

Popular and (until recently) scholar perceptions of the Christian and Islamic Middle Ages are grounded in an apparently intuitive view of this era as “white,” with Black Africans making appearances in the later Middle Ages as slaves, or in Christian lands, in representations of particular religious figures (the Queen of Sheba, Saint Maurice, and the *magus* Balthazar). But does this fit with historical reality? The relative absence of specific references to Blackness should not be construed as the absence of Blacks, but, rather suggests, that color was only noted in certain circumstances and that modern notions of color and race had simply not yet coalesced. This brief paper looks at the so-called “Palace Saracens” of Norman Sicily, and the presence of Africans around the contemporary Mediterranean to suggest that the presence of Black Africans in this period has been underestimated and overlooked.