

“From Imperial Subjects to National Citizens: The Making and Unmaking of Afro-Arab Internationalism Between the World Wars”

Alex Lubin

University of New Mexico

alubin@unm.edu

In the wake of World War I, numerous former Ottoman subjects were faced with the complexities of a new framework of juridical and affective belonging called national citizenship. Most Ottoman subjects were assigned Turkish national citizenship. Some former Ottoman subjects were members of British protectorates abroad, and therefore claimed British belonging. Such was the case for many Egyptians, especially those who migrated to the Crown in the wake of the British occupation of Egypt.

London became a nexus of global migrants and it is within this context that we can begin to understand the complex transformation of imperial subjects into national citizens. This paper examines the case of Dusé Mohamed Ali, an important Pan-African and Pan-Oriental intellectual who inhabit many forms of juridical belonging, including Ottoman subjecthood, British protectorate, Turkish citizen, West Indian citizen, and Nigerian citizen. By examining the shifting legal categories shaping Ali’s political work, in conjunction with reading his Pan-Arab/Pan-African newspaper, *The African Times and Orient Review*, we are able to excavate radical geographical linkages between East and West. Moreover, by studying how and why Ali’s politics became nearly impossible in the wake of WWI, I show how the imperial nation/state form eviscerated rich linkages across the Arab and African world.

The unmaking of Afro-Arab internationalism, I argue, represents an important story for understanding pan-Africanist support for United Nations partitions of the Middle East during World War Two. By this time, the sort of internationalism Duse Mohamed Ali represents, was replaced by political aspirations for national sovereignty and homelands.