

Bilal & Other Racial Minorities in Early Islam	
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Premodern populations	Distinguished themselves by language and shared custom, and far less by skin color
Complexion of Bilal	<p>Most Arabs were light and dark brown</p> <p>Bilal, Ali, Zayd and Usamah are all described as extremely dark brown (ādam shadīd al-udmah)</p> <p>ما كانت صفة علي؟ قال: رجل آدم شديد الأدمة وَكَانَ زَيْدٌ قَصِيرًا أَدَمٌ شَدِيدُ الْأَدَمَةِ فِي أَنْفِهِ فُطْسٌ فَوُلِدَتْ لَهُ أُسَامَةُ ... وَكَانَ أَسْوَدَ وَكَانَ أُسَامَةُ أَسْوَدَ أَفْطَسَ (flat-nosed)</p>
Early Muslim historians	<p>Early Muslim historians were far less scrupulous about history than they were about authenticating the laws, practices, and sayings of the Prophet ﷺ</p> <p>أحمد بن حنبل: إِذَا رَوَيْنَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي الْحَلَالِ وَالْحَرَامِ وَالسُّنَنِ وَالْأَحْكَامِ تَشَدَّدْنَا فِي الْأَسَانِيدِ، وَإِذَا رَوَيْنَا عَنْ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فِي فَضَائِلِ الْأَعْمَالِ وَمَا لَا يَضَعُ حُكْمًا وَلَا يَرْفَعُهُ تَسَاهَلْنَا فِي الْأَسَانِيدِ</p>
Racism in early Islam	Tribalism and slave status were the main contributing factors to limited social protections and power sharing in Arabia, rather than skin color
Bilāl bin Rabāḥ AS	<p>Described as being tall, dark with an aquiline nose</p> <p>He participated in all the major battles including Badr</p> <p>من السابقين الأولين الذين غُذِبوا في الله، شهد بدرا، وشهد له النبي ﷺ على التعيين بالجنة، وحديثه في الكتب</p> <p>His mother and father were Abyssinian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - His father Rabāḥ was an Abyssinian prisoner of war who became a slave - The rule was that a child of slave parents was de facto a slave <p>The Companion who called Bilal the “son of a black woman” was himself described as being dark brown</p> <p>يَا بْنَ السَّوْدَاءِ شَيْخَ مَعْرُوقِ آدَمَ</p> <p>Being born and raised in Arabia, Bilal was more culturally an Arab than he was an East African</p> <p>Bilal converted after witnessing a miracle of the Prophet ﷺ</p> <p>Served Abdullah bin Jad‘ān who permitted Abu Jahl and Umayyah bin</p>

	<p>Khalaf to torture Bilal upon his conversion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bilal would end up killing Umayyah in the Battle of Badr <p>Abu Bakr RA purchased Bilal's freedom</p>
Abyssinia	<p>Abyssinnia's connection to Arabia predates the birth of the Prophet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The incident of Al-Fil was an Abyssinian invasion - Many of the Abyssinian slaves in Makkah during the Prophet's life became captives during this campaign <p>The Prophet ﷺ directed a number of his early followers to the Abyssinian Christian kingdom</p>
Inclusion in early Islam	<p>The early Muslim community elevated faith and piety above race or pedigree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bilal was the first and primary prayer announcer appointed by the Prophet ﷺ himself - It is mentioned that he left for Sham after the Prophet's death and he saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream saying, "What is this abrasiveness Bilal? Has the time not come for you to visit us?" <p>مَا هَذِهِ الْجَفْوَةُ يَا بِلَالُ؟ أَمَا أَنْ لَكَ أَنْ تَزُورَنِي</p> <p>Bilal had at least 2 Arab wives</p>
'Āmir bin Fuhayrah RA	<p>Black-skinned Arab from Yemen who was bought and freed by Abu Bakr as well</p> <p>He served the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr during their migration to Madinah and was one of the few people aware of their location</p> <p>He was martyred while accompanying a delegation to Bi'r Ma'unah</p>
Aflah Abū Fukayhah RA	<p>Possibly Abyssinian or from the same tribe as Ibn Fuhayrah</p> <p>Accepted Islam and was tortured in light of his slave status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refused to renounce Islam - Freed by Abu Bakr RA
'Ammār bin Yāsir RA	<p>One of the first to publicize his Islam in Makkah</p> <p>He was Arab but had minority status, not as a result of his skin color but due to his parents' status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Ammar's father was of Yemeni descent and was a Qahtani Arab, rather than the predominant 'Adnani - 'Ammar's mother, Sumayyah RA, was an Abyssinian freedslave who was martyred by Abu Jahl <p>'Ammar and his entire family were tortured because his father's tribe in Yemen were too far away to ensure his safety</p>

	<p>‘Ammar had the honor of being the first person to build a mosque in Islam founding the Quba mosque</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prophet ﷺ prayed here upon arrival from Makkah during hijrah
Şuhayb al-Rūmī RA	<p>An ethnic Arab, he was taken into captivity by Byzantines and raised in Rome</p> <p>Among the early Muslims who were persecuted upon accepting Islam</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This was facilitated by his former slave status and lack of tribal ties - He was owned by the Arab slaver Abdullah bin Jad‘ān <p>He is described as being pale-skinned and there is little reason to believe that his being a slave had anything to do with his skin color</p> <p>Like Bilal RA, his persecution seems to have more to do with his former slave status, rather than his race, after all, Suhayb had Arab roots</p>
Mistreatment and skin color	<p>Stories of persecuted early Muslims indicate that black skin had little bearing on their mistreatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tribalism and slave status led to their vulnerability
Judging the past by the present	<p>Interpreting events of the past through the lens of the present, with its increasing polarization along the lines of race, fails to acknowledge disparate sociohistorical and cultural contexts</p>