

# The Consolidation and Spread of Islam in South Africa

*Yousuf Dadoo*

## Abstract

Much has been written about Islam's advent, entrenchment, and spread in specific regions of South Africa, and other writings cover its advent over the entire country. And yet no sufficient academic scrutiny of factors that have contributed to its consolidation and spread in recent times has been undertaken. By researching this issue, the problems and challenges confronting Islam at present and in the foreseeable future will be better appreciated.

After presenting a brief synopsis of Islam's advent South Africa, I assess how it was consolidated and then tackle its spread while underscoring specific successes and failures. Where necessary, the names of individuals are mentioned. The divergent nature of Islamic faith and practice is constantly stressed. The topic is a fascinating field of study in which sometimes contradictory forces strive for hegemony. Finally, a possible solution to this problem is presented.

## Introduction

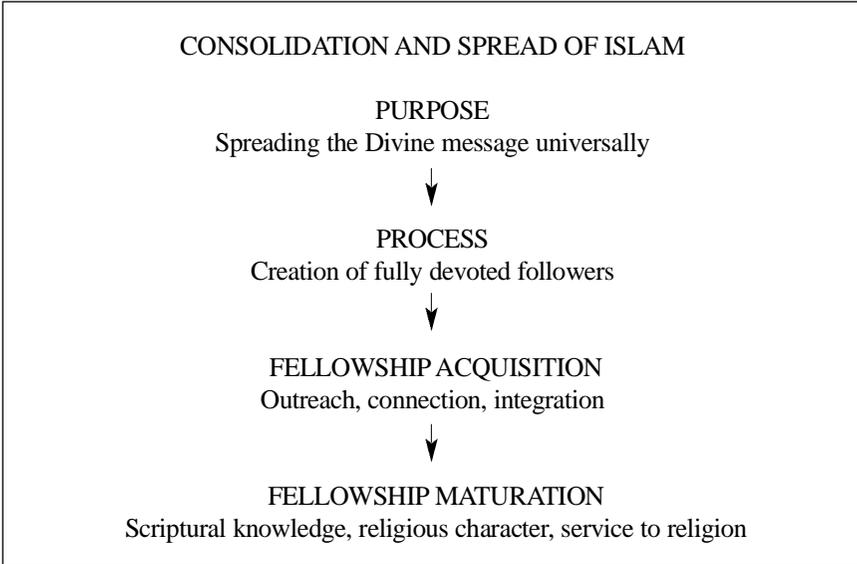
The term *consolidate* has been etymologically derived from the Latin word *consolidatus*, which is the past participle of *consolidare* (to make solid). The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines *consolidation* as "1. the act of making 'a position of power or success stronger so that it is more likely to continue' and 2. combining things."<sup>1</sup>

Islam's consolidation in any region may be understood in relation to the illustration on the next page. Therein, the purpose sequentially generates the activities outlined under process, fellowship acquisition, and fellowship

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Yousuf Dadoo is currently head of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of South Africa (Pretoria). His academic fields of interest include Qur'anic and hadith studies; Islamic law, philosophy, and mysticism; and area studies.

maturation. In this way, a religion's consolidation and spread may be viewed as mutually interdependent and interactive endeavours.



(Adapted from Connectionpower)<sup>2</sup>

The topic under review first requires a historical synopsis of Islam's advent and early anchorage in South Africa.

Much has been written about Islam's advent, entrenchment, and spread in specific regions of South Africa,<sup>3</sup> and other writings cover its advent over the entire country.<sup>4</sup> Yet no sufficient academic scrutiny of factors that have contributed to its consolidation and spread in recent times has been undertaken. By researching this issue, the problems and challenges confronting Islam at present and in the foreseeable future will be better appreciated.

The precise date for Islam's appearance in South Africa remains unknown. According to Moosa,<sup>5</sup> recent studies indicate that it may have arrived from the north as early as the fifteenth or sixteenth century,<sup>6</sup> by which time Muslim Arab traders had reached Mozambique. Mumisa states that the Xhosas of the Cape in particular had contacts with Arabs long before the arrival of the Malays (mentioned in the next few paragraphs).<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the early contacts between Islam and southern African tribes had no significant impact on the latter.<sup>8</sup>

Dangor records that Ahmad of Batavia was the first Muslim to arrive at the Cape with Jan van Riebeeck in 1652.<sup>9</sup> However, Wikipedia credits Shaikh Abd al-Rahim Matebe Shah, who arrived from Sumatra in 1668,

with this distinction. The Dutch East India Company exiled him to Cape Town because of his resistance to the Dutch occupation of the East Indies. He used his time in exile to consolidate the teaching of Islam among the territory's slaves, many of whom came from Muslim backgrounds in what is now Malaysia and Bengal.<sup>10</sup>

According to Davids, 50% of the slaves were from India, 30% from Africa and Madagascar, 15% from Indonesia, and the remainder hailed from countries like present-day Sri Lanka and Japan and regions like Southeast Asia.<sup>11</sup> There were also servants, refugees, non-political prisoners, voluntary migrants, and political exiles.<sup>12</sup> The following religious figures belonged to the latter category: Shaikh Yusuf, who arrived in 1694 among the first cohesive Muslim community comprised of twelve imams in the group; Rajah of Tambora, who arrived in 1697 and recorded the first Qur'an from memory while in prison; Tuan Sa'id, who arrived in 1744 and, upon release, became a policeman and used his status to enter locked and guarded slave quarters to preach Islam; and Tuan Guru. The latter petitioned for the first mosque site and, when that failed, led public congregational prayers in defiance of the law. After his release in 1793, he established the first Muslim school at Dorp Street in Bo-Kaap, which later became the first mosque (Masjid al-Awwal) to be used for congregational prayers.<sup>13</sup> The land had previously belonged to a freed female slave named Saartjie van de Kaap.<sup>14</sup>

Islam was a popular religion among slaves, and its tradition of teaching enabled literate slaves to gain better positions in their masters' households. At the same time, it taught its followers to treat their slaves respectfully.<sup>15</sup> Yet Islam, which had been banned, had to be preached secretly and practiced privately<sup>16</sup> until 1804, when religious freedom was proclaimed.<sup>17</sup>

But another problem lurked large: the heavy setback suffered by the Dutch in the East Indies around 1700 seriously undermined the effective contact between the local Malays and their counterparts in the Indonesian Archipelago. This caused the gradual disappearance of teachers of Islamic traditions from their communities. The situation had assumed critical proportions by 1850, when the tide began to turn. Having lost intellectual and religious contact with the East Indies, new generations of Muslims formed contacts with Islam's heartland, Makkah, which was made easier by the opening of the Suez Canal. By the 1870s, community members were studying Arabic and Islamic studies in Makkah and returning to the Cape invigorated.<sup>18</sup> To this day, the majority of the Shafi'is observe numerous cultural practices, including the Prophet's birthday, reciting specific spiritual hymns on auspicious occasions, the caliphate display, and the ceremony commemorating a child's mastery of Qur'anic recitation.<sup>19</sup>

The first Muslims came to Natal from southern India in 1860 as indentured labourers to work on the sugar plantations. The legendary Badsha Peer from Madras, who taught the essentials of Islam to them, was probably among this group.<sup>20</sup> The Indians, most of whom were Hindus, were imported since they provided the cheapest and highly reliable labor at a time when the provincial economy relied heavily on the human labor-intensive sugar industry. Efforts to compel local Africans to satisfy this need failed because of the poor working conditions and low wages offered by the White farmers. The latter, assisted by the government, imported Indian laborers to solve the problem.<sup>21</sup> When the contracts of these indentured laborers expired after three to four years, they became free residents of the territory.

Beginning in 1869, a second wave of Indians entered South Africa as passenger migrants who were either merchants or their employees. Mainly coming from Gujarat, Maharashtra, or Uttar Pradesh, they settled in different parts of Natal, Transvaal, and the Cape. As Islam flourished more among this group than any other, its members formed the core of South Africa's nascent Muslim community.<sup>22</sup>

One of the conditions upon which these traders arrived in Port Natal was that the state accord them sufficient space for observing religious practices such as the five daily prayers in congregation as well as the establishment of basic religious schools (*madrasas*) for their children wherever they settled. This explains the swift growth of mosques and *madrasas* in their localities.<sup>23</sup> Special mention has to be made of Goolam Mohammad Soofie, commonly known as Soofie Saheb, who arrived from Ratnagiri in 1895. According to oral tradition, he established the shrine of Badsha Peer in central Durban as well as a mosque, orphanage, and spiritual retreat (*khanqah*) at Riverside. Over the next fifteen years he replicated such structures elsewhere in Natal, Cape Town, and Lesotho. These formed the core venues for establishing a distinct, popular Islamic identity within a disparate working-class Muslim population that promoted such practices as visiting saints' tombs, having faith in their intercessionary roles, and celebrating the birthdays of the Prophet and other saints.<sup>24</sup> Muslims of Indian origin are mainly Hanafis.

The first African Muslims to arrive were the former slaves known as "Zanzibaris," so-called because they were rerouted from Zanzibar to Natal between 1873-80 to alleviate a labor shortage. They came from northern Mozambique, Tanzania, the Comoros, Zanzibar, Malawi, and possibly Somalia. Upon expiry of their period of indenture, they settled in and around Durban in places like the Bluff, Berea, Umgeni, Verulam, and Pinetown. The Indian Muslims already living there welcomed them, prayed with them, and took a keen interest in their settling down. At Kings Rest, the Indian Mus-

lms who had already settled in Durban helped the local community build a mosque. This group of Muslims could easily assimilate with the South African blacks, and there was even some intermarriage among them. Such spouses invariably adopted Islam.<sup>25</sup> They are Shafi`is and observe such cultural practices as the Prophet's birthday.

Some indigenous people, such as the Africans, Coloureds, Whites, and others have also embraced Islam. This matter will be amplified later.

Beginning with the 1990s, migrants from various African countries (e.g., the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Mali, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Somalia, and Ethiopia), the Middle East (e.g., Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Iran, Turkey, and Yemen), South Asia, Eastern Europe, and former republics of the former Soviet Union, have settled in the country, thus giving the Muslim community a cosmopolitan spirit. Among them are Malikis, Ja`faris, and adherents of some mystic orders.

The 2002 census figures reveal that Muslims numbered 654,064 in 2001, comprising just 1.46% of South Africa's total population of 44.8 million. While Indians and Malays constitute the bulk of this figure, Africans represent the fastest growing segment, having increased by 52.3% since 1991, when they numbered 11,986. In 2002 they comprised 11.42% of the Muslim population. Class differences are due to discrepancies in education levels, unemployment, and income levels of the employed. Work status is determined by levels of education. Language is another marker of differentiation. All of these details confirm the diverse nature of South African Muslim society.

**Table 1. Muslim Population per Province and Race in 2002.**

	African	White	Indian	Coloured (incl. Malays)	Total
Eastern Cape	3,601	630	5,866	9,575	19,672
Free State	1,798	108	1,847	284	4,037
Gauteng	24,597	2,967	98,823	23,695	150,082
KwaZulu-Natal	2,987	1,036	117,424	6,143	142,460
Limpopo	3,760	90	6,242	195	10,287
Mpumalanga	9,429	227	6,680	500	16,836
Northern Cape	736	65	1,015	2,833	4,651
North-West Province	4,717	221	7,234	961	13,133
Western Cape	8,204	3,065	29,800	251,837	292,906
Total	74,701	8,409	274,931	296,023	654,064
Percentage	11.42	1.28	42.04	45.26	100.00 <sup>26</sup>

Returning to the problem besetting Muslims, Vahed comments that

Islam has never functioned as an organic unity in South Africa. The most obvious distinction is between Indian and Malay Muslims with their different histories, cultures and traditions ... But deep differences also exist among Indian Muslims due to distinctions of locality, class, ethnicity and language.<sup>27</sup>

Among the latter, traders were mistakenly called “Arabs” in Natal because the majority of them adopted Middle Eastern attire to distinguish themselves from indentured laborers. They desired equality with Whites in accordance with Queen Victoria’s 1858 Proclamation that asserted the equality of British subjects.<sup>28</sup> But this differentiation plagued some Malays as well, for

“Cape Malays” were considered to be peaceful and loyal, and were known for their religious parochialism and their unquestioned acceptance of white dominance. This “Malayism” was characterized by something that set them apart, but also above the other people of colour in their common environment ... (t)hey were made to believe that they were the “elite of the coloured” people. This exclusivity and false superiority made it difficult for them to fuse with the other sections of the oppressed, and to develop a common united struggle against oppression.<sup>29</sup>

Africans have regarded this attitude in negative terms, which will be clarified later.

### *Consolidating Islam*

This section covers the ingredients for fellowship maturation, as outlined in the diagram on the first page, by acquiring scriptural knowledge, a religious disposition, and serving Islam. To achieve these objectives, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries South Africa’s Muslims began developing their own institutions, mosques, as well as religious and secular schools, together with a host of cultural, educational, and welfare bodies.<sup>30</sup> Recently, they have also embarked on media productions. Details are given below.

**MOSQUES.** As mentioned earlier, Masjid al-Awwal was the Cape’s first mosque. Its counterparts in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng are the Jumma Masjid (established in 1881 in Durban), Kerk Street Masjid (built in 1888 in Johannesburg),<sup>31</sup> and Queen Street Masjid (built in Pretoria in 1887).<sup>32</sup> Presently, almost every town, city, or village inhabited by Muslims has a fully

fledged mosque or a little prayer structure (*jamaat khana*). There are approximately 455 of them in all.<sup>33</sup>

**EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.** With the blessing of legal scholars, religious schools have been founded in most areas inhabited by Muslims. Although they have become more organized over time by teaching standard syllabi, they seek to “instil Islamic practices and rituals rather than foster independent and critical thinking.”<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, their doors have been flung open to Coloured and African Muslim children from the outset “as Muslim believed that Islam should be spread among the Africans, and the *madrasah* (sic.) and schools were the best means of *da`wah* activities.”<sup>35</sup>

For a long time, religious and secular schools have been combined and operated on the same venue, but at different times of the day. Examples of these are the Waterval Islamic Institute outside Johannesburg (established by the Mia family in 1935 and which provides free hostel accommodations),<sup>36</sup> the Ahmedia State Aided School and the South Coast Madrasah State Aided School (established in 1947), the Anjuman Islam State Aided School (established in 1953), and the Orient Islamic School (established in 1960). Apart from the first mentioned, all of the other schools are located in Durban.

Lately, there has been a growth of Muslim private schools – there were more than seventy by early 2003<sup>37</sup> – where students are largely Muslim while the curriculum is mainly secular with a small number of courses in Islam. They have emerged as a gender counterrevolution to practices promoted by the state and broader society in which, involved parties believe, the necessary Islamic moral values can be instilled. The teaching of several subjects (e.g., sex education and AIDS) at secular schools is opposed. Many also contend that such social problems as gangsterism, drugs, and pornography result in moral decline, for which they mainly blame non-Muslims. As a result of this initiative, Suraya Hassim, chairperson for the Islamic Relief Fund, declares that many African women with children attending such schools are converting to Islam.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, religious seminaries have been established over the final quarter of the twentieth century. They include: Darul Uloom Newcastle (1973), Darul Uloom Azaadville (1981), Darul Uloom Aleemia Razvia (1983), Darul Uloom Zakariyya (1984), Islamic College of South Africa (1990,<sup>39</sup> now known as International Peace University of South Africa), and Darul Uloom Pretoria (1993). Most of them are rooted in the tradition of their inspirational source, the Darul Uloom at Deoband in India. The clerical religious body in KwaZulu-Natal explains the importance of these establishments:

One of the main Role (sic.) and object (sic.) of the Darul Uloom is to provide, the muslims with a direct access to the original sources of Islamic Learning, produce learned man with missionary zeal to work among the muslim masses in particular, to create a truly religious awakening towards classical Islam, ridding the prevailing innovations and unorthodox practices, observations and belief that has crept into the Ummah and to impart instruction in classical religion.

The Darul Ulooms (sic.) role is, as has always been the propagation of the Quran and the Sunnah, the endeavour to keep the faith in its original form and to preserve the tenets of Islam along with safeguarding the community from religious heresy.

Throughout the corridor of Islamic History the Darul Uloom played a vital role in the dissemination of Islamic knowledge and the preservation of the Deen.<sup>40</sup>

These criteria are valid for all traditional seminaries, regardless of their affiliation. This statement leads to various deductions and consequences, such as placing the focus on reforming the Muslim community rather than disseminating its message among others; replicating classical models rather than producing new ones through enhancing research capacity is emphasized; creating a pervasive siege mentality in which all insights regarded as undermining those of this clerical group are condemned. Muslims who exercise their right to self-expression establishing their own Qur'an study groups and other issues are suspected of being in league with the enemies of Islam. All educational and media institutions under their control echo this prejudice.

Vahed criticizes their *modus operandi*:

Darul Ulooms are not attempting to develop an Islamic view to respond to the problems facing Muslims. Amongst most Muslims the main method of confronting Western domination is to criticize the West's secularism, which, respondents explained, includes the absence of political morality, the chauvinism of jingoistic capitalism and materialism. The lack of sustained intellectual development may be due to the fact that theological debate is discouraged. The ulema (sic.) consider intellectuals to be negatively influenced by Western education and culture that has resulted in them feeling that they are superior to ulema in knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

It has to be stressed that the International Peace University of South Africa mentioned above enjoys a broader vision, both theologically and practically, as compared to the other seminaries.

**MEDIA AND LITERARY ACTIVITIES.** The Qur'an has been translated into Zulu under the supervision of Maulana Cassim Sema of Newcastle and into Afrikaans by Imam M. A. Baker of Cape Town. Several portions have been rendered into Xhosa. Abdul Rasul Osman has translated a tract called Teachings of Islam into Tswana. The Africa Muslims Agency has also prepared and translated a number of rudimentary Islamic texts into Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, and Tswana.<sup>42</sup>

The following publications circulate either regionally or nationally: Newspapers include *Al-Qalam*, *Muslim Views*, *Ar-Rasheed*, *Al-Miftaah*, *Al-Balaagh*, *Majlis*, and *Al-Irfaan*. Journals include *Al-Huda*, *Muslim Woman*, *An-Nisaa'*, *Al-Misbaah*, and *Awake*. Besides this, several booklets and pamphlets on specific topics are distributed. The following radio stations beam broadcasts: Radio Islam (Lenasia), Channel Islam International (Lenasia), Voice (Johannesburg, now defunct), 786 and Voice of the Cape (Cape Town), Radio 1548 (Laudium), and Radio Al-Ansaar (Durban). A single channel, ITV, transmits television programs from Pretoria.<sup>43</sup> The quality of outputs varies from mediocre in many instances to occasionally stimulating. The primary theme is the permanent problems confronting Muslims, which are both of their own as well as of the defiled un-Islamic environment's making. The latter is often displayed in paranoia for everything alien.

Even alternative views on topics from Muslims are sometimes viewed negatively by the clergy. For example, Muslims operating under the Youth for Islamic Enlightenment and Development (YIELD) lodged a formal complaint against Radio Islam for having no women in its programming and management sectors in 1998 with the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) of South Africa. In its response, Radio Islam maintained that women's voices could not be aired because they constitute women's private parts (*'awrah*), which require concealment. YIELD refuted this by arguing that Islam always upholds justice and opposes discrimination based on gender. As a result, some substantial changes have been made that allow women to present and host a few categories of programs.<sup>44</sup>

**THE GROWTH OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS.** During the last three decades of the twentieth century the Tabligh Jama'at, which concentrates largely on the Muslim community, has emerged as a global entity for spiritual reformation. Preachers, sometimes even from foreign lands, discharge their mission door to door by encouraging fellow believers to observe Islam's fundamentals. They interpret religious injunctions very literally and use mosques as bases for their endeavors. Their scope of activity and preaching is restricted to six

issues only. Huge religious conventions are held at strategic places from which recruited preachers are sent to both local and international regions. Converts also join them in growing numbers, some of whom send their children to local seminaries where, upon graduation, they will spend a year executing the tasks mentioned above before beginning a profession.<sup>45</sup> This movement enjoys a close relationship with the Deobandi legal scholars.

Alongside these late twentieth-century developments, there has also been the mushrooming of spiritual groups in major South African cities. To some degree, this has resulted in a competition for spiritual space with the Tabligh Jama`at. And as far as could be ascertained, these groups have been pretty successful in gaining support from individuals from all walks of life and somehow attracting individuals who were involved in the *da`wah* movements. The primary cause for resorting to mysticism is the eradication of harmful ethical traits like greed, materialism, pride, unbridled passion, and dishonesty under the guidance of a spiritual mentor. Members are obliged to attend sessions where mystical chants are performed and advice on self-reformation is given.<sup>46</sup>

This tendency has also led to a number of leading mystical guides regarding South Africa a convenient place to base themselves. Prominent personalities such as the late Shaikh Abu Bakr Siraj ud-Din (Martin Lings; d. 2005), Shaikh Abdul-Qadir As-Sufi ad-Darqawi (Ian Dallas who heads the Murabitun, a group of predominantly converts in various parts of the world), Shaikh Fadhlalla Haeri (a moderate Shi`ite), and a few others have either made South Africa a regular stop-over or have established flourishing branches there. For example, Shaikh Haeri made South Africa his permanent home by taking up residence in White River, an outlying town, where he leads the Ja`fariya-Shadhiliya order and in which some locals play prominent roles. Despite these relocations, contact has been maintained with their followers and supporters via cyberspace. Websites for many of these orders have been designed, an undertaking this has drawn a new clientele and also added to the growing numbers of adherents.<sup>47</sup>

In 2006, some members of the Turkish community established the Interfaith Foundation of South Africa, which seeks to celebrate the unity and equality underlying diverse cultures, languages, and faiths as well as foster understanding, tolerance, and mutual love through a dialogue among various traditions. The focal point of association among people is the belief in the One, True God, which produces universal ethical values while striving to alleviate physical and social problems.<sup>48</sup> Undoubtedly such an outlook is radically different to that of the introspective legal scholars.

**ADOPTION OF PIETY SYMBOLS AND PRACTICES.** Especially in post-apartheid South Africa, piety norms are actively and consciously demonstrated in an attempt to counter social evils. They include wearing the veil, consuming food and beverages that comply with Islamic law (thereby making them lawful [*halal*] according to bodies like the South African National Halaal Authority [SANHA]), performing multiple pilgrimages<sup>49</sup> to Makka, eliminating harmful instruments of technology like television from homes (which are guilty of undermining viewers' morals through screening of objectionable programs), promoting early marriage to eradicate premarital sex, supporting Islamic financing and banking, advocating Muslim Personal Law, attending Muslim private schools, and turning to self-reformation activities.<sup>50</sup>

In all of the cases mentioned above, the primary objective of relevant individuals and institutions is to ensure that Islam's true message (as understood by them) is either conveyed to or implemented by other Muslims. Communicating this message to non-Muslims enjoys secondary importance. All of these activities are indicators of Islamic consolidation. But in all fairness, Islam is becoming increasingly heterogeneous as regards how its doctrines are being interpreted and implemented in people's lives. The most visible difference is between the majority Sunnis and the minority Shi'as where the Shi'as are contesting the Sunnis' hegemony under the aegis of the Iranian government. More will be said on this matter under "Racial Conflicts and African Muslim Independence."

But even within the Sunni fold there are discrepancies between some of the Hanafis and the Shafi'is. The majority of Indian Muslims belong to the former school, while the majority of the latter observe the latter school. The most noteworthy examples are the varied understandings about eating the meat of animals slaughtered by Muslims while deliberately not pronouncing the *tasmiyah*,<sup>51</sup> and the reprehensibility or permissibility of eating crayfish, crabs, and prawns.<sup>52</sup> These differences have caused the legal scholars of the predominantly Shafi'i legal school, represented by the Muslim Judicial Council, to function beyond SANHA's parameters. On the other hand, the Hanafi council of legal scholars, the Jam'iatul Ulama, are among SANHA's founders and executive members. Both conflicting bodies articulate their allegiance to the Qur'an and Sunnah.<sup>53</sup>

There are also dissimilarities between more puritanical devotees, often inspired by Wahhabism or its close Indian ally of Deobandism, and folklore Muslims who venerate Prophet Muhammad and Muslim saints. The former, represented by the Jam'iatul Ulama and the Muslim Judicial Council accuse the latter, represented by the Sunni Jam'iatul Ulama of religious innovation

(*bid`ah*), to which the latter respond by denouncing their adversaries' lack of love and devotion to pious personages.<sup>54</sup>

Yet purely through their visibility, all practices detailed above have indirectly contributed to *da`wah*.<sup>55</sup> The focal points of enquiry are Muslims in terms of how they have maintained or (re)invigorated their preexisting identities. In this context, *da`wah* has to be perceived as an adjunct to the cardinal endeavors, the favourable results of which would constitute a bonus, such as when non-Muslim children attend a Muslim private school or their parents tune into a Muslim community radio station or read a Muslim publication and eventually embrace Islam. Viewed differently, *da`wah* in this framework is of low intensity and predominantly targeted at "lapsed" Muslims.

*Da`wah* in its high-profile sense will be scrutinized next and will tie up with the fellowship acquisition phase mentioned in the introductory diagram through outreach, connection with, and integration of, others into the Muslim community. As stated earlier, the consolidation and propagation of religion often occur in tandem with each other; therefore this factor should always be kept in mind when the outreach of Islam has been undertaken.

### *The Spread of Islam*

**HIGH-PROFILE DA`WAH IN SOUTH AFRICA.** In 1997, Murshid Davids listed about thirty-five organizations active in South Africa that operated at various levels.<sup>56</sup> By now, they number about one hundred.<sup>57</sup> A brief survey of individuals and organizations that have prioritized the propagation of Islam to non-Muslims over the past fifty years forms the content of this section. Three representatives with different approaches to *da`wah* have been selected for this purpose.

*IMAM ABDULLAH HARON AND THE CLAREMONT MUSLIM YOUTH ASSOCIATION.* Imam Haron was born on 23 February 1923 in Newlands-Claremont, Cape Town. Among his tutors were the Azhar-trained Shaikh Ismail Ganief Edwards (d. 1958) and Shaikh `Abd al-Rahman al-`Alawi al-Maliki of Makkah (d. 1986). He served as leader of Claremont's congregation at Al-Jamia Mosque from 1955 until his death in 1969. During that period he founded the Claremont Muslim Youth Association and its mouthpiece, the Islamic Mirror, conducted religious classes for adults and children, encouraged women's participation in all Muslim activities, created a forum where people from diverse backgrounds and faiths could meet to discuss issues,

and assisted members of his community (regardless of religious affiliation) both morally and financially. He offered all of these services free of charge.

After his family business closed down, he was employed as a sales representative by a candy producing company based in Britain. This afforded him the desired mobility in terms of entering Black townships to conduct da`wah during the height of apartheid, when racial segregation meant that people from a particular racial group could only visit members of other racial groups after having received a permit to do so.

He won immense respect among Xhosa-speaking people. On account of his warmth and humility, they affectionately called him *mfundisi* (priest). As the state imprisoned many members of this community in the 1960s for socio-political activities, Haron deemed it his duty to do what he could to alleviate their plight. He worked closely with the Pan-Africanist Congress, which was the driving force in those areas against racist rule. Through this intimate networking, he spread Islam among the community members.

After having been under surveillance for about two years, he was arrested under the Terrorism Act, which permitted the state to imprison a captive for up to 180 days. He fasted throughout this period and, on 27 September 1969, was killed by the security police, who alleged that he had fallen down a flight of stairs.<sup>58</sup>

Imam Haron used social work as an avenue to propagate Islam among downtrodden people. Moreover, his contact with people of various faiths indicates his ecumenical spirit.

*SHAIKH AHMED DEEDAT OF THE ISLAMIC PROPAGATION CENTRE INTERNATIONAL (IPCI).* Deedat's approach differed completely from Haron's. Born on 1 July 1918 in the Surat district of India, he arrived in South Africa in 1927. Although he had no prior knowledge of English, he familiarized himself with it in six months and achieved impressive results at primary school. His secondary schooling career was terminated due to financial problems that beset his father. He was thus sent to work in a store in a rural area near Durban.

Students from a nearby Christian missionary school would visit the store and engage Deedat in religious discussion and debate. He found their approach abrasive. Fortunately, he found a book on comparative religion entitled *Izhar al-Haqq* by the Indian scholar Rahmat Allah ibn Khalil al-Uthmani al-Kiranawi that he read avidly to prepare himself for the challenge laying before him. He then began researching religions in greater depth and recording his information, after which he began delivering public lectures from 1940 onwards.

The *Islamic Propagation Centre* (IPC) came into existence as a result of his lectures to the Arabic Study Circle in Durban during 1956. He had realized the need for individuals to be knowledgeable about Christian missionary work conducted by the Anglican diocese and the Dutch Reform Church among the country's Muslims. After this, he and his close friend Ghulam Hussein Vanker set up the foundations of this organization in March 1957.

From 1957 until 1980, Deedat and his support group confined their teachings to the southern African region. The halls were packed whenever he held public debates. Muslim crowds were generally attracted to his harsh method of debate, arguing that it was necessary to counteract the hostile approach of Christian missionaries. However, other Muslims argued that his approach differed from the dignified model prescribed by the Qur'an. During the 1980s after his disparagement of Hindu beliefs, he was verbally attacked from numerous quarters. Despite such criticism, however, he soldiered on relentlessly. He grew immensely popular in Nigeria and several Arab states, where many of his writings were translated into Arabic.

In 1986, he visited Saudi Arabia for a conference and enthralled the Arab world in the first interview with his dynamic personality and profound knowledge of comparative religion. Then followed visits to the United Kingdom, Morocco, Kenya, Sweden, Australia and Denmark for *da`wah*. In the United States, his debate with Reverend Jimmy Swaggart on "Is the Bible the Word of God?" was witnessed by 8,000 people, an event that boosted his prominence. An interesting outcome of his Malaysian tour in the early 1990s was that he was prohibited from speaking in public or debating openly with his counterparts in that country. By then his organization had been renamed the Islamic Propagation Centre International.

A stroke in 1996 left him paralyzed from the neck down and unable to speak or swallow. He was flown to a hospital in Riyadh, where he was taught to communicate through a series of eye movements. He remained bed-ridden for the last nine years of his life before succumbing to his illness.<sup>59</sup>

Deedat has left behind numerous booklets, many of which have been translated into various languages. However, his video material has proved more popular since it gives viewers a close-up view of this *da`wah* worker in action. For his efforts, he received abundant financial backing from people in the oil-rich Arab countries. Mention should also be made of the fact that Vanker, who had resigned in 1982 because of ill health, was the other active member of IPC<sup>60</sup> during the 1960s through the 1980s. His style was markedly different from Deedat's, and he was viewed as a sober and intelligent debater, someone who wisely responded to issues pertaining to Christianity and other religious traditions.

Successors to Deedat have maintained his legacy of *da`wah*, but have adopted a conciliatory approach to members of other faiths. Its operations are global: it sends printed and audiovisual material throughout the world and maintains communication with interested persons via the Internet.<sup>61</sup>

*SHAIKH ABDEL SALAM JAD BASSIOUNI MOUSSA.* An Egyptian national born in 1950, Shaikh Moussa obtained a B.A. in Shari`ah and Law from al-Azhar in 1977 and a diploma for Propagation and Islamic Studies from the Institute of Da`wah Leaders in Makka. He obtained his first M.A. from Sierra Leone in 1985 after researching "Da`wah and Its Future." The Muslim World League in Makkah sent him to South Africa in 1990, where he completed his second M.A. at Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg in 1996. He obtained his doctorate from Unisa in 2004 on the topic of "Islamic Propagation in South Africa: Past and Present."

Shaikh Moussa was instrumental in opening the first Al-Tawhid Centre outside Lenasia, Johannesburg. Twelve more of them have opened in various parts of Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces. More than 20,000 people, mainly Africans, have accepted Islam; about 2,000 of them are taught daily at the various centres.

Among the focus areas of this group are dispatching *da`wah* groups and health personnel to needy areas, distributing publications on Islam in indigenous languages, delivering lectures on *da`wah* at mosques and radio stations, visiting prisons for conducting *da`wah* among inmates, and conducting training for preachers and empowering women with some life skills.<sup>62</sup> Briefly, the approach here is traditional and non-confrontational.

*OTHERS.* Mohammed Laher formed the Islamic Missionary Society in Johannesburg during 1958 and focused greatly on Africans. With his supporters, he set up simple Islamic centres to serve the needs of the impoverished communities in the African townships. This also caused him to initiate programs and self-help projects to empower the communities. These projects became part of the program of the Islamic Dawah Movement of Southern Africa (IDMSA), which was formed in Kwa-Zulu Natal during 1977. It began as a constituent of the Muslim Youth Movement organization in 1974.<sup>63</sup> It had humble beginnings in the Umlaas Marianhill Islamic Centre, an Islamic centre located in a township outside Durban. This body was started by medical doctors, among them Ebrahim Dada, Yusuf Osman, and Faizal Ahmad as well as Yusuf Mohammedy, the stalwart of Islamic *da`wah*. Presently, they are located in all of South Africa's major cities. However, when the Africa

Muslims Agency (AMA) came onto the South African scene, some of its members joined it to pursue *da`wah* in the region.

The AMA, directed by Faried Choonara, opened its offices in Johannesburg in 1981. The organization was (and still is) bankrolled by Kuwaiti funds via Dr. Abdurahman as-Sumayt. It operates in more than thirty-five African countries with the purpose of not only giving *da`wah* but also providing other assistance particularly during floods; the Mozambique floods were a case in point. The AMA and other organizations, among them the Waqf al-Waqifin, have been extremely active in helping these communities in times of need.<sup>64</sup>

Shaikh Abbas Phiri, who embarked on a personal *da`wah* campaign in the KwaMashu-Ntuzuma-Inanda area north of Durban, received his religious education in Malawi. After settling in South Africa, he married a local woman and set up home in Inanda on the outskirts of Durban. With the support of Indian Muslim traders, he launched his mission. In this respect he differed from other Malawians and Mozambicans, who “did not integrate with the local Black population to the extent of propagating Islam to them.”<sup>65</sup>

After assessing the situation, he obtained the consent and blessings of the local chiefs and town councillors by explaining his motive and religion to them. He faced other challenges too, such as the Africans’ misperception that Islam was synonymous with Hinduism – as the only adherents visible to them were Indians – or a religion of Indian traders and merchants only. Racial attitudes at the time negatively impacted on *da`wah*, and this was further compounded by the unethical conduct of some Indian Muslims. Selflessly and relying on a pension from the local authorities, he laboured and converted a part of his home at Ntuzuma near Durban into a prayer venue (*jamaat khana*) that also served as a religious and cultural centre and the location of his religious school. His basic strategy for conversion was to acquaint himself with them and explain Islam and its basic rituals, hoping thereby that dedicated Muslims would emerge from his endeavors. He converted over a hundred people. Others learned from Shaikh Abbas’s work and, as time passed, other organizations began similar activities.<sup>66</sup>

The major bodies representing Sunni religious leaders, among them the Jam`iatul Ulama (Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal), the Muslim Judicial Council (the Western Cape), Majlisul `Ulama (the Eastern Cape),<sup>67</sup> and the Sunni Jam`iat, as well as the umbrella body representing Shi`ites, and Ahlul Bait (based in Cape Town, with branches in Polokwane, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Kroonstad, Bloemfontein, Durban, and Port Elizabeth) have *da`wah* sections.<sup>68</sup>

An interesting association is the Islamic Relief Fund based in Johannesburg. It is striking for two reasons, namely, the chairperson and majority of its executive committee are women and it has worked among people of all major race groups (as well as a few Chinese) and religions (namely, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, and African Traditional Religion) during its thirty-five years of existence. About 16,000 people have embraced Islam at their hands.<sup>69</sup>

The Dawah Co-ordinating Forum (DCF) was launched on 15 May 2004 at Verulam, near Durban. Muslim activists and *da`wah* workers from diverse organizations and ethnic backgrounds launched this broad coalition with the objective of fostering unity and cooperation within the ranks of people belonging to previously marginalized groups, besides procuring workers to help build partnerships with government for various social upliftment programs like HIV/AIDS awareness, adult literacy skills, African Renaissance, and the nation's moral regeneration.<sup>70</sup>

Three foreign organizations may also be identified: namely, al-Azhar (of Cairo, after its agreement with the Muslim Judicial Council of the Cape to establish its schools there in 1994), the Saudi-sponsored World Assembly of Muslim Youth (which has run *da`wah* workshops and health clinics in poor areas twice annually since 2001), and the Muslim World League (which ran training courses for *da`wah* workers in 1986). Its *da`wah* office, founded in 2000, operates as a subsidiary of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Propagation and Guidance.<sup>71</sup>

Mention must also be made of the informal role of the Indian Muslim traders who, over time, had formed liaisons with indigenous African people. Some Tswanas accepted Islam in this way and returned to their people to further the effort. Such traders also married Tswana, Venda, and Sotho women, thereby initiating them into the faith. Islam is the fastest growing religion among the Venda on account of its lucid principles. In areas inhabited mainly by the Sothos in the Free State province, mosques and Islamic institutions are often seen. Traders in those areas have contributed to poverty alleviation among the local people.<sup>72</sup>

Conversion through marriage has also resulted in some Whites accepting Islam.<sup>73</sup>

## Reasons for Accepting Islam

Apart from Jung's pioneering scientific survey in three Cape Town townships,<sup>74</sup> no other work of this nature is found at the regional or national level. At best, information in the form of raw data is available, mainly from the

work of Bassiouni Moussa, which will be utilized to fathom some broad trends. Opinions of some African Muslims will also be presented for this purpose. In light of all these details and Jung's findings, a crude extrapolation will be attempted.

Bassiouni Moussa selected a total of 500 respondents for three surveys. The first one was conducted among 200 new Muslims, the second one among an equal number of non-Muslims, and the last one among 100 *da`wah* workers. Half the respondents for the first survey were less than twenty years of age, 30 percent were aged between thirty and forty, while the remainder was over forty. Forty percent had been to secondary school, 35 percent were professionals, and the others were university students. Eighty-five percent gave Christianity as their previous religion, 10 percent had followed African Traditional Religion, and the rest had professed no religion. Sixty-five percent of respondents felt that between fifty and 100 people known to them had embraced Islam, 20 percent believed that more than 100 people had done so among their acquaintances, while the rest deemed the figure to be between ten and fifty.

The primary reasons for conversion were disgruntlement with Christianity after having been regular church-goers. Some believed that Islam was an effective safeguard against vices like liquor and promiscuity. Others maintained that Islamic law would alleviate their plight. A large proportion of them (namely, 70 percent) understood Islam, together with its scriptures and beliefs, to be magnificent and logical. Forty percent had been exposed to it through conferences, while an equal number attributed this to either religious debates or Islamic publications. Sixty percent argued that the finest form of *da`wah* lay in positive social interaction, followed by information about Islam. The remainder gave preference to formal lectures, conferences, and propagation. An overwhelming majority of them (90 percent) emphasized that faulty information about Islam, as well as the lack of suitable subject material and preachers, were the most serious problems facing them. The rest complained about the lack of follow-up and guidance by the preachers and the lack of translated material.

In Bassiouni Moussa's survey among non-Muslims, 45 percent were older than forty, 39 percent were between thirty and forty, while the rest were less than twenty. Seventy percent were Christians, 10 percent observed African Traditional Religion, while the remainder did not conform to any religion. Sixty percent of them had learned about Islam through *da`wah*, and the others through conferences and lectures held in their localities. Roughly 75 percent stated that between ten to fifty people had embraced Islam where

they lived. About 15 percent put this figure at between fifty and a hundred, whereas the remainder estimated it to be above a hundred. An overwhelming majority (about 90 percent) desired to know the truth about Islam. Seven percent felt that it was the best religion preached by the prophets, while the rest refused to answer this question, claiming that they were ignorant of Islam. About 40 percent expressed an eagerness to embrace Islam but did not know how this could be done. Close to half of them were disinclined, since they could not abide by its legal tenets, such as suppressing sexual desires and abstaining from alcohol. The remainder refused to answer the question without giving any reasons. A huge majority feared they would face many problems if they accepted Islam, like observing its rigid code. The remainder wanted more information about Islam.

For the last survey, 85 percent were older than forty, 10 percent were between thirty and forty, and 5 percent were less than thirty. The overwhelming majority (90 percent) of them were university students and competent at their work, while the others were professional and incompetent, who invited people on the basis of their personal experiences only. Eighty percent of them had direct interaction with their addressees, 17 percent regarded conferences and debates as the best means for this task, while the rest favoured the distribution of publications and presentation of lectures. Sixty-five percent of them understood that less than 100 people had embraced Islam at their hands. Twenty percent were convinced that they had succeeded with between fifty and 100 people, while the remainder reduced this figure to between ten and fifty. Seventy percent held that the best way to impart Islam was through direct contact and informing the audience about the subject. Twenty percent preferred conferences, while the rest stressed the role of educational institutions. Ninety-five percent of respondents felt that their greatest impediment was the lack of language competence; the others complained of insufficient material support to them, which far exceeded amounts earmarked for *da`wah* and follow-up routines. A majority of respondents viewed the greatest problem related to confronting converts to be their inability to extricate themselves from customs woven into their being, which would make it difficult for them to obey the Islamic code. Almost all supported the convening of sessions for developing *da`wah* strategies more coherently and wished to learn from the experiences of other colleagues and religious leaders.<sup>75</sup>

The most important figures from these data are given in the tables on the next page that present the results gathered from 200 new Muslims in the following predominant categories: age, level of education, previous religion and view of Islam, best method of *da`wah* and problems.

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Teenagers	50%
Secondary school	40%
Christianity	85%
Islam as a rational faith	70%
Social interaction	60%
Faulty & inadequate subject material. Incompetent preachers	90%

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Results among 100 preachers in the following predominant categories: best method of *da`wah* and greatest obstacle.

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Direct contact followed by information	70%
Language incompetence	95%

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Mumisa's findings corroborate some of the above conclusions. For instance, direct and personal contact is the preferred strategy of many preachers, which is followed by clarifications about Islam and its differences with Christianity.

In order to minimize the domestic, social, and financial trauma of converts, centers provide accommodations for a reasonable period, during which they are tutored in Islam. The religious teachers here invariably turn out to be African Muslims. The greatest number of converts are youths attending educational institutions of different kinds. They meet with their Muslim friends from elsewhere in Africa or with African-American Muslims visiting the country and are drawn into the ambit of the faith fraternity.<sup>76</sup>

Rebekah Lee discovered that the overwhelming majority of Cape Town's African converts during the late- and post-apartheid eras were women. In this regard, her conclusion supported the assessment of Hassim and Mohammady<sup>77</sup> but contradicted the findings of the *Christian Science Monitor* reporter.<sup>78</sup> According to Mohammady, these women were either housewives or unemployed<sup>79</sup> and converted due to disillusionment with Christianity and the financial subscriptions demanded by churches and the economic stability offered by Islam. The latter is buttressed by the teaching of occupational skills to converts.<sup>80</sup>

According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, success in *da`wah* efforts is related to its strong stance against promiscuity, AIDS, alcoholism, and domestic violence, all of which are rampant in Black townships. Islam has grown six-fold in thirteen years among the developing sector.<sup>81</sup> These sentiments broadly confirm Bassiouni Moussa's findings.<sup>82</sup>

There is also a perception that Islam is a return to some rehearsed rituals and ideologies existing in African tradition generally and among the Xhosa specifically. These relate to burial rituals, circumcision, animal slaughtering, and gender relations. Restrictions on the free intermingling of sexes are thus interpreted as beneficial, since they curb the abuse of women.<sup>83</sup> Equally, one needs to be sensitive to the differences between Islam and African tradition; for example, ancestral intervention before the Supreme Being, consuming alcohol, and smoking cannabis are permitted by the latter but rejected by the former.<sup>84</sup>

### **Racial Conflicts and African Muslim Independence**

Ebrahim Fakude's useful historical perspective of *da`wah* sets the subsequent problems raised by some Muslim thinkers in proper perspective. Islam developed in the Black townships during the late 1970s. But it failed to surface as a result of social impediments like Christianity (at that time South Africa's official religion) and communism (which disparaged any contact with religion). Apartheid also impeded its growth in the townships because it prevented African Muslims from living near Muslims belonging to other races; moreover, it portrayed non-Christian religions as the work of the Devil. At that time, Muslims from Malawi and Mozambique settled in those areas, mainly to attain economic prosperity, and married local women. *Da`wah* was not their primary objective. Besides, xenophobia complicated their tasks.

The riots of 1976 caused many politically sensitive local Blacks to seek refuge in countries to the north of South Africa. There, some of them experienced Islam personally and brought back their positive experiences. The same applied to the political exiles of the 1990s. Meanwhile, inside the townships mosques were becoming a safe haven for refugees against the state's security forces. The Murabitun movement espoused the hopes of the Young Lions (the name given to the youths in the 1980s) because it highlighted Islam's teachings on justice and human rights.<sup>85</sup>

The relationship between the established Muslim Malay and Indian communities and the developing African Muslim community initially improved during the transitional period, for both sides had a better grasp of the other's strengths and weaknesses. But tensions gradually developed over issues like the uneven distribution of funds.

In the post-apartheid era, the townships witnessed the influx of many Muslims from other African countries, thereby introducing new schools of thought. Black Muslims were now adopting Shi`ism over the Sunni schools

of thought observed by the established community as a sign of revolt. Hostilities increased once more with grievances ranging from racism and exploitation to the established community's unfair distribution of charity toward the developing one. These tensions have not been satisfactorily resolved up to now.<sup>86</sup>

In light of this dilemma Sitoto complains that the African Muslim presence continues to be invisible in South African Islam, with perceptions about their late-coming into its fold as dominating discourses. Consequently, Muslim institutions in established communities are not yet prepared to absorb new Muslims.<sup>87</sup> This situation persists, notwithstanding representation by all major language groups in South Africa in the emerging sector. Examples of such highly acclaimed Muslims include world-renowned pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, legendary poet Don Mateta, rising journalist Simphiwe Sesanti, former South African junior lightweight champion Hassan Mpisekaya, chief financial officer in the Department of Public Enterprises Ike Idris Nxedlana, advocate Dawood Ngwane, librarian Nafisa Zondi, and bank administrator Faisal Mkhize.<sup>88</sup> Naledi Pandor, the current Minister of Science and Technology who was formerly Minister of Education, provides the finest example in this category.

All the same, the crisis demands an equitable solution. While it is acknowledged that members of the established community have used their skills to stifle legitimate aspirations and needs of African Muslims, some of the latter have not been entirely innocent either. Lee cites as one of the reasons for African women's conversion the satisfaction of their material needs, which, in the words of a Muslim-born Xhosa woman Fatima Lobi "was detrimental to the spiritual independence of Africans."<sup>89</sup> Such a stance on their part betrays insincerity or ignorance. There also remains the suspicion that Islam is used as a vehicle for various people to amass power without having made any significant sacrifices.<sup>90</sup> Despite these problems, however, the number of Muslims continues to grow in the townships. People embrace the faith by themselves, without much contribution from *da`wah* bodies.<sup>91</sup>

Simultaneously, new African *da`wah* initiatives have to be acknowledged with the building of alternative leadership structures in developing communities. The Masakhane Muslim Community of Cape Town united Muslim individuals and communities in the townships and provided coherent leadership, mature arbitration, and qualified education to African Muslims. The latter resulted in, *inter alia*, the teaching of Islamic studies courses coupled with life skills empowerment. It also launched teacher training courses. Consequently, it has now been recognized by international and governmental Islamic bodies throughout the Muslim world.<sup>92</sup> Unfortunately,

its energy has declined over the past four years.<sup>93</sup> There is also the Southern African Muslim Mission, founded in Soweto, outside Johannesburg, in 1981, and the Organization of African Muslim Unity, founded in KwaZulu-Natal in 1997.<sup>94</sup>

The reasons for conversion and the problems facing converts cited above find ample echoes in Jung's observations,<sup>95</sup> which advance the view about their general validity despite the unscientific nature of their deduction. The task of *da`wah* is further exacerbated by other factors that will be analyzed below.

### **Problems Facing *Da`wah* Institutions**

The problems can be divided into four categories: administrative, informational, lack of coordination among institutions involved in *da`wah*, and developmental-cum-financial.<sup>96</sup>

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS.** Several institutions operate without any constitution or administrative system, which means that all decisions are left to the director's discretion. Ultimately, they function like personal businesses. Workers have insufficient knowledge of sound administration; yet they adopt a complacent attitude, often believing administrative incompetence to be a symbol of Islamic work. In addition, many administrators lack foresight or refuse to build on previous experience; rather, they cling to earlier decisions unconditionally and unilaterally. All these discrepancies result from lack of experience. Many workers do not climb the administrative ladder whereby responsibilities are commensurate with experience. Moreover, work is delegated to people who are incompetent when it comes to religious knowledge or ethical conduct. Thus, nepotism and partiality cloud the assigning of tasks.

**INFORMATIONAL PROBLEMS.** Some preachers lack information on *da`wah* strategies or the rules of Islam. Others cannot differentiate between authentic and spurious prophetic reports and by relying on the latter, they disseminate ignorance. Likewise, there are those who cannot distinguish among compulsory, recommended, or permissible actions. In addition, scarce or ineffective Islamic references cause the dwindling of true scholars' reputation in the eyes of the masses.

The elevation of trivial differences among organizations involved in preaching to the level of benchmarks creates mutual animosity. All of their resources and energies are devoted to stirring petty conflicts among them,

which discloses their insincerity. These transgressions emanate from insufficient knowledge and experience and assume the form of religious, personal, ethnic, or national partisanship.

In addition, Christian evangelists have resorted to building schools, clinics, and churches and offering their facilities gratis most of the time. In this way, according to Mohammedy, missionaries have exploited the needs of the deprived in order to open the door of Christianity to them. They are often heavily supported by their parent churches or the media to distort Islam's message, often after doing fieldwork among Muslims under the pretext of paying social visits to them. Finally, Mohammedy cites language incompetence as a great problem.<sup>97</sup>

**LACK OF COORDINATION AMONG INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN DA`WAH.** Some institutions become prey to un-Islamic practices without discriminating between virtuous and sinful deeds, considerations of time and space, and faulty prioritization owing to the lack of coordination among relevant bodies. Occasionally, this deficiency leads to verbal confrontations.

The essential cause of this plight is insufficient consultation with religious leaders for guidance, which nullifies their administrative skills. At the same time, some religious leaders are guilty of not cooperating with such groups after being invited to do so. Every so often, such inflexibility is the outcome of partial knowledge. At times, despotism from religious leaders is based on satisfying their craving for power over people without considering their accountability to Allah. Another illustration of lack of coordination is evident in the implementation of different curricula, which are often merely improvised products, by different institutions.<sup>98</sup>

**DEVELOPMENTAL-CUM-FINANCIAL PREDICAMENTS.** Islamic work often relies on the arbitrary decisions of individuals rather than policy guidelines that can be followed in the leaders' absence. The shortage of finance, especially among the developing community, hampers many Islamic projects. The root of this problem lies in the lack of investment incentives that can benefit the Muslims at large: too many organizations endure dire financial straits. Relying on help from the community, rather than financial independence, has become the norm. Many groups are either wittingly or otherwise heedless of such plans. According to Mohammedy, the post-9/11 period has seen the drying up of foreign financial help.<sup>99</sup>

Solutions to many of the problems outlined above are implicit in their very formulation, so it is unnecessary to present them.

## Conclusion

The preceding discussion confirms the consolidation of Islam over the past fifty years through the establishment of clerical bodies that have exercised tremendous influence over the Muslim laity via the pulpit, educational institutions, media activities, various religious movements, and the forging of piety symbols. Despite the asymmetrical quality of their contributions, religious leaders have strengthened their grip on the commonalty while alternative voices are being heard louder than ever before.

Significantly, the relationship among clerical bodies has not been substantial. Consequently, conflicts around legal and doctrinal interpretations sometimes surface and thus validate the view of Islam's multiple countenances in South Africa. The entry of new groups belonging to an even wider fabric of Muslim society globally, together with the emergence of alternative voices within the country, shatter the myth about a monolithic Muslim community.

The spread of Islam reveals the following situation: approaches to *da`wah* have ranged from the polemical, as seen in the activities of Deedat, to the ecumenical, as found in Haron's example. Increasingly, it is being combined with efforts to improve the mundane lives of converts through training in life skills. The most striking cases are provided by the Al-Tawhid Centre and the Da`wah Co-ordinating Forum.

A comparison between the scriptural prototype of a Muslim preacher and the South African reality reveals that the latter has exhibited numerous flaws. Equally true is the incongruity between the commitments demanded by Islam and the existential truth of Muslims, whether they belong to established or developing communities. The quality of *da`wah* demands an overhaul to suit the needs and understanding of the target audience, instead of remaining fixed on foreign models. The status of the African Muslim presence needs continuous acknowledgement, reflection, and improvement so that the affected people feel genuinely welcome within this religious fraternity. Miraculously, Islam continues to be embraced, mainly on the strength of the converts' disenchantment with their earlier lifestyles.

A plausible solution to the conflict between the ideal and reality of *da`wah* could lie in forging an "African" Muslim identity that involves the adoption of the African worldview to the extent that it conforms to Divine, revelatory truth. Such an experiment has been eminently successful for rich and vibrant cultures like the Swahili in East Africa, the Hausa in West Africa, and large parts of the Muslim world where cultural contacts have occurred.<sup>100</sup>

## Endnotes

1. A. S. Hornby, comp., *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 6th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 244. See also P. B. Gove, ed., *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam, 1961), 484 and *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 3:777.
2. Online at [www.connectionpower.com](http://www.connectionpower.com) (Accessed on 23 April 2008).
3. See, for example, the pioneering work of Achmat Davids, *The Mosques of the Bo-Kaap* (Cape Town: The South African Institute of Arabic and Islamic Research, 1980), i-xiviii and 1-236; and Ismail E. Jaffer, *The Early Muslims in Pretoria: 1881-1899* (master's thesis, Johannesburg: Rand Afrikaans University, 1991), 1-98.
4. See, for example, Ebrahim Mahomed Mahida, *History of Muslims in South Africa: A Chronology* (Durban: Arabic Study Circle, 1993), 1-154; Ebrahim Moosa, "Islam in South Africa," in *Living Faiths in South Africa*, ed. J. W. De Gruchy and M. Prozesky (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 129-54; Muhammad Haron, *Muslims in South Africa: An Annotated Bibliography* (Cape Town: South African Library, in conjunction with Centre for Contemporary Islam UCT, 1997), i-xiii and 1-209.
5. In this article, the Library of Congress transliteration method of Arabic has been followed in all instances except for the transcription of "Islam" and names of persons and places that have been popularly spelled in other ways.
6. Moosa, "Islam in South Africa." The author devotes very little space to Islam's spread in South Africa during recent times, although his sociological approach to the broader topic is enlightening.
7. M. Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2002): 279-96. The relevant portion of his article covers the last nine pages. "Malay," despite its inaccuracy in this context, has been used to designate this community for the purpose of convenience as "Cape Muslim," also becomes problematic when referring to members of this community who have settled beyond that province. For a fuller account of the dispute regarding its usage, refer to G. Vahed and S. Jeppie, "Multiple communities: Muslims in post-apartheid South Africa" (2005): 254-55, in *State of the Nation: 2004-2005*. [www.hsrepress.ac.za](http://www.hsrepress.ac.za) (Accessed on 16 June 2007).
8. M. Haron, "Islamic Culture among the Nguni (Xhosa & Zulu) People." [www.uga.edu/islam/islam\\_nguni.html](http://www.uga.edu/islam/islam_nguni.html) (Accessed on 16 June 2007).
9. S. E. Dangor, *Shaykh Yusuf of Makasar* (Durban: Iqra Publishers, 1994), 3.
10. Wikipedia, Islam in South Africa. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_South\\_Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_South_Africa), 1-2. (Accessed on 16 June 2007).
11. Davids, *Mosques of the Bo-Kaap*, 32.
12. E. C. Mandivenga, "The Cape Muslims and the Indian Muslims of South Africa: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20, no. 2 (2000): 347.

13. Ibid., 38-43.
14. Z. Cajee, "Islamic History and Civilisation in South Africa: The Impact of Colonialism, Apartheid & Democracy (1652-2004)," 10. [www.awqafsa.org.za](http://www.awqafsa.org.za) (Accessed on 16 June 2007).
15. Wikipedia, "Islam in South Africa," 10.
16. Y. Da Costa and A. Davids, *Pages from Cape Muslim History* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Shuter & Shooter, 1994), 20-21.
17. Davids, *Mosques of the Bo-Kaap*, 35.
18. Mandivenga, "The Cape Muslims," 347-48.
19. A. T. Baker, "Exploring the Foundations of an Islamic Identity in a Global Context: A Study of the Nature and Origins of Cape Muslim Identity" (unpublished master's dissertation, School of Religion and Culture, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006), 45-84.
20. Cajee, "Islamic History and Civilisation in South Africa," 8.
21. N. Bhebe, "The British, Boers & Africans in South Africa, 1850-1880," in *Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s*, ed. J. F. Ade Ajayi (UNESCO: University of California Press & Heinemann, 1989), 154-55. See also P. Harries, "Plantations, Passes and Proletarians: Labour & the Colonial State in Nineteenth Century Natal," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (1987), 372-99.
21. Mandivenga, "The Cape Muslims," 349.
22. Ibid.
23. Cajee, "Islamic History and Civilisation in South Africa," 7. In the South African Muslim context, a *madrasah* (religious school) refers to a school that imparts an elementary understanding of subjects like Qur'anic recitation and teachings, Islamic law, and prophetic guidance. Rituals like ablution (*wudū'*), daily prayers, full ablution (*ghusl*), fasting, and guidelines for family and social life are also covered.
24. G. Vahed, "Contesting 'Orthodoxy': The Tablighi-Sunni Conflict among South African Muslims in the 1970s and 1980s," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23, no. 2 (2003): 314.
25. Ibid., 8. Also Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi," 280.
26. Vahed and Jeppie, "Multiple communities," 252-53.
27. Vahed, "Contesting 'Orthodoxy,'" 313.
28. Ibid.
29. A. Davids, "From Complacency to Activism. The Changing Political Mood of the Cape Muslims from 1940 to 1985," Fifth Workshop on the History of Cape Town, 6-7 December 1985, UCT History Department. During apartheid, Malays were grouped with people of mixed race parentage, called Coloureds, according to race classifications for the country's population register.
30. Z. Cajee, "Islamic History and Civilisation in South Africa," 9
31. A. S. J. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah fi Janūb Ifriqiya bayn al-Madi wa al-Ḥadir* (Ph.D. thesis, Pretoria: Unisa, 2004), 104.

32. Z. Cajee, "Islamic History and Civilisation in South Africa," 10.
33. A. Latif, "Islam in South Africa." [www.themodernreligion.com/convert/south-africa.htm](http://www.themodernreligion.com/convert/south-africa.htm) (Accessed on 18 June 2007).
34. G. Vahed, "Islamic Traditions and Emerging Identities," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2000): 60.
35. Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi," 294. *Da`wah* refers to propagating Islam among non-Muslims.
36. Cajee, "Islamic History and Civilisation in South Africa," 9.
37. Al-Qalam, "Islamic Schools in South Africa," January 2003. This is a Muslim newspaper published in South Africa.
38. S. Hassim, "Reasons for conversions to Islam among people." Interview conducted telephonically by the author with this respondent on 17 April 2007.
39. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah*, 117-20.
40. Jamiatul Ulama of KwaZulu-Natal, "The Role of Darul Uloom." [www.jamiat.org.za/duloom.html](http://www.jamiat.org.za/duloom.html) (Accessed on 18 June 2007).
41. Vahed, "Islamic Traditions," 59. *Ulema* is the collective term for the clergy.
42. Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi," 395.
43. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah*, 145.
44. See [www.genderlinks.org.za](http://www.genderlinks.org.za), "Report on Radio Islam," 2001. For comprehensive details, see Zohra Kahn's Radio Islam: A Case Study, presented on 6 September 2001 at [www.womensnet.org.za](http://www.womensnet.org.za) (Accessed on 3 September 2008).
45. Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi," 289-90. For a fuller discussion on the Tabligh Jama`at and spiritual movements, refer to M. Haron, "The Dawah Movements and Sufi Tariqat: Competing for spiritual spaces in contemporary South(ern) Africa." [www.uga.edu/islam/dawah\\_tariqat\\_sa.html](http://www.uga.edu/islam/dawah_tariqat_sa.html) (Accessed on 20 June 2007).
46. Vahed, "Islamic Traditions and Emerging Identities," 57-58; Vahed and Jeppie, "Multiple communities," 267-68.
47. Haron, "The Dawah Movements and Sufi Tariqat," 11. See also [www.yanabi.com](http://www.yanabi.com) and [www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com) for details on Haeri, and the latter site for details on al-Darqawi. (Accessed on 21 June 2007). For al-Darqawi, see also A. Godlas, "Sufism, Sufis, and Sufi Orders: Sufism's Many Paths." [www.uga.edu/islam/sufismorders.html#Shadhili](http://www.uga.edu/islam/sufismorders.html#Shadhili) (Accessed on 26 June 2007).
48. Refer to [www.interfaithsa.co.za](http://www.interfaithsa.co.za) (Accessed on 8 September 2008).
49. This term should more accurately be interpreted as referring to both the major pilgrimage (hajj) and/or the lesser pilgrimage (*umrah*).
50. *Ibid.*, 49-58. See also Vahed and Jeppie, "Multiple communities," 267-75 (with adaptations).
51. According to Abu Hanifa, reciting *bism illah al-rahman al-rahim* (In the Name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful) is mandatory each time when slaughtering an animal. Refer to al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami` li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, 5:96 at [www.altafsir.com](http://www.altafsir.com) (Accessed on 29 August 2008).
52. Al-Qurtubi, *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1996), 4:117. According to Abu Hanifah, only fish and sea

- creatures resembling it are edible. But Shafi`i and Malik allow consumption of all varieties of fish, sea insects, and animals.
53. Refer to [www.sanha.org.za](http://www.sanha.org.za) and [www.mjc.org.za](http://www.mjc.org.za) (Accessed on 29 August 2008).
  54. Wahhabis believe that seeking intercession of saints before Allah is tantamount to grave worship (See `Abd al-Rahman ibn Hammad al-`Umar, *Haqiqat Da`wat al-Imam Muhammad bin `Abd al-Wahhab* [Riyadh: Dar al-`Asima, 2005]). John Esposito censures them harshly by stating that they viewed “all Muslims who resisted as unbelievers (who could be fought and killed). They were therefore subdued in the name of Islamic egalitarianism.” Refer to his *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 48. For Deobandism, refer to Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Popular folklorists often substantiate their beliefs according to Sufi practices. `Abd al-Halim Mahmud defines the latter as being merely high quality comportment and not custom (see [web.archive.org/web/20021206160350](http://web.archive.org/web/20021206160350) [Accessed on 29 August 2008]). Nuh Ha Mim Keller refutes the allegation of innovation raised against Sufism (see [sunnah.org/Tasawwuf/sufisnk.htm](http://sunnah.org/Tasawwuf/sufisnk.htm) [Accessed on 29 August 2008]).
  55. This Arabic term basically means “an invitation” or “a call.” In religious parlance, it denotes the preaching Islam to non-Muslims.
  56. M. Davids, *Directory of Muslim Institutions and Mosques in South Africa* (Maraisburg, South Africa: SPAL, 1997).
  57. R. Hassen, “Dawah Organizations in South Africa” (information given by e-mail on 8 June 2007). A caution needs to be given here: not all such groups are engaged in full-time propagation. Many of them do so as part of broader based activities primarily intended to consolidate Muslim communities.
  58. M. Haron, “Imam Abdullah Haron: The Martyr of Justice.” [www.islamonline.net](http://www.islamonline.net) (file prepared on 5 June 2007 and accessed on 20 June 2007).
  59. Haron, “The Dawah Movements and Sufi Tariqat,” 6-7. Also, F. Asmal, “Muslims mourn late Sheikh Deedat.” [www.islamonline.net](http://www.islamonline.net) (Report dated 8 August 2005 and accessed on 20 June 2007.)
  60. This was the body’s original name before it was changed to IPCI in the 1980s.
  61. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah*, 181.
  62. *Ibid.*, 168-69.
  63. *Ibid.*, 183.
  64. Haron, “The Dawah Movements and Sufi Tariqat,” 7-8.
  65. S. Mathee, “Muslim Identity Constructions in Soweto,” *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, no. 6 (2003): 51.
  66. Mumisa, “Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi,” 287-89.
  67. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah*, 176-79.
  68. Ahlul Bait (AS) Foundation of South Africa. [www.afosa.org](http://www.afosa.org) (Accessed on 21

- June 2007).
69. S. Hassim, "Da`wah Report" (Johannesburg: Islamic Relief Fund, n.d.) (faxed report received on 10 April 2007).
  70. R. Hassen (information provided by e-mail on 23 March 2007).
  71. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah*, 191-95.
  72. *Ibid.*, 96-98.
  73. *Ibid.*, 140.
  74. M. Jung, "Theological reflections on the spread of Islam and attitudes in Churches: A case study on three Black townships in Cape Town" (master's diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2005).
  75. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah*, 200-05.
  76. Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi," 290-91.
  77. R. Lee. "Understanding African Women's Conversion to Islam: Cape Town in Perspective," *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, no. 5 (2002): 52. See also Hassim, "Da`wah Report," 3.
  78. N. Itano, "In South Africa, many blacks convert to Islam," *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 January 2002. [www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com) (Accessed on 15 June 2007).
  79. Y. Mohammady, "Da`wah Report of the South African Da`wa Network," 2 (information given by e-mail on 26 June 2007).
  80. *Ibid.*, 53.
  81. Itano, "In South Africa."
  82. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah*, 183 and 200-05.
  83. Lee, "Understanding African Women's Conversion to Islam," 55. See also "Jamiatul 'Ulama's Youth Convention a success," in *Laudium Sun*, May 2007, 12. Similar views are expressed therein by Maulana Abbas Hlatwayo, an activist from Soweto, a township outside Johannesburg.
  84. Jung, "Theological reflections," 27.
  85. Sitoto calls this the contribution of political activism to Islam. See T. F. Sitoto, "Engaging Muslimness and the Making of African Muslim Identity," *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, no. 6 (2003): 47.
  86. E. Fakude, "Muslims in the Townships of South Africa," *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, no. 5 (2002): 47-49. As an aside, White Muslims from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe (including Bosnia and Albania), and Turkey have also begun pouring into this region. Some Muslims from those areas who did not identify themselves as Muslims during apartheid have now openly begun to meet with Muslims of other ethnic communities and participate in religious activities. See Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi," 295.
  87. Sitoto, "Engaging Muslimness," 45-47.
  88. T. F. Sitoto, "Imam Essa Al-Seppe and the emerging of an unorganized African Muslim sector: A Contextual Analysis," *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, no. 5 (2002): 45.
  89. Lee, "Understanding African Women's Conversion to Islam," 54. Refer also to Quick's comments about the quality of conversions in Jung, Theological reflec-

- tions," 30.
90. My interview with the imam of the Kagiso Mosque (situated west of Johannesburg), Shaikh Ahmad Namutamba. 25 September 2006.
  91. E. Fakude, "Muslims in the Townships of South Africa," 49.
  92. The Masakhane Muslim Community, "Islam in the African townships of the Cape," *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, no. 5 (2002): 51.
  93. Jung, Theological reflections," 107.
  94. Sitoto, "Imam Essa Al-Seppe," 45.
  95. Jung, Theological reflections," 30-31.
  96. Bassiouni Moussa, *Al-Da`wat al-Islamiyah*, 209-23.
  97. Y. Mohammedy, "Da`wa Report of the South African Da`wa Network," 2.
  98. Ibid., 1.
  99. Ibid.
  100. A. Rafudeen, "Towards forging an 'African' Islamic identity," *Annual Review of Islam in South Africa*, no. 5 (2002): 47.