

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Rejoicing of the hearts: Turkish constructions of Muslim whiteness in Africa south of the Sahara

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Abstract

This article analyses the racial framing of the humanitarian encounter between Turkish and African Muslims as a trope of first contact. Intensifying humanitarian relations with Africa south of the Sahara, in tandem with the foreign policy of the AKP (Justice and Development Party), has led to the emergence of a racialized affective regime in Turkey that endows Islamic philanthropy with new racial meanings. This article argues that racial subjects such as the White Muslim and the Black Muslim are produced through the affective labour of humanitarian volunteers and others, who narrativize and circulate experiences of first contact in Turkey. Based on a multi-sited ethnography in Turkey, Tanzania, Senegal, Gambia and Benin, this article explores race-making as affective labour. Taking on Berg and Ramos-Zayas's call for an anthropological theorization of race and affect, it develops a critical framework to examine how humanitarian voluntarism produces differently racialized subjects. In order to do so, this analysis draws on James Baldwin's insights into the racial and affective politics of the first contact to discuss how Turkish humanitarians build on and alter the racialized affective regime Baldwin describes.

Résumé

Cet article analyse le cadrage racial de la rencontre humanitaire entre musulmans turcs et africains comme un trope de premier contact. L'intensification des relations humanitaires avec l'Afrique subsaharienne, en tandem avec la politique étrangère de l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement), a conduit à l'émergence d'un régime affectif racialisé en Turquie qui donne à la philanthropie islamique de nouveaux sens raciaux. Cet article soutient que des sujets raciaux comme le musulman blanc et le musulman noir sont le produit du travail affectif des bénévoles humanitaires et d'autres qui narrativisent et font circuler des expériences de premier contact en Turquie. Basé sur une ethnographie multisite en Turquie, en Tanzanie, au Sénégal, en Gambie et au Bénin, cet article explore la construction de la race en tant que travail affectif. Répondant à l'appel de Berg et de Ramos-Zayas pour une théorisation anthropologique de la race et de l'affect, il élabore un cadre critique pour examiner comment le bénévolat humanitaire produit des sujets différemment racialisés. Pour ce faire, cette analyse s'appuie sur les idées de James Baldwin sur la politique raciale et affective du premier contact pour étudier comment les humanitaires turcs s'appuient sur le régime affectif racialisé décrit par Baldwin et le modifient.

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa o enquadramento racial do encontro humanitário entre turcos e muçulmanos africanos como um tropo de primeiro contacto. A intensificação das relações humanitárias com a África a sul do Sara, em conjunto com a política externa do AKP (Partido de Justiça e Desenvolvimento), levou à emergência de um regime afectivo racializado na Turquia que confere à filantropia islâmica novos significados raciais. Este artigo defende que temas raciais como o Muçulmano Branco e o Muçulmano Negro são produzidos através do trabalho afectivo de voluntários humanitários e outros, que narra e faz circular experiências de primeiro contacto na Turquia. Com base numa etnografia multissensorial na Turquia, Tanzânia, Senegal, Gâmbia e Benin, este artigo explora a produção racial como trabalho afectivo. Assumindo o apelo de Berg e Ramos-Zayas para uma teorização antropológica da raça e do afecto, desenvolve-se um quadro crítico para examinar a forma como o voluntarismo humanitário produz temas racializados de forma diferente. Para o fazer, esta análise baseia-se nos conhecimentos de James Baldwin sobre a política racial e afectiva do primeiro contacto para analisar como os humanitários turcos se baseiam e alteram o regime afectivo racializado que Baldwin descreve.

‘The Ottoman [Empire] ruled half of Niger for a long time,’ said Muzaffer during our interview in 2016 in his villa in Konya, a central Anatolian city in Turkey. After sipping his tea, he continued: ‘And none of us went there since the Ottoman times. Can you believe that these people have never seen a White Muslim? Listen, this is a very important point. We were the first aid organization from Turkey that went to Niger at the time.’ In 2005, the Konya-based Umut (Hope) Association¹ organized its first international trip to Niger with a small group of humanitarian volunteers, including Muzaffer. It was the ‘Year of Africa’ in Turkey, and with the drought and famine that year, Niger became the focus of Turkey’s new foreign policy towards Africa. Turkish diplomacy in Africa, Muzaffer told me, had two chapters: before the AKP (Justice and Development Party) and after the AKP. The first chapter, he argued, was ridden with neglect and indifference towards the continent. In contrast, he described the second chapter as the reunion of long-lost brothers of the same faith.

This article examines the racial framing of the humanitarian encounter between Turkish and African Muslims as a trope of first contact. Reflected in Muzaffer’s conviction that ‘these people had never seen a White Muslim before’, this trope typically depicts the arrival of a Turkish man in an African country south of the Sahara, where he encounters a native who reacts with astonishment on realizing that this white man is not a Christian as he anticipated, but a Muslim. Putting anthropological theories of race and affect in conversation with James Baldwin’s reflections on the first contact in ‘Stranger in the village’ (Baldwin 2012 [1955]), I analyse the racialized affects of Turkish humanitarianism in Africa south of the Sahara. This analysis also considers the paradox by which racial claims about ‘being the first White Muslim’ exist alongside claims of return to, and reunification with, Muslim Africa after a prolonged period of post-Ottoman disruption.

¹ I use pseudonyms for the associations and their members.

Muzaffer's periodization of Turkey's relations with Africa south of the Sahara corresponds to a consensus about the shift in Turkish foreign policy from the Kemalist doctrine to the neo-Ottomanism of the AKP. Where Kemalist foreign policymaking is characterized by insularity and isolationism stemming from national security concerns and a Western orientation at the expense of Turkey's neighbouring regions, neo-Ottomanism implies activism, even adventurism, in those non-Western regions considered to be historically, racially, religiously and culturally connected to Turkey. The term was first coined in the early 1990s when President Turgut Özal pursued an active foreign policy in the Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East, based on arguments about shared Ottoman legacy (Yavuz 2020).

In the 1990s, the western frontiers of the neo-Ottomanist imaginary were found 'in the hills of Velika Kladusa (North-West Bosnia) and Bar (Montenegro) and extend[ed] to Durres (Albania)' (Yavuz 1998). However, as Muzaffer's remarks imply, under the AKP's cartographic hegemony, the western frontiers of neo-Ottomanism have descended more recently from Fezzan to Niger and Chad in the central Sahel and have extended further from the edges of the Sahara to the west coast of Africa (Güner 2022). This is mainly due to Turkey's new Africa policy, implemented soon after the AKP came to power in 2002. Dubbed 'the last frontier of capitalism' (Mbembe 2016; Moghalu 2014) – as if the continent has not played a central role in the historical development of capitalism from day one – Africa promises to shape the planetary future with its extractive economies, arable land, consumer markets and demographic trends. Belated, yet determined, Turkish state and non-state actors have participated in the rush for the 'appropriation of [Africa's] future' (Sarr 2019) in the past two decades by signing agreements and contracts; organizing forums and summits; building embassies, military bases and industrial zones; constructing schools, hospitals and mosques; renovating Ottoman and Islamic heritage sites; and shipping commodities and investing capital.

As the Umut Association's mobilization for the famine in Niger reveals, faith-based NGOs have been key partners of the government in developing transnational relations between Turkey and the African continent through humanitarian and development projects (Atalay 2013; 2019). Since the AKP government's legalization of civil society organizations' transnational operations in 2004, there has been a proliferation of water wells, livestock distribution, medical camps and food and other kinds of aid by Turkish NGOs of varying sizes and scales in Africa south of the Sahara, especially among Muslim communities. Soft power has been the dominant concept (both *emic* and *etic*) informing these faith-based NGOs' transnational activities. However, this conceptual framework obscures the humanitarians' deep entanglement with racialized knowledge production around Muslim Africa and the transnational racial formation of Muslim whiteness.

Muzaffer's words quoted above expose the imbrication of Turkish humanitarianism on the African continent with a new racial project, which I call Muslim whiteness. Humanitarian volunteers returning from short trips to the continent have contributed to the formation of a racialized affective regime in Turkey by narrativizing their personal experiences of first contact with anonymous African Muslims. These narratives not only circulate in their personal conversations, at fundraising events, via social media accounts, or in articles in Islamic magazines. They have also been taken up by Turkish soap operas and movies, such as *Milat*, screened on the state channel

TRT, providing the trope of first contact between Turkish and African Muslims with a broader reach and discursive effect. Based on the narratives of first contact I collected from ethnographic settings and cultural texts, this article theorizes race-making as affective labour by tracing how momentous encounters are amplified into a new racialized affective regime through the narrativization and reiteration of the first contact trope.

The trope of first contact has its roots in the historical encounter between the West and the peoples of the Americas, the Pacific, Asia and Africa through voyages, conquest and colonization since the fifteenth century. This colonial encounter not only provided the epistemological foundations of the discipline of anthropology (Asad 1975), but also created a resilient symbolic order (Trouillot 2003) that continues to position whiteness as an unmarked universal vis-à-vis the Other marked by race. Ethnographic and fictional accounts of the first contact between White and Black Muslims build on this symbolic order yet reconfigure its affective circuits. Far from being an unmarked category, whiteness in this context is more akin to a self-consciously worn badge, not of insult (Appiah 1985) but of honour. The badge of colour, as conceptualized by Du Bois, ties the African diaspora to Africa and Africans to Asians, as well as other 'coloured' races, based on a common history and memory of 'slavery, discrimination and insult' (Du Bois 2007 [1940]: 59). Instead of sharing the badge of insult that ties the non-white world in the Du Boisian sense (Appiah 1993), Turkish humanitarians proudly wear the badge of whiteness in Africa. Neither unmarked, nor marked by the historical responsibility of racial oppression and exclusion, the badge of Muslim whiteness reflects the emergence of a racialized affective regime in Turkey that endows Islamic philanthropy with new racial meanings.

Critical race scholars have analysed the racialized ideologies and practices of development and humanitarianism in postcolonial Africa, and have pointed to the privileging of whiteness as a symbol of expertise, authority, philanthropy, heroism and the saviour complex (Pierre 2013; 2020; Appel 2019; Benton 2016; Wilson 2011; Kothari 2006a; 2006b; Loftsdóttir 2009). Crafted in a humanitarian context, Muslim whiteness builds on this racial order, deploying its very codes, but reordering their meaning. Furthermore, in contrast to the de-historicization and de-politicization observed by Ferguson (1994) in relation to development work, the humanitarianism of the White Muslim is clearly a historicizing and politicizing racial project. Atlantic slavery, colonial expropriation, imperial partition and Christian mission are its constant points of reference for explaining material and spiritual dispossession on the African continent.

Against this historical and political backdrop, Muslim whiteness emerges as the moral antithesis of Christian whiteness, which is equated with European colonial racism. The moral condemnation of European colonial racism is further accentuated by the figure of the African Muslim waiting for the return of the Ottoman – that is, the arrival of the White Muslim. Ironically, however, the racist stereotype of the powerless, innocent African waiting to be saved by white intervention has its roots in the history of Christian mission on the continent. Paul's vision of a Macedonian man begging him to 'come over to Macedonia and help us' in Acts 16.9 was a key biblical text for the nineteenth-century missionaries in Africa. Likened to the Macedonian man, Africans were portrayed as eagerly awaiting the arrival of Europeans (Ludwig *et al.*

2004; Levine 2011). This article also explores the paradoxical relationship between Muslim whiteness and the colonial legacy of whiteness in Africa.

Through the lens of multi-sited ethnography

This analysis mainly draws on my interviews with humanitarian volunteers in Konya and Istanbul who have engaged in medical and humanitarian aid in Niger, Burkina Faso and other parts of Africa south of the Sahara. In addition, I attended regular meetings and volunteered at fundraising and other public events of several humanitarian NGOs. While most of the content for my analysis of the trope of first contact comes from interviews and observations in Turkey, this analysis is very much informed by a multi-sited ethnography. I travelled with a faith-based humanitarian NGO to Zanzibar, Tanzania, where we visited both completed and ongoing development projects over the course of a week. I also travelled to Gambia with another NGO for a similar purpose. Additionally, my fieldwork included interviews and observations with NGOs and other Turkish actors in Benin, Senegal and mainland Tanzania.

My own observations of the racialized encounters between Turkish humanitarians and African aid recipients did not necessarily correspond to the affective regime of the first contact trope. During my fieldwork, I did not encounter African Muslims whose hearts rejoiced because the White Muslim had finally arrived. Instead, random people I met on the streets of Zanzibar teased me after hearing my country of origin, saying that Turkish people loved to help, since Turks were known for sacrificing hundreds of animals and distributing their meat during the Eid al-Adha (festival of sacrifice) – a practice not as common among other transnational Muslim organizations on the archipelago. On another occasion, the Turkish humanitarians I travelled with to a project site in Zanzibar for the opening ceremony of a water well were disappointed when a villager asked for money in exchange for the mangoes he had picked for them. Romanticizing and Orientalizing Anatolia, they compared his attitude with that of a stereotypical Anatolian villager, who, they argued, would insist on serving tea and offering whatever he had, without ever asking for money. After all, the humanitarians convinced themselves that it would be only natural to receive small gifts of gratitude in return for the water well they sponsored in his village. As our bus left, the humanitarians contemplated the possibility that the Zanzibari villagers might not appreciate or love them, explaining away their disappointment as stemming from the cultural effect of colonialism.

The frictions I observed in actual humanitarian encounters posed a sharp contrast to the imagined affective intimacy between the White and Black Muslims that characterizes the trope of first contact. This is not a coincidence. Rather, the contradiction between my observations and my interlocutors' anecdotes suggests that the trope of first contact is the projection of Turkish humanitarians. As such, it says more about Turkish racial and imperial projections than about actual humanitarian encounters on the ground. This article, therefore, does not make an argument about African Muslims' perception of Turks or of Turkish humanitarianism. Rather, it contends that the narrative of first contact is a story Turks tell themselves because it does important racial work. As a result, this analysis provides a unique window onto the new investment in whiteness in Turkey under the AKP's neo-Ottomanist cultural hegemony

(Güner 2021) and the racialization of Muslims globally, while also making a critical contribution to the theorization of the relationship between race and affect.

Race-making as affective labour

Racialization as theorized by Fanon is a paradigmatically affective process (Blickstein 2019). Building on Fanon's theory, Blickstein (*ibid.*) argues that the affects of racialization today are genealogically rooted in, and continue to mirror, the histories of colonial domination and dispossession. The concept of 'racialized affect' developed by Berg and Ramos-Zayas (2015) allows an anthropological exploration of how affect as a relation of power produces differently racialized subjects. Whereas 'liable affect' disciplines marginalized subjects through subordination, 'empowering affect' maintains the privilege of whiteness. Together, these two affective modes reproduce the racialized inequalities instituted by the histories of colonialism, slavery and genocide. This article responds to Berg and Ramos-Zayas's (*ibid.*) and Blickstein's (2019) call for an anthropological theorization of race and affect. In doing so, it develops a critical framework to examine how a particular form of affective labour – humanitarian voluntarism – produces differently racialized subjects, specifically the White Muslim and Black Muslim. I therefore expand on Hardt and Negri's (2000) conceptualization of affective labour and its application to voluntarism in post-Fordist Italy (Muehlebach 2012) to theorize how the humanitarians' labour generates racial subjects. However, the affective labour discussed here is not limited to the humanitarian context of the actual encounter between White and Black Muslims. Rather, this article traces the crafting of the actual encounter into a racialized trope of first contact, and thus the meticulous discursive work that goes into conjuring race (Fields and Fields 2012). This work consists of the re-enactment of the affects arising from the encounter through narrativization and the circulation of narratives in different forms and media. I therefore shift Berg and Ramos-Zayas's focus on affective registers of everyday life to the circulation of affects through discursive practices. Unlike Richard and Rudnykyj (2009), who stress that affect is not an object of circulation, I argue that it is through the discursive circulation of affect that the racialization of Turks as White Muslims becomes possible. Therefore, this article is concerned with affective labour in the *afterlife* of the encounter, rather than the encounter itself.

'The perception of others as "the black other",' writes Sara Ahmed (2002), 'involves wrapping the bodies of others in fantasy.' As conceptualized in this article, affective labour involves the labour of wrapping black bodies in fantasy. The object of fantasy and fascination in this analysis, however, is first and foremost the newly discovered whiteness of the self, rather than the blackness of the African Other. Racialized constructions of Turkishness in the late Ottoman and early Republican eras developed a fascination with whiteness that continues to define the boundaries of national belonging and citizenship in contemporary Turkey (Ergin 2016; 2021). Historical, archaeological, anthropometric and linguistic evidence about Turkish whiteness was generated and mobilized under the auspices of the modernizing state to prove the young nation's fitness for modernity, something that was understood to be reserved for 'exclusively white, male, European and bourgeois' subjects (Goldberg cited in Ergin 2021). The trope of first contact reflects the cultural legacy of the

Ottoman/Republican fascination with whiteness, while challenging its deep and long-standing association with Western modernity and civilization (Güner 2021).

The new investment in Muslim whiteness by Turkish humanitarians and others reflects a continuing aspiration to belong to the club of 'moderns', now defined in contradistinction to African underdevelopment. At the same time, it diverges from earlier formations of whiteness in that it no longer represents a desire for inclusion into Western civilization. In contrast, Muslim whiteness embodies the moral superiority of Ottoman-Islamic civilization over that of the West, brought to trial for slavery, colonialism and plunder in Africa (Güner 2021). On the one hand, this entails the moral laundering of the Ottoman past in Africa by silencing histories of slavery, conquest and exploitation (Kayagil 2021; Minawi 2016; Powell 2003). On the other hand, the framing of Turkish moral discourses in postcolonial Africa in racial terms speaks to the inextricable link between morality and race and their embeddedness in the formation of modernity (Goldberg 1993).

Moreover, the Turkish humanitarians whose constructions of Muslim whiteness I analyse here occupy an ambiguous position within Turkey's racialized hierarchies inherited from the late Ottoman and early Republican modernization projects. As Sunni Muslim Turks, they belong to the hegemonic ethnic and religious majority and are therefore privileged over non-Muslims, Kurds, Alevis, Arabs and other racialized minorities. However, their piety and provincial origins in Anatolia would make it less likely for them to identify with whiteness within Turkey than in Africa south of the Sahara. The symbolic power and prestige of whiteness in the Turkish national context has historically been associated with the Westernized, secular, urban middle and upper-middle classes living in big cities. The Orientalizing discourses of the second half of the twentieth century portrayed rural migrants from Anatolian cities as the Other, invading and polluting these urban centres. This cultural hierarchization was mapped onto a series of racialized differences pertaining to the body, language and aesthetics, and eventually articulated as a binary opposition between the white and non-white/black later in the century (Yumul 2000). The leaders of political Islam in the 1990s identified pious Muslims as Black Turks in opposition to White Turks, who represented the privileged subjects of the secularist regime. Building on this legacy, President Erdoğan has continuously defined himself and his supporters as Black Turks since the early years of the AKP's coming to power, turning these racialized metaphors into pillars of populist authoritarianism (Arat-Koç 2018). This article begins to explore the social and political implications of the transformation of the so-called Black Turk into a White Muslim in Africa south of the Sahara.

In order to dissect the anatomy of the affects in the first contact trope, the material out of which racial subjects are made, I turn to James Baldwin's 'Stranger in the village' (Baldwin 2012 [1955]). In this essay, Baldwin compares his affective experiences as the first black man in a Swiss village with those of 'the white men arriving for the first time in an African village' (*ibid.*: 167). In Baldwin's comparison, the affects produced by these two racialized encounters are diametrically opposed to one another, even while both are centred on astonishment. 'The astonishment with which I might have greeted them, should they have stumbled into my African village a few hundred years ago, might have rejoiced their hearts,' writes Baldwin, 'but the astonishment with which they greet me today can only poison mine' (*ibid.*: 168). The 'great difference' between affective and visceral repercussions of astonishment on white and

black bodies hinges on their positionality within the history of colonialism. 'The white man takes the astonishment as tribute, for he arrives to conquer and to convert the natives,' adds Baldwin (*ibid.*: 168).

Reminiscent of the distinction Berg and Ramos-Zayas (2015) make between 'liable affect' and 'empowering affect', racial subordination and privilege correspond to different affective registers in Baldwin's comparison of first contact. While the astonishment of the African villager is a tribute to the white stranger, rejoicing his heart, the astonishment of the Swiss villager poisons the heart of the black stranger. Baldwin makes it clear that the racialized encounters in the present are structured by the histories of conquest and colonialism, and that their affective charges cannot be divorced from these histories which produced race in the first place. As such, the 'racialized affect' of the first contact cannot be neutral. Haunted by history, it corresponds to either the poison of subordination or the tribute of privilege, depending on one's position within racial hierarchies.

The trope of first contact crafted and circulated by Turkish humanitarians builds on the affective regime Baldwin describes, while reordering it to accommodate a different formation of whiteness deriving not from the history of European colonialism, but from the idealization of the Ottoman past. In this particular trope of first contact, astonishment arises from the fact that the white man is not a Christian, as the African villager expects based on historical experience, but a Muslim. The Muslimness of the white stranger, far from poisoning the African villager's heart, becomes a tribute that rejoices both hearts. This idyllic encounter hinges, on the one hand, on the Islamic ideal of racial egalitarianism, and, on the other, on the idealization of the Ottoman past. Muzaffer and others imagine the African Muslim longing not simply to unite with fellow Muslims who are white, but for the return of the Ottoman, whose ties with the continent were allegedly severed by the empire's collapse. Despite the continued subordination of the Black Muslim within the asymmetrical relations of humanitarianism, the first contact between White and Black Muslims is imagined as an empowering one, with astonishment lending itself to the affects of joy for both parties. The following ethnographic and media content analysis reveals how the White Muslim comes into being in Africa south of the Sahara.

Situating the Turkish Muslim as first among equals

Unlike Baldwin's scenarios, the astonishment arising from the Black Muslim's assumed first contact with the White Muslim rejoices both of the hearts involved. Throughout my research, I heard several anecdotes illustrating the formation of Muslim whiteness in Africa south of the Sahara through the trope of first contact. In one, Muzaffer and another Turkish humanitarian, Halil, entered a shop in Niger's capital Niamey and asked the shopkeeper for water:

Thirty years ago, water was sold in plastic bags on the buses. I don't know if you remember. There was no bottled water, but plastic bags. They had the same [in Niger]. I said, 'Don't you have cold water?' He [the shopkeeper] didn't even say no. He didn't care to say anything. He nodded his head no. The shopkeeper wasn't looking at us at all. At that moment, the *ezan* [call for prayer] was recited. Melodically [*makam olarak*], the *ezan* recitation is different there; it

is simpler. *Alla Akbar, Alla Akbar*, like this. Halil *abi* [brother] has a beautiful voice, and his *makam* is good. He said, ‘Muzaffer, what if I stood here and sung the melody like *Hayyaale’s-salâh, Hayyaale’s-salâh?*’ The shopkeeper turned to us and asked ‘Are you Muslim?’ in his own language. We said, ‘Yes, we are.’ Boom, he disappeared. A minute later, he came back with cold water in his arms. He told us to sit. He offered us water. He offered other things. He asked how we are doing. He tried everything to show us hospitality. Only because he learned that we were Muslim. In their eyes, whites are not Muslim, because they haven’t seen [any]. They haven’t seen any White Muslims. They like this a lot; they get emotional.

Muzaffer’s anecdote begins by relegating Niger back in time by thirty years as a racialized temporal trope (Fabian 1993). It was common for my interlocutors throughout my research, especially in Anatolian cities, to conflate Turkey’s past with an African country’s present: ‘Some decades ago, we too didn’t have electricity, telephone, tractor, etc.’ African countries were living in a past that Turkey has already moved beyond, according to my interlocutors, thanks to industrialization, development and technological advancement. The water in plastic bags thus becomes a racial symbol that resonates with this broader temporal politics of modernization. Muzaffer, therefore, begins his anecdote by temporally situating the White Muslim three decades ahead of the Black Muslim, through the teleological progress of modernity. The anachronism of the water in a plastic bag is complemented by the comparison of *makams*, or melodies, in Niger and Turkey. The simplicity Muzaffer attributes to the recitation of *ezan* in Niger contrasts with the sophistication of the *makam* in Halil’s recitation. This comparison builds on the racialized hierarchies between the simple and complex formations that are foundational to modernity. In this narrative, these hierarchies are mapped onto the sophistication of Turkish (White) Islam and the so-called simplicity of West African (Black) Islam.

As Muzaffer’s narrative proceeds, the material and cultural inequalities between the White and Black Muslim dissolve into immediate affective intimacy. How and why this happens requires some further contextualization. The post-Ottoman interruption of Turkish–African relations, according to humanitarians such as Muzaffer, has resulted in the monopolization of whiteness on the African continent by the European colonial project. With this historical claim, the trope of first contact erases the centuries-old trans-Saharan mobilities and networks that have historically connected Muslims through trade and Islamic scholarship. Contrary to the Turkish humanitarians’ imagination, labels of white (*bidan*) and black (*sudan*) in Muslim Africa have long been in circulation as genealogical arguments (El Hamel 2013; Hall 2011). In situating themselves as the first White Muslims in the Sahel, Turkish humanitarians such as Muzaffer deny both these historical transregional connectivities, not only across the Sahara, but also across the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, negating any possible claim to whiteness by Berbers, Arabs and other ethno-racial groups. The strong feelings of astonishment reported by my interlocutors, such as that of the Nigerien shopkeeper, become possible only through these historical erasures and social denials.

An immediate interracial intimacy based on a shared Muslim identity follows from the first reaction of astonishment in the accounts of first contact, rejoicing the hearts

of the White and the Black Muslim. This affective charge, however, must be read as a projection of my Turkish interlocutors' racial and imperial fantasies, rather than a reflection of the actual responses of African Muslims. The act of revoicing in this context does not simply reflect the complexities of a dialogical process in the Bakhtinian sense, but is further complicated by the processes of translation (Güner 2021; Bakhtin 1981). In a transnational context in which humanitarian volunteers such as Muzaffer do not share a common language with their African interlocutors, these are revoicings in which the original voices are lost in translation, if not altogether missing. The repertoire of the White Muslim, which includes anecdotes, articles and videos narrativizing interracial encounters in transnational Islamic spheres, therefore reflects Turkish fantasies more than actual encounters. Again, the trope of first contact is a story Turks tell themselves.

The appearance of the first White Muslim on YouTube

To make this newly discovered White Muslim identity known to the broader Turkish public, Muzaffer produced a short video clip based on footage from his Niger trip and uploaded it to YouTube. Like the previous anecdote, the video reportedly depicts the Nigerien Muslims' first contact with the White Muslim. Since its release in 2013, this video has circulated under different titles: 'The African Muslim who sees a White Muslim for the first time', 'Watch how emotional our Nigerien brother gets when he sees a White Muslim for the first time', 'The joy of our brothers who see a White Muslim for the first time in Niger'. Altogether, these videos have had over a million views so far.

The original video opens with the White Muslim (Muzaffer) touring the Sahelian landscape on a motorbike with emotional classical music playing in the background. This soundtrack – setting aside the irony of it being Western classical music – helps frame the audience's reception of the first contact as a deeply moving experience. Next, we see a bag of millet. Millet entered the Turkish Islamic humanitarian imagination in recent decades as the ultimate symbol of poverty in Niger. During fieldwork, I heard time and again that 'Nigeriens eat only millet, the grain with which we feed our birds'. One humanitarian NGO even placed small bags of millet on the tables at a fundraising iftar event during Ramadan. The contrast between the rich iftar menu and the representation of a millet-based diet, which was intended to generate a feeling of compassion and hence pious donations, did not go uncontested.

After the symbolism of the millet, the camera zooms in to a crescent moon, which not only evokes the Turkish flag and symbolizes Islam, but also foreshadows the trope of first contact as the beginning of a new relationship based on emotional intensity and interracial intimacy. In the next scene, the Turkish man gets off his motorbike and begins walking through rural Niger, where he encounters three men sitting on a rug, reciting the Qur'an. He kneels down and listens until the end. When the Nigerien man finishes the recitation, the Turkish man, who has been sitting in silence, says '*Sadakallahul Azim*', the phrase uttered at the end of Qur'anic recitation meaning 'God Almighty has spoken the truth'. The Turkish man's participation in the Islamic repertoire is met with tremendous joy by the Nigeriens. They hug and kiss each other, laugh and cry, shake hands and pray together. This homosocial intimacy supposedly follows from the Nigerien men's realization that the white man is indeed a

pious Muslim. The prayer of the video's protagonist, like the recitation of the *ezan* by Halil, becomes evidence of the white man's Muslim identity. Both the video's title and its soundtrack frame this encounter as one of interracial intimacy in which joy follows from the initial astonishment, rejoicing both men's hearts. The YouTube comments in Turkish curse racism and enthusiastically celebrate the interracial fraternity of Muslims.

Return of the Ottoman

Reflecting on the shooting and release of the video during our interview, Muzaffer said that he and Halil, who filmed the encounter, had a deep conversation with the Nigeriens afterwards. Despite everyone's curiosity, he said, he chose not to include this conversation in the YouTube video, because the content was too painful. He then ventriloquized his Nigerien interlocutors:

They [the Nigeriens] ask us, 'Where have you been? Where have you been for years? Where have you been for decades? Here, we are with no food, no shelter. We're poor, we don't know what to do. And all these whites are coming to help us and with each aid, they hand us a Bible. They're trying to indoctrinate us. We know they're conducting missionary activities, but there's nothing we can do, we're hungry, we take what they give. Seeing that you exist, where have you been? Why haven't you come until now?' These people say this from their hearts, hearts that are torn out. This is no lip service. They say this with tears in their eyes. They say this hugging us, embracing us.

Through this ventriloquizing, Muzaffer does not simply report what was uttered to him, but frames, interprets and comments on the utterances to represent his own meanings. The dialogue between Muzaffer and the Nigeriens, which supposedly took place in the absence of a shared language, accomplishes three important things. First, it situates the African as desperately waiting for the arrival of the White Muslim, discussed in the introduction to this article as a colonial trope inherited from Christian missionary discourses. Second, it naturalizes the equation of whiteness with philanthropy, which is another legacy of nineteenth-century missionary and humanitarian discourses. Finally, and most importantly, by interpellating Turks as White Muslims, it responsabilizes them to aid African Muslims through donations and volunteering. The trope of first contact, therefore, lends energy and legitimacy to Turkey's new Africa policy by pulling into its orbit Turkish Muslims as racial and humanitarian subjects.

During our interview in the office of Umut Association in Konya, Halil narrated a similarly dramatic moment of first contact that took place in 2005 when the director of a local NGO met Halil and others at the airport in Niamey. He appeared rather unwelcoming, and asked the Turkish group bitterly: 'Where have you been?' Halil recounted to me how he initially grappled with this obscure question. It wasn't their delayed flight or the delay in their response to the famine that the Nigerien man was referring to. When Halil revoiced the director's question a second time, the underlying historical argument became clear: 'Where have you been for the last hundred years?' According to Halil, the Nigerien director was alluding to the temporality of

post-imperial loss and remorse. This anecdote, like those of Muzaffer, helps imagine the arrival of the Turk on the African continent as the return of the Ottoman.

The contradiction between the trope of first contact and that of the return of the Ottoman stems from the multilayeredness of the discourses framing Turkish humanitarianism in Muslim Africa. The humanitarian encounter is informed, on the one hand, by the racial and affective regime established by colonial history. On the other hand, neo-Ottomanist tropes of return and reunion, which were originally constructed in the context of former Ottoman territories, are projected onto African spaces and interlocutors. 'Where have you been for the last hundred years?' is a recurrent trope of neo-Ottomanism, especially in the context of Muslim minorities in the Balkans. For instance, the director of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) reported that an old Bosnian man in Kosovo asked one of their staff 'Where have you been since 1912?', referring to the Balkan Wars that resulted in Ottoman territorial loss.² President Erdoğan narrated a similar anecdote from Macedonia, where an old man approached TIKA staff and asked 'What took you so long? We've been waiting for you for the last hundred years.'³ Ironically, it is not only the neo-Ottomanists but also their critics, such as Bosnian villagers (Henig 2020) and Serbian nationalists (Yavuz 2020), who reproduce the trope of Ottoman return after a hundred years. Halil's voicing of his Nigerien interlocutor reveals the projection of this trope of post-imperial reunion (after a century of republican interruption) onto Muslim Africa. More than a first contact, the YouTube video symbolized for Halil the restoration of lost historical connections between Turkey and the African continent. In other words, the rejoicing of the hearts stemmed from the reunion of old friends rather than from the meeting of White and Black Muslims for the first time, according to him.

Haunted by the Christian missionary

The joyful tears, tactile intimacy and emotional bonding emerging from the racialized encounter between White and Black Muslims are haunted by the deeper presence of the White Christian on the continent. Earlier in our interview, Muzaffer had said that, because of the aid missionaries provide, Nigeriens found Christians 'more humane, more helpful, and warmer', and that was the whole point. If the White Christian can create positive affect through aid, this is exactly what the White Muslim should be and is trying to do – hence the scramble for African hearts. The figure of the African Muslim waiting desperately for the arrival of the White Muslim to bring aid and the affective intensity their belated encounter generates in the trope of first contact are both fuel for the White Muslim in this intra-religious competition. The stakes of the competition between the White Muslim and the White Christian become clearer in Halil's version of the behind-the-scenes story.

² See <http://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/haber/ortak_kultur_mirasimizin_koruyucusu_tika-19645>, accessed 2 September 2022.

³ See <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-milletimizle-engelleri-a-40274017>>, accessed 2 September 2022.

If you watched that video carefully, the one where [he] got up and started crying in Africa, you know . . . as soon as I approached, he interrupted the verse he was reciting, said ‘*Bismillah*’ and started reciting another one: ‘Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends;⁴ they are friends of each other, they cannot be your friends.’ He thought we were *gavur* [infidel], he thought we were Christian because we were white and recited the verses about not to be friends with Christians. He was choosing his side, saying, ‘My Lord, I am hostile towards them [*buğz ediyorum*]. Look, I don’t love them. I’m not their friend or anything. Look, I’m reciting this verse.’ After it was done, I sat there, I put the camera away and recited the Qur’an. There were three villages around. All the people in that village gathered because a white person was reciting the Qur’an. The other villagers gathered too. A white person is reciting the Qur’an, hurry! Because they haven’t seen any [White Muslims]. A hundred years have passed. They cut us off in a way that now we are going there to see how we can fix this.

According to Halil, the Nigeriens in the video initially avoided contact with the white man, thinking he was Christian, just like the shopkeeper in Niamey. If the shopkeeper’s aversion was a reaction to the legacy of colonial racism in Muzaffer’s anecdote, unfriendliness towards whites became the command of God in Halil’s behind-the-camera story. During our interviews, both Muzaffer and Halil emphasized the importance of their own versions of the behind-the-scenes stories. However, neither the dramatic exchange between the Turkish and Nigerien men narrated by Muzaffer nor the Nigerien men’s switching of the Qur’anic verses upon the arrival of two white men made it into the video circulated on YouTube. Yet they are central to how the narrators frame their encounters with the Nigeriens and how the Turkish audience receives them. In the competition for the love and affection of Africans, such stories help construct a desired reality in which Christians are not more lovable, but are rather forbidden from being loved either by historical guilt or by God’s command. Nevertheless, whiteness does not lose its desirability. Rather, Turks become deserving of African love as they are racialized as white.

The White Muslim scales up to TRT

Muzaffer and Halil’s narrative of first contact circulated beyond their immediate circles in Konya after the release of their YouTube video. This mythical encounter reached an even larger Turkish public with the re-enactment of the scene of first contact in *Milat*, a soap opera screened in 2015 on the state channel TRT, depicting the struggles of the Turkish secret intelligence service against Turkey’s foreign enemies and their domestic allies.

In the first episode, we learn that Western powers, threatened by the growing assertiveness of Turkish Airlines (THY) in the African aviation sector, have sponsored a series of terrorist attacks carried out by so-called Islamist terrorist organizations in the region in order to force THY out of the market. Ibrahim, a rising member of the

⁴ The correct translation for *awliyā* in the original verse would be ally. However, Halil used the word ‘*dost*’ in Turkish, which translates as friend, hence divorcing it from its original context.

Turkish secret intelligence service, soon to become the White Muslim, is sent to Abuja at the head of a counterinsurgency mission to prevent the next terrorist attack. The scramble for Africa's air routes is a bloody one in the episode. Yet, it isn't completely divorced from the scramble for African hearts.

Milat relocates the scene of the first contact in the YouTube video from Niger to Nigeria. This time, it is Ibrahim who is walking with his colleague in the streets of Abuja and pauses after hearing the Qur'an recitation. Imitating Muzaffer, he kneels down in front of the man reading the Qur'an. The original sound of the Nigerian man's recitation in the amateur video is added to the fictional re-enactment of the scene to increase its verisimilitude. Unlike in the original clip, however, the Nigerian man raises his eyes from the Qur'an and throws Ibrahim a suspicious and unfriendly look. This gesture is intended to emphasize the Africans' hostility towards the white man, as illustrated by Halil's behind-the-scenes story about the Nigerian man's alleged switching of the Qur'anic verses. It is also worth noting another difference between the two scenes: in *Milat*, the man reads from the Qur'an, whereas in the original footage he recites it from memory. This fictional reworking is symptomatic of the belief in the goodness of distributing printed copies of the Qur'an in Africa, a practice institutionalized by Turkey's Foundation of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) and other faith-based organizations. Both this practice and the divergence of the soap opera from the original video undermine the centrality of Qur'anic memorization in classical Islamic education in West Africa.

When Ibrahim says '*Sadakallahul Azim*', the men embrace and touch each other's smiling faces, copying the original video. After a quick farewell, the Turkish men hit the road and Ibrahim's colleague asks, 'What's up bro?' With a frowning face, Ibrahim responds: 'Poor fellows, have they ever seen a White Muslim, bro? The white man first came with a weapon in his hand, then with a Bible. He stripped them of whatever goods they had.' With this response, Ibrahim explicitly spells out the message the audience should take away from this random encounter, which otherwise would not make any sense to those who haven't watched the original video: this is the Black Muslim's first contact with a White Muslim. Furthermore, he makes it clear for his audience that this interracial encounter takes place against the backdrop of the historical legacy of European colonialism. Witnessing this interracial and intra-Muslim intimacy based on a 'true story' of first contact, Turkish audiences not only participate in the rejoicing of the hearts, but, through this virtual affective exchange with the Black Muslim and interpellation into Muslim whiteness, they can also begin to identify as White Muslims.

The scene of first contact helps the audience orient themselves in transitioning from the headquarters of the Turkish secret intelligence service in Ankara to the streets of Abuja, where a truck full of armed terrorists, who are shouting '*Allahu akbar*', approaches the THY office, killing people randomly on the streets. In introducing the African continent as oppressed and dispossessed by the white man in the first contact scene, the episode prepares the racial terrain for the next scene in which the so-called Nigerian Islamists, manipulated by the West, carry out a terrorist attack. To emphasize this point, Ibrahim looks at the terrorists before the counterattack and asks a rhetorical question: 'Since when are the English saying '*Allahu akbar*' while killing a man, dude!' Again, the emergent presence of the White Muslim is foregrounded by pre-existing white bodies. If these took the form of Christian missionaries in

Muzaffer and Halil's version of the first contact trope, here they are represented by British neocolonialists with deeper roots in African markets. In both cases, they are responsible for the spiritual and material dispossession of Africans, to whom agency is denied. In contrast, the Turkish presence on the continent is imagined not only as restoring African dignity, but also as redeeming whiteness.

The day after the screening of the first episode of *Milat*, Turkish newspapers celebrated its success with headlines such as 'The moving Qur'an scene in the series *Milat*'⁵ and 'The Qur'an scene that brought tears to [the audience's] eyes'.⁶ '*Milat* surprised [its audience] by bringing the joy of Nigerian Muslims who saw a White Muslim to the screen,' explained *Yeni Akit*.⁷ This is how the racial trope of first contact based on a spontaneous encounter between Turkish and Nigerian men reached the broader Turkish public and popularized racialized imaginaries of Muslim Africa. The actual encounter was first filtered through Muzaffer's editing, titling and choice of soundtrack in the YouTube video, which was then re-enacted by a television series watched by millions, and finally reported in newspapers. Each time its racial meaning was reiterated, the Turk was interpellated as the White Muslim, and the trope of first contact created its own reality. This is the affective labour that produces the White Muslim. Even if the anecdotes were fabricated, or the original video staged, they helped invent and solidify the identity of the White Muslim. Regardless of their veracity, the White Muslim now has its own life. Reaching an ever expanding audience via different discursive forms and media, the re-enactment of the affects of astonishment and joy that characterize the first contact trope between the White and Black Muslim conjure up race (Fields and Fields 2012).

Much ink has been spilled on analysing Turkish soap operas as a tool of soft power in foreign policy. Çevik (2019) argues that, as propaganda tools, they equally target the domestic audience and aim to manufacture consent for AKP's policies. The analysis of *Milat* has revealed, however, the analytical limitations of concepts such as soft power and propaganda. The affective labour of conjuring race through humanitarianism and soap operas becomes legible only by going beyond such instrumentalist frameworks – as does the deep entrenchment of race and morality in neo-Ottomanism.

The White Muslim's pocket: converting phenotypic to economic value

I encountered another narrative of African Muslims' first contact with a White Muslim at a fundraising event organized by the Köprü (Bridge) Association. Since its establishment in 2005, Köprü has organized dozens of medical camps with Turkish doctor volunteers, conducting cataract, circumcision, dental and other surgeries, in addition to drilling water wells, distributing goats, and sacrificing animals during Eid.

⁵ See <<https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/milat-dizisinde-duygulandiran-kuran-i-kerim-sahnesi-60228.html>>, accessed 2 September 2022.

⁶ See <<https://www.star.com.tr/medya/milat-dizisinde-aglatan-kuran-sahnesi-haber-1017387>>, accessed 2 September 2022.

⁷ See <<https://www.yenisafak.com/video-galeri/haber/milat-dizisinde-aglatan-kuran-i-kerim-sahnesi-2011564>>, accessed 2 September 2022.

'Building bridges between hearts' read a banner at the fundraiser organized during the month of Ramadan in 2016 in the quad of a university campus in Istanbul. Next to the photography exhibition on past medical and humanitarian projects in different African countries, volunteers, including myself, sold calligraphy or *ebru* (marble painting), decorated hands with henna, or painted the faces of children to raise funds. While guests were waiting to break the fast, humanitarian volunteers came on stage one after the other and spoke about the NGO's accomplishments and their personal memories from the field.

Ahmet, an ENT (ear, nose, and throat) doctor and an experienced volunteer who was among the first group that went to Niger in 2005, shared his memories of a previous encounter in Burkina Faso at Köprü's fundraiser:

There are villages that are partly Christian and partly Muslim, and they have a friendly competition between them. One afternoon, we needed to pray in such a mixed village. Something very interesting happened after we prayed, the villagers said something very interesting, 'We tell the Christians, see we too have our whites now. This is the greatest gift for us.' And they thanked us. Our biggest service is to show them that we stand by them.

After the climactic narrative of the Burkinabe villagers' encounter with the White Muslim, Ahmet left the stage to applause. He had previously written about this particular encounter for the magazine published by the NGO that he had co-founded and for which he still volunteered. 'Africa is waiting for us ...' was the issue's title. Ahmet's article, which drew on his experiences in Niger and Burkina Faso, began: 'An African villager in Niger told the group who came for aid: "European whites came here before you many times. Their intentions were different. Both of you are white. But you are as white as snow."' The villager's words, Ahmet noted, were proof of Turkish Muslims' responsibility on a world scale. The whiter one is, it seems, the greater the responsibility to save the non-white. He then moved to his encounter in Burkina Faso: 'Another African said in a mosque that we went to in Burkina Faso for evening prayer: "God bless you. The Christians in our village used to say, 'We have our whites.' Since you arrived, we now can say, 'We too have our whites.'"' Based on the voicing of Burkinabe villagers, Ahmet's article concluded that the aid they provide affects a country socially, psychologically and historically.

During our interview in the hospital where he worked, Ahmet repeated the same voicing and ventriloquism of the Burkinabe Muslim, this time for me as a researcher. He made sure that I got his point by concluding as follows: 'They see us as one of them, they cheer up saying we have our white too. This is something very important. This is how they see us; you understand?'

Ahmet's narrative of first contact that he shared with an expanding audience through various media reveals how momentous encounters in Africa south of the Sahara are amplified into a racialized affective regime in Turkey. The narrativization and circulation of racialized affects by Ahmet illustrate the affective labour that produces racial subjects. Each time he invoked his memories of Burkina Faso or Niger, the doctor interpellated his fellow citizens as White Muslims. In short, words written and spoken by Ahmet in magazines, at public events and in interviews do important work in bringing the White Muslim to life.

Ahmet's reiteration of his encounter with the Burkinabe Muslims is also key to the responsibilization of Turkish citizens based on racial arguments. There is nothing new about humanitarian NGOs' appeals to their donors' sense of ethical responsibility to generate funds. However, Ahmet's framing of this responsibility is radically different to those previously explored by scholars and hints at the formation of a new racialized affective regime. Turkish humanitarian NGOs often frame responsibility in relation to religious duty and imperial legacy, addressing Turkish citizens as Muslims and heirs of the Ottoman Empire while reminding them of their inherent responsibility towards fellow Muslims and former Ottoman territories (Atalay 2013). Ahmet's first contact narrative includes these well-established tropes of responsibility, while also giving them a new racial meaning.

In Ahmet's representation of a multi-religious Africa, providing a water well for the Burkinabe Muslims becomes a racial responsibility. If the White Christian is the provider of the Black Christian's well, it is only natural within this racial humanitarian order that the White Muslim should provide a well for the Black Muslim. As such, the White Muslim is the equivalent of the White Christian in Africa south of the Sahara, not only belonging to the same racial category as the latter, but also claiming the role historically assigned to them: that of being a saviour. It is a relationship of patronage that takes place at the intersection of race and religion. If the White Christian is the patron of the Burkinabe Christian, the White Muslim emerges as the long-awaited patron of the Burkinabe Muslim. Ahmet's account makes it clear that whiteness is a form of wealth and property in the Du Boisian sense (Du Bois 2017 [1935]). As such, it benefits not only the beholder, but, through networks of patronage, it can also benefit the racialized Burkinabe subjects. Interpellating his audience as the White Muslim at a fundraising event, Ahmet was able to convert this phenotypical capital into economic capital, generating donations for the plight of Black Muslims in Africa. Islam mediated this conversion since the donations were religiously motivated. Hailed as White Muslims, Ahmet's audience is compelled to fund humanitarian aid in Muslim Africa based on an unprecedented racial responsibility that articulates with religious duty and imperial legacy.

Conclusion: the racial alchemy of neo-Ottomanism

This article has argued that Muzaffer's, Halil's and Ahmet's affective labour in narrativizing and circulating in various media their experiences of racialized encounters with African Muslims conjures up race. Taking the trope of first contact as its object of analysis, it showed how racialized affects that circulated among friends, at fundraising events, and via television, social and print media breathed life into the White Muslim. It demonstrated how the momentous encounters between Turkish humanitarians and African aid recipients have been amplified into a new racialized affective regime that lends energy, vitality and power to AKP's Africa policy. In doing so, this analysis makes a critical intervention into the instrumentalist frameworks that reduce humanitarian NGOs and television series to soft power and propaganda tools. Beyond simply legitimizing or manufacturing consent for AKP's domestic and foreign policies, the humanitarians' transnational and cultural work produces racialized knowledge about Muslim Africa and a particular racial subject, the White Muslim,

who is equipped by history and nature to lift their African co-religionists racialized as black out of poverty.

Affects of racialization mirror colonial history, as Tamar Blickstein (2019) argues. So do the racialized affects of the first contact trope between the White and Black Muslims in Africa south of the Sahara. Nevertheless, they do so in a paradoxical relationship with colonial discourses. On the one hand, Muslim whiteness as a racial project harks back to Africa's colonial encounter with the West with its temporal politics, hierarchization of difference and ascendancy of whiteness. This irony becomes visible in the Turkish humanitarians' appropriation of the racist figure of the powerless African waiting to be saved, a stereotype that can be traced back to nineteenth-century Christian missionary discourse and the biblical analogy of the Macedonian man. Turkish humanitarians vernacularized this racist figure, collapsing it with the neo-Ottomanist trope of return and reunification with Muslim minorities in today's Macedonia and in the Balkans in general. On the other hand, Muslim whiteness attempts to rework the affective flows of the racial regime instituted by colonial history in Africa by redeeming whiteness. As opposed to the fear of contamination, segregation and hierarchy that are associated with colonial racism, the astonishment stemming from this particular interracial encounter reportedly lends itself to a tactile and affective intimacy between Muslims. In James Baldwin's words, it strives to alchemize the poison of subjugation into a tribute that would equally rejoice African hearts in their first contact with the White Muslim.

To conclude, this critical ethnography reveals the relevance of race to debates on the so-called emerging powers on the African continent and the continent's transnational Islamic connections with the Middle East and wider Muslim world. By exposing the profound and unexpected ways in which global white supremacy informs these new forms of engagement, it makes a critical intervention into existing scholarship on the racialization of Muslims, which predominantly discusses whiteness in relation to the Islamophobia of the post-9/11 context. The racial project of Muslim whiteness complicates the theoretical debate on the intersectionality of race and religion. Furthermore, this discussion not only expands the scope of analysis on neo-Ottomanism to incorporate Africa south of the Sahara but also explores the centrality of race to neo-Ottomanist discourses. The moral economy of neo-Ottomanism has previously been subjected to critical scrutiny in the context of discourses on hospitality, generosity and charity towards Syrian refugees. The racial logic undergirding this moral economy, however, has remained largely unexplored. This article provides new insight into the deep entanglement of morality and race in neo-Ottomanism and the racialized affective regime of humanitarianism in AKP's Turkey.

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