Toward a Comparative History of Racial Thought in Africa: Historicism, Barbarism, Autochthony

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Is it possible or useful to write a truly comparative history of race? The question may seem frivolous, given the existence of countless excellent comparative studies. But most of those studies focus on various iterations of white supremacy, or on its inflections in Pan-Africanism or other forms of anti-racist racial modernism.[1] What of other forms of racial thought, forms that have nothing to do with ideologies of white supremacy or are tied to it only indirectly? In the literature on Africa (which will be the focus of this essay), the most obvious examples are those that shaped violence between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, or between so-called Arabs and Africans in Darfur or Zanzibar. There are other instances, as we will see. They all raise historical questions of how locally-specific ways of thinking about difference might become racialized—that is, how they might become invested with explicit meanings of bodily descent or of "blood," to use a ubiquitous metaphor.

When dealing with race or any other kind of ethnicity, historians of Africa must contend with two opposing tendencies. The first are assumptions of primordial ethnic essences that still cling to popular perceptions of Africa. This was readily apparent in the press coverage of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, when journalists lazily wrote about ancient tribal hatreds that

[1] Studies that point to the ironic complexities of the racial components of Pan-Africanist thought include K. Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York, 1992); Philip Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville, 2000); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the World Wars* (Chicago, 2005); James R. Brennan, "Realizing Civilization through Patrilineal Descent: The Intellectual Making of an African Racial Nationalism in Tanzania, 1920–1950," *Social Identities* 12 (2006): 405–23.

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erupted in the absence of a strong colonial state. Primordialism of course is part of the basic myth of the African past, in which Africans appear as inherently "tribal" beings, congenitally incapable of transcending their inherited ethnic essence: as Hugh Trevor-Roper put it in an infamous reiteration of Hegel, Africa's past consisted not of history, but merely of the "unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes."[2] As historians labored to refute such myths throughout the last third of the twentieth century, one of their recurring themes was the modern origins of ethnic thought. But in a sense, they were *too* successful. Since the 1990s, accounts of African ethnicity have hewed to a resolute modernism just as often as to old-school primordialism: journalists and scholars nowadays commonly write that ethnic differences were invented by the twentieth-century colonial state.[3]

In recent decades, this modernism has been revised by scholars who emphasize what are sometimes called "constructivist" factors, after a parallel literature in the study of nationalism. Without discounting the impact of colonialism, these authors have demonstrated how African intellectuals actively crafted new forms of ethnic thought out of indigenous cultural materials. Modern tribalism did not just spring into existence in response to colonial influences; rather, it built on locally inherited discourses of belonging and difference.[4] But although such constructivist revisions have profoundly deepened our historical perspectives on so-called tribalism, they have not had as much impact in studies of the forms of ethnic thought that are often described as "race." In that literature, a nagging modernism persists, and it is instructive to consider why.

To do so, however, we must specify what we mean by "race." I have mentioned the central idea of bodily descent, or "blood." Yet, in this regard it is crucial to recognize that no hard and fast analytic distinction can be made between "race" and other forms of ethnicity. (*Historical* distinctions are a different matter, inasmuch as a historical approach demands that we recognize each instance of ethnic or racial thought, or of any phenomenon,

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[2] Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (London, 1965). Trevor-Roper's views gained notoriety among Africanists by being roundly refuted by John D. Fage, *On the Nature of African History: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered in the University of Birmingham on 10th March 1965* (Birmingham, 1965). Notions of a cyclical African past, as distinct from what Trevor-Roper called a "purposive history," persist: see Nicolas Sarkozy's infamous 2007 speech and the subsequent doubling-down by his speechwriter: "Le discours de Dakar de Nicolas Sarkozy," *Le Monde*, 9 Nov. 2007, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2007/11/09/le-discours-de-dakar_976786_3212.html; Henri Guaino, "L'homme africain et l'histoire," *Le Monde*, 26 July 2008, https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2008/07/26/henri-guaino-toute-l-afrique-n-a-pas-rejete-le-discours-de-dakar_1077506_3232.html (both accessed 10 June 2020).

[3] For an overview, see Jonathon Glassman, "Ethnicity and Race in African Thought," in William Worger, Charles Ambler, and Nwando Achebe, eds., *A Companion to African History* (Hoboken, 2019), 199–223.

[4] Ibid.

as unique. That is why we cannot pretend that American white supremacy, for example, is somehow identical to other instances of race or ethnicity: to say that two historical phenomena are comparable is not to suggest that they are commensurate.[5]) Forms of thought we call "ethnic," like those we call "race," can all be characterized as *categorical orders* that distinguish differences between "human kinds" through *metaphors of common descent*.[6]

An explication of these two terms will clarify matters. My use of the Foucauldian notion of *categorical order*, which I take from Liisa Malkki's writings on ethnic nationalism, is akin to Ann Stoler's concept of a racial "regime of truth," or Rogers Brubaker's argument that race and ethnicity are matters of cognition, perspectives "*on* the world" before they are things "*in* the world."[7] I use "race," in other words, as shorthand for *racial thought*, the modes of perception by which people read the social and/or somatic clues that denote racial categories. These modes of categorization are historical creations, each specific to a particular society; as scholars have long observed, they do not arise from naturally occurring distinctions but, in many ways, create distinctions.[8] For purposes of historical analysis, it is useful to distinguish these habits of thought from the explicit ideas and practices of exclusion or domination that we call *racism*. For those socialized in American society, for example, the history of rac*ism* is obviously an important part of our history of racial *thought*. But the two are not necessarily identical. Hence, in societies structured by systematic *racism*,

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[5] This digression is necessary to avoid being misunderstood as endorsing a neoconservative line of thought that begins, as I do, with the observation that it is impossible to draw a clear analytic line between racial and ethnic thought. The neoconservatives go on to conclude that because prejudices against Jewish Americans (say) or Korean Americans have been of the same order as those against Blacks, there can be no social explanation of African American poverty. Aside from being argued in bad faith (the neoconservatives start with a rhetorical insistence on social construction only to suggest the opposite), this position ignores an enormous amount of history. While no clear analytical distinction can be drawn between what we commonly regard as racial, ethnic, and national thought, each instance of such thought has a specific history, some involving far more sustained and systematic practices of exclusion than others. In this sense, of course, the history of white supremacy is in a class of its own. For a brief account of the neoconservative line, see Roger Sanjek, "The Enduring Inequalities of Race," in Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek, eds., *Race* (New Brunswick, 1994), 8–9. Sanjek uses the historical uniqueness of white supremacy to argue against comparability. That, I think, is a mistake.

[6] I derive my understanding of racial and ethnic thought from a wide range of authors; for further elaboration, see Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, 2011), 8–22. For "human kinds," see Lawrence Hirschfeld, *Race in the Making: Cognition, Culture, and the Child's Construction of Human Kinds* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996).

[7] Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, "Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth," *Political Power and Social Theory* 11 (1997): 183–206; Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 65.

[8] E.g., Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (New York, 1968), vol. 1, 385–95.

members of the subordinate stratum may share prevailing perceptions of racial difference, and actively use those perceptions to craft strategies and philosophies of liberation, without partaking in the convictions (and certainly not the practices) of innate superiority and inferiority properly described as *racist*.[9]

Scholars since Weber have observed that virtually all notions of ethnic or national thought revolve around *metaphors of descent*.[10] Such metaphors can be taken more explicitly, or less. At one end of the spectrum are vague notions of common ancestry, used as little more than figures of speech, as when American politicians speak of the "Founding Fathers." At the other end are discourses that perceive common descent not simply as metaphor but as something real and significant, fixed in "the blood" or, to use the currently fashionable scientific metaphor, the genes.[11] In the postwar world we usually describe only this second kind of thinking as "racial." But the boundary between the latter form and forms in the middle of the spectrum— call them ethnicity, tribalism, or "culture"[12]—is not absolute. An "aura of descent," at the least, hovers over them all.[13] And history shows how readily any of them can become transformed: to take an immediate example, consider how birtherism during the Obama administration and debates over the Fourteenth Amendment's Citizenship Clause since 2016 have revived and reformulated many Americans' convictions about the racial nature of their ostensibly civic nation.[14] Likewise, as we will see, tensions over immigration and neoliberalism have begun to racialize civic nationalisms in parts of Africa. Any attempt to pose a sharp distinction can only obscure the

[9] Similar distinctions (using different language) can be found, *inter alia*, in Appiah, *In My Father's House*; and Hirschfeld, *Race in the Making*, and are implicit in the ample literature that approaches race as a mode of categorization, for example: Rogers Brubaker, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition," *Theory and Society* 33, 1 (2004): 31–64. Appiah, however, uses the adjective "racist" to describe alike the thought of inveterate white supremacists *and* of W.E.B. Du Bois. Such usage muddies distinctions that are otherwise essential to his argument. That is why I prefer usage like that of Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, who writes of the "metalanguage" of race, one that can be "double-voiced," both racist and liberatory: "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, 2 (1992): 251–74. Loïc Wacquant urges that we abandon altogether the fighting-word "racist" and instead focus on the precise techniques of racial domination: "For an Analytic of Racial Domination," *Political Power and Social Theory* 11 (1997): 221–34.

[10] For a useful overview, see Ronald Cohen, "Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7 (1978): 379–403.

[11] A growing critical literature examines how misapplications of genetic science reproduce racial categories. For a synthesis, see Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Create Race in the Twenty-First Century* (New York, 2011).

[12] Eric Wolf, "Perilous Ideas: Race, Culture, People," with comments by Joel Kahn, W. Roseberry, and I. Wallerstein, *Current Anthropology* 35, 1 (1994): 1–12.

[13] Cohen, "Ethnicity."

[14] This is not to say that American civic nationalism has ever been devoid of racial restrictions: Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York, 2010).

processes of racialization by which diverse modes of thinking about "human kinds" can become invested with more explicit ideas of descent.

Some scholars locate a categorical distinction between race and other forms of ethnicity in the criterion of hierarchy. According to this view, racial thought involves imagining ethnic categories as "horizontal" strata, linked to one another in relations of inequality that structure a single social formation. (A focus on the practices of domination that structure such "racist social formations" has produced some of the most thorough analyses of the sociological workings of racism in the modern West.[15]) Discourses of Tutsi and Hutu difference fit this model well. It is one we can contrast with the "vertical" divisions that in African contexts are typically described as "tribes." Whereas "races," in this formulation, constitute "ranked" strata within a single society, tribalist thought imagines each ethnic unit as an "incipient whole society."[16] (Anywhere other than Africa, "tribalism" would be described as "ethnic nationalism.") It is this latter form, of "tribalism" or "unranked ethnicity," that has received some of the most nuanced historical treatments in the Africa literature, treatments that avoid a limiting modernism without being primordialist.[17]

To return to our question, then: Why such persistent modernism in Africanist studies of race—in studies, that is, of discourses of difference that emphasize explicit concepts of bodily descent and/or hierarchy? One reason stems from the common assumption that racial thought originated in the West. There is, in fact, an influential comparative and social science literature that *defines* race that way: as a mode of thought invented by Europe in the course of its imperial expansion.[18] (This view ignores the fact that many key ideas in Western racial thought, including those that were deployed to explain the inferiority of colonial subjects, were first elaborated to explain differences among Europeans themselves—between Gauls and

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[15] Classic examples include Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York, 1994); and Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States," *New Left Review* 181 (1990): 95–118. But, again, when approaching the study of race as a problem of intellectual history, it is counterproductive to delimit one's topic of study too narrowly or categorically: there is no reason why a hierarchical notion of inherited difference may not have grown out of concepts that did *not* rest on hierarchy.

[16] I derive this language from Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, 1985), who writes not of "race" versus "tribe," but of "ranked" versus "unranked" ethnicities. Similar distinctions are made in George Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, 2002), 154–55; and John Comaroff, "On Totemism and Ethnicity," in John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, 1992), 49–67.

[17] Glassman, "Ethnicity and Race."

[18] E.g., Howard Winant, "Race and Race Theory," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 169–85; Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity," in Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991).

Franks, for example—long before the Columbian voyages.[19]) When racial thought is found in non-Western intellectual traditions, then, it is understood to have been introduced as part of the toolkit of empire and transmitted to the subject population.[20] In most of Africa, that would have been after the 1890s. In Rwanda, for example, where Belgians ruled through the old monarchy, members of the Tutsi elite sent their sons to study at mission schools after World War One. There, they learned racial theories that explained why it was that some Africans had been able to build complex states and military structures such as the Rwandan kingdom. These aristocratic students learned that they were descended from an advanced race of "Hamites," who long ago had migrated from the north and brought statecraft and other civilizing arts to the indigenous Hutu, aborigines of inferior "negroid" stock. The language of these "Hamitic" theories seems to confirm another modernist assumption common in the literature: that race originated as scientific doctrine.[21] Again, this assumption would imply that, if found outside the West, racial thought must have begun with colonialism.

Among the many problems with this view is its distortion of the history of race in the West itself. Biological doctrines, in fact, came late to Western racial thought, and their dominance was relatively fleeting, roughly from the mid-nineteenth century to World War Two.[22] Even in its heyday, race-science was hardly the only game in town; colonial racisms, for example, rarely

[19] *Inter alia*, Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (London, 1974); David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (Chicago, 2014), 143–90; Guillaume Aubert, "The Blood of France: Race and Purity of Blood in the French Atlantic World," *William & Mary Quarterly* 61, 3 (2004): 439–78; María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, 2008).

[20] The chief exception to this generalization can be found in the rich scholarship on racial concepts in the Islamic Middle East, which I will mention later. And although the literature on race and "communalism" in South Asia and East Asia is marked by an emphasis on the dominating force of Orientalist discourse, some scholars trace entangled processes like those I will describe here, for example: Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford, 1992); Sheldon Pollack, "Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj," in Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* (Philadelphia, 1993), 76–133; Peter Robb, ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (Delhi, 1995).

[21] The latter assumption prevails even among classicists who *challenge* the modernist consensus: understanding "race" as a distinctly scientific way of thinking about human difference, they contend that it originated with the ancient Greeks, the supposed inventors of systematic, abstract modes of thought: Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, 2004); and also Benjamin Isaac, Joseph Ziegler, and Miriam Eliav-Feldon, "Introduction," in Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, eds., *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge, 2009), 1–31.

[22] Race science was already in retreat by the 1930s: Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (New York, 1992).

emphasized biological difference.[23] (The Belgian valorization of a "Hamitic" racial elite was far from the norm.) Western racial thought, in fact, grew from multiple sources, many of which had little to do with biology. One of the most significant in the modern era was *stadial historicism*: the cluster of ideas, often traced to the Enlightenment, that understands history as a progression through a set succession of stages.[24] In this perspective, the problem of African difference (say) is explained not by reference to fixed biological qualities, but by Africans' low position on the ladder of progress from savagery to civilization—so low, in fact, that few had ever embarked on the construction of stable civil orders before Europeans intervened. Colonial racisms, for the most part, were of this stadial, historicist kind, emphasizing social evolution more than biology, especially after World War One. Their central quality was a paternalist conviction that colonial rulers and educators were engaged in a civilizing mission to draw their subjects along the path of progress.

There is no doubt that Western concepts, historicist and, less frequently, biological, influenced how colonial subjects thought about difference. But the key intellectual work of translating those concepts into local terms— crafting narratives, for example, in which Hutu and Tutsi resembled "Gauls and Franks"[25]—was not performed by Europeans. Rather, it was performed

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[23] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, 1989); Helen Tilley, *Africa as Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870–1950* (Chicago, 2011).

[24] Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress*, Jeremy Carden, trans. (New York, 2013); George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987); *idem, Race, Culture, and Evolution* (Chicago, 1968); T. Carlos Jacques, "From Savages and Barbarians to Primitives: Africa, Social Typologies, and History in Eighteenth-Century French Philosophy," *History and Theory* 36, 2 (1997): 190–215. Landmark studies of how stadial ideas were used to describe and explain African and Asian difference and inferiority include Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850* (Madison, 1964); and Adas, *Machines*. Both use the word "race" narrowly, applying it only to biological notions, although Adas allows that other, less restrictive usages might well encompass the stadial historicism he describes. These authors focus on Scottish and French thinkers, but Hegel's well-known ideas about African and Asian difference might be taken as variations on the same theme. Stadial explanations of difference are still very much with us, not only in politics and popular culture (e.g., Nicolas Sarkozy's infamous 2007 Dakar speech, cited above), but also in the social sciences. A random example is Bernard Chapais, "The Deep Social Structure of Humankind," *Science* 31 (11 Mar. 2011): 1276–77, which argues that the best way to recover the "deep structure" of social behavior from beneath the encrustation of "cumulative cultural evolution" is by "comparing human hunter-gatherer societies to nonhuman primate societies." Less egregious but therefore more problematic is Ronald Meek's essential study of Enlightenment stadial thought, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, 1976), which accepts as given the category of "primitive" societies. For broad critiques, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York, 1983); and James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, 2006), 176–93.

[25] Dominique Franche, "Généalogie du génocide rwandais: Hutu et Tutsi: Gaulois et Francs?" *Les temps modernes* 582 (1995): 1–58; and more generally, Norman Etherington, "Barbarians Ancient and Modern," *American Historical Review* 116, 1 (2011): 31–57.

by Africans themselves: schoolteachers especially, but also moral reformers, amateur historians, and other subaltern intellectuals. And the minds of those intellectuals were not blank slates. In Rwanda, they bore the imprint of the tumultuous century that preceded European conquest, which saw the violent expansion of the Nyiginya kingdom and attendant processes of acute polarization. The centralizing dynasts encouraged pastoralists, hitherto an ethnicized category of occupational specialists known as *Bahima* (a term used throughout the region), to regard themselves instead as "Tutsi," an elite stratum of herders tied to royal power. At the same time, farmers were subjected to novel forms of surplus extraction for the benefit of Tutsi overlords. Thus, what had formerly been vertical categories of *Bahima* and farmers became transformed, gradually and unevenly, into hierarchical relations between "Tutsi" and "Hutu." The latter ethnonym originated as a term of abuse, meaning uncivilized bumpkin, which Tutsi directed at their menials.[26]

These trends were intensified and transformed after 1897 by colonial rulers who governed via a Tutsi elite that they understood in terms of Western race science. But the era's most consequential historical narratives were written by Tutsi intellectuals who, in addition to their mission education, were adepts in the sophisticated oral historiography that had flourished at the courts of the nineteenth-century Rwandan kings. Those dynastic histories provided templates for narratives of Tutsi state-building that incorporated Hamitic motifs. Their grounding in the dynastic histories also supplied them with the kind of authority that ensured they would be taken seriously by critical Rwandan audiences that respected the precolonial intellectual traditions.[27] The Tutsi intellectuals' narratives were

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[26] Jan Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom* (Madison, 2004). It is instructive that, although ethnicized categories of herder and farmer (*Bahima* and *Bairu*) existed throughout the region, they did not undergo similar racializing transformations except in the kingdoms of Burundi and, to a limited extent, Nkore. Pastoralist values enjoyed widespread prestige, and in Nkore *Bahima* were loosely associated with royal rule. But, despite the Hamitic fantasies of a few colonial-era writers, European and African, *Bahima* in western Uganda, including Nkore, were never racialized as a ruling caste to the same degree as were Tutsi in Rwanda. The contrast points to the contingent nature of racialization: regional variations in social and demographic change (including whether pastoralism remained transhumant), precolonial statecraft, and colonial politics caused the relative racialization of the categories of herder and farmer to vary along the spectrum described above. John Beattie, *The Nyoro State* (Oxford, 1971); Martin R. Doornbos, "Images and Reality of Stratification in Pre-Colonial Nkore," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7, 3 (1973): 477–95; Samwiri Karugire, *A History of the Kingdom of Nkore in Western Uganda to 1896* (Oxford 1971); and Justin Willis, "Killing Bwana: Peasant Revenge and Political Panic in Early Colonial Ankole," *Journal of African History* 35, 3 (1994): 379–400.

[27] For a similar argument, see Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Power of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998).

later taken up by Hutu activists, who recast them as tales of racial oppression.[28]

So, although Western teachings were of undoubted significance to this story of racial polarization, they were only one strand among many that Rwandan thinkers spun into historical narratives of racial difference, the other strands being inherited, not borrowed. While the language of race-science was indeed novel, other concepts learned in Belgian classrooms had Rwandan parallels. These included the language of difference via descent: Rwandans described the categories of Hutu and Tutsi as *ubwoko*, an ancient noun that designates shared common descent (it is often translated as "race" or "clan").[29] Rwandans were also familiar with a precolonial language of civilization and barbarism, which was often couched in terms of inheritance. That is hardly surprising: throughout world history, civilizational discourses have been central to the self-image of expansionary states like nineteenth-century Rwanda. In China, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere, conquest brought civilization, and the barbarians who remained outside its domain or who were forced unwillingly into it represented a different, unimproved category of humanity.[30] Such indigenous ideas resonated with those of Western stadial historicism.

The political scientist Mahmood Mamdani argues that by casting the Tutsi as an alien ruling race, Belgian rule was a prime example of how Western colonizers constructed African political identities of indigenous and non-indigenous.[31] But, as I've indicated, there was more to it than that. Rwanda's dynastic historians built on rich discursive traditions that characterized political authority in terms of indigeneity and exogeny. Those traditions were older than the Rwandan kingdom itself. Throughout central and southern Africa, including in places where colonial rulers never espoused theories of "Hamitic" ruling races, one finds royal dynasties whose founding myths

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[28] Vansina, *Antecedents*; Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960* (New York, 1988); Claudine Vidal, *Sociologie des passions: Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1991), esp. 45–61; Jean-Pierre Chrétien, "Hutu et Tutsi au Rwanda et Burundi," in Jean-Loup Amselle and Elikia M'Bokolo, eds., *Au Coeur de l'ethnie: Ethnies, tribalisme et État en Afrique* (Paris, 1989), esp. 145–50; Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History*, Scott Straus, trans. (New York, 2003), 33–34, 281–88, 352–53. Vidal and Chrétien place more emphasis than Vansina does on the determining role of colonial concepts, and less on their interplay with notions inherited from the precolonial past.

[29] Vansina, *Antecedents*, 33, 233 nn98, 99.

[30] Dikötter, *Discourse of Race*; James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, 2009).

[31] *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, 2001); and more generally, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, 4 (2001): 651–64. The "official history" propagated by the post-genocide government is an extreme variant of such arguments: Filip Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Cambridge, 2013), 194–99.

speak of civilizing outsiders. These exogenous civilizers are often contrasted with mythical figures of autochthonous nature: that is, inhabitants understood to have sprung from the local soil. The autochthons' descendants are sometimes thought to still be around.

In short, the modernist focus on colonial officials and educators is not so much incorrect as it is incomplete. It flattens intellectual history into one where Africans have little agency save to adopt colonial ideas. I prefer instead to approach racial thought in the same manner as scholars approach other topics in intellectual history, where Africans' encounter with Western discourses took the form not of an embrace but an entanglement.[32] Of course, Tutsi and Hutu racial thinkers had been influenced by Western ideas. But Tutsi supremacy was not a colonial invention. In Africans' intellectual engagement with the West, borrowed ideas became entangled with discourses of difference they had inherited from their precolonial past.

Any history of racial thought within African intellectual traditions must take account of those inherited discourses. What form did they take? How, precisely, did modern racial thinkers make use of them? And, did they ever take racial forms in the centuries before European conquest? In the following pages, I will describe a few examples of locally inherited discourses that have, at times, shown signs of becoming racialized. Such discourses took a variety of forms, including those that a casual observer might describe as "class," "caste," or "ethnicity." But I will focus on those that suggest the presence of African historicisms that arranged "human kinds" along a progression from barbarian to civilized.

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The most extensively studied African examples of civilizational discourses derived their core ideas from the Abrahamic faiths. This includes Ethiopia, where rulers of the expansionist Christian kingdoms in the Semitic-speaking imperial core developed perhaps the closest thing to an indigenous version of the Hamitic myth. The Abyssinian rulers were said to be descended from "the seed of Shem," via the first-born son of King Solomon. These myths were enshrined in the *Kebra Negast*, the early fourteenth-century compilation that emphasized not only the ruling line's Solomonic ancestry (including genealogical ties to Christ) but also its destiny to rule over less exalted peoples on the peripheries of the Semitic-speaking highlands.[33] Most

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[32] For some exemplary studies, see Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola, eds., *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (Athens, Oh., 2009).

[33] E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek: Being ... a Complete Translation of the Kebra Nagast* (London, 1922). For its role as a "national epic" or "charter," see Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley, 2002); Donald Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society* (Chicago, 2000).

degraded of these "savages who did not acknowledge God" were the so-called *shankilla*, Nilo-Saharan-speaking pastoralists who lived on and beyond the empire's lowland marches, where plow agriculture was not feasible. Unlike other peripheral people, *shankilla* could only be incorporated into the Christian polity as slaves. For centuries highlanders had imagined their degradation could be read in the "blackness" of their bodies.[34]

Of wider geographical distribution were civilizational motifs adapted from Near Eastern Islam.[35] Written sources produced in West Africa document the presence of ideas that equated barbarism and unbelief with ancestral origins in the *Bilad al-Sudan*, the land of the blacks—ideas that, conversely, prompted Sudanic state-builders and other elites to imagine Arab ancestries for themselves. Under colonialism, those discourses meshed with European racial ideas, including historicist ideas that attributed governing skills to the more "civilized" among colonial subjects. In instances where colonial administrators ruled through what they called "native states," such as the emirates of Hausa-speaking northern Nigeria, the expediency of indirect rule was complemented by civilizational discourses that seemed confirmed by local historical narratives. The emirates' rulers were Fulbe by ancestry, historically pastoralists who had ranged throughout the grasslands of the western Sudan. Early in the nineteenth century, Fulbe religious scholars led a jihadist movement that conquered the Hausa city-states, knitting them together in a loose caliphate headquartered at Sokoto. Although by the century's end the Fulbe aristocrats spoke the same language as their subjects and practiced the same culture, they justified their social and political superiority by a belief that they had deeper genealogical roots in Islam than did their Hausa subjects; indeed, they believed that their paternal ancestors were Arabs, Companions of the Prophet.[36] These civilizational discourses, tightly intertwined with discourses of descent, appealed to the parallel

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[34] Speakers of Omotic and Cushitic languages, notably Oromo, although also subject to racialized stereotypes of barbarism, were more likely to be absorbed into the Christian polities via processes of "Abyssinianization." They are the subject of a literature which, for reasons of space, I neglect here. Donald Donham, "Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: Themes in Social History," in Donald Donham and Wendy James, eds., *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1986), 3–48 (quote from 19–20); Richard Pankhurst, "The History of Bareya, Sanqella and other Ethiopian Slaves from the Borderlands of the Sudan," *Sudan Notes and Records* 58 (1977): 1–43; Taddesse Tamrat, "Processes of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Agaw," *Journal of African History* 29, 1 (1988), 5–18, esp. 5–6.

[35] *Inter alia*, Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960* (Cambridge, 2011); Chouki el Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge, 2013); Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (Oxford, 1990).

[36] Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London, 1967); Muhammad Bello, "The Origin of the Fulbe," in *The Carthaginian Voyage to West Africa in 500 B.C., together with Sultan Mohammed Bello's Account of the Origin of the Fulbe*, H. R. Palmer, trans. and commentary (Bathurst, 1931), 18–49; and more generally, Hall, *History of Race,* 63–66.

notions of Nigeria's new British overlords. In a fascinating wrinkle described by Moses Ochonu, the British even thought that the emirs' Hausa subjects, although lacking the Fulbe's pedigree, had so benefited from their long exposure to Fulbe civilization that they could make fit rulers over the more barbaric peoples of what had been the caliphate's southern marches. Hausa-Fulbe civilizational discourses of racial difference were thus used to justify violating one of the cardinal principles of the British philosophy of indirect rule, in a core region of its birth: the principle that African intermediaries should be selected from among each constituency's own native "tribe."[37]

In regions with long experience of Islam, the prestige of Arab ancestry often meshed with the concept of *jahiliya*, the era of "ignorance" or "barbarism" that preceded the revelation of the Quran. This fostered a particular kind of civilizational discourse that was disdainful of cultural practices and people who were deemed of purely indigenous origin.[38] But those concepts were not imported into an intellectual vacuum any more than were ideas later imported from the West. On the Swahili coast of East Africa, they became entangled with the ancient motifs, already mentioned, that attributed civilizing processes to exogenous intruders. By the sixteenth century, if not earlier, those motifs had taken a form in which the civilizers were remembered as having originated in distant places across the Indian Ocean—that is, in the Islamic heartland. For reasons not altogether clear, the founder-heroes were often said to have come from the Persian town of Shiraz. Vague claims of "Shirazi" or "Arab" descent, unsupported by precise genealogies, were guarded by members of the urban elite, who deployed Arab- and Islam-centered concepts of "civilization" and "barbarism" to repel outsiders' claims to full membership in community institutions. In the eighteenth century these tensions were made more complex by the arrival at the coast of powerful Omani merchants and freebooters, who became important political patrons of the local elite, thus intensifying the prestige and currency of Arab cultural influences. These processes culminated in the nineteenth century with the establishment of a powerful sultanate at Zanzibar

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[37] Moses Ochonu, *Colonialism by Proxy: Hausa Imperial Agents and Middle Belt Consciousness in Nigeria* (Bloomington, 2014); Ochonu, "Colonialism within Colonialism: The Hausa-Caliphate Imaginary and the British Colonial Administration of the Nigerian Middle Belt," *African Studies Quarterly* 10, 2–3 (2008), https://sites.clas.ufl.edu/africanquarterly/files/Ochonu-Vol10Issue23.pdf (accessed 10 June 2020).
[38] The deployment of such concepts can be seen in the attitudes toward "African" (i.e., non-Muslim) practices described by Mervyn Hiskett, in *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usuman dan Fodio*, 2d ed. (Evanston, 1994), vii–xx; Douglas Anthony, *Poison and Medicine: Ethnicity, Power, and Violence in a Nigerian City, 1966 to 1986* (Portsmouth, 2002); A. Masquelier, "Of Headhunters and Cannibals: Migrancy, Labor, and Consumption in the Mawri Imagination," *Cultural Anthropology* 15, 1 (2000): 84–126; Jerome Barkow, "Muslims and Maguzawa in North Central State, Nigeria," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7, 1 (1973): 59–76. *Jahiliyya* is rendered in Hausa as *jahilci*.

ruled by Omani princes and dominated by creolized families who married locally and presided over a plantation economy worked by slaves imported from the continental interior.[39]

Likewise in northern Nigeria, Fulbe conquerors' narratives of their Arab ancestry paralleled pre-existing origin myths by which the Hausa nobility they had overthrown, the *sarauta*, traced their own origins to a foreign hero. This hero, after spending time in the ancient kingdom of Bornu (and, in some variants, in North Africa or Baghdad), arrived in Hausaland, where he married a daughter of the autochthonous ruling family. Their seven children later overthrew the autochthonous rulers and founded the seven classic city-states of Hausa tradition. Guy Nicolas writes that the Hausa aristocrats thus traced their noble essence to the "fact of [their] foreignness," that is, to their descent from early conquering immigrants. It was this exogenous essence that distinguished the *sarauta* from the autochthonous population of the villages, a "secular" distinction later elaborated by the kind of Islamic discourses that dominated intellectual life during the nineteenth-century rule of the jihadist states.[40] Similar processes can be found in Darfur.[41] In all these places, discourses of civilization, barbarism, and racial difference introduced from the Islamic Near East lay like palimpsests on a substrate of earlier ideas.

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The legacy of slavery was central to many of the discourses described above. Unbelief had been the classic justification for enslavement in Islam, and state-builders in Muslim West Africa had long enslaved war-captives, both

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[39] Yet more complexity was introduced in the twentieth century by the impact of British rule through the racially defined Omani state elite, the intellectual influence of historicist teachings conveyed in colonial schools, and the subaltern political currents of Garveyite Pan-Africanism. Glassman, *War of Words*; and "Racial Violence, Universal History, and Echoes of Abolition in Twentieth-Century Zanzibar," in Derek Peterson, ed., *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic* (Athens, Oh., 2010). For the earlier period, see also Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast* (Portsmouth, 1995). For similar processes of colonial-era intellectual entanglement, see Amir H. Idris, *Sudan's Civil War: Slavery, Race, and Formational Identities* (Lewiston, 2001); and Heather Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Berkeley, 2003).

[40] This passage simplifies Nicolas's more complex account (and Nicolas's version of the foundational narrative is itself simplified). Guy Nicolas, "Les catégories d'ethnie et de fraction ethnique au sein du système social hausa," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 15 (1975): 399–441 (whence the quotes); *idem*, *Dynamique sociale et appréhension du monde au sein d'une société Hausa* (Paris, 1975); Joseph H. Greenberg, *The Influence of Islam on a Sudanese Religion* (New York, 1946).

[41] R. S. O'Fahey, "Fur and Fartit: The History of a Frontier," in John Mack and Peter Robertshaw, eds., *Culture History in the Southern Sudan: Archaeology, Linguistics and Ethnohistory* (Nairobi, 1982), 75–87.

for export across the Sahara and for local use. But wars of conquest provided temptations to apply post-facto determinations of who might properly be regarded as Muslim. So, conquerors deemed entire geographic regions as "*Dar al-Harb*," the land of warfare and unbelief, and their entire populations as "*zunuj*," enslaveable barbarians (a concept akin to the Abyssinian *shankilla*). In the sultanate of Darfur, these ideas were grafted onto much more ancient traditions that disdained people who lived outside the rule of the state. A nineteenth-century song scorned such people as "slaves who yet go free"; as heathens and cannibals who wander about naked.[42] The convergence of such ideas yielded particularly vivid understandings of barbarism as an inherited trait that could be read not only in behavior but also in the body. Among Fulbe intellectuals connected to the Sokoto Caliphate, the characterization of any state or people as black or Sudanese connoted "the general charge of heathenism."[43] But such ingrained attitudes could also be found in regions that had never been under Caliphate rule. Fulbe in Burkina Faso commonly believed that all non-Fulbe, whether enslaved or not, had inherited traits that rendered them innately servile. They were "black, fat, coarse, naïve, irresponsible," and "dominated by their needs and their emotions"—the direct opposite of the ideal Fulbe.[44]

Muslim scholars did not uniformly accept these ideas; they debated them for generations. The sharpest debates arose from the unlawful enslavement of people who were, in fact, freeborn Muslims, an act sometimes justified on the grounds that their Islam was insufficiently orthodox.[45] Critics often cited a seventeenth-century text by the Timbuktu scholar Ahmad Baba. On the central point, Baba's judgment was clear: Islam forbade the enslavement of Muslims, and skin-color made no difference in that regard. The detailed attention he gives to refuting queries that impute an inherent barbarism to black skin (many of his interlocutors mentioned the curse of Ham) attests to the wide circulation of those concepts among Berber and Arab slave traders. But when it comes to the enslavement of entire categories of peoples below this level of black/white, Baba's judgment is ambiguous. He is less concerned with the question of whether it is possible to characterize entire peoples as non-believers as much as he disagrees about *which* peoples can be so judged: while it was unlawful to enslave captives taken from peoples or polities whose rulers were known for having voluntarily embraced Islam,

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[42] Ibid., 78.

[43] Last, *Sokoto Caliphate*, lxxvi.

[44] Paul Riesman, *Freedom in Fulani Social Life: An Introspective Ethnography* (Chicago, 1998 [1974]), 117.

[45] Paul Lovejoy, "Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate," in Paul Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, 1981), 201–43; John Ralph Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa: Volume 1, Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement* (London, 1985), esp. the chapters by Willis and Paolo Fernando de Moraes Farias.

descendants of other "clans" or "nations" were fair game. Baba provided a "confessional ethnography" of such collective distinctions which later jurists found invaluable.[46] So even for Baba, there was slippage between the categories of civilized belief and descent. But most pertinent was the middle ground accepted by all participants in these debates. Even the sternest critics, Baba included, accepted that conversion did not erase slave status; on the contrary, no matter how pious a slave, her servile status stemmed from her "original non-belief," that is, her ancestors' refusal to convert. The practice of slavery, in other words, reproduced and reinforced discourses that enshrined barbarism and unbelief as elements of descent.[47]

Although Islam provided a powerful cultural and legal discourse for limning distinctions between the civilized and the barbarian, it was not responsible for introducing slavery to Africa.[48] And whether Muslim or not, any society with widespread and long-lasting institutions of slavery (what Moses Finley distinguished as "slave-societies") might produce discourses of inherited difference that continued to "nourish a kind of everyday racism" vis-à-vis slave descendants long after emancipation.[49] Highland Ethiopians boasted a terminology that stigmatized precise degrees of slave descent as far back as the seventh generation (that is, a person of one-128th part slave ancestry).[50] In twentieth-century Zanzibar, stereotypes derived from the history of slavery were even imposed on voluntary labor migrants who had come long after abolition, which, in turn, prompted the migrants to identify with a history of oppression at the hands of "Arab" slave-traders.[51] By contrast, where slavery was only incidental ("societies with slaves"), it left only vague memories, usually in the form of unequal ties of kinship between "junior" slave and "senior" master lineages.[52] But even in such places, slave descendants might continue to be stigmatized because of their ancestry. In

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[46] Hall, *History of Race*, 84–86.

[47] Ahmad Baba, *Mi'raj al-Su'ud: Ahmad Baba's Replies on Slavery*, annotated and trans. by John Hunwick and Fatima Harrak (Rabat, 2000). I have also relied on the translation in Bernard Barbour and Michelle Jacobs, "The Mi'raj: A Legal Treatise on Slavery by Ahmad Baba," in John Ralph Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London, 1985), vol. 1, 125–59.

[48] Nor was it responsible for first introducing discourses of slaves' barbarian alterity: for early second-millennium evidence from a region then well outside the reach of the Saharan or Indian Ocean trades, see Marcos Leitão de Almeida, "Speaking of Slavery: Slaving Strategies and Moral Imaginations in the Lower Congo (Early Times to the Late 19th Century)," PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2020.

[49] Roger Botte, "De l'esclavage et du daltonisme dans les sciences sociales," in R. Botte, ed., "L'Ombre portée de l'esclavage: avatars contemporains de l'oppression sociale," special issue of *Journal des Africanistes* 70 (2000): 7–42, here 11; Moses Finley, "Slavery," *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 14 (New York, 1968), 303–13.

[50] Pankhurst, "History of Bareya," 29–30.

[51] Glassman, "Racial Violence," and *War of Words*.

[52] Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, "African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality," in Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, 1977), 3–81.

postcolonial Ghana, suspicion of slave ancestry can prevent appointment to an Akan chieftaincy.[53]

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One need not look only at centralized states or slave-societies to find discourses of inherited civilization and difference. They can be found in settings throughout the continent, as can signs of their incipient racialization and their entanglement with more explicit racial discourses introduced from the West or the Arab Middle East. Most common are historical motifs that distinguish between immigrants and autochthons, a discursive tradition mentioned above. Those motifs in turn are part of a broader and probably quite ancient political culture that conceives authority in terms of frontiers and pioneers—a political culture so widespread as to have prompted the anthropologist Igor Kopytoff to describe it as part of a continent-wide "cultural ecumene." In their most general form, these narratives tell of pioneers on a frontier who built communities by welcoming later arrivals; the latecomers were incorporated as junior kin or through other arrangements in which they acknowledged the firstcomers' authority and their prior claims to land and other resources. The possible permutations of such narratives were endless; what they held in common was an idiom in which history was told as a "code of arrivals." In many cases the first pioneers are remembered as having migrated from a long-settled region or well-established polity that was emblematic of a "mature" civilization (as Kopytoff glossed these concepts).[54] We have already seen traces of such motifs in the myths of the Hausa founding heroes who had come from Bornu or (under an Islamic, Arab-centered overlay) from Baghdad.[55]

　　The founding pioneers[56] are not always remembered as having arrived on an empty landscape, and, depending on their relative numbers and power, they

[53] Sandra E. Greene, *West African Narratives of Slavery: Texts from Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Bloomington, 2011); Alice Bellagamba, Sandra Greene, and Martin A. Klein, "When the Past Shadows the Present: The Legacy in Africa of Slavery and the Slave Trade," in Alice Bellagamba, Sandra E. Greene, and Martin Klein, eds., *The Bitter Legacy: African Slavery Past and Present* (Princeton, 2013), 1–27.

[54] Igor Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," in Igor Kopytoff, ed., *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, 1987), 3–84; "Code of Arrivals," from W. Murphy and C. Bledsoe, "Kinship and Territory in the History of a Kpelle Chiefdom (Liberia)," in ibid., 123–47.

[55] Other examples of such myths beneath an Islamic overlay include Muhammad Bello's story of Fulbe origin from the Maghreb via the Western Sudan (see note 36), and the Shirazi myths of the Swahili coast.

[56] I use the term "first" or "founding pioneers" where Kopytoff uses the term "firstcomer." As he notes, the "firstcomers" were rarely remembered as having actually been the first to occupy a territory. Kopytoff's readers often elide the distinction between "firstcomers" and autochthons; hence my alternate locution.

would have had to establish relations with people already present. The ambivalent nature of those relations is reflected in historical narratives, and in associated social and ritual practices, where the earliest residents are remembered as *autochthonous*, in the precise sense of that term: that is, as people whose origins tied them to the earth in a primal way. In many narratives, the autochthons are remembered for having been driven off (a common motif tells of them disappearing into the earth from which they had come), in which case the arriving pioneers inherited or appropriated some of their ritual powers. But in other cases, the present-day community still includes families acknowledged as being of autochthonous descent.

In societies where such concepts hold sway, the status of chronological primacy attributed to the autochthonous stratum is usually expressed in terms of their special ritual ties to the land. In the Mossi kingdom of Yatenga in Burkina Faso, for example, the population was divided between the *moose*, regarded as descendants of the exogenous founding-hero, and the *tengabiise*, descendants of the autochthons. The kingdom's exogenous founder-hero had introduced the arts of statecraft, and his descendants were imbued with the quality of creative political power, or *naam*: the ability to wield political force over others.[57] The *moose*, then, were understood as the *gens du pouvoir*, in Michel Izard's translation of these Mossi concepts. But they took care to maintain structured relationships with the autochthonous families, the *gens de la terre* (or *maîtres de la terre*), whose inherited ties to nature and to the soil invested them with the ability to control fertility and the rains.[58] Traces of tensions between similar categories can be found in the early histories of many polities, as exogenous founder-heroes were pressed by circumstances to co-opt or otherwise gain control over the autochthons' ritual powers.[59] The narratives sometimes tell this tale through

[57] *Naam* was thus akin to what James Boswell and Samuel Johnson described as the "useful violence" by which the Romans and English had civilized their barbarian subjects: Sebastiani, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 13.
[58] Michel Izard, *Gens du pouvoir, gens de la terre: les institutions politiques de l'ancien royaume du Yatenga* (Cambridge, 1985); *idem*, "Remarques sur le vocabulaire politique mossi," *L'Homme* 13, 1/2 (1973): 193–206. *Moose* descent is traced through the paternal line.
[59] Kopytoff, "Internal African Frontier," 50–56. It should be emphasized that African thinkers rearranged and recombined these motifs in precolonial times just as they continued to do after European conquest. Examples (with the permutations and variants mentioned above) include the legends of the early Cwezi kings who preceded the historical dynasties of Bunyoro and Nkore: Iris Berger, "Deities, Dynasties, and Oral Tradition: The History and Legend of the Abacwezi," in Joseph C. Miller, ed., *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History* (Folkestone, 1980), 61–81; Karugire, *History of the Kingdom*, esp. 96–104, 137–40. (Some colonial-era intellectuals, European and African, interpreted the Cwezi legends in terms of Hamitic racial science.) Other examples: Donald Donham, "On Being 'First': Making History by Twos in Southern Ethiopia," *Northeast African Studies*, n.s. 7, 3 (2000): 21–33; David Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, A Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region* (Portsmouth, 1998), 181–82, 203–4; Georges Balandier, *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Congo* (New York, 1968), 38–41; Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*

a motif of matrilateral conflict: the autochthons welcome the founding pioneer and give him one of their daughters to wed; the children of that union, once grown, rise up and overthrow the rule of their autochthonous maternal grandparents, displacing them in the name of their paternal, exogenous line. We have seen another example in origin-myths of the Hausa *sarauta*.[60]

What we have here, then, are ranked ethnic categories whose members understand themselves as standing in a relationship stemming from a history of displacement or conquest. Understandably, modern authors go out of their way to refute colonial-era interpretations that depicted such categories as vestiges of ancient racial conquests, along the lines of the Hamitic hypothesis. But the categories themselves were significant in precolonial thought, and while we might hesitate to describe them with the word "race," we should recognize the family resemblance. As such, these discourses were susceptible to becoming racialized, especially when they became entangled with others. The motif of matrilateral conflict between autochthons and immigrants, for example, appears in the Arab-centered foundation myths concerning the Fulbe emirates and the Swahili city-states.[61] In more recent times, discourses of autochthony and exogeny have become politicized and racialized through entanglement with the neoliberal land policies of the postcolonial nation-state. The anthropologist Jean-Pierre Dozon, among others, has shown how tensions arising from such policies in Ivory Coast got mapped onto local discourses of autochthons and pioneers—of *gens de la terre* and *gens du pouvoir*—that, in turn, can be traced to the late eighteenth century if not earlier.[62] Much of the ensuing bloodshed has been of the dramatic, theatrical kind characteristic of racial violence—violence, as I have argued elsewhere, that cannot be explained simply in instrumental terms, as is common

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(Madison, 1966), 38, 71–73; and *The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples* (Madison, 1978), 55. The autochthons in the latter instance were "pygmy" hunter-gatherers.

[60] In addition to Izard, see Dominique Zahan, "Towards a History of the Yatenga Mossi," in Pierre Alexandre, ed., *French Perspectives in African Studies* (London, 1973), 96–117; Murphy and Bledsoe, "Kinship and Territory."

[61] Bello, "Origin of the Fulbe"; Neville Chittick, "The Early History of Kilwa Kivinje," *Azania* 4, 1 (1969): 153–59.

[62] Jean-Pierre Dozon, "L'étranger et l'allochtone en Côte d'Ivoire," in Bernard Contamin and H. Memel-Fotê, eds., *Le modèle ivoirien en questions* (Paris, 1997), 779–98; and the synthesis of the Ivory Coast literature in Jonathon Glassman, "The Racialization of Civic Discourses in Twentieth-Century Africa," unpublished MS. See also Carola Lentz, who takes issue with interpretations that see in contemporary autochthony claims solely the hand of colonial rule and latter-day globalization; rather, she writes, they should also be traced to "precolonial configurations of first-comers and late-comers"; "Land Rights and the Politics of Belonging in Africa," in Richard Kuba and C. Lentz, eds., *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa* (Leiden, 2006), 14.

among scholars who wish to minimize the role of racial or ethnic subjectivities.[63]

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Perhaps the most telling examples of quasi-historicist discourses of autochthony and difference pertain to distinctions between sedentary farmers and neighbors who specialize in hunting and foraging. In the 1980s and 1990s these matters gave rise to contentious debates in two separate literatures: on the Basarwa or "Bushmen" of southern Africa and the Batwa or "Pygmies" of the Congo basin rainforest.[64] The conventional view, which was part of colonial knowledge, had regarded the foragers as racially distinct from the farmers: as living fossils who had failed to embark on the evolutionary stages of progress that led to settled agriculture. But revisionists noted, from both contemporary observations and historical sources, that foragers often depended on sustained relationships with farmers, developing specialized skills to provide niche products for exchange with farmers or undertaking part-time farm labor. In many ways, the debates that ensued from these two positions engaged old assumptions about ethnic categories as units of analysis; the revisionists who launched the so-called Kalahari Debate took their lead from a classic essay in which Shula Marks challenged the notion that San hunter-gatherers and Khoikhoi herders constituted discrete, ethnically circumscribed ways of life in the Dutch Cape Colony.[65] To the extent that the revisionists have won this larger battle—that the ethnic "group" has been dismantled as a unit of historical or sociological analysis, and we recognize the African past to have been characterized by broad cultural ecumenes and inter-braided cultural practices—the questions in these debates have lost much of their

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[63] Glassman, *War of Words*, esp. ch. 7. For the racialized nature of violence in post-Cold War Ivory Coast, see Ruth Marshall-Fratani, "The War of 'Who Is Who': Autochthony, Nationalism, and Citizenship in the Ivoirian Crisis," *African Studies Review* 49, 2 (2006): 9–43; Claudine Vidal, "Du conflit politique aux menaces entre voisins: Deux témoignages abidjanais," in Marc Le Pape and C. Vidal, eds., *Côte d'Ivoire: l'année terrible 1999–2000* (Paris, 2002), 215–52; idem, "La brutalisation du champ politique ivoirien," in *Frontières de la citoyenneté et violence politique en Côte d'Ivoire* (Dakar, 2008), 169–81; Corinne Dufka, *Côte d'Ivoire: The New Racism: The Political Manipulation of Ethnicity in Côte d'Ivoire*, Human Rights Watch 13, 6 (A) (New York, 2001); Richard Banégas and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, "Côte d'Ivoire: Negotiating Identity and Citizenship," in Morten Bøås and Kevin C. Dunn, eds., *African Guerillas: Raging against the Machine* (Boulder, 2007).

[64] All four words are problematic for different reasons, yet, being commonly used in the literature, are unavoidable.

[65] Edwin Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (Chicago, 1989); Shula Marks, "Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of African History* 13, 1 (1972): 55–80; Richard Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1985).

urgency.[66] But the revisionists advanced an extreme instrumentalist position that the "ethnic" distinctions were mere illusions, the result of conjunctural circumstances that had reduced former farmers to the level of landless "serfs," forced to forage for want of better alternatives.

In fact, the evidence is overwhelming that, in many places, distinctions between farmers and foragers, and the symbiotic relations between them, have been maintained for generations, and have given rise to complex discourses expressive of their ambiguous relationship. In other words, they do not merely reflect ad hoc or conjunctural conditions as suggested by the instrumentalist view. In the rainforest of the Congo basin, farmers and "Pygmy" hunter-gatherers perceive themselves as belonging to two discrete ethnic communities and understand their differences in terms of descent and corresponding physical traits. Yet at the same time, they are closely tied to one another in tight-knit relationships based on economic specialization. The precise forms of those relationships have varied from place to place and have always been subject to historical change. But in many instances they have been structured and ongoing, reproduced over extended periods.[67] Moreover, they have been *ranked*: although the relative valuation of each side's economic contribution depends on one's perspective, both generally agree that the foragers "depend" on the farmers for their main caloric intake. Despite this shared language of Pygmy dependency, the relationship is understandably ambiguous, marked by mutual disdain and, on the part of the Pygmies, the sense of frustrated hostility that Nietzsche called *ressentiment*, itself a sentiment that bespeaks a ranked relationship.[68] Alongside their scorn, farmers fear and even respect Pygmies as masters of the forest environment who possess crucial skills and ritual powers that the farmers themselves lack.[69] Those skills and powers are said to derive from Pygmies' status as descendants of the forest's autochthonous inhabitants.

[66] Glassman, "Ethnicity and Race"; for "inter-braided" (*symplectiques*): Jean-Loup Amselle, "Ethnies et espaces: pour une anthropologie topologique," in Jean-Loup Amselle and Elikia M'Bokolo, eds., *Au Coeur de l'ethnie: Ethnies, tribalisme et État en Afrique* (Paris, 1989), 11–48.

[67] Jan Vansina emphasized both points in his valuable overview, "Do Pygmies Have a History?" *Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika* 7, 1 (1986): 431–45.

[68] For ranking and *ressentiment*, see especially Serge Bahuchet, *La rencontre des agriculteurs: les Pygmées parmi les peuples d'Afrique centrale* (Paris, 1993); and Roy Grinker, *Houses in the Rain Forest: Ethnicity and Inequality among Farmers and Foragers in Central Africa* (Berkeley, 1994). *Ressentiment* is most suggestively expressed in tensions over Pygmy crop theft, for which also see Karen Biesbrouck, "Agriculture among Equatorial African Hunter-Gatherers and the Process of Sedentarization: The Case of the Bagyeli in Cameroon," in Karen Biesbrouck, Stefan Elders, and Gerda Rossel, eds., *Central African Hunter-Gatherers in a Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Leiden, 1999), 189–206.

[69] These concepts are a variant of a much broader set of discursive forms concerning the idea of "the bush" (as distinct from "the village"), the history of which has been traced by Kathryn De Luna, *Collecting Food, Cultivating People: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa* (New Haven, 2016).

Evidence of longstanding ethnic distinctions between farmers and foragers is derived from many sources, including archaeology and historical linguistics. But the most emphatic arguments cite genetic evidence: as one paleoanthropologist notes, African hunter-gatherers have become "iconic in the genetic literature."[70] In a way, such scholarship seeks to determine the extent to which hunter-gatherers constitute a separate race, in the biological sense—and an "autochthonous" race, to boot, insofar as it also usually seeks to demonstrate the presence of this distinct foraging population millennia before farmers or any others arrived on the scene. Understandably, this can cause discomfort among historians, since it seems to reify scientific concepts of race that we have learned to distrust. But we should keep in mind that the scientific concepts are not altogether exceptional. Rather, they share with *all* concepts of racial and ethnic difference the core idea of sexual avoidance, that is, the assumption that sexual reproduction across boundaries is limited or altogether absent. Of course, the notion that racial boundaries can be determined biologically is subverted by the simple fact that human sexual behavior is always more "disorderly" than idealized categorical orders might imply.[71] Debates about population genetics in central and southern Africa, then, only divert attention from the main issue: no matter what the genetic evidence suggests, pervasive disapproval of intermarriage, or ideals that limit it to forager female hypergamy (in which forager women can marry "up"), reflect longstanding *perceptions* of genealogical separation among farmers and foragers themselves.[72]

These perceptions of genealogical separation were not introduced by colonialism; the evidence from historical linguistics indicates that they have existed for a long time.[73] Most striking is how they conceive of hunter-foragers as autochthons whose way of life is a primordial element held over

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[70] Alison Brooks, "Cultural Contact in Africa, Past and Present: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Status of African Foragers," in Susan Kent, ed., *Ethnicity, Hunter-Gatherers, and the 'Other'* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 206–29, here 209.

[71] I adapt here language from Painter, *History of White People*, 385.

[72] For what it is worth, the genetic evidence suggests that such hypergamy has been practiced for many generations: Brooks, "Cultural Contact"; also see Alan Barnard and Michael Taylor, "The Complexities of Association and Assimilation: An Ethnographic Overview," in Susan Kent, ed., *Ethnicity, Hunter-Gatherers, and the 'Other'* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 230–46. Globally, even some of the most rigid proscriptions of ethnic or racial intermarriage allow for female hypergamy; in such cases, descent is typically calculated through the patriline. Where marriage is absolutely forbidden, as under white supremacy, interracial sexual contact is countenanced only between women of the subordinate and men of the dominant race. Thus, codes of gender and racial inequality are kept in sync.

[73] The scholars who make these arguments also rely on archaeology and comparative ethnography. They include Bahuchet, *La rencontre*; Kairn Kliemann, *"The Pygmies Were Our Compass": Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 C.E.* (Portsmouth, 2003).

from ancient times, before farmers ever arrived on the scene. Those concepts are reflected in words that exist in many of the region's Bantu languages, cognates of "Batwa" and "Basarwa," which signify autochthons who live in the forest by hunting and foraging or who originally did so. These words are ancient, as are their attested meanings.[74] In her deep history of the west-central rainforest, Kairn Klieman contends that the "ideology of the primordial Batwa" has remained a "root metaphor" for centuries, "adjusted to fit major transformations in social, political, and intellectual thought."[75]

Such indigenous concepts of primordial Pygmy autochthony parallel evolutionist historicism. The anthropologist Roy Grinker, who conducted research in the Ituri forest of northeastern Congo, has described in detail some motifs that are common among farmers' perceptions of foragers. In a variation of a motif about autochthons that can be found throughout the continent, the foragers in this instance, known as Efe, are said to have originally emerged from the stumps of trees that were being cleared by newly arrived farmers, the Lese.[76] At the time of Grinker's research in the 1980s, Lese and Efe lived in ongoing, tightly-knit symbiotic relations; each Lese family had a sustained tie with "its" Efe, whom it "fed" from its farm in exchange for bushmeat and other forest products. Yet the farmers considered Efe quintessential outsiders: while Lese were "village people," Efe were "forest people." Lese used the metaphor of marriage to describe the relationship: like a wife in her husband's village, Efe are permanent outsiders. And as the farming village was the locus of civilization, farmers regarded Efe as emblematic barbarians. In the Lese moral universe, as among farmer communities throughout the broader region, civil order inheres in discipline and control, including the ability to clear forest for farming: qualities that John Lonsdale, in another context, transcribes as *self-mastery*.[77] Those are qualities which, in the farmers' view, the foragers lack. "The Lese view the Efe as they view the forest," writes Grinker: "both are

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[74] Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison, 1990), 56; Thilo Schadeberg, "Batwa: The Bantu Name for the Invisible People," in Karen Biesbrouck, Stefan Elders, and Gerda Rossel, eds., *Central African Hunter-Gatherers in a Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Leiden, 1999), 21–39; Axel Köhler and Jerome Lewis, "Putting Hunter-Gatherer and Farmer Relations in Perspective: A Commentary from Central Africa," in Susan Kent, ed., *Ethnicity, Hunter-Gatherers, and the 'Other'* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 276–305.

[75] Klieman, *Pygmies*, quote from 211. She writes in fact not merely of centuries but of "millennia."

[76] Elsewhere in the Congo basin, Pygmies are also said to be descended from chimpanzee-like creatures: Bahuchet, *La rencontre*.

[77] John Lonsdale, "The Moral Economy of Mau Mau," in Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflicts in Kenya & Africa, Book 2: Violence & Ethnicity* (Athens, Oh., 1992), 265–467; also see Riesman, *Freedom*, for similar discourses in Burkina Faso.

wild." Forest people are unable to harness their passions or control their defecation; they copulate with abandon.[78]

But although they lacked the farmers' qualities of *sibosibo* (foresight, patience, and rationality), the autochthonous Efe were respected by the farmers for their knowledge of matters pertaining to nature. Like autochthons elsewhere (including *gens de la terre* in the relationships described by Izard and others), Efe provided their farming patrons with ritual services connected to the territorial spirits that ensured fertility and fecundity. The nature of these complementary knowledges is captured in a widely told myth about the origin of the Lese-Efe relationship. An Efe ancestor was bewildered by the behavior of his grandmother, who, after defecating, habitually wiped her anus on his thigh. His Lese trading-partner showed him how to stop such savagery, through an act of shrewdly calculated, socially useful violence. The Efe, in gratitude, taught the farmer how to copulate and reproduce. Efe autochthons thus taught the farmers about the life-giving forces that stemmed from animal urges, nature, and the forest; the Lese newcomers taught the forest people how to control those forces.[79]

Although these images are specific to central Africa, the ideas they reflect should strike a chord in anyone familiar with Western racial thought. Their central component, as of others that contrast autochthons and civilizing newcomers, might be described as an African version of evolutionist historicism, in which Pygmies and other autochthons figure as living remnants of earlier, pre-civilized humankind. Such concepts, of course, resemble how Hegel or Trevor-Roper characterized *all* Africans. But a more illuminating comparison is with an evolutionist writer who actually visited Africa, Joseph Conrad. As Marlow travels up the river in *Heart of Darkness,* toward the very region Grinker describes, he felt he was going back to the beginnings of the world. Still, he could not restrain his admiration for the qualities of the Africans he encountered: their wildness, their closeness to nature. (Such evolutionist thought continues to echo in stereotyped praise of Africans' presumably natural abilities in dance and other intuitive creative endeavors.) Marlow mocked the Europeans in the Congo, himself included, as mere phantoms, passing through; Africans, in contrast, belonged where they were, as if rooted to the soil. Pygmies in another part of the rainforest, supposed autochthons, likewise regard "village people" as only "passing by." Farmers "came into life," they like to say, "but will go again."[80]

Is this African historicism merely a reflection of Western influence? To be sure, there is ample evidence that contemporary Africans apply Western-

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[78] Grinker, *Houses*; the quotes are from Grinker, "Structuring Inequality between Foragers and Farmers in the Ituri Forest, Zaire," *American Ethnologist* 17, 1 (1990): 111–30, here 118.

[79] Grinker, "Structuring Inequality," 121–22.

[80] Kohler and Lewis, "Putting Hunter-Gatherer," 280–81.

derived concepts to denigrate hunter-foragers as unlettered, unlearned, and resistant to progress.[81] But in their specifics, the African stereotypes differ sufficiently from the European ones to make one doubt a simple, unilinear story of diffusion. The common European fixation on Pygmies' short stature, for example, does not figure in the African stereotypes Grinker describes. The evidence from historical linguistics suggests that the motifs described by Grinker and others can be traced to times long before Western intellectual impact. So Klieman's evaluation is no doubt correct: there were "two primordialist paradigms" about Batwa difference, one Western and one African. In the history of autochthony and historicism, as in the history of barbarism and civilization, Western and African intellectual interaction was a story of convergence and entanglement, not indoctrination.

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In suggesting the possibility of African historicist discourses and their convergence with Western notions of racial difference, I follow authors who argue that we take seriously African thinkers' role in the creation of European "Africanist" knowledge.[82] To be sure, modern ethnic thought in Africa shows the influence of Western ideas, to say nothing of the social and political contexts created by colonial rule and colonial and postcolonial capitalism: this central contention of the modernist narratives cannot be denied. But in tracing the emergence of modern ethnic thought, one should not ignore the legacy of older, local ways of thinking about difference. The literature on precolonial Africa, including *longue durée* studies of early history, reveals the existence of indigenous discourses of difference that utilized metaphors of descent. Modern histories show how those discourses were often transformed under twentieth-century circumstances into "tribe" and "race." But the histories of those discourses started long before the colonial moment. Certainly, there are no grounds for posing categorical distinctions between modes of ethnic thought and insisting that one mode (e.g., race) has purely European origins. Labels such as "race," "ethnicity," and "nationalism" are useful only as descriptive devices, not analytical categories, and insisting on a firm boundary between them can only impede historical investigations into how a form of thought we are content to describe with one of these labels may have emerged from something that

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[81] Pnina Motzafi-Haller, "Beyond Textual Analysis: Practice, Interacting Discourses, and the Experience of Distinction in Botswana," *Cultural Anthropology* 13, 4 (1998): 522–47; Biesbrouck, "Agriculture."

[82] E.g., Helen Tilley and Robert Gordon, eds., *Ordering Africa: Anthropology, European Imperialism and the Politics of Knowledge* (Manchester, 2007). This approach is in keeping with the arguments of a now substantial literature that eschews the notion of two distinct discursive circuits in colonial Africa, one African and the other European.

looked quite different. The central component shared by all these modes of thought—the propensity to categorize human kinds via metaphors of common descent—seems to be ubiquitous in world history, not restricted to any one part of the globe.[83]

A telling illustration of the protean nature of ethno-racial thought can be seen by observers of current African affairs, as the boundaries of some of Africa's postcolonial nation-states seem to be in the process of becoming racialized. In theory, this should not have happened: African nationalisms were resolutely civic (or at any rate based on pan-Africanist notions of belonging that were so broad as to have allowed for the easy sway of *jus soli*), and the states' boundaries had been drawn by European consuls who were famously oblivious to pre-existing political or ethnic identities.[84] Thus many observers were confident that African nationalisms would prove different from those that had produced so much brutality in modern Europe.[85] But in many parts of the continent, the past twenty-five years have seen the rise of "new nativisms" that take the nation-state itself as an "object of devotion" and have prompted popular violence against immigrants from other African countries.[86] Perhaps the best-known instances have been in Ivory Coast and South Africa. In the latter, the targets of popular violence have included people who have been continuing the more than century-old patterns of labor migration on which the wealth of modern South Africa was built. They have been vilified as barbarians or *makwerekwere* (the word supposedly indicates the gibberish sounds they make instead of proper language, thus echoing the classic etymology of the Greek *barbaros*), and as carriers of witchcraft, crime, and contagion, in particular HIV. Given that the

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[83] This is perhaps an extension of an even broader propensity to categorize in terms of metaphors of the body and/or to root conceptions of difference in metaphors of nature. Such matters were particularly prominent in the symbolic anthropology of the 1970s and 1980s, much of which traced inspiration to Mary Douglas, especially *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London, 1970), and before her to Durkheim, Mauss, and Vico. For useful overviews, see Roy F. Ellen, "Anatomical Classification and the Semiotics of the Body," in John Blacking, ed., *The Anthropology of the Body* (London, 1977), 343–73; Margaret Lock, "Cultivating the Body: Anthropology and Epistemologies of Bodily Practice and Knowledge," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22 (1993): 133–55, esp. 135–36; John O'Neill, *Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society* (Ithaca, 1985).

[84] Yet despite such arbitrariness, the Europeans who drew the boundaries were not as oblivious to local conditions as is commonly assumed, and political realities on the ground, as interpreted by the consuls' African interlocutors, played a role: Saadia Touval, "Treaties, Borders, and the Partition of Africa," *Journal of African History* 7, 2 (1966): 279–93.

[85] As observed by Crawford Young, "Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Class in Africa: A Retrospective," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 103 (1986): 421–95. Also see Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State* (New York, 1992).

[86] The growing literature includes Achille Mbembe, ed., "Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism," special issue, *African Studies Review* 44, 2 (2001). For "object of devotion," see Francis Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa* (Dakar, 2006).

recently overthrown system of apartheid had been based on persistent efforts to engineer divisions of nation, race, and tribe, the ironies of this situation have troubled the moral imaginations of many South Africans.[87]

Given the recent vintage of Africa's national borders, most studies of these phenomena understandably emphasize their modern context, explaining them in terms of late twentieth-century globalization and the attendant intensification of labor flows and other forms of economic migration.[88] Yet, valuable as they are, such explanations are not in themselves sufficient. In Ivory Coast, rhetoric directed against immigrants from Mali and Burkina Faso has been shaped by a much deeper history of tension between Muslim merchants from the north and people of the forest and forest-savanna transition zones in the south. That fellow citizens from northern Ivory Coast (and, at times, all Ivorian Muslims) are falsely denigrated as Burkinabè foreigners points to how the new nativism has become imbricated with those older discourses. Another source of nativist conflict in Ivory Coast involves tensions over neoliberal politics of "development" (*mise en valeur*). As I have indicated above, these tensions, too, have become racialized in part through their entanglement with much older inherited discourses of autochthony and civilizing pioneers. The racialized violence that has arisen from both axes of tension—in a country that, like post-apartheid South Africa, was once considered a textbook example of African civic nationalism —suggests that African nationalisms contain no fewer perils in this regard than their counterparts elsewhere in the world.

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[87] They have also prompted a flood of publications; for example, Phaswane Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (Pietermaritzberg, 2001); John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, "Naturing the Nation: Aliens, Apocalypse, and the Postcolonial State," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27 (2001): 627–51; Beth Elise Whitaker, "Citizens and Foreigners: Democratization and the Politics of Exclusion in Africa," *African Studies Review* 48, 1 (2005): 109–26; Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and Outsiders*; Michael Neocosmos, *From "Foreign Natives" to "Native Foreigners": Explaining Xenophobia in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Dakar, 2008); and Shireen Hassim, Twana Kupe, and Eric Worby, eds., *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia, and the Reinvention of Difference in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 2008).

[88] Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and Outsiders*; Peter Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe* (Chicago, 2009).

Abstract: Using material from the history of African thought, this essay proposes a strategy for writing a comparative history of race that ranges beyond a consideration of white supremacy and its anti-racist inflections. Studies of race outside the global north have often been hobbled by rigid modernist assumptions that over-privilege the determining influence of Western discourses at the expense of local intellectual inheritances. This essay, in contrast, proposes a focus on locally inherited discourses of difference that have shown signs of becoming racialized, at times through entanglement with Western ideas. It pays particular attention to discourses that arranged "human kinds" along a progression from barbarian to civilized, suggesting the presence of African historicisms that in modern times have converged with the stadial ideas that played a major role in Western racial thought.

Key words: barbarism, civilization, ethnicity, historicism, nativism, progress, race, racism, stadial, tribe