

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	Most Arabs were light and dark brown Bilal, Ali, Zayd and Usamah are all described as extremely dark brown (ādam shadīd al-udmah) ما كانت صفة علي؟ قال: رجل آخر شديد الأدمة وكان زيد قصيراً آخر شديد الأدمة في أنفه فطمس فولدت له أسامه... وكان أسود وكان أسامه أسود أفالس (flat-nosed)
Early Muslim historians	Early Muslim historians were far less scrupulous about history than they were about authenticating the laws, practices, and sayings of the Prophet ﷺ أحمد بن حنبل: إذا رأينا عن رسول الله ﷺ في الحال والحرام والسنن والأحكام تشدّدنا في الأسانيد، وإذا رأينا عن النبي ﷺ في قضايا الأعمال وما لا يضع حكماً ولا يرفعه شاهدنا في الأسانيد
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 Rabāh AS	Described as being tall, dark with an aquiline nose He participated in all the major battles including Badr من السابقين الأولين الذين عذبوا في الله، شهد بدرا، وشهد له النبي ﷺ على التعذيب بالجنة، و الحديث في الكتب His mother and father were Abyssinian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - His father Rabāh was an Abyssinian prisoner of war who became a slave - The rule was that a child of slave parents was de facto a slave The Companion who called Bilal the “son of a black woman” was himself described as being dark brown يابن السواداء شيخ معرفة آدم Being born and raised in Arabia, Bilal was more culturally an Arab than he was an East African Bilal converted after witnessing a miracle of the Prophet ﷺ Served Abdullah bin Jadān who permitted Abu Jahl and Umayyah bin

	<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>Abysinnia'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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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>ما هذه الجفوة يا بلال؟ أَمَا آنَ 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'ūnah</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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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>

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