Introduction
Slavery and the Racialization of Humanity: Coordinates for a Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

This introduction provides some historical and conceptual coordinates for a comparative analysis of the multifarious ethnographic manifestations and performative powers of the "racial legacies" of slavery in contemporary contexts in West Africa, North Africa and the Middle East. What is the connection, if any, between current expressions of racism and historical experiences of slavery? How is "race", with its relations with ideas of colour, origin and descent, locally conceptualized? How is "blackness" embodied and performed, experienced and contested, by different social actors – slave descendants, marginalized groups, sub-Saharan African migrants, students or professionals? In addressing these broad questions, this Special Issue radically expands the conversation on the legacies of slavery beyond the Sahara-Sahel, which has been the main focus of academic attention to date.

Keyword: post-slavery, race, racism, colour, blackness

Over the past decade, the growing public and media attention given to racial discrimination and colour prejudice against black people in North Africa and in the Middle East – sub-Saharan Africans, slave descendants, black marginalized groups and *Haratin*[1] – has opened up unprecedented societal and political debates on the issue of "anti-black racism" and its relations with the history of slavery. In West Africa and the Sahara-Sahel, slave movements have gained growing visibility since the 1980s (see, for example, Ha-

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1 *Haratin* is a term used in West Africa and the West Maghreb to indicate contextually both "freed blacks" or "free blacks", while in Tunisia and Libya other terms are used, such as *Shwashin*. The etymology of the word and the origin of this social group are still debated, as also is the origin of the social group it denotes. For example, El Hamel considers the Moroccan *Haratin* as being descendants of the indigenous black groups, originally detribalized families living in the Saharan oasis before the Berber and Arab invasions. On the use of *Haratin* in Mauritania, see Taine-Cheikh (1989).

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honou and Pelkmans 2011; Pelkmans and Hardung 2015; Hahonou 2008, 2011; Leservoisier 2005). In Mauritania, where the *Haratin* have struggled for four decades against continuing slavery and descent-based discrimination (for example, Ruf, 1999, McDougall, 2005, 2010, 2013, 2015a; Ould Ahmed Salem 2009; Ould Ciré 2014; Esseissah, 2016), societal debates on slavery and its contemporary legacies date back to the 1970s. In North Africa and the Middle East, though, these questions have emerged only relatively recently or still remain unspoken. This is perhaps because, as Moroccan historian Chouki El Hamel has noted, a "culture of silence" (2002; 2013a, p. 3, see also Chebel 2007) has long prevented these countries from engaging with, and overtly discussing, questions of race, slavery and colour. What is the connection, if any, between current expressions of "racism" and historical experiences of slavery?

With this Special Issue exploring racial legacies of slavery we take as our point of departure a set of fresh case studies from different "post-slavery" settings in West Africa (Senegal and Mauritania), North Africa (Morocco and Tunisia) and the Middle East (Turkey, Yemen and Iran). Benedetta Rossi has defined "post-slavery" as "historical and social circumstances identifiable in contexts where slavery was a fundamental institution and its legal abolition, far from bringing a linear and teleological transition from slavery to freedom, was followed by resilient legacies of past hierarchy and abuse" (2015: 303). Tracing the legacies of the slave trade, domestic slavery and slave emancipation in the aftermath of legal abolition, scholars have exposed continuities, disconnections and temporal disjunctures in contexts where pluri-legal systems were the norm (Lecocq and Hahonou 2015). Neither colonial abolitions nor post-colonial governments succeeded in ending the marginalization of slave descendants through laws and decrees, and the "stigma" (Klein 2009) of a slave past may persist through generations. The "bitter legacies" of slavery reverberate to this day in a number of transfigured forms in contemporary West Africa (Bellagamba 2015, 2016; Bellagamba, Greene, Klein 2013, 2016, 2017; Rossi 2009). So the use of "post-slavery" in reference to North Africa and the Middle East emphasizes the extent to which these societies have been deeply marked by centuries of slavery and the slave trade, and how they continue today to live with, and be confronted by, its multifaceted legacies. By the term "racial legacies" we refer to worldviews, notions of humanity and uneven distribution of power and resources based on race-constructs and modes of racialization of difference rooted in the histories of slavery.

This Special Issue is the culmination of a collaborative project initiated in 2014 within the frame of the ERC research programme "Shadows of Slavery in Africa and Beyond: A Historical Anthropology"[2]. It developed

2 "Shadows of Slavery in West Africa and Beyond. A Historical Anthropology" is an ERC project (Grant 313737) directed by Prof. Alice Bellagamba.

over the past five years through a series of intellectual exchanges between a number of scholars – from professors to post-docs – working within and beyond West Africa. Most of the papers were presented at the international workshop "Racial Legacies: Historical and Contemporary Dynamics" at the University of Milano Bicocca on 7 November 2017[3]. In this workshop, we began to assess how the racial legacies of slavery emerge, and are reckoned with, in people's everyday lives, across different contexts the common factor between which is their centuries-long histories of slavery and the slave trade. Our ambition here is to develop a comparative reflection on the multifarious ethnographic manifestations, and performative powers, of the racial legacies of slavery in these regions of the world.

What makes our intellectual endeavour particularly compelling, we feel, is that very few works have explicitly engaged with this question to date. The memory of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the "racial issue" in the post-slavery Americas have received growing scholarly and political attention.[4] But although the study of post-slavery in West Africa has been well consolidated in the past twenty years, a specific focus on its racial dimensions has until recently remained relatively marginal both in academic discussions on the "black diaspora" in North Africa and the Middle East and in local societal debates[5]. In the late 1970s, John Hunwick defined the question of black Africans in the Mediterranean Muslim worlds as an "understudied" (1978) dimension of the black diaspora and argued that it was still "neglected" (1992) in the early 1990s (see also Botte 2000). The publication of Bernard Lewis' seminal work, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (1990) paved the way for new research on the topic. In the past twenty years, and more particularly in the last fifteen, a growing number of works (for example, Segal 2002; Benachir 2001, 2005; Hunwick and Troutt Powell 2002; Cuno and Walz 2010; Mirzai, Montana, Lovejoy, 2009; Montana

3 I am deeply grateful to Alice Bellagamba, Marco Gardini, Marta Scaglioni and the two anonymous reviewers of Antropologia for their careful reading and commenting on previous drafts of this paper, and to Alessandra Brivio and Giacomo Pozzi for their editorial support. My warm thanks also go to Alieu Manjang, Ismael Montana and all the people who took part in the workshop.

4 The literature on the topic is vast – from classic works of black activists and intellectuals in the early post-abolitionist period, such as Frederick Douglass (1881) and Edward W.B. Du Bois (1903), to the landmark works of Paul Gilroy (1993) and black feminists Angela Davis (1974) and bell hooks (1981) and the more recent reflections of Julia O'Connell Davidson and Loïc Wacquant (2005) on the aftermaths of slavery in the US. On post-slavery in South America, see, for example, Fry 2000; Telles 2004; Ribeiro Corossacz 2005; Teun and Van Dijk 2008.

5 There exists a rich scholarly literature on slavery in the Muslim worlds, but the notions of race and colour, and their relationship with the history of slavery, remain understudied. On slavery, see for example, Seddon (2008), Gordon (2009), Toledano (1998, 2007), Ennaji (1998, 2001), Marmon (1999). On black slaves in Tunisia, see Valensi (1967).

2011; Hall 2005, 2011; El Hamel 2013a; Mirzai 2002, 2005, 2007, 2012, 2017; Trout Powell, 2011; Toledano 2007, Mrad Dali 2005; McDougall 2005, 2010, 2015b; Aouad Badoual 2004; Deveau 2002; Ould Ciré 2014) have significantly enriched our knowledge of the historical intersections of slavery and race in North Africa and in the Middle East. Anthropologists and social scientists have explored the lives of slave descendants (for example, Thompson 2005, 2011; Thompson M. 2006; Kapchan 2007; Becker 2002; Montigny, Le Guennec-Coppens, 2002; Scaglioni 2018), the *Haratin*, especially in Mauritania and in the Maghreb areas (for example, Brhane 1997, Ruf 1998, Ilahiane 2001, 2004; Ensel 1999, McDougall 2015a,b), and black groups and questions of colour (Brown, 1967; Blin 1988; Taine-Cheikh, 1989; Sharkey, 2008; Khiat 2015; Pouessel 2012). However, the ways in which the legacies of slavery have come to affect and inhabit social and intimate lives, collective identities, political subjectivities, and forms of activism and societal debates still have to be fully investigated.

In the remaining sections of this introduction, I begin to trace some historical and conceptual coordinates by which to orientate our comparisons of the racial legacies of slavery in these regions. In so doing, I outline four sets of questions with which the authors engage. First, how is "race", with its complex relations with ideas of "colour," "origin," "blood" and "descent," locally conceptualized? Second, how are ideas of "race" and "racism" contextually mobilized in different paths of activism and political mobilization? Third, how do the racial legacies of slavery emerge in people's everyday worlds? Four, how can we conceptualize the relationships between the historical and the contemporary? Engaging with these core questions, this Special Issue radically expands the conversation on the legacies of slavery beyond the Sahara-Sahel area, which has been the main focus of scholarly attention to date, by offering fresh insights into the complexity of imaginations, ideas and practices of human difference and the social work they do.

"Race"

Our venture into the racial legacies of slavery begins with the conceptual and ethnographic problems posed by the adjective *racial*, since "race" is, at least for anthropologists and social scientists, a deeply problematic and theoretically slippery concept. During the early twentieth century, anthropologist Franz Boas (1940) firmly criticized racial determinism, and his students Ruth Benedict and Ashely Montagu debated "race" and its relations with both culture and biology (see Visweswaran 1998). Montagu (1941, p. 185-187, 1962) discarded the very concept of "race" as a biological category to classify human difference, as its very existence is not supported by any biological and genetic evidence. While thinkers like Franz Fanon (1952)

contributed significantly to a theory of "race" and racial relations, the rejection of the biological concept of race by the anthropological establishment led anthropologists to endorse a "no-race" posture and to replace it with that of "ethnicity" (Harrison 1995, p.48; Visweswaran 1998, p. 75).

Anthropology's interest in "race" was revived again especially in the 1990s, when racism, and the ethnicization of wars and conflicts, appeared to have deepened in the era of globalization (Harrison 1995, 1998a,b; Visweswaran 1998). As Faye Harrison has noted, "despite its ontological emptiness and epistemic vagueness, race's vitality and volatility have intensified" (1995, p. 49). Joining the conversation about how to deal anthropologically with race's vitality, anthropologist Audrey Smedley argued that, if scholars now endorse the perspective that "'race' is a cultural invention, that it bears no intrinsic relationship to actual human physical variations, but reflects social meanings imposed upon these variations", then we are "challenged to explore its ramifications and consequences" (1998, p. 690). For Smedley, race as a "sociocultural phenomenon" (2007 [1993], p. 5) refers to the social and historical construction of *racialized* human difference.

These theoretical insights offer important anthropological tools for thinking about race. However, if we attempt to apply the concept of "race", wholesale, to West African, North African and Middle Eastern contexts, we encounter a number of linguistic, conceptual and epistemological challenges, beginning with the problem of translating the concept of "race" into local idioms and cultural traditions. Imposing Western conceptualizations of race onto African and Middle Eastern contexts is, indeed, problematic as it runs the risk of foisting Western meanings and Trans-Atlantic experiences onto different histories.

Postcolonial scholars have generally regarded "race" as a Western category imposed on Africa during the colonial conquest[6] and have analyzed recent ethnic conflicts as a colonial legacy. Certainly, the violence of colonial racial classifications imposed on the colonized has had deep implications, as Franz Fanon's work powerfully shows. Historian Janet Abu-Lughod (1980) provocatively used the idea of "urban apartheid" to discuss social and spatial segregation between Moroccans and the French produced by the colonial policies in Rabat. Bruce Hall, while taking seriously the legacies of colonial racial classification, has argued that, "there are African histories of race that do not obey colonial logics" (2011, p. 2).

Challenging the idea that race is merely a Western import, Hall's (2005, 2011) work on racial dynamics in West Africa and the Sahel, and Chouki El Hamel's (2002, 2013a) study on race and slavery in Morocco have doc-

6 For example, Mahmood Mamdani (2002) interprets the genocide in Rwanda as an index of the failure of postcolonial Africa to free itself from the colonial power. For a critical discussion of Mamdani's analysis see Hall (2011, pp. 1-3).

umented how a "racial thought" – whose emergence is closely related to slavery and the slave trade – was rooted in the pre-colonial history of these regions. Central to Hall's argument are the reflections of Stuart Hall (1980) and Thomas Holt (2009) on the "historicity" of race: the key idea that the socially constructed texture of race makes it vary deeply in different historical and geographical settings. In his contribution to this Special Issue, Bruce Hall points precisely to the theoretical and empirical challenges of taking race into West Africa and the Middle East; he concludes that, instead of searching for the origin of the idea itself, we should "try to think about how race works in the particular contexts in which we find it" and "seek to unravel the complex interplay of ideas and practices around race […]" (p. 42).

Connected to the epistemological problem of the origin (extrinsic or indigenous) of the idea of "race" is the question of translation. El Hamel has maintained that, similarly to modes of human classification in premodern Europe, a number of expressions were used to evoke "race" in these regions such as people, nation, community and tribe. He has proposed the Arabic *al-ʿirq*, a term which literally means "root", but also evokes ideas of "origin" and "source", as the translation of "race" in contemporary Arabic literature (2013a, p. 98). In these pages Luca Nevola proposes, instead, the term *ʿunsur* as the Arabic equivalent of "race" in his discussion of the manifold historical contexts of its emergence in Yemen: from the local historians' debate on the origin of the *Akhdam* (a "black" marginalized group) to the recent appropriation of the term in the political claims of the *Akhdam* themselves. Genarally, colour alone is not imagined the main marker of difference; rather ideas of "descent" and "origin" (or lack thereof) become the defining traits of "blackness". Moreover, as Martin Klein (2009) and Ibrahima Thioub (2012, p. 12) have pointed out, while colour is relevant in certain areas, in West African contexts in which slaves and masters shared the same skin colour, an ideology of "genealogical purity", "blood" or "habit" contributed to maintaining social distinction after abolition, a point that also emerges forcefully in Alice Bellagamba's paper.

By combining rich ethnographic and qualitative research with a historical perspective, the seven research papers in this Special Issue seek to unpack specific notions of humanity and human difference built on historical and contemporary dynamics of "racialization": the processes through which racialized groups are formed (Hochman 2019, p. 1245). In order to frame the papers to follow, I will identify some critical moments in the historical intersections of race and slavery by focusing on the contexts under examination: Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Turkey, Yemen and Iran. This history reveals not only the historical depth of "racial thought" in West Africa and the Mediterranean Muslim worlds but also the challenges confronting the contributors of this collection as they attempt to capture and translate culturally specific vocabularies and imaginations about human difference.

(Racialized) slavery

Slavery and the slave trade in Muslim worlds lasted from the sixth century until the early twentieth century. During the expansion of the Islamic empire (seventh and eighth centuries AD), commercial networks crossing the Sahara, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, provided slaves, soldiers, eunuchs and concubines to the countries of North Africa, Southern Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. Roger Botte (2010, p. 8) estimated that, overall, the numbers of African slaves transported along these routes between 650 and 1900 were similar to, if not greater than, those of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.[7] After the suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807, the trans-Saharan slave trade intensified until the 1930s (Webb 2000, pp. 72-77). In spite of that, as John Hunwick (1978, 1992) and Eve Troutt Powell (Hunwick and Troutt Powell 2002) have noted, this aspect of the "black diaspora" has long remained in the shadow of the trans-Atlantic slave trade: presumably because of the absence of serious racial conflicts, the scarcity of historical records, and the fact that so-called "Islamic slavery" was minimized by the political and academic establishments. According to Mohammed Ennaji (1998, p. xxi), an idealized vision of slavery in the Muslim world as a "benevolent institution" in comparison with the brutality of the plantation system in the Americas, contributed to an underestimation of its violence.

To be sure, slavery and concubinage were widespread prior to the Islamization of the Arabic Peninsula as fundamental expressions of power and social prestige. Islam sanctioned and regulated these institutions, emphasizing an "ethics of emancipation" (El Hamel 2013). Islamic jurisprudence granted rights to the slaves and defined paths of emancipation that contributed to their integration and assimilation into the slave-owning societies, including the legal mechanism of *umm al-walad*[8] and the *wala* (the client relationship between former masters and former slaves). In patrilineal Muslim societies, racial attribution was defined by genealogical origin (*aṣl*)[9] more than mere colour (Hamel 2013a, p. 94-103; Walz and Kuno, 2010: p. 8-9, Lewis 1990; Hunwick and Powell 2002). Consequently, a person's "social colour" did not necessarily equate to his/her skin colour. Transmitted along patrilineal lines, a person's blackness related to the absence of Arab lineage and genealogical ori-

7 For an analysis of trans-Saharan trade, see Wright (2007) and Lydon (2009).

8 Under the rule of *umm al-walad* (meaning "the mother of the sons") the child born from the union of a slave with his master inherited the status of her master and the mother acquired freedom for life. The child's acquisition of free status of the child, however, depended his being recognized by the master and, therefore, in a situation of widespread sexual violence, the children often inherited the status of the mother.

9 For a classic analysis of the notion of *aṣl* see, for example, Rosen (1984), L. Abu-Lughod (1986).

gin (see also Nevola and Scaglioni, this issue) – a pattern marked by a peculiar inversion of the "one drop rule" present in the US, where one drop of black blood made a person legally and socially black (El Hamel 2013a, p. 95).

Although racial stereotypes about the inferiority of the blacks were present throughout the Mediterranean basin (for example, Goldenberg 2003), in the Mediterranean Muslim world slaves had different geographical origins and skin colours (for example, Botte, Stella 2012). The condition of slaves and concubines under the Islamic law was related not to their skin-colour but to their non-Muslim status. However, the conditions that sanctioned the capture of slaves (mainly through *jihad*) were often transgressed and over the centuries the institution of slavery in general, and the legitimacy of the enslavement of West Africans in particular, were the subjects of ethical debates long before abolitionism emerged in European thought (Lovejoy 2004, p. 13). Although racial prejudice is absent from the Qur'an and the Sunna, a racial thought rooted in the Biblical curse of Ham did label black Africans as culturally and morally inferior.[10] Bernard Lewis pointed out that in early Islamic and pre-Islamic times "the stigma was associated to [slave] status, not to race […] Before long, however, a distinctive color prejudice appeared; and the association of blackness with slavery and whiteness with freedom and nobility became common" (1990, p. 89). Kenneth Cuno and Terence Waltz (2010, p. 8) have contended that the association of the colour and origins of trans-Saharan Africans with servile status was deeply rooted in popular imaginations throughout the Ottoman Empire. Here, White and Black slaveries established a hierachization between white-skinned slaves and black-skinned slaves, with different occupations, status and social functions (for example, Toledano 1998).

According to Hunwick and Tout Powell (2002, pp. iixx-ixx), slavery became racialized in West Africa and the Mediterranean Muslim world especially from the seventeenth century, and this contributed to the imaginative overlapping of slavery and blackness. In *A History of Race in Muslim Black Africa*, Hall (2011) has traced how a pre-existing racial thought became the ideological basis for the legal construction of the inferiority and the enslavement of black populations in Western Sahel between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. El Hamel has argued that the forced conscription of the *Haratin*[11] in the creation of the "Black Army" (*ʿAbid al-Bukhari*) by Sultan Moulay Ismail (1646-1727) was a watershed in the social and politi-

10 See, Lewis (1990, p. 55) Goldenberg (2003) on the myth of Cam; Sweet (1997) on the Iberian roots of American racist thought.

11 Traditionally lacking land, the *Haratin* in Morocco were considered "people without origin" (*aṣl*). Their lack of land and their doubtful origin positioned these populations at the bottom of the social hierarchy dominated by Shorfa (descendants of the Prophet). They worked as agricultural laborers and specialized craftsmen with cliental relations with the Arab and Berber tribes that ruled the area.

cal history of the Moroccan Sultanate (see also Meyers 1977, 1983). For El Hamel, the Sultan's action, by consolidating the equation between slavery and blackness, contributed to "the ideological foundation of a society divided by colour" (2013a, p. 10, 2013b). In the nineteenth century, the term *ʿabid* evoked not only a status (slave) but also a function (servant/domestic) and a skin-colour (black) (Aouad Badoual 2004, pp. 337-338). Still vividly present in popular imaginations in different contexts, the connection between blackness and social inferiority is a fundamental legacy of slavery.

Abolitions

Rita Aouad Badoual (2004, p. 337) has pointed out that, unlike the post-slavery Americas, the history of slavery in North Africa and the Middle East cannot be written along a straight line that connects slavery to abolition and racial segregation to emancipation. Tunisia was the first country in the Ottoman Empire to abolish slavery and the slave trade (with a series of decrees between 1841 and 1846): without any direct pressure from Western countries (see Botte 2010; Montana 2013). In Turkey, slavery was gradually abolished in the second half of the century as part of the modernization project of the Ottoman Empire (Erdem 1996). In North Africa, the penetration of colonial powers from the first half of the nineteenth century, and the abolitionist campaigns promoted by the former main agents of the slave trade, France and Great Britain, led to a slow decline in the trans-Saharan slave trade and slavery in their respective colonies. Britain abolished slavery in its colonies in 1833 and France in 1848, including the Senegalese territories which at the time comprised St. Louis, Gorée Island and other small settlements. Iran abolished slavery and emancipated slaves with a decree in 1928 (Mirzai 2017) and Yemen did so in 1962. The Muslim Republic of Mauritania was the last Muslim state to formally abolish slavery, in 1981. In Morocco, slavery was never formally abolished either during or after the French protectorate (1912-1956). Only in 1961 did the fundamental law of the newly independent Morocco, and then the Constitution in 1962, enunciate the formal equality of all citizens before the law (Goodman 2012, 2013). Similarly, in Senegal, the 1905 Roume Decree sanctioned the end of enslavement and the slave trade without bringing emancipation and freedom to slaves.

In all these countries, or in certain areas of them, slavery continued for the decades that followed legal abolition, or was transmuted into other institutions and relationships. As happened in other post-slavery West African contexts (see for example, Ruf 1999; Bellagamba 2015; Bellagamba, Klein, Green 2013a, 2013b, 2017; Rossi 2009, 2015; Gaibazzi 2012, 2016), in North Africa and the Middle East the processes of abolition did not necessarily result in social emancipation and freedom, and freed slaves and slave

descendants had to cope with the legacies of slavery. Black African slaves were in some places liable to be kidnapped and re-enslaved (Cuno and Walz 2010, p. 5) and those lacking patronage relationships with their former masters experienced social vulnerability and marginality (Montana 2013).

Two fundamental questions remain open: What are the consequences of this centuries-old history, and What are its racial legacies? As the contributors of this Special Issue show, the dynamics of slavery and emancipation in these areas have left highly diversified legacies that escape any attempts to reduce their diversity and complexity. What they demonstrate so well is that it is impossible to discuss the "racial legacies" of slavery without considering carefully how past slavery interweaves with many, varied, factors. These include the impact of colonial encounters during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the processes of abolition and emancipation, nation-state building, the coming of neoliberal economies that have contributed to the sharpening of social and economic inequalities, and the emergence of "EurAfrican" border regimes (Gaibazzi, Dünnwald, Bellagamba 2017). For example, Ayşegül Kayagil in this collection shows that the identities and social positions of Black Turks of African origin have been shaped as much by the experience of enslavement as by the ethno-racial-nationalist ideology of the early Turkish Republic (1923) which exalted whiteness and racial purity. In both Tunisia and Morocco the Pan-Arabist ideology underlying nation-state building – centred on ideas of Arabness, Islam and the Arabic language – contributed to the invisibility of the black groups (Pouessel 2010, 2012a; Tlili 2012). While racial relations came to the fore in post-revolution Tunisia (Mrad Dali 2015), Marta Scaglioni (this issue) shows the extent to which black Tunisians remain "racialized others" in the South. In Mauritania, the legacies of slavery have resulted in enduring forms of stigmatization and chromatic demonization of the *Haratin*. They were forced by the lack of social and economic policies in support of former slaves into conditions of dependence on their former masters and of more severe socioeconomic marginalization (McDougall 2015; Maimone, this issue). The experiences of sub-Saharan Africans in Rabat – undocumented migrants, students, young professionals – suggests that an exploration of the racial legacies of slavery cannot be analytically separated from the contemporary socio-political dynamics operating in Morocco, marked as they are by the violent institutional practices of border control and the media stigmatization of the "new" comers (Menin 2016, this issue).

In other words, the consequences of the dynamics of post-abolition varied greatly with the context. While not all black-skinned people are descendants of slaves and not all slave descendants are black, one major legacy of this history is the close, ubiquitous connection between blackness, slavery/servitude and low social/occupational position in the popular imagination (Kayagil, Maimone, Menin, Scaglioni, Nevola; see also El Hamel 2013b;

Schmitz 2006; Timérà 2011). This vision – which often translates into specific forms of racism – encompasses not only slave descendants but also people originally from areas of sub-Saharan Africa who served historically as slave reservoirs for the North Africa and the Middle East. In contemporary Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya, the racial legacy of slavery emerges, for example, in the use of the Arabic word *ʿabd* (literally meaning "slave" in Arabic, it also means "black") to target sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees[12]. But with what everyday tactics, and political languages, do people try to reverse, reimagine and contest prejudices and discrimination based on colour and "race" in their political, social and intimate lives?

Racisms and paths of political mobilization

Online magazines and internet platforms have been publishing articles and testimonies of both black Maghribians' and sub-Saharan Africans' experiences of discrimination in the Maghreb since the early 2000s[13]. In 2006, the Turkish activist Mustafa Olpak founded the Africans' Culture and Solidarity Organization to recover the history of the Afro-Turks, thereby opening radically new debates on previously undiscussed topics of slavery and its legacies (Ferguson and Kayagil 2017; Kayagil, this issue). Especially after the 2011 revolutions and protests in North Africa and the Middle East, these questions have gained increasing visibility (Bahri 2014; Law 2014; Morone 2015a, 2015b 2016; Pouessel 2012a,b; Menin 2016; Scaglioni 2017, 2018; Ferguson 2014; King 2019). For example, in Tunisia, unprecedented forms of activism on black rights have come to the fore since the revolutionary year of 2011 (Pouessel 2012b; Mrad Dali 2015). In Morocco, the attention given to the so-called "anti-black racism" (*le racisme anti-noir*) has increased since 2013, following a spate of institutional and civil violence against sub-Saharan African migrants. In 2014 the national campaign "My name is not a negro" (in Moroccan Arabic: *Ma smitish ʿazzi*) contributed to giving further public visibility to this issue. Then, in March 2016, a network of associations launched the international anti-racist campaign "Neither serfs nor negro: stop, that's enough" (in Arabic: *ma oussif, ma ʿazzi: baraka wa yezzi*) in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Mauritania. While Tunisian anti-racist movements focused on the broad social category of "blacks" (*le Noirs*), in Mauritania this campaign concentrated on the situation of the *Haratin* and in Morocco sub-Saharan African migrants remained the main

12 For example, on Sudanese refugees in contemporary Egypt, see Trout-Powell (2012, p. 3); on blacks in Libya, see Morone (2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017); on African migrants in Morocco, see Menin (2016); on black African refugees in Tunisia, see Scaglioni (2017).

13 For example, Mosbah (2004), Bouyahia (2005).

focus of attention. More recently, the racist comments targeting Kadija Ben Hamou, "Miss Algeria 2018", for being "too dark" reveals how much colour still matters as a marker of difference and identity.

Beyond exposing extremely rich local diversity, the papers in this Special Issue show that local anti-racist movements and societal debates on slavery have enabled novel forms of political practices, languages and subjectivities to emerge. At the same time, these discussions about, and activisms against, racism and colour-based discrimination are curious counterpoints to their societies' general denial. Generally perceived and depicted as a Western concept and problem, local expressions of racism are often described as "mild" relative to the harsh racism that black people suffer in the US or South Africa (Hall, Kayagil, Menin, Scaglioni, this issue). This is perhaps because, as we have seen, local race-constructs conventionally centre on genealogical origin (*aṣl*) and social status more than mere skin-colour. In this sense, an idea of racism based on colour emerges as the product of both recent local developments and global encounters.

In his work on the persistent forms of hierarchical categorization in South Morocco, Remco Ensel (1999) makes a similar point when he notes that, in the mid-1990s, the *Haratin* invoked the notion of racism to contest entrenched social hierarchy and to claim equality. While framing the *Haratin*'s quest for equality as part an Islamic revivalist discourse, Ensel also interprets the increased "colour consciousness" of the *Haratin* as integral to "a global moral discourse of condemnation" (1999, p. 36).

To what extent, we ask, are current anti-racist movements and debates on "race" able to capture the complexity and multiplicity of the experiences of people associated with a slave past? What histories and vocabularies are mobilized in order to raise public awareness and attain political goals? What impact do these movements have on the societies and people involved?

Drawing on both archival and qualitative material, Kayagil traces the transformative influence of the Africans' Culture and Solidarity Organization (ACSO) on the sense of self and the historical imagination of the black Turks of African origin, a previously invisible component of the Turkish population and historiography (Durugönül 2003). Kayagil argues that the establishment of the ACSO has contributed to opening societal debates on previously under-researched dimensions of African slavery in the Ottoman Empire. It has also affected the ways in which Black Turks perceive themselves and their history. Since the foundation of the ACSO, for example, the term "Afro-Turk" has come to replace the term *Arap* – which was used originally, as an equivalent of the Arabic *sudani*, to indicate "black slaves" (Cuno and Walz 2010, p. 9) – and *zenci* (nigger), used to define themselves.

Both Maimone and Nevola reflect on the emergence of "racism" as a key notion informing their interlocutors' political imaginations and discourses. Tracing the emergence of the term racism (*ʿunṣuriyya*) in Yemen during

the 1950s, Nevola examines the ways in which the "white-skinned" Beni Khammus and the "black-skinned" *Akhdam* resort to different understandings of racism – centred, respectively, on genealogical origin (*asl*) and colour – to denounce their socioeconomic and political marginalization. Nevola notes that a political discourse based on colour enables the *Akhdam* to attain a public voice and to gain unprecedented international visibility. In a society in which individuals and groups are conventionally ranked according to their genealogical origin (*asl*), Nevola argues, the *Akhdam*'s emphasis on colour reveals a crucial shift in the common sense knowledge and self-representation of this group. Situating the *Akhdam* in the wider context of a historical discourse on race, genealogy and colour, Nevola draws attention to the ways the notion of racism based on colour is mobilized to acquire a public voice in the global debate.

Similarly, Maimone notes that Biram Dah Abeid, the leader of IRA Mauritanie, pursues a political strategy that creatively revisits, and builds on, previous antislavery movements with its focus on colour and racism. In Mauritania, anti-slavery organizations like *El Hor* (established in 1978) have long denounced both the persistence of slavery and its continuing impact on the lives of the *Haratin* in terms of socio-political stigmatization and chromatic demonization. Maimone's key argument, however, is that although blackness is not the only trait defining the *Haratin* identity, Dah Abeid's contextual and strategic invocation of colour and racism has enabled him to overcome ethnic divisions and to campaign against the common marginalization of both the *Haratin* and "black-Mauritanians" (Wolof, Soninké, Haalpulaar).

Following the mobilizations of both slave descendants and black marginalized groups in pursuit of political inclusion and civil rights, these papers show that "Race works instead as an argument about the world, as a moral ordering device, even at times as a way of conjuring a utopian vision […]" (Hall 2011, p. 9). They expand the study of the politicization of slavery and its legacies by adding ideas of colour and racialization to the impressive variety of vocabularies and discursive strategies by which slave descendants have tried to overcome the stigma associated with servile origins and to gain political visibility (for example, Hononou and Pelckmans 2011; Pelckmans and Hardung 2015; Gardini 2015).

Intimate and social worlds

Political activism and mobilization are not the only crucial sites where the (racial) legacies of slavery can be scrutinized. In our experiences as researchers on the ground, questions of race and colour often surface in our interlocutors' everyday conversations in subtle and unexpected ways. At times, they

silently shape the everyday practices and vocabularies with which boundaries between social groups are drawn or crossed, spouses are selected or discarded, and the racialized aesthetics of beauty are embodied and performed. In order to explore how the legacies of slavery play out in social and intimate dynamics, Marta Scaglioni takes us to the ʻAbid Ghbonton of Gosbah in South Tunisia. This community of black slave descendants live next to their former masters, the Ghbonton, with whom they were formerly tied by a patronal relation (*wala*). In particular, Scaglioni disentangles the clusters of meanings and practices associated with "blackness" in this region, which emerge, in different guises, in peoples' everyday lives, vocabularies and aesthetics.

Blackness and colour, Scaglioni argues, are central concerns in women's discussions of marriage, beauty and social prestige. In a context where marriage between the ʻAbid Ghbonton and the Ghbonton is socially interdicted, "white" families generally avoid marrying their children to "black" spouses. But, as Scaglioni notes, the widespread idea that "whites do not get married to blacks" conceals a much more nuanced reality. Elopement marriages between ʻAbid Ghbonton and the Ghbonton – although extremely rare – do exist. Moreover, in the past two decades, some ʻAbid Ghbonton men have married white-skinned, low-status women of neighbouring villages, or foreigners, as a means of upward social mobility. These marriages, however, do not wash away the Abid Ghbonton's association with a slave past and their marginal position in the local hierarchies.

Questions of social origin and stigma also come to the fore in Alice Bellagamba's paper on marriage practices among the *jiyaaɓe*, a population of allegedly slavery ancestry, and the *rimɓe*, free people with noble ancestry, in the Kolda region of Senegal. In Senegal, where republicanism has long affirmed the equality of all citizens, and contemporary revivalist movements emphasize the equality of all Muslims, racism is generally confined to the experience of being abroad. In spite of that, Bellagamba's attention to the dynamics of spouse selection reveals a persistent ideology of genealogical purity and social superiority rooted in the history of slavery. Racial metaphors and stereotypes permeate the language of the political and social relations between the *jiyaaɓe* and the *rimɓe*. Although both social groups include both dark-skinned and light-skinned people, blackness, and the manifold meanings accorded to it, is one major marker of the *jiyaaɓe*. A slavery past is overtly evoked, in particular, when marriage is at stake, in order to promote, legitimize and explain specific marital choices and family strategies. Crucially, Bellagamba highlights the reciprocity and mutuality of the racialization by each group of the other. Indeed, marriage between a *jiyaaɓe* and a *rimɓe* is not only abhorred by the *rimɓe*, but also considered unideal for the person "marrying up", especially in the case of men. One of Bellagamba's interlocutors claims that a *jiyaaɓe* girl married to *rimɓe* man

would be disrespected by her future in-laws and a *jiyaaɓe* man married to a *rimɓe* girl would not have any authority over his wife. Significant generational changes, though, emerge in the stories told by Bellagamba. While an ideology of genealogical purity continues to matter in a context where marriage remains a key factor of social reproduction, an increasing number of young people today aspire to a marriage based on love rather than on local norms. Marriage, thus, emerges as a powerful "arena" for both emic and anthropological reflections on local constructions of human difference, and for an intergenerational exploration of the hierarchical interdependence between the *rimɓe* and the *jiyaaɓe*.

Marriage is also evoked also by Paul, a Senegalese physician met by Menin in Rabat, when he claims that, although marriages between Moroccans and Senegalese do exist, "[Moroccans] don't conceive, nor accept, that a Moroccan girl can be together with a black man" (this issue, p. 178). Menin's article exposes, in particular, the deep discontinuity between the imagination, in the minds of Senegalese students and professionals, of Morocco as the continuation of Senegal and the racial prejudice and racism they meet after arriving in the country. Racial prejudices also emerge in the boundaries they encounter in everyday life, boundaries that connote them as "racialized others". Senegalese students, for example, often complain that they are assumed to be animist, or that their religious orthodoxy is called into question. These attitudes have, perhaps, two origins: "[b]lack skin came to be equated with the sin of unbelief" (Marmon 1999, p. ix), and resistance to monotheism and Islamic orthodoxy in North Africa were historically reinforced by slavery (Lovejoy 2011, p. 7). In this sense, religion is another critical site in which the legacies of slavery subtly (re)emerge in the everyday interactions between North Africans and sub-Saharan Africans (see also Schmitz 2006, Timerà 2011, Pouessel 2013). But it is also a vast territory in which to explore the extremely rich African slave culture and the embodied memories that make the past present: a crucial aspect of the topic, which I introduce below.

Present pasts

A rich historical and anthropological scholarship has examined religious practices and ritual performances as sites where the memory of slavery is remembered, re-enacted and performed: from *bori* and *zār* cults of spirit possession (Montana 2011; Hunwick 2003) to *stambeli* trance, music and healing cults in Tunisia (Jankowsky 2010), from Gnawa brotherhoods and music festivals in Morocco, and their commercialization (El Hamel 2008; Kapchan 2007; Langlois 1998), to *voodoo* in West Africa (Brivio 2012) and beyond. Parisa Vaziri's article (this issue) explores the cinematic visualiza-

tion of *Arba'in* ritual in Iranian filmmaker Naser Taqvā'ī's experimental ethnographic documentary *Arba'in* (1970). As Varizi shows, this Shi'a elegiac ritual commemorating the fortieth day of Ash'ura, performed all round the Persian Gulf, "expresses a distinctly black African character" (ivi, p. 190).

In *Arba'in*, the past of African slavery is made present, invoked and embodied in the drumming virtuosity typical of performances in Southern Iran. But while some scholars have examined religious practices as "historical evidence" of African slavery (for example, Goodman-Singh 2002), Vaziri takes the cinematic visualization of the ritual as the point of departure for a theoretical discussion of the limits and possibilities of historicity itself. Following the shifting rhythm of the music and the ritual performance, Varizi's evocative exploration interrogates Taqvā'ī's search for the legacies of African slavery in Iran. For Vaziri, indeed, this ritual bears the history of African slavery only recursively (that is, not in a linear way but through repetition), in other words "through a kind of peeling away, tearing and tarrying, rather than a simple gathering or accumulation of layers of fact" (Intra, p. 192). Moving between silence and sound, between the traces and fragments of a past that is both absent and present, Vaziri proposes a sophisticated reflection on the nebulousness and precarity of Taqvā'ī's inquiry about blackness. She also opens up broad questions on the philosophical problem of historicity, on the conceptual and heuristic limits of the notion of "syncretism" and on questions of the translation and transmission of historical facts. A major element of Vaziri's compelling discussion of Iranian memory – or "dismemory" (Nikro 2012) – of African slavery in *Arba'in* is her insistence on the impossibility of closure. This impossibility, Varizi argues, is not detrimental to historiography but a constitutive element of it.

Presences tangible or haunting, subjects openly debated or kept unspoken, the racial legacies of slavery inhabit and shape the present of North and West Africa and the Middle East, in very many ways. Offering a broad spectrum of case studies, the contributors to this Special Issue demonstrate the complex ways in which the local histories of racialized slavery are embodied, inhabited, performed, experienced, transformed, represented and contested by different social actors. From different angles, they cast further light on how these histories invest the shifting relations between the descendants of masters and slaves, the main focus of attention in post-slavery analysis. But they take the analysis further, in exploring the legacies they have left of the uneven wealth distribution and the privileges, power relations, vocabularies and worldviews that deeply affect both local populations and trans-Saharan relations, and which must now form an integral part of the post-slavery analysis. Perhaps most importantly, the papers reveal that there is not one single answer to the question of what are the racial legacies of slavery in these regions, but that many different situations require careful, differentiated examination and contextualization. Instead of assuming a tautological

and linear connection between past and present, they invite us to look at the legacies of African slavery as an open theoretical and ethnographic question, one which deserves our full attention.

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