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Who Are You? Africa and Africans

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In a letter written to his former teacher from the city of Madauros, the Christian bishop Augustine of Hippo addressed the rhetor Maximus by saying, 'well now, as one African writing to another African, and since we are both from Africa...' (Aug. Ep. 17.2 = CCL 31: 41; 390 CE). His deliberate seeking of common ground in being 'African' was, it should be confessed, a rhetorical gambit. It was a powerful ploy because the identity to which appeal was made was a strong one of real substance. Not only among Christians like Augustine, but also among non-Christian interlocutors of the time like Maximus, being African had become an identity that they shared in common. How this came to be was the result of a long process of changes and responses. As late as the first century CE, no persons of Punic background, or any indigenous inhabitants of the land, or any Italian, Etruscan, or Greek settlers living in the region that we today call North Africa ever thought of themselves as 'African,' even if the matrix for this new identity was beginning to be formed all around them. The process of creating the new identity followed a path that ethnic labelling had often travelled in the past. The first local people that an outsider or incoming group encountered became a surrogate for all other peoples who were 'like them.' In the case of the ancient Maghrib, this seems to have happened when a small ethnic group located along the frontier lines of the old Roman province, in the region of Wadi Tine to the north of the Bagrada River (modern Wadi Medjerda), who were known as the Afri were encountered (AE 1893: 30 = BCTH [1892], p. 39, from Sua, modern Chaouach; see Kotula 1965, some of whose erroneous claims are corrected by Peyras 1985). They became stand-ins for all other local or indigenous inhabitants

of the land. Others like them became Afri, or Africani, and, metonymically, the land was called Africa. Over time, by cultural and political extension, the term came to designate a whole continent, the veritable Third World of their time as it was seen by outsiders in the ancient Mediterranean (Hdt. 2.16; Varro, LL, 5.31; Sall. Bell. Iug. 17.3; Strabo 17.1.1; Mela, De Chorogr. 1.2.0-4.2; Pliny, NH, 3.1.3; and implicitly in Tert. de Pall. 2.6 = CCL 2: 737, among many texts).

The ethnic group of the Afri was real enough. Its members were later recruited into the Roman army as an auxiliary cohort of Africans: the cohors II Flavia Afrorum, the Second Flavian Cohort of Africans (Lassère 1987). Their recruitment area, in the region around Souk el-Khemis in the upper Bagrada River valley, was precisely where the original small group of Afri was located (AE 1995: 1662; from Bou Salem, former Souk el-Khemis: a trooper from the First Cohort of the Afri). About the same time that the liminal area in which the Afri lived was being Romanized under the Flavian emperors, some of their men were being recruited into an ethnic group of the army (BCTH 1919, clviii, ILAfr. 9 = BCTH 1954, p. 51; Africa 5 [1978] 111 f., all from Tillibari, modern Remada). We know about them from inscriptions that record their presence in the garrisons of the Limes Tripolitanus under the Severan emperors. By this later age, however, as with most 'ethnic units' in the Roman army, it is doubtful that the Second Flavian Cohort of Africans had many actual Afri left in it. Whatever the details of this process, the designation of Africa and Africans came out of specifically Roman and western Mediterranean experiences. Greeks always referred to Africa as 'Libya' and to Africans as 'Libyans.' Over time, however, this usage came to be limited to the small area centered on Cyrenaica, east of the Maghrib, with which the Greeks had had constant contact and which they had colonized as early as the later seventh century BCE (Zimmerman 1999). The designation was accepted by everyone who used Greek as a mode of communication, like the Jewish writer of the marvellous squib entitled the Exagogê of Ezekiel who proclaims, 'this land is called Libya. It is inhabited by the tribes of all kinds of people, black Ethiopian men' (Exagogê of Ezekiel, 60-62 = H. Jackson, The Exagogê of Ezekiel, Cambridge 1983: 53-54). Educated Africans, especially of the high period of the so-called Second Sophistic under the Antonines, could access and exploit this learned Greek identification of Africans as 'Libyans.' Such was

the case with the high-ranking senator Marcus Cornelius Fronto, whose family came from Cirta in northern Numidia. In attempting to apologize to the emperor's mother, Domitia Lucilla, for his barbarous word usage, Fronto protested that he could compare himself in wisdom to the Skythian Anacharsis, but only insofar as he, too, was a barbarian: "For he was a Skythian of the nomad Skythians, and I am a Libyan of the Libyan nomads" (Fronto, Ep. Graec. 1.5 = Naber, p. 240). It was a learned and pretentious fiction and in this case a deliberately humorous one. Otherwise, in his own time and as concerned his peers, Fronto preferred to be identified as a man whose patria was Cirta; and he referred to his fellow senators from Cirta as 'Cirtensians' not Africans (Minucius Felix, Octavius, 9.6, refers to him as Cirtensis noster).

How early the designation Afer or 'African' was generalized beyond the name of an immediate contact group to a more general African identity is difficult to say. Almost all the usages that we have, both for this word and for related terms like Africanus and Africanus, come from the mid-first century BCE and later. By the end of the first century BCE, it is true, Terentius, the servile writer of comedies, had received the cognomen of Afer, although he himself never called any place 'Africa' or anyone 'an African' (Volcaci Sedigitus, fl. c. 100 BCE, quoted by Suetonius, Vita Terentii = De Poetis, 11.1). If Publius Cornelius Scipio, victor over Carthage in 201, received the cognomen Africanus in the aftermath of the war, then it is the earliest known evidence of the description (Livy 20.45.6; 21.46.8; cf. Per. 30.21; the victor of the third war received the same triumphal name: Livy 44.44.2). It seems that the circumstances of the second Roman war with Carthage generated the concern for the ethnic label and the identification. About this time, in the 190s, the terms Africa and African appear in Ennius' epic on the Romano-Punic War (Ennius, Annales, 9.309: as quoted by Cic. De Or. 3.42.167; see Skutsch, The Annals of Quintus Ennius, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, p. 487). And in 185 BCE, Scipio Africanus, in replying to the obstreperous tribune of the plebs, Marcus Naevius, could refer to his defeat of Hannibal 'in Africa' (Aulus Gellius, NA, 4.18.3: cited 'ex annalibus'). The two references in his near-contemporary Plautus (Poen. 1011 and 1304), both times as adjectives, reflect this same usage. Everything therefore points to on-the-ground combat and involvement with indigenous allies in

proximity to Carthage itself as provoking the definition of the lands inland of Carthage as 'Africa' and of some of the inhabitants as 'Africans.' The need for an official name for the permanent province in this same region after 146 BCE as something that was 'not-Carthage' confirmed the use of Africa for the region and Africans for its local inhabitants. The Lex Agraria of 111 BCE, whose terms refer back to the founding of the province, contains the first attested official mention of it with the name of Africa (Lex Agraria, cc. 52, 60, 86 = FIRA, 2: 113-14 & 119).

Subsequent identities that were claimed by persons who were Africans on any given occasion were as provisory and contingent upon existing categories of labelling as those asserted by Fronto: that is, as the occasion demanded, that is. To return to the late fourth century CE, the philosopher Maximus of Madauros referred to above, probably did consider himself to be an African, perhaps more than he did a 'Madaurensian' or anything of the sort. But two and a half centuries earlier, in the mid-second century CE, another citizen of Madauros, the philosopher, rhetor, and belle-lettriste Apuleius, had a quite different way of identifying himself. Very rarely in his writings does the word African occur as a term referring to a person or social group. For him, Africa is almost always a place: Africa the Roman proconsular province. When he speaks of someone as 'African,' the word has a slightly derogatory sense of referring to an indigenous persons and therefore necessarily go one of inferior standing. He uses the term only once, in order to label his rival in court: 'I am referring to that Aemilianus, not this *African* (Afer), but to Africanus and Numentinus' (Apul. Apol. 66). In this reference we can see a nascent sense of identity with place that was developing. It was already there, perhaps, in the Elder Pliny's assertion that before deciding on anything important the locals always first uttered the word 'Africa' (Pliny, NH, 28.5.24). The larger identity, it seems, was mainly cued by the larger stage on which locals found themselves having to act. In this situation, they repressed the 'smaller' identities nested within the larger potential one and they claimed, more simply, to be Africans. The evidence of Africans resident in Rome and Latium, for example, shows this systematic repression of local or civic identities (which, nevertheless, are sometimes mentioned) in favor of the larger claim to be 'an African' (see Noy 1990: 251-55; Table 29, p. 254; Appendix, pp. 289-91). In this sense, the presence and power of the much larger political unit,

that of the Mediterranean-wide empire of which Africans were part, provided the powerful conditions in which the larger identity was hailed forth. But it also reflects the factor of distancing; the further one was away from smaller identities, the greater the appeal to the larger one. This same dynamic is reflected in the literary usage of Tertullian, for whom the use of the term 'African' is never for internal consumption, but rather when he imagines Africa as seen from some global transmarine perspective. Then, that's what 'the Africans' do (e.g. Tert. Ad Nat. 2.8; Scorp. 6.2 and 7.6; in what are, in any event, quite rare usages of almost anthropological tone).

In the local circumstances of the trial at Sabratha, however, Apuleius was decidedly not an 'Afer' like his local opponent. In portraying himself as a Madaurensian, Apuleius was emphasizing his origins: Madauros was the patria or father-community that had created him. When appearing before Claudius Maximus, the governor of Africa, in 158 BCE, to defend himself on the charge of bad magic, he presented himself in the following terms (Apul. Apol. 24).

As far as my father-community [i.e. the city of Madauros] is concerned, you know that I have already shown in my writings that it is located right on the common boundary between Numidia and Gaetulia. I myself publicly admitted this fact, when I stated before Lollianus Avitus, vir clarissimus, that I was half-Numidian and half-Gaetulian. I don't see that there is anything in this about which I should be ashamed, no more than the elder Cyrus ought to have been ashamed that he was of mixed origin, being half-Median and half-Persian.

Apuleius' ethnic self-identification raises a number of problems. First of all, it was made in the context of a formal court proceeding: a trial on a capital charge in which the nature of his identity had been contested. His accusers from the region of Tripolitania where the trial was being held (who, quite assuredly, never called themselves 'Tripolitanians') had pointed to Apuleius' origins in the town of Madauros. Intending to humiliate him, they had accused him of being some kind of indigenous half-breed. As in many local contexts that are heavily

conditioned by these kinds of identities, it is often far better to be purely one or the other and not part of one and part the other, which is somehow seen to combine the worst of both worlds. No doubt, they were retaliating in kind for the many unkind ethnic cuts that Apuleius had made against them, as when he suggested that they were not much above the level of rural idiots who could only speak Punic. One volley of pejorative labels was exchanged for another. Ethnic labelling functioned in a theater of contention and hostility to mark out difference and inferiority. Instead of denying the ethnic slurs, in a fit of chutzpah, Apuleius brazenly embraced them. Madauros was on the boundary between two worlds. It was therefore actually and simply a fact that he, Apuleius, was half-Numidian and half-Gaetolian. And proud of it. No different than the Persian king Cyrus who was half-Median and half-Persian. No shame there. But he never thought of presenting himself as an African. Much later, however, Augustine did, as when he casually remarked of the rhetor from Madauros: 'Apuleius, who for we Africans is a very well known African.' (Aug. *Ep.* 138.19 = CCL 31B: 289; cf. Hunink 2003). Things had changed.

But just how much reality was there in these matters of honour and shame in which Apuleius' identity was implicated? A lot. The town of Madauros, a most splendid Roman colony, whatever its origins, had received a settlement of veteran soldiers in the Flavian age when the city had been honored with the rank of colony. As a matter of fact, Madauros was right on the boundary between two worlds, which is probably why the soldiers were placed there. In defining and embracing its liminality, however, Apuleius raised two more ethnic terms: Numidian and Gaetolian. What did he understand by them? Both terms were widely used as general and sweeping labels for large regions and widespread populations. The words were used to refer to peoples and lands in some of the earliest surviving Latin historical sources. There was a Numidia—later a Roman province in Africa—and there were Numidians. And there was also a Gaetulia and Gaetulians. Who or what were they? The two terms seem to have been used as what we might call broad ecological identifiers. Numidians lived in the north, Gaetulians in the south. Generally speaking, Numidians were seen to be settled people, farmers; Gaetulians were seen as peoples who were less fixed, more mobile, pastoralists of various kinds (Vaglieri 1905). Gaetulia therefore became a

general covering term that designated southern arid lands where such itinerant peoples tended to live (Desanges 1964; Vycichl 1955). Not unnaturally, these peoples, who were being pictured as pastoral nomads, were lumbered with the negative characteristics that were generally believed (by literate settled peoples, that is) to be shared by all such wanderers (Shaw 1982-83).

Although not quite, since in certain historical circumstances and to some observers, people who were labelled Gaetulians were less generalized ideal types than they were flesh-and-blood individuals. The context, interestingly, has to do with the first serious Roman contacts with peoples outside their province in Africa at the time of the so-called Jugurthine War, and specifically with a large spate of a new kind of army recruiting identified with the Roman consular commander Gaius Marius. Not only did he recruit from down on the social ladder in Italy, he recruited heavily among 'ethnic' peoples in Africa. It was a hidden side of the war that was not, and is still not, much talked about. In return for war service, these men received from Marius land settlements and some kind of Roman status. If the latter was not Roman citizenship (probably not), it nevertheless closely identified these men with Marius. We can trace their descendants in settlements just outside the frontiers of the old Roman province where they bear the Latin cognomen Gaetulicus: so-and-so 'the Gaetolian' (Gasco 1969 and 1970). As an outsider's pejorative label, Gaetulians were, like Gipsies, Roma, or Vagabonds, unsettled and unsettling people, but the name nevertheless came to be embraced as an element of self-identity, through army service. We know of cohorts of Gaetulians in the Roman army. They are well documented (Lassère 1994). These men, and persons related to them, added the sobriquet Gaetulicus to their Roman names. And were proud of it too!

But Gaetulians were not the only 'southerners.' As one advanced further to the south of Gaetolian lands, into the Sahara and its northern peripheries, the ethnic labels became fuzzier, more general, and often, since land and space were so vast and indeterminate, they were based more on a phenotyping of personal appearance than of place. The peoples deep to the south in the Sahara were called Aethiopes or peoples whose skin had been burnt to a darker color.¹ The simple existence of these peoples naturally suggested to the logical mind the necessary existence of intervening types, and so the category of Melanogaetuloi,

black Gaetulians, was invented and bandied about by scientific geographers like Ptolemy. Analogous terms like *Leukoaethiopes*, 'white black people,' or *Libyaethiopes*, 'african black people,' were exploited by the same Ptolemy and by Pomponius Mela, all in the name of the geographer's science. This was no different than the continued postulation of other supposed 'intervening types' in the service of science which certainly, like the Missing Link, had no existence in any objective reality. For the scientifically oriented Greek geographers and ethnographers, if there were Phoenicians (that is to say, Phoenician settlers in north Africa) and there were Libyans (that is, indigenous Africans), then somewhere in between there had to be half-breed 'Libyphoenicians' (Biondi 1971, who accepts them as fact). That modern scholars have taken these strange, if logical and learned confections from antiquity so seriously is yet more testimony of the will to believe.

We might now return to that well-known self-confessed mixed entity, Apuleius, and his identity as half-Numidian and half-Gaetulan. As general as the labels seem, they both had a hard on-the-ground meaning that was actually empirically true of Roman Madauros. The town was just north of Jebel Mdaourouch, a long east-west mountainous ridge that marked the region. To the north were the more fertile farmlands of peoples who were generally considered to be Numidians. Earlier and informally, and then more formally in Late Antiquity, the lands were known as Proconsular Numidia: the Numidian or western part of the Proconsular province. Immediately to the south of Madauros were the lands of more mobile semi-pastoral peoples. Several territorial boundary stones set up by the Roman imperial state have been discovered at the base of the southern slopes of Jebel Mdaourouch, just to the south of Madauros. The stones delimited the northern edge of the tribal lands of the Musulamii, who were regarded as quintessential Gaetulan peoples.

But, then, who were the Musulamii? In asking this question, we find ourselves at a level of specificity in ethnic identity that is not nearly as general and nebulous as African or even Gaetulan. These would seem to be real people in a more concrete sense. They are spoken of in more specific terms by, say, Roman historians, in a way that makes us feel that we could see or talk to an individual 'Musulamus.' We also know that there were Musulamian ethnic units

in the Roman army. Just as with the Afri, they are surely the touchstone of some kind of reality (Lassère 1991). The specific lands that they held that constituted the territorium Musulamiorum were well known and were marked out on their north, south, west and eastern frontiers by boundary markers set up by Roman governors (Kallala 2005: map, fig. 2, p. 415). This was very real, too. But in what sense did the Musulamii actually exist or did anyone identify himself as a 'Musulamus'? (Carton 1925). Even if some cases can be found, they are countered by equally important evidence of other identities nested within 'the Musulamii.' The larger group was constituted of subgroups that were located in the same territory, like the Begguenses, who are specifically said to be inhabitants of 'Musulamian territory' (Julius Honorius, Cosmographia, A 48 = GLM 54; CIL 8.270 = 11451 = 23246, Casae, Henshir Begwâr, Hadrianic date). Or another group who styled themselves the Musulamii of the Gubul tribe (ILAlg. 1.3144 = AE 1917-18: 39 = BCTH 1917, 330, Theveste, modern Tébessa). Even more important is the existence of a fraction, called a gens, of the larger unit who were self-styled as a 'regal' or 'royal' lineage of the Musulamii who presumably had some claim to a 'political' pre-eminence (BCTH 1903, 199 = AE 1903: 239, Hr. Rechig; Gordianic date).

This last is another real problem. The assertion of a particular group of persons to be 'royal' or 'regal' was perhaps rooted in a traditional claim in which that group was related to big men who had previously held real power over large numbers of others. In pre-Roman times, under the African kings there had been royal centers whose place names survived in Roman times: Zama Regia, Hippo Regius, Bulla Regia, Thimida Regia, and so on. Similarly, it is thought that there were special 'royal clans' that continued to assert a claim to this status in the Roman period. So the tribal faction of the Musuni were known as the Musunii Regiani (ILAfr. 102 = ILTun 315 = ILS 9393 = CIL 8.23195, at Hr. Cheraga; date: Severan; see Ben Abdullah 1992). Similarly, the more general ethnic group of the Suburbures in central Numidia contained a sub-group named the Suburbures Regiani (ILAlg. 2.1.43442 = AE 1917-18: 14, at Bir Fradj, near Cirta/Constantine). The existence of these socially superior subunits of tribes is indicated by groups named the Iubaleni and the Massinissenses, for example, who seem to have had a close and asserted personal relationship with the former

African kings Juba and Massinissa. By the time that we get to know them in later Roman times, however, this identity had either become a residual recollection or a deliberately retro-reconstructed memory made by small ethnic groups in the Kabylie. Or perhaps they were just a literary invention of our source. Both groups are mentioned only once by Ammianus Marcellinus, who may have had a penchant to invent out of his earlier literary sources (Res Gestae 29.5.44 for the natio Iubalena; and 29.5.11 for the gens Masinissensium).

Even more important, the larger ethnic label of Musulamii is first mentioned as a coherent group with this identity at the time of the big Roman military push into the more arid lands of the south that is marked by (if it did not actually provoke) the violence identified with the so-called Tacfarinas revolt in the teens and twenties of the first century CE. Tacfarinas was one of these persons and, in a manner that is directly relevant to our present discussion of identity, he was engaged in Roman military service in the auxiliary 'ethnic' units of the army (Syme 1951/1979). It is in the immediate aftermath of this long spate of violence connected with Roman provincial consolidation in the south that the Musulamii and their lands were formally recognized by the Roman state. To answer the question about individual identity, we can say that there are a few persons who did identify themselves as 'a Musulamus.' (ILAlg. 1.1426, Thubursicu Numidarum, Khamissa; 1.2856, between Madauros and Morsott; AE 1904: 76, near Jebal M'rata). But this behavior might be linked to the military factors of war and violence as defining identities. If Tacfarinas was a Musulamian who led his people in revolt against the Roman state, he had previously served in auxiliary units of the Roman army. This was precisely the response of the Roman state in the aftermath of the revolt, when, under the Flavian emperors (as we have already noted in the case with the Afri above) it recruited men from this group into an ethnic unit, the Cohors I Flavia Musulamiorum. It then proceeded to ship them out of the province to distant parts of the empire, like Syria, where they served in patrolling other arid and wilderness environments (Lassère 1991; Poinssot & Lantier 1923).

But the official impact on identity certainly followed from the delimitation and the formal assignation of their own 'tribal' lands to them by the Roman state. If this had been a one-off response to the problem posed by the Musulamii, the

effect would be negligible, but we know that such delimitations were usual. The Roman state, in collaboration with local leaders, was declaring that a particular social group was recognized, that its claims to lands were legitimate, and that the group had a formal identity to interacted with the state. In this same way, farmlands, pastures, and spring water sources (agri et pascua et fontes adsignata), almost certainly of the Nicibes, were delimited in the Severan age in the southern Hodna Basin on the Saharan periphery (Leschi 1948/1957; AE 1946: 38: Bled Goursi el-Tahtani). In the case of the people of the Nicibes, the delimitation was important because they were on the move every year. So their summer pasturelands in the north, located around the city of Cirta, also had to be formally recognized by the Roman state, marking them off from the neighbouring lands of the Suburbures (ILAlg. 2.1.4343 = BAA 3 (1968), 293-300 = AE 1969-70: 696; and ILAlg. 2.1.6252 = AE 1957: 175 = Libyca: arch.-épig. 3 (1955), 289-98; both made under Vespasian). In this case, as probably in others, claims to identity were functionally important because they could be used to assert the claims of certain persons to specific lands and resources. The formal assignation of ethnic territories by the Roman state, whether to the Numidae, the Zamaces, or the Muduciuvii, required some formal definition of who did and did not count as 'Numidae,' 'Zamaces,' or 'Muduciuvii' and therefore had claims and obligations under this administrative designation.

This connection points to an interaction between state and local non-civic groups that produced the 'exact' records in the administrative computational mode that we have of them. Such precise numbers are strewn, for example, throughout the writings of the Elder Pliny. He was able to note 112 tribes in northern Italy, 49 gentes in one part of the Alps, 150 populi in Macedonia, 50 'peoples' in the modest peninsular region of the Crimea, and the 706 distinctive ethnic groups in the Iberian Peninsula (Shaw 2000: 380-81). The same author was also able to report exactly 516 peoples, including gentes and nationes, in the eastern part of the Maghrib at the end of the first century BCE (Pliny, NH, 5.5.29-30). What we get to see is the counting, but there was surely a lot more involved in terms of responses to various pressures: land and water assignments, tribute processes, army recruiting, symbolic and ceremonial recognition, among others, that involved any given people in a fashion that changed and redefined their

identity as a corporate social group. We might pause for a moment to ask what these outsider labels and definitions meant.

However external they might have been, the official relations were of some importance to what the historian can understand about the significance of ethnic identity in Africa. Many of the standard anthropological models of ethnicity, from Van den Berghe to Barth, from Banton and Smith to Brubaker and beyond, have been developed for situations outside of north Africa. Even if the theories are accepted as having weight and analytic purchase for certain problems, they most often are not pragmatically applicable to our situation, in some part because of the lack of sufficient quantities and types of evidence on which their analyses critically depend. Either such ethnic narratives were not produced or they were not preserved. In either case, we cannot easily use their modes of analysis for our situation. The same applies to in-our-field developments of such concepts, mostly, it should be noted, by Greek historians of the archaic and classical periods, such as Hall, Malkin, and others, based on the corpora of data provided by the cultural constructions of the Greek poleis that are inflected so heavily by myth and memory. Again, there are no elaborate bodies of past mythologies or similar story and narrative materials (except for external ones) that might provide insights into internal post-historical reconstructions of past relationships in the Punic and Roman Maghrib. The problem is that these models are highly specific. They can only be made operative in the presence of the kinds of evidence that sustain them—precisely the quality and extent of literary evidence that does not exist for almost every other society in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East.

Historians and sociologists of north Africa have had to approach these same problems from rather different angles and with alternative methods. Their perspectives stem out of studies made of Berber highland communities, mainly in the Atlas ranges of Morocco, but also in the mountainous Kabylie of north-central Algeria. As yet, however, these rather different modes have had little or no impact on the general theorizing of group relations in the ancient Mediterranean. From the great Robert Montagne and Jacques Berque, to a number of more recent historians and anthropologists, like Ernest Gellner, Amal Vinogradov, David Seddon, and David Hart, among others, these interpreters

have proposed functional models of social organization that have emphasized more the 'why' and functional 'how' than the later representation of such identities. What these researchers have emphasized is the way in which kinship units relate to the ecological niches in which they are located and the circumstances and manners in which linkages between them intensify or abate so as to inflate or to deflate the significance of different levels of identity. Everyone allows that kinship units, down to the level of the larger family, were ordinarily named as the "so-and-so's" who are often further identified in an ascending manner as the "sons (Arabic banu or beni; Berber aït) of "so-and-so" who was the progenitor of the descendant lineages. Everyone is notionally related. Our best chance of better understanding the background of this process is in looking at the official Roman evidence for whom they recognized and how. Who or what counted as a gens or a natio? The ancient discourses offer little help. These terms were exploited right across the spectrum. Some people thought that it was a great thing to be their own gens or natio, to be really 'ethnic.' But Christian ideologues, like Tertullian at Carthage, consistently used these same terms: gens, gentiles, natio and nationes and ethnici to label the generally inferior and bad outsiders to his community which he thought of as quintessentially 'civil.' Even so, the usual cautions are in order. The modern evidence and models derive mainly from the study of highland Berber communities who might not reflect the dominant conditions of Roman antiquity. They might seem to be of only parochial interest to this earlier time and milieu, if they had not been anticipated in important ways by the genius of Ibn Khaldoun. The convergence of their observations with those of an early 'sociologist' of premodern social relations in the Maghrib give some confidence in their more general applicability.

All these studies have demonstrated, repeatedly, that ecological forces are complex systems that are themselves both set in and created by interlocking hierarchies of human and natural forces. No local force is ever innocent. In early modern times, the makhzen ('the treasury')—that is, the state seen as a tribute-collection agency—might well be more remote than it was before, permitting a freer play of local forces, but it could and did come back to play a large role in who determining who local people were and who they saw themselves as being. This official component in the forming of identity in the context of local ecology

was surely present in the Roman period in the case of the Musulamii in another way. The Roman state controlled the affairs of certain ethnic groups by placing an official, a Prefect of the Tribe, praefectus gentis, in charge of them, including at least one known praefectus gentis of the Musulamii (ILAlg. 1.285 = CIL 8.5351: Calama; date: post Trajanic: T. Flavius Macro praef(ectus) gentis Musulamiorum; for the man and his various official posts, see ILAlg. 1.3992, from Hippo Regius, modern Annâba). We know that one of the functions of these prefects was army recruiting. Without doubt the dialectic between certain on-the-ground realities and the administrative governance of populations ‘as if’ they were coherent peoples had a certain effect of causing them to behave ‘as if’ they were, for example, Musulamian. So which groups were counted in this fashion from the perspective of the Roman administration? Tribal prefects are attested for gentes in Africa, and later, more specifically, for ‘the six nationes who are in Numidia,’ for the Numidae, the Musulamii, the Mazices, the Cinithii, the Salassii and the Madices—all of them, save in one case (the nationes of Numidia) were classified as gentes in the Roman scheme of things.

The actions of the praefecti gentis were therefore instrumental in defining specific ethnic groups that were identified and treated as if they were distinctive and well-bounded social groups (Lepelley 1974, Leveau 1973, Letta 2002). Then again, this is dangerously one-sided evidence, since it is the prefect who literally ‘recognized’ the existence of these groups. And his purposes were related to his interests: political control and the exploitation of resources, mainly manpower for Roman military units. He was almost certainly the conduit, via the provincial governors, by which the Roman emperor formally recognized ethnic heads by formally granting them symbols of authority including ‘a staff of silver covered with gold, and a silver cap... a kind of white cloak fastened with a gold brooch on the right shoulder... an embroidered white tunic and gilded boots’ (Procop. Bell. Vand. 1.25; cf. Courtois 1955: 240 f.). There was a comparable mirroring effect of authority inside the indigenous ethnic groups when they were recognized and organized in this fashion by the state. These particular groups produced the designated ‘tribal heads,’ or principes gentis, who paraded themselves as the official leaders of their respective peoples. It is very difficult not to see in the terminology, at very least, a form of mimicry of the institutions

of Roman power that defined the ethnic groups. We know of principes of the Numidae, Cinithii, Saboides, Nattabutes, Mauri, Baquates, and Bavares among others. Of these, at least the Numidae and Mauri are known to have provided 'ethnic units' for the Roman army (Davies 1974). All this suggests a strong overlap between Roman interests and the actual pre-Roman function of ethnic identity. They were intimately involved in providing the means for mutual protection and defense of peoples who were interconnected in their interests through their exploitation of similar ecological niches in the environment and the economy.

But this is where the problem of identity has to confront head-on what actually was and what we can possibly know. At first blush, what we can know about ethnicity in north Africa of the Roman period seems optimistic. Compared to many other regions of the empire, there is a comparative wealth of literary sources that report on ethnic identities and, even better, a considerable range of contemporary epigraphical data that seem to report in a more concrete and more unmediated way about these ethnic identities as current realities. On closer inspection, however, problems rear up and they are big ones. All of the combined data provide specific evidence on about 285 distinct ethnic groups in Africa, although this evidence is, admittedly, strewn over a great stretch of time from the second century BCE to the sixth CE.² Whatever the caveats, these are significant numbers and bodies of data. Even a cursory glance at the data, however, is a 'wake-up call' for a more realistic view. First of all, of the 285 named African ethnic groups, close to two thirds are mentioned only once and then usually only as a name (the actual number is 178 out of 285 ethnic units, or about 62% of the total). The geographer Ptolemy lists no fewer than 88 African ethnic groups or 'tribes' not one of which is attested by any other source. Each of them is nothing more than a name on a set of map coordinates. Where did Ptolemy get his information from? How reliable was it? And even if his tribal names are reliable, what on earth do they mean? Other geographers and historians are not much better. Among the African ethnic groups named by the Elder Pliny in his geography, sixteen are nothing more than names. The same problem bedevils the more narrative historical writings. In his account of the revolt of Firmus in the 370s, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus names specific

ethnic groups in the precisely confined area of the Grande Kabylie in what is today north-central Algeria. Again, six of them are nothing but names. Literary sources that retail specific historical events, such as the epic poem, the *Johannid*, of the Byzantine court poet Corippus on the events of 546-48 in Tripolitania, reveal the same proclivity. A full thirteen of the named ethnic groups involved in this violence are just names. They are attested nowhere else and several of them look suspiciously like literary fictions: the *Silvacae*, the *Silvaizan*, and the *Silzactae*, for example. The hard epigraphical data, probably not fictionalizing, at least at this level, are sometimes just as frustrating. Twenty-two ethnic groups are recorded in inscriptions only once, again with almost nothing other than the name of the group on the record.

Even where we have more numerous notations of a given ethnic identity, serious problems still bedevil interpretation. Take, for example, the *Massyli* and the *Masaesyli* mentioned so frequently in Livy and Polybius in their accounts of the second and third Roman wars with Carthage (and which therefore find copycat mentions in later parasitic sources like Stephanus Byzantinus). Just how profound or actual was this identity? Real complexities behind identity occur since these groups, at least in the form in which they are presented to us by Livy and Polybius (that is, as large-scale ethnic societies claiming hegemony over large parts of north Africa) is limited to and defined by the peculiar conditions that seem to have created them. Any student can find their territories clearly laid out, sometimes in brilliantly coordinated colors, on most maps of Africa covering the history of the period. The *Masaesyli* are a kingdom dominating central and western Algeria, the *Massyli* have a kingdom in central and eastern Algeria. Just how real were these identities? The most plausible answer seems to be: as real as the quasi-states with which they are identified and with the forces that created them. That is to say, the colossal military struggle between Rome and Carthage created the conditions in which both sides poured great manpower and material resources into the lands in Africa intervening between Spain in the west and Carthage in the east. This unusual application of violence and the heightened significance of the large-scale warfare created the conditions in which different ethnic unities eventually coalesced into quasi-states under the rule of 'kings,' foremost amongst them Syphax of the *Masaesyli* and Massinissa of the *Massyli*.

These identities were as real as the social and political formations of which they were part—which was substantial enough. One set of factors was involved with the creation of the other. When these forces were no longer in play, the identities themselves began to fade. They are not found again after the Third Punic War, save for odd or unusual poetic creations that drew on Livy for their raw literary-ethnic fodder. Even Sallust, in his account of the post-Massinissa breakdown of the African kingdoms focussed on the so-called Jugurthine War, does not mention them. They have vanished along with the conditions that created them. They were not fictions, but rather specific historical creations of their time.

Where did the identities come from? In a process analogous to the extension of the term Afri or African to a much larger geographic and demographic stage, it is most probable that the small ethnic group, and its leader, that was at the head of the accumulation of power had its identity extended to cover every larger group subordinate to it. This process of ethnogenesis through the pressures and opportunities of large-scale war and violence is well attested for the later Roman empire. Highly-variegated ethnic congeries are called Vandals or Goths largely because these specific groups happened to form an important élite or leadership element in them. This performative element in identity formation appears to have applied here as well. By the first century BCE, the Masaesyli no longer existed as they once had: ‘They had been extinguished by war. Just like the great Mauri or Maurousioi to their west, they had been ground down by wars to a few familiae. In the same way, their neighbours, the Massyli, had been extinguished by this same process’ (Pliny, NH, 5.17). This is the claim asserted by the Elder Pliny, or better his source, and there is no reason to disbelieve it.

Although pressures of larger-scale war and the rewards of violence were one normal factor in encouraging the building of larger ethnic identities, the processes that we witness in this case were normal. When the identity of the Massyli was extinguished, notably by the same process of violence working in reverse, it is said that they were degraded to the level of a few familiae, which appear to be the lowest component unit of their group identity. But how did a familia or a few familiae enforce their power over other ‘families’ in order to form a larger ethnic group. The answer, it appears, is that they didn’t. The

process was more complex than this. Some of its lineaments were gradually unearthed by Robert Montagne in his great work on the segmentary lineage systems of the highland Berbers of the far west (Montagne, 1930, 1973; cf. Berque 1953). He showed that in the greater political geography all the small groups were knit into larger, often chequerboard-like patterns on the ground (see Gellner 1967, 35-68 for an analysis of the social dynamics and an historical application). These groups always related to each other in patterns of 'political relations' that permeated their local social relations. Growth in size or coverage of identity is therefore a matter of systemically linking these units under conditions in which they activated larger putative senses of common identity or which actually created supervening identities (Mattingly 1983, 96-97 and . In many ways, the larger notional identity was the elephant in the room. It was always hovering around, as Hart has neatly put it, as a 'super-tribe': it was a social notion that could be activated or made to come into being under the appropriate conditions.

To better understand the principles involved, let us begin by examining the Zegrenses. They offer the additional benefit that they were an ethnic group in the Middle Atlas mountains, the same highland ecology in which many of the modern studies have been done. Now, theirs is a rather odd name. Before the year 1971, they were another of the one-off ethnic groups mentioned by the geographer Ptolemy, peoples known only in his text and for their name alone. Given the oddity of their name, and the letters forming it, the manuscript variants were many, so not even their name was actually known to us. The publication of a large epigraphical text in 1971, the Tabula Banasitana, named after its find spot at Banasa in Morocco, changed all of this (IAM, 2, 94 = AE 1971: 534, from Banasa, modern Sidi-Ali-Bou-Djenoun; date: 6 July 177; see Seston & Euzennat 1971; and Euzennat 1974; these few studies must suffice; the literature is vast). It recorded the award of Roman citizenship by the emperor Marcus Aurelius to an ethnic headman, a princeps gentis, named Julianus. He was the headman of the Zegrenses. The document reveals how Roman citizenship and the system of tribute payments (notably, not to be impeded by any of these grants) were operable along with the local ethnic organization.

The terms that the Tabula Banasitana uses to designate the kinship units to which Julianus belonged are three: gens, domus, and familia. It is also clear that these units were stacked up, as it were, in a hierarchy. The gens was the most general and largest unit: in this case the gens Zegrensium. In turn, the large gens or 'tribe' was made up of smaller units: numerous domus or 'large-households' and, nested within each of these were smaller familiae. The evidence of the Tabula Banasitana strongly suggest that the highland peoples of the Middle Atlas, like the highland groups of the Atlas studied in modern times by Montagne, had a balanced segmentary structure. This structure of personal relationships could also be true of the construction of other larger ethnic groups in north Africa that we call 'tribes.' If this same social dynamic was found in other regions of Roman Africa, like Tripolitania, then one can diagram how this 'nesting' arrangement might look [see "Tripolitania: Hypothetical 'Tribal' Kinship Structure": fig. 2.1, p. 20 in Mattingly 1994]. But caution must be exercised. The Zegrenses, like the Numidae in Mattingly's chart, surely never existed, like a photographic still, in the terms suggested by the fixed structure of a diagram. The terms in the Tabula Banasitana do indeed attest the existence of interlocked hierarchies of orders in kinship groups. But there was no fixity to these terms. Gens, along with rough equivalents, like populus and natio, could be used interchangeably in a given circumstance to identify a specific ethnic group. Depending on the author, the source, the circumstances, or the literary genre, something as large as the ethnic group of the Musulamii could be labelled as a gens, or a group as tiny and regionally specific as a familia (Desanges 1973). These ethnic or tribal familiae are attested as individual units, as in the instance of the Mathun son of Massirani from Mactaris who was princeps or chief of the familia of the Medidi.

The terms of the Tabula Banasitana suggest that the normal functioning reality of social life was not the great gens or huge social units like the Massyli, Massaesyli, Musulamii or others, but rather the small gens, the small familiae or domus limited to this or that microregion. In almost every other case, larger functional units than this emerged from conditions that favoured a hyper-violence that caused much larger units to coalesce, sometimes suddenly. Let us consider three cases—the Quinquegentiani, the Austuriani, and the Laguatan—

all of them, notably, emerging in the conditions of the disintegration of the late Roman imperial state in the west. The very large scale expansion of ethnic groups like these seem to prefigure the tenth and eleventh-century expansions of the Almoravids and the Almohads from smaller ethnic units into huge conglomerates that were much like states in their role and function.

The Quinquegentiani or the Five Peoples is a name that occurs first in the Diocletianic period. The new name refers to a larger ethnic group who appear in the highlands of the Kabylie (Desanges 1962: 67; Courtois 1955: 120; the view I accept is that of Galand 1970, against the speculation in Camps 2001). Under conditions analogous to those that had hailed into existence the subjectivity of the Massyli and Massaesyli in the third and second centuries BCE, similar larger-scale ethnicities were being brought into existence in the fifth and sixth centuries CE. Over and above these temporary 'confederations,' more permanent greater identities began to emerge in the disaggregated circumstances of later antiquity. In the same way, too, ethnic principes were replaced by more independent and powerful men who styled themselves as reges or kings. Some of these were founded on existing ethnic identities, like that of the Mauri. Whole geographic and governmental entities took their names after the fact the lands of the Far West of the ancient Maghrib were generally conceived as the 'Lands of the Mauri': Mauretania. So the two Roman provinces formed in these region in the reign of Claudius were named Mauretania Tingitana. In this sense, the Mauri became, along with the Gaetuli, general representatives of frontier barbarians that pullulated on the edges of Roman rule. The Gaetuli were the barbarians of the arid lands of the south, the Mauri were the barbarians of the highlands of the western Maghrib (e.g. Tert. Adv. Iud. 7.8 = CCL 2: 1355-56; Apol. 37.4 = CCL 1: 148). In later antiquity, with the fragmentation of central Roman power and the gradual re-emergence first of local 'tribal' confederations and then regional kingdoms, began to assert their power. The same process can be witnessed at the other, the eastern, extremity of the Maghrib, more or less over the same period of Late Antiquity. At first larger tribal groups coalesce in the hinterland of Tripoltania in the mid-fourth to early fifth century under the general name of Austuriani (Reynolds 1977; Mattingly 1983: 97-98; Tripolitania, 00-00 CHECK). From the early to mid-sixth century into the early period of the first Arab

conquests, this group is supplanted or (more probably) it re-coalesces into a much larger ethnic 'confederation' that is identified and re-named as the Laguatan (Mattingly 1983; variant spellings are Lewathae and Lawata).

In both cases, the shifting ecologies of the pre-desert in the eastern case and the mountain highlands in the west, along with the reshaping of central political power, that encouraged latent identities to be activated. In both cases, armed protection and entrepreneurial raiding were an important part of the phenomena. The hitherto autonomous communities of the west, mostly found in the highlands and the 'Roman' populations in the towns and cities in the lowlands formed a new dyad: the former were generally known as Mauri and the latter Romani. New entrepreneurial headmen could boast of themselves as 'kings of the Mauri and of the Romans' (Camps 1984). Centuries earlier, the extension of Roman rule had led to the reverse process of grinding down and localizing that had gradually extinguished the Massyli to the level of ethnic familiae. Although the Mauri had similarly come to be restricted by the acme of Roman rule in the Maghrib to a 'tribal' entity in northern Morocco (Mauretania Tingitana), the recession of Roman power led to a huge expansion of ethnic power flowing out of the Far West in some ways comparable to the Almoravid expansion in the tenth century. Increasingly, the term Mauri was used to designate all the inhabitants in the entire region. The 'Romans' half of the old equation began to drop permanently from sight. The terms Maures or Mauri thus reveal periods of expansion and recession—real recession in the frequency in their use, for example, in the aftermath of the Punic Wars, and then, later yet, a long interim interval where the use of such ethnic identifiers is occasional and not that significant. But then there is a renewed resurgence in the late and post-Roman period in the Maghrib (Modéran 2003, 2004). What does this mean?

In the long term, the post-Roman efflorescence led to the permanent emergence of the term Moor to designate the indigenous inhabitants of the western Maghrib. This is another case where the interpretive model of ethnogenesis developed and propounded by Reinhard Wenskus and, later, by various members of the so-called Vienna School, would seem to be helpful (the literature is vast; see Pohl 2002 and Gillett 2006 for critical overviews). At a certain level, there is some validity to their claim that the social identity of

groups is constructed out of circumstances of high pressure factors, above all warfare, that link what are in fact diverse ethnic groups under a new single heading or identity determined by a core group: 'the Goths' or 'the Vandals,' for example. The model must offer some of the explanation of how a small ethnic group like the Frexes, who were barely recognized in the early fifth century by Augustine and were described by Corippus in the time of the father of Antalas at the end of the fifth century as a humble group of no great size, became a huge armed force by the middle of the sixth under the command of the father's son (Coripp. Iohann. 3.153; see Modéran 2003: 315-24). Demographic growth cannot account for this phenomenon. The problem, however, is that the main model of ethnogenesis, as it has been proposed and used to explicate the emergence of the new peoples of the northern frontiers of the empire, and even more recent variations of it, are not of much use here (Modéran 2008). A different explanatory model is needed.

Was the name simply foisted by outsiders on all 'non-civil' Africans as a convenient way of identifying 'them'? There is a certain truth to this when one considers the use of the label Maurus in Procopius (certainly) and Corippus (less clearly). But this doesn't begin to resolve the problem, since there are quite a few 'civil' and Roman Africans who were quite happy to identify themselves as 'Maurian.' A well known example is provided by the court case held before the governor Zenophilus in the year 320. One of the witnesses interrogated by the governor at that trial is first asked to provide a formal identification of himself. He declared, presumably in a loud voice, in a public forum: 'I am a teacher of Roman literature, a Latin grammarian. My father is a decurion here in the city of Constantine, my grandfather was a soldier who served in the comitatus, for our [sc. family] origin comes from Maurian blood.' (Gesta apud Zenophilum, 1 = CSEL 26: 185; see Modéran 2004, 00-00, CHECK and 2008a, 119-20). The words were as proudly enunciated as were those declared by Apuleius, also in a court before a Roman governor more than a century and a half before. This and other less dramatic cases reveal a substrate, as it were, of strategic ethnic identity that was shared by persons who were just as civilized, educated, and elitist as could be. There are sufficient other examples to show that this identity was there for Africans of the fourth and fifth centuries and that it was not just an imputed

cover identity imposed by others. One of the best, because of its banality, comes from the African grammarian Pompeius when he is commenting on the use of the pronoun cuias: “For example, if you ask a question about a Maurus or if I wonder to myself ‘This guy, where does he come from? Well, he’s one of our own, he’s a Maurus.’ That’s to say, that man has asked me about his people, and I have replied to him.” (Pompeius, Grammatici Latini, ed. H. Keil, vol. 5, 205; and the comments by Modéran 2008b, 123-24).

Other than violence, of course, it has usually been thought that the spread of towns and cities, the forces of urbanization in general, caused ethnic identities to be displaced or eradicated, and to be replaced with new identity of being a member of an urban community—the Carthaginienses, the Madaurenses, the Thuggenses, the Cirtenses, and the Siccenses, for example. This process then led to the displacement of the old rural ‘tribal’ identities with new urban corporate ones. The former Maurus or Musulamus would become a member of one of the town’s constituent units of identity: he would belong to and identify himself with a neighbourhood organization or vicus; a club or sodalitas, or a political ward, a curia, all of which were important in town contexts. There is probably some truth to claims made about this process. On the other hand, we should not doubt the ability of ethnic identities to persist and to function well in the dense intensifications of towns and cities. And it is clear that ‘tribes,’ like the Nattabutes, could have their own urban centers, in this case the Civitas Nattabutum (CIL 8.4826; 4836 = 16911 = ILAlg. 1.151). The town of Nicivibus that became a municipality in the later empire, was manifestly the urban center of the ethnic group of the Nicibes (Lepelley, Cités de l’Afrique romaine, 2: 440-41). But there were many other towns that show all of the hallmarks of being such ethnic centers, like Thubursicu Numidarum: Thubursicu ‘of the Numidae.’ As many modern instances have shown, ethnic blocks can exist within urban environments, and they surely did in antiquity: the congenticiles in the town of Thuccabori (Touccabeur) attested in the town long after it became a Roman municipality (CIL 8.14853 and 14855; Peyras 1985, 212-13, correctly, against the claims of Pflaum and Bénabou) is but one example. The gens or natio, much less the domus or familia did not disappear to be replaced by the city in a neat

evolutionary progression. Such examples are so frequently found in the toponyms of Africa that the general phenomenon should not be ignored.

Although we must never forget that our knowledge is heavily prefabricated by the surviving source materials, it is still interesting to wonder why and how people came to form cohesive identity groups. Existing models that concentrate on kinship, shared narratives, and mythological genealogies do not tell us much in general about the 'why' question, and they certainly do not contribute much to a better understanding of the African case. To say that these devices and related fictions exist is simply to kick the 'why' ball further down the explanatory road. Of these models, the historian must surely ask: so what? They tell us about how peoples configured current identities, but not about the longer term process of how and why they formed them. This is where a thinker like Ibn Khaldûn might well offer a better guide, if only because he was such a keen and creative observer of his contemporary society (Lacoste 1984). In his discussion of the cohesion, the asabiyya as he calls it, of human groups in the Maghrib of his own time, the unity that empowered them, Ibn Khaldoun paid rather less attention to the object of our fascination: that is, with how this cohesion is represented. He was more concerned with why this was happened and for what end-purposes (Gellner 1981: 86-98). One consistent cause was the ever-present threat of violent struggles, in both towns and in the countryside, over basic resources. What Ibn Khaldoun suggests is a category that is Wittgensteinian in its use, a sort of language game with names that are played with, manipulated, and exploited for the purposes of protection, advantage, and exploitation in a competitive environment.

So was there any generally shared identity of some sort among the indigenous populations of Roman Africa? Probably. But it is most difficult to unearth. Most guesses, I think correctly, hone in on a common language as the main identifier at this level. And there is widespread evidence, from the northern regions of present-day Morocco to the highland areas of the Algerian-Tunisian border, and in the hinterland of Tripolitania, of the use of a common script to express what modern historians have rather misleadingly called a 'Libyan' language. It was a local language that, despite three major distinctive regional variations in the script, bears a striking resemblance to the modern Tamazight

spoken by the modern Imazighen (sing. Amazigh)—that is, peoples whom outsiders have labelled Berbers. The language surely finds echoes in the ancient evidence of a large number of ethnic and personal names that begin with the Mas- or Maz- phoneme: Mazaces, Mazices, Massyli, Masaesyli, Massinissenses, Masikes, Masathi, and so on (Gozalbes 1994; more accurately, Modéran 2008b). These are the same groups as those who are currently called and name themselves Berbers. In one of those odd happenings in history, the fact that many of the highland populations of antiquity were designated to be ‘not civilized’ or ‘barbarian,’ the term barbari was one that was usually used to designate them as a whole, a label that took deeper hold in late antiquity (Gebbia 1990). These ‘barbarians’ and ‘barbarian lands’ at the end of Roman antiquity were quintessentially those of the mountain highlands of the central and western Maghrib (Decret 1985). The Arab invaders of the seventh and eleventh centuries, shared much the same attitude to these marginal highland peoples that were held by the Roman invaders of an earlier age. By default, the indigenous peoples came to be designated as ‘barbar-ous’ or ‘berber,’ a pejorative label that was applied to the uncivilized indigenous inhabitants of the Maghrib by their ‘civilized’ Arab conquerors, but a name which, perhaps paradoxically, they have come to embrace as a national identity today (Fentress & Brett 1999; Serra 1990; and, importantly, Ghazi & Ben Maïssa 2007). Over the great expanse of past time, however, there is no doubt that these same peoples spoke Tamazight and that they called themselves Imazighen, meaning, as with very many indigenous social groups on our planet, quite simply ‘the people.’

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Of the works listed above, the best general work on ancient African ethnicity, albeit focussed on the specific case of the Mauri, is that of Yves Modéran. Elizabeth Fentress and Michael Brett offer one of the better general introductions to 'the Berbers' that is available in English. The individual studies of Ernest Gellner are wonderful investigations both into specific aspects of highland ethnic communities (especially in Morocco) and into the historiography of the problems. The second chapter of his Saints of the Atlas offers a fine discussion of the ideas of Robert Montagne and an instance of their application. The English translation of a 1931 essay by Montagne, The Berbers: Their Social and Political Organization, is as fine a point of departure on these questions as any. It is accompanied by a preface by Ernest Gellner and a critical introduction by the translator David Seddon. Finally, despite its great antiquity, the fifth volume of Stephane Gsell's classic Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord, remains a resource of great value on African ethnic identities in antiquity.

¹ To treat this subject in any reasonable depth would raise the category of race and racial typing, for which there is no sufficient room to expatiate in this brief chapter. For what is still one of the best treatments, see Thompson 1989, mainly directed against the fanciful ideas of Snowden 1970 and 1983; cf. Hölscher 1937 and Desanges 1993.

² These numbers and those that follow are derived from a data base developed by the author, partly based on the existing assemblage of the evidence by Desanges 1962, but with new literary and epigraphical sources that have been discovered since his publication taken into account.