

Quand parler de racialisation ? Trouver les mots de la minorisation et de la discrimination au Moyen-Orient et au Maghreb

When to speak of racialisation? Choosing the right words for minorisation and discrimination in the Middle East and North Africa

PARTIE 1

Responsables

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Programme de la partie 1 *Terminological considerations* *Réflexions terminologiques*

Kahina Guillard (Cermom, CESSMA, Inalco)

At the root of a terminological doubt: Expressing anti-gypsyism in words
À l'origine d'un doute terminologique: Mettre les mots sur l'antitsiganisme

Armand Aupiais (URMIS-Paris, IFEA-Istanbul)

Colorism, southernism, and immigrants' racialisation in contemporary Turkey
Colorisme, sudalisme, et racisation des immigré-es en Turquie contemporaine

Gaëlle Wahid-Simon (Institut Agro Rennes, Laboratoire ESO)

What does being white mean? Historical perspectives and study cases in Brazil, Western Europe and Morocco

Qu'est-ce qu'être blanc? Perspectives historiques et études de cas au Brésil, en Europe de l'Ouest et au Maroc

Kahina Guillard

At the root of a terminological doubt: Expressing anti-gypsyism in words
To introduce this workshop, I propose to look back at the beginnings of a terminological consideration initiated by my recent research on anti-gypsyism in the Middle East. Far from being self-evident, the link between anti-gypsyism and racism is an exception in the choice of analytical grids used by specialists in Gypsy studies in the West (Kohn, 1996; About, 2020). Nevertheless, when those active in this field evoke racism and insist on its use, the researcher has no choice but to seize upon it, despite the unease that its use engenders, particularly in the public space, but also in academic circles, especially when it comes to defining it (Zoubir, 2023).

Racism, although evoked or euphemistically referred to as discrimination and marginalisation, is little used in the literature either as an englobing concept or as a process, like racialisation. This caution with regard to these terms perhaps stems from a concern about the generalisability of empirical cases. Nevertheless, this reflection deserves to be discussed, expanded, and more clearly justified, whichever way it goes.

In this preliminary contribution, I wish to examine what racialisation does to relations with the Other in the Middle Eastern context, and conversely what anti-gypsyism in the region teaches us about different forms of racism.

En guise d'introduction pour cet atelier, je propose de revenir sur les prémices d'une réflexion terminologique initiée par mes travaux de recherche sur l'antitsiganisme au Moyen-Orient. Loin d'être une évidence, le rapprochement entre antitsiganisme et racisme fait figure d'exception dans le choix des grilles d'analyse des spécialistes des études tsiganes en Occident (Kohn, 1996 ; About, 2020). Malgré tout, lorsque les acteurs du terrain évoquent le racisme et insistent sur son usage, la chercheuse n'a d'autre choix que de s'en emparer, malgré le malaise que son emploi engendre, en particulier dans l'espace public, mais aussi dans les mondes académiques, notamment lorsqu'il s'agit de le définir (Zoubir, 2023).

Le racisme, bien qu'évoqué ou alors mentionné par euphémisme sous les mots de discrimination et marginalisation, est peu mobilisé par la littérature, ni comme concept englobant ni comme processus, à l'instar de la racialisation. Cette précaution à l'égard de ces termes provient peut-être d'une inquiétude quant à la généralisation des cas empiriques. Néanmoins, cette réflexion mérite d'être discutée, augmentée et plus nettement justifiée, quelle que soit la voie qui s'impose.

Par cet avant-propos, je souhaite interroger ce que fait la racialisation aux rapports à l'Autre en contexte moyen-oriental, et inversement ce que l'antitsiganisme dans la région nous apprend des différents racismes.

Armand Aupiais

Colorism, southernism, and immigrants' racialisation in contemporary Turkey

This paper is based on a research study carried out in Turkey among Christian immigrant populations from the Global South, particularly from Africa. After problematising their invisibilisation within the hegemonic ethno-confessional assignation regime, we will question othering processes provisionally described as colourist and/or southernist, emphasising the critical vigilance required in a context of relative epistemological heteronomy in relation to the heart of Western expansionism and its postcolonial or subaltern margins.

The emerging application of critical race studies in Turkey is often carried at a general level that tends to dissociate "whiteness" from the history of the transatlantic slave trade, and to reduce "everyday racism" to the character of hostility towards a difference of "colour" considered to be self-evident. If Ottoman slavery—mainly fuelled by the spoils of Balkan or Pontic campaigns and marked by the widespread practice of emancipation—is not questioned as a key factor in the emergence of colour as a mark of radical (naturalised) and familiar (domesticised) otherness, the daily experience of African immigrants demonstrates the coextensive nature of the relationships of assignment to subaltern employment, of appropriation of bodies through sexual predation, and of chosification that they identify as slavery.

We will also consider the concept of "southernism" (Piolat 2022), constructed as an extension of the orientalist imaginary—in which Turkey occupies an ambivalent position—and a new proposal for articulating the physicalist and culturalist criteria in racialisation processes. In a situation where international migration is being constructed as a public problem, the stigmatisation of immigrants, including within minority and marginalised religious configurations, calls for a postcolonial reading of the mechanisms of alterisation and a materialist perspective on the imaginary (re)fabrication of the Global South.

Cette communication se base sur une enquête menée en Turquie auprès de populations chrétiennes immigrées des Suds, originaires d'Afrique en particulier. Après avoir problématisé leur invisibilisation dans le régime d'assignation ethno-confessionnel hégémonique, nous interrogerons les processus d'altérisation provisoirement qualifiés de coloriste et/ou de sudaliste, en insistant sur la vigilance critique nécessaire dans un contexte d'hétéronomie épistémologique relative par rapport au cœur de l'expansionnisme occidental et à ses marges postcoloniales ou subalternes.

L'application naissante des *critical race studies* en Turquie se fait à un niveau de généralité tendant à dissocier la «blanchité» de l'histoire de la traite transatlantique, et à réduire le «racisme quotidien» au caractère d'hostilité vis-à-vis d'une différence de «couleur» considérée comme auto-évidente. Si l'esclavagisme ottoman – d'abord alimenté par le butin de campagnes balkaniques ou pontiques et marqué par la pratique généralisée de l'affranchissement – n'est pas questionné comme principal dans l'émergence de la couleur comme marque d'une altérité radicale (naturalisée) et familière (domesticisée), l'expérience quotidienne des immigré-es africain-es démontre la coextensivité des rapports d'assignation à l'emploi subalterne, d'appropriation des corps par la prédation sexuelle, et de chosification qu'ils identifient comme esclavagistes.

Nous considérerons aussi le concept de «sudalisme» (Piolat, 2022), construit comme une extension de l'imaginaire orientaliste – dans lequel la Turquie occupe une position ambivalente – et une nouvelle proposition d'articulation des critères physicalistes et culturalistes dans les processus de racisation. Dans une situation de construction du fait migratoire international comme problème public, la stigmatisation des immigré-es, y compris au sein de configurations religieuses minoritaires et marginalisées, invite à adopter une lecture postcoloniale des mécanismes d'altérisation et une perspective matérialiste sur la (re)fabrique imaginaire des Suds.

Gaëlle Wahid-Simon

What does being white mean? Historical perspectives and study cases in Brazil, Western Europe and Morocco

Being white, as a racial category, is a notion that is being strongly claimed in the current European context, rather turned against immigration. However, this racial category, as any racial category, does not describe a natural state but rather a social construction that varies according to place and time. So what does it actually mean to be white or to be considered as white? This article, through a diachronic approach of the concept of whiteness and synchronous exploration of the white categories in Western Europe, Brazil, and Morocco, based on fieldwork, will venture into the deconstruction of this concept often politically mobilized but rarely defined. We will see that in Western Europe, the concept of whiteness is deeply connected to immigration and the search of an alleged ancestry on the territory, when in Brazil and Morocco, the racial categorizations are more directly linked to the colour of the skin and how this colour is socially perceived. Social attributes play a role on the perception of these colours. In Brazil, most of the people considered as white come from a colonial descent when the indigenous are racialized; same process in Morocco, where people from Arabic background might have “whiter skin” than Amazigh people, especially from the Southern parts of the country. Most of the Arabs do consider themselves as white in Morocco, in opposition to people from the Sahara or from sub-Saharan African countries, when they are racialized in the European context. We will see than in Western Europe, whiteness, as a valorised category, is mobilized by people to difference themselves from who they consider as strangers, and historical construction behind that, when in Brazil and Morocco, whiteness is mobilized by people with colonial descent, both of these phenomena being part of a global structuring racism with different local manifestations.

Être blanc, en tant que catégorie raciale, est une notion fortement revendiquée dans le contexte européen actuel, généralement mise en opposition avec l'immigration. Cependant, cette catégorie raciale, comme toute catégorie raciale, ne décrit pas un état naturel mais plutôt une construction sociale qui varie selon le lieu et le temps. Alors, qu'est-ce que cela signifie réellement d'être blanc ou d'être considéré comme blanc? Cette communication, à travers une approche diachronique du concept de blancheur et l'exploration synchronique des catégories blanches en Europe occidentale, au Brésil et au Maroc, s'aventurera dans la déconstruction de ce concept souvent mobilisé politiquement, mais rarement défini. Nous verrons qu'en Europe de l'Ouest, le concept de blancheur est profondément lié à l'immigration et à la recherche d'une prétendue ancestralité sur le territoire, davantage qu'à la couleur de peau en elle-même, quand au Brésil et au Maroc, les catégorisations raciales sont plus directement liées à la couleur de la peau et à la perception sociale de cette couleur. Les attributs sociaux jouent un rôle dans la perception de ces couleurs. Au Brésil, la plupart des personnes considérées comme blanches sont issues d'une famille à descendance coloniale, alors que les indigènes sont racialisés; même

processus au Maroc, où les personnes d'origine arabe peuvent davantage avoir une peau considérée comme blanche que les Amazighs, en particulier ceux vivant dans le sud du pays. La plupart des Arabo-descendants se considèrent ainsi comme blancs au Maroc, en opposition notamment aux populations du Sahara ou des pays d'Afrique subsaharienne, alors qu'ils sont racialisés dans le contexte européen. Nous verrons donc qu'en Europe occidentale, la blancheur, comme catégorie valorisée, est mobilisée afin de se différencier de ceux considérés comme étrangers et la construction historique derrière ces supposées catégories, quand au Brésil et au Maroc, la blancheur est davantage mobilisée par des personnes d'une descendance coloniale, et donc originellement extérieures au territoire. Ces deux phénomènes font ainsi partie d'un racisme global structurant avec différentes manifestations locales.

PARTIE 2

Responsables

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• Rami Inkheili (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Programme de la partie 2

Multiple experiences of racialization

Expériences multiples de la racialisation

Paloma Serrano Oñate (Université autonome de Madrid)

Syrian refugees: The “self” and the “other” in the discourse of political parties in the 2023 Turkish elections

Réfugiés syriens: Le “soi” et “l’autre” dans le discours des partis politiques lors des élections présidentielles turques de 2023

Inès Le Goff (chercheuse indépendante)

Sub-Saharan immigration to North Africa: Identity issues and socio-cultural dynamic

Rami Inkheili (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Modèles de construction de l’identité noire dans le monde arabe: La Jordanie comme modèle

Models of black identity construction in the Arab world: Jordan as a model

أنماط بناء هوية السود في العالم العربي : الأردن نموذجًا

Paloma Serrano Oñate

Syrian refugees: The “self” and the “other” in the discourse of political parties in the 2023 Turkish elections

The study will present the progress of the doctoral thesis on the representation of Syrian refugees in the discourse of Turkish political parties with seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM), during the legislative and presidential elections of 14 and 28 May 2023—from 18 March, the official start of the electoral cycle, until 11 October, the opening day of the legislative year—a period during which an unprecedented radicalisation of the anti-immigration discourse was observed, which the literature attributes to the presence of the radical right-wing populist Victory Party (ZP) (2021).

The aim is to examine, on the one hand, the validity of the pro-shelter policy discourse of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, which has allowed it to reinforce a discourse on Turkish national identity, in which religion and the Ottoman legacy have a pre-eminent presence, in which it has integrated Syrian refugees as part of this narrative and of the Sunni-Muslim base of the Turkish nation and state. On the other hand, the radicalisation of the discourse of opposition parties, which claim Kemalist secular nationalism, and which represent refugees as a threat to their ethnic base, will be analysed. For this purpose, a theoretical framework has been developed, focusing on critical discourse studies (Faiclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2009) and on the method of frame analysis (Goffman, 1974; Gamson et al., 1982; Snow and Benford, 1988, 2000), through the perspective of Amparán (2005), which applies to the analysis of a specific issue in the context of an electoral juncture, the frameworks of “protagonist” (as he describes himself) and “antagonist” (as he describes his opposition), both as political actors (Hunt et al., 1994), and the “diagnostic” framework (with which the central problem to be addressed is delimited).

L'étude présentera l'avancement de la thèse de doctorat sur la représentation des réfugiés syriens dans le discours des partis politiques turcs avec des sièges à la Grande Assemblée nationale de Turquie (TBMM), lors des élections législatives et présidentielles des 14 et 28 mai 2023 – du 18 mars, début officiel du cycle électoral, jusqu'au 11 octobre, jour d'ouverture de l'année législative –, une période au cours de laquelle on a observé une radicalisation sans précédent du discours anti-immigration, que la littérature attribue au parti populiste de droite radicale Victory Party (ZP).

L'objectif est d'examiner, d'une part, la validité du discours politique pro-réfugiés du gouvernement du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), qui lui a permis de renforcer un discours sur l'identité nationale turque, dans lequel la religion et l'héritage ottoman occupent une place prééminente, et dans lequel ils ont intégré les réfugiés syriens, dans le cadre de ce récit et de la base sunnite-musulmane de la nation et de l'État turcs. D'autre part, nous analyserons la radicalisation du discours des partis d'opposition, qui se réclament d'un nationalisme kémaliste laïc et présentent les réfugiés comme une menace pour leur base ethnique.

Pour ce faire, nous nous concentrons sur un cadre théorique basé sur les études critiques du discours (Faiclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2009) et sur la méthode de l'analyse des cadres (Goffman, 1974; Gamson et al., 1982; Snow et Benford, 1988, 2000), dans la perspective d'Amparán (2005), qui applique à l'analyse d'une question donnée, dans une situation de campagne électorale, les cadres de « protagoniste » (comme il se décrit) et « antagoniste » (comme il décrit son opposition), tous deux en tant qu'acteurs politiques (Hunt et al., 1994), et le « diagnostic » (qui définit le problème central à résoudre).

Inès Le Goff

Sub-Saharan immigration to North Africa: Identity issues and socio-cultural dynamic

This contribution aims to explore identity dynamics in North Africa, focusing on issues related to otherness and sub-Saharan immigration. It relies on data collected during fieldwork conducted between 2022 and 2025, as well as analyses of digital fieldwork.

It seeks to examine how the pursuit of cultural homogeneity can lead to tensions regarding cultural diversity and foster discriminative behaviors. The presence of Sub-Saharan migrant populations highlights complex dynamics in the politico-cultural construction of certain North African states, particularly concerning the recognition of African identity (*africanité*), the memories linked to slavery, and perceptions of racism. Moreover, language plays a significant role in these issues, as illustrated by the use of the term “regionalism” to sometimes refer to racial discrimination, whereas its primary meaning pertains to disparities between regions.

In urban margins and peri-urban areas, the settlement of migrant populations raises questions about territorial appropriation and cohabitation dynamics. These settlements, no longer confined to “ghettos,” foster social and spatial diversity, which generates both tensions and solidarity interactions among various socially marginalized communities. The figure of the so-called “transit migrant” increasingly becomes a permanent element in these territories, redefining representations of North African countries, long perceived primarily as lands of emigration.

By adopting a methodological approach that combines geopolitics and social geography, this contribution analyzes the implications of sub-Saharan presence on the redefinition of local identities and the representations of populations towards this immigration.

Rami Inkheili

Modèles de construction de l'identité noire dans le monde arabe: La Jordanie comme modèle

In an attempt to, holistically, understand the scale, pace, and influence of Black people's identity perception in Jordan, the structure of my ongoing research project will be presented at three interconnected levels. One of them is what I may call image/identity construction hegemonies, the other is the ramifications of those hegemonies, and the last deals with how Black people in Jordan cope with those ramifications. In the workshop, I aim to present the first level which I referred to as the “identity construction models, elements, or hegemonies.” I started this project to explore how the social construction of a racial identity links to historical, social, and cultural accounts, structures, and narratives. While phenotypical attributes that may define race become less influential in such a context, socio-cultural attributes that may define ethnicity appear to be more instrumental in the way a social group is racially imagined and perceived by both mainstream society and racialized groups. In my argument, I suggest three elements that impose a certain perception of “Black people's identity in the collective imaginaries of the mainstream Levantine Arab society, with Jordan as an example. These hegemonies, or elements, are the historical encounters and memories, social structures (genealogical and tribal affiliation), and cultural representations of Black people in the collective Arabian literary, and folkloric memory.

The term “Black people” of Jordan refers to all who self-identify as Somor, or Somran (plural of *Asmar*, which means brown) through ancestral roots that refer their settlement in Jordan and Palestine to several decades and centuries due to different reasons that include voluntary and involuntary settlement for labor, religious, or enlistment purposes. The group also includes those who came and settled in Jordan through different waves of migration from the early 20th century onwards due to engagement in national revolts, encampments to protect holy places or to seek refuge as a result of occupation and

civil wars. Regardless of how dark the tone of the skin, or the national affiliation are, the population of this study includes all those for whom historical, literary, and popular narratives, phenotypical characteristics, and self-reported testimonies have established that their ancient or relatively recent origins go back to black Africa. For such a reason, many several writings referred to them as Afro-Arabs. In the demographic sense, Black people in Jordan include the following communities: Black Jordanians (Ghawarneh of the Jordan valley, Black Bedouins, and Black people communities who hold the Jordanian nationality and come from neighboring countries like Palestine, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, and live either in urban or rural areas across Jordan), Black Palestinian refugees who came to Jordan with the onset of the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars, and sub-Saharan African refugees/asylum-seekers and migrants.

In this project, I adopted a qualitative approach to carry out my research project across the different sections and themes in the research. I used semi-structured interviews and focus groups to collect data and evidence that speak to all study themes, as I wanted to learn about social realities of Black people communities and confirm the validity of my hypothesis, therefore all themes were covered with questions in my interviews and focus groups either with Black people or mainstream communities. For the identity construction elements/hegemonies theme, in addition to interviews and FGDs, I also relied on reviewing a big volume of writings from medieval periods to modern times spanning decades of Black people personification in literary production from different branches of sciences, such as history, geography, travels, medicine, and sociology. Furthermore, I am in the process of reviewing and analyzing more recent media and cultural production contents (TV series, folkloric, old and new songs, popular proverbs, social media posts/comments, blogposts, vlogs, podcasts, and other relevant materials), where people of dark skin have been introduced in several ways or were a subject of focus. My aim is to have a basic understanding about the extent to which this historically passed down Black image perception has been maintained or altered.

I will employ process tracing with reviewed content and data collected throughout the research to understand how events evolved and influenced social phenomenon of concern (which is, in my case, Black identity construction and discrimination Black people go through in a hegemonic Arab context). The research problem of this study is compound in nature; therefore, the research question to be answered is multi-fold and its examined hypotheses are interconnected. On the one hand, the study argues that the perceived image of Black people in the Arab world is a product of passed down socially constructed hegemonies or influences that evolved over the course of time and went through different intensities and transitions as we entered the time of national states and the influence of that in maintaining the notion of collective national identity. On the other hand, discrimination (be it social or institutional) against Black people in Jordan, as case, is a result of such a perceived image that I believe now takes place on the basis of race or combination of race and nationality. Finally, socio-institutional discrimination against Black people, in our case study of Jordan, provoked coping strategies amongst Black peoples' communities to escape stigma and prejudice, and those strategies vary according to the sub-category of the community members. Triggers for sub-categorization may include nationality, tribal affiliation, territorial location, adopted lifestyle, ancestral social functions, etc.

Conclusion

When to speak of racialization? The necessity of mobilizing multiple epistemologies, scales, and mediums

Quand parler de racialisation? La nécessité de mobiliser des épistémologies, des échelles et des supports multiples

To conclude the workshop, we propose an overview of the presentations delivered and outline potential avenues for future exploration. First, we underscore the diverse epistemological approaches employed to describe the complex realities of the contexts under study. These processes of othering—while not reducible to this single phenomenon—are shaped by multiple factors and forms of categorization. These include, but are not limited to, anti-gypsyism racialization, minoritization, colorism, Southernism, and Africanism, all of which challenge and expand our epistemological frameworks.

It is crucial to emphasize the diversity of epistemological tools and to draw insights from multiple literatures—Arabic, Turkish, and South American—to better capture dynamics specific to the Global South, while recognizing their entanglement with broader global contexts. Categories such as “Whiteness,” “Blackness,” “White,” or “Black” carry varied meanings depending on the context and often intersect with other forms of categorization, including tribal, social, or status-based distinctions.

Furthermore, we stress the dual scale at which these processes operate. On the one hand, they occur internally, as seen in the cases of “Black” Jordanians, the Dom people in the Middle East, or the interplay between Arabs and Amazigh communities in Morocco. On the other hand, they manifest externally, particularly in reference to immigrants and refugees in Turkey, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Lastly, we highlight the range of mediums and formats—both written and oral—that have been used to illustrate the expressions and instrumentalization of stigmatization, racialization, and othering. It is essential to trace the historical trajectories of stigmas and ethno-social assignments through social and tribal imaginaries, collective memories, literature, and political discourse. This multidimensional approach allows for a richer understanding of the mechanisms and impacts of these processes across various contexts.

Afin d'apporter quelques perspectives de conclusion à l'atelier, un bilan des présentations entendues et des pistes de travail futures seront proposés. En effet, nous soulignerons tout d'abord la diversité des épistémologies empruntées afin de décrire les multiples réalités des terrains abordés. Nous montrerons que ces processus d'altérisation – sans pour autant les réduire à ce simple procédé – se comprennent à partir de plusieurs facteurs et formes de catégorisation et complexifient nos grilles de lecture épistémologiques: anti-tsiganisme, racialisation, minorisation, colorisme, sudisme, africanisme... Il nous est apparu crucial de rappeler la diversité des outils épistémologiques et de puiser dans plusieurs littératures – en langue arabe, turque et dans le contexte sud-américain – pour rendre compte des dynamiques propres aux Suds, mais qui s'enchevêtrent avec d'autres contextes. Ainsi, les catégories de «blanchité», d'«africanité», de «Blancs» ou de «Noirs» ont différentes significations en fonction des contextes et se recoupent avec d'autres catégories, notamment tribales, sociales ou statutaires. En outre, nous rappellerons la double échelle de ces processus qui s'opèrent à la fois de manière interne dans le cas des Jordaniens «noirs», des Doms au Moyen-Orient ou des Arabes et des Amazighes au Maroc, et externe quand ils se réfèrent aux immigré·es ainsi qu'aux réfugié·es en Turquie, au Maroc et en Tunisie.

Enfin, nous rappellerons l'ensemble des supports et des médiums mobilisés – écrits et oraux –, afin d'illustrer les manifestations et les instrumentalisation de la stigmatisation, de la racialisation ou de l'altérisation. Il est ainsi nécessaire de retracer l'historicité de stigmates ou d'assignations ethno-sociales à travers les imaginaires sociaux et tribaux, les mémoires collectives, la littérature et les discours politiques.