

The African Roots and Transnational Nature of Islam

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Introduction

Most works dealing with Islam and Africa trace the roots of their connection to the first *Hijra* when two groups totaling more than 100 Muslims fled persecution in Mecca and arrived in the Kingdom of Axum (modern-day Ethiopia) in 614 and 615 AD, respectively. A few works would begin with the story of Bilal ibn Rabah or Bilal al-Habashi, the former enslaved Ethiopian born in Mecca during the late 6th Century (sometime between 578 and 583 AD) and chosen by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the first *Muezzin* (High Priest, or Caller of the Faithful to prayer) of the Islamic faith. More recent sources would add the fact that the African/Black Saudi Arabian Sheikh Adil Kalbani is now the Imam of the Grand Mosque of Mecca. This chronology misses the African roots of Islam: i.e. the story of the Egyptian Hagar or Hājar (in Arabic), the second wife of Abraham or Ibrahim (in Arabic). It also misses the fact that Luqman The Wise, who wrote the 31st *Sura* of the Qur'an, was an African. Today, Islam is practiced everywhere and has emerged as the fastest growing *din* (meaning in Arabic "way of life," as Islam is more than just a religion) in the world. The African flavor to Islamic practices is evident in the Americas, the Caribbean, and many European countries with significant concentrations of African Muslims. Using Transnational Theory, this paper analyzes the challenges African-centered Muslims face in these majority-Christian states in terms of the concept of the sovereign state and the difficulties that this poses. Thus, the following aspects are examined: (a) defining new African-centered Muslim actors, (b) modes of change African-centered Muslims encounter, (c) factors impacting success of African-centered Muslims, and (d) challenges for the role of the state in dealing with African-centered Muslims. Before doing all this, however, it makes sense to begin with a brief discussion of Transnational Theory, with its attendant concept transnationalism, and Africancentrism for the theoretical grounding of this essay.

As I state in my essay titled "A Time Series Analysis of the African Growth and Opportunity Act: Testing the Efficacy of Transnationalism" (Bangura, 2009), transnationalism is defined as the heightened interconnectivity between people around the world and the loosening of boundaries between countries. The concept of transnationalism is credited to Randolph Bourne, an early 20th Century writer, who used it to describe a new way of thinking about intercultural relationships. Scholars of transnationalism seek to show how the flow of people, ideas, and goods between regions has increased the relevance of globalization. They argue that it makes no sense to link specific nation state boundaries with, for instance, migratory labor forces, transnational corporations, international money flow, international communication flow, and international scientific cooperation (see, for example, Appadura, 1997; Barkan, ed., 2003; Guamizo and Smith, eds., 1997; Hoerges, Sand and Teubner, eds., 2004; and Keohane and Nye, 1992).

According to John Rourke, Transnational Theory is concerned with external challenges to the authority of the state and the nationalism that binds together the state and the citizenry. In addition, he points out that many analysts have shown that the world is being brought together by the habits of cooperation and cross-cultural understanding that result from increased economic interdependence, rapid travel and communication. He cites many examples of this development, including the fast-food McDonalds Restaurant which now can be found in almost every country in the world. He adds that people all over the world "are moving toward living in a more culturally homogenized global village" (1997:43).

Furthermore, Rourke notes that the concept of transnationalism encompasses a range of activities, loyalties and other phenomena that connect humans across nations and national boundaries. As people of different nations engage in common political efforts of different nations and raising the possibility of having a sense of primary political identification that does not focus on the nation-state, transnationalist thought and activity can undermine nationalism and its tangible manifestation—i.e. the national state (Rourke, 1997:166).

Rourke further identifies three stages in the development of transnational thought. The first stage is *early transnational thought*. This stage is traced to the Stoics of ancient Greece and Rome. From about 300 BC to AD 200, Stoicism flourished in a political environment that witnessed the demise of Athens and the other Greek city-states as the focus of political organization and the emergence of empires: the empire of Macedonia to the north and that of Rome to the west. The emphasis in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle on the superiority of the geographically small, ethnically homogenous city-state was discredited and supplanted by a new direction of thinking founded in about 300 BC by the philosopher Zeno, a Cypriot of Phoenician heritage. Stoic thought was advanced by such great philosophers as Epictetus (AD ca 50-120), a Roman slave, and Marcus Aurelius (AD 121-180), a Roman emperor (Rourke, 1997:167-168).

The second stage is *later transnational thought*, which is traced to Thomas Paine for stating in his famous 1776 pamphlet, *Common Sense*, that “We have it in our power to begin the world over again” in advocating the idea of transcending local political structure and power. Paine’s commitment was to a philosophy and not to a country, as he described himself a “citizen of the world.” Paine’s prediction of a transnational march saw a time of free trade and the establishment of an international congress to resolve differences among states. During this same period, the philosopher Immanuel Kant pushed the idea of international cooperation for peace much further when he advocated in his 1784 work titled *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* that countries should abandon their “lawless state of savagery and enter a federation of people in which every state could expect to derive its security and rights...from a united power and the law-governed decisions of a united will.” Early communist theory also had a strong element of transnational thought, as Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx in their 1848 work titled *The Communist Manifesto* called for the communality of humankind and foresaw a global community (Rourke, 1997:168-169).

The third stage is *contemporary transnational thought*. This stage represents the reemergence of transnationalism in the last century after existing on the periphery of political thought due to the dominance of nationalist thought during the halcyon days. Another recent school of thought that is related to transnationalism is postmodernism or post-positivism, which argues that because we have been trapped by stale ways of conceiving of how we organize and conduct ourselves, we must therefore “deconstruct” discourse in order to escape all our preconditions. This latter perspective relates to politics in a number of ways. For instance, postmodernists or post-positivists would urge us to use non-gender specific words, such as diplomat, instead of gender-specific words, such as statesman, in order to deconstruct our stereotyped notions of male and female by distinguishing between sex and gender, as sex is biological and gender is attitudinal and behavioral (Rourke, 1997:169-170).

Thus, as I also state in my essay cited earlier (Bangura, 2009), the usefulness of Transnational Theory hinges on the fact that it can be used to designate recent global patterns. For example, migration used to be perceived as a directed movement with a point of departure and a point of arrival. Nowadays, migration has been described by transnationalism theorists as an ongoing movement between two or more spaces. Many more migrants have developed strong transnational ties to more than one home country, blurring the congruence of social and geographic spaces, due in large part to the increased international transportation and telecommunication technologies.

For Africentrism, as I state in my book titled *African-Centered Research Methodologies: From Ancient Times to the Present* (Bangura, 2011:149-150), from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, many, and consistent, definitions of the approach were proffered by Africanists. The first definition was by Molefi Kete Asante who defined “Africentricity [African-centered] as the placing of African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” (1987:6). The second definition was by C. Tsehloane Keto who defined the “African-centered perspective [as an approach that] rests on the premise that it is valid to position Africa as a geographical and cultural starting base in the study of peoples of African Descent” (1989:1).

The third definition was by Wade Nobles who defined "Afrocentric, Africentric, or African-Centered [as being] interchangeable terms representing the concept which categorizes a quality of thought and practice which is rooted in the cultural image and interest of African people and which represents and reflects the life experiences, history and traditions of African people as the center of analyses. It is therein that the intellectual and philosophical foundation [with] which African people should create their own scientific criterion for authenticating human reality" exists (1990:47). The fourth definition was by Maulana Karenga who defined "Afrocentricity...as a quality of thought and practice rooted in the cultural image and human interest of African people [and their descendants]. To be rooted in the cultural image of African people is to be anchored in the views and values of African people as well as in the practice which emanates from and gives rise to these views and values" (1993:36). Finally, Lathardus Goggins II defined "African-centered [as being able] to construct and use frames of reference, cultural filters and behaviors that are consistent with the philosophies and heritage of African cultures in order to advance the interest of people of African descent" (1996:18).

From the preceding definitions, it is evident that Africentrism presupposes knowledge of a commonality of cultural traits among the diverse peoples of Africa which characterize and constitute a worldly view that is some how distinct from that of the foreign world views that have influenced African peoples. Africentrism simply means that the universe is a collection of relationships, and an individual or a group being in that universe is defined by and dependent upon these relationships. Africans, prior to European and Asian dominance, and still to some degree now, considered the Cause or God as being a part of His creation while Europeans on the other hand considered God separate from His creation. An African-centered Muslim then is one who includes African culture and behavior in his/her practice of Islam while adhering to the major tenets of the *din*. The question that emerges here then is the following: How have African-centered Muslims been able to mix Islamic and African practices? The following synopsis of the history of Islam in Africa I recount in my book titled *Keyboard Jihad: Attempts to Rectify Misperceptions and Misrepresentations of Islam* (2010:189-193) provides an answer.

As in the rest of the world, Islam is the fastest growing faith in Africa today with 52.39% of the 2.1 billion global Muslim population (muslimpopulation.com, July 2012). Islam reached East Africa in 615 CE, just five years after the birth of the religion when some Muslims from Mecca fled to modern day Ethiopia to escape religious prosecution—today, 50 percent of the citizens of Ethiopia, the original home of the Coptic Church, which is the first church in the world, are Muslim. The spread of Islam into North Africa was followed by the spread into West Africa and later Central and then Southern Africa. There is not a single African country today that does not have a Muslim population. Africa has the second largest population of Muslims (401,975,628 or 27 percent) in the world next to Asia (1,023,564,005 or 69 percent). The breakdown of the Muslim populations for the five geopolitical regions in Africa, in order of size, is as follows: North Africa, 180,082,076 or 89 percent; West Africa, 133,994,675 or 50 percent; East Africa, 66,381,242 or 34 percent; Central Africa, 12,582,592 or 15 percent; and Southern Africa, 8,935,043 or seven percent. Consequently, an examination of the history of and reasons for Islam's growth in Africa is imperative for understanding the impact of the religion on the continent.

The Almoravid Berbers of North Africa, who became the bridge between the Muslim conquerors of Spain in the 18th Century and the African traders of the Sudan, were among the first African converts to Islam and the first to perform the annual *Hajj* (holy pilgrimage) to Mecca in Arabia. Occupying a territory known as Western Sahara, this particular Berber ethnic group of the Sanhaja found itself caught between the strong Moroccan lands and the Ghana Empire to the south. The Sanhaja were able to compel the Muslims to bring down the Ghanaian Kingdom in the name of religious propagation. While infighting later caused the collapse of the Almoravid dynasty in Ghana after less than 15 years, Berber control of the region resulted in the wide ranging conversion of West Africa to the Islamic faith.

Besides the fact that the arrival of Islam in Africa as far west of the Atlantic shore dates back to over 1,000 years, this phenomenon of Islamization is a much more interesting fact than often perceived. The Almoravid constituted a dynamic religious movement often defined as fanatical, which is credited with the religious conversion of numerous African communities. In the Western Sudan and areas south of the Sahara, religious conversion was in part based on the desire to cause the collapse of the Ghanaian king's lengthy reign. The organization of these former enemies into an empire-destructing force resulted in the unified Almoravid campaign, which toppled Ghana around 1070 CE under the leadership of Abu Bakr. A more in-depth investigation, however, bears witness that the majority of historical analysis regarding the rapid and blanket spread of Islam was not entirely by trade or a result of militaristic force.

While Islam was introduced in West Africa by both of these means, the religion spread throughout East Africa and the Sahel by the piety and scholarship of its early personalities; many reverts also traveled long distances to West Africa to study the Islamic faith. The regular migration of travelers rendered Mali, not long after the Berber invasion, the religious *Medina* of the African continent. The fall of the Almoravid in 1087 CE represented the liberation of the Ghanaian populace. Together, the southward flow of Islamization from the northern region and the westward directed Islamic propagation from the eastern regions of the Sudan were the cause of the domino effect in the Islamic conversion of West and parts of North-central Africa. Considering that many of the Atlantic Berbers were of Mande origin, known to be peace loving and studious, they became part of the Islamic *ulema* (scholars trained in Islam and Islamic Law) of West Africa; the transmutation to Islam remained a sedated one rather than replicating an Almoravid imperialistic model.

What renders this southward metamorphosis the more phenomenal is that, as stated earlier, Islam first entered into Africa from the lands of the Ethiopians in the east. In the history of Islam from its early inception in Mecca, the ruling oligarchy, consisting of wealthy merchants and bankers who rejected religious conversion and oppressed the small band of Muslim reverts, regarded the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as revolutionary. In order to escape persecution, Muhammad (PBUH) directed 52-53 of the early Muslims to migrate to the land of Abyssinia in 622 CE. There the Muslims were welcomed and protected by An-Nagashi (the Negus) of Ethiopia named Ashama. Very few Muslims settled in East Africa, however, indicating that the spread of Islam in Africa was not generated from the Ethiopian shores of the Red Sea. Rather, it flowed westward into Algeria, West Sahara and Morocco from Nilotic Egypt before making its journey southward into the Sahara, Sub-Sahara and the Sahel. Remarkably, the conquest of Egypt by the Muslim army freed the Christian Copts from Byzantinian control as well as reverted much of the Coptic and Byzantinian Orthodox Church followers to Islam, with much credit being given to Islam's simplicity and personal freedom.

At that time, only the Nile Valley from Egypt to Abyssinia had been infiltrated by Christianity. While the reversion of Africans to Islam did eventually encompass most of the east African coast from Egypt to Madagascar, the religion was slow to penetrate the central and southern interior. On the other hand, the Muslim reversion from the north was a blanket transformation above the equatorial zone. Had Islam not entered Africa from the north, it is likely that the entire continent would have been Christianized when the invading European colonizers focused their attention on what they called the "dark continent." By the time the Ghanaian Empire fell around 1070 CE, a Mandingo warrior named Soundiata Keita had already occupied himself with defeating Souman Kourou Kanté, King of the Soso entity to the southwest. From 1230 until his death in 1255 CE, Soundiata expanded the Malian Empire assuring that the Islamization of the new Malian Kingdom was completed by the end of the 13th Century. Soundiata's son and successor, Mansa Uli, established the *Hajj* to Mecca as a permanent institution among the Mansas.

Among the memorable of occasions in early African Islam is the *Hajj* of Emperor Mansa Musa who ruled Mali from 1312 to 1337 CE, followed by his brother, Mansa Sulayman (1341-1360 CE). During the nearly 45-year reign of the two brothers, Mali became known for its many and unique mosques and was regarded as the center of Islamic scholarship. While much of early African history remained the property of Griots (oral historians) for centuries, the reign, particularly the *Hajj* of Mansa Musa, has been widely documented in written records. So great was the entourage and so vast the wealth of gold carried to Arabia by Mansa Musa, in 1324-1325 CE, that some regard African wealth as the financier of the further propagation and spread of Islam in the later centuries. Without a doubt, much of the gold transported across the desert trade routes by Mansa Musa remained in Egypt, Syria and Mecca and at all points along the way. The estimated 12 tons of gold made Mali the most well-known African kingdom, and its diverse but peaceful expansion is attributed to this factor along with the unification and political ability of its leaders.

Mansa Musa's nurturing of Islamic reversion and sponsorship of the building of mosques inaugurated Mali as a depot of Muslim scholars, facilitating a religious Imamate that was a necessary and important link in the global Islamic tradition. The city of Timbuktu, claiming a unique heritage of diverse traders, languages and mobility, eventually claimed itself heir to the African division of the Islamic Caliphate.

It was common for traders and travelers to settle there for months to several years before moving on. The sedentary families of Mali, particularly in Timbuktu, possess generations of history about this transitory land, having remained inheritors of its cities for centuries unchanged.

Mali's present day capital, Bamako, became the second West African island of traditional Islamic belief and practice. Like other major Islamic communities from the Atlantic to the Niger River and Lake Chad, the political class was slowly replaced by the Islamic *'ulema*. By the time Sonni Ali became the ruler of Mali in 1493, the transatlantic trade was already underway. Although slavery existed in some parts of Africa before the Europeans invaded the continent, the division into war slaves or home slaves did not imply economic significance. The system was also not entirely exploitative but was a common utilization of war captives and the indebted, and did not generally replace the labor of free men. In fact, some of the slaves married into their owners' families and some became important figures in society, including being rulers. Therefore, the Atlantic slave trade, in adding the characteristics of brutality and dehumanization, created an institution bent on quickly deconstructing the centuries-old traditions and social fiber of African societies.

Islam's impact has varied considerably from one African country to another and even within a country. For instance, Islam among the Hausa in Nigeria is quite different from that among the Yoruba in the same country. While Yoruba Islam is less politicized, that of the Hausa is the opposite. The Yoruba are more likely to explode in defense of ethnic interests than in pursuit of religious concerns. For the Hausa, both religion and ethnicity can get very political. Periodic religious explosions have occurred involving Muslims of different denominations in the north of Nigeria, sometimes leading to the loss of many lives. The links between religion and politics among Muslims in the north are deeper and more durable than such links among Muslims in the south. The major reason for this situation is that historically, pre-colonial Hausa city-states often attempted to enforce the *Sharia* (Islamic Law) and fused mosque/church and state. Pre-colonial Yoruba kingdoms, on the other hand, were based on indigenous Yoruba customs and traditions. The precise combination and weight between indigenous loyalty and Islamic allegiance notwithstanding, the Muslim presence in Nigeria has deep roots. In fact, the number of Muslims in Nigeria (126,635,626) is greater than that of any Arab country, including Egypt (69,536,644). There have also been many occasions when Nigerians going on pilgrimage to Mecca constituted either the largest or the second largest contingent of pilgrims from any part of the Muslim world.

The new international horizons within Africa are an extension of a process initiated by Islamization in some parts of the continent. Islam introduced a new understanding of distance and space, as well as a new comprehension of time and duration. The obligation on every Muslim to go on pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his/her lifetime was an extended perception of distance. African Muslims were forced to think of a far-away place called Mecca as a target to reach in their own lifetime. For many centuries, many African Muslims marched overland over many months, not returning away from pestilence or draught, not seeking new worlds to conquer, but simply to visit Mecca.

Islam also introduced its own discipline of time in societies which previously were not enslaved to time. Islam's discipline of time was revealed in the five daily prayers mandated for every Muslim. Nonetheless, this revolution in the discipline of time succeeded only in the religious domain. Prayers in African mosques, like those in other parts of the world, are preceded not only by the *Muezzin* calling believers to prayer but also by a sermon in mostly Arabic. Most Muslim children have to learn the art of reading and reciting the Qur'an, even if they do not understand what the Arabic words mean. Many Muslim schools in Africa are referred to as Qur'anic schools, emphasizing the verbal mastery of the Holy Book. The hymns in the mosques in Africa are in Arabic language and are memorized and recited.

Islam has also appeared more accommodating to the wider cultures of Africa. For example, the use of the drum is widely accepted in certain Muslim ceremonies. In addition, Islam has been less militant against female circumcision compared to Christianity, even though, by the canons of orthodox Islam, female circumcision is equally alien and un-Islamic. Yet such deeply Muslim societies as Somalia and northern Sudan practice female circumcision on a wider scale.

There are also areas of accidental similarities between African and Islamic cultures. One widely discussed area of convergence is that of polygamy. Islam has a limit of four wives at anytime (polygyny), whereas African cultures have an open-ended policy. Normally, African Muslims have not been tempted to go beyond four wives.

Nonetheless, it has been suggested by some observers that part of Islam's success in Africa is precisely because it tolerates polygamy compared with monogamy taught by Christianity. This kind of argument fails to take into consideration the numerous other disciplines Islam imposes upon its adherents. Among these is Islam's prohibition of alcohol. Many traditional African societies used alcohol for a variety of cultural and ritual ceremonies. African Islam has not conceded on this issue. That African Muslims brought their African-centered Islamic practices to the New World is a well-documented fact. For example, as Edward Curtis IV (2009) recounts, enslaved African Muslims combined the old with the new. Those in the South did not dissimilate; they proffered that Christianity and Islam were two expressions of the same religious idea: "God, they say, is Allah, and Jesus Christ is Mohammed—the religion is the same, but different countries have different names" (Curtis IV, 2009:19).

Curtis notes that on the Georgia coast, however, since Christianity had not become the majority religion among African Americans on the island until the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras, Muslim religious practices before the Civil War (1861-1865) were far more performed alongside African traditional religion rather than alongside Christianity. Local residents spent the night singing and praying when they celebrated the harvest festival. They beat drums, shook rattles made out of dried gourds, and danced when the sun came up. Called the ring shout, participants in the dance moved in a counterclockwise direction and fell into a trance. Their performance of the dance did not preclude them from performing Muslim rituals and saw no contradiction between African traditional religion and Islam. They were "mighty particular about praying," used prayer beads, and recited Arabic words (Curtis IV, 2009:19).

Some African American Muslims on the coast, Curtis points out, combined Islamic rituals with elements of hoodoo or conjure—a religious activity labeled pejoratively as magic and superstition—in their form of Islam. Every morning at sun-up, they would kneel on the floor in a room and bow over and touch their heads to the floor three times and then say a prayer. When they finished praying, they would say "*Ameen, ameen, ameen.*" They called Friday their "prayer day," a reference to the Islamic tradition of congregational prayers on that day (Curtis IV, 2009:20).

As Curtis also states, some African Muslims in the area seemed to frown at hoodoo practices as superstitious. Salih Bilali on St. Simon Island, for example, was a strict Muslim who abstained from alcohol and kept the various fasts, including Ramadan. He was contemptuous of those Muslims that held on to their African beliefs in "fetishes and evil spirits"—for instance, killing a chicken to heal an illness. Still, Bilali would suggest that a patient place an amulet containing passages of the Qur'an around his/her neck or recite certain litanies using prayer beads. Muslim piety in West Africa during that time was virtually defined by such practices (Curtis IV, 2009:20-21).

Nonetheless, as Curtis points out, for African American Muslims and enslaved African Americans more generally, however, Bilali's criticisms of African traditional religion as magic and superstition was a minority perspective. Enslaved Africans often employed any religious practice they perceived would lift their spirits above the dehumanizing conditions under which they were forced to live. Testimonies of enslaved Africans who could no longer stand the dehumanization rising up and flying back to Africa were many. They believed that if the body could not be transported back home, then at least the spirit could. They would face east, in the direction of both Mecca and Africa, and prayed to Allah (SWT) who had ultimate sovereignty over all affairs both human and divine. They believed that as one bowed at the waist and touched his/her head to the earth, his/her spirit took flight to Africa and was restored (Curtis IV, 2009:21-22). Also, in the words of Curtis,

...many African American Muslims in the twentieth century would testify later that by practicing Islam, they were reclaiming a religious and spiritual heritage that had been stolen from them when their ancestors were kidnapped in Africa. Their desire to reconnect with a Muslim past, like those slaves who faced east, pointed not only toward Africa but also toward Mecca, the axis of the worldwide Muslim community. The religious imaginations of twentieth-century African American Muslims leapt across the Atlantic and so did their bodies, as they visited West Africa and Egypt, made pilgrimage to Mecca in Arabia, and toured Pakistan and other Muslim majority countries. For many of them, such travel felt like a homecoming (Curtis IV, 2009:22).

In the following sections, I probe the following four major research questions based on the four aspects the essay covers mentioned earlier: (1) What definitions are employed to characterize new African-centered Muslim actors in the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe? (2) What modes of change do African-centered Muslims encounter in these states? (3) What factors impact the success of African-centered Muslims in these states? (4) What challenges does the state encounter in dealing with African-centered Muslims? In order to systematically ground the analysis of the data collected to examine these questions, a qualitative descriptive case study approach is used. This method, as we state in our book titled *Peace Research for Africa: Critical Essays on Methodology* (Bangura and McCandless, 2007:128), helps a researcher to answer the question “what is?” in developing accurate profiles of persons, events, or situations while emphasizing words as opposed to numerical values.

Defining New African-centered Muslim Actors

To clearly define new African-centered Muslim actors in Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean, a brief background of their ancestors will help. In the case of Europe, as Leslie Rout, Jr. recounts, the initial arrival of African Muslims from South of the Sahara into the Iberian Peninsula can be traced back to when Gebel-el-Tarik (Tariq ibn-Ziyad) and his Moorish legions crossed over from North Africa and, after six years of campaign (711-716 AD), brought Iberia under Muslim rule. During the 8th Century, some of the defeated Christians who retreated into the Pyrenees launched the *Reconquista*—i.e. a series of wars with Muslims in order to recapture their lost territories. European Christians had come to view the armed struggle against the Muslims in Iberia as a Western crusade by the 13th Century. As the papacy granted plenary indulgences to all those who fought against the Moors, some Frankish knights were encouraged to join the struggle. Moorish rule was permanently ended in the Portuguese kingdom in 1250 (Rout, Jr., 1976:3).

As numerous Moors left the liberated kingdom of Portugal in the wake of the European victory, the area faced an acute shortage of manual laborers. Many Muslims, realizing that their defeat was eminent, went to Granada—the only area in Iberia that was still under the control of their coreligionists. Several hundred years of recurrent fighting had diminished the native population of the kingdom. There was also a reduction in the number of slaves at the end of the wars, as many of them were ransomed by both Christians and Muslims (Rout, Jr., 1976:3-4).

The Christians came to perceive the Black Africans as soldiers fighting for the Moors or as slave labor during the centuries of bitter struggle. The logical answer to the Portuguese's labor shortage after 1250 was therefore Blacks. A few Portuguese traveled to the Barbary Coast to buy Blacks at a very high cost, as desert tribesmen who delivered the captives controlled the trans-Saharan trade routes. In addition to the occasional raids on Moorish vessels, Christians obtained Black slaves by buying them from Arab dealers. In essence, while Black slavery did exist in 13th and 14th Century Portugal, it was not common because it was too expensive (Rout, Jr., 1976:4).

The 15th Century Portuguese policy of discovery and expansion was driven by the combination of technological advancement in shipbuilding and navigation, a favorable geographical position on the Atlantic Ocean and Africa, and the perception that the *Reconquista* could be successfully carried out in Morocco. In August 1415, Ceuta (Morocco), a major terminal on the trans-Saharan trade route was taken over by an expeditionary Portuguese force. Since until the 7th Century all of North Africa had been Christian, the Portuguese, in keeping up with their past history, claimed that they were fighting a holy war. The papacy supported the pretensions of the Portuguese, urging the whole of Europe to back Lisbon and authorizing a new round of plenary indulgences for the troops (Rout, Jr., 1976:4).

Nevertheless, the impecunious Portuguese could not follow-up their initial success with another campaign. Moreover, Prince Henry (later named “the Navigator”), Duke of Viscu, who became the commander at Cueta in 1418, viewed the frontal attack in Morocco as only a part of the greater effort that was necessary to smash the Islamic states on the Barbary Coast. When he became director of the Military Order of Christ, he was also able to gain the financial means to pursue his ambitions. Fearing that the state of Castile might attempt to take the Madeira Islands, Henry sent João Gonçalves Zarco and Tristão Vas to seize them. The occupation of these two territories in 1419 and 1420, respectively, marked the true beginning of Portuguese colonialism in Africa (Route, Jr., 1976:4-5). As we will later see, descendants of the Moors continue their ancestors' Islamic proselytization in the Americas, particularly in Mexico. Other writers have also provided abundant information on early African Muslim influences in Europe. For example, Affan Seljuq informs us that before Napoleon Bonaparte launched his attack on Egypt in 1798, he addressed his troops as follows:

“Soldiers you are engaged in a conquest whose consequences will be incalculable” (Seljuq, 1997:1). The historical significance of the events that followed the invasion proved the truth of Napoleon’s assessment.

Western interest in North Africa was spurred by Napoleon’s brief occupation of Egypt and Syria in 1799, paving the way for further French incursion into the region. By 1830, French troops had landed in Algeria (Seljuq, 1997:1). World War I (1914-1918) saw Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian troops fighting alongside French troops. North Africa’s military assistance to France was so enormous that it contributed significantly to the change in the direction of migration between Europe and North Africa. As Seljuq puts it,

Algeria sent 173,000 men, whose gallantry may be assessed by the fact that 25,000 lost their lives. Tunisia contributed 56,000 soldiers, 12,000 of whom never returned home. Moroccan troops participated in the defense of Paris. Not only did the Maghreb help France with troops but it also provided relief and manpower to replace the French workers who were serving in the army. About 119,000 Algerian youth went to France to take up jobs in factories in 1919. Similarly, Moroccan workers arrived in Bourdeaux as early as 1916. In the early decades of the twentieth century, these North African settlers initiated the process of cultural interaction on the French mainland. How much of a change the general complexion and ethnic composition of French cities have undergone can be best judged by looking at Paris. According to the 1980s statistics, about 25% of the total population of inner Paris, and 14% of the metropolitan area, were foreigners, the majority of whom came from Algeria (Seljuq, 1997:1).

In the case of the Americas and the Caribbean, contrary to some writers like Edward Curtis IV (2009), United Islamic Association (2009) and Lindsay Jones (2012) who trace African Muslims’ presence in the area to the enslaved African Ayuba Suleiman Diallo in 1730 or 1731, other more informed writers such as Ivan Van Sertima (1976), Barry Fell (1983) and Abdus Sattar Ghazali (2012) demonstrate that Muslims were in the area at least 300 years before Christopher Columbus’ visit. From the latter group, we learn that in 1178, a Chinese document known as the *Sung Document* recorded the voyage of Muslim sailors to a land named Mu-Lai-P’I (America). The document is mentioned in the publication titled *The Khotan Amirs* (1933). In 1310, King Abu Bakar of the Malian Empire spearheaded a series of sea voyages to the New World. In 1312, Mandingo Muslims arrived in the Gulf of Mexico for exploration of the American interior via the Mississippi River as their access route. These Mandingo Muslims were from Mali and other parts of West Africa. In 1527, a Moroccan Muslim named Estevanico of Azamor landed in Florida with the expedition of Panfilo de Narveaz and remained in America to become the first of three Americans to cross the continent in 1539. At least two states in the United States—Arizona and New Mexico—owe their beginnings to Estevanico. By 1530, more than 30 percent of the estimated ten million enslaved Africans brought to the Americas and the Caribbean were Muslims uprooted from the areas of Futa Jallon, Futa Toro and Massina, as well as other areas of West Africa governed from their capital Timbuktu. These Muslims became part of the backbone of the American economy of that time. In 1730, the enslaved African Muslim Ayyub Bin Sulaiman Jalloh from Boonda, Galumbo was set free by James Oglethorpe of Georgia and provided transportation to England. Three years later in 1735, Ayyub arrived home. In 1790, Moors from Spain were reported to be living in South Carolina and Florida (Ghazali, 2012).

In 1807, the United States Congress prohibited the importation of enslaved Africans into America after January 1, 1808. An African Muslim called Yarrow Mamout was set free in Washington, DC and later became a shareholder of the second chartered bank of America. He lived to be more than 128 years old. There are two portraits of Yarrow: one painted by Charles W. Peale in 1819, when Yarrow was 100 years old, hangs in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; the other done by James Simpson in 1826, almost a decade later, is on display in the Peabody Room at the Georgetown Public Library in Washington, DC. In 1809, an African Muslim named Omar ibn Said was enslaved in Charleston, South Carolina and imprisoned after running away. He was visited in prison by John Owen, who later became the Governor of North Carolina. Owen took Omar to Bladen County where he was placed on the Owen plantation and lived to be 100 years old. In 1828, Abdul Rahman Ibrahim Ibn Sori, an enslaved African in Charleston, South Carolina, was freed by the order of President John Quincy Adams and Secretary of State Henry Clay. Abdul Rahman was a prince when he was captured. He was referred to during his captivity in America as “Prince among Slaves.” A drawing of him by Henry Imman is on display at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC and his life has been well documented in books and films. In 1856, the United States cavalry hired the African Muslim Hajji Ali to experiment with raising camels in Arizona.

In 1889, noted scholar and Pan-African activist Edward Wilmot Blyden travelled throughout the Eastern and Southern parts of the United States lecturing about Islam. During his lecture before the Colonization Society of Chicago, Blyden asserted that the major reason Africans chose Islam over Christianity is that the Qur'an protected the Black man from self-depreciation in the presence of Arabs or Europeans (Ghazali, 2012). In 1913, Noble Drew Ali (born Timothy Drew) established the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) in Newark, New Jersey. Drew Ali was commissioned by the Sultan of Morocco to teach Islam to African Americans. The MSTA is also responsible for many of today's African American reverts to Islam. In 1926, Dues Muhammad Ali, mentor of Marcus Garvey and had considerable impact on his movement, established the Universal Islamic Society in Detroit, Michigan. The organization's motto was "One God, One Imam, One Destiny." In 1930, African American Muslims built the first mosque in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1933, the Nation of Islam (NOI) was founded by Wallace Fard Muhammad (born Wallace Ford), a Muslim mystic who introduced the organization's philosophy to the United States and disappeared in 1933. Elijah Muhammad (born Robert Poole) succeeded Wallace Fard and built the organization into a strong ethnic movement advocating Islam as a way of life. The NOI is one of the most well known organizations with imprints on United States history, as well as American Muslim history. It has been responsible for helping a large percentage of African Americans to revert to Islam and highlighting American Christians' difficulties in combating the lingering effects of slavery and racism among African Americans. Two of the most famous African Americans—Alhaji Malik al-Shabazz or Malcolm X (born Malcolm Little) and Muhammad Ali (born Cassius Clay)—were early adherents of NOI, but both of them later embraced the broader multiethnic concepts of mainstream Islam (Ghazali, 2012).

Other writers have also provided very important research findings on early African Muslim influences in the Caribbean and the Americas. For instance, the United Islamic Association (2009) recounts that in the Caribbean, the Mandingo and Fulani Muslims from West Africa remained very devout, in spite of the harsh and inhumane conditions under which they were forced to work and live. In the face of intense anti-Islamic propaganda, these Muslims held strongly to their faith and died as Muslims. Their children, however, were not as lucky, as they were brutally taken away from their parents and given over to the custody of other European slavers who baptized and raised them in their Christian faith. The inhuman disintegration of the enslaved Muslims' family structure was the most potent weapon the European slavers employed to ensure that the offspring of their enslaved Muslims would be robbed of their Islamic heritage (United Islamic Association, 2009). Also, Richard Brent Turner (2010) reveals that about 15 percent of the enslaved population in North America in the 18th and 19th Centuries was comprised of urban-ruling elite from West Africa. The ancient Black Islamic kingdoms in Ghana, Mali, and Songhai served as their religious and ethnic roots. By writing in Arabic, fasting during the month of Ramadan, praying five times a day, wearing Muslim clothing, and writing and reciting the Qur'an, some of the enslaved West African Muslims brought the first mainstream Islamic beliefs and practices to America (Turner, 2010).

Turner notes that Georgia Sea Islander Bilal is a fascinating portrait of an enslaved West African Muslim who retained mainstream Islamic practices in the United States. Bilal was among at least 20 Black Muslims in Sapelo Island and St. Simons Island reported to have lived and practiced Islam during the antebellum era. Due to the relative isolation from Euro-American influences, the Georgia Sea Islands provided the opportunity to retain mainstream Islamic practices. Bilal was known for his devotion, Muslim clothing, Muslim name, and ability to speak and write Arabic. It is suggested that he might have been the leader of a small local Black Muslim community. His descendants retained Islamic traditions for at least three generations. But by the end of the Civil War, the old Islam of the enslaved West Africans was virtually wiped out, as these Muslims were unable to develop their community institutions in order to continue their religion. Their version of Islam, which was African American, private, and with mainstream and heterodox practices, vanished as they died (Turner, 2010).

According to Turner, the political framework for Islam's appeal to African Americans was ushered in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries by the Pan-Africanist ideas of Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) when he critiqued Christianity for its racism and suggested Islam as a viable alternative faith. Moreover, the rise of African American mainstream communities from the 1920s to the 1940s was propelled by the internationalist perspective of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association and the Great Migration of more than one million African American southerners to northern and Midwestern cities during the First World War era. By providing African Americans with their first Qur'an, important Islamic literature and education, and linkages with the Islamic world, the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, a heterodox missionary community from India, provided an impetus for mainstream Islam in Black America (Turner, 2010).

Also, Turner states that the Islamic Mission of America led by Shaykh Daoud Ahmed Faisal in New York and the First Mosque of Pittsburgh were the roots of Black Sunni Muslims in the United States in the early 20th Century. In 1924, Faisal, who was born in Morocco and came to the United States from Grenada, established the Islamic Mission of America, also known as the State Street Mosque, in New York City. He was influenced by the Muslim migrant communities; Muslim sailors from Yemen, Somalia, and Madagascar; and the Ahmadi translation of the Qur'an. The mission he founded served as the first African American mainstream community in the United States (Turner, 2010).

In addition, Turner mentions that Faisal's wife, "Mother" Khadijah Faisal, whose background was Pakistani Muslim and Black Caribbean, became the president of the Muslim Ladies Cultural Society. The mission published its own literature, including a Muslim journal for women named *Sahabiyat*. In the 1920s and 1930s, the mission spread mainstream practices among Black Muslims on the East Coast and continued to have a significant influence among African American Sunni Muslims throughout the 20th Century (Turner, 2010).

Furthermore, according to Turner, African American Muslims who desired to spread the teachings of Islam established the First Mosque of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1945, built other mosques, established the *Jumu'a* prayer in their community, assisted its members in times of grief and hardship, and aligned themselves with other Muslim communities across the country. The emergence of this mainstream community was the result of a spiritual metamorphosis after its earlier connections with the heterodox philosophies of the Moorish Science Temple and the Ahmadiyya. In the 1950s, the First Mosque of Pittsburgh issued sub-charters to African American Sunni communities in several other cities and established Young Muslim Women's and Young Muslim Men's Association which provided social services to the community (Turner, 2010).

Finally, Turner points out that in addition to the two African American communities, there is also strong evidence of the existence of a vibrant multi-racial mainstream Islamic community that included African American, continental African, Turkish, Polish, Lithuanian, Russian, Indian, Albanian, Arab, Persian, and Caribbean peoples in New York in the early 20th Century. But he notes that "this multi-racial model, which also developed among Sunni Muslims in the mid-western United States, does not suggest a race and color-blind community experience, as immigrant Muslims were noted for their ethnic, racial, and linguistic separation from African American Muslims during this period" (Turner, 2010). Overshadowed by the successful missionary work of the Ahmadiyya and later by the ascendancy of the Nation of Islam in the 1950s, the African American Sunni Muslim community did not become a popular option for African American Muslims until the 1960s (Turner, 2010).

In addition, Abdul Wahid Hamid (2010) retells the story of the Mandingo Muslims of Trinidad, with a greater focus on Muhammad Sesei (1788-1838). According to Hamid, the first Muslims to arrive in Trinidad were from West Africa. These Muslims were forced by the European slave plantation system to either observe their religion privately or renounce it completely. There was a thriving Muslim community in Port of Spain led by Yunus (Jonas) Muhammad Bath up till the early 19th Century. The size of the community increased during the Napoleonic wars by Africans who had served in the British West Indian Regiment. Most of these Africans were settled in Port of Spain and some were given lands in Manzanilla in the north east of Trinidad after they were disbanded from the regiment. Those in Port of Spain failed in their petition to the British to be returned to Africa. Muhammad Sisei, however, did succeed in returning to Africa by way of England (Hamid, 2010).

Born in Niyani-Maru, a village on the north bend of the River Gambia, in about 1788 or 1790, Sisei descended from the Mandingo in the area, the majority of who were Muslims. His father was named Abu Bakar after the first Caliph or successor to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his mother was called Ayisha after the Prophet's wife (may God be pleased with her; henceforth, MGBPWH). Sisei was sent some distance away to Dar Salami (Dasilami), which was one of the centers of Islamic learning in The Gambia at the time, at the age of eight. While at Dar Salami, Sisei learned to read and write Arabic and studied the Qur'an. Writing at the center was done on paper, which was of high value to Muslims—an important point, as literacy has been one of the greatest gifts of Islam to Africa and many other parts of the world. Sisei stayed at the school for eight years and returned to his hometown at the age 16 around 1804 (Hamid, 2010).

Sisei travelled somewhat extensively and even made a journey by sea from his hometown, which was a shipping port, to the French colony of Goree in Senegal in 1805. His purpose for the journey was to engage in trade and buy presents for his intended wife, a cousin named Aiseta, whom he later married. Upon his return to his hometown, Sisei set up a school and taught what he had learnt in Dar Salami. Through his teachings, he consolidated and spread Islam in the area from 1805 to 1810. But the early 19th Century was a period of great unrest in West Africa and The Gambia in particular. In addition to the Anglo-French wars, there were also wars among the local chiefs. One of these wars ended Sisei's career as a teacher. Rival chiefs sought to gain control over the River Gambia. One such chief who was repulsed in the Upper Gambia retreated downstream to increase his forces. Sisei's hometown was attacked by the chief and his forces, capturing Sisei and many others and marching them as prisoners of war to Kansala where they spent five months before being sent to the port town of Sikkah. Sisei was sold at the port to a French slaver which immediately sailed away (Hamid, 2010).

On the fifth day in its journey from Sikkah, the French slaver was intercepted by a British naval frigate enforcing the abolition of the slave trade on the West African Coast, as Britain had in 1807 officially abolished the slave trade from Africa. Sisei was taken to Antigua onboard the British frigate. As a free man who did not endure plantation slavery, under the claim that it was difficult to place all free Africans in Antigua, Sisei was enlisted in the Third West India Regiment as a Grenadier and given the name Felix Ditt. Distinguished from the enslaved, Sisei was one of the "Kingsmen" who saw active service against the French in Guadeloupe while he was stationed in Barbados. Sisei fought alongside Yoruba, Ashanti, Fula, Susu, and Hausa troops. He spent most of his time in Trinidad when he arrived there in 1816 until the Regiment was demobilized in 1825. While other disbanded soldiers accepted lands on the east coast of Trinidad as compensation for their service, Sisei accepted neither land nor pension. Instead, he moved to Port of Spain and joined the Muslim group led by Yunus Muhammad Bath. Sisei, determined to return to Africa, borrowed money from another Muslim and bought a passage for himself, his wife and young child to England where they arrived in 1838. The wife whom he married was a Grenadan Creole (Hamid, 2010). Upon the arrival of Sisei and his family in England, they "fell under the protection" of John Washington, Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, who used Sisei to learn a great deal about West African geography and languages. Washington had hoped that Sisei would be helpful in future British expeditions into the African interior. Sisei eventually left England and returned to The Gambia (Hamid, 2010).

Furthermore, Sylvaine Diouf (1998) narrates the story of the Muslim factor in the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). As he points out, the French failed to realize that their most profitable colony, Saint-Dominique (now Haiti) was fertile ground for Muslim maroons and rebels. With the emergence of many maroon communities, about a thousand runaways were advertised every year. Although many of the enslaved Muslims had been forcibly baptized and had their names changed, many also managed to retain their Muslim names. From the notices posted by plantation owners, one gets an idea of these Muslims, both males and females: Ayouba, Tamerlan, Aly, Soliman, Lamine, Thisiman, Yaya, Belaly, Salomon, Fatme, Fatima, and Hayda. These Muslims fled individually and certain times in groups. One night in 1783, for example, 12 Mandingo men between the ages of 22 and 26 were reported missing from their owner's house of Portau-Prince. The men were all professionals comprising bakers, carpenters, and masons (Diouf, 1998).

While it is not known whether some maroon communities were composed of all Muslims, it is known that the major communities had Muslim leaders. For example, before he was executed in 1787, Yaya, also named Gillot, had a devastating presence in the Trou and Terrier Rouge parishes. Also, an African Muslim called Halaou led a large army of thousands of maroons in Cul-de-Sac (Diouf, 1998). Among the most feared and famous pre-Revolution leaders was Francois Macandal, a sugar plantation field hand. His hands got caught on the wheel of the sugar mill while he was working and had to be severed. He then became a cattleman and eventually ran away. Macandal was at large in the mountains for 18 years, frequently making incursions on the plantations to kill owners, managers, and enslaved collaborators. He organized devoted followers and taught them how to make poison, which they used against their enemies. A 1758 French document estimated that he was responsible for approximately 6,000 deaths in three years. In 18th-Century Saint-Domingue, poison was referred to as *macandal* (Diouf, 1998). A Mandingo born in Guinea, Macandal was a descendant of an illustrious family and had been sold to Europeans as a war captive. He was a Muslim and well read in the Qur'an and fluent in the Arabic language. He was a marabout and was able to predict the future and having revelations. He possessed such great amulet making skills that *gris-gris* came to be called *macandals*. He also was said to be a prophet, indicating that he was believed to have a direct connection to Allah (SWT) (Diouf, 1998).

More than just a simple maroon leader, Macandal had a long-term plan for the island and saw the maroons as the “center of an organized resistance of the blacks against the whites” (Diouf, 1998). Employing symbolism, Macandal explained his vision for Saint-Domingue as follows, according to Diouf: “Here are the first inhabitants of Saint-Domingue, they are yellow. Here are the present inhabitants—and showed the white handkerchief—here, at last, are those who will remain the masters of the land; it is the black handkerchief” (Diouf, 1998). To bring his prophecy to fruition, Macandal planned to poison the wells of the city of Cap-Français. As the slaveholders lay dead or in the middle of convulsion, the “old man from the mountain,” as Macandal was referred to, would then be accompanied by his captains and lieutenants to kill the remaining Whites. But before he could execute his plan, an enslaved African betrayed him. Macandal was caught and burned at the stake on January 20, 1758. The pole on which he was tied collapsed and the crowd saw this incident as a sign of his immortality. He was then tied to a plank and thrown into the fire again (Diouf, 1998).

Boukman was another popular leader who attained quasi-mythical status in Haitian history. He came to Haiti from Jamaica, having been smuggled there by a British slaver. Boukman became a professional and rose to the rank of driver and later a coachman. With his charismatic personality, Boukman used his position that allowed him to travel from plantation to plantation to build a network of followers in the north. On the night of August 14, 1791, he galvanized a large assembly of enslaved Africans in a clearing in the forest of Bois-Caiman. During this voodoo ceremony, he launched the general revolt of the enslaved Africans with a speech in Creole that has remained famous by denouncing the God of the Whites, who asked for crime, compared to the God of the enslaved, who wanted only good. He added: “But this God, who is so good, orders you to seek revenge... He will direct our arms, he will assist us. Throw away the image of the God of the whites who is thirsty for our tears and listen to freedom which talks to our hearts” (Diouf, 1998).

One week later, 200 sugar estates and 1,800 coffee plantations were destroyed by the enslaved Africans and cut the throats of a thousand slaveholders. In early November of 1791, while fighting a detachment of the French army with a group of maroons, Boukman was shot dead by an officer. His head was severed, fixed on a pole and exposed on a public square in Cap-Français (Diouf, 1998). Boukman was a Muslim. Coming from Jamaica, his English name Bookman, “man of the book,” as the Muslims were referred to even in Africa, was rendered phonetically in French by Boukman or Boukmann. He must have had a Qur’an while in Jamaica, and got his nickname from this. As an English lieutenant attested at the time, the Mandingo were “Prime Ministers” of every town, and they went “by the name bookman” (Diouf, 1998).

Through their occult skills, literacy, and military traditions, other marabouts, and Muslims in general, played a pivotal role in the Haitian revolts and, ultimately, in the Haitian Revolution. Using *gris-gris*, the marabouts provided protections to the insurgents. The Muslims also used Arabic to communicate during the uprisings (Diouf, 1998). Finally, Raymond Chickrie (1999) relays the fact that Islam travelled to the shores of Guyana largely due to the institution of slavery and the indenture system. He adds that among the enslaved Africans brought to the island were Mandingo and Fulani Muslims, who were first brought to work on the sugar plantations. The Muslims and the practice of Islam were neutralized and eliminated by the cruelty of slavery until the arrival of South Asians from the Indian subcontinent in 1838. But to this day, Muslims in Guyana are called Fulani, a clear linkage to their West African ancestry (Chickrie, 1999).

The new African-centered Muslims in Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean have not deviated much from the characteristics and practices of their ancestors. They are professionals, entrepreneurs, community organizers, activists, proselytizers and reverts still engaged in the struggle to provide greater freedom and better lives for their people. The number of Muslims in Europe grew from 29.6 million in 1990 to 44.1 million in 2010 and projected to exceed 58 million by 2030. Today, Muslims account for approximately 6% of the total population of Europe, up from 4.1% in 1990. They are expected to make up 8% of Europe’s population by 2030. Most European Muslims will continue to live in Eastern Europe, although some of the largest increases in the continent’s Muslim population in absolute terms over the next 20 years are projected to occur in France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and other countries in Western, Northern and Southern Europe. A major reason for the expected increase in the Muslim population, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage, is because their fertility rates are generally higher than those of non-Muslims in Europe.

Another major factor in the growth of the continent's Muslim population has been the large influx of immigrants from North Africa, South Asia, Turkey, and other parts of the developing world (Pew Forum on Religion, 2011).

Spain is likely to remain an important destination for Muslim migrants to Europe, as that country saw a net gain of about 70,000 Muslims in 2010, with the largest number coming from Morocco. Muslims' proportion of new immigrants to Spain is nearly six times as large as their share of Spain's local population—2.3%—in 2010. In France, Muslims were expected to account for more than two-thirds of all new immigrants (68.5%) in 2010. That country was also expected to see a net gain of about 66,000 Muslim immigrants, mainly from North Africa, in 2030. The United Kingdom's net flow of approximately 66,000 Muslim immigrants in 2010 was forecast to be nearly as large as that of France (Pew Forum on Religion, 2011).

Today's Muslim populations in Europe are more youthful compared to their non-Muslim counterparts. In 2010, people under the age of 30 made up about 49% of the Muslim population in Europe, compared with about 34% of the non-Muslim population. Approximately 42% of Europe's Muslim population is projected to be under the age of 30 by 2030, compared with about 31% of the non-Muslim population (Pew Forum on Religion, 2011). The increase in their numbers prompted African Muslims living in Europe to launch the African Ummah in Europe (AUEU), a non-profit and non-governmental association, in 2012. Their mission is to promote "unity among African Muslims living in Europe by working together as Muslims, regardless of age, ethnic origin or ability, and recognizing the value of [their] differences" (Africa Ummah in Europe, 2012).

In January of 2009, the West African Muslim Association in UK (WAMA) was established and registered in the United Kingdom as a charity organization. WAMA is said to be flourishing as a vibrant Muslim community and a cohesive partner with the wider society. Its members mentor school children of different ages and are also engaged in building hospitals and supporting mosques in Africa. Its aims are to advance education and training; help relieve poverty, sickness and distress; and provide good health and recreational facilities in the interests of social welfare (West African Muslim Association in UK, 2009).

Richard Reddie (2009a & 2009b) discovered after his very extensive research that many Black Britons, especially the younger ones, are reverting to Islam for many cultural, emotional and theological reasons. Almost all of those he interviewed stated that Islam had given them meaning and woken them from a spiritual malaise. Others said that Islam gave them the inspiration and strength to live in a society that they perceived to have been corrupted by materialism and moral relativism. Many of the women interviewed asserted that Islam's focus on modesty had liberated them from the rampant fashion-related consumerism that objectifies women and sexualizes pre-pubescent girls (Reddie, 2009a & 2009b).

According to Reddie, the vast majority of those he interviewed had some previous connection to Christianity, either as congregants or having relatives with firm ecclesiastical connections. This differs from White reverts who tend to have no previous religious connection. He also found that Malcolm X had influenced many Black Britons, particularly the men, to consider Islam. Black British Muslims, like their brother and sister African American Muslims, have also gained a reputation of "cleaning up" the lives of those engaged in crime, drugs and gang violence. The beneficiaries of this service are not bashful about sharing their beliefs with those of other faiths or none, and they are often in the vanguard of efforts to proselytize. The Black Muslims interviewed included doctors, academics, students, artists, sportsmen, and musicians. Muslim musicians are increasingly using hip-hop to promote Islamic teachings; in fact, many of the leading Black British hip-hop artists are Muslims (Reddie, 2009a & 2009b).

These Black Muslims are mindful of the fact that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington, DC and July 7, 2005 in London have placed their faith under a microscope, with reverts singled out for particular scrutiny. Nonetheless, all those interviewed vowed to walk "the straight path" and believed that sections of the media overstate the so-called impressionability and/or susceptibility of reverts to the wiles of "preachers of hate" (Reddie, 2009a & 2009b).

According to Affan Seljuq (1997), most of the three million Muslims in France came from the Maghreb. Muslims make up the second largest religious community, after the Roman Catholics, in France, with their 1,500 regular mosques and informal places of worship. For quite some time, the North African Muslims had been living a peaceful life in complete harmony with the local population. They could not, however, remain oblivious to the political and social developments in and outside France, especially in the Muslim world.

Thus, as Seljuq observers,

The growing religious awareness, the quest to retain their identity, socioeconomic disparities, French government policy regarding the Muslim world, waves of subversive activities, and last but not the least, the Gulf War and its aftermath—all these diverse and multivariant factors, joined by the rise of neo-Nazism in Germany, have posed serious challenges to the peace and stability of the Mediterranean region. French cities, especially ports where there is a sizeable immigrant population, are gradually turning into crisis areas in the contemporary European scene, challenging the peace and harmony of the region, as the latest incidents of violence in Nice and other cities in Southern France indicate (Seljuq, 1997).

As *The Economist* (2006) reports, Via della Conciliazione, the avenue leading to the Vatican in Rome, Italy, is dotted with African traders hawking “ethnic” carvings or bags, belts and sunglasses with fake brand names. In some cities like Venice signs tell visitors not to buy from the street vendors or face a fine, as owners of pricey boutiques hate the competition. But most locals shrug their shoulders as they walk past the traders or make fun of their habit of code switching between Italian and French. Tourists and locals assume that these traders are just a disorganized bunch of Europe’s vast army of human flotsam and jetsam, desperate migrants from poor places who arrive in leaky boats. But these traders on the streets in Italy are hardly a disorganized bunch. They are members of a highly disciplined international community—at once religious and economic—with headquarters in the holy city of Touba, situated in the heart of Senegal, a three-hour drive from Dakar, the capital. These peddlers belong to a dynamic Sufi movement called the Mourides, followers of Cheikh Amadou Bamba, a religious leader who died in 1927. At his pious but cosmopolitan home in Touba, local businesses boast of branches in every corner of the globe. Once a week, most Mourides in Rome and other cities in Italy would gather to pray, socialize, and help any of their members who is in need. Small groups would pull their resources, hire a container and send home purchases of consumer goods, which are then sold by other Mouride traders in Senegal. The Mourides prefer peddling to more settled jobs, in part because this reflects Bamba’s call for self-reliance, and they do their best to stay out of trouble. They are believed to make up approximately 40% of Senegal’s population, but they form the majority among the country’s Diaspora, which is estimated to number at least 700,000. Once they get their papers and visas, many of them go home at the end of the year to celebrate a Muslim festival known in Africa as *Tabaski* (*The Economist*, 2006).

In the United States, the newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*, published by the Nation of Islam, is now the largest minority weekly publication in the country reaching 800,000 readers at its peak. The Muslim Students Association (MSA) established at the University of Illinois in Urbana in 1963 to aid foreign Muslim students attending schools in the United States now has more than 100 branches across the country. In 1990, Muslims held their first solidarity conference called Muslims Against Apartheid in support of Muslims engaged in the struggles against the White racist system in South Africa. On July 12 of that same year, the American Muslim Council was established to increase the effective participation of American Muslims in the nation’s political and public policy spheres. On January 4, 2007, the first African American Muslim Congressman Keith Ellison was sworn in, holding his left hand on a leather-bound volume of a Qur’an that was once owned by Thomas Jefferson. On January 19, 2009, American Muslim leaders marked both the inauguration of President Barack Obama and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by releasing “peace doves” at a mosque in Washington, DC. The release of the 44 white doves, one for each President, was to symbolize the American Muslim community’s desire for a more peaceful world (Ghazali, 2012).

But as Richard Brent Turner (2012) points out, although African American Muslims populate multiethnic Sunni places of worship across the United States, there are subtle racial and ethnic tensions between them and immigrant Muslims. While immigrant Muslims talk about “a color and race-blind Islam” and the “American dream,” African American Muslims “continue to place Islam at the forefront of the struggles for social justice, as the United States enters a century of frightening racial violence and corruption” (Turner, 2012).

Meanwhile, as Hisham Aidi (2011) recounts, every Friday afternoon in El Barrio, the Puerto Rican heart of East Harlem, Imam Ramon Omar Abduraheem of the Alianza Islamica (Islamic Alliance) delivers a *khutba* (sermon) in Spanish, English and Arabic to congregants made up of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Panamanians, Spaniards, and African Americans.

While it might seem surprising to find a thriving Muslim community in such a traditionally Catholic community, organizations such as Alianza Islamica make up the ongoing growth of Islam among Latinos in North and South America. Alianza Islamica was founded in 1975 by a group of Puerto Rican reverts as the first Latino Muslim community in the United States.

The founding members had come of age during the 1960s and were involved in the antiwar protests, civil rights protests, and Puerto Rican nationalist movements. Some of them still have scarred scalps from police batons (Aidi, 2011). Its social and political engagement being similar to the activism of African American Muslim organizations, Alianza Islamica has been at the forefront of tackling gang activity, drug dealing and prostitution in the Barrio. It has confronted gangs and drug dealers, trained young men in martial arts to enforce law and order in the community, brokered truces between rival gangs, and mentored jailed members of the local gang called Latin Kings. Hajj Yahya Figueroa, the organization's director, lectures on Islam and spiritual health at prisons, highlights the difference between "el Islam" and "el Farrakhanismo" at rallies, provides police officers "sensitivity talks," and has even addressed the United Nations. The organization also holds cultural programs, celebrations and weddings "which are a fascinating display of the rich syncretism of 'Latino Islam,' featuring congregational prayers in Arabic, sermons in Spanish and English, traditional Puerto Rican pork dishes served with lamb instead, Spanish poetry slams, and conga jam sessions" (Aidi, 2011).

The number of Latinos embracing Islam is increasing steadily. With a community estimated to be 40,000 strong, Latino Muslims have established mosques in Los Angeles, New York, Newark, and Chicago in the United States alone. This growth can be explained in part by the growing Latino presence in the country and their exposure to African American Muslims. Influenced by the ideology of their African Muslim brothers and sisters, Latino Muslims have been adopting similar ideas of spiritual self-discovery and emancipation in their approach to Islamic theology. Latino Muslims, like African American Muslims, celebrate a glorious past rooted in Africa by romanticizing Islamic Spain, the civilization established by the Moors, the Muslims from northern Africa who dominated Spain from the 8th to the 15th Century. Nonetheless, Latino Muslims also acknowledge their differences with African American Muslims. For example, while agreeing that African Americans have had a strong impact on them, Latino Muslims also point to the fact that they do not have to change their names because many Spanish names like Medina are actually Muslim (Aidi, 2011). As Imam Ocasio of the Alianza Islamica recounts,

Most of the people who came to Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean were from southern Spain, Andalusia. They were Moriscos, Moors forcefully converted to Christianity. The leaders, army generals, *curas* (priests) were white men from northern Spain... *sangre azul* (blue blood) as they were called. The southerners, who did the menial jobs, slaves, artisans, foot soldiers, were of mixed Arab and African descent. They were stripped of their religion and culture, brought to the so-called New World where they were enslaved with African slaves. But the Moriscos never lost their culture (Aidi, 2011).

Imam Ocasio also points out some of the many Islamic and Moorish elements in Latin culture. For instance, the Spanish *ojala* is a derivative of the Arabic *Insha'Allah* (both expressions mean "God willing"); the Spanish *Olé* is derived from the Arabic Allah (SWT). He further points to the Islamic influences in Latin American architecture—e.g., fountains, tiles, arches—and churches and cathedrals built facing Mecca (Aidi, 2011).

As Susan Ferriss (2002) observes, the Muslim mission in Mexico continues to grow. The proselytizers are Spanish reverts who arrived in 1995 from the southern province of Granada, the last stronghold of the Muslim Moors before they were defeated by Christian soldiers in 1492. The Spanish missionaries first came to Spain after the 1994 armed uprising staged by Mexico's rebel group, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Every weekday morning, children at an Islamic school in San Cristobal de las Casas, which is located in southern Chiapas state and better known as the gateway to the region's modern Mayan culture in Mexico, sit cross-legged at low desks reciting the Qur'an in Arabic. All of the children are required to leave their shoes at the door and the older girls' heads are wrapped in scarves. This Islamic *madrassa* (school) is part of a growing community of several hundred Muslim reverts. The new Muslim adherents in Chiapas are almost all Mayan who were once Protestants, a choice that made their families renegades for several decades in many Catholic indigenous communities. With about 40 families in their group, the Spanish missionaries and their Native American followers seek to spread their movement to the rest of Latin America.

The irony of the Spanish involvement is not lost on the Mayans; but as the reverts say, they embraced Islam as deliverance from the cultural oppression that began with the Spanish Conquest of the 1500s. As a 21-year-old Mayan previously known as Anastasio Gomez and now called Ibrahim, who sees no contradiction in being a Muslim and a Native American, puts it, "Five hundred years ago, they came to destroy us.

Five hundred years later, other Spaniards came to return a knowledge that was taken away from us" (Ferriss, 2002). The missionaries' leader, Aureliano Perez, reverted to Islam 30 years ago after a trip to Morocco and is now known as Mohammed Nafia (Ferriss, 2002).

In the Caribbean, notes the United Islamic Association (2009), Islam is growing steadily in all of the countries in the region to which the predecessors of today's citizens came as enslaved Africans or indentured laborers, as many people are reverting to the faith. In Guyana and Trinidad, in particular, Muslims of African and Indian descent can be seen standing shoulder to shoulder in many mosques offering their prayers to Almighty Allah (SWT). They hold very dearly the Islamic tenet that the faith belongs to people of all races and forbids a color or race barrier. Muslims in Guyana, Surinam and Trinidad have made significant progress in every field, as they have in the religious field. Among them are doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, chemists, businessmen, traders, agriculturists, tradesmen, as well as members of parliament and ministers in government. They have received services from visiting Muslim missionaries from Egypt, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates. Some of their local students are also being sent for Islamic education in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, and then return to their homelands as trained theologians (United Islamic Association, 2009).

According to *The Muslim World League Journal* (2007), Muslims from different parts of the globe have also settled in different Caribbean countries. These immigrants include medical students and traders from Africa, Indonesia, and Indo-Pakistan. In the French-speaking Islands of Guadeloupe, Guyana Française, Haiti and Martinique, the Muslim community is mainly composed of African Muslim immigrants from Senegal and Mali. Of the 7,178,572 inhabitants in these five countries, about 2,600 are Muslims—this figure does not include the Muslim populations in Guyana Française and Haiti which are unknown. In Martinique, native reverts are struggling to preserve their Islamic identity, with the help of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO) based in Port of Spain, Trinidad that provides them with *dawah* material. A native Martinican scholar was sent to study Islamic theology in Saudi Arabia; Dr. Omar Hassan Kasule of IIFSO promises to hire him as soon as the scholar returns to mobilize the Martinican community. Muslims can also be found in the Dutch-speaking countries of Curacao, St. Martin, Surinam, and the Netherland Antilles. While the population figures of Muslims in Curacao and St. Martin are not available, the figures for Surinam and the Netherland Antilles are 425,000 (out of 120,000) and 1,000 (out of 210,415), respectively. In Surinam, where the Afro-Surinamese community is growing, there is a large number of Muslims, constituting 28.23 percent of the total population of 425,000. The six million French-speaking Canadians in the Quebec province are culturally insecure and always fear being absorbed into the predominant English culture; they are therefore more receptive to Islam and Muslims. Haitians, being very family-oriented and deeply religious, have many social characteristics that make Islam quite attractive to them (*The Muslim World League Journal*, 2007). There are also smaller numbers of Black reverts to Islam in Barbados, Grenada, and Jamaica (French, 1990).

As Linsay Jones (2012) observes, given the number of Muslim organizations and centers, it is quite obvious that there are Muslims everywhere in South America. Muslim communities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil are made up of descendants of enslaved African and immigrant Muslims (Jones, 2012). Brazil's reverts now make up about 100,000 or 1% of the approximately one million Muslims in the country (Moreira, 2008). During the 1920s, Arab immigrants and traders added to Brazil's Islamic presence. Today, university students are in the forefront in teaching about Islam. There are now five large Islamic organizations in Brazil: in São Paulo, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Boa Vista, and Florianopolis. Venezuela has 15 Islamic civic associations in ten states. Creoles, Venezuelans and Arab immigrants have united to make Islam an important tradition in the country. Estimates of Muslims in the country range from 700,000 to almost a million. Muslims in Peru trace their ancestry to the Spaniards and Moors; the latter fled persecution in Spain and settled in many South and Latin American countries. Peruvian Muslims have established the *Asociacion Islamica del Peru* and a school in Lima, the capital. Argentinean Muslims are estimated to be between 900,000 and one million.

If Arabs and other ethnic groups are included, the number increases to three million Muslims. There are mosques all over the country, in addition to nine Islamic centers. Although the first mosque in Peru was not commissioned until 1992, there are already three civic organizations known as Centro Islamico Bolivanos (Jones, 2012).

Modes of Change African-centered Muslims Encounter

African-centered Muslims have encountered and continue to encounter many modes of change in Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean, although the changes seem to be more pronounced in the United States. The modes of change have been both environmental and attitudinal.

In France, as Affan Seljuq (1997) points out, Muslims who have acquired French nationality are now citizens of France and are entitled to equal rights and privileges in that country. Nonetheless, the Harakis—those Algerians who supported and fought against their own countrymen during the Algerian war for independence—are now being targeted as Muslim activists. They had fled to France after the fall of French colonial power in Algeria and were given French citizenship. The majority of them were born and raised in France, and their number has risen to approximately 450,000. They are today disenchanted and disillusioned by their hopelessness, as almost 80 percent of them are unemployed which, in turn, makes them quite vulnerable to crime and subversive activities. “Unfortunately,” asserts Seljuq, “despite having such a close historical relationship, the Muslim community in France too has fallen a victim to the fear of Islamic fundamentalism that is haunting the West” (Seljuq, 1997).

In the United States, recounts Abdus Sattar Ghazali (2012), when Elija Muhammad died in 1975, his son, Warith Deen Muhammad, inherited the leadership of the Nation of Islam. Warith recognized the importance of bringing the organization into the mainstream of Islam and immediately began the process of closing the gaps between his father's doctrines and mainstream Islam. Some members of the organization did not agree with the changes introduced by Warith. One significant segment of the organization, led by Minister Louis Farrakhan, has continued the teaching of Elajah and maintained the Nation of Islam's name as well as its basic organizational structure. Farrakhan preaches that Blacks worldwide are oppressed by Whites and seeks a separate state for African Americans in the United States. In 1976, Warith renamed the Nation of Islam as the World Community of Islam in the West. In 1980, he again renamed it the American Muslim Mission. In 1985, Warith's movement was officially integrated into the general Muslim community in the United States and its members are now simply called Muslims. In 1991, Warith was invited to give the invocation in the United States Senate (Ghazali, 2012).

On December 3, 1993, African American captain Abdul Rashid Muhammad began serving as the first Imam in the United States Army. In 1996, the White House began celebrating *Eid ul-Fitr* hosted by then First Lady Hillary Clinton. That same year, a majority of Muslim Americans voted for Bill Clinton in the presidential election. On December 14, 2001, the Treasury Department blocked the assets of two Islamic organizations, Global Relief and Benevolence International Foundation, on the grounds that they were providing financial assistance to terrorists. On December 19, a systematic poll of Muslim Americans revealed that two-thirds agreed with President George W. Bush's administration that America was fighting a war on terrorism, not Islam. On March 20, 2002, federal agents raided a number of Muslim offices and homes in Virginia and Georgia. The raids were part of Operation Green Quest, a task force established to track and disrupt the sources of terrorist finances. On November 13, Bush, during a meeting with then United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, distanced himself from attacks against Islam by the Christian right (Ghazali, 2012).

On January 15, 2003, the United States government dramatically increased the deportation of people from Muslim countries, even as it eased up on illegal immigrants from Mexico and other countries. From October 2001 to September 2001, the number of immigrants from North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia expelled multiplied faster than that for immigrants of nearly all other nations combined. On February 5, 2002, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission confirmed that Muslim workers in California and Illinois faced religious discrimination. On July 2nd, American financial institutions used extreme interpretations of the USA Patriot Act to justify blacklisting Muslim account holders. On July 24th, the Research Center for the People and the Press released a poll showing that 44% of Americans believed that Islam sparks violence. On August 3rd, eminent Muslim scholar Dr. Ali Mazrui who has lived in the United States since 1974 was detained and interrogated for seven hours after he returned from a working visit to the Caribbean.

On August 23rd, Bush appointed Daniel Pipes, an anti-Muslim Middle East expert who has written dismissively of diplomacy, to head the United States Institute of Peace. The appointment outraged Democratic Senators, American Muslims and Arabs.

During an Islamic Society of North America annual convention in Chicago from August 29 to 31, Rev. Bob Edgar, head of the National Council of Churches, which represents thousands of mainline Protestants and Orthodox Christian congregations, condemned what he called the “hate speech” of conservative Christian leaders. On August 31st, Imam Warith Deen Mohammed, the African American Muslim leader who over three decades transformed how African American Muslims practice Islam, resigned as head of the American Society of Muslims (Ghazali, 2012).

On January 1, 2004, a strong protest by American Muslims forced the ruling Republican party to remove an anti-Islam link to its Web site. On January 21st, Dr. Ahmed Al-Akhras, president of the Council of American-Islamic Relations Ohio office, opened the Ohio Senate with *Surah Al-Fatihah* and other prayerful remarks. On February 1st, Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, donning a white Islamic headscarf, spoke at the *Eid ul-Adha* prayer at Sun Angel Stadium. On February 20th, Los Angeles City Councilman Bernard Parks, former Chief of Police for the Los Angeles Police Department, accompanied by other Council members, issued a resolution to recognize the *Hijra*, the beginning of the Islamic New year. On February 24th, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert Mueller during a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing thanked American Muslims for their ongoing commitment to prevent acts of terrorism. On March 31st, the Anti-Arab Discrimination Committee welcomed the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division’s complaint against an Oklahoma school district for violating the constitutional right of an American Muslim student to wear a *hijab* (headscarf) to school (Ghazali, 2012).

On January 12, 2005, the Virginia-based missionary group World-Help dropped its plans to place 300 Muslim “Tsunami orphans” in a Christian children’s home, after a protest launched by the government of Indonesia. On January 15th, a Muslim student at East Ridge High School in Chattanooga, Tennessee was allowed to wear her *hijab* to school, after she was initially told that it was a violation of the school’s dress code. On January 16th, the Fox Television network decided to remove some stereotypical aspects about American Muslims from its action drama “24,” due to demands by Muslim community leaders. On January 17th, the Sacramento office of the Council of American-Islamic Relations co-sponsored an event to honor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During his inaugural address on January 20th, President Bush mentioned the Qur’an. On January 24th, United States lawyers and government officials defended the rights of American Muslims to offer sacrifices during *Eid ul-Adha*. Out of curiosity spawned by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, thousands of Latinos across the country—both United States-born and immigrants—reverted to Islam on January 25. The next day, the host of the New York morning radio show Hot 97 suspended her on-air crew members over their racist and religiously insensitive Tsunami parody. On that same day, Baltimore Muslims lobbied the city council for day offs on *Eid ul-dha* and *Eid ul-Fitr*. On January 27th, Dr. Gordon Neligh, a psychiatrist professor, was paid \$1.54 million by Colorado University in a law suit settlement when he was fired for standing up for a Muslim administrative assistant being harassed by her peers (Ghazali, 2012).

On January 18, 2006, a Bible was replaced by a Qur’an in a ceremony of a Muslim named Tajammul “Taj” Khokhar taking his oath for the planning board of Boonton, New Jersey. On January 24, a school in Ohio accommodated Muslim students’ prayer. On January 2, 2007, former President Jimmy Carter’s book titled *Palestine Peace, Not Apartheid* was placed on the market, breaking the taboo barring criticism in the United States of Israel’s discriminatory treatment of Palestinians. On January 11, 2008, award winning author and Georgetown University Law School Professor David Cole at a special event co-sponsored by the Muslim Public Affairs Council and the University of California Los Angeles School of Law criticized the “preventive paradigm” in the American government’s counterterrorism efforts (Ghazali, 2012). On January 15, 2009, former Democratic Party Chairman Governor Dr. Howard Deen thanked American Muslims for their extraordinary work in getting Obama elected President in 2008. On January 21st, Obama’s inauguration speech delighted American Muslims for his statement of inclusion of Muslims. On January 28th, he named Rashad Hussain as his deputy Associate Counsel. Hussain, a lawyer, was born in the United States in 1979. On January 7, 2010, Massachusetts College reversed its ban on the *hijab*. On January 12, 2011, Indiana State Representative Bruce Borders decided not to introduce his anti-*Sharia* bill. And during his State of the Union Address on January 25th, Obama made the statement that American Muslims are a part of the American family (Ghazali, 2012).

In the Caribbean, according to *The Muslim World League Journal* (2007), Christian missionary activity has generally failed to convert Muslims to Christianity. While some youth have been neutralized, they still remain nominally Muslims. Afro-Caribbeans have been reverting to Islam, and many Islamic organizations have been formed since the 1970s and are active in various endeavors (*The Muslim World League Journal*, 2007).

As reported by Rakib Buckridan (2012), in 1994, a research project sought to obtain information through a mailed questionnaire on various issues and problems encountered by Muslims of Trinidadian ancestry in Canada. The major findings were that there is a core of non-negotiable elements which are held firm by the Trinidadian Muslims—the oneness of Allah (SWT) and Muhammad (PBUH) as his Prophet, the Qur'an is the revealed word of Allah (SWT) to Muhammad (PBUH), acceptance of the Qur'an and some of the Hadith, there is life after death, angels exist, and Christianity and Judaism are also acceptable to Allah (SWT). Perhaps for survival or simply getting along in the larger society, several aspects of their religious practices appeared negotiable. Other findings included disenchantment with the practice of arranged marriages, preferring pre-marital mixing of the sexes, dating, and male selection. Also noteworthy are the appeal of skimpy clothes, calypso dancing, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual affairs. While respondents regarded themselves as less religious than their parents, they also saw themselves as being relatively more religious than their Canadian-born children. Also, among them, the overall watering down in Islamic traditions and practices seemed to be more prevalent among those respondents who are university educated, are professionals, and have higher salaries (Buckridan, 2012).

Factors Impacting Success of African-centered Muslims

Many factors impact the success of African-centered Muslims in the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe. Here again, American factors appear to be dominant. The factors are cultural, economic, political, and sociological. In Europe, the Muslim population is projected to grow at a declining rate because its fertility rates are declining and Muslim immigration to the continent is leveling off. Nonetheless, Europe's Muslim population will continue to increase at a faster pace compared to its non-Muslim population, which has been decreasing. Thus, Muslims are expected to comprise a growing share of Europe's total population (Pew Forum on Religion, 2011).

In Britain, states Richard Reddie (2009a), whether or not we accept the proposition that Islamophobia exists there, there is little doubt that the events of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington, DC and July 7, 2005 in London have served as fodder for the media to peddle negative, pejorative stories about Muslims that link them to terrorism, extremism and hate. And these associations are especially strong in the case of Black British and other reverts, who are portrayed as susceptible to the wiles of persuasive, fanatical "preachers of hate" (Reddie, 2009a:9). In the case of France, according to Michel Gurfinkiel (1997), multi-ethnicity includes religious and racial dimensions. This is because French minority groups are largely Muslim; thus, they are perceived by the majority as having alien values, think of themselves as a new nation, and even have hopes of superseding the present Judeo-Christian nation of France (Gurfinkiel, 1997).

As it pertains to the United States, in 1952, Muslims in the Armed Services had to sue the federal government to be allowed to identify themselves as Muslims, since until that time Islam was not recognized as a "legitimate religion." In 1965, Al Hajj Malik al-Shabazz (Malcolm X) was assassinated in New York. He was one of the most outstanding Muslims in American history and a dedicated fighter for justice and equality for African Americans and other oppressed people around the world. In 1991, the Muslim Members in the Military Organization held their first "Unity in Uniform" conference at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, DC to highlight and seek ways to remedy the fact that there were more than 5,000 Muslims in uniforms on active duty, yet there was not a single Muslim Chaplain on active duty in any branch of service (Ghazali, 2012).

On January 5, 2004, the United States government imposed discriminatory security checks for all Muslims who would be entering the country at any of its 115 airports and 14 seaports. On January 11th, American authorities barred two South African Muslims, businessman Musa Sulayman and cleric Mulana Ahmad Sulayman Khatani, from entering the country to attend an Islamic convention in Atlanta, Georgia, even though they had American visas. Sulayman, 66 years old at the time, endured five hours of "hell, uncertainty and embarrassment," and Khatani, then 33 years old, was detained and spent more than 34 hours in a cell with four criminals before being sent back to South Africa.

On January 12th, the United States Supreme Court dealt a blow to government openness and accountability by refusing to review the Justice Department's secret arrest and detention of hundreds of foreigners, the overwhelming majority of whom were Muslims. On January 14th, Senators on Capitol Hill called for the investigation of all Muslim charities in an effort to tarnish the organizations and chill their activities.

On February 1st, a seven-member Moroccan parliament delegation was detained at Portland International Airport and deported after being questioned by officials of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Transportation Security Administration who also sifted their 14 bags. On February 12th, Army intelligence agents investigated attendees of a legal conference at the University of Texas, leaving Muslims and civil rights activities wondering. On February 13th, Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy of the Interfaith Alliance Washington wrote a letter to Representative Peter King to express his shock and sadness of the congressman's inflammatory remarks against American Muslims. On March 5th, a new Disney movie, *Hidalgo*, came under severe scrutiny by American Muslims for its negative stereotypes of Muslims. On March 14th, Muslim Americans challenged an edition of Merriam-Webster dictionary which defined Muslims as having hostility toward Jews. On March 18th, the Rand Corporation issued a study about Islam and Muslims suggesting that Islam be revamped. On March 19th, the United States government dropped all criminal charges against Army Captain James Yee, a West Point graduate and Muslim chaplain who ministered suspected Al-Qaeda terrorists held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In March, the California Senate Research Office released a report on the troubling impact of the Patriot Act and other post-September 11, 2001 enforcement powers on Muslims in the United States (Ghazali, 2012).

January 4, 2005 saw a new intelligence law to deport naturalized United States citizens allowed by a court ruling. On January 5th, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sued Oberto Sausage Company for religious discrimination when it failed to accommodate the religious needs of six Muslim employees. On January 18th, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began monitoring the Islamic missionary group Tablighi Jamaat on the grounds that its members may be ideal recruits for terrorist organizations. On January 19, someone spray painted foul language on a northland house aimed at the Muslim owner in Kansas City. On January 21, members of the city mosques in Waterbury, Connecticut were troubled to discover that members of a small Christian church were on the downtown Green distributing tracts including Islam. On January 25th, WQHT-FM, known as HOT 97, radio station in New York apologized for repeatedly airing a joke song that ridiculed victims of the Tsunami and used racial slurs. On January 27th, a Muslim student sued the New Orleans school system and a former high school teacher because the school board failed to adequately resolve her claims that the teacher used racial slurs against her and also yanked off her religious mandated headscarf. On January 31st, Shahriar Ahmed, president of the Bilal Mosque Association in Beaverton, Oregon, asked Robert Jordan, a special agent in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Oregon, to explain his remark about the presence of jihad-trained fighters in the state (Ghazali, 2012).

In 2006, the Islamic Society of Boston began the struggle to complete a mosque that would be the largest in the region. As soon as articles claiming that leaders of the organization are "Islamic extremists" began appearing in newspapers, a lot of political machinations were launched to derail the building of the mosque. In 2007, Muslim leaders met with then Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to express concerns about post-September 11, 2001 treatment of Muslims. That same year, pig races near a mosque in Katy, Florida sparked meetings aimed at preventing bigotry. In 2009, AirTran apologized to nine Muslims kicked off a New Year's Day flight to Florida after other passengers allegedly reported hearing a suspicious remark about airplane security. That same year, shots were fired at a Mosque in Florida and a Pennsylvania mosque was vandalized. Also, members of a group of Black Canadian Muslims coming to see Obama's inauguration as President of the United States were detained at the Canadian-United States border for seven hours. In 2010, Muslims in Orange County and Costa Mesa in California began the New Year with hate crimes targeted at them, as burned copies of the Qur'an were left at the entrances of their centers. Also, racial and religious tensions flared in Sheepshead Bay, New York over plans to build a mosque there. In 2011, Muslim leaders called upon the Department of Defense not to use anti-Muslim extremists to train military personnel. The leaders also urged the New York Police Department to probe the use of an anti-Muslim training film. Furthermore, the effort of a California man named Roger Stockman to blow up a mosque in Dearborn, Michigan was thwarted and he was sent to jail. In 2012, a video clip that appears to show Marines urinating on dead Taliban fighters was condemned by United States officials.

And Republican presidential candidate and former speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich said that he would only support a Muslim for the presidency if that person would “commit in public to give up *Sharia*” (Ghazali, 2012).

Still in the United States, as Hisham Aidi (2011) states, by rejecting Catholicism and embracing Islam, many Latino Muslims are experiencing alienation by friends and families. An Evangelical group on 107th Street, one block from Alianza Islamica, was aggressively opposed to the Muslims’ activities. But because of these Muslims’ community service work, most Barrio residents now view them with curiosity and respect.

As part of their AIDS outreach program, the Muslims lecture on HIV infection and drug abuse, help the sick get treatment, and give free *Iftar* meals (a festive gathering at which Muslims break their day-long fast) during the holy month of Ramadan (Aidi, 2011).

French-speaking African Muslims living in New York and Philadelphia come to look for work. Many of them do menial jobs and have poor education. Ignorance of English is a barrier to their advancement. They find themselves engaged in an uphill struggle to preserve their Islamic identity (*The Muslim World League Journal*, 2007). In San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico, the Native American Muslims there have experienced little hostility from their kinfolk. Nonetheless, the Muslims are well aware that some people in the town dismiss the missionaries as latter-day conquistadors. The missionaries simply state that they came from a Moorish civilization that the Spanish Christians destroyed and, thus, they are not really Spanish. A few of the young reverts get thrown out of their parents’ homes when they refuse to read the Bible. Some have been able to get their parents to revert to Islam. Others were Protestant Mayans who were expelled by leaders that run their own quasi-Catholic churches. A number of the Muslims have made the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca, courtesy of wealthy Arab sponsors (Ferriss, 2012).

In the Caribbean, according to Lindsay Jones (2012), Muslims continue to experience life as minorities. As Christian missionaries continue to try to convert them, they also try to get Christians to revert to Islam. Newspaper accounts reveal that the Muslims have been the ones that have been successful in the endeavor. In Cuba, Muslims continue to pray at home because they do not have a mosque. There is an Arab House built by a wealthy Arab in the 1940s that houses an Arabic museum, a restaurant, and a prayer space for diplomats. Monies are being collected to build a mosque. The Muslim population in a small town called Pilaya de Rosacio is now 40%. In Venezuela, Islam being a potentially competing faith there, the issues have revolved around dress, political participation, civic concerns, and Christian missionizing. In Chile, the majority of the Muslims are Sunni, although there are both Shi’a and Sufi communities as well. These Muslims generally face great pressure to convert to Christianity (Jones, 2012).

Guyanese Muslims look up to Saudi Arabia and other Arabic-speaking countries for religious leadership and guidance; but to this day, Saudi Arabia and Guyana have not established diplomatic relations. This is the situation, despite the fact that Guyana and Suriname are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, whose headquarters are based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Chickrie, 1999). In Brazil, the political and personal interests of some Muslims themselves seem to be preventing or at least delaying the task of presenting Islam to the Brazilian people in a comprehensive manner. Nonetheless, other Brazilian Muslims are convinced that it is only through Islam that they can restore their original culture (Moreira, 2008).

Challenges for the Role of the State in Dealing with African-centered Muslims

The state has some challenges in dealing with African-centered Muslims. On this issue, American challenges seem to be once again the most predominant. The challenges are both political and legal in nature. In France, the Muslim migration trend is intensifying. France is therefore concerned about the emergence of a predominantly African population and rapid Islamization. The prospect for this development is not being dismissed by Michel Gurfinkiel for four reasons: (1) “the high demographic rates of French Muslims,” (2) “their aloofness from mainstream society,” (3) “their increasing religious assertiveness,” and (4) “the growing appeal to Islam by non-Muslims” (Gurfinkiel, 1997). Other factors noted by Gurfinkiel are the sharp decline in the French nation-state, as sovereign attributes—money, border control, etc.—are being transferred to the European Union and the growing power of Muslim voters (Gurfinkiel, 1997). Also, as Affan Seljuq (1997) recounts, the first incident staged by Muslims that sent ripples across French national life took place on October 22, 1989 when thousands of Muslims staged a demonstration in Paris in support of Muslim girls who were expelled from their school, Gabriel-Havez Secondary School in Criel, for wearing headscarves.

The demonstration sparked similar actions in other French cities and those of neighboring European countries. The controversy led to many violent demonstrations, hunger strikes, and law suits. Furthermore, racism and ethnic violence is on the increase and threatening the stability and integrity of French society, and France's foreign policy, especially toward the North African states, is adding to the tension (Seljuq, 1997). In the United States, beginning in 1960, the Nation of Islam's University of Islam schools flourished and drew the attention of the American media. But instead of lauding the Black Muslims' self-help programs, the media were characterizing them as a "threat" to the White establishment. In 1968, the Hanafi Movement was founded by an African American named Hamas Abdul Khaalis in New York but later moved to Washington, DC. It had a membership of more than 1,000 in the United States. Basketball legend Kareem Abdul Jabbar reverted to Islam through the movement. In protest against the marginalization of African Americans, the Hanafi seized control of three District of Columbia buildings and held hostages for more than 30 hours. In the ensuing commotion, one man was killed. Imam Khaalis was incarcerated in Washington, DC and serving a 41-120-year sentence. In 1995, the Oklahoma Bombing took place, launching a hate campaign against Muslims across the United States (Ghazali, 2012).

Following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC on September 11, 2001, the Justice Department named 19 suspects that included 15 nationals from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, one from Egypt, and one from Lebanon. On September 24th, President Bush ordered American financial institutions to freeze the assets of 27 groups and individuals suspected of supporting terrorists. In 2003, the United States Senate condemned attacks on Muslims and the Justice Department prohibited racial profiling. The Supreme Court, however, refused to review secret deportation hearings. In 2004, a federal judge in Los Angeles ruled that part of the USA Patriot Act which bars giving expert advice or assistance to groups designated as foreign terrorist organizations as unconstitutional. In 2005, the Council on American-Islamic Relations established a 24-hour hotline for Muslims who may face fingerprinting or detention upon their return from the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca. In 2007, the Federal Bureau of Investigation probed a death threat against California Muslim activist and Council on American-Islamic Relations director of the Sacramento Valley chapter Basim Elkarra. The threat came after Senator Barbara Boxer rescinded an award for Elkarra's work in promoting peaceful realtions. In 2008, the Muslim Public Affairs Council joined the American Civil Liberties Union in urging the Senate majority leader to oppose warrantless wiretapping. In 2010, the Transportation Security Administration told a Muslim traveler that the *hijab* would now trigger security checks. Also, an informant by the name of Craig Montheilh, a convicted felon who worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation to spy on mosques and Muslim communities throughout the country, sued the agency for \$10 million because agency operatives asked him to lie against Muslims. In 2011, right-wing Texas legislator Leo Berman sought to ban *Sharia* Law. Finally, in 2012, President Obama signed indefinite detention into law (Ghazali, 2012).

For Canada, suggests Rakib Buckridan (2012), the socio-cultural environment in the country tends to hinder the exercise of some basic injunctions. As he illuminates, "political and governmental agencies may find it of interest to note concerns related to finding suitable education for children (including facilities for the imparting of Islamic instruction, Arabic and Urdu or Hindustan languages), obtaining proper burial sites, and avoiding religious and racial prejudices. Also problematic are efforts geared at maintaining the extended family with parents and elders held in high respect" (Buckridan, 2012). Some societies in the Caribbean are getting a lot of pressure from the governments which are characterized as being the most hostile toward Islam (*The Muslim World League Journal*, 2007). In reaction to this hostility, Trinidad, for example, had to deal with the actions of a militant Black Muslim group called the Jamaat al-Muslimeen, or Society of Muslims, when it sought to overthrow the government in 1990 and challenged other religious organizations for their anti-Islamic posture. The group, which has between 300 and 500 members, draws inspiration from Black Muslims in the United States and has been getting reverts from Christian churches. Its leader, Imam Yasin Abu Bakr, formerly known as Lennox Phillip, reverted to Islam while studying engineering in Canada in the 1970s. He returned to Trinidad in 1984 and began preaching Islam to Blacks (French, 1990; caribbeanmuslims.com, 2012).

Conclusion

That the transnationalism of Islam would be significantly African in nature was divinely predestined is hardly a matter of dispute.

As we may recall, in one way, all Muslims understand Islam to begin with Adam (PBUH): that is, with creation of humanity, Adam's (PBUH) descendants are traced through Noah (PBUH), to Noah's (PBUH) son Shem (from whom we get the term *Semite*, referring to his descendants, including both Jews and Arabs), on through the generations to Abraham (PBUH), who was the first to believe in a monotheistic God, and then on to Abraham's (PBUH) sons Ishmael and Isaac (PBUT). It is at this point that we find two narratives which become cornerstones of Islam. The first begins in the Qur'an with the story of the birth of Abraham's (*Ibrahim's*) two sons, Ishmael (*Ismail*) and Isaac (*Ishaq*) (PBUT), telling the expulsion of Ishmael (PBUH) and his Egyptian mother Hagar (MGBPWH) from Abraham's (PBUH) home and their subsequent residence in Mecca.

It continues with Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) descent from Ishmael's (PBUH) biological line. The second involves the Qur'anic story of Abraham's (PBUH) attempted holy sacrifice of his son, which demonstrated Abraham's (PBUH) submission to God's will, from which we get the word *Islam*. It is widely believed that Ishmael (PBUH) is associated with the Arab population, and particularly with Arab Muslims. Historical records do link ancient northern Arabians to Ishmael (PBUH); however, the link of Ishmael (PBUH) to Islam remains a topic worthy of further investigation.

According to Genesis, Ishmael's (PBUH) wife was an Egyptian (21:21). However, Jewish *midrash* expands on this story. It says that Ishmael (PBUH) chose his own first wife, a Moabite. Abraham (PBUH) disapproved. So Hagar (MGBPWH) sent for a wife from Egypt, of whom Abraham (PBUH) approved on his next visit. This is the wife represented in Genesis 21:21. Islamic understandings, however, are unconnected to the version in Genesis 21. Their goal is to establish Ishmael (PBUH) and his descendants as clearly Arabian; an Egyptian wife would not accomplish this. Thus, the Islamic legend explains that Ishmael (PBUH) married into a pre-Islamic Arab tribe associated with the holy city of Mecca.

Also, as Mwalimu (Honorable Teacher) Yosef A. A. ben-Jochannan (1970/1991) reminds us, Bilal ibn Rabah or Bilal al-Habashi, who had been an enslaved African in Arabia when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) got the revelations from Allah (SWT) through Archangel Gabriel, was the very first *Muezzin* (High Priest, or Caller of the Faithful to prayer) and treasurer of the Islamic Empire. He was also the first "soul" (i.e. man) Muhammad (PBUH) reverted to Islam, while the Prophet (PBUH) himself was a camel driver and hardly anyone else wanted to listen to him and his "strange teachings and foreign ideologies" (ben-Jochannan, 1970/1991:199). Is it therefore not only fitting, as I mentioned in the beginning of this essay, that the Imam of the Grand Mosque of Mecca today is the African/Black Saudi Arabian Sheikh Adil Kalbani?

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