"Chant Down Babylon:" Confronting the Question of Racial Anachronism in the Zanj Rebellion of 869-883 C.E.

Nicholas C. McLeod, PhD
mcleodnc@ucmail.uc.edu
Assistant Professor of Africana Studies
Department of Africana Studies
University of Cincinnati

Abstract
In the ninth-century, enslaved Africans in southern Iraq, called the Zanj, revolted against their Arab captors in the Zanj Rebellion of 869 C.E. While scholars maintain that race and racism were never a significant factor in the rebellion or the larger medieval Muslim world, this article employs a structural framework for analyzing race in order to demonstrate how the racialization processes; prevalent racial ideologies in Islamic doctrine and Arabic literature; and racial stratification created a racialized social structure. Also, this essay centralizes the perspectives of the Zanj, and other African descended peoples from this time, to position them as autonomously motivated historical actors who understood the social implications of being Black. Ultimately, this approach to studying the Zanj Rebellion postulates new methodologies for studying the historicity of race by analyzing historical factors in conjunction with the sociological conditions that caused the Zanj to revolt against the Abbasid's racialized social structure.

Siyabonana: The Journal of Africana Studies, Volume 4, Number 1, Winter 2026

Keywords
Zanj, race, enslavement, Islam, revolt

Introduction

In the ninth-century C.E., the Abbasid Caliphate moved its capital city to Iraq and placed it at the center of an Islamic empire stretching from Western Asia to Iberia. At the intersection of commerce between the Far East, India, Europe, and Africa, Baghdad naturally became the center of the Abbasid economy; however, this great civilization thrived, in large part, because of its enslaved African populations. Many of these Africans were enslaved to serve in military and domestic capacities; however, tens of thousands were taken to southern Iraq where they were forced to drain and extract salt from the marshlands to reclaim the land for agriculture. These enslaved Africans, many of whom were captured from the east coast of Africa, were called the Zanj. In response to these severe working conditions, they harbored a burning resentment toward their captors, which resulted in one of the longest lasting enslaved rebellions in human history.

In recent years, the causes of this rebellion have been the topic of debate amongst scholars. While issues of social class and religion have been widely accepted as the primary causes of the rebellion, scholars of race have been admonished for arguing the necessity of a racial analysis being applied to the living conditions of the Black racial minorities in ninth-century Iraq. As result, the theme of anachronism is set forth when race is mentioned as a potential cause of the Zanj Rebellion. Whereas, the theories and analyses of social forces, like class, religion, gender, sexuality, and political economy, are seamlessly applied to the medieval Muslim world, race is immediately labeled as a concept that should only be applied to the nineteenth-century and beyond. Consequently, this article challenges the notion that the early Islamic world was not afflicted by issues of race and racism, and argues that a race specific theorization is necessary when examining the Zanj Rebellion.

This article begins with an overview of the rebellion, and is followed by a discussion of how scholars have analyzed the Zanj and argued for the exclusion of a racial analysis. Next, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's structural theory of racism is deployed to examine the conditions of the racialized social structure that gave way to the rebellion by assessing the racialization processes; racial stratification; prevalent racial

ideologies; and the racial consciousness of Blacks living in the early centuries of Islam. Lastly, this essay includes translated Arabic literature and poetry written by African descended peoples living during this time. Overall, an Africana epistemological framework is utilized to position the Zanj, not as mere objects nor as Black faces in the background; but, as autonomously motivated historical actors who were conscious of the social implications of their Blackness. Ultimately, this article postulates a new method for investigating Africana life and the historicity of racial conflict by unburdening ourselves of European periodizations of history, and analyzing the specific socio-historical conditions that prompted the Zanj to revolt against their Arab captors.

The Revolt of the Zanj

Since the seventh-century the Zanj were trafficked from the east coast of Africa to the malaria-infested swamps in southern Iraq. Here, they worked in gangs of 500 to 5,000 men; with diets consisting of a few handfuls of flour, semolina, and dates; and they lived in dirty dwellings, haphazardly made of reeds and palm leaves. The Zanj were forced to drain and extract salt from the southern marshlands in land reclamation projects, and, in some rare cases, they labored on cotton and sugar cane plantations. In response to these severe working conditions, the Zanj harbored a burning resentment toward their captors, and were only in need of shrewd leadership to call them to revolt.

The great Zanj Rebellion of 869 C.E. was initiated by a free Arab named Ali ibn Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahim, who was eloquent and a natural poet.[1] Little is known of his life prior to the rebellion; however, scholars agree that he was a man in search of followers for his own gain. After failing to stir up people against the Caliphate’s forces in Bahrayn, Ali journeyed to Baghdad with his most capable general, a Black freeman, Sulayman ibn Jami, to recruit enslaved Africans for rebellion. There, he and Sulayman appealed to an enslaved African overseer, named Rayham b. Salih al-Mahrib, to induce as many enslaved people as he could to join the rebellion, and, in return, Ali promised “to extend various benefits” to Rayhan and make him their commander.[2] Rayhan agreed to Ali’s request, and on the morning of Saturday, September 9, 869 C.E., he called a group of fifty enslaved Africans to rebellion in southern Iraq. Ali and his companions joined this collective and continued to another work site, this time liberating and recruiting five-hundred

enslaved persons to their cause.[3] The Zanj rebel army carried on, growing in this fashion for the rebellion's initial days, after which Ali made his initial address to the liberated rebel army. In his address, he noted that he had observed the Zanj's miserable conditions and promised them wealth, beautiful homes, and enslaved persons of their own. Although the Zanj were concerned with the immediate objective of escaping enslavement, they were pleased with Ali's oath to share in each battle and assume the same risks as them.

By the end of the rebellion's first year, it is said that fifteen thousand enslaved persons joined the Zanj rebel army.[4] Amongst the rebel army were Africans from the Zanj from East Africa, various free and enslaved African descended peoples in the area, as well as Arabs from the clans of Bahila; Hamdan; Iyad; 'Ijl; Qays; 'Abdulqays; and the numerous clans of Tamim.[5] Despite their limited resources and the challenge of open war against the Abbasid Caliphate, the Zanj were fearless in battle. The ferocity and resolve with which the rebel army fought was embodied in an account of a Zanj rebel being seen charging into battle carrying only a plate as a weapon.[6] While weapons and supplies were limited initially, with each victory, the Zanj gained swords; spears; daggers; shields; horses; boats; and other provisions. More importantly, the Zanj rebel army was joined by hundreds of formerly enslaved African men and women.

Aside from those liberated in battle, enslaved Africans from the surrounding villages and towns fled in mass from their captor's homes to join the Zanj's ranks. Ninth-century historian, al-Ṭabarī, who lived in Baghdad during the rebellion, notes an instance where three hundred Zanj fled to join the rebel army seeking protection, which was graciously granted.[7] Additionally, Theodor Nöldeke's account of the rebellion speaks of an instance in which a division of three hundred enslaved African soldiers of the Caliphal army, whom upon defeat, joined the Zanj rebel army.[8] This act of joining the Zanj rebel army, whom they had likely never met nor had any history with, was not only unexpected for the Caliphal command; but, should also be viewed as a demonstration of racial consciousness by these enslaved African soldiers. Moreover, these stories of deserters and runaways joining the rebellion reflect not only the notoriety of the rebellion, but also the agency and solidarity inspired by the Zanj's cause amongst enslaved African populations in the region.

Within two years the Zanj rebels had developed into a true army composed of three corps: a navy, an infantry, and a cavalry. All three were commanded by Black and Arab generals and several prominent Zanj commanders, each with their

own horsemen and colored flags.[9] In addition to Ali ibn Muhammad, Sulayman b. Jami, and Rayham b. Salih al-Mahrib, the Zanj Rebel army featured several commanders, including Abu Salih Mufarraj al-Nubi and Salim al-Zaghawi, both of Sudanese origin, and Rashid al-Qarmati. Also, from the East African coast were Sandal al-Zinji and Darmawayh al-Zanji who are described as the most courageous and heroic of the Zanj.[10] Under this leadership, the Zanj rebel army conquered the city of Basra on September 7, 871 C.E., which allowed the Zanj to seize control of trade routes along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and disrupt Baghdad's access to merchant ships from the Persian Gulf for nearly a decade. At the height of the rebellion, in 879 C.E., the Zanj were seemingly unconquerable as they had succeeded in capturing the city of Wasit, and began to expand their territory northward, eventually coming within seventy miles of Baghdad.

In 880 C.E., the Abbasid Caliphate was freed of other military preoccupations throughout the empire and able to focus its undivided attention on the Zanj rebel army. Led by the Caliph's brother, al-Muwaffaq, the Caliphal army and its large river fleet of ships were able to methodically push the Zanj rebels back south. Eventually al-Muwaffaq was able to seize the entire Zanj territory and establish a blockade around the Zanj capital city, al-Mukhtara. The Zanj resisted his attacks for three years; however, on August 5, 883 C.E., al-Muwaffaq led 50,000 men into battle to take the Zanj capital city. After six days, al-Mukhtara was taken; Ali ibn Muhammad was executed; and the remaining Zanj surrendered. After a three-year siege, the Zanj rebel army was finally defeated; however, during this time, the rebels seized their freedom and presented a genuine threat to the Abbasids for fourteen years.

Scholars and the Zanj

Scholarly investigations of the Zanj Rebellion have focused on several questions including: religious influences on the revolt; the composition of the Zanj rebel army; or the proper way to characterize the revolt. More recently, Philip Grant's work has focused on silk and the agency of materials in the revolt.[11] Still, as scholars find new vantages from which to examine the rebellion, its origins have remained the subject of debate amongst scholars for centuries. The earliest account of the rebellion comes from al-Ṭabarī's ninth-century text, *History of Prophets and Kings,* which portrays the revolt as comprised of majority African participants and under the leadership of Ali

B. Muhammad. In the first modern account of the rebellion, Theodor Nöldeke confirms not only that the Zanj were, indeed, enslaved Africans; but, the existence of racial ideologies and the notions of Arab supremacy were also present when he describes the great contempt with which "genuine Arabs" regarded Blacks.[12] Despite al-Ṭabarī's first-hand account of the rebellion with direct quotes from key figures, and Nöldeke's acknowledgement of the existence of anti-Blackness in Abbasid society, modern scholars have used a number of antiquated methods of analysis to remove race from any analysis of the rebellion in order to diminish the contributions of the Zanj and other Black rebels.

Most notably, scholars like M.A. Shaban maintain that the involvement of Arabs from the Persian gulf and Syria; Jewish supporters of the revolt; and the backing of local merchants who's non-Black wealth combined with the Black manpower of the Zanj are what made the rebellion possible.[13] Similarly, Ghada Hashem Talhami argues that the Zanj were not the primary actors in the rebellion and concludes that the rebellion should not be portrayed as a "slave rebellion in the strict sense of the word," since enslaved and free Africans were among many oppressed groups (i.e. Arab Bedouins, Bahranis, and lower-class artisans) who participated in the rebellion.[14] While it is difficult to determine the exact numbers of Zanj troops, had there not been a substantial or overwhelming majority of non-Black participants, then surely the revolt would not have been called a revolt of the Zanj. Additionally, Talhami overlooks the fact that Ali appealed specifically to the enslaved African Zanj prior to the rebellion, as opposed to the Arab Bedouins, Bahranis, and lower-class artisans who later joined the exploits commenced by the Zanj rebel army.

Talhami is also concerned with examining the specific geographic and ethnic origins of the Zanj and suggests that the Black populations in the rebellion consisted of Ethiopians, Nubians, Fezzanis, as well as people from Meroe and al-Sudan. Ironically, this approach further indicates the significance of race by acknowledging that these various ethnic groups were classified by Abbasid society as a collective group called the Zanj. Even if there were several different ethnic groups amongst the African populations within the rebel army, scholars still note that there were large populations of Blacks who had been living in Iraq for generations prior to the rebellion. For example, Jere L. Bacharach's work on enslaved people in the military in the medieval Middle East discusses a revolt of enslaved African Zanj that took place in Basra as early as 695 C.E., and also notes the appearance of 4,000 enslaved Zanj in the military in Mosul in 751 C.E.[15] Both examples demonstrate a sustained

presence of enslaved populations called "Zanj" that date back centuries before the great Zanj Rebellion of 869 C.E.

Today, scholars agree that "Zanj" does not refer to a specific African ethnic group; however, Alexander Popovic reminds readers that "we must not forget that there are Zanj and Zanj, that some had been settled (and Islamized ?) for a century or more, and some had just arrived... if there are no Zanj who are not Black, there are many Blacks who are not Zanj."[16] Here, Popovic reminds readers that in the ninth-century, the term became a "free floating" classificatory label for African descended people, regardless of their region of origin. Where the Zanj came from in Africa is less significant than the term's use to describe and categorize African people into a Black racialized social group in Abbasid society. Of more concern is that the rebellion itself featured should be viewed as a Pan-African alliance with the participation of Ethiopians, Sudanese, Nubians, and possibly West and Central Africans, along with the so-called "Zanj."

Not only did the term "Zanj" describe Blacks who occupied the lowest status in Abbasid society, it also commonly carried anti-Black stereotypes of inferiority, barbarity, and in Persian, the term "Zangi" described a fool or a simpleton.[17] Popovic notes that Arab scholars stereotyped the Zanj as: stupid, evil, ugly, ignorant to Arabic, and the cheapest enslaved persons in the market.[18] However, even after acknowledging that in that time, the Zanj were viewed as inferior and even sub-human, Popovic still cautions that race and racism, as understood in modern times, was never a significant factor in the medieval Muslim world. Similarly, Gwen Campbell argues that the Zanj rebels could not have developed or shared a Black racial "consciousness" as part of their motivations to revolt.[19] For Campbell, the Zanj, a marginalized racialized social group that was categorized by an Arab socially dominant racial group, were somehow incapable of developing a sense of shared experiences and collective identity. Such a farcical argument can only be the result of either a misunderstanding of how race functions as an instrument of social organizing; a reluctance of scholars to discuss manifestations of racism outside of the West; or a deliberate attempt to absolve the Islamicate of being impacted by race.

The Question of Racial Anachronism

Despite Blackness being an indicator of social stratification, and the African continent increasingly being associated with barbarism, sin, and enslavement by the

ninth-century; contemporary studies of the rebellion continue to regard race as an anachronistic European phenomenon that had no impact on, or was never an important factor in, the medieval Muslim world. Thus, race should not be inserted into historical studies of the Islamicate.[20] This reluctance amongst scholars to discuss race is typically justified with antiquated methods of analysis that maintain traditional thinking about social conditions within the Islamicate. The result is that traditional thinkers become resistant to change, particularly when new ways of understanding or perspectives that contradict traditional thought begin to emerge.[21] Such is the case with scholars of the Islamicate who are less concerned with unearthing new understandings of the histories of the Abbasid era, and more with absolving the Islamicate of racism and unscrupulous acts in an effort to preserve its integrity.

Among these thinkers is Abdul Sheriff, who is unable to comprehend the significance of studying of the Zanj Rebellion through the prism of race. Sheriff believes that focusing on the social conditions and perspectives of the Zanj is tantamount to "writing off" the large number of non-Africans (i.e. Persians and Arabs among the masses who supported it, as well as its leadership) from the history of the revolt.[22] For many scholars, anything that centers and highlights the value of the perspectives and experiences of African people is equivalent to marginalizing other groups. Ironically, this very act of marginalizing the African presence and contributions within society is common practice in the histories of the Islamicate. Since the African participation in the rebellion cannot be disputed, we should consider why scholars, like Shariff and Talhami, are so intent on labeling the Zanj Rebellion as a colorblind "social revolt." Even if the initial rebels were comprised of both enslaved and formerly enslaved populations, does this preclude the existence of racial oppression in Abbasid society? Can the rebellion not be the result of both the racialized social structure's impact on the Zanj, as well as social discontent from non-Africans? Moreover, why is there such an effort to remove or divert the examinations of the rebellion and the Islamicate from the topic of race?

Haroon Bashir brings further clarity to these questions by arguing that to apply racial analyses to the Muslim world "projects the sins and iniquities of European colonialism onto the Islamicate."[23] Bashir believes that to examine the extensive history of racism within the Arab Islamic world is an attempt to declare that Muslim racism was worse than western racism. Bashir and M.A. Shaban view the connections made between enslavement and the racial categorization of

Blackness as problematic and dismiss racial analysis as a "reflection of nineteenth-century racial theories." Subsequently, Bashir suggests the proper way to situate historical Blackness within the Islamicate is to shift away from the "Eurocentric historical imaginary." Methodologically, this entails detaching research from the "racial logics of Europe" that seek to use the history of the Islamicate as a tool to narrate and reaffirm stories about the exceptionality of the West.[24] These racial logics, according to Bashir, have no use in understanding the Islamicate prior to the advent of the colonial world order because "the actualization of racism can only be found in the West."[25] Moreover, the history of Blackness in the Muslim world, according to Bashir, can be properly recovered only if it is highlighting those parts of history that do not cast a negative light on the Islamicate.

Typically, when scholars detach the "racial logics of Europe" from their research concerning the Islamicate, it is accompanied by over-simplified strawman arguments or frail excuses that aim to dismiss, or deflect, scholarly inquiry away from Africana experiences within the medieval Islamic world. Paradoxically, as scholars suggest detaching from the racial logics of Europe, their arguments and excuses made to suppress racial analyses in the medieval Islamic world often parallel the same arguments and excuses used to dismiss and deflect away from issues of race in contemporary western society. A common excuse suggests that when scholars assess the connections between race, enslavement, and Islam, it is conspicuously overlooked that the majority of enslaved people within the Islamicate were not African. This deflection attempts to shift attention to the racial diversity of Arab-Islamic enslavement to evade comparisons to its Trans-Atlantic counterpart, and to suggest that an equal opportunity system of enslavement precludes the existence of racism. This is due to a fear that highlighting the shared "sins and iniquities" of Trans-Atlantic and Arab-Islamic enslavement would lead to a differentiation of the "good empires" of Europe from the "bad empire of Islam."[26] Endeavors to halt comparative dialogues on the crimes against humanity of the Islamicate, or the European nations, only further obscures the exploration of this understudied region of the African world.

Another strawman argument suggests that focus should be placed on the complex nature of color and identity, specifically in a way that does not suggest that the Islamicate was anti-Black. For Peter Webb, to construct Arabs and Africans as clearly demarcated and distinct homogeneous blocs overlooks how these identities were constantly redefined throughout history.[27] Although Arab and African racial

identities were indeed fluid, this does not preclude them from being clearly demarcated and distinct homogeneous blocs. African descended authors from the ninth-century, like the Crows of the Arabs, confirm these conditions by acknowledging both the rigidity and fluidity of Afro-Arabian identity. Instead of rejecting a single perspective like Webb, this essay embraces the complexities of racial identity construction and looks not only to the dominant Arab racialized social group, but also to the perceptions and experiences of the subordinated Black racialized social group to analyze the social construction of race in Abbasid society.

Similarly, Bashir argues that to juxtapose "Arab" and "Black" racial dynamics in the same way as "white/Black" dynamics does not correspond to historical realities.[28] It is true that the dynamics of racialized societies are not dictated merely by color or Arab/Black dynamics, but the historical realities of racialized societies are shaped by social dynamics created between dominant and subordinate racialized social groups. Moreover, it is neither a white/Black, nor an Arab/Black, dynamic that should be analyzed within the Islamicate; but, rather an Arab; Persian; Indian; East Asian; Turkish; European; and African dynamic, as each of these racialized social groups contributed to the functioning of the Abbasid racialized social structure.

These deflections disregard the perspectives of the African descended individuals under study and seek to absolve the Islamicate of any sort of racism or crimes against humanity that their European counterparts may have also been guilty of. The Africana epistemological approach used in this study centers the perspectives and experiences of African descended people and is inherently detached from Eurocentric logic and imaginary frameworks. Furthermore, to suggest that criticisms of the racism in the Islamicate is Eurocentric or grounded in Orientalism assumes that African peoples are incapable of independently assessing their own socio-historical experiences. As stated above, many of these arguments are premised on the same frail logics of Europe that they argue to be separated from; however, in the process, scholars tend to demonstrate their own impoverished understandings of how race functions in a given society.

Scholars of the Islamicate routinely characterize racism as prejudice, or a mental incapacity, that causes individuals to discriminate against or feel they are superior to another person because of the color of their skin.[29] This rudimentary view examines racism as a mere psychological or ideological phenomena, rather than as manifestation of a racialized social system with specific mechanisms, practices,

objectives, and social relations that produce racial inequality at all levels. Thus, by applying a structural approach to analyzing race to examine historically-specific conditions of racialized societies, the process through which race is socially constructed, articulated, and contested is revealed. In other words, instead of conceiving of race as a universal and uniformly orchestrated phenomenon that is timeless and unchanging, scholars must study the conditions of "historically-specific racisms."[30] Such is the nature of this study, as it examines the racialization of the social structure of the ninth-century Islamic world to highlight the race specific conditions that contributed to triggering the Zanj Rebellion.

Racialized social structures are initiated by a process of racialization where the dominant social group constructs a society by placing subordinate social groups into racial categories or races with distinct value and meaning.[31] This racialization process is always hierarchal; and the race ascribed with the superior position (i.e. the Arab) enjoys social, political, economic, and psychological advantages over groups assigned to inferior positions.[32] Subsequently, racial ideologies are used to assign meaning and value to racial groups, and are disseminated to rationalize social, political, and economic interactions among the races. These racial ideologies provide the dominant racial group with a self-assured feeling of being naturally superior, while also justifying and promoting the varying social exclusion of other subordinate racial groups.[33] Race then becomes a point of contestation between racialized groups at all levels of society as the social implications of being Black, white, Arab, or Persian reflect social stratification between the races. These contestations manifest in passive and subtle forms, or in more active and overt forms, such as enslaved revolts. Thus, when one considers the anti-Black racial ideologies that manifested in Arabic and Islamic literature, along with the race consciousness that developed and displayed in the poetry of the Blacks living during the Abbasid era, the racial condition surrounding the Zanj Rebellion cannot be overlooked.

Racialization and Stratification in Abbasid Society

Originally, the term “Arab” was used to reference the pale skinned inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula who spoke Arabic and practiced the Muslim religious tradition.[34] By the nineth-century, Baghdad, the Abbasid capital, became the center of knowledge and world trade. It also became a cosmopolitan society, as the people and cultures of China, India, North and Eastern Africa, and Europe began to

converge in the region. In response to the influx of non-Arabs into Islamic society in the ninth-century, the socially dominant "pure" Arabs observed that their social and cultural primacy began to diminish. The first contributing factor to this was the population's general background of universal biological miscegenation stimulated by polygamy. It was not uncommon for many of the Abbasid Caliphs to be born of enslaved mothers of Turkish or Slavic descent; however, ancestry was traced through the father's line which remained a "pure Arab" descent.[35] Consequently, as the "pure Arab" (i.e., being Muslim and speaking Arabic) became a dated claim to social superiority, the Arabs turned to the most obvious markers of difference: race. Accordingly, skin color and phenotypical attributes were used to categorize social groups and assign meaning and value to each racialized group within society. Through this process of racialization, the Arabs claimed racial and social superiority, ascribing to all non-Arabs inferior status that resulted in economic, social, political, and military disadvantages.

In his text, *Race and Color in Islam*, Bernard Lewis suggests that in early Arabic literature, human skin colors are frequently described as red, black, white, yellow, green, and various shades of brown.[36] The term "white" came to describe the Arabs, Persians, Greeks, Turks, Slavs, and all peoples of Europe and Asia. The northern people of Europe were designated as being dead white, pale blue, and shades of red. "Red" was a term used with a connotation of inferiority to describe Persians, Europeans, and other peoples of the Mediterranean who were lighter than the Arabs. Finally, the term "Black" was designated for the natives and inhabitants of Africa south of the Sahara, and was increasingly identified with enslaved populations.[37] To solidify the order of the racial structure the socially dominant Arabs maintained that the "Arabs had generosity and courage; Persians, statecraft and civility; Greeks were philosophers and artists; Indians, magicians and conjurers; while the dexterous Chinese were makers of furniture and gadgets."[38] Following these racial groups were the white Turks and Slavs of Europe and the Black inhabitants of Africa, who constituted the majority of the enslaved population and inhabited the lowest levels of the racialized social structure.

Although scholars have used the enslavement of whites to suggest that the Arab-Muslim system of enslavement was devoid of racism, a closer examination of both the white and Black enslavement experience reveals the presence of racial stratification within the enslaved system itself. This is demonstrated in the favored treatment of enslaved whites, particularly in the transformation of the terms *Mamluk*

(owned) and *abd* (slave). Both terms were originally used to reference any enslaved person; however, the terms eventually underwent a semantic transformation that left enslaved whites to be referred to as *Mamluks* and Blacks as *abd*. For a Black person in the Islamicate, the term *abd* was used in reference to them regardless of free or enslaved status. Thus, the social status of being enslaved or operating in a servile capacity became bound to Blackness.

The disparities in white and Black enslaved populations are likely due to the favorable treatment regarding the assignment of labor tasks based on race within the Abbasid enslaved system. Enslaved whites were rarely used for hard menial labor, as they were rare and more expensive in comparison to their Black counterpart. This can be seen in three ways. First, the expendability of enslaved Blacks is exhibited in the Caliphal armies, which were organized into units on the basis of racial identities. Traditionally, enslaved whites were trained for more prestigious posts in the cavalry, while the expendable Blacks were restricted to serving as infantry foot soldiers and performing menial chores.[39] It should also be noted that Arab historians rarely viewed the happenings of enslaved African soldiers as largely significant, which further reflects the view of their service as expendable and inferior.

Second, in ninth-century Baghdad, a white "good looking" enslaved girl could be bought for 1,000 dinars, while a Black enslaved girl would be sold for 25-30 dinars.[40] Here, white enslaved girls were prized, and many of the Arabs took them as concubines to bear their children. Enslaved whites also found increased value in their potential to be used to obtain substantial ransoms as a result of their capture in religious wars. This was likely possible because Europe, unlike Africa, had well organized institutions, such as *El Orden de la Merced* (The Order of Mercy), which specialized in raising money to ransom enslaved Christians.[41] Accordingly, white *mamluks* were viewed as investments to protect, and were often credited with possessing more useful skills and enhanced human qualities that naturally elevated them in the enslaved racial hierarchy. On the other hand, enslaved Africans were usually seen as lacking in such qualities and deemed fit only for the least gratifying and menial tasks. The expendability of enslaved Blacks can be attributed to their minimal value and the nearly endless supply of enslaved Blacks from pagan Africa.

Racial stratification also impacted enslaved Blacks upon manumission as freed Blacks were still referred to as *abid* (slaves) and continued to occupy the lowest positions in society. Although scholars have used the existence of Black scholars, military generals, and musicians in Abbasid society to suggest the absence of racism,

these token examples were mere exceptions as the majority of Blacks were confined to enslaved status, barred, in many cases, from marrying outside of their race, and mostly confined to lowly occupations such as butchers and bath attendants. Consequently, Blacks in the Abbasid era remained permanently bound to their identities as a servile class with very little prospects of transcending the lowest positions in society. Reinforcing this racialized stratification were the racial ideologies that prescribed race relations and the perceptions of Blacks.

Racial Ideas and the "Zanj"

The presence of racialization and the racial ideologies used to justify the racial stratification demonstrates that the Islamicate was never an idyllic haven of racial innocence. Racial ideologies constitute an agreed upon set of stereotypical conditions and beliefs that justify and maintain a racial group's position on the racialized social ladder. In the case of ninth-century Abbasid society, racial ideologies concerning African descended peoples were derived from two sources. The first came from Arab travelers and scholars who recorded their own characterizations of the Zanj and their way of life. Arab historian, al-Masʿūdī, was one of the most celebrated scholars in the medieval Muslim world and also wrote extensively on the Zanj in his text, *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*.

al-Masʿūdī has much to say on the "Country of the Zanj," as well as the Zanj themselves. He grounds his own characterizations of African peoples in the accounts of the Greek physician, Galen, who attributed ten peculiar properties to Blacks including: kinky hair; sparse eyebrows; expanded nostrils; thick lips; sharp teeth; stench of the skin; black complexion; the length of the feet and hands; the development of the genitals and great exuberance.[42] Additionally, al-Masʿūdī claims that the particular exuberance and the gay temperament of the Zanj was due to the weakness of the intelligence they possessed. According to the Arab cosmographer, Kazouini, Masudi's use of the term "exuberance" was intended to mean that one never sees a worried Zanj since they abandon themselves to gaiety and are incapable of sorrow. Furthermore, Kazouini, suggests that: "Doctors say this is because of the equilibrium of the blood from the heart or, according to others, because the star Soheil (Canope) rises over their head every night and this star has the power to give rise to gaiety…"[43] Having been born in ninth-century Baghdad, al-Masʿūdī's characteristics reflect not only racial thinking concerning the Zanj during the century

of the rebellion, but also the historical characterizations of the African peoples dating back to the second-century in Ancient Greece.

Similar accounts of Arab scholars and travelers described the Zanj as unintelligent; cheerful for no reason; thieves; having no memory; and the cheapest enslaved persons in the market. Another prevalent attitude toward the Zanj perceived of them as "the worst of creatures," and suggested their physique was "ruined by the heart of their homeland, which has caused them to be burned in the womb."[44] These claims not only dehumanize African descended peoples, but also demonstrate the use of pseudoscience to articulate anti-Black racial stereotypes and ideologies at this time. Consequently, the racial thinking of the time also contributed to a particular loathing of the Zanj with some Arabs, like Taous al-Yemani, refusing to eat the meat of any animal that had been killed by a Zanj, which he referred to as "a hideous slave.."[45]

The second source of racial ideologies in Abbasid society came from Islam, the major religion and social organizing principle of the age. Prior to Islam, the institution of enslavement had been in existence in Arabia for centuries; however, while Islam is often portrayed as a religion of peace and compassion, enslavement is not condemned in the Quran, Hadith, nor Islamic law. Instead, the religion provided Abbasid society with a structure of stipulations aimed at regulating and mitigating possible abuse.[46] As a result, enslaved traders were provided a moral code and a set of legal principles that regulated interactions with potential enslaved populations. The primary justification for enslavement in Islam stems from non-belief, otherwise known as *kufr*. The religion sanctioned enslavement as long as it occurred in the space between the Dar al-Islam (the House of Islam) and the Dar al-Kufr (the Land of Dis-belief), meaning that it occurred between the faithful people of Islam and the pagans who were said to still be in ignorance and darkness.[47] As a result, Africa came to be viewed as a stronghold of non-belief and a nearly unlimited source of enslaved populations as early as the seventh-century.

In a display of Arab supremacy, Arab Muslims, like the Greeks and the Romans before them, believed themselves to be the sole members of the civilized world while viewing non-Muslims as infidels, barbarians, pagans, and a source of enslaved persons to be imported into the Islamic world and molded in Islamic ways.[48] Sharia law sanctioned the enslavement of all non-believing peoples; however, this principle was not applied to non-believing Arabs. In the seventh-century, the second Caliph Umar is reported to have declared: "No ownership of an Arab is

permitted."[49] By prohibiting the enslavement of both non-believing and Muslim Arabs, not only was Umar's declaration directly contradicting Islam, but it was also a reinforcement of Arab racial superiority. Furthermore, as Islam spread throughout Africa, many communities began to convert on their own accord to establish trade relations and to avoid enslavement. While Muslim law unequivocally forbids the enslavement of free Muslims of any race, this law was not always strictly enforced to protect African Muslims from Arab enslaved traders.[50] Thus, for those in Africa whose lands and religious status were unknown, they were often assumed to be non-believers and enslaved without investigation, which suggests that Blackness superseded religious belief in the recruitment of enslaved populations.

Another justification for enslaving Africans suggested that Blacks were legitimate candidates for enslavement by virtue of their skin color. This association of Blackness with servitude was partially rooted in the biblical Genesis story, the Curse of Ham. This biblical curse of servitude came into Islam by way of Jewish and Christian converts, and is believed to have fallen solely upon Africans, who were allegedly the descendants of Noah's son Ham. A seventh-century Jewish convert to Islam, named Kab al-Ahbar, spoke of the cursed descendants of Ham stating that "Among them are Nubians [nuba], the Negroes [zanj], the Barbars [brbr]… and all the black: they are the children of Ham." Additionally, Wahb ibn Munabbih, a celebrated eighth-century authority on the traditions of ahl al-Kitāb (people of the book), suggested that God "changed [Ham's] color and the color of his descendants in response to his father's curse,' and that Ham's descendants are Kush, Canaan… the various races of blacks [sudan]: Nubians, Zanj, Qaran, Zaghawa, Ethiopians, Copts and Barbar."[51]

The adoption of the Curse of Ham by Jewish converts and Islamic scholars coincided with a number of Hadith (traditions of the Prophet) beginning to associate Blackness with hell, evil, and impiety whereas whiteness was associated with heaven, purity, and piety. An eighth-century tradition states in detail that the Prophet was approached by an Ethiopian man who recognized that they (Blacks) were inferior to the Arabs "in color, appearance and [possession of] prophecy," and asked whether in spite of all of this, if he would be able to join the Prophet in heaven if he believed in him and followed his example.[52] To this, the Prophet assured the man that Blacks would appear white in paradise from within a distance of one thousand years.[53] Another eighth-century tradition of the Prophet states that "beginning with the creation of Adam the colours white and black were destined by God for the people

of Paradise and Hell, respectively." In both traditions Blacks are associated with ungodliness, inferiority, and condemned to hell simply because of their skin color.

Subsequently, these racial ideologies were used to condemn Blacks to enslavement, servile status, and second class citizenship. Arabic scholarship and Islamic doctrine were used to promote racial ideologies, and, ultimately, gave credibility to 'Abduh Badawī's suggestion that "the Arabs despised the black color as much as they loved the white color; they described everything that they admired, material or moral, as white."[54] Consequently, these racial ideologies and the resulting racialized oppression in Abbasid society demonstrate a clear racial consciousness amongst Arab, and even non-Arab Muslim, populations at the time. These racial ideologies were accepted and spread not only by Arabs, but all racialized groups within the Islamicate, governing social interaction between the races. Subsequently, these prevalent racial ideologies were responsible for nurturing a racial consciousness amongst African descended people as well.

Ninth-Century Black Consciousness

One's awareness of differences in social status compared to other groups is heightened by an awareness of differences of skin color and race. Historically, when there are distinct racial boundaries within a society, there is a heightened tendency toward strife between those races. In a society where racial prejudice exists, the significance of race to one's identity is imperative, as each individual carries with themselves the constant reminder of the benefits and limitations, advantages and disadvantages, and the increased and diminished opportunities in society. Furthermore, any racial group that is relegated to subordinate status in a society will be aware of the past and present oppression and recall, with bitterness, the resulting social debasement conferred upon its race. These resulting hostilities are cultivated by racial domination and have the unintended consequence of strengthening racial consciousness and, ultimately, fostering resistance.

This race consciousness is best illustrated in the racial identities espoused in Afro-Arabic literature that directly reflects the social structures of the early Islamic world. The profiles and accounts of Blacks during this time illustrate not only racial consciousness and the racial thinking of the age, but also how various racial identities and stereotypes were either acquiesced to, or contested by, Blacks at this time. Some of the most acute depictions of the meanings and implications of Blackness in early

Islamic societies are seen in the poetry of the "Crows of the Arabs," a group of early Arabic poets of African, or partly African, descent. In their poetry, themes of servitude and Blackness emerge in their articulations of identity, which indicate that their Blackness marked them as socially inferior, and fostered a dimension of their existence that constantly afflicted them.

The most famous of the "Crows of the Arabs," and a major figure in Arabic literature in general, was the poet and warrior 'Antara. Living during the pre-Islamic period, his father was an Arab and his mother an enslaved Ethiopian woman. Since 'Antara's mother was enslaved and he was not recognized by his father until later in his life, enslaved status was transferred to him at birth. In a famous passage 'Antara, indicates explicitly that his African ancestry and dark skin mark him as socially inferior: "Enemies revile me for the blackness of my skin, But the whiteness of my character effaces the blackness."[55] Here, Antara suggests that the racial hostility that he experienced because of his black skin color was mitigated by the whiteness or the purity of his character. This passage also demonstrates the prominence of racial ideologies stemming from Islam that equate whiteness to purity and positivity and Blackness with evil and negativity.

Writing in the seventh-century was an enslaved poet of African descent named Suhaym, who reveals the social inferiority associated with his Blackness in a passage stating: "These girls excite other men and turn away from my shock of hair, despising me as I can clearly see. If I were pink of color, these women would love me, but my Lord has shamed me with blackness."[56] Possibly the most talented of these Black poets was the eighth-century poet, Nusayb, whose accounts demonstrate a keen awareness of his Blackness. Recalling an occasion where he was insulted for his Blackness, Nusayb responded: "If I am jet-black, musk too is very dark – and there is no medicine for the blackness of my skin."[57] This account displays Nusayb's awareness of the Blackness of his skin, and the social disadvantages that he would encounter for the rest of his life for it. Additionally, stating that "there is no medicine" for his Blackness demonstrates the prominence of racial ideologies in society, and his own knowledge of the permanence of the social disadvantages of being Black.

Another account follows one of the most famous early eighth-century musicians, Sa'id ibn Misjah. This story features Sa'id ibn Misjah, a free Black man, being reluctantly invited to accompany a group of young Arab men to a singing-girl's home for lunch. Upon lunch being served, Sa'id ibn Misjah voluntarily withdrew himself saying: "I am a black man, some of you may find me offensive. I

shall therefore sit and eat apart."[58] Though embarrassed, the young men arranged for Sa'id ibn Misjah to eat separately. When the enslaved singing girls appeared to the group and Sa'id ibn Misjah praised their performance, the singers and owners were taken aback by a "black man" who dared to praise the girls, and he was warned to mind his manners. Only after revealing his identity to the group, did they all begin to vie for the company of this famous Black musician. This account illustrates that regardless of being a free man, the racialized social structure dictated the parameters of social interaction, which determined that Sa'id ibn Misjah was to be treated as a second-class citizen because of his Blackness.

In the ninth-century, a defense against the anti-Black racial ideologies in Abbasid society was set forth by one of the most prolific Arabic scholars in history, 'Uthman Amr Ibn Bahr al-Jāḥiẓ (776-869 C.E.). al-Jāḥiẓ was a Black Muslim scholar living in Abbasid society in the years leading up to the Zanj Rebellion, and is credited with authoring over two hundred publications spanning Theology, Anthropology, Zoology, and Philosophy. In a text entitled *Fakhr al-Sūdān 'alā-l-Bīḍān ("The Boasting of the Blacks Over the Whites")*, al-Jāḥiẓ ridiculed the racialization of Abbasid society and challenged the prevalent racial prejudices in the Islamic world. Arguing against common anti-Black stereotypes of the time, he insisted that Blackness is beautiful in nature and amongst humans: "No color is more firmly established in value or more deeply rooted in goodness than black."[59] He also disputed the accounts of Arab scholars and travelers by listing several valiant virtues of Blacks including their honesty, generosity, piety, and even presents the Negus of Abyssinia as the first ruler to convert to Islam. In an extensive discussion of pre-modern world histories and the origins of cultures, al-Jāḥiẓ divides human populations into categories of whites and non-whites, and insists that anyone who is non-white belongs to a culturally superior Black majority:

> The number of Blacks is greater than the number of Whites, because most of those who are counted as Whites are comprised of people from Persia, the mountains, Khurasan, Rome, Slavia, France and Iberia, and anything apart from them is insignificant. But among the Blacks are counted the Negroes, the Ethiopians, the Fezzan, the Berbers, the Copts, the Nubians, the Zaghawa, the Moors, the people of Sind, the Hindus, the Qamar, the Dabila, the Chinese, and those beyond them … The Arabs come from us — not from the Whites…[60]

al-Jāḥiẓ also insists on the equality of all humans arguing that Blackness and whiteness both originated before the creation of nations and that originally it had no association with anything dirty, ugly, or any sort of disadvantage. Evoking the Prophet Muhammad, he contends that "When the Prophet (Blessings of God and salvation be upon him) had learned that the Zinjs, Ethiopians and Nubians were neither Red nor White, but Black, he considered the Arabs and us as equals."[61]

While some scholars suggest that al-Jāḥiẓ authored this text with satirical elements, it remains significant for three reasons. First, the fact that al-Jāḥiẓ felt compelled to author a text in defense of Blacks demonstrates the existence of a racial consciousness in the same century as the Zanj Rebellion, in one of the most renowned Arabic scholars of the age. Next, the text reflects how the racial ideologies, disseminated by the racially dominant Arabs, affected everyone categorized as Black, whether they were free or enslaved. Regardless of how al-Jāḥiẓ would have viewed his own origins as distinct from the east African Zanj, his choice to identify with them as the rebellion simultaneously raged on is a demonstration of his own racial consciousness. This text should be viewed not as a mere celebration of the excellence and virtues of Blacks, but rather as a racial contestation that argues for the equality and humanity of Blacks within the Islamicate. Indeed, al-Jāḥiẓ was compelled to rewrite Blackness as a blessing as opposed to a curse because of the racial ideologies of the time that were used to justify the subordination of Blacks. Finally, not only does the text illustrate al-Jāḥiẓ's racial consciousness, but it also represents a racial contestation because of its repudiation of racial stratification and prevalent racial ideologies in the Islamicate.

These anecdotes, and literary defenses of Blacks in Abbasid society by the Crows of the Arabs and al-Jāḥiẓ provide a vivid illustration of how enslaved and free Blacks were perceived in Abbasid society and, more importantly, how Blacks perceived of themselves. Their accounts reveal that in the centuries leading up to the Zanj Rebellion, it was expected in Arab societies for Blacks to be insulted; to be treated as inferior; to accept their assigned inferiority; and to occupy the lowest positions of the racialized social structure. As such, when the Zanj Rebellion began in 869 C.E., the Abbasid racialized social structure had fostered a racial atmosphere that was ripe for an overt racial contestation in the form of a violent armed rebellion.

The Zanj Rebellion as Racial Contestation

Although most accounts of the rebellion focus solely on Ali ibn Muhammad, scholars have routinely neglected and understated the roles of Zanj rebels like Rayhan ibn Salih and Rafiq, who were primary recruiters and organizers of the Zanj on the eve of the rebellion. On the morning of September 9, 869 C.E., it was not Ali himself who called the Zanj to rebellion, but rather Rayhan ibn Salih whose camp initially revolted and commenced the march between work sites mobilizing the Zanj for rebellion. Also, as the rebellion progressed, Ali was increasingly surrounded by, or represented by, the massive Zanj rebel army and its Black commanders, like the freedman Sulayman ibn Jami, who was one of the most capable leaders of the rebellion. Sulayman frequently battled and outsmarted Abbasid forces on campaigns using guerilla warfare by concealing Zanj soldiers along waterways for surprise attacks by night. He also demonstrated his value to sustaining the rebellion by seizing livestock, weapons, and boats for Ali and the Zanj capital city, al-Mukhtara. Following the construction of al-Mukhtara in October 869 C.E., Ali increasingly operated from the Zanj capital city, as other maroon cities were constructed including al-Mani'a in Suq al-Khamis on the Baratiq Canal, and the largest of the Zanj cities, al-Mansura in Tahitha, which belonged to Sulayman ibn Jami.[62] Consequently, for the majority of the rebellion, enslaved Africans were being liberated and compelled to join the rebellion not by an Arab man, but rather an army of liberated Africans.

Racial solidarity and a sense of group identity was also embodied by the Zanj rebel army that repeatedly compelled enslaved Black domestic and military persons to join the rebellion. Enslaved Black domestics, particularly women, would not have been among those to initially revolt and would have either fled their captor's homes or chosen to join the rebel cause after being liberated by the Zanj army who shared a common experience of racial subordination. Also, the accounts of enslaved Black Caliphal soldiers switching sides and joining the Zanj rebel army in the middle of a battle further indicates the existence of a shared collective racial identity. Thus, for the Zanj, racial identity and consciousness were solidified and expressed through the violent militancy of the Zanj rebel army and constant influx of Black runaways joining their ranks.

The rebellion's use of violence to contest the racialized conditions of their oppression and, ultimately, liberate themselves reflected the same violence used to

initiate and maintain enslavement in Abbasid society. Furthermore, Frantz Fanon's assertion of the necessity of counter-violence in the course of liberation struggles is applicable to the Zanj. Fanon suggests that the mobilization of the masses, as a result of a war of liberation, provokes the idea of a common cause, and that the destruction of the oppressive class, through violence, unifies the people.[63] This violence frees the oppressed enslaved person of their inferiority complex; from despair and inaction; makes them fearless; and restores self-respect. No where is this fearlessness displayed better than in the accounts of a Zanj rebel soldier, charging into battle armed with a broken plate as a weapon, and also in Zanj women throwing bricks during battles. Some may suggest this was solely due to the lack of weapons early in the rebellion; however, this also attests to the desperation of their condition caused by the Abbasid's racialized social structure, which, ultimately, necessitated a violent racial contestation in the form of the Zanj Rebellion.

Conclusion

Revolts against enslavement should be viewed as basic assertions of humanity and dignity.[64] Through their revolt, the Zanj successfully asserted their political, social and human interests to the Muslim world, and remained a genuine threat to the ordering of Abbasid society for fourteen years. The Zanj's contestation of the Abbasid racial structure manifested violently through their retaliatory mass killings and retreat from Abbasid society to maroon cities to start their own independent societies. Furthermore, the objective of the rebellion was not an assault on the institution of enslavement itself, but rather for the Zanj to seize the freedom denied them by their Arab masters and to reject the social stratification conferred upon them on account of their race. This article challenged the notion that the early Islamic world was not afflicted by issues of race and racism and demonstrated that a race specific theorization and an Africana epistemological approach is necessary for examining the Zanj Rebellion. "Africana" refers to any person of African descent or African descended communities wherever they are found globally across time and space. Thus, as Africana scholarship enters a new era, it is imperative that we continue to expand the boundaries of our research methods by answering Runoko Rashidi's call for detailed studies of the African presence in Asia. This study does this by valuing and centering the perspectives of the Zanj in its analysis, and portraying them not as mindless slaves taking orders from an Arab man, but as racially conscious

and active participants in leading and fighting a war of liberation against their captors.

While many scholars conceptualize race and racism to be a modern social phenomenon with its roots in Trans-Atlantic enslavement and European colonialism, African descended people have been oppressed throughout medieval and modern history with particular references and justifications being tied to their Blackness. This article demonstrated that the Zanj Rebellion cannot be thoroughly assessed without also examining the historical implications of racialization. Additionally, the aim of this article was not to determine whether this rebellion was solely a race, religious, or class-based social movement; instead, it sought to demonstrate that charges of racial anachronism were unfounded, by centering the experiences and perspectives of African descended peoples within the Islamicate to highlight their own racial consciousness and solidarities. As a result, the Zanj Rebellion stands as a reminder of the necessity of utilizing a structural analysis of race to examine conditions of historically racialized societies and the tradition of anti-Blackness throughout world history.

Notes

[1] Alexandre Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century*. (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers. 1999), 42n7.

[2] al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume XXXVI: The Revolt of the Zanj, A.D. 869–879/A.H. 255–265*, trans. by David Waines (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 35.

[3] Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq*, 40.

[4] E. A. Belyaev, *The Arabs, Islam, and the Arab Caliphate in the Early Middle Ages*. (New York: Frederick a. Praeger Inc., Publishers, 1969), 242.

[5] M.A. Shaban. *Islamic History: A New Interpretation. Vol. 2*. (Cambridge University Press, 1971), 102.

[6] Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq,* 46.

[7] al-Ṭabarī, *The Revolt of the Zanj*, 38.

[8] Theodor Nöldeke, Sketches from Eastern History. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1892), 153.

[9] Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq*, 136.

[10] Abdul Sheriff. "The Zanj Rebellion and the Transition from Plantation to Military Slavery." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38, no. 2 (2018), 225.

[11] Grant, Philip. "Entangled Symbols: Silk and the Material Semiosis of the Zanj Rebellion (869–83)." *Al-ʿUsur al-Wusta* 30 (2022), 573-602.

[12] Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, 159.

[13] Shaban. *Islamic History*, 108.

[14] Ghada Hashem Talhami, "The Zanj Rebellion Reconsidered." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* (1977), 460.

[15] Jere L. Bacharach. "African military slaves in the medieval Middle East: The cases of Iraq (869–955) and Egypt (868–1171)." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13, no. 4 (1981): 471-495.

[16] Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq*, 20.

[17] Marina Tolmacheva, "Toward a Definition of the Term Zanj," *Azania: Journal of the British Institute of History and Archaeology in East Africa Azania, 21:1*, 110.

[18] Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq*, 21.

[19] Gwyn Campbell, *Early Exchange Between Africa and the Wider Indian Ocean World* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 281.

[20] Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq*, 21.

[21] Serie McDougal. *Research Methods in Africana Studies*. (New York, NY, USA: Peter Lang, 2014.), 45.

[22] Sheriff. "The Zanj Rebellion and the Transition from Plantation to Military Slavery." (2018), 255.

[23] Haroon Bashir. "Black Excellence and the Curse of Ham: Debating Race and Slavery in the Islamic Tradition." *ReOrient* 5, no. 1 (2019), 93.

[24] Bashir. "Black Excellence and the Curse of Ham," 111.

[25] Bashir. "Black Excellence and the Curse of Ham," 94.

[26] Bashir. "Black Excellence and the Curse of Ham," 93.

[27] Peter Webb. *Imagining the Arabs: Arab identity and the Rise of Islam*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 179–180.

[28] Bashir. "Black Excellence and the Curse of Ham," 95.

[29] Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 2001), 45.

[30] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation," *American Sociological Review*, 62: 3 (1997), 475.

[31] Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism," 469.

[32] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "The Essential Social Fact of Race," *American Sociological Review* 64:6 (1999), 899.

[33] Herbert Blumer, "Race Prejudice as A Sense of Group Position." *The Pacific Sociological Review.* 1:1 (1958), 5.

[34] Joel Carmichael, *The Shaping of the Arabs: A Study in Ethnic Identity*. (New York: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1967), 128.

[35] Carmichael, *The Shaping of the Arabs*, 128.

[36] Bernard Lewis, *Race and Color in Islam*. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971), 7.

[37] Lewis, *Race and Color in Islam*, 9.

[38] Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery In the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 46-47.

[39] Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*. (United States: New Amsterdam Books, 1989), 99.

[40] Y. Talib and F. Samir, "The African Diaspora in Asia," in *General History of Africa volume 3: Africa from the 7th to the 11th Century,* ed. Ivan Hrbek, (London: J. Currey, 1992), 342.

[41] William McKee Evans, "From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea: The Strange Odyssey of the "Sons of Ham." *The American Historical Review*, 85:1 (1980), 29.

[42] al-Masʿūdī. *El-Mas'údí's Historical Encyclopædia Entitled, vol. 1: Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*. Translated by A. Sprenger. (London: The Oriental Translation Fund, 1841), 178.

[43] Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq*, 16.

[44] Suliman Bashear, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam*. (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1997), 82.

[45] *Popovic, The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq*, 21.

[46] John Alemillah Azumah, *Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa*. (Oxford: One world Publishers, 2001), 118.

[47] David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 63.

[48] Lewis, *Race and Slavery In the Middle East*, 42.

[49] Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*, 32.

[50] Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*, 53.

[51] David M. Goldenberg, The *Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 107.

[52] Bashear, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam*, 79.

[53] Bashear, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam*, 93.

[54] 'Abduh Badawī, Al-Shu'arā' al-Sūd wa Khasā'iṣuhum fī al-Shi'r al-'Arabī (The Black Poets and Their Characteristics in Arabie Poetry) (Cairo: Al-Hai'at al-Misrīyyat al-'Āmmah li'l-Kitāb, 1973), Quoted in Bernard Lewis's, "The Crows of the Arabs," *Critical Inquiry, "Race," Writing, and Difference* 12:1 (1985), 89-90.

[55] Bernard Lewis, "The Crows of the Arabs," *Critical Inquiry, "Race," Writing, and Difference* 12:1 (1985), 92.

[56] Lewis, "The Crows of the Arabs," 94.

[57] Lewis, "The Crows of the Arabs," 95.

[58] Lewis, *Race and Slavery In the Middle East*, 31.

[59] al-Jāḥiẓ, U. A. I. B. *The Book of the Glory of the Black Race*. (Los Angeles: France Preston. 1981), 47.

[60] al-Jāḥiẓ, *The Book of the Glory of the Black Race*, 55-56.

[61] al-Jāḥiẓ, *The Book of the Glory of the Black Race*, 51.

[62] Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq*, 132.

[63] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. (New York: Grove Press, Inc, 1966), 51.

[64] Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), xiii.