

# ***Islam in America: The Issue of Arrival and Survival***

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## **Introduction**

In the wake of 9/11 the issue of the survival of Islam and Muslims has once again come into the front, as the study of the last 500 years of American history since the white man while searching for a new route to India bumped accidentally to the shores of the New World. This article explores the issue, purely through Western sources, most of the information in this study is gathered from the very common sources like Encyclopaedias, which does not represent the view point of a special interest group. The study is divided into three sections: the background, religion in America, and the Muslim experience.

## **I**

### **THE BACKGROUND**

The Portuguese, beginning with a voyage to Porto Santo off the coast of West Africa in 1418, were the first Europeans to promote overseas exploration and colonization.<sup>1</sup> Though initially lagging behind the Portuguese in the arts of navigation and exploration, the Spanish quickly closed that gap.<sup>2</sup> Soon other European nations were also competing. The Spanish, Portuguese, French and English colonization of North America was but one

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1 "The United States of America: History" *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1985), vol. 29, p. 203.

2 *Ibid.*

chapter in the larger story of European expansion and colonization through out the globe.

### **The New World**

During the decades following Columbus' voyages to America, first in the Caribbean and then in conquest of New Spain and Peru, the Spanish captured the imagination and the envy, of the European world.<sup>3</sup> By 1500, when Pedro Alvares Cabral stumbled across the coast of Brazil en-route to India, Portuguese influence expanded to the New World as well.<sup>4</sup> Beginning in the early 16 century, French fishermen established an outpost in Newfoundland, and in 1534 Jacques Cartier began exploring the Gulf of St. Lawrence.<sup>5</sup> The English possessed a theoretical claim to the North American mainland by dint of the 1497 voyage of John Cabot off the coast of Nova Scotia.<sup>6</sup>

The territory represented by the continental United States had, of course, been discovered, *perhaps several times*<sup>7</sup>, before the voyages of Columbus. When Columbus arrived in 1492, he found the New World inhabited by people who in all likelihood had originally come from Asia. Probably these first inhabitants had arrived 10,000 to 30,000 years ago by way of the Bering Strait. By the time the white man appeared, the aborigines had spread and occupied all portions of the New World.<sup>8</sup>

### **Where did the Indians Go?**

At the time of Columbus' arrival there were probably roughly 1,500,000 Indians in what is now the continental United States. Their number varies greatly.<sup>9</sup>

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3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 See infra pages 11-13, for a few available pieces of evidence that suggest that the African and Moorish Muslims had several trading voyages to America before Columbus "discovered" the "New World".

8 "The United States of America: History", *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 203.

9 *Ibid.*

Only the American Indians, can truly be called native, and they have been least integrated into US society. The Indian population is concentrated in Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, California, and North Carolina.<sup>10</sup>

### **The WASP America Turning White**

The population of the United States is probably the most widely diverse as compared to nation in the world. The “old-stock” American population, until about 1860 was relatively homogeneous. It was overwhelmingly WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestants). The majority had come originally from the British Isles. Of the 5,000,000 European immigrants who had entered the United States between 1820 and 1860, nine out of 10 were from England, Ireland, or Germany...<sup>11</sup>

Colonial political leaders assumed not only that Americans would continue to be white, but that most would continue to be Protestants of British origin.<sup>12</sup> America’s first naturalization act — passed in 1790 — allowed [also only] all “free white persons” who swore an oath of allegiance to the Constitution to become citizens after a two-year period of residency in the United States (one of those spent wholly in one state).<sup>13</sup>

By the mid-1800s, however, that assumption was vanishing beneath a wave of Irish-Catholic and German immigration.<sup>14</sup> With the exception of some of the Irish Roman Catholics, these early immigrants, many of whom were barely distinguishable from the native stock, were easily assimilated by the English Protestants.<sup>15</sup>

After the Civil War, large numbers of immigrants began to arrive from the countries of central and south-eastern Europe; Italy, the Balkans, Poland, and Russia. This vast group of newcomers,

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10 “The United States of America: People”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 177.

11 “The United States of America: People”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p.176.

12 Ellis Cose, *A Nation of Strangers* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992), p. 11.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

15 “The United States of America: People”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 176.

some 30,000,000 of them from 1860 to 1920, flooded the US cities. Most were non-English, non-Protestant, and markedly different in culture and language from the earlier Americans.<sup>16</sup> The name ethnics was used in the early 1970s to describe the Americans of Polish, Italian, Lithuanian, Bohemian, Slovakian, and other extraction, most of whom live in the northern and Midwestern cities. They tend to be Roman Catholic and middle-class.<sup>17</sup>

### The Non-Whites

Persons with Spanish surnames make up more than 6 percent of the US population. More than half of them are of Mexican origin; the descendants of ancestors who settled in areas that were once part of Mexico. A majority of them still lives in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. Another 15 percent of the Hispanics are of Puerto Rican origin; they are concentrated in New York City. Nearly 6 percent are Cuban immigrants who have settled in or near Miami.<sup>18</sup>

Gold discovered in California would draw thousands more—from as far away as China. Politicians rationalized their Sinophobia by portraying the Chinese as “coolies,” in effect, as slaves—unfairly competing with whites—owned by a mysterious group of Chinese masters. Once the connection (however false or tenuous) to slavery was made, the identical arguments used to keep slaves out of the state could be used against the Chinese.<sup>19</sup> Now

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16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*, vol. 29, p. 177.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Ellis Cose, *A Nation of Strangers*, pp. 30-32. He adds: The anti-Chinese feelings stirred up by the politicians soon spread to the press and to the courts. San Francisco's *Daily Alta California*, the state's most influential newspaper, ran an editorial in 353 arguing that Chinese, “morally a far worse class to have among us than Negro, were unfit for citizenship and should be permitted no more privileges than Africans or Americans blacks” (*Daily Alta California*, May 21, 1853). A few weeks later, the paper ran a front-page condemnation of “semi-human Asiatic” who had brought about a “degradation and reduction of the price of labour” (*Daily Alta California*, July 29, 1853) and suggested that eventually the Chinese might have to be removed by force. Around the same time, a state appellate court judge invalidated the conviction of a white man who had killed a Chinese, citing a recently enacted California statute that prohibited blacks, mulattoes, and Indians (and by extension, reasoned the judge, Chinese) from providing against whites.

persons of primarily Japanese, Chinese and Filipino origin, the great majority of whom live in the cities of California and Hawaii make up the Oriental population of the United States.<sup>20</sup>

Following the Civil War, blacks were also granted naturalization and citizenship rights.<sup>21</sup> Some of the earliest people who reached America with the “explores” and possibly some even came before Columbus<sup>22</sup>. But a great majority was brought as slaves by the colonialists. In 1993 the blacks made up 12.6% of the total population of USA.<sup>23</sup>

### **Limiting Naturalization to Whites**

By limiting naturalization to whites, the first Congress of the United States made generations of judges into arbiters of racial purity. Time and again, would be Americans of various hues — Mexicans, Japanese, Armenians, East Indians — were forced to be certified as “white” or as exceptions to the rule. As recently as the 1940s, trials of whiteness were still being held.<sup>24</sup>

The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, by eliminating all racial restrictions to naturalization, brought such judicial race reckoning to an end. Shortly thereafter, the civil-rights movement made unacceptable the very concept of blanket prohibitions based

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20 “The United States of America: People”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 178.

21 Ellis Cose, p. 11.

22 See infra pages 11-13, for a few available pieces of evidence that support this claim.

23 US Government, Department of Commerce: 1993, p. 19

24 Ellis Cose, p. 209. In 1942, a federal district court in Michigan denied citizenship to Yemen native Ahmed Hassan (in large part because of the petitioner’s “undisputedly dark brown” skin), declaring, “The court is of the opinion that when one seeking citizenship is in fact clearly not white of skin a strong burden of proof devolves upon him to establish that he is a white person within the meaning of the act.” (in re Ahmed Hassan, No. 162148, District Court, E.D. Michigan, S.D., decided Dec. 15, 1942, cf., Ellis Cose, p. 209). Two years later, a federal district court in Massachusetts ruled on the same question when Mohamed Mohriez, also an Arab, applied for naturalization. In the light of Ahmed Hassan’s case, the Massachusetts court felt compelled to defend its opposite conclusion: “Both the learned and the unlearned would compare the Arabs with the Jews towards whose naturalization every American Congress since the first has been avowedly sympathetic. . . . Indeed, to earlier centuries as to the twentieth century, the Arab people stand as one of the chief channels by which the traditions of white Europe, especially the ancient Greek traditions, have been carried into, the present.” (Ex parte Mohriez, No. 1500, District court, D. Massachusetts, decided April 13, 1944, cf., Ellis Cose, p. 209-210).

exclusively on race. Nothing, however, could speedily undo two centuries of tradition and legal and legislative history that rationalized (by blaming racism on its victims) the Founding Fathers' decision in making race—the key standard for judging prospective Americans. Excluding Asians from citizenship was not discrimination, went the rationale, if they were inherently inassimilable—just as enslaving blacks was not a denial of freedom, if slavery were all they were fit for.<sup>25</sup> In the words of John Kincannon:

The American Declaration of Independence noted, “All men [Italics are by the current author] are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

[But] For hundreds of years, the new generation of immigrants has attempted to slam the door on the next generation denouncing them as inassimilable and unable to absorb “American values.” The English felt this way about the Scotch-Irish who in turn felt this way about the Catholic Irish who in turn distrusted the Italians who, in their turn, felt that Americans could never assimilate Slavs from Eastern Europe. All these groups harboured profound suspicions of “inscrutable” Japanese and Chinese immigrants who could never be assimilated and whose grandchildren now dominate admissions to Cal Tech and UC-Berkeley.

I would argue that the single most important thing that has occurred in these last two hundred plus years of American history is that we have both developed an expanded understanding of what it means to be “equal” and to “enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” as well as extending this social contract to women, African-American, Hispanics, the poor, people of differing sexual orientations, and other groups previously disenfranchised from the compact of the Founding Fathers.<sup>26</sup>

### **A Pluralistic Society**

The United States is not homogeneous; it is a pluralistic society, a nation of groups.<sup>27</sup> During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century a strong

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25 Ellis Cose, p.210.

26 John Kincannon, Public Officer, US Embassy, “Islamabad, America in the 21st Century” inaugural address at the occasion of 6 American Studies Conference, organized by Area Study Centre, Quaid-i Azam University, Islamabad, March 20-21, 2002.

27 “The United States of America: People”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 176.

trend among minorities (primarily among blacks and white ethnics) to organize groups to press for social change made the American people increasingly conscious of the characteristics of the various ethnic and racial groups that make up the national population.<sup>28</sup>

According to Britannica, thus, the long cherished belief that the United States has been a great “melting pot” in which people from all nations and cultures have blended into what are called “Americans” is in many respects a myth.<sup>29</sup> In my humble submission, it all depends on the nature of the expected function of “melting pot” and how “being American” is defined.

### **The Minority Groups Deprived of “American Dream”**

The traditional ideal of US society had characterized the nation as a democratic “land of opportunity,” in which social, political, economic, and religious freedom prevail, one person is as good as another, and individuals can achieve their goals if only they work hard enough. A shared belief in such egalitarian ideals is often seen, as being perhaps the strongest bond that has united Americans, and the fact the ethnic groups had not achieved equality troubled many Americans.<sup>30</sup> Economic uncertainty and social tensions and divisions among its citizens were the major causes of discontentment, according to several surveys. Many Americans perceived these problems as caused by the failure of society to extend what is traditionally called the “American dream” equally to its entire people, particularly to those who were members of minority groups.<sup>31</sup>

## **II RELIGION IN AMERICA**

### **Propagation of Christianity Among the “Savages”**

One of the declared purposes of the English trading company chartered to colonize Virginia was the propagation of Christianity among the “savages” and from the first this mission was kept in

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28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*, vol.29, p.176

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

view. The civil and ecclesiastical authorities alike, who both took an oath of allegiance to the crown, were drawn from the conservatives in the Church of England. The new English Bibles, combined with the old Catholic ritual modified under the “Elizabethan settlement”, seemed to satisfy all parties. They were content with the general supervision of the bishop of London, there being no resident bishops in the colonies, and with the ultimate authority of the crown, at least in spiritual matters. The College of William and Mary was founded in 1693, and by the Revolution half the clergy of Virginia were its graduates. The other half was supplied by the bishop of London.<sup>32</sup>

Totally different from the Virginia conservatives were the Puritans in Massachusetts. These radical Calvinists disapproved of the doctrines and practices of the Church of England and could not accept the harsh measures taken by James I to enforce the Act of Uniformity. The first group, who arrived in Plymouth in 1620, were Separatists, extreme Puritans [Pilgrims who had left the Church of England to found their own church in the New World]. The second much larger, group, who arrived in Massachusetts Bay in 1630 with a royal charter, was that of Puritans.<sup>33</sup>

The Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, like the Pilgrims, sailed to America principally to free themselves from religious restraints. Unlike the Pilgrims, the Puritans did not desire to “separate” themselves from the Church of England but, rather, hoped by their example to reform it.<sup>34</sup> At first the Puritans in Salem accepted two Anglican clergymen, but the principle that every congregation had the right to call and ordain its own minister was soon recognized. Harvard (1636) and Yale (1702) colleges were founded to train men for the ministry.<sup>35</sup>

The Middle Colonies were settled by a number of religiously diversified groups: English Friends (Quakers), Welsh Calvinists,

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32 Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion”, *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 552.

33 *Ibid.*

34 “The United States of America: History”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 205.

35 Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion” *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 552.



Dutch Calvinists (Dutch Reformed Church), Swedish Lutherans, and Germans, including Lutheran and Reformed Protestants, Mennonites, Moravians, and Brethren (Dunkers). Under Lord Baltimore and his son, both Roman Catholics and Protestants settled in Maryland, with toleration for all Christians guaranteed by the Toleration Act of 1649.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Arrival of the Jews**

Sephardic Jews went to New Amsterdam [New York] in 1654, although there is record of individual Jewish traders arriving earlier in the English colonies notwithstanding the prohibition of Jewish settlement there. Some small groups were from Holland. But in the 18<sup>th</sup> century they went from England or by way of England from the Continent, especially from Germany and, after 1772, from Poland. Newport, R.I. was the leading colonial centre of Jewish life. Other congregations were in New York, Charleston, and Philadelphia.<sup>37</sup>

### **Religious Diversity**

From the early colonial period, the diversity of colonial settlements produced diversity in American religion. Protestant and Catholic, dissenting and established, evangelistic and ceremonies, “enthusiastic” and educated-all varieties of western European Christianity were brought to American shores.<sup>38</sup> American religious development, during the past three centuries and more, has been marked by several characteristics that distinguish it from religion in European countries. One is pluralism, or sectarianism, the result of many groups of colonists and later immigrants seeking, along with economic independence, religious liberty from some national church in Europe.<sup>39</sup>

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36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*

38 Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion”, *Encyclopaedia Americana* (Danbury, CT: Grolier Inc., 1984), vol. 27, p. 552.

39 *Ibid.* See also, “The United States of America: History”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p.204, it states: During the settlement era [sixteenth and seventeenth centuries], once it was proven that America was a suitable place for settlement, Englishmen would travel to those particular colonies that promised to free them from religious persecution.

America, thus, has been rich in religious diversity ever since colonial times. A closer look at the 500 years of the history of America, however, reveals that the religious diversity has not come by easy and the major credit for the religious diversity goes not as such to religious tolerance but to vast empty lands. Though, from the beginning of the period of colonial settlement, America attracted devotees of a huge array of faiths—Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Roman Catholics, and Jews—all in search of religious freedom.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, at the time of the American Revolution, an estimated 98 percent of Americans were Protestant.<sup>41</sup> That was no accident. For many of those Protestants so feared pollutions from competing sects that they refused to sanction Religious freedom for others, and America had become not so much a haven for the world's theologically oppressed as a refuge for dissenting Protestants.<sup>42</sup> They set the basic character of national life and often treated as guests, sometimes unwelcome ones, the millions of later Roman Catholic and Jewish arrivals.<sup>43</sup>

### **Correction or Expulsion**

The early Congregationalists, as the Puritans came to be called, did not believe in religious toleration.<sup>44</sup> One of the recurring problems facing the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was to be the tendency of some, in their desire to free themselves from the alleged corruption of the Church of England, to espouse “separatist” doctrine. When these tendencies or any other hinting of deviation from orthodox Puritan doctrine developed, those holding them were either quickly corrected or expelled from the colony.<sup>45</sup> They expelled two men for holding a service in

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40 Ellis Cose, p. 17.

41 Benjamin Hart, “The Wall That Protestantism Built: The Religious Reasons for the Separation of Church and State” in *Policy Review*, [Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation], (Fall 1988).

42 Ellis Cose, p.17.

43 Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion”, *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p.557. Emphasis is added.

44 Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion”, *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 552.

45 “The United States of America: History”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 205.

accordance with the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and later Antinomian radical Anne Hutchinson and the liberal Roger Williams<sup>46</sup> were also expelled. The leaders of the Massachusetts Bay enterprise never intended their colony to be an outpost of toleration in the New World; rather they intended it to be a “Zion in the wilderness,” a model of purity and orthodoxy, with all backsliders subject to immediate correction.<sup>47</sup>

### **Restrictive Policies Continue**

During the early seventeenth century, Massachusetts Puritans prohibited anyone from settling without permission and limited the vote and all political power to fellow believers.<sup>48</sup> The Rev. Thomas Hooker, who had arrived in Massachusetts Bay in 1633, soon found himself in opposition to the colony’s restrictive policy regarding the admission of church members and to the oligarchic power of the leaders of the colony.<sup>49</sup> [Consequently] Thomas Hooker and John Wareham removed their Congregational parishes to Connecticut.<sup>50</sup> Connecticut, which did not limit suffrage to any specific sect, denied it to Quakers and atheists. Over the ensuing decades, Virginia, South Carolina, and several other colonies prohibited non-Protestants from full membership in their communities.<sup>51</sup>

Roger Williams, the man closely associated with the founding of Rhode Island, also fled Massachusetts Bay for Providence in 1636 because of his objections to the arbitrary nature of Massachusetts government. Williams, however, was in some ways more rigid in his approach to religious polity than those Puritans he criticized. In 1639 William Cardington, another dissenter in Massachusetts, settled his congregation in Newport. Four years

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46 Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion”, *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 552.

47 “The United States of America: History”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 205.

48 Thomas J. Curran, *Xenophobia and Immigration, 1820-1939* (Boston: Dwayne Publishers, 1975), pp.12-15.

49 “The United States of America: History”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 205.

50 Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion”, *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 552.

51 Thomas J. Curran, *Xenophobia and Immigration, 1820-1939*, pp. 12-15.

later Samuel Gorton, another minister banished from Massachusetts Bay because of his differences with the ruling oligarchy, settled in Shawomet (later renamed Warwick).<sup>52</sup>

In case of Virginia, as dissenters from the Church of England moved into the colony, the vestries of the Established Church, acting as county officials, taxed them to support the parishes and the poor. Quakers were banished when they refused to bear arms in the face of the ever-present threat of Indian massacres. Itinerant Baptist ministers were arrested for preaching without a license. On the other hand, French Huguenots and German Protestants were permitted to organize their own congregations and were released for a time from all taxes payable to the established Church. Scotch-Irish Presbyterians were welcomed by the governor to the Shenandoah Valley. Hanover parish, near Richmond, built a chapel for dissenters and paid the dissenting minister.<sup>53</sup>

Even Maryland, founded as a refuge for persecuted Catholics<sup>54</sup>, early on discovered liberalism had limits—and in 1654 repealed the [famous] Toleration Act passed five years earlier to safeguard the Catholic minority.<sup>55</sup> Three and a half decades later [in 1718], Maryland restricted entry of Irish-Catholic servants<sup>56</sup>, as did South Carolina and Virginia.<sup>57</sup>

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52 “The United States of America: History”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 205.

53 Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion”, *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 552.

54 George Calvert (Lord Baltimore) had been an investor in a number of colonizing schemes before being given a grant of land [Maryland] from the crown in 1632. The colony was intended to serve at least two purposes. Lord Baltimore, a Roman Catholic, was anxious to found a colony where Catholics could live in peace, but he was also eager to see his colony yield him as large a profit as possible. See, “The United States of America: History”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 204.

55 From the outset [in Maryland] Protestants outnumbered Catholics, although a few prominent Catholics tended to own an inordinate share of the land in the colony. Despite this favouritism in the area of land policy, Lord Baltimore was for the most part a good and fair administrator. (*Ibid.*) To protect the Catholic the famous Toleration Act was adopted in 1649. But as a result of Puritan pressure during the English Civil War, toleration was limited and then abolished in 1692. See, Martin E. Marty, “United States: Religion”, *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 552.

56 Following the accession of William and. Mary to the English throne, however, control of the colony was taken away from the Calvert family and entrusted to the royal government. Shortly thereafter the crown decreed that Anglicanism would be the established religion of the colony. In 1715, after the Calvert family had

### Persecution and Violence

Each colony, of course, made its own rules (subject to the restrictions of its charter and the power of its governor) and not all were so distrustful of competing faiths. After Roger Williams and his Anabaptist followers were expelled from Massachusetts, they founded a colony at Providence dedicated to accepting others.<sup>58</sup> And when the Quakers, considered heretics in New England, were whipped, mutilated, and ordered to leave, they found compassion and shelter in Rhode Island. Similarly Pennsylvania, founded by Quaker William Penn, was a committed sanctuary from religious persecution. Yet even the most liberal colonies harboured a deep suspicion of Catholicism, a religion with all the trappings of a rival political sovereignty.<sup>59</sup> So despite the colonists' heightened sensitivity issues only in Rhode Island did Catholics enjoy full religious and political rights.<sup>60</sup>

Such attitudes set the stage for major problems of Catholic assimilation. Americans greeted the European inflow [mid-eighteenth century] with less than ecstasy, both because of the ever-increasing size of the migration and because its composition was jarringly different from earlier waves. Previously the majority of those from Ireland had been Scotch-Irish Protestants with an interest in staying in farming. The heavily Catholic newcomers gravitated toward urban areas.<sup>61</sup> They also struck some American as less genteel and generally less desirable than those who had come before. A series of violent clashes in the early 1830s between Irish Labourers and railroad officials led to the deaths of two

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renounced Catholicism and embraced Anglicanism, the colony reverted back to a proprietary form of government. See, "The United States of America: History" in *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 205. In 1718, Roman Catholics were disfranchised. There were no resident bishops, and Catholics migrated to other colonies. See, Martin E. Marty, "United States: Religion" in *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 552.

57 Ellis Cose, p. 17.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

59 Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration*, (Cambridge: Mass Harvard University Press, 1951), pp.34-35.

60 Ray Allen Belington, *The Protestant Crusade*, (New York: Macmillan, 1938), pp.6-9.

61 See Williams F. Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1980), 273-83.

deputy superintendents of construction near the District of Columbia and drove one citizens' group to pass a resolution declaring "the present class of Irish labourers employed on the Baltimore and Washington railroad... a gang of ruffians and murderers".<sup>62</sup> Around the same time, the Massachusetts legislature urged enactment of a federal anti-pauperism statute. A group of New Yorkers, fretting over the newcomers' religious orientation, established the Protestant, a weekly newspaper that later evolved into a magazine, for the purpose of inculcating "Gospel doctrines against Romish corruptions"<sup>63</sup>. Similar anti-Catholic publications sprouted in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and elsewhere. The phenomenal immigrant-driven growth of the Catholic Church—from seventy thousand in the entire country in 1807 to one of the largest religious groups in the nation forty years later— fuelled a growing sense of unease among many Protestant Americans.<sup>64</sup> Rumours abounded concerning Catholic priests who allegedly raped nuns and committed other atrocities.<sup>65</sup>

In response to a complaint that Protestant Bibles were being forced on Catholic schoolchildren in Philadelphia, the school board ruled that parents could approve the Bible from which their children were read. Angered by the decision, the American Protestant Association held a huge public gathering in Philadelphia's Independence Square. Shortly thereafter, Americans Republicans convened a meeting in a largely Irish suburb of

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62 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

63 Ray Allen Belington, *The Protestant Crusade*, p. 53.

64 *Ibid.*

65 Thomas J. Curran, *Xenophobia and Immigration, 1820-1939*, P. 26. In 1834, a nun apparently suffering from overwork fled the Ursuline order in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and subsequently returned. Word soon spread that the woman was being held against her will, and a mob burned the convent to the ground. Eight were arrested but no one was convicted for the crime. The following year saw publication of *Six Months in a Convent*, a best-seller that purported to be the memoir of one Rebecca Reed that detailed her escape from a life of Ursuline corruption. Shortly thereafter, the even more lurid *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* was published by Maria Monk, a Protestant who had converted to Catholicism and then gone to a nunnery, where she supposedly discovered that nuns either submitted to priests' sexual demands or were murdered. The children of such assignations, said Monk, were killed, and their bodies disposed of in a huge hole in the basement of the nunnery. Ray Allen Belington, *The Protestant Crusade*, pp. 71-89.

Philadelphia. The gathering was disrupted by neighbourhood residence, but the party defiantly scheduled a second to protest “assaults of aliens and foreigners.” A sniper fired upon the attendees, killing one and setting off several days of riots. Anti-papists marched on the suburb, burning homes and torching two Catholic churches. Later that year, anti-immigrants activities set off a second round of riots that led to battles between Irish immigrants and the state militia and resulted in the deaths of two militiamen and numerous civilians.<sup>66</sup>

They [“Know-Nothing”] also wanted political offices kept in the hands of native-born Protestants, reasoning that Catholicism’s insistence on fealty to a foreign pope could endanger America’s freedoms and institutions.<sup>67</sup> Events, seemed to corroborate Know-Nothing warnings of the foreign threat. The archbishop of New York, for instance, went on record describing the Catholic Church’s objective as the conversion of “all Pagan nations, and all Protestant nations”.<sup>68</sup>

The Mormon Church was founded in Fayette, New York, in 1830 and from the beginning had gathered its members together in religious, social, and economic cooperation. In Kirtland, Ohio; Jackson county, Missouri; and Nauvoo, Illinois, the Mormons had grown rapidly, but wary neighbours eventually forced their removal from each such gathering place. From Nauvoo, which the Mormons had built up from Mississippi River swampland into a prosperous community, some 16,000 Mormons” escaped violent mobs in 1846 by fleeing across Iowa to Council Bluffs. When wagonloads of Mormon pioneers under the leadership of Brigham Young first entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847, they were determined to transform the arid valley land into a green and wholesome “Kingdom of God”.<sup>69</sup>

In December of 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant expelled all Jews from his Department of Tennessee domain, apparently blaming them for illicit cotton trading through Union lines. The

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66 *Ibid.*, pp. 220-234.

67 Thomas J. Curran, *Xenophobia and Immigration, 1820-1939*, p. 59; Ellis Cose, p.33.

68 Ray Allen Belington, *The Protestant Crusade*, p. 291.

69 “The United States of America: History”, *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, P. 434.

order did not reflect official Union policy but simply Grant's anti-Semitism, and it was soon rescinded on Lincoln's instructions.<sup>70</sup>

### **Separation of Church and State**

The existence of people of different European backgrounds, combined with the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state, has helped gradually that various religious bodies develop freely on an equal civil footing. Nevertheless, the dominant majority of the church going population in the past was white Protestant.<sup>71</sup> By the 1950's, however, the situation had changed. White Protestants remained a majority, but they no longer were dominant. According to Will Herberg in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955), at least three large faith-clusters shared almost equally in helping shape the American way of life. A society exposed to radio and television and accustomed to geographic and social mobility was becoming increasingly familiar with the Catholic, Jewish, and other American subcultures.<sup>72</sup> In my humble submission the idea that "All men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights" the spirit of The American Declaration of Independence was instrumental in gradual minimization of the religious narrow mindedness and intolerance, though it has not completely eliminated it yet.

Despite the overall trend toward secularity, almost every decade has seen more people attending and supporting churches and synagogues. This trend crested in the 1950's, reflecting the post-World War II religious revival. A slight decline followed in the 1960's and 1970's, especially in Catholic and main-line Protestant churches. Fundamentalist and evangelical churches, however, steadily increased.<sup>73</sup>

At the same time, many Americans turned to Eastern religions, attracted by their exotic ritual, sophisticated metaphysics, or

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70 John Hingham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955), p.13.

71 Martin E. Marty, "United States: Religion", *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 557.

72 *Ibid.*

73 *Ibid.*, vol. 27, p.559.



practice of meditation. Until the 1960's only a few intellectuals propagated these non-biblical faiths. Hinduism and Buddhism, especially the Zen variety, became popular among college students. Many Americans flocked to join Vedanta societies, the hare Krishna movement, and other followers of Hindu gurus, Zen centres, or the militant Japanese Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai. Other Americans gained new appreciation of American Indian religious emphasizing tribal community and respect for the world of nature.<sup>74</sup>

Some Americans, concerned that these many religious expressions might cancel one another out, advocated a civil religion that regarded the American political tradition with a kind of religious awe; They did not found new churches but merely emphasized those religious expressions that were already part of public life, such as the national motto ("In God We Trust"), the pledge of allegiance to the flag (revised in 1954 to "one nation under God"), and the military chaplaincy.<sup>75</sup>

Despite the interest in non-Western and other religions, the majority of religious Americans remained within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Nearly a quarter of the U.S. population are Roman Catholics, and about 6,000,000 are Jews. Nine out of 10 churches in the United States, however, are Protestant, with the largest groups being the Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, and members of the Churches of Christ. Many of the others can be grouped into such families as Adventist, Brethren, Churches of God, Churches of the New Jerusalem, Eastern, Friends, Latter Day Saints, Mennonite, Moravian, Old Catholic, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Reformed, River Brethren, and United Brethren. There are well over 1200 religious bodies within the United States. A number of them, however, including the Disciple of Christ (1809), Mormons (1830), Seventh-Day Adventists (1863), Jehovah's Witnesses (1872) and Christian Scientists (1875) have been called uniquely American.<sup>76</sup>

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74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*

### III THE MUSLIM EXPERIENCE

#### The First Muslims in the Americas

Despite the perception that Muslims are among the most recent immigrants to North America, research has shown that Islam has had a long history in this continent. In writing the history of Islam in the United States of America one must pay attention to the fragmented data available to those studying and reconstructing this past. This period is ridden with controversy because all the parties to the debate do not universally accept the evidence. But regardless of how one may feel about the evidence, the fact remains that Muslims or persons believed to be Muslims visited this part of the world in pre-Colombian past.<sup>77</sup>

In 1312 Mansa Abu Bakr of Mali is believed to have travelled from the Senegambian region of the African coast to the Gulf of Mexico. This account, which has captured the attention of distinguished scholars such as Basil Davidson of Britain and others in Africa, America and Europe, came to us by way of the writings of [Ibn Fadl Allah] al-Omari, a Muslim historian whose work has shed much light on medieval African kingdoms in the sub-Saharan regions of the African continent.<sup>78</sup> This piece of historical evidence received support indirectly from the writings of Leo Wiener, the Harvard University professor who wrote a tome on Africa and the Discovery of America.<sup>79</sup> His book<sup>80</sup> provides data on ethno-linguistic connections between certain peoples of the West African coast and the native Americans living in the Gulf of Mexico region

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77 Sulayman S. Nyang, *Islam in the United States of America* (Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc., 1999), p. 12; Abdullah Hakim Quick, *Deeper Roots: Muslims in the Americas and the Caribbean From Before Columbus to the Present* (London, England: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 1996), pp.13-37.

78 Sulayman S. Nyang, *Islam in the United States of America*, p. 12; Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery* (Beltsville, MD: Printers Inc., 1995), p. 36; Basil Davidson, *Lost Cities of Africa* (Boston: Little Brown, 1959), pp. 74-75. This story of an African visit to the New World in pre-Columbian times is based on Chapter Ten of Ibn Fadl Allah al-Omari's *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar* (Cairo, c.1342 AHT). The Arabic original was translated and published in Paris by Gaudefroy Demombynes in 1927.

79 Sulayman S. Nyang, *Islam in the United States of America*, p. 12.

80 Leo Wiener, *Africa and the Discovery of America* (Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1922)

of the Americas. Though Leo Wiener's study was not accorded the much needed attention by his contemporaries, towards the end of the nineteen seventies another scholar by the name of Ivan Van Sertima of Rutgers University in New Jersey was reminding his colleagues in the academy that there were indeed other people who came to America before Columbus.<sup>81</sup>

Barbara J. Bilge in her article "Islam in the Americas" writes: The identity of the first Muslims to set foot on American soil is unknown. Evidence suggesting that Muslims from Spain and West Africa arrived before Columbus is ambiguous but cannot be discounted. It is recorded, for example, that in the mid-tenth century, Muslims of African origin who ruled Spain and adjacent North Africa sailed westward from Cordova into the "Ocean of Fog" and returned after a long absence with much booty from a "strange and curious land".<sup>82</sup>

Adib Rashad writes: The available evidence also shows that Muslim navigators arrived in the New World from Africa and Spain. This is supported by Arab coins found off the coast of South America dating back to 800 A.D. These voyages, over time, involved about 2,400 ships. Once these Muslims reached the Americas, they established trading posts. They also introduced the West African gold trade into the Americas as well as the art of alloying gold with copper and silver. Furthermore, they introduced the cotton trade and the art of making cotton into the Americas. Most importantly, they always exhibited an Islamic demeanour. Many of them settled in the Americas and attempted to name or rename the areas in which they settled after important localities in West Africa, which were under the reign of the emperors of Mali.<sup>83</sup>

Abdullah Hakim Quick reports that Arab geographer al-Idrisi (1100-1166), in *The Geography of al-Idrisi*, wrote about Muslim

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81 Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came before Columbus*, (New York: Random House, 1976); Sulayman S. Nyang, *Islam in the United States of America*, p. 12.

82 Barbara J. Bilge, "Islam in the Americas", *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company), vol. 7, pp.425-426.

83 Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, pp. 31-32.

sailors who ventured from Lisbon to the Caribbean and were met by native people who could speak Arabic.<sup>84</sup>

This piece of historical evidence received support indirectly from the fact that the famous Muslim philosopher, astronomer, historian, mathematician, and geographer al-Biruni (d. ca. 1050) had come to conclusion that there are four sections of the earth, of which two sections are water and two sections are land, thus there must exist another section of land opposite to this one.<sup>85</sup>

Adib Rashad adds: Several scholars, including Dr. T. B. Irving, Kofi Wangara (Harold Lawrence), Clyde-Ahmad Winters, Dr.Ivan Sertima, Philp Curtin, John Ralph Willis, and Professor Joao Jose Reis now agree that African Muslims (Moors and Manding) came to the Americas at least 180 years before Columbus. These scholars have presented unearthed evidence from sculptures, artefacts, eyewitness accounts, oral traditions, and inscriptions.<sup>86</sup>

Barbara J. Bilge in her article "Islam in the Americas" adds: Although people of Muslim origin are known to have accompanied Columbus and subsequent Spanish explorers to the New World, their religious affiliation at the time of the voyages was not recorded and thus is open to question.<sup>87</sup> Rashad says: It is also documented that Columbus obtained his information about the Americas from African Muslims. In addition, the Spanish had recognized, from various written and oral accounts that African Muslims were residing in the Americas. Similarly, Vasco de Gama is said to have received information concerning the West Indies from an African Muslim named Ahmad Majid whom he met along the West Coast of Africa.<sup>88</sup>

Several writers, including Carter G. Woodson and (more recently) Emily Kalled Lovell, have written that: It was the "Moors" among the Spanish conquistadors who introduced Islam

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84 Abdullah Hakim Quick, *Deeper Roots: Muslims in the Americas and the Caribbean from Before Columbus to the Present*, pp.13-37.

85 Al-Biruni, *Kitab al-Hind*.

86 Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, p. 31.

87 Barbara J. Bilge, "Islam in the Americas", *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 7, p.426.

88 Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, p. 32.

to the New World.<sup>89</sup> Bilge records: Granada, the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, fell to the Christians in 1492, just before the Spanish Inquisition was launched. Many non-Christians fled or embraced Catholicism to escape persecution.<sup>90</sup> Emily Kalled Love!!, have written that the first Muslim in America was a black Spanish conquistador named Estevanico (or Little Stephen), who arrived in Arizona during 1539.<sup>91</sup> Woodson credits him with being the first non-native to “discover” what is now the American southwest. The second recorded Muslim to reach America was Hajj Ali-Hi Jolly, who worked in Arizona and California as an experimental camel breeder.<sup>92</sup>

### **What Happened to the Early Muslims?**

Bilge records: At least two documents imply the presence of Muslims in Spanish America before 1550. A decree issued in 1539 by Charles V, king of Spain, forbade migration to the West Indies of the grandsons of Muslims who had been burned at the stake. It was evidently ineffective, for when it was ratified in 1543, an order for the expulsion of all Muslims from overseas Spanish territories was published simultaneously.<sup>93</sup>

Rashad writes: The plan to stop Islam from reaching the American continent is recorded in the first document concerning the importation of Black slaves into the Western Hemisphere issued by King Fernando the Catholic, on September 16, 1501. He gave general instructions to Sir Nicolas Ovando, the newly appointed Governor of the Indies, enjoining him “not to allow to enter into the colonies” any Muslims; but to permit to come Black slaves, “with the condition that they be born under Christian power.”<sup>94</sup>

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89 Samory Rashid, “Islamic Aspects of the Legacy of Malcolm X”, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Volume 10, Number I (Spring 1993), p. 66.

90 Barbara J. Bilge, “Islam in the Americas”, *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 7, p. 426.

91 Lovell, Emily Kalled, “Islam in the United States: Past and Present”, *The Muslim Community in North America*, Eds. Earle H. Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban, and Regula B. Qureshi (Edmonton, Alberta: Univ. of Alberta Press, 1983), 94.

92 Samory Rashid, “Islamic Aspects of the Legacy of Malcolm X”, p. 67.

93 Barbara J. Bilge, “Islam in the Americas”, *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 7, p. 426.

94 Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, p. 32.

### Muslim Slaves in America

Islam is not new to the New World. Evidence suggests that Muslims from Africa and Spain reached America long before Columbus brought Christianity; and it has been said that perhaps as many as one-fifth of the slaves brought to the Americas were educated in the Maliki principles of Islam. West African Muslims from the Berber-, Wolof-, and Mande-speaking tribes and Sudanic Muslims from the Hausa, Fulani, and Yoruba peoples practiced Islam surreptitiously during slavery in North and South America and the West Indies.<sup>95</sup> This account by Steven Barboza is aided by Barbara Bilge, She writes: Of the hundreds of thousand of slaves brought from West Africa by the Spaniards, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British between 1530 and 1850 [ and even before] to work in mines or on plantations in the American colonies, about 14 to 20 percent were Muslims. Among them were Mande- and Wolof-speaking villagers from the Senegal coast and upper Niger River, Hausa peasants and artisans from the oasis towns south of the Sahara, and Fulbe herders from the western savannas of the Sudan. Many enslaved Muslims were highly educated and literate in Arabic. These Afro-Muslims were Sunni and adhered to Maliki legal interpretations. Though they spoke diverse, mutually unintelligible native languages, they could communicate with one another by reciting prayers and sayings in Arabic.<sup>96</sup>

Leslie B. Rout Jr. has utilized Spanish terminology to describe certain slaves who were accepted or prohibited from entering the Western Hemisphere, based on the declaration of these royal decrees:

A 1522 rebellion of bondsmen in Santo Domingo touched of a review of royal policy, and the conclusion was that a combination of Muslim-influenced *gelofes* and disgruntled *ladinos* had been responsible for this frightening to white authority. The further shipment of either *ladinos* or *gelofes* to America was therefore declared an illegal action. The prohibition was followed by decrees on 25 February 1530 and 13 September 1532 that specifically proscribed the dispatch of any White, Moorish, Jewish, or *ladino*

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95 Steven Barboza, *American Jihad: Islam after Malcolm X*, (New York: Doubleday, 1993), pp. 9-10.

96 Barbara J. Bilge, "Islam in the Americas", *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.7, p. 426.

slave to the Indies. Only African *bozales* who were not *gelofes* were to be disembarked because they were considered “peaceful and obedient”.<sup>97</sup>

Beginning in the seventeenth century, European immigrants settled in temperature zones of North and South America, but their small family farms and cattle ranches did not require a large supplementary labour force. Only in the warm, fertile lowlands of the Caribbean islands, northern South America, eastern Brazil, and the south-eastern United States was the economy built upon slave labour. Here native populations were rapidly exterminated, necessitating the importation of workers, the vast majority of whom were captives from Africa.<sup>98</sup>

### **The Fate of Muslim Slaves**

While some slave owners exploited the intellect and integrity of Muslim slaves, it was common practice for slave owners to try to break the will and spirit of the Muslim slaves.<sup>99</sup> In most cases, Muslim slaves on the plantation could not practice the Islamic religion, nor could they retain their names or pass their Islamic names onto their children, nor could they pray or teach their language or religion to their children. If they were caught doing any of these things, they could be put to death or severely punished.<sup>100</sup>

This account gains high credibility once one visualizes the prevailing religious fervour and intolerance in the colonial America, that even the famous “Act of Toleration of 1649” adopted by Maryland Assembly, granted “Toleration” only to those who professed belief in Christian religion, and a part of the same Act enforced *Death Penalty* for the Blasphemers. And Blasphemers were to include who denied Jesus to be the Son of

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97 Leslie B. Rout., Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. Xiv, 24-26.

98 Barbara J. Bilge, “Islam in the Americas”, *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 7, p.426

99 Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, p. 33.

100 *Ibid.*

God or the Holy Trinity, or the Godhead of any of the three Persons, or the Unity of the Godhead.<sup>101</sup>

The more general question of Islamic authenticity among American blacks in a matter of historical record rather than one of political debate. For example, Lincoln notes that despite stern measures to discourage such practices, “accounts persist of Muslim slaves who committed the entire Qur’an to memory in an effort to keep the faith alive and to pass it on to others”.<sup>102</sup> He concludes: “The memory of Islam, however tenuous, was never completely lost to the slave experience”.<sup>103</sup>

They [Muslim slaves] were found to have an obstinate determination for freedom and an undesirable influence on other slaves. In light of this fact, decrees were eventually passed by the United State government that no more Muslims could be brought to America enslaved.<sup>104</sup> After the influx of enslaved Africans into the southern United States during the eighteenth century, later generations of slaves were born in America. Thus, the ancestral traditions of U.S. slaves were not revitalized by a continuing stream of new arrivals from Africa. Vigorous proselytization by Anglo- Protestants missionaries pressured non-Christians slaves,

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101 The law stated: If any person whatsoever inhabiting this Province shall blaspheme, that is, curse God, deny our Saviour to be the Son of God, or deny the Holy Trinity, or the Godhead of any of the three Persons, or the Unity of the Godhead, or shall utter any reproachful words or language concerning the Holy Trinity, or any of three Persons thereof, he or she shall for the first offence be bored through the tongue, and fined 20 pounds sterling, to the king, or if the party hath not an estate sufficient to answer the sum, then to suffer six months’ imprisonment. For the second offence, he or she shall be stigmatized in the forehead, with the letter B, and fined 40 pounds sterling, (&c) or be imprisoned for one year. And for the third offence, he or she so offending and thereof legally convicted, shall suffer death, with confiscation of all their goods and cattles to the king. Beacon’s “Laws of Maryland”, chapter 16, Sec. 1, “Against Blasphemy”. Cf. William A. Blakely, ed., *American State Papers on Freedom in Religion*, 3rd edn. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1943), p. 36. Italics are added.

102 C. Eric Lincoln, “The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History”, *The Muslim Community in North America*, eds. Earle H. Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban, and Regula B. Qureshi (Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 218.

103 *Ibid.*, 219.

104 Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, p. 33.



including Muslims, to observe their faiths covertly<sup>105</sup> and fragmentarily during the nineteenth century, and few Islamic practices survive from the slave period among U.S. blacks today.<sup>106</sup>

It explains why we don't find a continuous vivid presence of Islam and Muslims in 500 years of written American history. Yet Afro-Americans who trace their genealogies often encounter Muslim ancestors, and oral histories taken from elderly blacks through the 1940s contain occasional mention of Islamic customs. Extant texts in Arabic written by Muslim slaves before the Civil War and scattered references in travelogues by European authors of the same period further confirm the once greater visibility of Islam in the southern United States.<sup>107</sup>

### **Muslim Immigrants in America: 19th and Early 20th Centuries**

Early Muslim immigrants to this country began to come in the late 1800s, primarily from the Middle East. Usually young men with no intention of settling in America, they hoped to earn enough money in this country to be able to return to their countries of origin to establish homes and families. Opportunities for employment in America were hard to come by, however, and they found themselves working as migrant labourers, peddlers, and petty traders. Some decided to homestead in places such as Ross, North Dakota, home of one of the earliest Muslim settlements. Others ended up serving as cheap labour on the railroads. For many their dreams of returning home were as futile as their hopes of earning a fortune in the new land.<sup>108</sup>

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105 For example, The Sunday desecration statute of 1671, which is a revision of previously enacted Sunday observance laws, had the death penalty attached to it for its presumptuous violation. The Puritans had thirteen religious obligations which they imposed upon the public and enforced under the death penalty. William A. Blakely, ed., *American State Papers on Freedom in Religion*, p.50.

106 Barbara J. Bilge, "Islam in the Americas", *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.7, p.426.

107 *Ibid.*

108 Yovonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, *Muslim Communities in North America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. Xvii.

### **Five Periods of Muslim immigration**

The pattern of Muslim immigration consists of five periods. From 1875 to 1912, most Ottoman Empire: Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. For the most part, those who stayed in the United States settled in urban communities, even though their backgrounds were primarily rural.<sup>109</sup>

The second and third periods, from 1918 to 1922 and 1930 to 1938, respectively, consisted mainly of relatives, friends, and acquaintances of earlier arrivals. It also included a very small number of immigrants from other parts of the Middle East and Eastern Europe.<sup>110</sup> Many who came from 1918 to 1922 had experienced the disruptive effects of World War I. Some were enticed to immigrate to the United States by reports of opportunities from returning immigrants, letters from immigrants, or Americans (including missionaries) visiting the Middle East and the Balkans.<sup>111</sup> The fourth and the fifth periods belong to the later half of the 20th century.

During the nineteenth century Muslim dignitaries and Christian merchants from the Ottoman empire visited cities in the United States to attend trade fairs, and a handful of Turks and Arabs escorted two shipments of camels purchased by the U.S. government to facilitate travel in its Southwest Territory. One of them later became a scout for the U.S. Army. The 1871 Canadian census notes thirteen "Muslims" of unknown origin, but those of 1881 and 1891 list the number of Muslims as zero. A few white American Christians converted to Sunni Islam in the 1870s and 1880s. Muhammad Alexander Webb, Jeweller, newspaper editor, and diplomat, founded the American Islamic Propaganda Movement in 1893 after his conversion to Islam while visiting

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109 Kathleen M. Moore, "Muslim Commitment in North America", *AJISS*, vol. 11, n. 2 (1994), p.227; Yvonne Y. Haddad and Adair T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Kemal Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America: 1860-1914", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No.17 (1985), pp.175-209.

110 Kathleen M. Moore, "Muslim Commitment in North America" in *AJISS*, vol. 11, n. 2 (1994), p.227; Yvonne Y. Haddad and Adair T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States*.

111 Kathleen M. Moore, "Muslim Commitment in North America", *AJISS*, vol.11, No.2 (1994), p.227.

India. He lectured extensively in the United States, wrote three books on Islam, published a periodical called *The Moslem World*, and established seven circles of the Moslem Brotherhood in eastern and Midwestern cities. He received financial support first from India, then from the Ottoman sultan, Abdul Hamid II. After Webb died in 1916, his movement evaporated.<sup>112</sup>

### **Hanafi Muslim Arabs**

Several hundred Hanafi Muslim Arabs from the Ottoman province of Syria appeared in North America between 1900 and 1914, with most arriving in 1908. A few Arabs from Morocco, the Sudan, and Yemen also came during these years. The overwhelming majority were uneducated villagers, fourteen to forty years of age, who hoped to return to their homeland after making a fortune in America. Many began their careers as wholesale traders and peddlers for Arab Christian merchants who had settled in New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia about twenty years earlier. Arab Muslims dispersed throughout the Dakotas, Minnesota, Montana, Alberta, and Manitoba. After World War I, many purchased small farms, but others were drawn to the factories of Chicago, Gary, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, where an enterprising few opened grocery stores, restaurants, coffee houses, barber shops, and funeral parlours. The majority of the men never married, violating the ideals of Islam. They feared American Christian brides would not embrace Islam or adjust well to life in the old country when they returned. Men who had married before they emigrated often never saw their wives and children again, although they sent them money regularly. Of the handful who did marry, three-quarters either found Muslim brides in the United States or managed to import brides from abroad, and the rest wed North American Christian women. Many mixed and unmixed marriages were troubles, and some ended in divorce. Lacking access to a

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112 Barbara J. Bilge, "Islam in the Americas" *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 7, p.426.

proper Islamic education, most of the tiny second generation converted to Christianity and was assimilated into the U.S. or Canadian mainstream.<sup>113</sup>

### **Turks, Kurds, Albanians, and Bosnians**

Elsewhere in the Ottoman empire, some forty thousand Turks, Kurds, Albanians, and Bosnians who were Sunni Muslims left the war-torn Balkan and eastern Anatolian provinces for the United States between 1900 and 1925. After 1920 many Albanians returned to their newly created nation in the Balkans, but most Turks, Kurds, and Serbian-speaking Bosnians found jobs in the industrial cities of the eastern seaboard and Great Lakes. Between the two world wars, a few thousand Turkish families joined their countrymen's urban enclaves or took up residence in small town of western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia.<sup>114</sup>

Detroit, the second largest Muslim centre in the United States, reflects the heterogeneous nature of Muslim settlements in North America. Founded in 1903 by a Turkish immigrant, metropolitan Detroit's Ottoman Sunni community in the 1930s boasted about two thousand persons, mostly Turks (45 percent) and Kurds (45 percent), plus a smattering of Arabs and Albanians (10 percent). They cohered as an ethnic unit despite language barriers. By 1912 they congregated to pray in the home of Detroit's first imam, an Arab from the Levantine coast. A Sudanese Arab Ford employee, the mosque's leading fundraiser, bought plots in a Detroit cemetery for the burial of Muslims who might die in Michigan. Before he returned to his homeland in the late 1920s, he organized a funeral association and established a local chapter of the Kizil Ay, or Red Crescent, the Muslim wing of the International Red Cross. Red Crescent members received booklets issued from Ankara, the capital of Turkey, with regulations in Arabic script and spaces for the placement of stamps acknowledging monthly donations.<sup>115</sup>

The Kurdish revolts of 1928 and 1936 in Turkey were echoed by schisms between Turks and Kurds in Detroit. Kurds spurned a Turkish owned coffee house, the social hub of the entire Sunni

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113 *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 427.

114 *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p.428

115 *Ibid.*

community, opened one of their own, and retained control of the Kizil Ay. In retaliation, the Turks resigned from the Kizil Ay, organized a separate funeral association, and founded the Turkiye Cocuk Esirgeme Kurumu (Turkish Orphans' Association). When the Kurdish wars subsided, Detroit Turks and Kurds frequented one another's coffee houses attended one another's funerals, and belonged to both charitable societies.<sup>116</sup>

Of the 5 percent of Detroit's Sunni men who wed, three-quarters took American Christian or Jewish wives, while the rest found Sunni Turkish or Albanian brides. While most American wives did not work outside the home, many Turkish women worked in their husband's store or found jobs elsewhere. American wives encouraged their husbands to become U.S. citizens but not to deny Islam, and they participated in the fundraising activities and holiday celebrations of the Red Crescent. Most Sunni wives did not get involved in either of their charitable organizations.<sup>117</sup>

#### **Muslims from Tsarist Russia**

Muslims from tsarist Russia, and later from the Soviet Union, also immigrated to the United States. During the first decade of the twentieth century, a few hundred Polish speaking, Sunni Tatars left Baltic Russia to make their homes in Brooklyn, New York, and some Turkic-speaking Crimean and Kazan Tatar families fled from southern Russia in the aftermath of the 1917 revolution. After World War II, Crimean Tatars who had fought in the Red Army and were captured by the Nazis came directly to America or migrated via Turkey. They clustered in New York City, adjacent New Jersey, and Chicago; elsewhere they were integrated into Turkish communities.<sup>118</sup>

#### **Day of Sacrifice ('Id al-Adha) Celebrated with a Dazzling Parade**

In the 1940s several thousand Sunnis in metropolitan New York City annually celebrated the Day of Sacrifice ('Id al-Adha) in Harlem with a dazzling parade. Men donned long robes and

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116 *Ibid.*

117 *Ibid.*

118 *Ibid.*

turbans or fezzes, and women bedecked themselves in brocades and jewels. Led by Shaykh Davud Ahmed Faisal, born on the Caribbean island of Grenada allegedly of Moroccan and Syrian parents, they included immigrants from any nations plus Afro-American converts. They intermarried freely, worshiped in private homes and rented halls, and held religious classes for children on Saturdays. Most of the year they wore ordinary clothing, and the men worked as bellboys, mechanics, janitors, factory workers, insurance agents, and businessmen.<sup>119</sup>

### **Building Masajid**

Pre-World War II Muslim immigrants in North America were a beleaguered minority in an alien, Christian world. Though they usually kept a low profile, most adhered to their faith.<sup>120</sup> Albanian Muslims founded a religious association and built a mosque in Marine in 1915 and another in Connecticut in 1919. In the 1920s, Lebanese Sunnis built a mosque in Ross, South Dakota, and in 1934, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Polish speaking Sunni Tatars constructed a mosque in Brooklyn in 1928 that is still in use today.<sup>121</sup> Canada's first mosque opened in 1938 near Edmonton; it served twenty Lebanese families, who founded the Arabian Muslim Association.<sup>122</sup>

### **Muslim Immigrants in America: Second half of 20th Century**

The fourth period, from 1947 to 1960, was more diverse as regards national origins. It consisted of immigrants from the Middle East plus South Asia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and other parts of the Muslim world. Displaced by the upheavals of the post-World War II postcolonial era, many arrivals differed from their predecessors when it came to social class: they were less likely to be unskilled or rural, for they were the children of the indigenous ruling elites and had been westernized before they arrived in the United States. Some came as refugees, to pursue

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119 *Ibid.*

120 *Ibid.*

121 *Ibid.*, Yovonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, *Muslim Communities in North America*, p.xviii.

122 Barbara J. Bilge, "Islam in the Americas", *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 7, p. 428.

graduate study or advanced technical training, or for specialized work opportunities.<sup>123</sup>

The fifth, and quantitatively the largest, period of immigration began in 1967 and continuous until the present. Its volume has been affected by the relaxation of immigration quotas and the demands of the labour market. According to Carol Stone's (1991) study of immigration and census statistics, the number of Muslim immigrants has more than doubled in an eighteen-year period, "increasing from 4 percent of all immigrants in 1968 to 10.5 percent in 1986". Most of these arrivals share the socio economic background (i.e. middle class, highly educated) of the fourth period. Many come from Pakistan and Iran. An increase in the number of Afghanis, due to the recent war in their homeland, was also noted. Very few Muslims are immigrating to the United States from sub-Saharan Africa and Europe.<sup>124</sup>

By 1952 there were over twenty mosques<sup>125</sup> and by 1983 Muslims in the United States owned 110 mosques or centres in 24 states and the District of Columbia; Bilalians have constructed 156 mosques in 39 states since 1976.<sup>126</sup>

### **National-level Islamic Organization**

National-level Islamic organization first emerged in the United States and Canada in the 1950s. A Lebanese World War II veteran organized the Federation of Islamic Association (FIA) in 1954.<sup>127</sup> It owned buildings and

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123 *Ibid.*, Yvonne Y. Haddad and Adair T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States*; Hossein G. Askari and John T. Cummings, "Middle East and the United States: A Problem of 'Brain Drain'", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No.8 (1977), pp. 65-90.

124 *Ibid.*

125 Yovonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, *Muslim Communities in North America*, p.xviii.

126 Barbara J. Bilge, "Islam in the Americas" *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.7, pp.428-429.

127 *Ibid.*, vol.7, pp.429-430; Yovonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, *Muslim Communities in North America*, p. xviii, states: by 1952 there were over twenty

extensive camp grounds, published *The Muslim Star*, and had a scholarship fund for college-bound high school graduates, but after factional disputes arising in the 1980s it has gradually gone out the lime light of Muslims in the United States of America.

The Muslim Student Association of the United States and Canada (MSA) was founded in 1963 to promote Islamic Solidarity, preserve the Islamic way of life, and foster friendship with non-Muslims. It has spawned the Islamic Medical Association, the Association of Muslim Social Scientists, the Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers, Islamic Circle of North America, and Islamic Society of North America. Presently there are several National Muslim organizations representing different sections and/or serving different interests of the Muslim community. However Muslim Shura of North America and its constituting four major organizations: Organization of Imam Warith Deen Muhammad (formerly American Muslim Mission), Islamic Society of North America, Islamic Circle of North America, and Organization of Imam Jamil al-Amin (formerly Dar al-Salam Movement), along with the American Muslim Council and CAIR dominate the American Muslim scene today.

### **Muslim in America: 21st Century**

To fully cover the Muslim presence in North America in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, is beyond the scope of this paper. However a summarized, sort of official US Government, view of Muslim presence at close of 20<sup>th</sup> century and the wake of 21<sup>st</sup> century is quoted here from John Kincannon's inaugural address to the 6 American Studies conference in Islamabad, he states: Although the statistics are debated, about three years ago, Islam became America's second largest religion. It is also America's fastest growing

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mosques that joined in the formation of the Federation of Islamic Association of America.



religion with roughly six million practitioners of the Islamic faith. In the United States, we now have 1,250 mosques, a number that has doubled since 1984, and which is up from 52 at the end of World War II. Having spent my entire diplomatic career in the Muslim World, I have noted with considerable pleasure the increasingly large role that the Muslim community plays in American cultural life. The United States government now issues “Eid Mubarak” postage stamps, major American politicians host Iftar dinners, and Muslim Khateeb periodically offer prayers at the start of Congress.<sup>128</sup>

Islam has been practiced variably in the Americas at different times and in different places and is flexible enough to be adapted to local customs, which do not violate its tenets.<sup>129</sup> However the question of the survival of the present Muslim wave still remains open, and depends on how much has changed after 9/11, and to what extent Patriot Act would be enforced to curtail the Civil Liberties, resulting in expulsion or “voluntary” migration, or intimidation to the level of being ashamed of, and thus hiding Muslim Identity, and eventually melting of their next generations into “American Society”.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that the religious diversity as revealed by 500 years history of the Americas, has not come by easy and the major credit for the religious diversity goes not as such to religious tolerance but to vast empty lands. Every ethnic as well as religious group had to struggle hard for its survival and to secure its identity. The Muslims has however suffered the most, and of the previous waves which migrated

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128 John Kincannon, Public Officer, US Embassy, “Islamabad, America in the 21 Century”, inaugural address at the occasion of 6 American Studies Conference, organized by Area Study Center, Quaid-i Azam University, Islamabad, March 20-21, 2002.

129 Barbara J. Bilge, “Islam in the Americas” *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 7, p. 430.

voluntarily or forcedly were not able to secure their Islamic identity, which was either snatched in case of Muslim slaves or dissipated and vanished in the course of a couple of generations, in case of free immigrant Muslims. The present generation and wave Muslims in Americas have to observe very minutely the history as well as the changing circumstances in devising a strategy to secure their presence as well as Islamic identity of their future generations.