] While accepting that Turkishness is defined in racial terms and that the affective, discursive, and historical dimensions of the exclusion of Kurds from fully belonging to the nation heavily draw on racial elements, Yeğen, Ergin, and Saraçoğlu argue that Kurds were not racialized until the 1990s because the ethno-political aspect of the Kurdish Question was "denied". Yeğen states: "The ~~Kurdish~~ question, framed as an issue of banditry and tribal unrest, was also, then, a state project of the 'introduction of civilization.'"[24] Here, I would like to take Yeğen's signification on the elimination of the ethno-political aspect of the ~~Kurdish~~ question seriously and analyze it as the discursive operation of erasure.

As Yeğen argues, the operation of the racial definition of Kurds may occur through discursive enunciation, the usage of explicitly racial vocabularies depicting Kurds as inferior to Turks biologically or culturally, and mostly both. For example, in the 1930s and 1940s official Turkish state discourse racially defined Kurds with the false and contradictory statements like "a group or a member of this group of Turkish origin, many who have changed their language, speaking a broken form of Persian"[25] and "Turks who speak Arabic."[26] This racial vocabulary was also active in public discourses and implicated a racialized body. As Welat Zeydanlıoğlu cites, during the 1930 Ağrı uprising a journalist, Yusuf Mazhar, defined Kurds as follows:

> The manifestation of the feelings and intellects of these ones, which work through the simplistic drives like those of ordinary animals show how vulgar and even stupid their ways of thinking are. [...] There is no difference between these men who mix raw meat with a little bulghur and eat it just like that and the African savages and cannibals.[27]

Although not as blatantly racist and malicious as Mazhar's words, the themes of the Kurds being "barbarians" with "dim intellect" and "animal-like" emerged frequently during my interviews and ethnographic fieldwork with Turkish farmers. Assuming that there is no connection between these colonial and racist public representations and collective affects of the 1930s and the contemporary ones, would mean underestimating the power of the circulation and endurance of colonial and racial vocabularies and affects in the social domain. Moreover, racialization operates not only through overt racist signification but also through silencing, omitting, and replacing social difference with covert symbols that do not have racial meanings outside a specific context.[28] Erasure might take explicit forms such as the following words of the Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya from the Parliament records of 1934:

> Why should we still speak of the Kurd Mehmet, the Circassian Hasan or the Laz Ali. This would demonstrate the weakness of the dominant element. . . If anybody has any difference inside him, we need to erase that in the schools and in the body politic, so that man will be as Turkish as me and serve the homeland.[29]

A similar overt erasure happened through the social engineering policies implemented by changing the non-Turkish names of villages, districts and cities into Turkish names in Republican Turkey[30] and the division of the national territory into seven geographic regions established according to "natural features" the First Geographical Congress held in 1941. [31] This division was one among many strategies the Turkish State used to "dehistoricize the land and erase the ethnic markers in the Ottoman provincial names "like 'Eastern Rumelia,' 'Pontus' and 'Kurdistan.'" [32] Kurdistan was thus divided up into two regions, "Eastern Anatolian Region" and "Southeastern Anatolian Region." These "regions" prepared the ground for reducing social difference to geographic difference and re-signifying it through "backwardness" and "lack of development" starting with the 1950s. Thus, racialization started to operate through the covert markers of "the

East" (*Doğu*) and "the Southeast" (*Güneydoğu*) matching "backwardness" with "Eastern" and "Southeastern" bodies.

Several scholars have argued that this was a form of Turkish Orientalism, colonialism or postcolonial condition, comparable to the Orientalism of the West, in which the Turkish elites reproduced the Orientalist gaze and mode of government with regard to the periphery (*taşra*), the religious Muslim masses, Arab countries, "Persians", and Arab minorities alongside Kurds, which made them the "other" of the ideal Turkish citizen.[33] However, many of these scholars also underscore that this form of orientalism of the Turkish Republican elite is intimately connected with nineteenth century racist and colonial discourses, especially towards Kurds. There are many material factors that set Kurds apart from all the other Orientalized groups cited above in terms of their high population density in a single area, the past experiences of regional autonomy and self-government, and a history of organized resistance to the Turkish state. These factors contributed not only to the obsessive erasure of the names "Kurd", "Kurdish", and "Kurdistan" and their replacement with the euphemisms of "the East", "the Easterner", and "the Southeasterner" but also to the incessant overt and covert signification of everything Kurdish through a racialized vocabulary and affects of distrust and potential of betrayal that is always mapped onto a real or imagined Kurdish body.

"Recognition" or Colonial Erasure and Racial Affect?

More recent ethnographically based studies focus on how Kurdish bodies, Kurdish spaces, and the relationships in-between are built (and erased) visually, discursively, affectively, and materially, almost always through an overt or covert intervention of the Turkish state. Özsoy examines how the dead bodies of Kurdish guerillas become a key site of Kurdish nation identity and how the Turkish state tries to prevent it "by a series of repressive techniques such as refusing to deliver dead bodies for burial, secret interments, destroying graveyards, banning funeral or attacking funeral participants." [34] The political in the unofficial capital of colonized Kurdistan, Umut Yıldırım argues, is formed as much through the "visceral sensations of irritation, disgust" of her interlocutors at the sight of the military as it is through the unseen governmental gates of the "classed and racial blockages, pushing out those Kurdish citizens legally labeled as potential terrorists."[35] Writing on the people trapped in the basements of apartment buildings in the military operations in Kurdistan in 2016, Darıcı and Hakyemez argue that the Turkish state used the racialized structure of feeling that the Other can always be fake and claimed that the PKK made combatants look like civilians, while the Kurdish movement appealed to the universalizing affective structure of humanitarianism, depicting their thirst, pain, hunger, fear, their jobs, families, feelings as well as the universalist language of innocent children in the hopes of eliciting compassion from outside Kurdistan to stop the state violence.[36] Güllistan Yarkın's study on Kurdish homeownership in Zeytinburnu, a working-class district of İstanbul shows that Kurdish home ownership emerged as an anti-racist practice since the owned home (rather than the rented home) was one of the very few places where Kurdish migrants could escape from Turkish racist aggression.[37] Onur Günay draws attention to how Kurdish communities in another working-class district of İstanbul mobilize affects and narratives of counter-violence as communicative labor among generations of Kurdish migrants where the justness of counter-violence "becomes a key element of care for one's self and community."[38] In all these studies, we see both the erasure of Kurdishness (or at least one form of Kurdishness that Turks and/or the Turkish state find threatening, the content of which might range from "supporting the pro-Kurdish movement" to simply "speaking Kurdish in public") and the racialization of Kurds not only through openly racist stereotypes but also through silences, affects, sensations, and visceral experiences.

Marlene Schäfers uses the concept of erasure to reflect on how Kurdish women singers (*dengbêjs*) performed at two events that were characteristic of the era of recognition: one, a performance at a state university in İstanbul with the majority-Turkish audience, and the other, a performance at a rally of the pro-Kurdish political party in Kurdistan with a Kurdish audience.[39] She draws upon on Irvine and Gal's concept of erasure, which they define as: "the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field,

renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible. Facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away." Schäfers argues that the singers were obliged to erase various elements of their performances to fit the ideologies and the affective and embodied political sensibilities of their audiences in each case.

My take on erasure builds on Derrida's conceptualization of "under erasure", and it differs from Irvine and Gal's definition in that erasure is never complete, and therefore always leaves behind a trace to be dealt with.[40] Even when erasure renders some persons and activities invisible to paper over a contradiction, the trace of the erased object emerges as another contradiction and thus never allows the ideological scheme to be complete. Erasure does not presuppose an original truth that is evident in the world, which is then endorsed or rejected. Erasing Kurdishness, just like the discursive construction of Kurdishness,[41] is a productive practice. Neither does erasure cause Kurdishness to disappear, nor does the recognition of Kurdishness put an end to its erasure (or the attempts of erasing it). Erasure of Kurdishness always leaves behind readable traces, which expose the instability of its past and haunts its present. It also invites a recurrent, almost obsessive, rewriting of Kurdishness, the re-signification of which draw on vocabularies associated with either era characterized as denial or recognition.

Conclusion

The practices of race-making in the social realm are as affective and material as they are symbolic, and thus racialization goes beyond the articulation of otherness, difference, and exclusion[42] as race. The making of race includes the formation not only of the subordinate (marked) but also of the dominant (unmarked) subjects as racialized affects circulate through spaces, bodies, relations, and real or imaginary encounters.[43] Once these affective and material practices of race-making go into circulation, they tend to stick to (racialized) bodies, summon (racial/colonial) vocabularies, become commonsense, and outlast the periods in which they were produced.

Lisa Marie Cacho states: "As ways of knowing and methods of meaning-making, race, gender, and sexuality simultaneously erase and make sense of what should have been a contradiction by making racial contradictions commonsense."[44] In other words, in my usage, it is not the completeness of erasure but the recurrent erasure and re-signification embedded in the operation of race that allows contradictions to become commonsense. For example, the Turkish "civilizing mission" may seem to carry the promise of the transformation of the entire Kurdish population defined as "barbarians" into a civilized people in the future. However, these "barbarians" are also imagined to have an embodied difference, which made them inferior in the first place. Imagining this hierarchical embodied difference is made possible not only by erasing Kurdishness as a people with their own ways of doing, living, and being but also by erasing the very operation of that erasure so that the contradictions in the statements of "there is no such thing as Kurds" and "they are barbarians" can go together in the same social imaginary.

The erasure of erasure is how the Turkish farmers in my research could simultaneously avoid the word "Kurd," mark Kurdishness as inherently dangerous (potential terrorists), yet also act with the absolute confidence that it was the Kurds who would be in danger in a potential conflict since the Turkish state would side with themselves. They refrained from recognizing Kurdish as a language, called it an accent, but also note that they did not understand a word that they said when they "switched" to the accent. Both the practices of the erasure of Kurdishness and the formation of Turkish and Kurdish subjects through the circulation of racialized affects that are characteristic of the period called "denial" continued into the period called "recognition" and both of them always implicated the body. By paying attention to the current mechanisms of erasure and racialized affects, we can see that racialization has always been intrinsic to the formation of not only Turkish but also Kurdish ways of being, seeing, and doing as well as reflections on the self, the other, and the distance in between.

Endnotes

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[40] This conceptualization of erasure comes from Jacques Derrida's "sous ratour" and Spivak's translation of the concept as "under erasure" in Spivak, Gayatri. "Introduction. Of Grammatology. By Jacques Derrida." *Trans. Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP* (1997). Spivak defines under erasure as "to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. (Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible.)" (Spivak 1998, xiv). Every time the words Kurd, Kurdish, and Kurdistan are erased, their erasure not only opens up a productive space of rewriting but also attempts to erase the operation of erasure. However, since erasure is never complete, Kurdishness, which is attempted to be erased since it is marked as not-of-the-right-order, not-belonging, and in that sense inaccurate, remains legible.

[41] Mesut Yeğen argues that the relationship between the status of Kurds and the concept of Turkishness has been always productive of a space in which Turkish state could implement its policies ranging from assimilation (inclusion) to discrimination (exclusion) because of the ambiguity inherent to both the status of the Kurds in Turkey and the racial, political, nationalist, and civic meanings and practices of Turkishness. Yeğen, Mesut. "" Prospective-Turks" or" Pseudo-Citizens:" Kurds in Turkey." *The Middle East Journal* 63, No. 4 (2009): 597-615.

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Anti-Palestinian Racism:
Analyzing the Unnamed and Suppressed Reality

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For the past fifteen years, we have worked jointly and equally as political scientists with roots in the Palestinian (Abu-Laban) and Jewish (Bakan) diasporic and cultural traditions to analyze Israel/Palestine in relation to race, racism, and anti-racism. For much of the post-World War Two era, race has been curiously absent within political science scholarship in comparison to other disciplines. Moreover, many social scientists actively avoid discussions of the situation in Israel/Palestine in their research and teaching for fear of reprisals, and mainstream public discourse in the West, and in North America in particular, has actively obscured attention to both Palestinians and race in the region. These twin absences – of race generally speaking, and of Israel/Palestine specifically – have distorted understanding of Israel/Palestine, notwithstanding some important notable exceptions amongst critical theorists.[1] The *status quo* of avoiding Israel/Palestine as an untouchable topic, or steering discussion through race-neutral concepts like citizenship, culture, ethnicity, religion, or democracy, does not address this lacuna, sometimes referred to as the Palestine "exception".[2] Our commitment to address race as it relates to Israel/Palestine is grounded in consideration of political realities, where state structures, political actors and civil society are rendered knowable through such a framework. Israel needs to be understood as a state and analyzed as such in a world of states; this centrally requires addressing race, just as political scientists have increasingly done with regard to many other states across world regions.[3] In the case of Israel, this necessitates centering Palestinians and anti-Palestinian racism.

We understand "race" to be both socially constructed and historically specific. As such certain groups come to be racialized and thereby designated and treated as a separate group that is inferior to the dominant group. Further, racialization occurs as a result of humanly generated social, political and cultural processes; it involves ascribing certain characteristics of human behavior to phenotypical or cultural traits, such as physiognomy, language or accent, religion or habits of dress. Racism – the ideological expression and material exclusionary practices that follow from specific forms of racialization – necessarily takes different forms and is subject to change over time and place. Systemic racism focuses on the ways in which racism is embedded in established organizations and institutions and is associated with structures of power. For example, in addressing contemporary anti-Muslim racism, British political scientist Tariq Modood has helpfully distinguished between an older form of "color racism" which emphasizes purported biological differences, and a newer form of cultural racism, which fixates on purported differences in culture. As Modood has expressed it "there are of course colour or phenotype racisms but there are also cultural racisms which build on 'colour' a set of antagonistic or demeaning stereotypes based on alleged or real cultural traits."[4] Given that groups of relevance for the Middle East, including both Arabs and Jews, have both historically fallen in and outside of constructed ideas of whiteness,[5] addressing anti-Muslim racism or anti-Jewish racism requires attention to more than phenotypical differences.

As an Arab grouping with a large number of Muslims, Palestinians have encountered both anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism; however, they are also victim to what we refer to as systemic anti-Palestinian racism. In what follows, we consider systemic anti-Palestinian racism in the context of the unique oppressive conditions Palestinians have encountered since 1948: dispossession, occupation, repression of rights, and also the repression of rights claims. While the ideological and material elements of racism specifically targeting Palestine and Palestinians are readily documented, naming and centering anti-Palestinian

racism is contested. This is because it involves a particular, though not insurmountable, complexity of looking at a settler colonial state in an era of postcolonialism, and therefore is associated with coded language. Anti-Palestinian racism is a form of racism which does not say its name. Anti-Palestinian racism relies on various forms of coding to hide divisive, undemocratic practices of exclusion in an age where overt racism is considered ideologically distasteful. The complexity is furthered in that the language of antisemitism and Jewish suffering – language that addresses systemic racism against the Jewish people – is a central means through which to code anti-Palestinian racism, and thereby suppress claims for redress. However, insights drawn from anti-racist theory and praxis point to ways out of an impasse in which claims of anti-Palestinian racism are silenced – even at the expense of free expression and academic freedom – rather than taken seriously with the aim of moving towards tangible redress.

The State and Race in Israel/Palestine

Recent developments should give pause to anyone who doubts the importance of attending to race, state, and society in Israel/Palestine. The findings and language used by the international non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch offer a starting point. In April 2021 Human Rights Watch issued a 217-page report entitled *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*. The report holds that despite ongoing references to the "peace process" and the claim that Israel's now 54-year-old occupation is "temporary," in fact, a single state, Israel, holds power from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, and exercises discriminatory rule over Palestinians through its entrenched policies. To quote:

Israel has maintained military rule over some portion of the Palestinian population for all but six months of its 73-year history. It did so over the vast majority of Palestinians inside Israel from 1948 and until 1966. From 1967 until the present, it has militarily ruled over Palestinians in the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territory], excluding East Jerusalem. By contrast, it has since its founding governed all Jewish Israelis, including settlers in the OPT since the beginning of the occupation in 1967, under its more rights-respecting civil law.[6]

The Human Rights Watch report holds that authorities of the State of Israel have shown clear intent to dominate over Palestinians through policies aimed to favour Israeli Jews, Moreover the report demonstrates that treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) amount to the crimes against humanity of both apartheid and persecution.[7] The word "apartheid" emerged from the historical context of South Africa in which the white minority population dominated. However, in terms of its usage in international law in the contemporary context, "apartheid" relates to specific acts and policies that could be practiced by any state. Hence, in the report notes: "The severity of the repression carried out in the OPT amounts to 'systematic oppression' *by one racial group over another*, a key component for the crime of apartheid as set out in both the Rome Statute and Apartheid Convention."[8] Persecution is evidenced in the denial of rights to millions of Palestinians through "the discriminatory intent behind Israel's treatment of Palestinians and the grave abuses carried out in the OPT that include the widespread confiscation of privately owned land, the effective prohibition on building or living in many areas, the mass denial of residency rights, and sweeping, decades-long restrictions on the freedom of movement and basic civil rights."[9]

The findings of the Human Rights Watch report demand attention to race, racism and racialization. Racial formations are also relevant in terms of consideration of Israel as a state in comparative perspective. Apartheid is a notable category of state formation, policy and practice that identifies the centrality of race. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of countries in the United Nations General Assembly granted Palestine non-member observer state status in 2012, Israel remains the only state in charge of matters from the "river to the sea."[10] Regardless of whether one sees Israel as a state with the authority of actual governance[11] or anticipates a future system of governance with a more equitable binational system in a newly constructed single state,[12] from the vantage point

of understanding power and control, Israel should not be treated as exceptional or sui generis in comparative political science.

Human Rights Watch is not the first to apply the concept of apartheid in the context of Israel. A plethora of scholarship as well as UN reports have considered Israel's approach to Palestinians in relation to apartheid. These include political scientist Richard Falk who served as the United Nations Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories from 2008-2014.[13] The "separation barrier", referred to widely as the "apartheid wall,[14] was also ruled in 2004 to be in violation of international law by the United Nations International Court of Justice, for serving to illegally annex more land from Palestinians.[15]

A lens attentive to race in Israel/Palestine also brings civil society and comparative social movements into focus. The African-American experience resonates deeply for Palestinians. As an example, in 2020, in the wake of the murder of unarmed African-American man, George Floyd, by Minneapolis police, many murals depicting Floyd and calling for freedom were painted by Palestinian artists on the wall. In the words of Taqi Spateen, the artist responsible for a mural of Floyd in Bethlehem, "George Floyd was killed because they practically strangled him, and cut off his breathing… and every day, this wall strangles us and makes it hard for us to breathe."[16] There is also resonance of the Palestinian situation with the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, part of a long identification with, and debates related to, racialization across communities internationally.[17]

Palestinians have been subjected to anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism, where border regulations, state violence and related stereotypes are institutionalized. Moreover, these forms of racism have only increased over time, particularly since 9/11.[18] Statelessness, in turn, exacerbates racialization. In the absence of state representation, generations of Palestinian refugees have turned to international law as the only political vehicle where claims can be made for human rights. However, there is a repeated denial of the right of return to Palestinian refugees, and Israel has not faced reprisals from powerful states or international institutions in its treatment of Palestinians and ongoing expropriation of land. This overall reality calls for a more focused analytical lens that recognizes the salience of race in relation to entrenched structures of state power. This brings us to consider dispossession, antisemitism and Zionism from this perspective that demands analysis through the lens of race as well as anti-racism praxis.

Dispossession, Antisemitism and Zionism

The continual suppression of Palestinian rights claims is entangled with complex codifications which are commonly, and contentiously, based on appropriation of the suffering of the Jewish community facing antisemitism, here meaning anti-Jewish racism. While the material and ideological aspects of racism specifically regarding Palestine and Palestinians are well documented, naming this reality has proven fraught. Naming anti-Palestinian racism for what it is clashes with a narrative forwarded by the State of Israel and its advocates centered on antisemitism that has also impacted both politics and scholarship.

The active efforts to suppress Palestinian claims of racism, while particularly impacting the Palestinian population in the region and in the diaspora, also carry further implications. Such suppression has threatened the ability of the international community to attend to racism as a global phenomenon in need of consistent and equitable responses. In every effort of the United Nations to hold a world conference to deal with racism – in 1978, 1981 and 2001 – the US and Israel (and sometimes other allies) have refused to participate or join in common statements, precisely because of attention drawn to Israel's treatment of Palestinians.[19] In 2021, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Durban Declaration and Program of Action, stemming from the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, history is repeating itself. Tellingly, in the words of a Canadian government spokesperson, Canada joined the US and Australia in

boycotting the 2021 anniversary events because "Canada opposes initiatives at the United Nations and in other multilateral forums that unfairly single out and target Israel for criticism."[20]

The claim that Israel is "targeted" serves as a coded discourse to challenge action against a state that is in ongoing violation of international law in its occupation, and ongoing human rights violations regarding Palestinians. Notably, following the release of the Human Rights Watch report on Israel discussed above, leaders of the Israel advocacy group B'nai B'rith International expressed "outrage", claiming the report "defames Israel", reflects "anti-Israel bias" and, since "Israel's harshest critics often use this apartheid language in an attempt to delegitimize the Jewish state" advances a "pervasive singling out of Israel on the world stage."[21] Such responses claim to represent the "Jewish community" internationally, while in fact forwarding a particular political view, Zionism. Zionism is a political ideology, rather than an approach representative of Jewish identity, religion, or culture. Zionism is hegemonic as the core foundational narrative and political structure of the state of Israel, and this is also widely accepted among powerful global political allies such as the US, Canada, and other Western countries.

The premise of political Zionism is that Jews cannot live in peace with non-Jews, drawing this pessimistic conclusion from the experience of entrenched antisemitism particularly in Europe. The view is that only an ethnically defined political state can ensure lasting Jewish survival.[22] Zionism since 1948 is the state ideology of Israel. While Zionism may take different forms, political Zionism moved from being a marginal to a mainstream strategy following the Holocaust.[23] Perhaps the most formative experience shaping contemporary political Zionism is that of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution, who were systemically denied entry to all the major Western countries before and during World War Two.

This context points to what is, arguably, the key challenge in the discourse of race and politics regarding Israel/Palestine – the disconnect between Zionism as understood in the West, and Zionism from the standpoint of its victims as noted by Edward Said (1992). Palestinians are the subject of occupation, dispossession and racialization, rendered stateless and silenced, from a militarized state claiming to represent the "Jewish people." While Israel has defined its mission as a refuge for Jews exiled from all other societies due to antisemitism (anti-Jewish racism), this is also a country built on appropriated Indigenous Palestinian land. Israel, like other settler colonial states, was generated through war, dispossession, immigration, and occupation.[24]

This dispossession, however, while offering no comfort from the ongoing ravages of antisemitism in the West, has also been entrenched in international institutions and discourses. A transformative series of events that were instituted after World War Two, symbolized and enforced through the UN Declaration of Human Rights, were finalized in the same year, 1948, as the *Nakba*. This dispossession of Palestinians has not been redressed through the creation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950, nor the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees. As Stephen Castles has observed, initially the Convention was limited in geographic scope to protecting some 40 million European refugees displaced prior to 1951, but with the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, the geographic and temporal specificity was removed.[25] The large number of countries that have signed on to the Convention and Protocol, along with the work of the UNHCR, are typically what scholars have in mind when they refer to 'the international refugee regime.' But the connotation and denotation of the international refugee regime problematically erases Palestinians from discussions pertaining to refugees more generally. This erasure is further reinforced by the fact that the UN itself assigns separate responsibility of Palestine refugees to UNRWA, an agency formed in 1949, one year prior to UNHCR.[26]

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 is marked by a racial formation of its own, serving to transform Ashkenazi (European) Jewish refugees and their

descendants into settlers and citizens of a new state. This settlement process laid the basis for the survival and relative advancement of a dispossessed European Jewish population *vis à vis* other groups in the region, and hence a form of "whitening" in relation to power and privilege. Significantly, the ascendance of a section of the Jewish population was also strongly skewed toward Ashkenazi, or European Jews; other Israeli Jewish populations, including Arab and North African Jews – the Mizrahim (Hebrew for Easterners) – have suffered from longstanding racial and ethnic discrimination relative to Ashkenazi Jews.[27] At the same time, by the 1950s, the restrictive policies and responses to refugees which expressed anti-Jewish and other forms of racism in Western states gradually came to give way to more openness in an age of universal human rights – at least formally.[28] Notably, however, Palestinian refugees continued to be left outside of these measures, and continue to experience uniquely oppressive, and racialized, bordered exclusions. While the right of return has been recognized recurrently by the United Nations, this right is firmly denied in practice, and Palestinians are marked as the quintessential "terrorists" when it comes to international border security and surveillance.[29]

For Palestinians, however, the focus on racism is not recent. There are numerous instances in which race and racism have been invoked to discuss the situation of Palestinians in international bodies before and after the foundation of Israel in 1948. In 1946, Palestinian-American political scientist and UN official Fayez Sayegh, speaking to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry and addressing Mandatory Palestine, framed racism towards Palestinians as being part and parcel of political Zionism's project of building a state for the world's Jews in Palestine.[30] In 1975, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379 calling Zionism "a form of racism and racial discrimination" was explicitly linked to South African apartheid as well as settler-colonialism. This was in the spirit of a new General Assembly comprised of many more independent states from the global South.[31]

Issues of antisemitism demand attention, especially in light of the growth of far-right xenophobic groups in North America and Europe. This is painfully exemplified in the armed shooting that killed 11 and injured 6 in the attack at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, USA in October, 2018.[32] And on January 6, 2021, the attack on the US Capitol included those wearing shirts with the logo "Camp Auschwitz".[33]These are only some of the events indicating in stark relief that the legacy of the Holocaust and the daily realities of anti-Semitism are real and present dangers. But antisemitism should not be trivialized, which is the effect when the term is weaponized to exploit Jewish suffering while in reality serving as coded rationalization to ignore, silence, or discredit the legitimate human rights claims of Palestinians. One racialized group cannot be emancipated through the violent racialization of another.

Conclusion

The study of race in relation Israel and Palestine is an urgent necessity. It is here that the tools offered in political science, including its more recent focus on race, racism and anti-racism, can be productive. The work done on questions of Indigeneity, where Palestinians are an example, and settler colonial states, where Israel is an example, help to place acts of dispossession and racialization in focus.[34]

Critical race theory can also be helpful to understanding the broader international context in which Israel's human rights abuses garner limited reprisal from the world's powerful states. In his important work, *The Racial Contract* (1997), Charles Mills uses the idea titling the book to describe a contract that appears to be universal but is in fact only between those with race privilege, and excludes those without. In relation to the case of the United States, Mills argues while the Constitution speaks of "we the people," the racial contract identifies an unspoken agreement of domination that gives power and privilege to "we the white people."[35] Extending the concept of Mills to the international level, we have found it useful to theorize an Israel/Palestine Racial Contract.[36] The Israel/Palestine Racial Contract works to assign a common interest between Israel and its allies like the United States, while absenting the Palestinians as non-white, stateless,

and subjects who should be repressed and their claims suppressed. This is especially the case when claims are framed in relation to racism in its multiple forms.

Centering anti-Palestinian racism is pivotal to understanding the dynamics and alliances we see in global civil society. Those speaking out against anti-Palestinian racism and Israel's human rights abuses, many supporting the Boycott Divesttment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, include increasing numbers of people who are not Palestinian, among these Jews in and outside of Israel. Jewish voices which hold to and respect a tradition of universalism, and challenge the narrow political perspective forwarded in political Zionism, indicate the diversity of views among Jewish scholars and in civil society regarding Israel/Palestine.[37] From such a perspective, it is timely and responsible to name and frame anti-Palestinian racism as part of contemporary politics and political science.

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Jewish Illegality: the case of Ethiopian Jews between 1955-1975

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Ethiopian Jews were present in Israel since its establishment; however, the state did not consider them Jews and, therefore, they were not eligible for Israeli citizenship. Ethiopian Jews who arrived in Israel between the early 1960s and 1975 under the "Entry Law" as tourists and migrant workers stayed to naturalize later. The law of return did not apply to them, and they remained "illegal" residents for few years. This was the first time in the history of Israel that Jews were denied a citizen status and thus their status forms a unique case of Jewish illegality.

In this paper I would like to address two intertwined lacunae: in the sociological research on Ethiopian Jews and the Israeli national historiography. Critics of the Israeli immigration regime typically emphasize the discriminatory policy that allows naturalization only for Jews.[1] The uniqueness of the case of Ethiopian Jews is that the racialized logic operates within the ethno-religious community and not without.

The question of who is eligible for citizenship is comprised of legal and socio-political aspects. Ethiopian Jews were in an ongoing relationship with rabbinical authorities and political and state bureaucrats since 1948. This study is based on documentary analysis of Israel's State Archives, Hazi Ovadia archive[2] and NLI-The National Library of Israel. It is also part of a larger research based on other archives in addition to those mentioned above and Life Narratives interviews with Ethiopian Jews who arrived in Israel between 1955 to 1975, as well as on their private archives.

Where are the Ethiopians? The historical lacuna

Despite the active attempts of Ethiopian Jews to immigrate for decades, Israel's national historiography highlights their "discovery" by explorers such as Joseph Halevi and Jacques Faitlovitch; the journey of Ethiopian Jews to Sudan in the early 1980s; the 1980s-1990s rescue operations; and the role of prominent Israeli leaders such as Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and prime minister Menachem Begin. Meanwhile, scholars of Ethiopia's Jews have been researching the religious and racial origins of Ethiopian Jews;[3] the Zionist and humanitarian activities of Jewish individuals and organizations before 1948;[4] the ongoing integration crisis;[5] and the community's religious beliefs and traditions.[6] A small amount of this research corpus deals with North American Jews' involvement in the struggle for aliya[7] and the group known as Falashmura.[8]

According to the Israel's currently hegemonic national narrative, the historical encounter between Ethiopian Jews and the sovereign entity occurred in November 1984, the year of "Operation Moses" when the state of Israel airlifted Ethiopian Jews from Sudanese refugee camps and not before. This notion was not the result of a lack of research, on the contrary, Ethiopian Jews are among the most studied communities in Israel. But the study of Ethiopian Jews mostly represents the national narrative about this group, which over the years scholars reproduced. The Ethiopian Jewish presence in Israel from 1948 and their struggle for recognition and citizenship by the state authorities is absent from this history.

The national historiographical framing tendency highlights the alleged containment of the State of Israel and the detachment of Ethiopian Jews from the Jewish Diaspora for 2000 years. This historiographical dynamic, which ignores much of the Jewish community's history in Ethiopia, is not unique to Ethiopian immigration. According to Amnon Raz Krakotskin, the Zionist historical consciousness promotes continuity between the ancient past to the modern present which appears only through the Zionist movement that sees itself as a renewal of ancient Jewish political sovereignty. Thus, Jewish communities exist only insofar as they are encountered by the state of Israel. This consciousness cannot capture the vitality of Jewish diasporic communities.[9]

Different historical path-the missing part

A small group of Ethiopian Jews arrived in Israel in 1955 as part of the "Kfar Batya Youth"[10] project initiated by Jacques Faitlovitch (1881-1955), a Zionist researcher and supporter of the Ethiopian Jewish cause. This group arrived in Israel to study agriculture, Jewish law, and Zionism in order to go back to Ethiopia and to educate their communities there. The youth went through a "special conversion" process in 1957 in a "Special Court for the Conversion of Falasha[11] Youth"[12] because they were considered as questionable Jews – meaning they were perceived as Jews with doubts, therefore they had to convert to Judaism.

Another group that arrived during the early 1960s and 1970s remained in Israel illegally after visa extensions and expirations. In 1965, correspondence on a plan to settle 50 Falasha families in Upper Galilee[13] was exchanged between various departments of the foreign affairs ministry including Israel's embassy in Addis Ababa. The project was archived for "political reasons." In a meeting of the Ministry of Interior from 26 October 1966 it was decided:

"The Falashas – as concluded- considering that we are talking on minors - to skip the fact that the Falashas stayed in Israel illegally. Apparently, the instruction to close the file on Mr. Meleke did not come from the general director (of the ministry of interior). It was decided to extend everybody "temporary" (residency) for another year."[14]

These individuals were probably no longer minors during these correspondences but arrived in Israel as minors in the Kfar Batya Youth project and stayed as "trespassers" without civic status.

In March 10th, 1965 a letter, that was part of an ongoing written dialogue between the embassy in Addis Ababa and the coordinator of East Africa in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the Falashas youth, indicated the inconsistency of Israel's policy toward the Falashas:

> "We cannot agree on scholarship (for Falasha) as we do with others (Ethiopians and others EY) in the framework of our foreign relations with different countries… We see the question of whether to give scholarships to the Falashas as a matter of Israel's stance toward them which is taken care with lack of treatment, (lack) clear policy, inconsistency and its knack for misunderstandings and bitterness."[15]

Tesfay Mengisti, the man under discussion about whether to give him scholarship, appeared in another document in 1967, when he was still living in Israel with no civic status.[16]

In 1971, long before the 1984 "discovery," a group of 17 Ethiopian Jewish elders signed a letter to the chief Sephardic rabbi Isaac Nissim in which they agreed to accept his spiritual leadership and his authority.[17]

On 14 November 1972, the Israeli embassy in Addis Ababa sent a letter to the Consular Department regarding two requests for entry visa:

> "Because I suspect that these two are Falashas who intend to stay in Israel, I am asking for your instructions…"[18]

A request was attached to this letter from Kibbutz Ma'abarot[19] to the Israeli embassy in Ethiopia to provide tourist visas to four Ethiopians:

> "We hereby confirm that we are willing to accept the names below as students in our Hebrew class. We will be grateful for his honor to provide them tourist visas for 3 months…"[20]

Shortly thereafter, the Ministry of Interior issued visa expiry announcements and demanded the immediate departure of several Ethiopian Jews. Some of them then met with Ovadia Yosef, the chief Sephardic rabbi of the state of Israel appointed after Isaac Nissim, following his correspondence with Hazi Ovadia. Subsequently, in March 1973, Rabbi Yosef made the controversial rule of Halacha claiming that Ethiopian Jews are in fact Jews and are therefore eligible to the law of return and should reunite with Israel's people.

> "The Falashas are Jews that must be saved from assimilation and there is need to expedite their Aliyah … I am certain that the government authorities, the Jewish agency, and organizations in Israel and the diaspora, will assist us in the best ways they can in this holy mission … this is a mitzvah [our religious commitment] of saving our brothers."[21]

The ruling by Rabbi Yossef was contested by diverse public figures, bureaucrats, institutions, and authorities. Two central authorities that related to the religious and political aspects of the subject matter are the Ashkenazi chief rabbi and the Ministry of Immigration and Absorption. The Ashkenazi chief rabbi Shlomo Goren claimed that the decision about who is a Jew should not be made by rabbis, but rather it is under the authority of the "*Rabanut* Council." Scholar Yossef Litbak from the Ministry of Immigration and Absorption published the "Falashas" report[22] in the same year as Rabbi Yossef's rule of Halacha. Among many arguments against the immigration of the Falashas to Israel - genealogical, medical, and social – he stated:

> "Even if they will convert under pressure, there is no realistic chance that the religious public in Israel will credit their formal conversion with no reservations and fully integrate socially among them. Moreover, it is unlikely that the secular public will contain people who are culturally strange when the only factor that connects these groups is a common religious belief."

On July 17, 1974, Michael (Admas) Eshkol, an Ethiopian Jew who was one of the main activists among the Jewish community in Ethiopia before coming to Israel, sent a letter to Rabbi Ovadia Yossef asking for an ID card.[23] Conflicting authorities and bureaucrats' interests allowed this group to remain in Israel though in a vague legal status. In April 1975 under government resolution, Ethiopian Jews were eligible to the law of return.[24]

After Yossef's ruling of Halacha, Ethiopian Jews in Israel start the process of family reunification after some of them undergo special conversion (*Giyur L'humra*)[25] and receive a legal civic status. The "special conversion" path is a rare path in the history of the state of Israel. There is no evidence for any other collective required to "join" Judaism in the "special conversion." Ethiopian Jews were thus Jews and non-Jews at the same time.

In 1977 activists met Menachem Begin to convince him to make progress toward Aliyah. In August 1977, the first "legal" group of 122 Ethiopians entered Israel through the figurative "front door," rather than coming as trespassers.

Sociological Lacuna – Racialized mechanism of naturalization

According to the Law of Return, anyone who converts can immigrate to Israel and obtain citizenship. However, Ethiopian Jews who were present in Israel did not receive citizenship, were required to convert, and it took several years for their right of citizenship to be recognized. Moreover, there is an inconsistency regarding civic status between different contexts of immigrants i.e. the while the *Kfar Batia* youth obtain civic status, other Ethiopians didn't receive it.

This anomaly embodies the racialization of the citizenship mechanism: first, the rejection of Ethiopian Jews as Jews; second, the demand for conversion. And third, the denial and later hesitation of the *rabanut* and the Ministry of Interior of the right to citizenship after conversion. Moreover, the wide range of discretion by the state as well as the individualistic practice of naturalization are also part of racialization of the citizenship mechanism. These practices of exclusion shaped their legal status and their strategies toward recognition and citizenship.

While the Law of Return is defined as a "natural right" bestowed upon the state by the Jewish nation,[26] the ethnic definition ("who is a Jew") of the state's official discourse is fluid, negotiable, and performative. The examination of who belongs to the ethnic nation, a Jew, does not derive from a structured and ordered set of laws. The negotiation takes place regarding a set of rules and ideological and normative perceptions. This negotiation

is part of ideological and political struggles and interests. The mixture of Jewish law and liberal Israeli law creates a gap between the state law of who can be a citizen and the Jewish law of who is a Jew.[27] These differences led to irresolution regarding the definition of "who is a Jew" in the Law of Return (1950) for two decades, until 1970, where a limited solution was put in place.

Unlike other Jews, Ethiopian Jews entered Israel from the "back door" as tourists or migrant workers and became "infiltrators." However, unlike non-Jews "infiltrators"- mostly Palestinians and migrant workers- they were expected to enter through the "front door" under the Law of Return a few years later.

The state thus reacts to the Ethiopian case as an anomaly. It leaves them "outside the tent." On the one hand, the state negotiates with this group as though they are Jews but, on the other hand, prevents them from being Israeli citizens. I would argue that this is not an anomaly but part of state logic regarding immigrants who do not conform to the white national character.

Israel's stratification of citizenship through the definition of who is a Jew interacts with whiteness. The question of "who is a Jew" is also racialized by its fluid answers and not questioning the racialization of Jewishness itself. Previous studies indicate selective regulation policies of immigration applied to different ethnic groups. For example, differences in quotas, medical tests requirements, and Jewishness documentations, i.e., documents that a potential immigrant is required to submit.[28] Most studies on Jewish immigration to Israel focused on the selective integration policies comparing western Jews to eastern Jews.[29] Though these studies indicate discriminatory policies, they do not suggest citizenship denial.

When considering the Law of Return, we should address three layers: ideological- who is a Jew; legal- the law itself; and its target audience - the role of the potential citizen (the performative role of the potential citizen) regarding the law.

The ideological-normative layer is before articulating the law and constitutes Zionism's values and beliefs of the stakeholders involved: gathering of the exiles, a safe haven for Jews from around the world based on democratic values.

The legal layer is the juridical articulation of law itself and its target audience. When bureaucrats and politicians during the formative period discussed the Law of Return, they did so while imagining European Jews. Ethiopian Jews were not part of this image. This image of white Jews is not relevant only for the formative years, but it is part of the state logic decades later. We can see how it manifest in the 1970 amendment of the law of return that allowed white non-Jews to naturalize via the law of return.

Who is a Jew is typically understood as an individualistic matter, based on the ability of an individual to negotiate concerning his Jewish origin. In the case of Ethiopian Jews, it was not an individualistic matter but a collective issue. Ethiopian Jews entered to the political community via a collective reference, the examination of Jewishness was not Ad hominem but a collective examination of the community. In the group relevant in this research, the state negotiates their status as individuals and individuals that are part of a questionable community. Eventually, their position as illegal residents shaped the struggle for citizenship.

In addition to the law of return, we should consider other immigration and citizenship laws relevant to Ethiopian Jews until 1975. The law of return is relevant only for Jews, the following laws are relevant to non-Jews. The entry into Israel Law, 1952- Israel nationality is acquired by return (the law of return for Jews) by residence, by birth (relevant for minors); the Prevention of Infiltration Law, 1954, was relevant mostly for Palestinian refugees who try to return from hostile nations; article 7 to the Citizenship Law on Family Reunification, relevant for husband or wife of Israeli citizen. The Law of Entry regulating entry and residing in Israel for non-Israeli citizens and non-Jews and gives full discretion to the interior minister. The 1st Amendment of 1966 ruled that the Minister of Interior can grant four

types of visas of the following types at his discretion: Visa and Permit of Transitory Residence up to five days; Visa and Visitor's Permit of Residence for up to three months; Temporary Residency Visa for up to three years; and Permanent Residency Visa. The Prevention of Infiltration Law was initially enacted to prevent Palestinian refugees' return and displaced persons who tried to return to their homes after 1948. Article 7 on family reunification allows Israeli citizen's spouse or minor children to naturalize.

Some of the Ethiopians that enter Israel during the 1950s received permanent residency visas that allowed them to work and move freely. When 3 of the Kfar Batia Youth project wanted to gain membership in Kibbutz Nezer Sereni, they had to be citizens and they started to work toward citizenship. They received citizenship around 1970. Ethiopians that arrived in the 1960s and early 1970s arrived with visa permits for 3 months and they had to renew it every 3 months in the Ethiopian consulate. Like the three mentioned above, they did not enjoy the rights Jewish immigrant enjoyed like "absorption basket" which is a financial assistance during the initial settling period in Israel and housing rights for Jewish new immigrants that can include public housing, rent assistance or mortgage grant.

Ethiopian Jews encounter a legal conflict based on normative conflict; both are part of racialized logic. These conflicts are intertwined though they are different in how they shape the character of the struggle for recognition and citizenship. Ethiopian Jews present in Israel until 1975 had to confront the state authorities while being in a vague legal status, unsecure, deportable, and under the threat of the authorities. Due to their "un-Jewishness," they had to execute their political work as "infiltrators."

Systemic disqualification in this manner is not relevant only to a specific law but to the ideological and normative state logic and its naturalization mechanism. These deviations from the state logic of the Ethiopian case are part of the state logic. The state considers Ethiopian Jews an anomaly and therefore, they need a unique system of regulations and mechanisms to naturalize.

The consequences of this systemic disqualification appears in every step of their struggle for recognition and naturalization until they will enter the polity from the front door, i.e. the law of return, as any Jew. In order to enter the front door, they needed to dismantle the normative and legal racialization.

A particularly striking dynamic characterizes nationalism in Israel considering the State of Israel's desire to secure a Jewish majority and at the same time to prefer the European component of the immigrant identity over the Jewish component. It is evident from the 1970 amendment of the Law of Return, which allows non-Jews by the earlier definition of the law to naturalize under the new law of return, mostly from the USSR.

The nation-state is not passive towards the waves of immigration. The state reaction is rooted in a historical, political, and cultural context. The state uses diaspora communities to promote its demographic interest.[30] This claim fits in opposite ways to USSR immigrants and Ethiopian immigrants. In the case of immigrants from the USSR, the country made legal and international efforts to enable their arrival. In contrast, in the case of Ethiopian Jews, despite a continuous presence in Israel, the state prevented and hardened their ability to integrate into the Jewish collective and avoided enacting laws that could allow immigration until 1977.

The state of Israel was hesitant toward the containment of Ethiopian Jews into its polity. It seems that since Ethiopian Jews encounter the state, they confront numerous obstacles before they can enter Israel. These obstacles appearing both in the legal level and the rabbinical-religious level. Most of the stakeholders involved including the ministry of interior, ministry of absorption, the chief rabbis (both Ashkenazi and Sephardi), the foreign affair ministry and humanitarian and philanthropic Jewish institution consent on their questionable status and express in diverse practices. These trajectories of Ethiopian Jews to enter the Jewish state may be the basic reason for their anomalous statues in contemporary Israeli society.

Endnotes

[1] Hacohen Dvora, 1998, The Law of. Return - Its Content and Disputes Around It in Anita Shapira (ed.), Independence- The First Fifty Years, Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for the History of Israel, 1998)
Naama Carmi, The Law of Return, Immigration and the Law of Return: Immigration Rights and Their Limits
Gavison Ruth, "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint" -: a meta-purpose for Israel and its implications, Neaman Institute

[2] Hazi Ovadiah (1922-2012) was an Israeli Yemenite who became an activist for the Aliyah of Ethiopian Jews and the head of the Association of Ethiopian Jews between 1972-1977. The association was the first representative organization of Ethiopian Jews in Israel.

[3] Kaplan, 1988; Waldman, 1989; Quirin, 1993

[4] Trevisan-Semi, Emanuela, 1997; Summerfield, D. 2003

[5] Ben-Eliezer, 2004; Herzog, 1998, Lazin, 1997, Ofer, 2007; Shalom, 2012

[6] Shelemay, 1986; Kaplan, 1995

[7] Dezmenovich-Tenenbaum, 2013,

[8] Talmi Cohn, 2018; Goodman, 2008.

[9] Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993

[10] The Kfar Batia Youth is a program initiated by Jacques Faitlovitch (1881-1955), a Zionist researcher and supporter of the Ethiopian Jewish cause This group arrived in Israel to study agriculture, Jewish law and Zionism in order to go back to Ethiopia and to educate their communities there. List of the youth from AAEJ archives on FEJ website.

[11] Falasha(s) is a derogatory name that been use toward Ethiopian Jews in Ethiopia and was common among non-Ethiopians as well. The term meaning is without roots or land. I will use this term respectively to the original materials, otherwise I will use the term "Ethiopian Jews".

[12] From Haim Gvaryahu, director of the department of Jewish studies to Rabbi Shmuel Kipnis, member of the special court for conversion of Falasha youth, Israel's State Archives, 15793/6-גל

[13] Correspondence from Levi Kedar, Africa department, foreign affairs ministry to Israel's embassy in Addis Ababa, December 23, 1965, Israel's State Archives, 440/9-חצ

[14] Minutes from a meeting on October 26, 1966 with the director general and the minister of interior, Israel's State Archives, 12039/7-גל

[15] A letter to Ben Yehuda M, Coordinator of East Africa from Levin A, Israeli Embassy in Addis Ababa, March 10th, 1965, Israel's State Archives, \440/9-חצ

[16] List of the friend in Israel, Hazi Ovadiah archive, 1967, 005_001_0041

[17] A letter to the chief Sephardi rabbi Isaac Nissim signed by 17 elders from the Ethiopian Jewish community in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, May 23, 1971, Hazi Ovadiah archive, 001_001_0169

[18] A letter to the consular department from the Israeli embassy in Addis Ababa regarding entry visa, November 14, 1972, Israel's State Archives, 5191/20-חצ

[19]

[20] A letter to Israel's embassy in Ethiopia from Israel Furman, manager of Ulpan (Hebrew school) Ma'abarot, October 2nd, 1972, Israel's State Archives, 5191/20-חצ

[21] Letter from Y. Dweik, spokesperson and bureau director of the chief Sephardic rabbi to Rabbi Akiva Gotlib, chief secretary of Chief Rabbinate of Israel, opinion of the chief Sephardic rabbi of Israel in regard to the Falashas, July 19, 1974, Israel's State Archives, 7071/10-ג

[22] From Mordechai Rozeman, assistant of the minister, to the chief bureau of the prime minister, "Falashas" report, Yossef Litbak, January 1973, ministry of immigration and absorption, the sub-department for programs and research, the department for the research of the Jewish people in the diaspora. Israel's State Archives, 6911/5-ג

[23] Michael Eshkol to Rabbi Ovadia Yossef Ha'Rishon Le'tzion, July 17, 1974, Hazi Ovadia Archive, 001_001_0070

[24] Historical Jewish Press (JPress) of the NLI & TAU, Davar newspaper, April 11, 1975

[25] *Giyur L'ehumra* is a specific type of conversion which its basic assumption is that the subject is "Jew" by halachaic terms though there is a slight doubt on his Jewishness. To prevail this slight doubt there is a need for a conversion that includes a ceremonial process and do not include the study of Jewish law as it required in an ordinary conversion of non-Jews. The process include immersion for men and women and symbolic circumcision for men.

[26] Dvora HaCohen, The Law of Return as an Embodiment of the Link between Israel. and the Jews in the Diaspora. Journal of Israeli History, volume 19 no.1. Tel Aviv University, Frank Cass, London 1999. pp.61-89.

[27] For further reading on the basic clashes between liberal and ethno-religious aspects of the Jewish state Gans, C. (2008). A just Zionism: On the morality of the Jewish state. Oxford University Press.

[28] Avi Picard, 2013, Cut to measure: Israel's policies regarding the Aliyah of North African Jews, 1951-1956,

[29] Saporta, I., & Yonah, Y. (2004). Pre-vocational education: the making of Israel's ethno-working class. Race Ethnicity and Education, 7(3), 251-275; Swirski, S. (1981). Orientals and Ashkenazim in Israel: The ethnic division of labor. Haifa: Machberot LeMechkar U'leBikoret (in Hebrew).

[30] Yonah, Y. (2005). In virtue of difference: The multicultural project in Israel. Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute.

Racial Formations in the Middle East and Africa

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In this commentary on the papers and presentations, I aim simply to offer a synthesis of the archive compiled through the writings and discussions, so as to draw out what I see as some of the key themes and still unresolved questions and tensions, as well as to offer a few places where we might delve deeper into some of the key tensions that emerge across the work. These are not tensions in the sense of things that need to be resolved, but rather tensions in the sense of a productive animating buzz, as each of the papers sought to get beyond the dichotomous ways in which these issues have been addressed in previous studies.

The first tension I want to explore is that between what we might call particularism and universalism in studies of race in the Middle East and Africa, one about which Diana Kim said, "the idea of the seduction of comparisons [is] something to embrace but not entirely to succumb to." Each one of the papers dealt with this topic in some way, shape, or form, as they sought to translate or contextualize their particular case within broader global or regional processes.

For many, the presence of American discourses on race haunted the conversation, one we could not escape, and one which, many argued, we might not want to escape entirely. In Stephen King's paper where he critiques L. Carl Brown's assessment of a more humane kind of slavery in the coastal regions of North African by pointing us to the forms of slavery that exist in the desert region, which he calls "much closer to the brutal chattel slavery of the American South" we see a way in which the American model provides a measuring stick. Though the two scholars differ in their assessments of slavery in North Africa, the American model remains a touchstone for both as a negative measuring stick to assess the relative horrors of forced labor in the region.

From another direction, Zachary Mondesire's paper asks, "to what extent do individuals who, due to phenotype, would be racialized as black in the US, become or remain black without juxtaposition to individuals racialized as white?" asking "what are the signposts that harness the qualities of an abstract experience of blackness globally to lived experience in historically, materially, and spiritually constituted time and space?" Again, to paraphrase Kim, can we both embrace the seduction of comparison without succumbing to it entirely, to pull on the strength of what Neha Vora and Amelie le Renard remind us cannot be collapsed as particularisms in the Gulf region that they study, in their critique of reigning scholarly models of Gulf exceptionalism, but are parts of global flows of racialized capitalism. As Vora and le Renard put it, "Ideas about Blackness also circulate transnationally and between/across empires. They don't develop distinctly in the Atlantic vs Indian Ocean." This is critical: sometimes what we think is comparative is in fact part of one larger racial formation.

This theme was fascinatingly picked up *in practice* in the debates that Gokha Amin Ashaif outlines among the Muhamishin, between those activists who pull on the particularism of their context in order to advocate for rights (appropriating the word Khaadim for example), and those who push against genealogy as a defining characteristic, and instead try to connect to transnational discourses of Blackness. This is the tactic of the activist from the Free Black Peoples Movement in Yemen she discusses, who cites the civil rights movement and apartheid and "resists the genealogical imagination by stripping it and saying that these genealogical imaginations are not important and not powerful. What is important is this global struggle against the violence that black people are facing and also the global anti-blackness that they face everywhere." Of course, the seduction of comparison is not just a scholarly conceit but something that activists themselves admit. Annie Olaloku-Teriba's work on the black radical tradition again suggests a framework that might help us to better understand the labor that goes into the struggle to construct movements of solidarity across such impossible divides.

But, as Bayan Abubakr reminds us in her paper, the urge to universalize, to create solidarities across regions can also blind us to local dynamics. Indeed, it is a major strength of so many of the papers, and our conversation collectively, that the tension between these local dynamics and global processes were kept alive and active rather than siding with one side or another as a methodological approach. Abubakr takes us to the year 1964 when two events that are happening simultaneously—Malcolm X's trip to Egypt where he proclaims Afro-Arab unity and the displacement of Nubians by the Aswan High Dam (also discussed in Yasmin Moll's paper) — seem to be utterly unaware of one another. Indeed the vignette about 1964 could be a symbol for a great portion of our conversation: the strength of global solidarities in recognizing what are, in the end, dynamics global in scope, but the danger of losing out on understanding the modes of domination that cannot be homogenized within their frames, what she calls, provocatively, "what Malcolm could not name." She writes, "How would the history of these international movements of solidarity evolve if it was informed by the current, historical, and elemental racisms of the Afro-Arab world?" She asks us to consider, again neither picking one or the other—global solidarity or local particularism— but seeing how they might synergize with one another.

Zeyad an-Nabolsy's paper also reminds us to treat these claims of solidarity with caution, asking how and why the kind of pan-African solidarity promoted by Nasser has seemingly no effect on the geographical and racial consciousness of Egyptians, leading to the kinds of phrases Mondesire mentioned hearing in Cairo, "I hope one day to travel to Africa." This phrase, as he recognizes, is not so much a shocking example of someone confused about his physical location, but is rather a wise and telling recognition of the fact that geography and race are always combined. That Egypt, per Nabolsy's paper, is not in fact in Africa in the consciousness of so many, no matter Nasser's protestations, because the historical processes of racialization, both imposed by western experts and internal, has been to constitute it as outside, despite the protestations of the map.

If American articulations of Blackness and civil rights have proven a powerful way to conceptualize and internationalize struggles for justice of some actors these papers discuss, as well as a useful analytic frame for many scholars, Diana Kim's helpful paper looked at the transportability of another category of racial categorization, this time from South Asia, that is, caste. Instead of a wholescale importation of this framework to look at Nigeria and Korea, Kim asks provocatively, "what would it look like to decouple, analytically, untouchability from caste." She writes, " Now, consider an alternative perspective that looks sideways, rather than vertically, at the place of the so-called outcastes in their respective communities and societies. And relax the presumption that what happens in the life of an individual called untouchable necessarily makes sense in reference to someone higher up in a shared system of stratification, comprised of overlapping intimate, social, economic, religious, and ritual realms. Does untouchability still exist without caste?" Again, while it has been American race studies that has predominated as a comparative frame, Kim reminds us that other sorts of analytics, from other sorts of places, can be brought productively to bear on conversations about racial formations in the particular locales in which we work and to help us see things that transect the local contexts we study.

So much for the tensions between universals and particulars, solidarities and local modes of confronting racial violence. A second tension crystalized around the history and the present, genealogies of racial formations and the stabilities that seem to work across time and space. If 1964 could be the vignette that framed the last theme, Sumayya Kassamali's "joke" "where is your Sri Lankan from?" might frame this one. Here we have an example of a historical genealogy of racialization that is so strong that Sri Lankan (the category) exists and can be occupied even long after Sri Lankans (the individuals) have left.

Dahlia Gubara's workshop comments about the present day racial slur of 'abid and the danger of too quickly collapsing it with the historical process of al- 'ubudiyya, is a helpful jumping off point for the tension I am discussing here as

well, warning us away from a kind of anachronistic reading of race. This is echoed in Dennis Regnier's paper, which considered an important shift in thinking about slaves that comes about at the moment of the colonial abolition of slavery, where they attain a kind of hidden essence.

Parisa Vaziri's essay offers another sort of warning about history. In it, she asks, "What are the 'processes of subjectification made possible (and desirable) through the very idiom of the archive'? What are the conditions of possibility that lead to *this* assumption?: that we *must* look to the archive for the truth of slavery. Is there a truth a slavery? And if so, what suggests that this truth is located in history?" Back to the topic of comparison, but here in a historical register, she continues "Again, a comparative logic sutures Atlantic and Indian Ocean slavery, this time, not only along the lines of the archive's comparative abundance or poverty, but in terms of the hegemony of racial blackness, which is not only 'out of place,' but deranges Indian Ocean slavery's non-racial truth. This means that, despite the purported lack of an 'engaged constituency,' that is despite the supposed absent politics of slave descent consciousness in the Indian Ocean, *another kind* of consciousness infects it—consciousness of Blackness. The historian's task is to immunize, defend against this infection." *In other words, there are truths that the archive does not, indeed cannot, tell.* Her model of "Enfleshing slavery," one that through an insistence on maintaining the conceptual salience of racial blackness "refuses to release slavery to a transparent and 'objective' account of itself" offers a challenge to the dominance of the archive in so much work. "To write history is to repress history," she reminds us.

Yet it is not only subaltern racial categories that have a genealogy. Neha Vora and Amelie Le Renard turn our attention genealogies of purification, racializing in terms of creating whiteness. How the dominant narrative racializes as well, through things such as national dress and language. Sitting here in Muscat, Mondesire's mention of a video of the Sultan of Oman speaking Swahili was particularly evocative of this point.

The Gulf is also an interesting site to explore another question around history that came up several times, notably in the Maghreb countries such as Tunisia: to what extent does it matter how the descendants of former slaves claim their former slave status to understanding the politics of race in the present? How does this then shape the academic discourse?

The final tension I want to discuss is the one that, maybe predictably given my own training, I felt was mentioned several times and in several papers but never received sustained analysis: that is the intertwining of race and religion. Zekeria Ahmed Salem's book burning vignette forced us to think about the ways religion is often mobilized both to justify slavery and anti-Blackness and to provide a liberal alternative. Sabria al-Thawr took us in another direction asking us to look at genealogy and uncleanliness. She offers a really fascinating reading of the Houthi movement and the conflicts that have ensued as essentially not about sectarianism, but about race, at least in the sense of descent, perhaps answering a question that Hisham asked in the Lebanese context about whether the Shia can be considered a race. This issue of *asl* as a category that spans race and religion (and what it means both racially and theologically to be *bidun asl*, as al-Thawr's story about the dead child in the mosque tells so vividly) is fascinating and underexplored.

Sean Jacobs' paper tells a story that resonates here in the vignette with which he ends his paper on why Islam is not considered an African religion in South Africa, where contempt for black neighbors is articulated within the language of Islam, where "Siqalo residents 'don't know how to lift themselves up by their bootstraps because they lack sabr," again forcing us to think about categories that straddle discourses of race and religion. When are they mutually constitutive? Finally, George Bajilia's paper asked us to explore the way in which race can migrate across religious categories, as he invited us to an Eid meal attended and prepared by Christians and Muslims alike, asking us provocatively to look at the period of waiting as equally important as the period of coming and going both for how it forms the individuals in their community and in the way that the communal sentiments formed around and across religion can transform into other kinds of solidarities.

Reflections on Race Formation in Comparative Context

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There's something happening here
But what it is ain't exactly clear . . .

[Buffalo Springfield, (song,1967)]

There is something happening here, indeed; something very interesting. It is not clear whether the particular geographic framing – 'Africa and the Middle East' – is responsible for an unusual, one might even say eclectic understanding of 'race,' 'racialization' and 'race formation.' Or whether it was taking the lens of race to view 'Africa and the Middle East' that gave the particular geographical perspective that emerges here. While some of the usual North African countries like Morocco (Silverstein, Bajalia) and Egypt (Abubakr, el Nabolsy) are included (see Hahonou on North Africa in general), the Middle East embraces not only Israel and Palestine, (Yerday, Abu-Laban & Bakan) Syria and Lebanon, but Yemen (al-Thawr, Alshaikh) and the Gulf States (Lori & Kuzomova; Le Renard & Vora, Mathews).[1] This subtle shift in geographical centering matters. It affects which parts of Africa come into focus, for example. Here, apart from the North African studies, light is shone on Sudan and South Sudan (Abubakar, Mondesire, Yoll), East Africa – Tanzania and Zanzibar, the Comoros Islands (as part of the Gulf States case studies), Madagascar (Regnier), and Cape Town, South Africa (Jacobs). The vision is towards (and around) the Indian Ocean rather than the more common Atlantic or Mediterranean. The Sahara, too, is largely invisible apart from two papers (King, Marsh). There is a third significant aspect of this particular collection of papers to factor in and that is its genuinely impressive range of interdisciplinarity. It becomes very apparent that much of the eclectic nature of these pieces also derives from their very different methodological and theoretical starting points.

". . . but what it is ain't exactly clear'. Again, indeed. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily a bad thing. There have been no attempts to shoehorn approaches or analyses. There has been a concerted effort by the editors to encourage cross-fertilization and discussion between contributors. A lot of this took place in the two days of intensive conferencing held in February 2021; however, an unusual effort was made post-conference to bring some of this discussion directly into the papers. So what one finds, reading through the full collection, is a sense of several themes around 'racial formation' developing out of the process of reflection and revision. Speaking as an historian, I would note that what provides a lot of cohesion to this particular set of case studies is a shared appreciation of the need to set any analysis – political, cultural, economic, social – firmly in its historical context. And that context provides a common foundation for case studies as wide ranging as Morocco, Cape Town and Oman.

I would also add that while not as apparent in the papers themselves, in the conference, the issue of *how* to get at 'race' and the process of 'racialization' through historical evidence was much discussed. Colonialism loomed large in both discussions. Its inherent beliefs in categorizing, tribalizing and racializing people everywhere in its domination, which includes the geographical area of study here,[2] is an integral part of the processes continuing today. (For example, Silverstein looks at the process with respect to Moroccan Amazigh; el-Nabolsy situates Egypt's uneasy straddling of 'North' and 'sub-Saharan' Africa in the context of colonial-inspired academic discourse.) Its paper trail, its archives, remain one of the key sets of sources providing us access to that past. Frank, comparative discussions of what "reading against the grain" actually means in specific times and places, and what it means with respect to this particular issue of 'race formation,' is extremely important. It is gratifying to see what historians often think of as their particular albatross, shared across disciplinary approaches.

There is a very striking difference of approach evidenced in the collection between those looking to governments and national policies concerning such things as immigration

and passports as shaping the process (a very large feature of the Gulf States discussions, for example), and those looking more at the level of personal or community interactions (as in Yemen or Cape Town). Yet even here we often see linkage through mobility – migration, more specifically. Some migration has its origins and/or destination in that 'local' context; this tends most often to be 'economic migration,' something measured on the personal, familial level. Other migrations are generated by government 'push' policies (sometimes rising to the level of genocide) or by wars, which have many different, causes but the same devastating consequences in uprooting tens of thousands of people. The 'race formation' we are looking at here ironically is both cause and consequence of such migrations be they local, regional or international (the Sudan and Gulf States studies in particular come to mind).

For many, this focus on fluid identity, movement and public policy will seem a rather roundabout way to get at race. Is phenotype really not in consideration at all? Are we jettisoning the role of skin colour and identifiable physical characteristics completely? There are no clear answers here either. But Montesire (in a study of Sudan) does pose the quintessential question: 'who is black when everyone is black?.' Several papers approach this problem from a more theoretical perspective, tying the discussion to the 'source' of so much literature on racial formation and 'racialization' – namely, America (see Lori & Kuzmova). As they point out, because of America's particular history, any understanding of 'black' is shaped by the assumption of a contrasting 'white' population. In terms of phenotype, neither needs to actually be 'black' or 'white,' what is key is that there can be a distinction between them. Conceptually, red, yellow or brown can be 'black' in contradistinction to something seen as 'lighter' or 'white.' But what is being questioned here is this assumed need for this kind of perceived 'whiteness' against which to measure 'other.' Identifying the process as one rooted in the Trans-Atlantic world allows for the suggestion that it need not apply everywhere. And as noted above, the geographical shaping of this collection is focused more on a Middle East and Africa that looks towards the Indian Ocean world (see Vairizi). So this suggestion has fertile soil in which to be nurtured. It is very significant that even a deeply rooted assumption about 'constructions of race,' certainly one very familiar to and accepted by Africanists steeped in histories of the African diaspora in the Atlantic world, may not be as universal as we have thought.

Above, I speak of a Trans-Atlantic world and an African diaspora in that world; the crucial missing concept here is of course, slavery. Africans who were part of that diaspora were, historically speaking, mostly forced into their 'migration.' The use of the 'black-white' opposition in creating racial classes in America was also overlaid by the opposition between 'slave and free.' The 'classic' racial formation has been a process by which all who are African are black, all Africans (in America) are slaves, therefore black is the equivalent of slave. By defined contrast 'Americans are white, Americans are free, white is the equivalent of free. Law may have changed that 'slave' reality but it did not erase the cultural associations the history of slavery embedded in America. (Hahonou makes a similar point in the context of the Saharan slave trade into North Africa, suggesting it may have helped define the concept of 'blackness' as it is understood in the contemporary Arab world.) Many of the case studies here engage with that association as it has been articulated in their own particular histories, which is to say they engage with the process of how racialization became a justification for discrimination and in some instances (especially concerning women), exploitation. So this collection indirectly – and indeed, in several instances directly, also speaks to issues of contemporary or 'modern' slavery. (Those permanently 'excluded' as in traditional understandings of 'caste' are addressed as well; see for example Abubakr, Hahonou, al-Thawr, Regnier, Kassamali, Kim, Matthews.). Because none of this research starts with the premise that we know what slavery is (any more than we know what 'race' is), it opens up the dynamic to closer, more subtle understandings.[3] Certainly, one sees here the intersection between the racialization of, say domestic labour, and the evolution of that labour into a form of direct exploitation (for example, the *kafala* system discussed by Kassamali, Abubakr and Mathews). Is it slavery? Is that a helpful construction of the situation?

Various terms are used here but what is striking when reading across the collection is how often 'servitude' is linked to contemporary forms of 'racialization'.

This is where I would like to weigh in by drawing on some recent work in my own area of research. In particular, I refer to two very recent (2020 and 2021) collections whose contents speak to several of the themes raised above but particularly the last one – how understanding 'race formation' becomes part and parcel of understanding the move from slavery through emancipation to what many now refer to as 'post-slavery' (or what Abubakr calls the 'afterlives of slavery'). The studies in these collections and the work of the contributors to them more generally, overlap with some of the regions discussed here but for the most part, are complementary to them. Moreover, they tend to forefront the issue of 'freedom' (or lack thereof) and different forms of dependency, rather than race per se. And yet – the really interesting reason for bringing them into this discussion, is in the extent to which they seem to be talking about the same processes in which we can see similar points of intersection between historical constructions of ethnicity/identity, class and race.

The first research to which I draw attention is my edited collection on what much of the literature refers to as 'black Mauritanians' and 'black Moroccans,' people presumed to be of slave descent by virtue of their skin colour.[4] The collection's title *Becoming visible in the wake of slavery* underscores the important point that historically, this particular class has been largely rendered invisible, their colour making them indistinguishable from 'slaves' but their status enforcing a kind of glass ceiling on their ability to ascend socially in free society. Known as *haratine* in Mauritania and *asuqqi* in southern Morocco, they know very different histories and are generally considered to have 'opposite' relations to slavery itself. Haratine are 'freed slaves' and therefore were historically considered superior to slaves – with each generation that superiority grew but the status remained. Asuqqi deny slave heritage and are considered to be of a lower social class because unlike freed slaves, they cannot trace their 'heritage' through an elite, noble family. Manumitted slaves prefer to retain the term 'abid' – slaves – for this reason.[5] Although there are some light-skinned haratine, for the most part both groups actually are darker than their former masters. That said, there are exceptions to the latter – very black skinned former masters who are considered white by virtue of their genealogy and class.

The Introduction to the volume poses the question 'how important is race?', meaning the phenotype rather than the construction. Bruce Hall, drawing largely on Chouki el-Hamel's well-known *Black Morocco*, argues that indeed the association of blackness with slavery has limited the ability of haratine and asuqqi to fully integrate, to fully enjoy the rights of citizenship, in both Mauritania and Morocco.[6] This conclusion, however, is rooted in his own study of racialization in the Middle Niger; his book *A History of Race in West Africa* has strongly influenced how we talk about 'race formation' in the Saharan-Sahel. His work speaks most directly to the issue of the impact of colonial rule. Among Africanists, there has been a long-standing tendency to ascribe many (if not most) forms of tribalism, hierarchy and 'racial preference' to colonial policies. Hall has argued that we can see the development of race consciousness and discrimination against 'blacks' in the Arab literature dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the writings of local (Middle Niger) clerics. But his suggestion that this process of racialization holds true for Mauritania's and Morocco's 'servile blacks' is not entirely supported by other studies in the collection. It is fair to say that what at first glance appears to be the 'key' shared issue across the two societies – skin colour that can be associated with a class of masters and one of slaves – is not generally seen as the most important. Drawing on Kim's terminology here, they tend to explore identity more from a 'sideways' than a vertical (top-down or bottom up) perspective. That is, they tend to see haratine in particular as active agents drawing on Islamic law and local culture to shape their own identity. Haratine also ingested notions of 'class' based on ancestry (when manumission occurred, how many generations in the past), and Islamic purity (how manumission occurred – secular abolition or religious manumission). They also reflected the social class of their former masters.

One of the most revealing approaches parallels several pieces in this collection (e.g. Jacobs, Kassamali), namely a combination of etymology and evolution – an effort to uncover the etymology of a term or 'name,' followed by an exploration of how its usage has changed over time. For example, while the etymology of 'haratine' remains somewhat controversial,[7] it is considered to be a very generic term whose linguistic origins are the source of most of that controversy (Silverstein also addresses this question here.) However, two of the collection's studies found people in different regions using other terms, both of which derived from colour; dark colours like green, brown or black-ish – but not black *per se*, or in one instance 'red.' Both authors, Katherine Wiley[8] and Corrine Fortier,[9] argue that while colour was embedded in the terminology they encountered being used to identify specific social groups, the colours were not a reference to skin or to race. Fortier saw colour as a linguistic tool to group people for a variety of purposes. Wiley's case study showed that terms could be used differently within the same region and during the same historical moment: people she observed self-identified differently, even while using the same colour-coded terms, according to context.

Other contributors equally rejected the notion that the colour-based terminology was 'racial' in essence. Benjamin Acloque worked among people of different classes who nevertheless shared a very light skin colour. In this clan, it was status as defined by occupation that constituted the distinguishing 'features,' not phenotype. It was status, not colour that was on the one hand valued and on the other, exploited. Jean Schmitz emphasizes 'purity' in religious terms, in contrast to race. He essentially argues that in both Morocco and Mauritania, it is closeness to Islam that determines 'race': hence, in Morocco colour is associated with the Prophet Mohamed's 'servant,' Bilal while in Mauritania, the custom of keeping slaves ignorant of Islam translates into the association of black slaves with ignorance. While an analysis unlike others in the collection and definitely one opposed to Hall's, Schmitz like Hall points to the consequences of these perceptions and associations of being black with being ignorant keeping Mauritanian haratine from fully participating as citizens in contemporary society, while simultaneously supporting the relative 'superiority' of those of slave descent vis-á-vis those of unknown origin, namely haratine, in Morocco.

What is most intriguing in reading across the various engagements with race – linguistic, anthropological, historical – in the *Becoming Visible* volume is the extent to which all of them argue against skin-colour *per se* as a defining factor while continuing to acknowledge the use of 'colour' as discourse. It is here that I see connections with several of the studies in the current collection in two respects. First, there were repeated observations of the term 'haratine' (and in the case of one study based in Mali, 'bella') becoming pejorative over time and being replaced with other terms.[10] Also in this context: whether a term is considered pejorative in any given situation may also depend on who is using it and who is 'hearing' it.[11] Historical circumstances be they local, national or international (as discussed in several papers in this collection) shape that context in important and always dynamic ways.

Second, it also cannot be denied that skin-colour has long been and remains a social factor in these societies – again something evident in many of the case studies here. The questions must be 'how is it acknowledged' and 'why is it acknowledged' at any given moment. Certainly, colonial discourse was highly racialized, driven by its own needs and perceptions rather than by any on-the-ground realities (in the Mauritanian case, it often had to do with taxation). But Wiley's paper in particular is instructive in showing how contemporary people, Mauritanians themselves, also reference skin-colour as it suits their needs and situation. As I summarize this section of the collection's Introduction: "To see only skin-colour would be to miss the full complexity of their self-selected identity; to ignore it would equally be to overlook a factor that influences their daily lives. In short, even as it is argued that social organization is not racial in that it is not based on skin-colour, it must be remembered that skin-colour does exist – it simply does not define 'race' in all instances. Understanding the evolving meaning and use of '*ḥarāṭīn*', therefore, provides a useful commentary on the evolving meaning and use of 'race' itself."[12]

Another reason I bring up this collection are the articles by Alessandra Guiffrida and Benedetta Rossi.[13] Guiffrida's research is focused in Mali. Her long experience there allowed her to identify shifting understandings of *eghawelen* (those of slave descent) in the context of Mali's larger political economy. French policies distributed power in ways that excluded their former masters, leaving eghawelen in some circumstances, doubly marginalized and vulnerable. The irony here is that those who were given power were 'black' sahelian, sub-Saharan groups, while the Tuareg, the former master class were 'white' but still discriminated against in terms of access to national resources. However, the focus of her study in this collection is more contemporary. It targets a group into which large numbers of drought and civil-war-generated refugees had recently returned. It was a very complex and, by definition, dynamic situation, one resonant in both aspects of much of the work in the collection here – thinking especially of Sudan and Southern Sudan, and of Zanzibaris in the Gulf States. Guiffrida describes how extensive land reform, part of governmental 'decentralization,' upset traditional hierarchies rooted in socially-defined land-ownership/land-worker relationships. The return of refugees further complicated the implementation of these reforms. Ironically, in some instances, eghawelen have negotiated improved social positions and achieved economic prosperity superior to their former masters. Guiffrida cautions that each set of social circumstances is specific to its historical and environmental contexts; generalizing an understanding of social groups like haratine, asuqqi and eghawelen from one study area to another can be misleading. Consequently, the kind of larger comparisons we are attempting here should be undertaken slowly and carefully – and with the benefit of much intensive research. In both recognizing the caution necessary (spelled out specifically here by Kim) and in appreciating the importance of historical context, the case studies in this collection reflect a similar approach to race formation.

The other article of interest is Rossi's. Rossi's research is rooted in Niger. She raises a question that strikes me as comparable to what Kim is asking here in the context of 'being seduced by comparison'. Just as Kim ultimately does not reject comparison as useful but argues that we need to be careful about what criteria we use to justify and frame comparisons, Rossi challenges the project that underlay the *Becoming Visible* collection in terms of our assumed 'base-line'. She asks us to question whether the most appropriate reason for comparing haratine and asuqqi is their relation to the institution of slavery. Put differently, should we assume that what we see of their situation (re: discrimination, poverty, exploitation etc.) is necessarily or even primarily, the consequence of their 'slave status'? Or would it be more appropriate to look at conditions (of living) as the central criterion for comparison and then see where slave legacy – and by extension, race – 'fit' into the analysis? Whether the focus is race formation or emancipation, this alternative is both provocative and unsettling. Yet it opens the door not only for comparative work but situating discussions of race, slavery, and post-slavery in the same analytical framework. (Regnier, in the collection here, takes on exactly this challenge in exploring how, when, and why 'post slavery' became 'racialization' in Madagascar.)

The second publication I want to draw attention to, *Inscriptions of Slavery on the African Urban Landscape,* will appear shortly.[14] And I will be much shorter in my discussion of its relevance. This edited volume is also a collection of case studies and wherein more overlap with the current collection is evident. The case studies include Mauritania, Gambia and Niger but also coastal southern Tanzania and Madagascar; the Introduction has a lengthy historiographical section looking at South Africa, in particular Cape Town. One of the central points emerging from this historiography is a rejection of the paradigms generated by Trans-Atlantic slavery and an exploration of how approaching the subject more from the Indian Ocean perspective might change the discourse. The Gulf States papers, alongside Jacob's study of Islam at the Cape will feel very much at home in this framework. For clearly while *Inscriptions* is looking at the historical and contemporary experience of 'slavery' and 'post-slavery' in an urban context, this collection is tracing exactly the same processes by which these groups came to be identified –

call it ethnicity, religion or race. In Cape Town, the story of the Malays is in fact the story of all three (Jacobs).

But there is another reason this small set of case studies resonates with the collection here and its essence lies in the title, 'inscriptions of slavery'. Several of the studies show, through historical analysis, how it was those who came to the city as slaves or freed-slaves in turn 'inscribed' themselves physically on its structure. Felicitas Becker[15] traces how particular places of origin came to be attached not only to its migrants, assumed to be of slave/former slave status, but to the urban neighbourhoods where they lived. Others who subsequently settled there were in turn associated with both the geographical and the status origins of the original (assumed) servile migrants. Marco Gardini[16] sees a similar process unfolding in Madagascar's capital; the 'lower quarters' were associated with those of slave origin in spite of the fact that several waves of in-migration were coastal people of free origin simply looking for urban employment. His study is also revealing of how internal differentiation develops totally irrespective of perceived race or class. To outsiders, the people of this neighbourhood were all the same; to themselves, clear distinctions were recognized between those of slave and those of non-slave origins. The latter did not intermarry with the former and saw themselves as a separate and superior class. 'Who is black when everyone is black?' The answer is often invisible to those lying outside the group. (Regnier's paper here probes the role of marriage as a stigmatizing 'tool' while providing a larger picture of this same class of slave descendants beyond Gardini's urban context.)

The significant point is the parallelism these studies of 'urban slavery' (including urban post-slavery) show with the studies of race formation – the ways in which physical place can itself become a central part of the process of constructing identity, racial or otherwise (See Silverstein for an example of this same thinking in the rural context of southern Morocco). And given that the proportion of the populations of both Africa and the Middle East becoming not just seasonally but permanently 'urban' is growing exponentially, thinking about the questions of racialization and race formation (understanding that they are not synonymous in spite of the slippage probably evident elsewhere in this essay) as distinctly urban phenomena has significant research potential. Moreover, the whole process of urbanization is also one closely associated with migration, taking us full circle back to understanding migration itself as both personal and local, and policy-driven on national and international scales. This is yet another point of intersection between studies of race, class and power.

Which is really where I want to end. There is much more that can be drawn from this current collection and certainly much more that could be discussed in terms of other relevant literature. My intent in choosing to introduce work from my own recent edited volumes was simply to suggest ideas for some more fruitful conversations around the intersections, as well as the overlaps between, studies of race and studies of post-slavery. The historical process of emancipation would seem to have shaped important elements of both in many parts of Africa and the Middle East. This (current) collection will 'unsettle', as they say, many who think they know what 'race' is all about. The literatures, the historiographies generated in African studies have for the most part, followed different paths from those current in Middle Eastern studies. It is time they were brought together and time they were challenged in their geographical and theoretical frameworks; as we see here, the former can and does facilitate the latter. "There is something happening here, . . .what it is ain't exactly clear'. But it certainly is exciting.

Endnotes

[1] For references to the studies included in this collection, I have simply used names, not article titles. Other references are complete.

[2] The term being broadly used to include forced dependencies like 'protectorates' and 'mandates'.

[3] It is worth pointing to an important observation in Abu-Laban and Baklan, namely that because so many studies of 'race' engage very limiting understandings of the term – often based on phenotype and structured according to a 'black-white' dichotomy, important political racializations such as those we see in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are overlooked. Their paper makes a strong case for the kind of fluid, flexible historically conscious analyses that populate this collection.

[4] E Ann McDougall, Ed., *Devinir visible dans le sillage de l'esclavage: le question haratine en Mauritanie et au Maroc/Becoming visible in the wake of slavery : the haratine question in Mauritania and Morocco. L'ouest saharien.* Vols. 10-11, 2020.

[5] This is a simplified explanation. Silverstein's paper in this collection provides more detail. However two points should be made. One, the observation he makes that 'haratine' today prefer to be called by other names (e.g. Khammas, Drawi) is an example of what I refer to below as evolution that often involves a term coming to be seen as perjorative. When our project work was done in the Dra'a Valley in 2010, none of these people referred to themselves as haratine; indeed, the term was considered an insult. Others, however, often did so – an example of another point made below about terminology being specific to who is using it and who is listening to it. Secondly, our research did not extend to desert oases. It is true that historically, the term haratine was used to refer to those of slave descent but also others who did the same kind of labour (see my discussion of this point in the Introduction to *Becoming visible*).

[6] Bruce Hall, "Memory, Slavery and Muslim Citizenship in the Post Emancipation circum-Saharan World, 95-108.

[7] Catherine Taine-Cheikh, « 'hartani' : une enquete au pays des mots », 73-94.

[8] Katherine Wiley, "Being haratine? Being Hadriyyin? Fluid meanings of Ethnic Terms in Mauritania's Assaba Region", 209-224.

[9] Corrine Fortier, "Genre, statuts et ethnicisation des haratine de Mauritanie", 171-186.

[10] Wiley; also Benjamin Acloque, "Les liens serviles en milieu rural: le statut des haratine et leur attachements á l'agriculture et á l'élevage", 125-144 ; Jean Schmitz, « Les haratine entre le baraka des escalves par Bilal (au sud Maroc) et la science coranique (sud de la Mauritanie), 145-170 ; Allessandra Guiffrida, « Briding the Divide : continuity and change among the Kel Antassar Eghawelen and other Tuareg clans (District of Goundam, Mali), 249-271.

[11] Wiley; Fortier.

[12] E. Ann McDougall, "Introduction: Who are the haratine? Asking the right questions. . . ", 33,34. Discussion of 'What is the importance of race?' is drawn from pages 30-34. For simplicity, I have chosen to use a purely anglicized spelling of haratine throughout this essay, rather than attempting to transcribe the Arabic.

[13] Guiffrida (as above); Benedetta Rossi, "From Slavery? Rethinking slavery as an analytical category. The case of the Mauritanian and Moroccan haratine", 187-206.

[14] *Inscriptions of Slavery on the African Urban Landscape: case studies in Emancipation and Post-Slavery.* Special Issue of the *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage,* E. Ann McDougall Ed. (Forthcoming, 2021).

[15] Felicitas Becker, " 'Looking for Life': Traces of Slavery in the Social Structures of Southern Swahili Towns".

[16] Marco Gardini, " Fear of the Dark: Urban Insecurities and Legacies of Slavery in Antananarivo, Madagascar".

The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see http://www.pomeps.org.

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