

# African Muslims in Antebellum America

Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles

Allan D. Austin

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## Preface

This book is a radical condensation of my *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland, 1984), an illustrated collection of the majority of then-available documents accompanied by introductions and extensive notes. It is also an update including short notices of about forty more people, four manuscripts in Arabic, a portrait, and scholarship discovered since 1984. It reprints five of six maps but has thirteen fewer illustrations. Instead of notes and a bibliography, I have provided a Selected Reading list at the end of each chapter. In nearly all cases, the original documents and citations from obscure sources may be found in my earlier book.

Some names of major figures are changed here. I continue to use the familiar Job Ben Solomon, but I have changed Abdul Rahahman to Abd ar-Rahman, because this is the way he pronounced his name to his earliest interviewers and it is closer to an Arabic standard; Lamén Kebe to Lamine Kebe, because contemporary writers were not sure how to pronounce the name and the latter pronunciation better approaches the Serahule standard; and Omar to Umar, because contemporaries heard different pronunciations and Umar is closer to the Arabic standard. I discuss the pronunciation of Bilali in Chapter 5.

## Muslim Slaves in the eighteenth-century colonies? Islam in antebellum America?

Allan Austin, noted scholar of antebellum black writing and history, here tells the remarkable stories of dozens of African Muslims—all from sub-Saharan Africa, and none of them peasants—who were taken as slaves between 1730 and 1860. Examining the fragments of evidence left to us, Austin establishes a picture of the African Muslim slaves: proudly insistent on covering their bodies, reading and writing Arabic, respectful of both Africa and Islam, praying to one God. Though slaves, these individuals aroused apprehension among their purchasers, from whom they extracted many accommodations of their religious and cultural identities. Moreover, many of them had been political, religious, commercial, or military leaders in Africa. Some of them were returned to Africa, while others became leaders within America's slave system.

*African Muslims in Antebellum America*, a condensation and updating of the author's 1984 *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook*, opens wide a rich and important dimension in the study of American cultural and religious history.

"A pioneer in a little-explored field, Allan Austin has written an accessible, well-illustrated book that presents and puts into detailed historical context the inspiring life stories of West Africans caught in the Atlantic slave trade. *African Muslims in Antebellum America* is a welter of historical, social, cultural, and personal information on more than eighty men and the troubled times they lived in. It is an indispensable tool for anyone wanting to understand the history of the Africans in the New World."

—Sylviane A. Diouf, author of *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*

"Allan Austin has discovered a new dimension of African-American history: the existence of literate Muslim slaves who wrote of their experiences. His book changes dramatically what we know and how we think of African religion in the New World."

—Richard Newman, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute  
Harvard University

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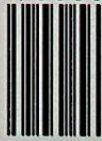
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