

COMPARATIVE DIGESTS

1] Racism: Arab and European compared

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Concerning the lands of Islam in the Middle East, there is “the conventional picture of a society totally free from racial prejudice and discrimination.” This is “the false picture drawn by the myth makers.”—[Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, p.99]
 Below is a digest of some of the evidence on the matter.

	White Euro-Christian Societies, Europe and Americas (1500-1950)	White Arab-Islamic Societies, From Spain & Morocco to Pakistan (ca.600-2000)
Doctrines	<p>Hume (1711-1776): “I am apt to suspect the Negroes . . . to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. . . Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of which none ever discovered any symptom of ingenuity . . . In JAMAICA indeed they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but ‘tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.” [1741/42] --[See David Hume, <i>Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary</i>, vol. I, ed. T.H. Green and T. H. Grose (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), p. 252; quoted in Jacob H. Carruthers and Leon C. Harris eds, <i>African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge</i>, Los Angeles, CA: ASCAC, 1997, p.33]</p> <p>Montesquieu (1689-1755) in arguing for Negro inferiority said: “it is natural to look upon [white] color as the criterion of human nature. . . It is impossible for us to suppose these creatures to be men, because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians.” [1748] --[See Montesquieu, <i>The Spirit of the Laws</i>, New York: Hafner, 1949, pp.238-239, quoted in Jacob Carruthers, <i>Intellectual Warfare</i>, Chicago: Third World Press, 1999, p.6]</p> <p>Hegel (1770-1831) The Negro as already observed exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state . . . There is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character.--G.W.F. Hegel, <i>The Philosophy of History</i>.(1831) Quoted in I. Onyewuenyi, <i>The African Origin of Greek Philosophy</i>, p.96]</p>	<p>A Persian treatise on world geography, written in 982 AD says: “As regards southern countries, all their inhabitants are black on account of the heat of their climate. Most of them go naked. . . . They are people distant from the standards of humanity.” And of the Zanj: “Their nature is that of wild animals. They are extremely black.” –[See Lewis, <i>Race and Color in Islam</i>, pp. 35]</p> <p>The great geographer, Idrisi (1110-1165), ascribes “lack of knowledge and defective minds” to the black peoples. Their ignorance, he says, is notorious; Men of learning and distinction are almost unknown among them. –[See Lewis, <i>Race and Color in Islam</i>, pp.37]</p> <p>Even such luminaries as Ibn Sina [Avicenna (980-1037), the most famous and influential of the philosopher-scientists of Islam], considered blacks to be “people who are by their very nature slaves.” “Blasphemy Before God: The Darkness of Racism In Muslim Culture” by Adam Misbah al-Haqq</p> <p>Sa ‘id al-Andalusi (1029-1070) a <i>qadi</i> of Toledo: “They lack self-control and steadiness of mind and are overcome by fickleness, foolishness and ignorance, Such are the blacks, who live at the extremity of the land of Ethiopia, the Nubians, the Zanj and the like . . .” . . . The 13th century Persian writer Nasir al-Din Tusi remarks that the Zanj differ from animals only in that “their two hands are lifted above the ground,” and continues “Many have observed that the ape is more teachable and more intelligent than the Zanj.” –[See Lewis, <i>Race and Color in Islam</i>, pp.35, 36, 38]</p>

Doctrines Contd .	<p>Kant (1724- 1804), in his <i>Anthropology</i> and allied works on race theory, argued: “The white race possesses all motivating forces and talents in itself” and skin color is evidence of “this difference in natural character” hence “this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid.”</p> <p>--[See Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, “The Color of Reason”, in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed. <i>Postcolonial African Philosophy</i>, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997, pp. 117, 119]</p>	<p>Osama Bin Laden said to the Sudanese-American novelist Kola Boof in Morocco in 1996.</p> <p>“All African women are prostitutes, and the whole race of African men are <i>abeed</i> [slave] stock. Your people are like rats plaguing the earth” –[Kola Boof, <i>Diary of a Lost Girl</i>, p. 167]</p> <p>“In the eyes of the Arab rulers of Sudan they [black slaves] were simply animals given by Allah to make the life of the Arab comfortable”</p> <p>–quoted in Nyaba, P. A., <i>Arab Racism in the Sudan</i>, p.163.</p>
Stereo-types	<p>The Negro was “a merry-hearted, grinning, dancing, singing, affectionate kind of creature, with a great deal of melody and amenability in his composition”</p> <p>–Thomas Carlyle, “The Nigger Question,” <i>Fraser’s Magazine</i>, December 1849 [See Wilfred Cartey, <i>Black Images</i>, p. 2]</p> <p>[find and quote more examples]</p>	<p>The black (person) is frivolous and lighthearted . . . musical, and with a strong feeling of rhythm. Thus Ibn Butlan remarks that “If a Zanj were to fall from heaven to earth he would beat time as he goes down” – [Lewis, <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i>, pp. 94-95]</p> <p>-----</p> <p>In Arab societies, the accusations commonly brought against “the dark-skinned peoples—and especially the Zanj, the blacks of East Africa” [included] “weakness of mind, lack of discernment, and ignorance of consequences”, “boundless stupidity”, “dimness”, “obtuseness”, “crude perceptions”, and “evil dispositions”. Jahiz of Basra (<i>ca.</i> 776-869) wrote a defense against these stereotypes.</p> <p>To those who ask “How is it that we have never seen a Zanji who had the intelligence even of a woman or of a child” Jahiz also gave an answer. –[See Lewis, <i>Race and Color in Islam</i>, pp. 15-17]</p> <p>-----</p> <p>An Arab proverb about the Zanj: “When he is hungry he steals, when he is sated he fornicates” –[Lewis, <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i>, p. 34]</p>
One drop rule	<p>(USA) Just one drop of Black blood, i.e. (any visible trace of) one black ancestor makes one black</p> <p>[Find and quote Booker T. Washington’s joke on this— something about how powerful black blood must be if one drop makes a white into a black]</p>	<p>(Sudan) One drop of Arab blood plus Islam and Arabic language makes one an Arab:</p> <p>“One is classified an Arab if one is a Muslim and speaks the Arabic language and more specifically if one has [the] light (red) skin [of the Arab-black hybrid]” —[Nyaba, P.A., “Arab Racism in the Sudan”]</p>

<p>Social strata; Economic and legal inequality</p>	<p>In Saint Domingue (colonial Haiti) the population was ranked from the top down, as follows: French Whites (transients), Creole Whites (those born on the island), Mulattoes (in ten or more classes, all the way from nearly white to nearly pure black), Freed Blacks, and the Slaves (nearly all black, with about 10% Mulattoes) at the bottom.</p> <p>--[See Carruthers, <i>The Irritated Genie</i>, pp. 15-17]</p> <p>In the USA until the 1960s, under slavery and thereafter under Jim Crow, the law and the terrorism of white mobs enforced a color-caste system. Racial inequality is enshrined in the US Constitution, in its “3/5 of a man” clause; and in the Dred Scott case (1857) the Supreme court ruled that blacks, whether freed or slave, were not citizens, and had no rights that whites were bound to respect. The Slave Codes “were directed toward defining Africans as property and depriving them of any legal or human right or personality. Under these [Slave Codes] the African slave could not make a contract, could not testify against anyone except another African, could not strike a white man even in self-defense; could not leave a plantation without authorization; could not possess firearms; could not visit whites or free Africans or entertain them in their quarters; could not assemble without whites; could not learn or be taught to read or write; and could not even beat drums or blow horns” Under the Black Codes of the Jim Crow era, blacks suffered segregation in schools, transportation, housing, sports, and were discriminated against in jobs. --[See Maulana Karenga, <i>Introduction to Black Studies</i>, (1982), pp 86,102, 106]</p>	<p>The ranking order in Arab society</p> <p>Among the ancient Arabs there was an elaborate system of social gradations. . . .The term commonly used by the ancient Arabs for the offspring of mixed unions was <i>hajin</i>, a word which, like the English “mongrel” and “half-breed,” was used of both animals and of human beings... [W]hen applied to human beings, [it denotes] a person whose father was Arab and free and whose mother was a foreign slave. . . . Full Arabs—those born of two free Arab parents—ranked above half-Arabs, the children of Arab fathers and non-Arab mothers. . . . Half-Arabs, in turn, ranked above non-Arabs, who were, so to speak, outside the system. According to ‘Abduh Badawi, “there was a consensus that the most unfortunate of the hajins and the lowest in social status were those to whom blackness had passed from their mothers.. . . The son of an Arab father and a Persian or Syrian mother would not look very different from the son of two Arab parents. . . . The son of an African mother, however, was usually recognizable at sight and therefore more exposed to abuse and discrimination. “Son of a black woman” was a not infrequent insult addressed to such persons, and “son of a white woman” was accordingly used in praise or boasting</p> <p>–[Lewis , <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i> pp.39- 40]</p> <p>Another black poet Da’ud ibn Salm (d, ca.750), known as Da’ud the Black (a-Adlam) was famous for his ugliness. It is said that on one occasion he was, together with an Arab called Zayd ibn Ja’far, arrested and brought before a judge in Mecca, on a charge of flaunting luxurious clothes. The two accused received very different treatment. The handsome Arab was released; the ugly black was flogged.</p> <p>[See Lewis, <i>Race and Color in Islam</i>, pp. 11-14]</p>
<p>Sexual stereotypes</p>	<p>In Spanish America, some of the sexual stereotypes on the black slaves were:</p> <p>The nigger stud lusting to rape white women;</p> <p>The Negress who unleashes lust; the Mulata who kindles the drunken delirium of the senses; etc</p> <p>[See Wilfred Cartey, <i>Black Images</i>, p. 2]</p> <p>[Find and quote from other studies of the subject]</p>	<p>Immense potency and unbridled sexuality was ascribed to the black male; and incandescent sexuality was ascribed to the black woman e.g. in the poem</p> <p>“How many a tender daughter of the Zanj walks about with a hotly burning oven as broad as a drinking bowl”--Farazdaq,</p> <p>[See Lewis , <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i>, p.94]</p>

<p>Stereo types in Literature</p>	<p>“The nigger” according to Roark Bradford is indolent, entirely irresponsible, shiftless, the bugaboo of Anglo-Saxon ideals, a poor fighter and a poor hater, primitively emotional and uproariously funny. . . . Those (Negro stereotypes) considered important enough for separate classification are seven in number: (1) The Contented Slave, (2) The Wretched Freeman, (3) The Comic Negro, (4) The Brute Negro, (5) The Tragic Mulatto, (6) The Local Color Negro, and (7) The Exotic Primitive. -[See Sterling Brown, “Negro Character as seen by White Authors” in <i>Dark Symphony</i>, pp.139, 140]</p>	<p>The portrayal of blacks in Islamic literature begins at an early date, and soon falls into a few stereotyped categories. They appear—usually though not always as slaves—in the stories of the Prophet and his Companions; as demons and monsters in Persian mythology; as the remote and exotic inhabitants of the land of the Zanj and other places, as for example the cannibal islands of South and Southeast Asia. . . . Most commonly, however, the black portrayed in literature is . . . a familiar household figure, as slave or servant or attendant. The black slave or attendant is often part of the background depicted in narrative belles-lettres. Occasionally—though infrequently—he plays a more prominent role in the story. This may be either negative or positive. Where negative, his crimes are usually lechery, greed, and ingratitude; where positive, he is the prototype of simple piety and loyalty, which achieve the ultimate reward from God. Paradoxically, this reward may take the form of his turning white.-[B. Lewis , <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i> p.95]</p>
<p>Ideological/Theological legitimation</p>	<p>The Curse of Ham The identification of Hamites with blacks comes from a Jewish oral tradition first recorded in the Babylonian Talmud in the sixth century A.D. There the story is told that Ham crept up on his father, Noah and, for some unexplained reason, castrated him while he slept. On awakening, Noah cursed his son in these words: Now I cannot beget the fourth son whose children I would have ordered to serve you and your brothers! Therefore it must be Canaan, your firstborn, whom they enslave. And since you have disabled me . . . doing ugly things in blackness and night, Canaan’s children shall be born ugly and black! Moreover, because you twisted your head around to see my nakedness, your grandchildren’s hair shall be twisted into kinks, and their eyes red; again because your lip jested at my misfortune, theirs shall swell; and</p>	<p>The Curse of Ham Classic Muslim thought maintained that blacks became legitimate slaves by virtue of the color of their skin. The justification of the early Muslim equation of blackness with servitude was found in the Genesis story so popularly called “the curse of Ham,” in reference to one of Noah’s sonsIn the Arab-Muslim version, blacks are cursed to be slaves and menials, Arabs are blessed to be prophets and nobles, while Turks and Slavs are destined to be kings and tyrants. . . . The famous Al-Tabari, for example, cites no less than six Prophetic traditions which seek to support this story. One tradition reads: Ham begat all those who are black and curly-haired, while Japheth begat those who are full faced with small eyes, and Shem begat everyone who is handsome of face (Arabs of course) with beautiful hair. Noah prayed that the hair of Ham’s descendants would not grow past their ears, and wherever his</p>

because you neglected my nakedness, they shall go naked, and their male members shall be shamefully elongated! Men of this race are called Negroes.

A different—and somewhat tamer –version of the story can be found in the Bible. The Book of Genesis says only that Ham “saw his father’s nakedness” while Noah lay drunk. This seems a far less egregious sin on Ham’s part than castrating his father. Even so, Noah still punished it with a curse. The Biblical version of the curse makes no mention of blackness. It says:

Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers. . . . May Canaan be the slave of Shem. . . . May God extend the territory of Japhet; may Japhet live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave.

Thus, Canaan receives two versions of the curse. In the Bible, he is cursed only with slavery. In the Babylonian Talmud, he is cursed with both slavery and blackness. From this slender evidence, American slave owners wove an elaborate theological justification for their enslavement of blacks. –[Richard Poe, 1999, *Black Spark, White Fire*, pp.370-371

Robert E. Lee (1807-1870): “The blacks are immeasurably better off here than in Africa, morally, socially and physically. The painful discipline they are undergoing is necessary for their instruction as a race, and I hope will prepare and lead them to better things. How long their subjugation may be necessary is known and ordered by a wise Merciful Providence.”

--[Robert E. Lee, Letter to his wife, December 27, 1858. quoted in Wilfred Cartey, *Black Images*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1970, p. 2]

descendants met the children of Shem, the latter would enslave them.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal reported a saying attributed to the Prophet which in effect states that God created the white race (dhurriyyah bayd) from the right shoulder of Adam and created the black race (dhurriyyah sawd) from Adam's left shoulder. Those of Adam's right shoulder would enter Paradise and those of the left, Perdition. Other equally racist sayings have been attributed to the Prophet in the traditions. Contradicting this spirit, there are the sayings of the Prophet which equate the value of a person to his God-consciousness (taqwa), and to their piety without any regard to the tribal or ethnocentric concerns of a racist purport.

Such [egalitarian] reports [were overshadowed by] the more deeply rooted tradition of racial bigotry . . . [emphasized by] Muslim geographers and travelers who ventured into Africa. . . . Al-Maqdisi [tenth century] wrote, “. . . As for the Zanji, they are people of black color, flat noses, kinky hair, and little understanding or intelligence.” . . . Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406CE) added that blacks are “only humans who are closer to dumb animals than to rational beings.” . . . Even such luminaries as Ibn Sina considered blacks to be “people who are by their very nature slaves.” . . .

The creation or resurgence of the mythology of Ham also made dark-skinned people synonymous with servitude in light-skinned Muslim thinking. This went so far that eventually the term abd (slave) went through a semantic development and came to specifically refer to “black slave” while light-skinned slaves were referred to as mamluks. And further on in later usage, the Arabic word abd came to mean “black man” of whatever status. . . --[from “Blasphemy Before God: The Darkness of Racism In Muslim Culture” by Adam Misbah al-Haqq,

MuslimWakeup.Com
<http://www.muslimwakeup.com/archives/000498.php>

In Islamic tradition, slavery was perceived as a means of converting non-Muslims . . . as a form of religious apprenticeship for pagans. —[Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, p.16]

<p>Colorism: discrimination on basis of skin color</p>	<p>In the USA, among the plethora of entrenched color-based inequalities that were challenged by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s were racially segregated schools and housing, segregationist laws and practices in transportation which forced seating by race; racially segregated restaurants, hotels and other public facilities; racial discrimination in jobs; inequality before the law; political inequality and disenfranchisement; and anti-miscegenation rules. All of these penalized blacks on the basis of color. – [See Maulana Karenga, <i>Introduction to Black Studies</i>, (1982), pp 126-130]</p> <p>-----</p> <p>What’s written down for white folks ain’t for us a-tall: “Liberty And Justice— Huh— For All.”</p> <p>--Langston Hughes [quoted in Jemie, <i>Yo’ Mama!</i>, p. 39]</p> <p>-----</p> <p>A yellow gal rides in a limousine, A brownskin does the same A black gal rides in a old-time Ford, But she gets there just the same</p> <p>White folks lives in a fine brick house, Lord, the yellow gal does the same, Poor black man lives in the big rock jail, But it’s a brick house just the same.</p> <p>--[American Negro folk poem in Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps eds <i>The Book of Negro Folklore</i>, pp.514-515]</p>	<p>[In Arab culture, there is] the emotional content attached to the concepts of blackness and whiteness—the idea that black is connected with sin, evil, devilry and damnation, while white has the opposite associations</p> <p>---[Lewis, <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i>, p.94]</p> <p>Colorism in Sudan</p> <p>Arab culture standardizes the white color, and despises the black color. . . .They say <i>al-husnu ahmar</i> (beauty is white). . . . [In Northern Sudanese culture] the first color in ranking is <i>asfar</i>. This literally means "yellow", but used interchangeably with <i>ahmar</i> to denote "whiteness". . . . <i>ahmar</i> (white) is the ultimate standard color for the average Northerner. It is considered the standard color of the in-group, i.e. the center of the Arab identity. . . . The second in ranking is <i>asmar</i>. This literally means reddish, but it is used to describe a range of color shades from light to dark brown. This range usually includes subdivisions such as <i>dahabi</i> (golden), <i>gamhi</i> (the color of ripe wheat), and <i>khamri</i> (the color of red wine). The third in ranking is <i>akhdar</i>. This literally means green, but it is used as a polite alternative of the word "black" in describing the color of a dark Northerner. . . .The early Arabs used the word <i>akhdar</i> to describe people of unquestionable nobility whose color, for one reason or the other, was black. . . Last and least is <i>azrag</i>. This literally means "blue", but it is used interchangeably with <i>aswad</i> to mean "black", which is the color of the <i>'abid</i>. . . .Janice Boddy shows how the women of <i>Hofriyat</i> village are conscious of skin color. To them, "white skin is clean, beautiful, and a mark of potential holiness". They repeatedly told her that, as a white woman, she had far greater chances to get into heaven, if she converted to Islam, than them or any other Sudanese. Their reasoning was that "this is because the Prophet Mohammad was white, and all white-skinned peoples are in the favored position of belonging to his tribal group.". . . Northerners showed readiness to intermarry with white people, be they Europeans or Arabs, but they demonstrated reluctance to intermarry with black people, be they Southerners or Africans in general . . .Northerners usually experience [a feeling of dismay] when they discover, for the first time, that they are considered blacks in Europe and America. It is also observed in their attitude towards the black communities there. . . . Northerners attitude towards the black population in these countries [Europe and America] is similar to their attitude towards the [Sudanese] Southerners. They usually refer to them by the word "<i>abid</i>" [slave], and one of my interviewees, once, referred to the Afro Caribbeans as Southerners '<i>janubiyyin</i></p> <p>—[AI-Baqir al-Afif Mukhtar “Crisis of Identity in Northern Sudan”]</p>
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<p>Opportunity Limited by color: Blackness as an Affliction</p>	<p>Before Emancipation in 1863, most blacks in the USA were chattel slaves, with no more opportunities than horses or other live property. The few freed blacks were severely restricted in their educational and economic opportunities and had no political opportunities at all. After emancipation, the freed blacks were reduced to semi-slave conditions as peons or sharecroppers. In urban areas, black “skilled workers were strongly opposed by white artisans in their employment efforts. –[See Maulana Karenga, <i>Introduction to Black Studies</i>, (1982), p. 106</p> <p>Negroes: Last to be hired First to be fired --[American Negro folk saying in Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps eds <i>The Book of Negro Folklore</i>, pp.514]</p> <p>Some view our sable race with scornful eye, ‘Their colour is a diabolical die.’ Remember, <i>Christians, Negroes</i>, black as Cain, May be refin’d, and join th’angelic train. --(1773)[Phillis Wheatley, quoted in Jahnheinz Jahn, <i>Neo-African Literature</i>, p. 37]</p> <p>We know in America how to discourage, choke, and murder ability when it so far forgets itself as to choose a dark skin.”— (1920)[Du Bois, <i>Darkwater</i>, p.117]</p>	<p>Whereas white slaves could become generals, provincial governors, sovereigns, and founders of dynasties, this hardly ever happened with black slaves in the central Islamic lands. . . . The same limitation of opportunity applies to the emancipated slave. The emancipated white slave was free from any kind of restriction; the emancipated black slave was at most times and places rarely able to rise above the lowest levels. –[Lewis, <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i> pp. 59, 60] [Given such color discrimination, it is not surprising that, for the Black Arabs and the Black African slaves and freedmen in the Arab lands, blackness was an affliction. Some of their complaints are recorded]:</p> <p>The poet Suhaym (d. 660), born a slave and of African origin, laments in one poem:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If my color were pink, women would love me But the Lord has marred me with blackness.</p> <p>In another poem he defends himself:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Though I am a slave my soul is nobly free. Though I am black of color my character is white.</p> <p>Another black poet Nusayb ibn Rabah (d. 726) complained:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If I am jet-black, musk too is very dark—and there is no medicine for the blackness of my skin</p> <p>And al-Hayqutan, a black slave, responded to abuse and said</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Though my hair is wooly and my skin coal-black, My hand is open and my honor bright.</p> <p>–[Lewis, <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i> pp. 28, 29] In Umayyad times, we still hear of black poets and singers achieving some sort of social standing, even though they complain of discrimination. In later times, the black poet as a figure in Arabic literature disappears and none of any consequence are reported from the mid -eighth century onward. –[Lewis, <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East</i> pp. 60-61]</p>
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As the table above shows, almost every key aspect of European racism has its Arab/Islamic counterpart-- or worse! Unfortunately, Edward Blyden and Malcolm X endorsed the conventional but false picture that Islamic society was without racism. They, obviously, did not have the

opportunity to adequately investigate the realities when they visited the Arab lands. In the light of the above evidence, Black Africans cannot use their authority to cling to the false picture.

Sources

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In the headings of the two major chapters of [Hinton Helper’s] book, the whole symbolic apparatus of the white aesthetic handed down from Plato to America is graphically revealed: the heading of one chapter reads: “Black: A Thing of Ugliness, Disease”; another heading reads: “White: A Thing of Life, Health, and Beauty”

—[Addison Gayle, Jr. *the Black Aesthetic*, New York: Doubleday, 1972, p. 42]

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