

CHAPTER - 8
MUSLIMS IN AMERICA

1- Introduction

The story of Islam in America started certainly before the conquest of the Continent by European Christian powers which followed its discovery for them by Christofer Columbus. There is strong evidence that Andalusian Muslims visited the American continent long before Columbus as reported by Al-Sharīf Al-Idrīsī in the 12th century C.E. Furthermore, there is certain evidence in the Caribbean of visits from the Muslim kingdoms of West Africa. Finally, it is a known fact that the Portuguese and Spanish discoverers were led by Andalusian Muslim mariners who knew better about the high seas. Some of the discoverers themselves were Moriscos, i.e., secret Muslims from Spain. It is also a known fact that the Andalusian Muslim immigrants of Al-Ribāt and Salā (in Morocco) led the fight against the Spanish and Portuguese ships in the Atlantic down to the Caribbean coast.

However, the present formation of the Muslim communities of America can be traced to three main waves of immigration: the European wave; followed by the African wave; and then the Asiatic wave.

The Muslim European immigration to America started with the discovery of Columbus. Indeed, this discovery coincided in 1492 with the fall of Gharnātah (Granada) to Christian forces. Several years later, Cardinal Cisneros, head of the Spanish Catholic Church, imposed the Catholic religion on the millions of Muslims of Spain by force.

Those among them who did not leave their homeland kept their Islamic religion secret. Thousands of these so-called Moriscos emigrated to America in the 16th century with the Spanish and Portuguese colonial armies. While in the new continent they declared their Islam openly. They even tried to convert the West Indians. The Catholic Inquisition (both Spanish and Portuguese) followed them and thousands of Muslims have been burned on the stake for "apostasy". Among these Moriscos were Rodrigo de Lope, the colleague of Columbus and Estevanico de Azamor, the Spanish General who conquered Arizona. Only traces remained of this immigration. However, some new Muslim converts in Mexico, Argentina and Brasil declare to be descendants of these first Muslims.

As soon as the first wave of Muslim immigration died out in blood and tears, a new wave started. This time it was from Africa and in no less dramatic circumstances. The Europeans, after destroying the local populations of the new continent started enslaving the free Africans to make up for the shortage of manpower in the colonies of the New World. This movement of population started in the 17th century and lasted until the 19th century. A great number of these Africans were Muslim. They tried to keep their faith by all means, including sometimes armed struggle. Among these known Muslim revolts is the revolt of Makendal in 1758 in Haiti. This Muslim leader was burnt alive by the French colonial forces after his defeat. In 1830, the African Muslims of Brazil even succeeded in establishing a Muslim state which was destroyed after four years in a sea of

blood. Due to this ferocious persecution against the Muslims which included the destruction of the family unit, Islam was on the verge of disappearing among the Blacks of America. However, things have taken an altogether unexpected turn, and the Africans have begun an en masse return to Islam.

The third wave started from Asia in 1830 C.E. Indeed the British and the Dutch replaced slavery by forced emigration from India and Java for "indentured labor". This was a barely disguised form of slavery. Islam remained firmly entrenched among the descendants of these immigrants. By the end of the nineteenth century a wave of emigration started from Greater Syria. It continues to this day. By the twentieth century Muslim immigrants arrived to America from all corners of the world, but more specifically from Asia, and Eastern Europe.

Table 7.1 shows that there was about 4,600,000 Muslims in the American continent in 1982 or 0.74% of the total population. They were only 2,000,000 in 1971 (0.4%). Moreover, Muslim percentages exceed 10% of the total population in three countries: Surinam (35%); Guyana (15%) and Trinidad Tobago (13%). The number of Muslims exceeds 100,000 persons in four other countries: the U.S., Canada, Argentina and Brazil. Muslims of the American continent are organized in 25 countries. The Muslim population is growing at a fast pace due to natural increase, immigration and conversion. Surinam for instance might soon become the first Muslim majority state of America. The distribution of Muslims in America is shown in Figure 7.1.

Table 7.1 : Muslims in America in 1982

Country	Total Population	Number of Muslims	Percentage in total population (%)
The U.S.	229,700,000	3,000,000	1.3
Argentina	28,800,000	400,000	1.4
Brazil	127,770,000	380,000	0.3
Trinidad and Tobago	1,220,000	160,000	13.0
Surinam	430,000	150,000	35.0
Guyana	870,000	130,000	15.0
Canada	24,300,000	120,000	0.5
Venezuela	16,000,000	50,000	0.30
Columbia	27,600,000	20,000	0.07
Mexico	71,690,000	15,000	0.02
Jamaica	2,330,000	14,000	0.6
Others	91,100,000	26,000	0.03
Total	621,810,000	4,600,000	0.74

2- The United States

It is almost certain that Muslims crossed the Atlantic as well as the Pacific long before Columbus reached the New World. But these visits did not have any lasting effects. Moriscos of Spain arrived in the 16th century with the Spanish armies to the region of New Mexico and Arizona. The most known of these is the Spanish General Estevanico de Azamor, whose Muslim name remained unknown. These first Muslims could not retain Islam among their descendants. During the same period an Egyptian prince by the name of Nāṣir-al-Dīn joined the Mohawk tribe in the territories which form today the state of New York. He reached a position of pre-eminence within this tribe.

Slavery has been introduced in the lands which were to form later the United States in 1619 C.E. Hundreds of thousands of people were shipped from Africa across the Atlantic under the most horrifying circumstances. Many of these were Muslims and their trace can be followed along the entire history of the United States. For instance, in 1790, the state of South Carolina allowed the trial "of some Moors subject to the Emperor of Morocco" in the tribunals using the current laws. There was during the same period a debate in the South on the right of worship of "Catholics, Jews and Mohamedans". Muslim names such as "Ben Ali" are to be noted among those who fought with the Confederates in the Civil War in the 19th century. The conditions under which African Muslims have been brought to America and how they

have been robbed of their dignity and religion, has been vividly described by Alex Haley in his book Roots which traces his own origin among the Muslims of Gambia. Islam never died completely in the hearts of the Americans of African origin and at the present it is vigorously coming back.

Asian Muslim emigration to the U.S. started in 1855 C.E. when a certain Hajd Ali was brought from Syria to oversee the introduction of camel breeding in Arizona. He has been followed by a continuous flow of immigrants from Greater Syria which goes on to this day. Many descendants of the first immigrants have been lost to Islam completely and have been assimilated in the majority.

European Muslim emigration started after World War I. It included Muslim Tatars from Kazan; Polish Muslims; but especially Yugoslavs and Albanians. After World War II, Muslim immigration to the U.S. came from all over the world, but especially from India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Egypt.

Conversion to Islam in the U.S. has taken place throughout. Although most of the converts are those of African origin who are, in most cases, actually returning to their original religion, in addition to them, there are also converts of European, Mexican, Puerto Rican and even Jewish origins. Among the first converts of European origin one must note Mr. Alexander Russel Webb, the US Consul in the Philippines who accepted Islam in 1888 C.E.

The organizational efforts of the Muslims started only in the 20th century. The Afro-American returnees to Islam established their first Islamic association in 1913. As for the Syrian immigrants, they formed in Detroit their first Islamic Association in 1912 and built the first mosque in 1919.

Efforts at establishing organizations on the national level started in 1952 when the "Federation of Islamic Associations" was formed. However, this effort is far from satisfactory. Since 1976 a reorganization at two levels, one at the level of each state of the U.S. and the second at the national level is in progress.

In 1971, there were in the United States about 1,000,000 Muslims (or 0.5% of the total population). They have been increasing at a yearly rate of about 10% due to natural increase, immigration, and conversion. Their number reached about 3,000,000 in 1982 making up about 1.3% of the U.S. population. Of these, about 1,200,000 were of African origin; 900,000 were of Arab origin; 450,000 were of Indo-Pakistani origin and the remaining 450,000 were of diverse, especially Yugoslav, Albanian, Turkish, and Iranian, backgrounds. There are at least 90,000 Muslim students in American universities.

About 90% of the Muslims in the U.S. are Sunni and 10% are Shī'ah. There is no area where Muslims are highly concentrated, but it seems that their numbers are larger in the bigger cities such as New York, Boston, Washington D.C., Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston,

etc. Many Muslims are professionals such as physicians and engineers, out of whom some are highly outstanding. Others are workers or even farmers in the South-West.

Muslims of the United States are not yet organized on the national scale, and thus have only a negligible influence in the country. They are not represented in the Senate nor in the House of Representatives in spite of the fact that they are, in a good majority of cases, U.S. citizens. However, Muslims are completely free to practice their religion, and their associations are treated in the same manner as Christian and Jewish religious organizations.

The Muslim organizations with nation-wide influence and activity are increasing in importance and influence. The main activity of the "Federation of Islamic Organizations" is its annual convention. The "Muslim Students Association" was established in 1963 as a student organization and makes a laudable effort in spreading Islamic literature. It established later many affiliated organisations dealing with the needs of the Muslim community. "The World Community of Islam in the West" concerns itself mainly with the Afro-American population which is becoming increasingly closer to the Muslim mainstream. Since 1976, regional councils came into being gathering Muslim community organizations in several regions. Among these two councils especially deserve to be mentioned: "The Islamic Council of Northern California" and "The Islamic Council of New England".

In the U.S., there are at least 400 Muslim organizations and as many mosques, coupled with Qur'anic schools. Among these mosques some are full-fledged community Islamic centers on the Islamic style such as the ones in Quincy (Mass.); Waterbury (Conn.); Detroit (Mich.); Dearborn (Mich.); Toledo (Ohio); Cedar Rapids (Iowa); Sacramento (California); Gary (Indiana); Phoenix (Arizona), etc. The Islamic Center of Washington D.C., with its beautiful mosque, is not a community mosque. It is rather a mosque established by the Muslim embassies of the capital and is run by them.

There are few full-fledged Islamic schools in the U.S. Almost all Muslim children go to non-Muslim schools, either public or private, and tend to be assimilated. Two Muslim universities are, however, being established in Chicago. Islam is bound to grow in the U.S. as more efforts are being devoted to establishing Islamic institutions which will cater to the needs of the rising generations and stop the nibbling effect of religious assimilation on the Muslim community.

3- Argentina

The first Muslim immigrants to the areas which came to form Argentina are the Moriscos of Spain who arrived in the 16th century. Although Islam could not endure among these first Muslims they certainly left a lasting impact on the country such as the Gaucho tradition. Domingo Sarmiento, the Argentinian writer of the 19th century, exposed himself to the wrath of his fanatic compatriots when he claimed descent

from the Muslim Banī Al-Razīn in Eastern Spain. Andalusian Islamic tradition has had great influence on the Argentinian writers.

Immigration from Greater Syria lasted from about 1880 to around 1955. In these 75 years, Syrian Arabs immigrated in such numbers that they became an important element in the constitution of the Argentinian population. In fact, they are the third element after the Spanish and the Italians. However, most of the immigrants were Christian; the Muslims being a mere minority among them. The Syrians constitute, nevertheless, the largest Muslim ethnic element of the Muslim community of Argentina.

In 1982 there were about 400,000 Muslims in Argentina who formed about 1.4% of the total population. They were about 300,000 in 1971, and their increase is limited to natural growth. There is no Muslim immigration to Argentina at present and the number of Muslims who leave the country is very small. Among the Muslims, about 200,000 live in the Greater Buenos Aires which has districts with high Muslim concentration. The remaining 200,000 Muslims live scattered throughout the country, most of them in the northern provinces.

About 65% of the Muslims are of Syrian origin, 25% of Lebanese and about 10% of diverse ethnic origins including local converts. Religiously, they represent all the religious schools of Greater Syria: about 90% are Sunnis and 10% are Shi'as. Most of the Muslims are Argentinian citizens, with the exception of the old representatives of the first wave of immigration who cling tenaciously to their Syrian citizenship.

Most of the Muslims of Argentina are active in commerce. There are many professionals in the younger generations. These Muslims suffer from a poor contact with the rest of the Muslim world. Outside Buenos Aires, they did not receive much help and Arabic language is dead among the younger people. Argentinian law forces them to carry Argentinian (i.e., Christian) names and it is impossible to recognize a Muslim by name, accent or physical appearance. Besides this nagging official policy aimed at the effacement of their Islamic identity, Muslims are free to organize as Muslims and have all their rights as Argentinian citizens. There are even among them governors of provinces and generals in the armed forces. However, as a religion with its institutions, Islam is practically ignored by Argentinian laws.

Earlier in the century, Muslims suffered from a status of double minority. In the first place, within the Arab population the Christian Arabs tended to infiltrate all their social activities, de-Islamize them, and steal from them all the attention of the Arab world. Secondly, they also suffered obscurity within the Argentinian population which forced them in the beginning to conceal their Islamic identity. This double persecution has now been greatly reduced, but it left the Muslim community weakened, its Islamic identity mixed up and its organization loose.

Organizationally, the Muslims are divided into a multitude of clubs hailing from different Syrian villages. These clubs are social gatherings which bring together both Muslims and Christians. They do not help the Muslims retain their identity. Religiously, the first

Muslim organization, the Islamic Center was established in Buenos Aires in 1918. It used to meet in rented places and in 1968 it bought a building which is used as the spiritual center of the entire Muslim community of Argentina. The center has a qualified Imām from Al-Azhar, and it is planning to build a large mosque/Islamic center in the capital. Other Muslim associations were established in the capital such as the "Arab Argentinian Islamic Association" which was established in 1960. This association opened the first Muslim school in the country, which provides the regular instruction along with instruction in Arabic and Islam. The Muslims of the capital have also a cemetery. Muslim organizations and Islamic centers were later established in other cities such as Mendoza (in 1926); Cordoba (in 1929); Rosario and Tucuman. However, these Islamic centers are closer to social clubs; they have no Imāms, no qualified teachers, and no regular prayers.

Thus, Muslims in Argentina are in real danger of disappearing by assimilation. Many have even been baptized in the Catholic religion. Most of the others lost their Arabic language; yet others have been forced by circumstances to marry in the Catholic Church. All are forced to carry Christian names. Unless this trend is reversed soon, there is little hope of the survival of the Muslim community in Argentina.

4- Brazil

When the Portuguese conquered Brazil in 1500 C.E., they specifically forbade their citizens of Muslim origin to emigrate to it. In spite of this ban, many Moriscos managed to reach Brazil. Their numbers became so large that by the end of the 16th century they openly declared their profession to Islam. This led the Court of Bahia to declare the Brazilian Catholic Inquisition against the Muslims in 1594 C.E. Thus, thousands of Muslims were burnt at the stack; others were enslaved; and the entire community eliminated with the most atrocious brutality.

In the 17th century, the Portuguese started capturing Africans and transporting them as slaves to Brazil. Many of these were Muslims of West Africa such as the Mandinguas, the Fulani, the Yoruba, the Hausa who had been caught by the animist King of Dahomey in his raids against the territories of the Muslim states and sold as slaves to the Europeans, including the Portuguese. Many of these Muslims were learned 'Alims who were capable of keeping the knowledge of Arabic and the Islamic culture alive among the victims and their descendants. They even succeeded in converting to Islam other enslaved or oppressed persons such as the American Indians. These Muslims were able to keep Islam alive in Brazil for more than two centuries. They were well established in the States of Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and San Luis do Maranon. Their mosques and Qur'anic schools were counted by the hundreds. In 1835, they felt strong enough to free themselves from the subservient status

to which they had been consigned by the Christians. They led a war of liberation which lasted four years during which they established a Muslim state. They were finally defeated and persecuted mercilessly. The Christian authorities of Brazil then expressly forbade any profession of Islam and declared death sentence for any one who has any allegiance to it. Hundreds of thousands crossed the Atlantic back to Africa where they form thriving Muslim communities in such ports as Porto-Novo, Lagos and Freetown. Others have kept their religion in the secret to this day. The area where their presence is conspicuously felt is in the state of Bahia.

Immigration from Greater Syria started in 1860. Most of the immigrants were Christians, but there was a number of Muslims among them as well. This immigration originated first from Syria, then Lebanon and more recently from Palestine. Immigration from Lebanon and especially from Palestine still goes on. These Arab Muslims have started to organize themselves since 1929.

There were in Brazil about 380,000 Muslims in 1982, among whom about 40% were of Syrian origin, 20% of Lebanese origin, 20% of Palestinian origin and about 20% of diverse backgrounds, including African. About 90% of these Muslims are Sunnis, and 10% Shi'as, and a great majority of them are Brazilian citizens.

Most of the Muslims of Brazil are in business, ranging from the roaming peddlers to the rich businessmen of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Those who are of African origin are concentrated in the state of Bahia and no much information about their present situation is available. Those who are of Arab origin are concentrated mostly in the southern states, and more specifically in the two states of Sao Paulo and Parana. Most Syrians are in Sao Paulo and most Lebanese are in Parana whereas Palestinians can be found in Brazilia, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul.

There is at present more freedom of religion for Muslims in Brazil than in Argentina, and Muslims in Brazil are better organized and have greater ties with the rest of the Muslim ummah. There are Muslim associations in seven Brazilian states and in ten different cities. Most associations have their mosques which often include a community center as well as an Islamic school. There are seven mosques and others are under construction at present. The associations owning mosques are in Curitiba, Londrina and Paranagua in the state of Parana, in Sao Paulo and Barretos in the state of Sao Paulo as well as in Rio de Janeiro (Gunabara), Cuiaba (Matto Grosso) and Brazilia. Muslim communities are organized at Manaus (Amazonas), at Campo Mourao (Parana) where the city donated a piece of land for the construction of the city's mosque; at Tubarao and at Criciuma in the state of Santa Catarina and at Porto Alegre in Rio Grande do Sul. There are also Muslim schools in Sao Paulo, Londrina, Curitiba and Paranagua.

Brazilian Muslims received some support from the Muslim world in the form of financial help for the construction of the mosques and

the services of qualified imāms were made available to them. Indeed the cities of Paranagua, Curitiba, Londrina, Sao Paulo, Cuiaba, Brazilia and Barretos, all have qualified imāms.

The Muslims of Brazil are not yet organized on the national level. However, there are strong informal links between the different organizations, and there are periodic meetings between the leaders of the different communities. At this pace of development the future of Islam in Brazil, when the dark oppressive period of the nineteenth century has receded to the past, seems once more encouraging.

5- Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago are at about 11 km from the Venezuelan coast in South America. Its overall area is 5,130 km² of which 4,828 km² make up Trinidad Island and 302 km² cover Tobago and 5 smaller islands. In 1982, the total population was 1,220,000 persons.

The islands were invaded by Britain in 1797 C.E. and received their independence on August 31, 1962. The official language is English. Racially, 43% of the population is of African origin, 40% of Indian origin, 14% of mixed origin, and 3% of Chinese and European origins.

As for most of the American continent, the first wave of Muslim immigration came from Africa in the form of slaves. These first Muslims lost their religion, but their descendants are today returning to Islam

in large numbers. After the abolition of slavery, Britain introduced the institution of indentured labor by bringing workers from its Indian colony from 1844 C.E. until 1912 C.E. Many of these indentured laborers were Muslims who were able to keep their religion alive by forming secret Islamic societies since their arrival. But they have lost their mother tongues to the point that most of them speak English as their first language.

The different local Islamic societies started to organize on a national level in 1920. At this stage the Qadianis were able to infiltrate the Islamic societies. It was only in 1935 that the Muslim community was able to free itself from this infiltration by forming the "Anjuman Sunnatul Jamaat Association" (popularly called ASJA). This represents today almost the total number of Muslims of Trinidad and Tobago. The total number of Muslims amounted to 160,000 in 1982, or about 13% of the total population. Of these about 10,000 are of African origin and the remaining are of Indian origin. They are all English speakers. There were 115,000 Muslims in 1971, or 11.5% of the population. In 1951, the number of Muslims had amounted to 52,000 persons and made up only about 9% of the total population. In 1978, the population of Trinidad and Tobago was 52% Christian and 35% Hindu.

At present, the Muslim community of Trinidad and Tobago is one of the best organized in America. The ASJA represents almost the total number of Muslims and manages all mosques and Muslim schools in the country. It is divided into 70 branches and is grouped into 4 regions. Its executive committee is elected by representatives from the 70 branches.

In Trinidad, the Muslims are better educated and are less poor than their brethren in neighboring countries. The Muslims of Indian origin are of the Ḥanafī school. They are concentrated mostly in the southern part of the island. They are basically farmers but many have become professionals and businessmen. The influence of the Muslims in the country is proportionate to their numbers: the president of the Senate is Muslim as well as three Government ministers and 5 deputies in the House of Representatives out of a total of 36.

Muslims have 80 mosques in Trinidad and one in Tobago. They have fifteen full-time primary schools and 3 full-time secondary schools. To each mosque is attached a Qur'ānic school to teach Islam. There is, however, a shortage of qualified imāms and teachers which creates a basic problem for the growth of the Muslim community.

Many persons of African origin return to Islam every year. This phenomenon does not occur as a result of any effort on the part of the Muslims of Indian origin to convert them. It is rather due to events in the United States which has a great cultural impact on Trinidad and Tobago. This creates a friction between the two components of the Muslim community, the leaders of which are trying their best to heal. Indeed, the Muslims of African origin find the way Islam is practiced by Indians too static and not necessarily in the spirit of the original Message of the Prophet (s.a.w.). They complain that the sermon in the mosque on Friday is in Arabic (rather than in English) which no one understands, that women are not allowed in the mosques while they

were in the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.). The Indian Muslims developed under the effect of more than one century of persecution a defensive attitude by which they tried very hard to preserve Islam in the mould it had developed in their country, India. The return to Islam of an increasing section of the African population has, however, stimulated the Muslims of Indian origin to look afresh at the problems of their life and the Islamic sources in order to develop a judicious, truly Islamic, life-style.

The Muslims have a radio program, several newspapers and are becoming active in their relationship with the rest of the Muslim world. Their future would seem guaranteed if they succeed in maintaining their unity and improving their educational system by importing more teachers of Islam and providing a better knowledge of Arabic.

6- Surinam

Surinam is a South American state which has an area of 163,265 km² and a total population of 430,000 persons in 1982. The territory was conquered by Holland in 1667 C.E. It became autonomous in 1954 and gained its full independence on November 25, 1975. A National Military Council took over the Government in 1982. Dutch is the official language, but the Surinamese, a local tongue, is the lingua franca of the country. About 44% of the population is of African origin (190,000 persons), 34% are of Indian origin (146,000 persons), 20% are of Javanese origin (86,000 persons) and 2% or (8,000 persons) of diverse origins.

The first Muslims who arrived in Surinam were Africans who were enslaved by the Dutch. They began to be brought to Surinam to work on sugar cane plantations since 1667 C.E. But most of the descendants of these Muslims have lost their religion due to the harsh conditions under which they lived. Many, however, are at the present returning to Islam.

After the abolition of slavery, the Dutch introduced indentured labor by bringing workers from Java to meet their need for manpower. All of these were Muslims of the Shāf'ī school. This immigration started in 1850 C.E. and lasted until 1931 C.E. Islam is still alive in this community.

In 1873 C.E., the Dutch supplemented the manpower from Java by manpower from India as well. This immigration lasted until 1916. Among these Indians there were many Muslim of the Ḥanafī school. The descendants of these immigrants kept the usage of the Urdu language as well as the Muslim religion.

In 1978, there were about 150,000 Muslims in Surinam, or 35% of the total population. They represent, therefore, the highest Muslim percentage in any American state. Of this total about 90,000 were of Javanese origin, about 50,000 of Indian origin, and the remaining 10,000 Muslims were of diverse origins including African, American-Indian, and Palestinian. The other religions in the country are Christianity (40%), Hinduism (23%) and Paganism (2%).

The percentage of Muslims in the country has increased dramatically during the last two decades. They were only 64,000 persons in 1964 or 21.4% of the population. This increase is due to a high rate of natural growth of the Muslim population, immigration, and conversion to Islam. The increase of percentage is dramatized by the large rate of emigration of non-Muslims. ~~Indeed~~ between 1964 and 1971, about 63,000 persons left the country permanently. As big a number did the same after 1971, especially just before and after independence.

The Muslims of Surinam have preserved the usages of their religion as well as their languages. But the different ethnic groups did not succeed in fusing into one single Muslim community due to differences in language and school. Many Muslims live in the capital city Paramaribo of commerce, others are farmers. Indians are better educated Islamically and their economic level is higher. The differences in language and school between Javanese and Indian Muslims became more serious by disagreement between the two groups on the direction of Mecca. The Javanese had crossed the Pacific to come to Surinam and kept praying Eastward whereas the Indians had crossed the Atlantic and pray Westward!

Muslim personal laws are in force in the country. About 50 citizens perform the ḥajj yearly. There are about 50 mosques in the country, the most important being the Paramaribo Jāmi' Mosque built in 1932 C.E. There are also about 20 Qur'ānic schools and 3 full-time Muslim schools. There is no Islamic education in public schools however.

In 1973, there were 2 Muslim ministers in the government out of a total of 13 ministers and 8 Muslims in the Legislative Council out of 39 members. 'Id-ul-Fitr is a national holiday in the country. The country is divided into 9 districts and the commissioner of at least one district is Muslim. There are Muslims in the professions as well as in the university. Nevertheless, the colonial regime gave a preferential treatment to Christian churches and Muslims were never treated on equal footing.

In spite of their diversity, the Muslims of Surinam are well organized in several organizations which are all members of an overall body: the Surinam Islamic Council.

7- Guyana

Guyana is west of Surinam in South America. It has an area of 214,969 km² and a population of 870,000 in 1982. The territory was conquered by Britain in 1796 C.E. It received its autonomy in 1951 and its full independence on May 26, 1966. The official language is English. About 55% of the population is of Indian origin, 33% of African origin and 12% of diverse origins including 4% American Indians.

Just as in neighboring Surinam, the first wave of Islamic immigration came from Africa with the enslaved Africans among whom there were many Muslims. A large number of the descendants of these Africans are at present returning to Islam. In 1834 C.E., the British started to

bring indentured laborers from India among whom there was a good percentage of Muslims. These were highly persecuted and pressured into leaving their faith. They were able to keep their religion however by forming secret Islamic societies. One manifestation of this persecution was that the Muslims were not allowed to marry outside the Christian Church. It is only in 1860 that Islamic marriage outside the Christian Church was allowed.

Eventually the attitude of the colonizing powers toward Islam relaxed and Muslims were able to build mosques and establish open societies. The different societies united in 1936 to form the United Sadr Islamic Anjuman (USIA). This was unfortunately split in 1972 into two sections: one identified itself with the governmental party, the other with the opposition.

In 1982, there was 130,000 Muslims in Guyana, or 15% of the total population. Of these about 125,000 were of Indian origin, and 5,000 of African origin. There were 48,000 Muslims (11%) in 1951. As for the rest of the population, 37% are Christians, 34% are Hindus, and 14% are of diverse religious convictions.

At present the Muslim community is divided. The roots of the division are political and go back to 1961. This division was evident in the elections of USIA in 1972. Indeed, during that year, two parties fought the elections in the country for power: People's National Congress (PNC) supported in its majority by those citizens of African origin and the People's Progressive Party supported by those of Indian

origin. The leaders of the Muslim community in the USIA were divided between those who see Muslims as a third force who are neither Indian nor African, but merely Muslim citizens of Guyana, independently of their ethnic origin, and felt it in the best interest of the Muslims to join the African Party, and those who found greater affinity with the Hindus. The solution would have been to keep an official Muslim neutrality while granting Muslims the freedom to join the party of their choice. Efforts to create an Islamic Party have also failed.

In the face of this division of the USIA, many new Islamic associations were established on a neutral platform. Of these, the General Congress of Islamic Brotherhood (established in 1973), the Muslim Youth League, and the Islamic Center are among the most important ones.

Nevertheless, the local societies formed around mosques, which were the branches of the USIA, continue to function properly. There are about 120 such societies with an equal number of mosques. Each mosque is usually combined with a Qur'ānic school for the children and a community hall. The Queenstown Jāmi' Mosque in the capital Georgetown is the largest of all mosques. Constructed at the turn of this century, it includes a ladies' annexe, a community hall, a school, and a prayer hall. Saint-Peter's Hall Mosque is the second largest mosque in the capital. Muslim personal laws are in force in marriage and inheritance. But Islam is not taught in the state schools and there are no full-time Muslim schools. The Muslim Trust College in Georgetown has a minority Muslim student body and no Islamic education at all.

Most of the Muslims of Guyana are farmers. Many Muslims who are well established in the capital are in the professions or in business. Those who are of Indian origin still speak Urdu fluently. There is a trend toward conversion to Islam among those who are of African origin. In 1978, there were 4 Muslim ministers in the government, including one African, out of a total of 24 ministers. There are about 10 Muslim deputies in the National Assembly out of a total of 53 members. Both 'Īd-ul-Fitr and the Birthdays of the Prophet (s.a.w.) are national holidays.

The Muslims of Guyana never received much support from the Muslim world and they feel handicapped vis-a-vis the Christian community which receives a tremendous help from the Christian world in the form of missions, especially in the field of education.

8- Canada

Muslim immigration to Canada started in 1880 C.E., mainly from Greater Syria. This first immigration was followed by immigration from Albania and Yugoslavia after World War I. The number of Muslim immigrants increased speedily after World War II, when they arrived from the four corners of the world, including other minority areas such as Trinidad, South Africa and Fiji. This Muslim immigration still continues.

There were about 120,000 Muslims in Canada in 1982 or about 0.5% of the total population. In 1971, their number barely reached 64,000 persons. Of their total number in 1982, one could estimate about 40,000 were Muslims of Arab origin, 40,000 of Indian origin (including Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Guyana, Trinidad and Fiji), about 20,000 were of Yugoslav and Albanian origin and the remaining 20,000 of diverse backgrounds, including local converts.

It could be estimated that about 50% of all Muslims of Canada live in the Province of Ontario, with the greatest concentration in the city of Toronto. Most of the Muslims of Canada are Canadian citizens. The new immigrants are often professionals with a high level of education: engineers, physicians, scientists, professors, technicians, etc. Most of the descendants of the old immigrants are in business. Their state of continuous assimilation seems to be arrested and an improvement in their Islamic awareness is perceptible.

The situation of the Muslims in Canada is improving continuously. They are better organized than the Muslims of the U.S., Argentina, and Brazil, but less well organized than those of Australia. The first Muslim organization was established in Edmonton (Alberta) in 1920's by the Lebanese immigrants. This organization built the first mosque of Canada in 1938. After World War II, new Muslim organizations were established in London (Ontario), Windsor (Ontario) in 1954, Toronto (Ontario) in 1955, Lac La Biche (Alberta) in 1957; etc. At present,

there are 50 community Muslim organizations in Canada, of which 29 are in Ontario, 4 in Alberta, 4 in Quebec, 3 in Saskatchewan, 2 in British Columbia, 2 in Nova Scotia, and 1 in each of Manitoba, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. There were 28 organizations in 1973 of which 17 were in Ontario and 11 in the rest of Canada

By the 1960's the different Muslim organizations which were concerned mainly with local communities started to feel the need for overall coordination. After years of discussions the Council of Muslim Communities of Canada was established in 1973. This council has six committees under it: finance committee, youth committee, ladies committee, public relations committee, publications committee and education committee. It publishes a magazine called Canada-Islam.

There are eleven mosques/Islamic centers in Canada, including three converted churches. The best known mosques are in Edmonton (Al-Rashid Mosque, built in 1938); Lac La Biche (1958); London (1965); Windsor (1969); Toronto (converted Church in 1970); Montreal (1972); and Ottawa (1978). About 12 more mosques are planned at different places in the country. There are also about 20 mosques and Islamic centers which are located in houses and apartments which are sometimes rented.

Islam is not recognized on an equal footing with Christianity and Judaism in Canada. However, the local Islamic associations receive some help from time to time from local authorities. Islam is also taught

to Muslim children in some private schools and in all public schools as one of the "world religions". Islamic education is also imparted in Islamic centers and mosques in week-end classes. But all this is highly insufficient and a large number of Muslim children remains without proper knowledge of Islamic principles. There are no primary or secondary full time schools. There are practically no Muslim in the upper echelon of the government, neither at the provincial nor at the federal level.

9- Other Countries

There are about 50,000 Muslims in Venezuela (1982). There were about 30,000 Muslims in 1971. Of the present total about 20,000 Muslims are of Lebanese origin, 15,000 of Syrian origin, 10,000 of Palestinian origin and 5,000 of diverse origins including Muslims from Trinidad. About 20,000 Muslims live in Caracas. The rest live in Maracaibo, Maracay, Barcelona, Valencia, Matarin and the island of Santa Marguaita. Most of the Muslims of Venezuela are workers and small retailers. Some are businessmen and professionals. Muslims of Venezuela are not well organized. It was only in 1968 that they formed the first Islamic Society in Caracas. This Society bought a house in 1972 in Alparaiso, a Caracas suburb, and transformed it into an Islamic center. This society plans to establish a mosque and an Islamic school in Caracas.

Columbia had in 1982 a Muslim population of about 20,000 persons with about 5,000 Muslims in the capital Bogota. About half of them are of an old immigration from Syria and Lebanon. The other half came from

Palestine more recently. There are large Muslim communities in Paranaica, Cali, Maico and San Andres. Muslims are not organized in Columbia although there is a Palestinian club in Bogota. The old immigrants are in a well advanced stage of assimilation.

The Muslims of Mexico can be estimated at about 15,000 persons. They are in majority of Syrian origin and spread out across the country. They are, however, not organized. Unless they do so soon, they are doomed to be absorbed religiously in the total population.

Muslims reached Jamaica in the 19th century from India under the same conditions of indentured labor as those who reached Guyana and Trinidad. But their number was much smaller, which handicapped their efforts to organize. However, by 1982 their number reached about 14,000. With the help of Muslims from Trinidad, they were organized for the first time in the 1950's. They are at present grouped in two organizations and have two mosques, both of them in Spanish Town.

Muslims are organized in 13 other American countries. These are: Bermuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Curacao, Grenada, Dominica, Puerto Rico, St. Christopher, US Virgin Islands (St. Croix), Martinique, Panama, Peru and Chili.

The first Muslims who reached Panama are those brought from Bengal for the building of the Panama Canal at the turn of this century

The first Muslim organization was established in 1930 under the name of "Islamic Mission". It became in 1967 the "Indo-Pakistan Islamic Association" and the "Panama Islamic Association" in 1974. This Association established an Islamic Center in Panama City as well as a cemetery. There were about 1,000 Muslims in Panama in 1982; of whom 400 were rich businessmen of Indo-Pakistan origin, 400 were retailers of Palestinian origin and 200 of diverse origins.

There are about 1000 Muslims in Peru, most of them in the capital Lima and many of them of Palestinian and Syrian origin. They established an Islamic society in 1975.

Chili has a Muslim population of about 1000, half of whom are in Santiago. Of these two-third are of Syrian and Palestinian origins. They established the first Muslim organization in 1926 in Santiago. This association still exists and operates from rented facilities used as Islamic center.

Barbados has a Muslim population of about 2,000 persons half third of them are descendants of 19th century Indian immigrants. The other half consists of new converts. They are in good contact with the Muslims of Trinidad and have 4 mosques. The number of the Muslims in the Bahamas could be estimated at about 1000 persons. Most of them are new converts. They formed an Islamic organization recently called "Jamaat-us-Islam". There were about 2000 Muslims in Curacao in 1982

which is part of the Dutch Antilles. Half of these were of Lebanese origin, 25% of Indian origin and the remaining 25% are local converts. They established in 1964 an Islamic Association and built a mosque in the island's capital. There are about 500 Muslims in Bermuda organized in a Muslim community. Most of them are converts. Several hundreds Muslims live in each of Dominica, Grenada, and Saint Kitts. Most of them are new converts and are organized. As for Puerto Rico, it has a Muslim population of about 3,000 persons, most of whom are of Palestinian origin. They formed an Arab Club rather than an Islamic society although one of the elders acts as imām for the community. There are about 2,000 Muslims in the US Virgin Islands. They are of African and Palestinian origins and have formed an Islamic organization in Saint Croix recently. There were about 500 Muslims in the Martinique. They are mostly converts who were organized in 1982.

There are unorganized Muslim groups in all the other countries of the American continent. One should note in particular about 4,000 Muslims of North-African origin in French Guyana about 1,000 Muslims in Cuba, in which the Muslim population used to be much larger, and 1,000 Muslims in each of Paraguay and Uruguay. In these three countries the old immigration was Syrian, but the recent one is Palestinian. There are several hundred Muslims in each of Ecuador and Bolivia and at least 8,000 Muslims dispersed in the countries of Central America and the Caribbean which have not been mentioned above.

10- Conclusions

The Muslim communities of America can basically be divided into two categories: those which are well established and those which are in the formative stage. If one limits the comments to those communities where the number of Muslims is larger than 10,000 persons, one can see that basically: Argentina, Trinidad and Tobago, Surinam, Guyana, Mexico and Jamaica are old communities, whereas the US, Brazil, Canada, Venezuela, and Columbia are in the formative stage.

In the first category the Muslim community results from 19th century or early twentieth century immigration. Most of the present day Muslims were born in those countries. In this category only the communities of Trinidad and Tobago, Surinam and Guyana have a fair chance of growth and survival. The Muslim community of Argentina is in serious danger of complete assimilation in spite of the large numbers involved. Whereas the Muslim community of Jamaica seems to be on the verge of being retrieved, that of Mexico is not even organized and might have reached the point of no return on the path of religious assimilation.

In the second category, at least half of the Muslim population consists of those who were born outside their new countries of adoption. However, the presence of a new Islamic emigration had a beneficial effect on the old immigration and a phenomenon of return to Islam is noticed in these countries. Among these communities, the Muslim community of Canada

is the best organized, whereas those of the US and Brazil are still without an acceptable overall national body that would legitimately claim to represent the entire Muslim community in a given country. Organization in Venezuela is limited to Caracas and there is no Islamic organization yet in Columbia.

The effort of organization and establishment of new institutions has been enormous. The financing of this effort has come regularly from the Muslim individuals in the different communities. In recent years some financial support came from the Muslim countries, but it remained negligible compared to the real need of the communities. It has however, in some special cases, had the effect of encouraging hard-pressed communities to try harder.

Islamic literature is well developed in the English language, especially in the US and Canada. The effort in this area of such Muslim organizations as the Muslim Students Association is to be commended. The need for Islamic literature in Portuguese and Spanish is however pressing and unless this need is fulfilled soon the Muslim communities of Brazil and especially Argentina will suffer greatly in so far as they will remain handicapped in transmitting Islamic teachings to the coming generations.

Freedom of religion is at the present enjoyed to a desired degree by all religious communities, including the Muslims, in the US, Canada, and Brazil. Of course, this was not the case in the recent past and

this freedom of religion for Muslims is certainly a new development. Had it not been for the preferential treatment the Christian denominations receive, and the enormous outside help they obtain, the same could have been said about Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam. In the Spanish speaking countries, Muslims are persecuted and discriminated against statutorily and the attitude of the people, especially outside the capital cities, too is one of dislike and discrimination. The level of persecution differs however, from one country to another. But even in such modernized countries as Argentina, the Muslim citizens are not permitted to give Muslim names to their children.

To summarize, while Islam has an old and tragic presence in the American continent, its relative freedom of existence is new. Furthermore, new immigration trends are contributing to a revival and return of the remnants of the old communities especially among those of African origin. Islam is at present strongly rooted in three American states (Trinidad, Surinam and Guyana) and has increasing presence in three others (the US, Canada and Brazil). The only country where Islam seems to have declined is Argentina, but this trend has been arrested in recent years. It seems therefore that the future would guarantee a greater Islamic presence in America.

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