Emerging and Challenging Voices in the House of Islam: South Africa's "African" Muslims[1]

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Abstract

South African Islam has always been associated with the Cape Malay and Indian communities throughout the twentieth century. As a consequence, Islam as a religious tradition was seldom associated with other ethnic groups. Toward the end of apartheid and during the era of democracy there has been tangible evidence of its growth among African ethnic communities. This essay, which looks at this phenomenon from roughly 1961-2001, reflects upon South African Muslims' demographics with special focus on the African Muslim communities and analyzes the position of African Muslims alongside their coreligionists by concentrating on randomly selected case studies. I seek to demonstrate how certain representatives from the selected communities, via internal developments and external influences, have had significant input in terms of changing the face of Islam in southern Africa. The essay is prefaced by a theoretical frame designed to assist in understanding the development of an African Muslim identity and the emergence of an African Muslim community.

Introduction

South African Islam has been in the spotlight for many decades. During the pre-democracy years, Muslims either aligned themselves with the liberation movements or remained neutral or even apolitical toward the apartheid regime. During the era of democracy, some Muslims participated fully in the sociopolitical transformation and showed their support and loyalty to the state, while others joined civic organizations and social movements that con-

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sidered the democratic state ineffective as regards the social issues, such as poverty and crime, that still affect large sections of South African society.

From these brief introductory remarks, it is quite evident that South Africa's Muslims are not in any way a homogenous community. In fact, this community consists of various representatives and strands on different levels and in various social sectors. In the political arena, some support the state while others differ with it; in the social sphere, some remain exclusivist as opposed to inclusivist when it comes to solving social issues; and in the theological sector, some have remained devoted to the traditions and others have challenged them. When viewing the Muslim community from a variety of angles, we can see that it is somewhat divided and disparate. But despite this reality, some observers agree that it is nevertheless culturally rich and socially vibrant. The mere fact of its diversity indicates that its members are unlikely to hold a unanimous opinion on any sociopolitical, economic, religious, or cultural issues.

When looking into the distant past, we can tabulate issues that divided them, such as their response to apartheid; when looking at contemporary developments, we can see that many sensitive matters (e.g., Muslim personal law) have left the leadership divided and in disarray. That said, it is not surprising that the question of identity has remained at the heart of some of the enduring debates and on the differing opinions that have been expressed at various historical moments.

The question of identity should be fully appreciated within South Africa's sociopolitical and historical context. Throughout the cold war, South African society was rooted in apartheid. Communities were forced to live separately, based upon their members' race, and were coerced to accept the regime's legislated rules and regulations that were tacitly approved and supported by the United States, the United Kingdom, and their western allies. The South African Muslim community, which formed an integral part of this oppressed and discriminated-against society, was deeply affected and scarred by the inhumane racial system. In addition to this official discrimination, their religious tradition (i.e., Islam) was also perceived to be false and considered a threat because of its proselytizing nature.[2]

Be that as it may, my essay focuses on the African Muslim community, or what some of its representatives have termed "an emergent Muslim community" in South Africa.[3] It critically looks at and assesses the concept of an "African Muslim" identity, an identity that has been debated and discussed at length within and outside this growing "imagined" Muslim community. In this analysis, I will compare it with other competing ones, such as the country's predominantly Cape Malay and Indian Muslim communities. I thus

begin by discussing South Africa's Muslim demographics before focusing on the "emerging" Muslims. The essay *en passant* attempts to contextualize the issues that are dealt with to provide an overview of the developments within and outside these communities. It also offers insights into the formation and development of South Africa's various African Muslim communities by drawing upon particular case studies from approximately 1961-2001, a period that clearly demonstrates the demographic shifts that have taken place. Within the final decade of that period, everyone also witnessed seismic sociopolitical change.

Conceptualizing South Africa's Muslims

When trying to fathom and discuss the makeup and composition of South Africa's Muslim communities in general and its African Muslim community in particular, there is little doubt that the question of identity as a conceptual framework plays a crucial role.[4] As a social variable, identity has been and remains ambiguous because, according to Zegeye and Harris,[5] it implies both uniqueness and sameness. Identity also harnesses an exceptional plurality of meanings, is just as concerned with difference or uniqueness as it is with shared belonging or sameness, and marks out the divisions and subsets in our social lives. The multifaceted nature of identity and, more particularly, of identity politics forces us to explore groups that have been politically privileged and marginalized. This is particularly so when evaluating apartheid-era South Africa when the whites, who proudly espoused European values and a strong Christian identity (with the exception of a few who were Jewish or associated with certain ideological groups), were the most privileged group, as opposed to the marginalized and oppressed African, Coloured, and Indian communities.

Social scientists generally agree that identity in general – and religious identity in particular – is not a fixed, closed, or unchanging variable and that it has always been part of a process of formation and (re)construction. Accepting a multiplicity of identities in contemporary societies indicates that religious identity construction has always been something in the making. Since this was and still is the case, South Africa's nation-building process has been dynamic and will continue to display its dynamism for the foreseeable future. That said, some social scientists have observed that the concept of identity is at the crux of sociopolitical identity structures, religious identity interpretations, and cultural identity analyses. This has been the case throughout this era of globalization, where contradictions about identity formation abound. A similar argument goes for the contested concept term *community*.

Among the country's religious communities, the Muslim community stands out as significant. Some aspects of its significance will be elaborated upon later in this essay. But since the focus is not upon the South African Muslim community as such but the African Muslims in South Africa, I wish to argue that as a minority religious group within a larger minority religious community they fit within the definition and explanation provided by Rabinowitz and others who argued that the term *community* has been and remains imprecise and ubiquitous.[6] The community, Rabinowitz averred, is "usually associated with an array of positive connotations such as solidarity, familiarity, unity of purpose, interest and identity."[7] Social scientists have generally agreed that it may be defined as a "type of collectivity or social unit" or a "type of social relations or sentiments." Collectivity means that the group shares a defined physical space or geographical area, shares common traits or has a sense of belonging, maintains social ties, and that its members' interaction with one another shapes them into a distinct social entity, such an ethnic or religious community. Azarya pointed out that the community is a "type of social unit" or a "type of social relations or sentiments" that share physical geographical space and common traits, such as a sense of belonging, that bring about the interaction that shapes it further into a distinct social entity, namely, a religious community.[8]

South Africa's African Muslim community shares specific physical geographical areas and is made up of a variety of sociolinguistic and ethnic groups. Furthermore, not only do these different groups, *inter alia*, socialize with one another in the work place and business arena, but they also participate in religious functions (e.g., celebrating the Prophet's birthday) and other related socioreligious and cultural activities. While many of its members are associated with their respective linguistic groups (e.g., Sotho, Zulu, or Xhosa speakers), they view themselves as part and parcel of the national South African Muslim *ummah* (community) with which they express their differences and sameness. In other words, as a separate but related community, they reflect the South African Muslim community's heterogeneous nature.

South Africa's Muslim Census

When assessing the demography of this community, then, we are forced to view it through the racial lenses "legally" imposed by the apartheid regime in 1948, when the Nationalist Party came to power. South African society was basically classified into four distinct racial categories: Whites, Coloureds, Indians, and Africans. The racist system, which was socially engineered and Biblically justified by the white Afrikaner regime, foisted upon

South Africa a peculiar racist identity that served its sociopolitical and economic objectives and was further supported by a barrage of discriminatory policies (e.g., the Group Areas Act, the Populations Registration Act, and the Mixed Marriages Act). The apartheid census was also employed to further reflect racial divisions. When the democratic government came to power in April 1994, it accepted the racial statistical structures not to continue perpetuating racial stereotypes, but rather to implement "affirmative action" policies and level the playing field in all sectors of South African life.[9] For the purposes this essay, I will briefly touch upon the Muslim community's demographics between 1946-2001 (see table 1 below) before focusing specifically on the African Muslims' demographics.[10]

Table 1: Census of Muslims between 1946 and 1991

Year	Total Muslims	White	Coloured	Indians	Africans
1946	110,392	169	43,890	61,405	4,928
1951	146,829	200	63,216	78,787	4,626
1960	197,037	240	92,130	99,068	5,599
1970	269,915	945	134,087	125,987	8,896
1980	352,993	1,697	176,406	165,842	9,048
1991	338,142	1,756	157,815	166,585	11,986

Regarding these statistics, Tayob stated that Muslims have been speculating that their numbers are far more than what the censuses had revealed.[11] Some even questioned the apartheid-era statistics, rejecting the conclusion that they only form 2 percent of the total population and, unconvincingly, argued that their numbers were over 1 million. To date, however, they have been unable to present any conclusive evidence to prove their assertion. When these government censuses were conducted, the Muslims were not very responsive in filling out the questionnaires circulated to all households, for they were generally suspicious of the apartheid government's intentions and opined that the resulting information would be used to further its oppressive rule and restrict Islam's (and other religious traditions') growth. Despite the mentioned and other unrecorded objections that might be leveled at the representative nature and accuracy of these statistics, they nevertheless serve as a useful guide as regards the numbers of Muslims living in the country between the mentioned dates.

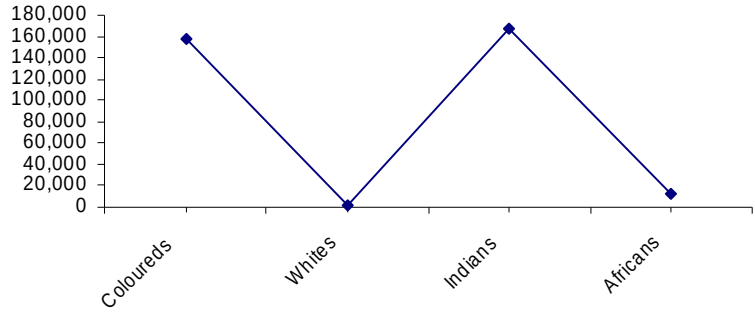
Upon analyzing table 1, one glaring revelation stands out: between 1980-91, the number of Muslims actually decreased. One possible reason for this may be attributed to the fact that fewer Muslims were prepared to

answer racial questions in 1991. This was particularly so in the Western Cape, where the rejection of ethnic categorization and the census was quite pronounced and where the decrease was conspicuously evident. If this interpretation is correct, then the argument stands that the statistics underrepresented the number of Muslims throughout the apartheid period.

Two other points come to mind when reviewing the census: (1) Muslims belong to each of the identified ethnic/racial groups and that the Africans represented a small percentage and (2) that during 1980-91 there was a sharp increase in the number of African Muslims. The reason for this is fairly simple: the 1980s marks a volatile period in apartheid's social history, for Iran's Islamic revolution had an indelible impact on Muslims all over the world. In fact, politically active South African Muslim organizations[12] used this opportunity to offer Islam as an alternative (ideological) model to those worldwide systems that operated during the cold war.

African young people who became disillusioned with Christianity, despite the fact that liberation theologians and Black theologians constructed the Kairos document[13] in 1985 as a way forward against apartheid, sought viable alternatives. The rejection of racial labels by young activist Muslims and the dissemination of Islamic literature written by Muslim ideologues from the Muslim heartlands attracted African young people and some embraced Islam.[14] Although satisfied with what their new religious home offered, they began to learn about the harsh reality as they tried to socialize with the Cape Malay and Indian Muslims, the Muslim community's two dominant ethnic groups.[15] I shall discuss some of the challenges faced by these "emerging" Muslims later in this essay. For now, I will comment briefly the stacked line graph presented in figure 1:

Figure 1: The 1991 Census: South Africa's Muslim Communities



Source: South African Statistics (www.statssa.gov.za) and consult Muhammed Haron's "Undercounting or Over-counting South Africa's Muslims: The Era of Democracy (Censuses of 1996 and 2001), *Journal for Islamic Studies* 23 (2003): 100-10.

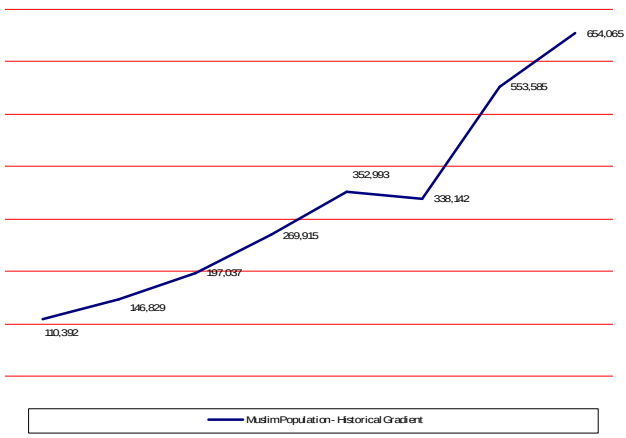
Before the 1991 census was conducted, South Africa underwent some radical changes, among them releasing Nelson Mandela after twenty-seven years of incarceration and lifting the ban on all liberation movements. Although the statistics recorded a drop in the number of Muslims in general, it recorded an increase in the number of African Muslims. Tayob noted that

> the decrease in the number of Muslims may be a reflection of a secularization that we are reluctant to admit. Is it possible that fewer people in South Africa identify themselves as Muslims, again particularly in the Western Cape? The census, in this scenario, may be picking up a trend belied by over-flowing mosques, rallies and eat-n-treats.[16]

Although he is not far off the mark, he might have to amend his comments since a different scenario was found in the Western Cape in particular, and in South Africa in general, by the end of the 1990s.

Now that we have a fair understanding of apartheid-era statistical developments, my focus will shift to the post-apartheid era, when the formerly oppressed communities underwent significant change and when Muslims, alongside others, were granted freedom by the Constitution to express and practice their religions. As a consequence, they freely participated and contributed to the census surveys of 1996 and 2001, respectively. This brings us to the line chart below, which provides another dimension of the community's growth.

Figure 2: The Muslims between 1946 and 2001

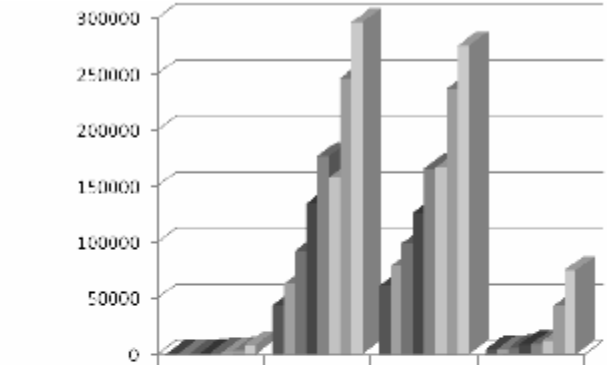


Source: South African Statistics (www.statssa.gov.za) and consult Muhammed Haron's "Undercounting or Over-counting South Africa's Muslims: The Era of Democracy (Censuses of 1996 and 2001), *Journal for Islamic Studies* 23 (2003): 100-10.

The line graph below (figure 2) demonstrates that the Muslim community never grew exponentially, but only at a steady pace during the second half of the twentieth century. This may be attributed to the slow birth rate, rate of conversion,[17] the small number of Muslim immigrants, and the mortality rate. When comparing the line chart above with the "columns with depth" chart below (figure 3), a slightly different view with additional information comes to the fore. In addition to the numerical values for each year, this chart contains a breakdown of the number of Muslims within each racial group and the country's nine provinces. Our attention is drawn to the fact that although the critical mass of Muslims lies within the Coloured and Indian communities, there was a remarkable growth in the number of African Muslims between 1991 and 2001.

These charts provide one with an overview of the community's breakdown into different population groups and across all provinces. In addition, they reveal that while the dominant groups' numbers remained within the expected growth rate, those of the minority groups increased at a rapid – and

Figure 3: Distribution of Muslims' Population Groups between 1946 and 2001



	Whites	Coloureds	Indians	Africans
1946 = 110,392	109	43,690	61,405	4,928
1951 = 146,829	200	63,216	78,787	4,626
1960 – 197,037	240	92,130	99,068	5,599
1970 = 269,915	945	134,087	125,987	8,896
1980 = 352,993	1,697	176,406	165,842	9,048
1991 = 538,142	1,756	137,815	166,585	11,986
1996 = 553,585	3741	246,431	235,315	43,253
2001 = 654,065	8,409	296,023	274,931	74,701

Source: South African Statistics (www.statssa.gov.za) and consult Muhammed Haron's "Undercounting or Over-counting South Africa's Muslims: The Era of Democracy (Censuses of 1996 and 2001), *Journal for Islamic Studies* 23 (2003): 100-10.

indeed an unexpected – rate. Before offering a more detailed narrative of the African Muslims vis-à-vis that of their coreligionists, it should be stated that the census confirmed and affirms that the Muslim community has not as yet reached the one million mark, as some had claimed. If the censuses of 1996 and 2001 are accepted as they stand, then the Muslims will have to provide other means and ways of determining accurate figures so that they may acquire a better sense of their numerical potential.

African Muslims and Their Coreligionists

The statistical graphs in the aforementioned paragraphs give a fairly clear overview of the representation of the different racial groups within and beyond the apartheid era. Although census taking has generally not been (and will never be) an accurate process, it at least offers one a clue as to how many individuals form part of South Africa's population and, more specifically, how many adherents belong to a specific religious tradition. In this instance, we get a good sense of how many African Muslims appeared on the population radar screen when the 2001 census was taken. In my opinion, South African Muslims seem to be oblivious of what this really means, for the Cape Malay/Coloured Muslims and the Indian Muslims are still caught up in the apartheid-era racial system. Therefore they have not readily opened their doors to their coreligionists who, it is presumed, genuinely entered the fold of Islam.[18] In essence, this means that racial attitudes among the dominant groups still abound and continue to impact upon the Muslims' perceptions toward one another as a whole.

Apart from intra-Muslim relations, which are highly problematic, I would like to know how democratic South Africa, which has retained these racial classifications, is going to account in the census for immigrant Muslims coming from other parts of sub-Saharan Africa and the Muslim heartlands and how they will be measured alongside the growth of South Africa's African Muslims.[19] While this appears to be a problem for the census takers and for the democratic government, it is also a problem for South Africa's Muslims. Be that as it may, let's take a closer look at and reflect briefly upon the African Muslims' social history in the respective regions during the final four decades of the twentieth century.

Sociohistorical Developments

It is well nigh impossible to provide an in-depth social history of the African Muslims in this essay because of obvious space constraints. Although glimpses into this particular dimension of this community will naturally not

be very satisfactory, a cursory overview is appropriate. In order to address its members' social history, we need to pose a number of interrelated questions for which we might never be able to find any suitable answers.

The following immediately come to mind: Who was the first African within the community to embrace Islam in South Africa? Where did the African Muslims learn about Islam? When did they hear its message? How did they respond to it when their mothers were underpaid domestic workers in the homes of Muslims? When the imams and *maulanas* sermonize[20] about Islam being non-racial, why, the "reverts" want to know, did South African Muslims act like racists in their work place toward their fellow citizens? How did they deal with the problems they experienced with non-African Muslims? With the influx of African Muslims from other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, have they begun to appreciate Islam and Muslims better? These and many other questions continuously arise when dealing with and writing about African Muslims. Since I do not intend to answer all of them here, they should be kept in mind when assessing their position vis-à-vis their coreligionists.

Nonetheless, "Islam in the (African) townships of South Africa" seems to have gradually made its presence felt during the 1970s, according to Fakude, Dangor, and other observers.[21] Although I concur with their opinion, it should not be forgotten that over many decades African Muslims from Malawi,[22] Mozambique, and other sub-Saharan countries also came to work in the mines and other sectors via the northeastern region. Some of them socialized with and integrated into the country's Bantu-speaking communities, while others remained detached because of their religious identity.

The Northwestern Part of South Africa: The Lemba Tribe and Archeological Artifacts (?)

At the beginning of this long and fascinating narrative of socialization and integration, it must be stated that social scientists should not cast their eyes so much on the country's southwestern part, where Muslims were brought as slaves and political prisoners to the Cape during the mid-seventeenth century, but rather on its northeast, where it has been speculated that Muslims from the upper portions of East Africa (and the Middle East) left their footprints.[23]

Let me cite two examples, the first of which is controversial and the other more straightforward in terms of extant empirical records. The first example leads us to the Lemba tribe, which Jewish social scientists have claimed as one of the lost tribes of Israel.[24] According to numerous studies, they have

argued that this tribe, which resides in southern Zimbabwe and on the northern fringes of South Africa, has cultural and religious practices that are similar to those of the Jewish community.[25] In response to this theory, some Muslims have speculated (without undertaking any scientific research) that perhaps the Lemba were Muslims who subsequently lost their Islamic identity but persisted in maintaining some of their Islamic (cultural) practices. Muslim scholars should undertake their own anthropological fieldwork to come up with definitive responses to the claims made thus far by Jewish scholarship.

The second example consists of archeological sites in the region that might help Muslim social scientists prove that Muslims entered that part of South African territory from the East African coast before Muslims were brought to the Cape (circa 1650-70) and that some Bantu-speaking communities were converted by Muslim traders who settled down there for a while. Although no debate has ensued to delve into these matters with great earnestness, the issues should be taken up by social scientists in general and Muslim scholars in particular not so much to bring the debate to a close, but to open it up for thorough scrutiny. In fact, very few Muslims have made the connection between these earlier historical developments and the Muslim communities in Limpopo province.

Moving on to the contemporary period, we come across observers such as Ali Mathonsi who, although not trained anthropologists or social historians, have made cursory assessments of the missionary activities in Gazankulu, Venda, and Lebowa in Limpopo province.[26] Mathonsi stated that Muslim missionaries were active in Venda towns (e.g., Louis Trichardt, Messina, and Pietersburg) and observed that efforts have been underway to set up a *jamat khana* (a place of worship) to handle the influx of Muslims from the region, particularly those from Zambia and Mozambique as well as South Asia (Pakistanis and Indians). An interesting ongoing project is tracing Muslims of Malawian descent in Gazankulu villages such as Vumani and Malamulele. In fact, according to Kalla's assessment, many Malawians have found their way into poverty-stricken Limpopo province since the early twentieth century.[27]

Even though Mathonsi mentioned that Yaser Rasethaba, a trade unionist, and Salahuddin Shaikh, a local madrasa teacher, had made great strides in their mission among people in Zebediela, Perekisi, and some other townships, Kalla lamented that while Christian organizations have established province-wide outreach programs, Muslim organizations have lagged far behind and have neglected to share ideas and cooperate with one another. She opined that "there is a serious lack of development of Islam in the Northern

(Limpopo) Province" and that this has led to Islam's inaccessibility to its African communities. This is quite different from the conditions found in the Western Cape, where the socioeconomic conditions are much better.

The Western Cape's Nascent African Muslim Community

When turning to the Western Cape, Zainul-Goesn Abrahams' pioneering research project conducted at the turn of the 1980s[28] shows that the seeds of the African Muslim community's formation in the Greater Cape Town area of Western Cape province took place in the 1950s and 1960s.[29]

By the time South Africa became a republic in 1961, the oppressed communities were vehemently opposed to apartheid. Among them were Muslim organizations such as the Claremont Muslim Youth Association (CMYA 1958-63), which was established and guided by Imam Abdullah Haron.[30] The imam, an outspoken critic of the racist regime, used his position to preach against all forms of racism, injustice, and oppression. In the early 1960s while employed as a salesperson by Wilson Rowntrees, he was able to enter the African townships located outside the Cape Town city center fairly easily. He used this opportunity to interact with many Africans and frequented their homes.[31] Even though he talked with them about Islam as a way of life compared to other existing systems, he did not enforce his beliefs on them. In other words, he did not engage in *da`wah* (mission) as understood in the conventional sense.

While pursuing sociopolitical and religious discussions, however, he convinced some of the people about Islam as a possible alternative. Among a small coterie of people, individuals such as Shamil Kula were some of the first to embrace Islam at his hands. After the imam's tragic death at the hands of the South African security branch at the end of September 1969, the socialization process between the Cape Malays and the coterie of African Muslims to some degree stalled for a while.

Despite the small numbers of African Muslims in the 1960s, it appears that the imprints left by Imam Haron in Langa, Gugulethu, and Nyanga were there to stay. Individuals such as Imam Dawood Lobi (d. 2002) and others used their resources to continue his efforts. Unfortunately, Imam Lobi experienced great hardship in the 1970s and 1980s just trying to keep the Langa Muslim community together. In fact his place, where a *jamat khana* had been established, was seen as a convenient outpost for the handouts given by those established Muslim communities that were not as forthcoming in their approach as expected.

Abdul Kayum Ahmed aptly described the place:

> The mosque, with its undecorated white walls and colourful myriad of *musallahs*, seemed almost incandescent. Its resplendent simplicity transcended the artificial beauty of larger mosques. What was however painfully absent was its soul. There was no Muslims standing shoulder to shoulder, united irrespective of race, class or gender. Instead, the mosque stood like a relic, a symbol of our past struggles and our present failures.[32]

His description was made in the light of the non-performance of the Friday congregational prayer during the first week of December 1998. He rightly remarked that the established communities were more able to readily with the Bosnian and Palestinian Muslims than with their fellow African Muslim brothers and sisters in their own neighborhoods. These outcomes were a far cry from the developments in the 1980s, when young Muslims from the established Cape Malay and Indian communities protested hand-in-hand with those from these townships.

At this point, mention should be made of the Young Elephants of the Al-Jihad International Islamic Movement, which Ismail Joubert (a.k.a. Tatamkulu Afrika) established to undertake social welfare and mission work in the African townships and target African youths.[33] A small group of young people from this community was drawn to Joubert's organization, which offered them recreational opportunities that the apartheid regime failed to provide. They were very eager to accept alternatives and, consequently, a handful were shipped off to Kuwait to pursue Arabic and other technical studies.

Abdullah Nonyana, one of the Kuwait University graduates, remains an articulate and outspoken individual. He expressed his views against the dominant Muslim groups that marginalized them as newcomers to Islam when he returned in the mid-1980s as a technical engineer. Like a few others, among them Tahir Vaalboom, the Muslim community did not give him the necessary moral support to find suitable appointments. Unfortunately, these starry-eyed fellows had been under the illusion that the Muslim community would come to their aid during the 1980s, when large numbers of Muslims showed their displeasure with apartheid. Although these young vibrant gentlemen and a few young ladies[34] made their presence felt in terms of what they could do, they gradually disappeared into Langa's divided, impoverished community. One reason for this could be that they were frank about how they were treated by their fellow Muslims; another was that they basically became frustrated with having to vent their feelings at meetings and religio-social functions before being taken seriously.

Vaalboom, for example, embraced Islam when he was fairly young – about thirteen years old. He often visited the mosque in Surrey Estate, an

area that was occasionally or derogatively termed "Shariah Estate" because it was a densely (Cape Malay) Muslim populated area and the young theologians, such as Shaykh Erefaan Johnson, tried to "cleanse" the community of all forms of "innovative impurities" and thus preached the Wahhabi doctrines of social mores that they had inherited as students at the Islamic University of Madinah. Nonetheless, these young African Muslims never found a permanent home in this or other geographical areas where Muslims lived. In fact, some of them argued that individuals who had the skills and the potential to excel were never allowed to make a substantial input to the (Muslim) community.

These young African Muslims grew up amidst some of the older African Muslims who had lived in a slightly different sociopolitical period and had been committed to the liberation movement. Mtutuzeni Hasan Ghila (1912-92), who was born in the Eastern Cape, departed for the Western Cape where job opportunities were plentiful.[35] During his stay in Paarl, a town outside Greater Cape Town, he heard the "call to prayer" and said that it sounded like the Xhosa incantations of his ancestors. Also during this period, the renowned spiritualist Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddqui,[36] was on his memorable South African lecture tour. This further inspired Ghila to become a Muslim.

Ghila narrated the hardships he had to endure for being a Muslim. Not only did the Muslims adopt a negative attitude toward him and his fellow Africans, they even mocked him and suggested that he go live among the Indians. He retorted by saying that if that were the case, then they – the African Christians – should go and live with the whites! Although initially he was an African National Congress member, he switched allegiances for political reasons and became a leading Pan African Congress (PAC) member (the Western Cape was a PAC stronghold at that time). Since Imam Haron was a key contact person but not a card-carrying PAC member, Ghila admired the imam and how he assisted the fellow oppressed communities. He said that "(the imam) was an inspiration to me. His untimely departure was a loss to us all. He has no complex … All he cares about was justice." The interview of Shabodien Roomaney, although short, provided a synopsis of one of the stalwarts of the African Muslim community, one who was indeed committed to the struggle and upholding the cause of Islam and Muslims.[37]

Perhaps it is useful at this point to mention Shaykh Thulane Zaid Langa's remarks regarding the established Muslims' attitude toward their African Muslim sisters and brothers.[38] In a fairly critical article, he made the point that such organizations as Al-Hidaya Dawah Movement (est. 1981-82), the Islamic Dawah Movement of South Africa (IDMSA; est. 1984), and the Islamic Dawah Foundation (est. 1985), which have been propagating or try-

ing to propagate Islam in their areas, were of a particular type: the "Breyani Islam" type or what was also referred to as "ice-cream *da`wah*" type.[39] In his view – and correctly so – these communities were seen as outlets to salve the conscience of the predominantly Cape Malay and Indian Muslim communities, respectively. Their charities and food parcels were quickly and easily distributed with the assistance of some of the above-mentioned Muslim missionary organizations.

Generally none of these organizations, as far as I could assess, searched for alternative methods of empowering African Muslims, for this became a concern only in the post-apartheid era. In fact, many of them were more interested in pursuing Muslim missionary activities – aping Christian missionary organizations – instead of earning a living by acquiring suitable jobs and making substantial contributions toward transforming their community. It may be argued that the African Muslim community was doubly marginalized – oppressed by the inhumane apartheid system and discriminated against by its fellow Muslims brothers and sisters who were supposed to be color blind! When comparing the attitude of the Western Cape's Cape Malay and Indian Muslims toward the African Muslims with those residing in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal, we are able to observe a marked difference – the relationship was somewhat more hostile, and the treatment was deeply racist. Before turning to the north's predominantly Indian Muslim community, I shall give brief attention to the Eastern Cape.

The Eastern Cape and the Emerging African Communities

The Eastern Cape has produced a number of young African Muslims who contribute substantially to the Muslim community's development and transformation. Reference will be made to at least two of them later in this section. At this point, I want to unpack the Eastern Cape story by renarrating the developments of an African Muslim community in the Ciskei (far Eastern Cape) region, not far from the outskirts of East London. In the restricted (unpublished) report prepared by the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa (MYMSA) for its central office, a survey was done as to the developments in the Ciskei.

During the 1980s, few individuals were serving as *da`wah* workers in the Eastern Cape. One of them was Imam Yusuf Petersen, who was based in King Williams Town and worked in the surrounding areas. He expressed his concerns regarding the scant support he received from the established Muslim community and the problems faced by emergent Muslims as well as the Ciskei's community in general. As a result of his request, Rashied Omar

(director of MYMSA) and Fuad Hendricks (editor of *Al-Qalam*) went on a fact-finding mission that culminated in certain decisions and recommendations being made to provide the necessary assistance. The said imam was also invited to participate in MYMSA's first Natal Region Dawah Conference, which took place in Durban on 25-26 November 1983.

The report mentioned that in the Ciskei, Islam took shape in 1971 and was boosted by the marriage of migrant Malawian laborers to local Xhosa-speaking women. By 1983 there were nineteen African Muslim families that included about thirty-eight children. The report highlighted the situation in two townships: Quzwini and Dikidikani. In the former, Maulana Yusuf Karaan from the Strand (Western Cape) erected a small *jamat khana*. This place of worship was regularly used by the Tabligh Jam'at,[40] which tried to spread its influence and understanding of Islam in these areas. Despite these efforts, however, there was nothing to sustain its activities. Therefore, it was recommended that students from these townships be sponsored to pursue their Islamic and secular studies at the As-Salam Educational Institute (AEI) in Braemer, KwaZulu Natal, that funds be made available for some of them to continue their studies at the townships' schools, and that financial assistance be collected for drilling boreholes in the drought-stricken areas.

By the end of 1983, Imam Yusuf provided a list of about thirty-three family and individual names of Muslims living in King Williams Town and the specific townships. Subsequent to this report, others were circulated within the MYMSA and IDMSA circles to monitor the progress and development of the *da`wah* activities in these areas. The Ciskei project thus led the IDMSA to spread its wings into the Transkei region of the Eastern Cape. By 30 September 1994, it completed the construction of the Tombo Islamic Centre, which had begun in 1989. Located in the heart of the Transkei, the center served the local and outlying communities. At that time there were 130 Muslims, most of whom were from the Xhosa-speaking tribes. Abdul Aziz Phiri, a Malawian who was the resident *da`wah* worker, well-grounded in Islamic studies, and fluent in Xhosa, was able to attract the local people's interest in Islam. His *madrasa* classes had seventeen pupils by the time *Al-Qalam* reported on the outcomes in October 1994.[41]

As mentioned earlier, a few African young people had the opportunity to attend the AEI. Two people may be mentioned, Tahir Sitoto and Nceba Salamtu, both of whom completed their studies there and went on to university. Sitoto completed his Arabic studies at the Arabic Language Institute at King Saud University (Saudi Arabia), and Salamtu went to the International Islamic University in Islamabad (Pakistan). Sitoto became a key member of MYMSA and, by the beginning of the 1990s, its president.

In this position, he discovered what it meant to lead a predominantly Indian/Malay Muslim organization. For example, some of the old guard had little confidence in placing the organization's leadership into indigenous hands and, as a consequence, the previously abundant funds almost dried up. Nevertheless, Sitoto was particularly critical of the MYMSA membership as well as of Muslims as a whole. At its Annual General Meeting held in Kimberly (Northern Cape) during April 1993, he castigated the membership for its inactivity, commended MYMSA for slowly shifting away from its past, and stressed that the movement needed members who would challenge its leadership and would not remain complacent.[42]

Upon his return from Islamabad, Salamtu worked on documentaries focusing on Islam and Muslims that were later screened on SABC in the mid-1990s. Sitoto subsequently joined the academic fraternity at the University of KwaZulu Natal. In an interesting *Al-Qalam* article, "The Challenge of Islam among the indigenous people of Azania," He made the point – and translated Franz Fanon's idea – that as an emergent Muslim community some – if not all – of its members

> unconsciously became "African Muslims" with "Indian Souls" parading under Arab names. Anything to do with indigenous culture was anathema and in that process we lost our identity. We were so bought over by the ideal of One Muslim Identity that we never pondered deeply on the Quranic verse 13 of Chapter Hujurat … whilst the slogan of one identity drowned us, most of its originators kept their separate identities.[43]

He expressed his pride that fellow African Muslims such as Simphiwe Sesanti and Ebrahim wa Bofelo, who were MYMSA executive members in the mid-1990s, provided a different and important understanding of African (Muslim) identities in their *Al-Qalam* writings during that time. He ended by stating that African Muslims, in particular, need to fight the contemporary imperialism pervading the Muslim community and that many things have to be rectified and set aright to "retrieve" the lost African heritage, for not all is "darkness and ignorance." In another complimentary *Al-Qalam* article, "The incident that reminded me of the days of slavery in America," Salamtu shared more of his ideas on these sensitive and significant issues, which remain matters of debate and discussion within Muslim organizations and circles.[44]

KwaZulu Natal and Its Emerging Muslims[45]

During the intense apartheid period, particularly during 1980s, and after the post-apartheid period in the 1990s, Muslim organizations have targeted African communities through social welfare and other programs. Numerous

organizations in KwaZulu Natal undertook *da`wah* (e.g., the IDMSA) and social welfare work (e.g., the Waqf al-Waqifin). While the latter were not really concerned with advancing the *da`wah* program of the region's Muslims but mainly in providing humanitarian assistance, the former were keen to spread their *da`wah* activities. The work of these *da`wah* organizations was very similar, at times, to that undertaken by Christian missionaries. One way of getting the Islamic message across from the 1970s onward was through pamphleteering and audio (and later video) cassette recordings of such *da`wah* workers as Ahmad Deedat (d. 2005).[46]

Two of the many Muslim missionary-oriented organizations that have been active in KwaZulu Natal over the years are the Islamic Propagation Centre (IPC), under Ahmad Deedat's erstwhile leadership, and the Islamic Dawah Movement of South Africa (IDMSA), formed by Dr. Ebrahim Dada, a medical doctor. In a sense, they complimented one another and did not work against one another in and beyond the region. A brief overview will offer an insight into their activities and also indicate to what extent they have targeted and attracted the African Muslims of KwaZulu Natal.

The IPC came into being as a result of the classes Deedat gave to adults attending the Arabic Study Circle in Durban during the 1950s. Believing that individuals should be knowledgeable about the missionary work conducted by the Anglican diocese and the Dutch Reform Church among the country's Muslims, he and his good friend Ghulam Hussein Vanker decided to set up the IPC's foundations in March 1957. From that time until 1980, Deedat and his support group confined their teachings to the southern African region. Whenever he held public debates the halls were packed, for Muslim crowds were generally attracted to his harsh method of debate. Deedat has left behind numerous booklets, many of them translated into different languages. However, his video material has proved more popular since the audience can watch him in action and see how he conducted his debates. Purportedly, the Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI)[47] is one of the richest *da`wah* movements in southern Africa. Mention should be made of the fact that Mr. Vanker, who resigned in 1982 because of ill health, was the other active IPC member until the 1980s. His style was so markedly different that he was viewed as a sober and intelligent debater, someone who responded wisely to issues pertaining to Christianity and other religious traditions.[48]

Before Deedat suffered a stroke during the mid-1990s, he attracted a few Africans who embraced Islam. But when one considers his method and his way of conveying the message, one can understand why he generally did not succeed in attracting crowds of African Christians. For example, there is

not much evidence to support the view that the IPC convinced Zion Christian Church members or, for that matter, Pentecostals that their beliefs in Christ and Christianity were not in line with the general understanding of monotheism. Although these might be considered among the negative outcomes of Deedat's *da`wah* activities, others responded positively to his method and message as well as to those of other related organizations, such as the South African Dawah Network (SADN) and the IDMSA.[49]

The IDMSA, one of the country's largest and oldest *da`wah* organizations, started humbly in Durban's Umlaas Marianhill Islamic Centre. Before becoming an independent organization, it was an integral MYMSA branch that later set up the Islamic Movement of KwaZulu and Natal (IMKAN) specifically to engage in *da`wah* work. Although it succeeded in doing so, some of its members, namely, Ebrahim Dada, Yusuf Osman, Faizal Ahmad, and the stalwart of the Islamic mission Yusuf Mohamedy, all MYMSA members who felt the need to break away from the parent body and devote their time to *da`wah* activities, decided that it was best to create an independent organization. They thus started the IDMSA.

Before it became independent, the 1984 MYMSA Islamabad (Pakistan) report confidently stated that the ground for Islam's growth and spread in South Africa was most fertile. In other words, since it was working closely with non-Muslims against apartheid, the leadership realized that the non-Muslims (i.e., particularly the Africans) were more than receptive to Islam's call. The report indicated that there were fifteen thousand African Muslims and, for some odd reason, identified the Zanzibaris and Malawians as "foreign blacks" who numbered around five thousand individuals. The first group, which had been in South Africa for many decades, had been classified by apartheid-era statisticians as "Asians." The Malawian migrant workers have also been around for a lengthy period of time. Why classify these groups as "foreign"? Nevertheless, the report provided some indication as to how a Muslim activist organization reviewed the South African status quo.

Presently, the IDMSA is headquartered in Durban and located in all major South African cities. It has done well for itself. When the Africa Muslim Agency (AMA) was formed in South Africa, however, some IDMSA members joined it to combine *da`wah* with social welfare work in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, its leadership worked tirelessly to make inroads among African Muslims by trying to convince its target audience of how close Islam was (and still is) to African traditional practices and to what extent they would have to adapt their traditions so that they would not undermine Islam's basic principles. The IDMSA was partially success-

ful in adopting these methods in KwaZulu Natal. On many occasions it has requested an audience with Zulu king Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and, in quite a few instances, he responded positively.

The IDMSA, like all other Muslim missionary organizations, has had to deal with racism, an issue that cannot be easily resolved because of the extent to which apartheid psychologically conditioned and regimented the ethnic communities. It has published several texts that covered aspects of Islam. During the mid-1990s it published *Islam for Africa: Africa for Islam*, a booklet that contained two short articles. The first article was penned by Nigerian judge Shaykh Ahmed Lemu, who had visited South Africa on a few occasions, and the second by Dr. Hamidullah, who focused on "African Muslims at the time of the Prophet." This booklet sought to inform its readers about the close connection of Islam and Muslims with Africa. In addition, the IDMSA also distributed pamphlets highlighting the role of certain Muslim personalities, among them Malcolm X.

Since Malcolm X's status in the United States is closely tied to the issue of racism, it is perhaps of interest to mention an incident that somewhat reflects the extent of the tension that continues to exist between established and emerging Muslim communities. During 1992 Omar Moleleki, an IPCI employee, took a group of about ninety students from Qwa Qwa (Eatsern Cape) on a tour of the Grey Street Mosque, the large and oldest mosque in the Southern Hemisphere. The imam at that time, Maulana Sajjid Makki, ordered them to leave its premises. In response, Moleleki wrote a letter of protest to the trustees. Although the incident seemed to have died down, *Al-Qalam* latched onto the issue and emblazoned its front page with the headlines: "Racist Imam."[50] The imam and the trustees took umbrage, asserting that the imam had not requested the students to leave because of any racial bias, but because the mosque was quite full and some space was needed for others to pass through. The dispute that erupted between the imam and the community, particularly *Al-Qalam*, was amicably settled; the November issue was headlined: "Imam not 'racist'" and the article categorically stated that he was not racist in any way and toward anyone.[51]

This and similar incidents were closely monitored by individuals from within these communities to stave off and reduce any potential tension. Kassiem Ntombela and Advocate Dawood belong to this group of individuals and usually intervened and negotiated to reach a settlement. These elderly, wise African Muslim gentlemen contributed substantially to the formation and growth of KwaZulu Natal's African Muslim community. Ntombela, who died in October 1994 after long illness, embraced Islam in the late 1960s and was an active *da`wah* worker. A very garrulous and lively indi-

vidual, he always engaged his listeners and invariably shared his views on Islam with his audience.

Ntombela openly showed his love and passion for Islam as a way of life throughout the apartheid era. Whenever individuals met him in public and private places, he would respond passionately with warm greetings and a hug. One of his habits was to always make isi-Zulu translations of the Qur'an available to prominent individuals within and outside his community. For example, he publicized the fact that he had handed these translations to the Zulu king and other prominent members of society. In addition, he was the founding member of the Nkandla Muslim Jamaat, which was instrumental in setting up a *jamat khana*, a *madrasa*, and a high school and active in social welfare work in the province's heart. He fostered and encouraged tolerance and reconciliation between Muslims and non-Muslims and eagerly initiated meetings between them to defuse the province's widespread conflicts.[52]

The African Muslims in Gauteng and Surrounding Regions

When reflecting upon *da`wah* in South Africa, one can safely argue that Durban acted as an important center and stimulus for others in the country. The IDMSA, for example, entered numerous areas and made its contribution. But in Gauteng and the northern part of South Africa, there were other organizations. One of these was the AMA,[53] which has been directed by Farid Choonara (who was also a key member of the MYMSA in Johannesburg) since its formation in 1981. It challenged the IDMSA position in these and other regions. Bankrolled by Kuwaiti funds via Dr. Abdurahman As-Sumayt, it currently gives *da`wah* and provides humanitarian assistance in more than thirty-five African countries. For example, it gave ample assistance to Mozambique's flood victims in 2002.

The AMA and other organizations, among them the Waqf al-Waqifin, have been extremely active in helping communities in times of need. The AMA has also distributed its publications as a way of informing the community about its ongoing role. One of the many publications that have emerged from its desk was *Some Points of Similarity Between Islam, Africa and the African* by Essa Al-Seppe, a leading African Muslim active in southern Africa and a former MYMSA executive member. Among the aspects it discussed was the perception of God from the African viewpoint and a comparative view between African social customs and Islamic etiquette. Al-Seppe concluded by stating that the aspirations of Muslims and Africans are similar and not divergent as might have been thought initially.

Other (and more prominent) organizations have also paid attention to the plight of African communities for about fifty years. One of these was the well-known Islamic Missionary Society (IMS), founded in Johannesburg during 1958 by Mohammed S. Laher. Given his focus on missionary work among Africans, Laher and his supporters set up simple Islamic centers to serve the needs of impoverished African townships. This, in turn, led him to establish feeding programs and self-help projects to empower the communities. In addition, he also saw to the distribution of literature among the local Sotho, Setswana, and Zulu peoples in their own languages. One example will suffice: a slim AMA publication on the principles of Islam by the renowned Muslim theologian Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, who had visited South Africa twice during the early and mid-twentieth century, was translated from English into isi-Xhosa as *Iziseko Zenkolo Yobu - Islam*.[54]

But while these organizations played specific roles within the South African community, others directed their efforts only toward the emerging communities. One of them was the Nation of Islam. From its very name, it is quite evident that these Gauteng-based Muslims had a strong affinity toward their fellow Muslims, namely, the African Americans in the United States. Since the Nation of Islam had made an indelible impact in that country and brought about significant positive change within the African-American Muslim community, some African Muslims felt that following similar strategies would enable them to carve out an important niche for themselves within the general South Africa society and particularly within the minority Muslim community.

In 1992 Shaykh Abas Adam Mabena, Shaykh Othman Mabena, and Shaykh Chauke Ebrahi, together with a group of brothers and sisters from Soweto, decided to launch this organization to actively give *da`wah* and preach Islam in the townships. From the time of its formation until after South Africa became a democratic state, the Nation of Islam used its limited resources and funding to establish a *jamat khana* in Meadowlands (1992), open a central office in Johannesburg (1993), and erect another *jamat khana* in Emndeni (1994). Apart from setting up its infrastructure, the organization sought to send students to Sudan for further theological training and to participate in debates with regional student and religious bodies. The organization also saw itself as a relief agency and thus involved itself in social welfare work in at least four provinces.

Even though the above-mentioned organizations made significant contributions to the communities in Gauteng and the surrounding provinces, communal racism persisted. This came to the fore during March 2000, when a group of disgruntled African Muslims chose to publicly protest and air

their grievances regarding the established community's widespread racist attitudes. In an *Al-Qalam* report of April 2000, mention was made of the fact that these Muslims "brandished inflammatory posters and pamphlets in full view of the cameras, some even pasting them to the back of vehicles they arrived and left in." The report mentioned that the one poster read: "Boycott all Indian shops" and that another one screamed: "Jamiat Ulema you are racist."[55] This is indeed in contrast to what the Jamiat had wished to do when it circulated a pamphlet stating its opposition to all forms of racism.

Be that as it may, even though the protest did not cause a great stir or have a negative impact, as the protesters desired, the incident clearly showed that the Muslims in Gauteng and the surrounding areas need to take cognizance of the concerns expressed by their fellow African Muslims. Incidents such as these can have a devastating effect not only on the relations between the various ethnic groups, but particularly within the Muslim community.

Toward a Conclusion

South African Muslims have expressed their feelings regarding the one *ummah* idea; however, despite their emotional outbursts and feelings it appears that while they wish to be viewed as one, they remain divided. Meeting and conference participants have raised and intensely debated the racial issues. Between 25-27 August 1995, the Free State Islamic conference was held in the town of Kroonstad. The conference was the first of its kind in that it brought together many African Muslims of the Free State province, which was and still is known as the Afrikaner province. Moreover, according to *Al-Qalam* report, it set the agenda for the province's socioeconomic and educational development.[56]

Both the MYMSA and the AMA have been active in serving their impoverished Muslim communities; MYMSA was particularly active with helping the conference organizers. Conference Coordinator Maulana Mustafa Mantsho stated that one reason for holding the conference was to "rally the activities of the Muslims in a unified way." He did, however, lament the fact that there was not much support from the Muslim theological bodies. Yet he also mentioned that one positive outcome was that it successfully addressed the "racial tension" existing within the Muslim communities.

According to Shamima Shaikh's report, Mantsho declared that "the ice has been broken between the different communities." The latter issue was also touched upon when the Greater Soweto Islamic Youth Conference was held under the theme of "One Ummah" during November of the previous

year.[57] On this issue, under the caption "A Holy Alliance?" in his regular *Al-Qalam* column Tayob further interrogated the debate by raising important and indeed similar points.[58] He referred to a leading local African member of the Murabitun, a group that was established soon after Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Murabit's visit in 1983. The African Murabitun, according to him, used this as an effective ploy to keep Indian Muslims out of the township. This was clearly the case in 1986, when they took control of a local mosque located in one of the African townships and made it off-limits to Indian Muslims.[59]

In fact, one nasty incident brought the conflict to the fore: Amir Abduraghman Zwane (d. 2006) of the Murabitun sent some of his supporters to assail the AMA and the LMS. They attacked the respective leaders of these organizations, namely, Farid Choonara and Mohamed Laher, and took R5,000.00 ($500.00) from their coffers.[60] They were forced to hand over the funds in their possession. He and his group also apparently robbed a bank, arguing that they lived in a land of *kufr* (unbelief) and had the right to take money that belongs to them (and everyone). This unforgettable act resulted in his incarceration for a long time; he was also later expelled from the Murabitun and replaced by Advocate Abdus-Samad Nana.

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was in session, it was further revealed that Zwane was a *Vlakplaas askari*, a term for someone who worked with the notorious South African Security Branch during the apartheid era in the 1970s and 1980s. This was indeed a shock to some, but to others it was a confirmation that individual people should not be given complete trust in running any organization's affairs.[61] Nevertheless, the events of the African Muslim leadership in the Murabitun remained a clear case of tension during the 1980s and 1990s among the ethnic Muslim communities. Unfortunately the racial tensions have not at all disappeared, as was the hope of those from within both communities.[62] Representatives attempted to decrease the tensions via open discussions at conferences, pamphleteering, and other methods.

Some Muslim organizations also considered it opportune to print pamphlets that would give a fairly positive view of the Muslims' perceptions of race and racism. For example, the Central Islamic Trust (CIT) in Johannesburg issued *Love, Brotherhood and Equality in Islam* (circa 1980). Before that, it reprinted the second edition of a booklet initially issued by the IMS. Written by Abdur-Rahmaan Wright, *The People of South Africa and the Imported Religions* sought to show the similarities between African and Islamic culture. Later on, a joint Jamiat Ulama of Transvaal and Jamiat Ulama of Natal glossy hand-out entitled *The Baneful Plague of Racism! An Islamic Perspective* (circa 1993) was distributed. Their input on this vexed

subject was indeed welcome; the issue, however, was and still is not what they printed and freely distributed, but whether their fellow Muslims – and particularly the theologians – preached and practiced the message that the pamphlets tried to convey to their fellow citizens, particularly the oppressed African masses that outnumbered them numerically.

During Ramadan 2005, the African Muslims of Seshego (near Pietersburg) and Zamdela (near Sasolburg) in Limpopo province organized, despite their lack of resources, a two-day gathering during which they debated and discussed issues of faith and non-faith. According to Ebrahim wa Bofelo's write up, members of the Tabligh Jama'at also addressed the gathering and extolled the virtues of "*amama*, the *kurta*, the *miswak*, and the walking-stick," the four elements that make up the external lifestyle of the Prophet's Companions. The attendees countered these ideas, stressing the inner dimensions as opposed to the representatives' emphasis on the external dress code.[63] These young emerging Muslims thus opposed and countered the emphasis upon the extrinsic dimension and were concerned with the intrinsic dimension, which seemed to have been overlooked.

Nonetheless, the African Muslims felt that one of the only ways to become independent was to set up their own structures and rely on their own resources, something similar to what had taken place in the United States. They derived a great deal of inspiration from their fellow Muslim brothers and sisters in the United States. When Muhammad Ali visited in 1993 they were filled with joy because this international boxing figure has always taken pride in being associated with Islam and Muslims.[64] Two other American personalities who left a deep impression were Malcolm X and Minister Louis Farrakhan. The latter, who led the Million Man March in 2000, visited South Africa in the late 1990s. His visit reinforced the views of the importance of maintaining and cultivating a unique African identity and the need for self-reliance instead of being locked into a dependence syndrome.

Malcolm X, whose ideas have filtered down and endured for many years among young South African Muslims, were usually invoked and applied within the anti-apartheid setting. During their protests against Washington and some of its internal and external policies, they again extracted his views. This was particularly true in the case of Abu Mumia Jamal, the African-American award-winning journalist who, in their opinion, had been unjustly found guilty of having murdered a white policeman in 1981. Sesanti showed how relevant Malcolm X's ideas were to that and other civil cases in and outside the United States. MYMSA president Salman Letlatsa, who was born during the same year when Malcolm X was assassinated, was impressed by the example that Malcolm X set and, in 1986, was influenced to consider

Islam as a significant alternative in the anti-apartheid struggle while he was a member of the Azanian People's Organization.

Due to their frustration and many other reasons, in 1977 they decided to establish the Organization of African Muslim Unity (OAMU) to look into and after the interests of the African Muslim communities across the country. OAMU president Idris Nxedlane stated that on 13 April 1976 representatives from twenty Muslim organizations gathered to discuss the future of African Muslims. He mentioned that OAMU was not racist and that it was formed to cultivate a sense of reliance. Imam Essa Al-Seppe, who was critical of its formation, stated: "I hope that OAMU would serve as a catalyst that would usher the formation of a movement that would characterize an inclusive and holistic Muslim community."[65]

Toward the end of 1997, Nxedlane was invited to Atlanta and was the guest of Imam Plemon el Amin at the Atlanta Masjid. At that time, the imam was also the chief representative of Imam Wareeth Ud-Din Muhammad, the late leader of the African-American Muslim community. This trip was a learning experience for Nxedlana.[66] In Dangor's assessment of this organization's formation in his article in *Muslim Views*,[67] he argued that it should be welcomed because it will (a) change the power relations, (b) eradicate the dependency syndrome, (c) assist them in forming their own strategies and solutions within the socioeconomic and political realities, (d) provide them with the means to organize themselves into a cohesive group, and (e) allow them to contribute to the overall development of the South African Muslim society.

In another article he raised the following rhetorical question: "Towards an indigenous Islam?"[68] Dangor explained that the outside influences such as that of Malcolm X on local Islam should not be underestimated. He reflected upon the African-American Muslims and discussed their transformation and how they had developed an indigenous African-American Islam instead of depending upon the "Arab" or "Indian" Islam that gradually grew within the United States. In addition, he pointed out that African Muslims had tried to establish an alternative African Islamic Society at the University of Durban-Westville and that Shaykh Adam of the IPCI had formed an African Islamic Propagation Mission in Durban. Dangor went on to identify the role played by the Murabitun in contributing to this indigenous identity. In conclusion, he said that any effort to forestall the emergence of an indigenous Islam will fail and that such attempts will only cause greater tension to develop between the established and the emerging Muslim communities. This will not be different to what has taken place in the United States.

The relations between these two Muslim communities have differed from region to region and from town to town across South Africa. It is very

unlikely that the existing tension will fade in the near future. However, a great deal depends upon the leadership in both communities and the attitudes displayed by the established communities toward the emerging communities. The former should begin accepting the fact that the traditional structures that were given some support by the apartheid system are slowly crumbling and that they will have to gradually become more engaged with the emerging African Muslim community. Although it is not easy to predict the outcome of the relationship between these two communities the next decade, it can be argued that the challenges for the established community will be far greater and harder to deal with if its leaders and members are not willing to compromise on their attitudes and behavior patterns.

Endnotes

1. This is a revised paper that was delivered at the International Conference on Local Islam under global influence in Africa that was held at the University of Bayreuth (4-5 June 2007) and organized by Professor Franz Kogelmann.
2. Cf. M. Haron, "NGK Missionary activities amongst Muslims (1652-1952): A General Survey," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 19, no. 1 (1999): 115-28.
3 . E. Fakude, "Muslims in the Townships of South Africa," *Annual Research of Islam in South Africa* 5 (December 2002): 50-51.
4. Cf. A. Rafudeen, "Towards Forging an 'African' Muslim Identity,"*Annual Research of Islam in South Africa* 5 (December 2002): 57-59 and T. Sitoto "Engaging Muslimness and the Making of African Muslim Identity," *Annual Research of Islam in South Africa* 6 (December 2003): 46-50.
5. A. Zegeye and R. Harris, "Introduction," in *Media, Identity and the Public Sphere in Post-Apartheid South Africa,* ed. A. Zegeye and R. Harris (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 4.
6. D. Rabinowitz, "Community Studies: Anthropological," in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (New York: Elsevier, 2001), 4:2387-89.
7. Ibid., 2387.
8. V. Azarya, "Community," in *The Social Science Encyclopaedia*, ed. Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper (London: Routledge, 1996).
9. Cf. B. Thaver, "Affirmative Action in South Africa: The Limits of History," *Race and Inequality: World Perspectives on Affirmative Action*, ed. Elaine Kennedy-Dubourdieu (London: Ashgate, 2006), 153-72.
10. For a more detailed analysis, consult M. Haron's "Undercounting or Overcounting South Africa's Muslims: The Era of Democracy (Censuses of 1996 and 2001)," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 23 (2003): 100-12.
11. A. I. Tayob, "Counting Muslims in South Africa," *Annual Research of Islam in South Africa* 1 (1998): 7-8.

12. The organizations that were active in the 1980s were the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa, the Call of Islam, and Qibla Mass Movement (cf. F. Esack, "Three Islamic Strands in the South African Struggle for Justice," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 [1988]: 473-98). Also consult A. Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa: The Muslim Youth Movement* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1995).
13. J. Cochrane, "The Significance of the Kairos Document," *South African Outlook* 116 (1986): 123-24 and 117 (1986): 110-11.
14. T. F. Sitoto, "Imam Essa Al-Seppe and the 'emerging and unorganized African Muslim sector,'" *Annual Research of Islam in South Africa* 5 (December 2002): 43-46.
15. Cf. M. Haron "Da`wah amongst the Africans in the Greater Cape Town region," *Al-`Ilm: Journal of the Centre for Research in Islamic Studies* 12 (1992): 1-16 and P. Kaarsholm, "Population Movements, Islam and the Interaction of Indian and African Identity Strategies in South Africa during and after Apartheid," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 24-25 (2006-07).
16. Tayob, "Counting Muslims," 7.
17. A. Doi, "Proselytism and Islam in Southern Africa," *Emory International Legal Review* 14, no. 2 (summer 2000): 1147-67; N. Itano, "In South Africa, many blacks convert to Islam," *The Christian Science Monitor* (2002) and online at www.csmonitor.com/2002/0110/p13s1-woaf.html. Also see G. Bell "Massive Growth of Muslims in South Africa's Black Townships: African-style practice lures" *Cape Times* (15 Nov. 2004) and his "Islam Spreading in Christian South Africa," (2004). Online at www.islamawareness.net/Fastest/southafrica.html.
18. Interestingly, during the first week of March 2006, MYMSA and an array of other Muslim organization operating under the "Anti-Racism Education Forum" banner issued a circular that contained a sermon they wanted the Muslim theologians to read out on the Friday before the 21 March that coincided with Human Rights day. Also read Bangstad's comments on Black African conversion in Cape Town in S. Bangstad, "Black African Conversion to Islam in Cape Town," *Annual Research of Islam in South Africa* 9 (2006/07): 14-17.
19. Y. Kathrada, *African Muslim Refugees in the Durban Area 1994-2001* (unpublished Islamic studies B.A. Honors Thesis, Durban: University of Durban-Westville, 2001).
20. Refer to the sermon mentioned in endnote 19.
21. Cf. Fakude, "Muslims in the Townships," and Dangor's regular newspaper columns in *Africa Perspective and Muslim Views,* respectively; his columns on African Muslims during 1998 are of relevance.
22. M. Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 2 (October 2002): 275-98.
23. Consult K. Prendergast's "Medieval Africa: Great Zimbabwe and the Arabic Connection," 17 Feb. 2005. Online at www.islamonline.net/English/artculture/2005/02/article05.shtml.

24. Cf. R. Gayre, "The Lembas and Vendas of Vendaland," *The Mankind Quarterly* 8 (1967): 3-15 and T. Parfitt, *Journey to the Vanished City: The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992; reprint New York: Vintage, 2000). Also view the www.pbs.org documentary and P. Tyson's "The Mystery of Great Zimbabwe," *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, Nova, Public Broadcasting Service, 2000.
25. In a more detailed doctoral study, M. Le Roux argues along similar lines. See her *The Lemba: A Lost Tribe of Israel in Southern Africa* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2003). She also wrote two accessible articles related to the subject. One of them is "A preliminary investigation into the Semitic origins and missionary initiatives of some Lemba communities in southern Africa," *Missonalia* 25 no. 4 (1997): 493-510. And visit online: www.freemaninstitute.com.
26. A. Mathonsi, *Muslim Views* 31 (16 Jan. 1990).
27. Cf. J. Kalla, "Islam in the Townships of the Northern Province," *Annual Research of Islam in South Africa* 4 (December 2001): 45.
28. Z.-G. Abrahams, "The Spread and Growth of Islam in Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu (Cape Town) (unpublished Religious Studies B.A. Honors Thesis, Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1981).
29. Also consult M. Haron, "Islamic Dynamism in South Africa's Western Cape," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 9, no. 2 (July 1988): 366-72 and Manfred Jung, *Theological Reflections on the Spread of Islam and attitudes of Churches: A Case study of three Black Townships in Cape Town* (unpublished M.A. Mission Thesis, Stellenbosch, University of Stellenbosch, 2005).
30. Cf. M. Haron, "Towards a Sacred Biography: The Life and Times of Imam Abdullah Haron," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 14 (1994): 63-83.
31. Haron, "Islamic Dynamism," 368-69.
32. A. K. Ahmed, *Muslim Views* 13, no. 2 (December 1998): 36.
33. Cf. Abrahams, "The Spread and Growth of Islam."
34. Cf. R. Lee, "Understanding African Women's Conversion to Islam," *Annual Research of Islam in South Africa* 5 (December 2002): 52-56.
35. Cf. *Muslim Views* 2, no. 14 (November 1989): 15-16.
36. Y. Mohamed, ed., *The Roving Ambassador of Peace: The Lectures of Moulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqui in South Africa* (Cape Town: 2006).
37. *Muslim Views* 12, no. 19 (12 Jul. 1998).
38. Cf. T. Z. Langa, "Changing Perceptions," *Al-Muwahhidoon Newsletter* 3, no. 1 (5 Sept. 2000).
39. Ibid., 5. Also read Masakhane Muslim Community, "Islam in the African Townships of the Cape," in *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa* (2002), 5:50-51.
40. E. Moosa, "World's Apart: The Tabligh Jama'at under Apartheid," in *Travelers in Faith: Studies of the Tabligh Jama'at as a Transnational Movement for Faith Renewal,* ed. K. Masud (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000).
41. *Al-Qalam* 20, no. 10 (8 Oct. 1994).
42. Ibid., 19, no. 4 (3 Apr. 1993).

43. Ibid., 22, no. 6 (5 Jun. 1996).
44. Ibid., 23, no. 3 (13 Feb./Mar. 1997).
45. Cf. S.Vawda, "The Emerging of Islam in an African Township," *al-Ilm* 13, (January 1993): 45-62. This paper is essentially a field report undertaken in Kwamashu-Ntuzuma-Inanda over a period of three months during 1992.
46. S. Sadouni, "les territories d'un predicateur musulman sud-africain: Ahmed Deedat," in *Dynamiques religieuses en Afrique austral,* ed. V. Faure (Paris: Karthala 2000), 161-73; D Westerlund, "Ahmed Deedat's Theology of Religion: Apologetics through Polemics," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 3 (2003): 263-78; and M. Haron, *The Dynamics of Christian-Muslim Relations in South Africa (circa 1960-2000)* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International 2006), chapter 3.
47. The Islamic Propagation Centre became the Islamic Propagation Centre International during 1982, after it received financial support from Muslim governments and institutions from the Middle East.
48. Cf. Haron, *Dynamics of Christian-Muslim Relations,* 34-41.
49. Fakude, "Muslims in the Townships," 48.
50. *Al-Qalam* 18, no. 9 (1 Oct. 1992).
51. Ibid., 18, no. 10 (November 1992).
52. Ibid., 20, no. 11 (9 Nov. 1994).
53. Read a very critical article by M. Terdman and R. Paz, "Islamization and Dawah in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of the Africa Muslim Agency," African Occasional Papers 1, no. 2 (July 2007). Online at www.e-prism.org; and consult S. Sadouni, "New Religious Actors in South Africa: The Example of Islamic Humanitarianism," in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, ed. B. Soares (New York: PalgraveMacmillan, 2007), 110-12.
54. Cf. Haron, *Dynamics of Christian-Muslim Relations,* 41 and see A. Maurier "The Islamic Missionary Society-Johannesburg: A Descriptive Study of Dawah Activities in Gauteng during 1958-1996" (unpublished M.A. Mission Thesis, Stellenbosch, University of Stellenbosch, 1997).
55. *Al-Qalam* 26, no. 4 (1-2 Apr. 2000).
56. Ibid., 21 no. 8 (7 Aug. 1995).
57. Ibid., 20, no. 11 (6 Nov. 1994).
58. Ibid., 21, no. 8 (15 Aug. 1995).
59. Ibid., 18, no. 3 (17 Mar. 1992).
60. Ibid.
61. Cf. Ibid., 23, no. 3 (2 Feb./Mar. 1997).
62. Cf. Fakude, "Muslims in the Townships," 49.
63. *Al-Qalam* 23, no. 3 (9 Feb./Mar. 1997).
64. Cf. ibid., 23, no. 3 (April 1994).
65. Ibid., 23, no. 4 (7 Apr. 1997) and also cf. Sitoto, "Imam Essa Al-Seppe."
66. Ibid., 23, no. 12 (2-3 Dec. 1997).
67. *Muslim Views* 10, no. 6 (17 May 1997).
68. Ibid., 7, no. 10 (17 Nov. 1994).