

Southern Historical Association

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Source: *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Nov., 1994), pp. 671-710

Published by: Southern Historical Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2211064>

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Muslims in Early America

By MICHAEL A. GOMEZ

DURING THE POST-1492 CONTACT BETWEEN THE OLD WORLD AND THE New, Christianity and Judaism were introduced into the latter and indeed facilitated the western hemisphere's political subjugation and cultural transformation. These religions were carried by European colonizers, whose success in subjugating and transforming the Americas has resulted in careful study of the cultural institutions that accompanied them—at the expense of non-European systems of belief that were also imported into the New World. Specifically, Africans, transported via the transatlantic slave trade, brought with them their own religions, which were transferred into the New World with varying results, depending upon the unique blend of acculturative forces operating in the various areas of destination.¹

One of the belief systems introduced into the Americas by Africans was Islam. However, the dawn of Islam in the Americas and its association with Africans have yet to receive the scholarly attention that is merited. This is particularly true of North American historical studies, in which one rarely reads of the early existence of Islam in what would become the United States.² Such neglect is most regrettable, given the possibility that one of America's most illustrious sons, Frederick Douglass, may have himself been a descendant of Muslims.³

This essay is a preliminary study of Islam in early African American history. Because of the limited data available at this stage of research, the arguments presented are necessarily more tentative than

¹ With regard to North America itself, compare the discussion of African cultural transfer in William D. Piersen's *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Amherst, Mass., 1988) with that found in Mechal Sobel's *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, 1987), or her earlier work *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Westport, Conn., and London, 1979). Margaret Washington Creel's *"A Peculiar People": Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York and London, 1988) is an equally important contribution within this framework. Finally, Michael Mullin's *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831* (Urbana and Chicago, 1992) provides an examination of the relationship between acculturative forces and slave revolts, among other things.

² Henceforth, "America" will be used to designate that part of North America that became the United States.

³ Consider William S. McFeely's speculations in *Frederick Douglass* (New York and London, 1991), 3-5.

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Volume LX, No. 4, November 1994

conclusive; nonetheless, available evidence does permit several statements on Muslims in early America. First of all, their numbers were significant, probably reaching into the thousands. Second, Muslims made genuine and persistent efforts to observe their religion; and even though they perpetuated their faith primarily within their own families, in some cases they may have converted slaves who were not relatives. Third, Islam and ethnicity were important in the process of social stratification within the larger African American society. And finally, cultural phenomena found in segments of the African American community, such as ostensibly Christian worship practices and certain artistic expressions, probably reflect the influence of these early Muslims.

The study of Muslims in the American colonial and antebellum periods has yet to be undertaken seriously because materials on the subject are scarce. This scarcity of primary data is a function of two factors. First, colonial and antebellum observers, who were ignorant of the Islamic faith, did not accurately record the variegated cultural expressions of African slaves. The cumulative evidence suggests that such observers could distinguish the Muslims from other slaves but had neither the skills nor the interest to record detailed information about them. The other factor contributing to the scarcity of data is the reluctance of the descendants of these early Muslims to be forthright in answering questions about their ancestors.

Another reason for the lack of scholarly inquiry into Islam in early America is the absence of a satisfactory dialogue between historians of Africa and of North America. Efforts to address this problem have begun and can be seen in the work of such historians as Peter H. Wood and Daniel C. Littlefield. However, a great deal remains to be done, and the current exercise is an attempt to foster a process by which Americanists and Africanists come to view the colonial/antebellum world as it really was. As such, the present approach is not unlike the "Atlantic community" perspective advocated by scholars such as Philip D. Curtin, except that it is informed by a greater emphasis on the African component. Further, the present study is an effort to establish a more reliable context for the investigation of Muslims in early America and thus assist in the much needed exchange and collaboration between Africanists and Americanists.⁴

⁴ For example, see Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina: From 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974); Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge and London, 1981); Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge, Eng., 1990); and Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge, Eng., 1984).

The primary documentation for this inquiry includes autobiographical and biographical sketches, newspaper articles and advertisements for runaway slaves, slaveholders' records, and the testimony of slaves and their descendants. Complementing the primary sources are secondary materials, of which Allan D. Austin's *African Muslims in Antebellum America* (1984), a mixture of primary sources and analysis, is the most comprehensive treatment of the subject to date. As it relates to North America, the work focuses on seven individuals who achieved a level of notoriety sufficient to warrant commentary by observers.⁵ Although the book is very useful, readers should keep in mind that the author is neither an Africanist nor an Islamicist.

In addition to Austin's book there are biographies of two relatively prominent Muslims. In 1968 Douglas Grant published *The Fortunate Slave*, an account of the life of Ayuba b. Sulayman, more commonly known as "Job Ben Solomon." The book's most important contribution concerns the activities of Ayuba following his repatriation to West Africa, but it is riddled with language suggesting paternalistic condescension. In contrast is the very fine effort of Terry Alford entitled *Prince Among Slaves* (1977), a biography of Abd al-Rahman, or Abdul Rahahman. Alford's study is valuable in that it provides considerable insight into an African Muslim's reaction to enslavement. Beyond Grant and Alford, the more scholarly writings of Ivor Wilks, published in Philip D. Curtin's *Africa Remembered* (1967), address the experiences of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Salih Bilali.⁶

In addition to information in print, an interview with Cornelia Bai-

⁵ Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York, 1984). The seven and their approximate lifespans are as follows: Umar b. Said (ca. 1770–1864), Lamine Kaba (ca. 1780–?), Salih Bilali (ca. 1765–?), Bilali (contemporary of Salih Bilali), Abd al-Rahman (ca. 1762–1829), Ayuba b. Sulayman (ca. 1702–1773), and Yarrow Mahmud (elderly when portrait made in 1819).

⁶ Douglas Grant, *The Fortunate Slave: An Illustration of African Slavery in the Early Eighteenth Century* (London, New York, and Toronto, 1968); Terry Alford, *Prince Among Slaves* (New York, 1977); and Ivor Wilks, "Abu Bakr al-Siddiq of Timbuktu," and "Salih Bilali of Massina," in Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1967). Concerning Muslim names, there is no standard method of transliteration into English. For example, just as the word "muslim" is often anglicized as "moslem," so names such as "Sulayman" may appear as "Sulaiman" and "Muhammad" as "Mohammed." The approach used here is to employ a scheme of vowelization that most closely approximates standard Arabic. However, it must be kept in mind that Arabic names often underwent changes in West Africa, and in such cases, it is the African appellation that will be transliterated. That is, since it is common in West Africa to encounter "Mamadu" as opposed to "Mahmud" or "Ahmad," "Mamadu" will be used here. Finally, the names of some individuals are slightly different in English due to corruption and/or a lack of familiarity with the meaning and functions of the components of the name. For example, Ayuba b. Sulayman belongs to the Jallo clan of the Fulbe, and sometimes Jallo will be attached to the end of his name. In many instances Jallo will be written as "Diallo," owing to the French influence. The anglicizing of African and Arab names is problematic, to be sure. For the purposes of this study, care will be taken to make a full identification of the individual in question.

ley, a direct descendant of Bilali (a prominent Muslim slave), was conducted for the purposes of this research. Her comments are critically treated and provide important insights into Bilali, the Muslim community in early coastal Georgia, and the question of the Muslim legacy.⁷ All of these secondary materials focus on individuals, or a set of individuals, and, with the exception of Austin's book, make little attempt to treat the more complex issue of the general experience of Muslims in North America. In order to address this more complex issue, it is necessary first to establish the African context.

The evidence for the presence of Muslims in colonial and antebellum America comes from both sides of the Atlantic. On the African side, the historical research provides a reasonably clear picture of the political and cultural milieu out of which American-bound captives emerged. Several different types of sources yield information on the presence and activities of Muslims upon landing in the New World: the ethnic and cultural makeup of the African supply zones; the appearance of Muslim names in the ledgers of slave owners and in the runaway slave advertisements in newspapers; references to Muslim ancestry in interviews with ex-slaves and the descendants of Muslims; stated preferences for certain "types" of Africans by the slaveholding community; recorded observations of Islamic activity; and profiles of certain Muslim figures. Within the last genre are documents written in Arabic by Muslims themselves, a rare phenomenon. While very general statements can be ventured as estimates of the Muslim population in America, the data on this subject are almost entirely qualitative, so that attempts at quantification are only speculative at this point.

Islam had penetrated the savanna south of the Sahara Desert by the beginning of the ninth century as a consequence of Berber and Arab commercial activity. Some subsaharan African (or "Sudanese") merchants living in the *sahel* ("shore" or transition zone between the desert and the savanna) and the savanna began to convert, so that Islam became associated with trade, especially long-distance networks of exchange. In some societies, political rulers also converted to the new religion with varying degrees of fidelity, so that Islam became a vehicle by which alliances between commercial and political elites were forged. Islam continued to grow slowly throughout West Africa into the sixteenth century and dramatically increased its adherents dur-

⁷ I interviewed Cornelia Walker Bailey in July 1992 on Sapelo Island, Georgia. She was born in Bell Marsh on June 12, 1945. Bilali is her great-great-great-grandfather through his daughter Bentoo (Arabic "Binta"). Mrs. Bailey presently lives in Hog Hammock Community on Sapelo with her husband and family. The interview was taped, and notes were taken during the interview. Both the tapes and the notes are in the author's possession.

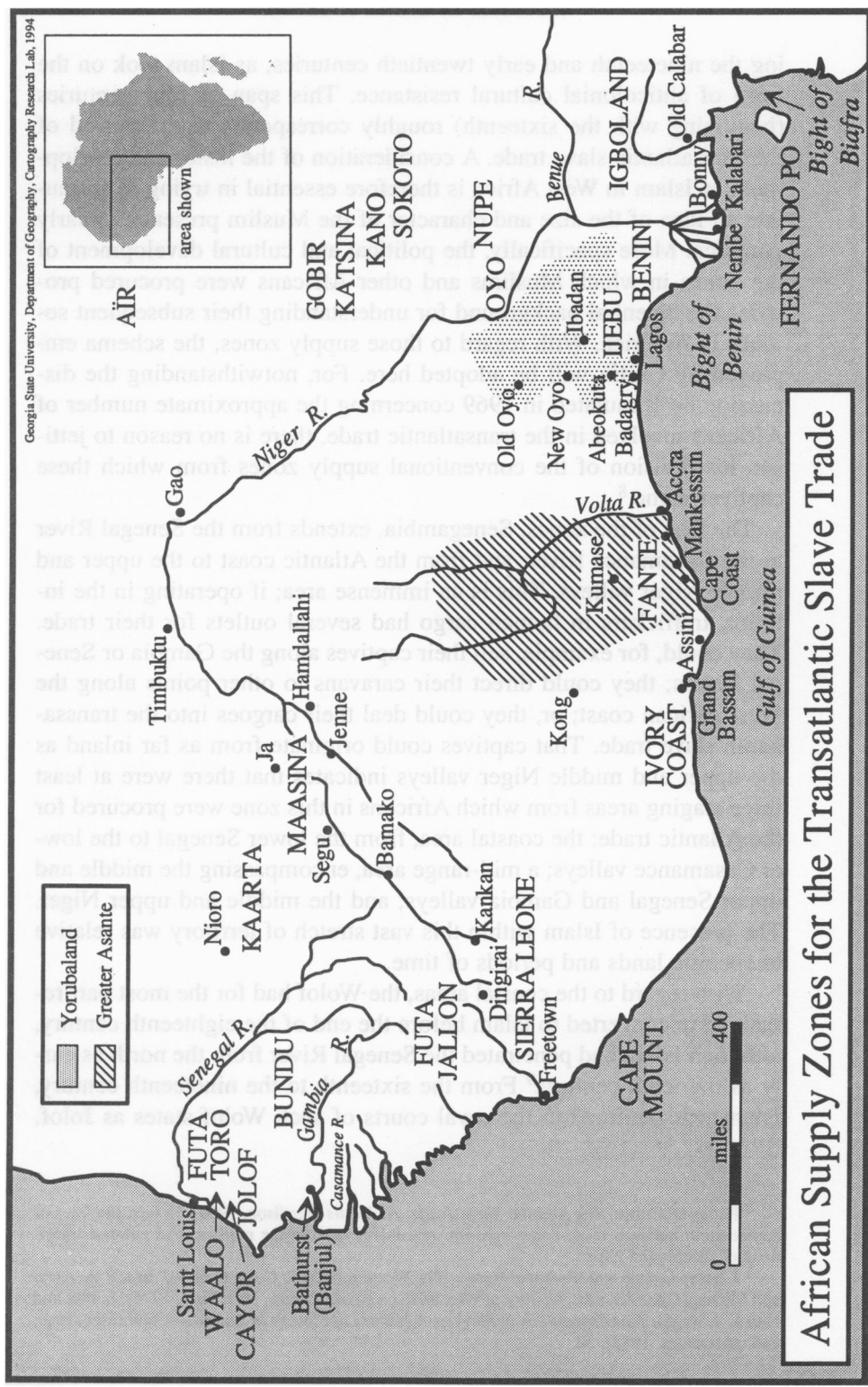
ing the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Islam took on the form of anticolonial cultural resistance. This span of four centuries (beginning with the sixteenth) roughly corresponds to the period of the transatlantic slave trade. A consideration of the historical development of Islam in West Africa is therefore essential in trying to formulate an idea of the size and character of the Muslim presence in early America. More specifically, the political and cultural development of the zones in which Muslims and other Africans were procured provides the essential background for understanding their subsequent sojourn in America. With regard to those supply zones, the schema employed by Curtin will be adopted here. For, notwithstanding the discussion he stimulated in 1969 concerning the approximate number of Africans involved in the transatlantic trade, there is no reason to jettison his division of the conventional supply zones from which these captives came.⁸

The first of the zones, Senegambia, extends from the Senegal River to the Casamance River, and from the Atlantic coast to the upper and middle Niger valleys. This is an immense area; if operating in the interior, traffickers in human cargo had several outlets for their trade. They could, for example, sell their captives along the Gambia or Senegal Rivers; they could direct their caravans to other points along the West African coast; or, they could deal their cargoes into the transsaharan slave trade. That captives could originate from as far inland as the upper and middle Niger valleys indicates that there were at least three staging areas from which Africans in this zone were procured for the Atlantic trade: the coastal area, from the lower Senegal to the lower Casamance valleys; a mid-range area, encompassing the middle and upper Senegal and Gambia valleys; and the middle and upper Niger. The presence of Islam within this vast stretch of territory was relative to specific lands and periods of time.

With regard to the coastal areas, the Wolof had for the most part remained unconverted to Islam before the end of the eighteenth century, although Islam had penetrated the Senegal River from the north as early as the tenth century.⁹ From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, Islam was confined to the royal courts of such Wolof states as Jolof,

⁸ Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, 1969). In fact, the lines of demarcation between these zones conform reasonably well to the political and cultural transitions of precolonial Africa.

⁹ J. Suret-Canale and Boubacar Barry, "The Western Atlantic Coast to 1800," in J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa* (2d ed.; 2 vols., New York, 1976), I, 466; and Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in America* (Cambridge, Eng., and other cities, 1983), 58.



African Supply Zones for the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Cayor, and Waalo; Muslim advisors serviced rulers who in turn practiced traditional religions and/or Islam. While the majority of the population did not practice Islam, the Muslim presence was nevertheless influential and resulted in a Muslim grab for political power in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

In the mid-range of the Senegambian supply zone a substantial proportion of the population was Muslim. In the middle Senegal valley a strong Muslim polity was established as early as the eleventh century. Subsequently, a dynasty of fluctuating loyalty to Islam was founded in the early sixteenth century, but it was overthrown in 1776 by a militant Islamic theocracy. Futa Toro, as the state came to be known, was ethnically Fulbe, or "Tukulor." (The latter term is used to distinguish the Muslim, sedentary, and—in some instances—ethnically mixed portion of the Fulbe from the pastoral, non-Muslim segment.) The upper Senegal and Gambia valleys contained proportionately fewer Muslims (and lower population densities), but again, the Islamic factor had been present for several hundred years by the eighteenth century, largely due to the far-reaching tentacles of the old Malian empire (north and east of the Senegal River), of which the upper and middle Gambia composed the westernmost provinces before the empire's dissolution in the seventeenth century. In the upper Senegal around 1698, the Islamic factor eventually led to the creation of a Muslim polity known as Bundu, in which the population gradually became predominantly Muslim by the nineteenth century. Along the Gambia and further south to the Casamance, the various Mande-speaking populations, along with the Sereer, turned from traditional religions to Islam with the passing of time, facilitated by the presence of Muslim merchants among them.¹⁰ Thus, the mid-range area represents a focus of Muslim power that increased throughout the duration of the transatlantic trade.

Far into the interior lay the western reaches of the Niger River, fabled for such cities as Ja, Jenne, and Timbuktu. The area was a mixture of Muslim and non-Muslim populations from the time of imperial Songhay (1464–1591) to the early nineteenth century, at which point the area known as Maasina fell to the armies of militant Fulbe Muslims. Between the fall of Songhay and the dawn of an islamized Maasina in the early nineteenth century, the middle and upper Niger valleys witnessed an intense period of warfare with the rise of Segu in

¹⁰ Jean Boulegue and Jean Suret-Canale, "The Western Atlantic Coast," in J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa*, (3d ed.; 2 vols., New York, 1985), I, 519–30.

the early seventeenth. The non-Muslim Bambara of this well-known citadel, under the leadership of the Kulubali elite, went on to establish control throughout the upper Niger in the eighteenth century. The numerous war captives during this period were Muslim and non-Muslim alike, and many of them were eventually traded and transported to the western hemisphere.¹¹

Thus, from the fifteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries the Senegambian supply zone gradually became islamized, more dramatically in the nineteenth than in earlier centuries, and during the nineteenth century the majority of the population became Muslim. But in order to assess the significance of this trend, several factors must be taken into consideration. First, Senegambia, by virtue of its location vis-à-vis Europe, was a principal supplier of slaves during the early phase of the Atlantic trade.¹² Second, the evidence from the clerically led revolt along the coast in the 1670s known as the *tubenan* movement suggests that the Wolof states of the Atlantic coast were deeply affected by the slave trade before the last quarter of the seventeenth century.¹³ The Moor Nasir al-Din gained the support of the Wolof peasantry by condemning the participation of the Wolof elite in the slave trade, stating that "God does not allow kings to plunder, kill or make their people captive."¹⁴ When the lieutenants of Nasir al-Din in turn betrayed the trust of the peasantry and began selling them into slavery, these officials were quickly overthrown. Their overthrow suggests the presence of effective opposition to the trade along the coastal area and leads to the conclusion that, beginning in the eighteenth century, the supply of slaves originated increasingly from farther inland, in the middle and upper Senegal and Gambia valleys. This shift in the slave supply is indirectly confirmed by the Islamic revolution of Futa Toro, which began in the 1760s and was, in part, the response of the Muslim community to its victimization in the trade.¹⁵ Muslims seeking protection against enslavement created the Islamic polity of Bundu in part as an asylum from the slave trade.¹⁶ In fact, there is grow-

¹¹ Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 72–73.

¹² Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, Chap. 4; and Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 35–37.

¹³ The term *tubenan* is from the Arabic *tawba*, "to repent"; the Wolof word *tub* essentially carries the same meaning. For more on the *tubenan*, or "guerre des Marabouts," see Philip D. Curtin, "Jihad in West Africa: Early Phases and Inter-Relations in Mauritania and Senegal," *Journal of African History*, XII (No. 1, 1971), 11–24; and Boubacar Barry, "La guerre des Marabouts dans la région du fleuve Sénégal de 1673 à 1677," *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental (formerly Français) d'Afrique Noire*, XXXIII (July 1971), 564–89.

¹⁴ Suret-Canale and Barry, "Western Atlantic Coast," 470.

¹⁵ David Robinson, "The Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, VIII (No. 2, 1975), 185–221.

¹⁶ Michael A. Gomez, *Pragmatism in the Age of Jihad: The Precolonial State of Bundu* (Cambridge, Eng., and New York, 1992).

ing evidence that the middle and upper Senegal valleys were more severely impacted by the transatlantic trade than previously understood.¹⁷

Finally, the non-Muslim Bambara of Segu were renowned warriors, so that a number of Muslims must have been fed into the trade as captives of war. Although the contribution of Senegambia to the trade declined dramatically after 1750, the *tubenan* movement along the coastal area meant that the bulk of the captives came from the mid-range and upper/middle Niger areas, in which Islam was relatively more widespread. After 1750 traders operating in the upper/middle Niger valleys simply redirected the considerable number of war captives to other points along the coast of West Africa.

The next supply zone was Sierra Leone, or what is now Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and a small portion of Liberia, spanning the coast from the Casamance in the north to Cape Mount in the south. From the middle of the sixteenth century through the seventeenth, the region's principal sources for the slave trade were the non-Muslim Tenda and the "Paleo-Negritics," as Walter Rodney refers to them.¹⁸ These people of the littoral were in fact the victims of raiding by Mande-speakers of the interior, who sold their captives to traders servicing, for the most part, the Spanish colonies. The French dominated the trade of the region for the first half of the eighteenth century and were succeeded by the English during the second half of the eighteenth. For this period (1690–1800), Rodney estimates that 75 percent of the Africans sold into the trade came from the interior.¹⁹ This observation suggests that a proportionate number of North American slaves who came from this supply zone during this time also originated in the hinterland.

The interior of present-day Guinea is dominated by the Futa Jallon massif. Originally inhabited by the Jallonke, these Guinea highlands received substantial numbers of Fulbe pastoralists from Maasina in the fifteenth and seventeenth/eighteenth centuries.²⁰ By the early eighteenth century, tensions between the Fulbe, who were largely Muslim, and the indigenous, largely non-Muslim Jallonke reached intolerable

¹⁷ Abdoulaye Bathily, "La traite atlantique des esclaves et ses effets économiques et sociaux en Afrique: Le cas du Galam, royaume de l'hinterland sénégalais au dix-huitième siècle." *Journal of African History*, XXVII (No. 2, 1986), 269–93; see also Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1975).

¹⁸ Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545–1800* (Oxford, 1970), 95–113 (quoted phrase on p. 112).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 244–55.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 255; and Thierno Diallo, *Les institutions politiques du Fouta Djallon au XIX^e siècle* (Dakar, 1972), 20–34.

levels for reasons contested in the scholarly literature.²¹ An alliance of Fulbe and Jallonke Muslims launched a holy war, or *jihad*, in the 1720s. After consolidating its power in 1747, the *jihad* expanded into adjacent lands and became a decidedly Fulbe-controlled operation. As a consequence of this movement, large numbers of captives were sold along the coast into the transatlantic trade.

A glance at the *jihad* suggests that the preponderance of captives sold into the trade were non-Muslims. However, the *jihad* was not one long, uninterrupted Muslim march to victory. Non-Muslim populations fought back; in particular, the incursions into Muslim-ruled territory by Kundi Burama of Wassulu lasted from the 1760s into the 1780s and wreaked havoc among the community of the Muslim faithful.²² Paul E. Lovejoy records that the 1760s through the 1780s was the "most violent" phase of the conflict in Futa Jallon and resulted in a greater than 100-percent per annum increase in slave exports from the region.²³ It appears, therefore, that the Futa Jallon *jihad* was responsible for nearly all of the captives coming from the interior, which in turn accounts for Rodney's estimate that 75 percent of the eighteenth-century trade came from the interior.

The next supply zone was the Windward Coast, which at that time stretched from Cape Mount to the city of Assini (near the present-day Ivory Coast–Ghana border), and encompassed what is now Liberia and Ivory Coast. To date there is no evidence to suggest that Islam was significant here. However, the continuing expansion of the Futa Jallon theocracy, combined with the considerable commercial activity of Muslims from Kankan (in Guinea) to Kong (in Ivory Coast), indicates that some captives reaching the Windward Coast for sale must have been Muslim.

The Gold Coast, roughly occupying what is now Ghana, was visited by European traders along the Atlantic as early as the fifteenth century. Originally an exporter of gold and a net importer of slaves, the Gold Coast became a net exporter of slaves by the early seventeenth century.²⁴ In the first decade of the eighteenth century, Africans were

²¹ See the following for a discussion of causal possibilities: Boubacar Barry, *Le royaume du Waalo: le Sénégal avant la conquête* (rev. ed.; Paris, 1985); Suret-Canale and Barry, "Western Atlantic Coast"; William Derman with Louise Derman, *Serfs, Peasants, and Socialists: A Former Serf Village in the Republic of Guinea* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1973); Joye Bowman Hawkins, "Conflict, Interaction, and Change in Guinea-Bissau: Fulbe Expansion and Its Impact, 1850–1900," (Ph.D. dissertation, U.C.L.A., 1980); and Joseph Earl Harris, "The Kingdom of Fouta Diallon," (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1965).

²² Suret-Canale and Barry, "Western Atlantic Coast," 493–95; and Alfa Ibrahim Sow, *Chroniques et récits du Fouta Djallon* . . . (Paris, 1968), 15.

²³ Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 59.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

exported from the region at a rate of 2,500 per annum; by the 1740s, the trade peaked at 9,100 per annum. The escalation of the trade resulted from the rising demand for slaves and the expansionist behavior by Asante, which pursued an imperialist policy from the time of its creation about 1680 until 1750.²⁵ One of the polities that succumbed to the power of Asante was the province of Gonja, a Muslim territory vitally connected to the middle Niger valley via Muslim commercial networks that led through Kong, Dagomba, Wa, and Mamprussi. In addition, Muslim traders from as far east as Hausaland conducted business on a regular basis in the capital of Kumase.²⁶ The Islamic presence in the interior was such that Lovejoy comments: "The Muslim factor was strong, providing commercial connections with the far interior, so that the Akan states were involved in continental trade on a scale that was at least equal to Oyo, Dahomey, and Benin and was perhaps even greater."²⁷ All of this suggests that Muslim captives constituted some percentage of the supply from the Gold Coast.

The Bight of Benin, from the Volta River to the Benin River, corresponds approximately to contemporary Togo, Benin, and southwestern Nigeria. The eighteenth-century struggles between the Yoruba (led by the state of Oyo) and Dahomey produced a great many captives, whose numbers were further augmented by Yoruba resistance to the ultimately successful expansion of Muslims from Ilorin. The latter were inspired by the 1804 *jihad* and subsequent caliphate of Usman dan Fodio at Sokoto (in northern Nigeria). Again, as was true of the *jihad* in Futa Jallon, Muslims as well as non-Muslims lost their liberty and found their way into the transatlantic trade. The existence of large numbers of Muslim "Hausa" slaves (from northern Nigeria) in Bahia (Brazil) is confirmation of this observation.²⁸ In light of this information, it is reasonable to propose that a significant number of the captives exported from the Bight of Benin were Muslim.

The supply zones of Angola and Mozambique will not be reviewed here, as the Muslim factor was either nonexistent (as was true of Angola), or the total contribution to the North American slave population was negligible (the case with Mozambique). This leaves the Bight of

²⁵ See Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (London, 1975); and Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 56.

²⁶ Wilks, *Asante*; Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development from the 8th to the 20th Century* (London, 1982), 50–60; Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York and London, 1941); and Herskovits, *The New World Negro* (Bloomington and London, 1966), 90–93.

²⁷ Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 56–57 (quotation on p. 57).

²⁸ Joao Jose Reis, "Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The African Muslim Uprising in Bahia, 1835" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1983).

Biafra, comprising what is now southeastern Nigeria, Cameroon, and Gabon. Here, large numbers of captives were procured via numerous, small-scale raids upon a densely populated region. Although there were some trade relations with Muslims to the north, it appears that the number of Muslims arriving on the coast for export was minimal.²⁹ As is true of Curtin's division of the supply zones, there are no compelling reasons to discard his computation of the relative contributions of these zones to the consequent African American population. According to his estimates, the distribution was as follows:

Senegambia	13.3%
Sierra Leone	5.5%
Windward Coast	11.4%
Gold Coast	15.9%
Bight of Benin	4.3%
Bight of Biafra	23.3%

Altogether, these six zones account for 73.7 percent of the slaves exported to North America.³⁰ If the Bight of Biafra is eliminated from further consideration, it would mean that slightly over 50 percent of Africans imported to North America came from areas in which Islam was at least a religion of the minority. Given that between 400,000 and 523,000 Africans came to British North America during the slave trade, at least 200,000 came from areas influenced by Islam to varying degrees.³¹ Muslims may have come to America by the thousands, if not tens of thousands. Beyond this general statement, a more precise assessment of their numbers is difficult to sustain at this time.³²

However, it would be a mistake to focus simply on the Muslim population, for Islam's impact in West Africa was not confined to the converted, practicing community. On the contrary, many non-Muslims were acquainted with some portion of its tenets through the activities of Muslim traders and clerics. The Muslim trading networks, through which the Juula, Yarse, and Hausa merchants all supplied disparate West African communities with goods from as far away as the

²⁹ Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 57–58; see also Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1986).

³⁰ Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 157.

³¹ See Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of African History*, XXX (No. 3, 1989), 365–94; James A. Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (New York and London, 1991), 428; and Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 83–91.

³² For example, see the unsubstantiated estimates of Austin that 10 to 15 percent of all imported Africans were Muslims. Austin, *African Muslims*, 32–36.

Mediterranean, also linked the savanna with the forest area, from Senegambia to Lake Chad.³³ The apolitical, nonproselytizing code of behavior of the merchants explains the receptivity of many non-Muslim as well as Muslim communities to their commercial activities.

In addition to, and often in conjunction with, the activities of Muslim traders, Muslim clerics performed religious offices throughout West Africa. Far removed from the lofty positions of the erudite in such cities as Kano and Jenne, numerous clerics of a more utilitarian calling were spread across the region's expanse. Literate in Arabic, these men performed religious and diplomatic services for royal courts and commoners alike. In particular, they provided amulets for both Muslims and non-Muslims; in fact, Muslim amulets, often containing Qur'anic inscriptions encased in sealed pouches, were very popular among non-Muslim populations, many of whom believed that letters possessed particular efficacy.³⁴ Mosques and *madrasas*, or Qur'anic schools, were invariably established in the Muslim part of town, or in the nearby Muslim village. As a result, many West Africans practiced indigenous religions but were nevertheless familiar with and influenced by Islam, having been exposed to Muslim dress, dietary laws, and overall conduct.

By the same token, it was not unusual for those who had converted to Islam to retain certain aspects of their previous belief systems, and Islam in West Africa underwent a number of reforms in an effort to achieve complete orthodoxy.³⁵ However, to the degree that these non-Islamic tendencies are not in conflict with the fundamental tenets of the faith (*e.g.*, one God, Muhammad as God's messenger, daily prayer, fasting during Ramadan, etc.), the integrity of these practitioners and the veracity of their confession is not open to challenge.

To be sure, the Muslim presence in North America antedates the arrival of the English colonists. The Spanish first controlled Florida from 1565 to 1763, during which time St. Augustine and nearby Fort Mose featured a significant black population.³⁶ By the middle of the

³³ For information on the Muslim merchants of Juula, see Timothy F. Garrard, *Akan Weights and the Gold Trade* (London and New York, 1980); Ivor Wilks, "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Journal of African History*, XXIII (1982), No. 2, pp. 333-49 (Part I) and No. 4, pp. 463-72 (Part II).

³⁴ Regarding the role of clerics and amulets, see Jack Goody, ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968); and Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (New York, 1984).

³⁵ For introductory discussions, see I. M. Lewis, ed., *Islam in Tropical Africa* (London, 1966); and Nehemia Levtzion, ed., *Conversion to Islam* (New York, 1979).

³⁶ Jane Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," *American Historical Review*, XCV (February 1990), 9-30.

eighteenth century, the third largest African ethnicity in this metropolitan area was "Mandingo," a group that certainly contained Muslims.³⁷ As was true of the Spanish in Florida, the French in Louisiana also imported Muslims, as they received slaves from Whydah and Angola, but especially from Senegambia. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall argues that two-thirds of all Africans imported into Louisiana from 1719 to 1743 via the French came from Senegambia, while Rawley estimates that by 1803 some 28,300 slaves had entered Louisiana, many from Senegambia.³⁸ The Muslim population, while unquantifiable, must have been significant. The runaway notices support this probability, as in 1802 a Louisiana newspaper called for the return of "Pierre-Marc," who was "Sénégalais, âgé de 30 ans, parlant Mobilier, Espagnol, Français et Anglais"; and "Thomas, Sénégalais, âgé de 30 à 32 ans, . . . couleur rouge . . ."; and again in 1806, when owners sought to find "Deux Negres bruts, nation Sénégal . . ." ³⁹ Hall writes: "The slaves of French Louisiana often kept their African names, many of which were Islamic. Some slaves with French names had Baraca, an Islamic religious title, as a second name."⁴⁰

The existence of Islam in Spanish- and French-speaking North America is important and merits further investigation. The preponderance of the evidence, however, concerns English-speaking North America. The slave-owning society in anglophone North America regularly distinguished among the various ethnicities within the African community. While these distinctions were generalized—they categorized African-born slaves according to region of origin and were therefore often inaccurate and misleading—at least whites understood that Africans were not a monolithic people. Some Africans, such as the Igbo and Ibibio of southeastern Nigeria, were reputed to be rebellious, unruly, and suicidal and were not highly prized in some North American areas. In contrast, Akan-speakers from the Gold Coast were regarded as more industrious and manageable.⁴¹ In other words, the fun-

³⁷ Jane L. Landers, "Black Society in Spanish St. Augustine, 1784–1821," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1988), 27–28.

³⁸ See Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's recent work, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge and London, 1992), 10–35; and Rawley, *Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 114–15.

³⁹ *Moniteur de la Louisiane*, September 11, 1802, and July 30, 1806.

⁴⁰ Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 166.

⁴¹ See Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 156–57; Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor . . .* (New York and London, 1918), 42–44; Darold D. Wax, "Preferences for Slaves in Colonial America," *Journal of Negro History*, LVIII (October 1973), 390–97; Herskovits, *Myth*, 50; Marguerite B. Hamer, "A Century Before Manumission: Sidelights on Slavery in Mid-Eighteenth Century South Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XVII (July 1940), 232–36; Rawley, *Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 272–73; Elizabeth Donnan, "The Slave Trade into South Carolina Before the Revolution," *American Historical Review*, XXXIII (April 1928), 816–17.

damental issue was the degree to which African labor could be successfully exploited.

Within this context, slaves from Senegambia and Sierra Leone, often simply called "Mandingoes" by whites, were generally viewed by slave owners as preferable to others.⁴² Within the categories of Senegambia and Sierra Leone were the bulk of the Muslim imports; both Hall and Austin maintain that the terms "Mandingo" or "Mandinga" were synonymous with Muslim by the nineteenth century.⁴³ While it cannot be demonstrated that all of these "Mandingoes" were Muslim, the aforementioned close association suggests that a substantial number must have been. The preference for "Mandingoes" by North American slave owners is reflected in the activity of eighteenth-century North American shippers who, although not responsible for the majority of slave importations into North America, nonetheless confined their activities to those areas of West Africa that were of greatest interest to planters and for that reason obtained the vast majority of their slaves from Senegambia and Sierra Leone.⁴⁴

Advertisements for runaway slaves contain unique and substantial information on ethnic and cultural traits of individual slaves and are an underutilized source of data on American slavery. With regard to Muslims in early America, these advertisements occasionally provide names that are clearly Muslim but rarely identified as such.⁴⁵ Names such as "Bullaly" (Bilali), "Mustapha," "Sambo," "Bocarrey" (Bubacar, from Abu Bakr), and "Mamado" (Mamadu) are regularly observed in the advertisements for runaway slaves. Unless slave owners clearly understood the origin of these names, they would not necessarily associate them with Islam.⁴⁶ A good example is "Sambo," a corruption of the name Samba (meaning "second son" in the language of the Fulbe, an ethnicity spread throughout the West African savanna). The May 24, 1775, edition of Savannah's *Georgia Gazette* ran a

⁴² For example, see David Duncan Wallace, *The Life of Henry Laurens* (New York and London, 1915), 76–77; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 29.

⁴³ Austin, *African Muslims*, 21. Hall argues that these terms were synonymous as early as the eighteenth century in Louisiana (*Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 41–42).

⁴⁴ David Richardson, "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700–1810: New Estimates of Volume and Distribution," *Journal of African History*, XXX (No. 1, 1989), 16; and Lovejoy, "Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa," 374.

⁴⁵ For examples of names that probably have African origins see Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States of North America* (2 vols., New York, 1849), I, 263. For discussions of names as ethnic markers, see John C. Inscoe, "Carolina Slave Names: An Index to Acculturation," *Journal of Southern History*, XLIX (November 1983), 527–54; and Cheryll Ann Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations: Slave-Naming Practices in the South," *American Historical Review*, XCII (June 1987), 563–96.

⁴⁶ See Lathan Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790* (4 vols., Westport, Conn., and London, 1983); and Inscoe, "Carolina Slave Names," 533–35.

notice for three missing men, including twenty-two-year-old "Sambo," reportedly "of the Moorish country."⁴⁷ This association with the "Moorish country" is more a reference to Sambo's Muslim identity than to his actually having hailed from North Africa. Similarly, the January 9–12, 1782, publication of the Charleston *Royal Gazette* sought the return of "Sambo" or "Sam," described as having a "yellowish complexion . . . and his hair is pretty long, being of the Fulla country"⁴⁸ The connections among "Sambo," Islam, and the Fulbe become more apparent when the preceding advertisement is juxtaposed with another notice in which a decidedly Muslim name is identified with the same ethnicity. Thus, the July 29, 1766, edition of the Charleston *South-Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* features an ad in which George Austin seeks the return of "Moosa, a yellow Fellow . . . of the Fullah Country."⁴⁹ While the association between the name "Sambo" and Islam is strong in the preceding examples, it does not at all follow that the name was the exclusive property of Muslims. Rather, it is more reasonable to conclude that a significant number of African-born males with this name may have been Muslim.

The appearance of incontestably Muslim names in the runaway notices is relatively infrequent. More commonly, owners seeking the return of their slaves associated them with particular supply zones (e.g., Gambia or Senegal), or they provided an ethnic identity (Mandingo or Fula, for example). In the case of either supposed area of origin or ethnic derivation, one cannot conclusively argue that the individual in question is Muslim, but—given both the African background and the tendency of American planters to conflate Muslims, ethnicity, and area of origin—the probability that many of these people were Muslims is high.

Interestingly, examples of Muslim runaways come overwhelmingly from South Carolina and Georgia, especially along the coast, and also from colonial Louisiana.⁵⁰ This is probably because Charleston (and Savannah to a lesser extent) was a preeminent slave port and was surrounded by major slaveholding areas devoted to rice and indigo cultivation. Similarly, rice (and secondarily indigo) was extremely important to early Louisianians for their own use, and when the first two slavers arrived in Louisiana in 1719, they carried "several barrels of rice seed and African slaves who knew how to produce the crop."⁵¹

⁴⁷ Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, Vol. IV: *Georgia*, 64.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, III: *South Carolina*, 593.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 605.

⁵⁰ The author has only partially examined early Mississippi and Louisiana newspapers. This assessment is therefore subject to revision upon completion of the larger project.

⁵¹ Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 10 (quotation)—11 and 122–26.

That is, slave ships arrived with people from Senegambia, Gold Coast, and Sierra Leone, who were noted for their skills in this type of agriculture and therefore greatly in demand.⁵² In turn, these captives tended to come from islamized areas. Given their preference for slaves from these areas and their distaste for Africans from the Bight of Biafra, South Carolina and Georgia planters paid close attention to ethnicity. In contrast, Virginians were not as discriminating.⁵³ Their relative lack of interest in ethnicity—rather than an absence of slaves from those locations—may help to explain the scarcity of references by Virginians to Muslims from Senegambia and Sierra Leone.

Further examples of advertisements that clearly refer to Muslims include the notice for “two Gambia Negroes, about 5 Feet 6 Inches high, the one his Name is Walley [Wali], the other’s Bocarrey”⁵⁴ In this notice, a connection is established between the Gambia area and Muslims. At times a geographic or ethnic affiliation is not given, only a name, as was the case in 1757, when a “negro man named Mamado” escaped from Rachel Fairchild; or again in 1772, when William Wood of Santee advertised for “A NEGRO FELLOW named HOMADY [Amadi, from Ahmad], Has a sulky Look and speaks bad English”⁵⁵ Enough time had passed for John Graham of Augustin’s Creek and John Strobhar of Purrysburgh to learn the names of their absconded slaves and to seek the return of “Mahomet” and “Mousa” respectively, whereas John Inglis of Charleston could only state that three “new” men and one woman had escaped, and that “two of the fellows are of a yellow complexion and Moorish breed”⁵⁶

In North Carolina in 1808, a one-hundred-dollar reward was offered for the apprehension of Arthur Howe, a white man who had taken away a slave named “Mustapha,” commonly called “Muss,” described as “polite and submissive” and a “handy fellow with

⁵² Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana and Chicago, 1984), 14–15; Wood, *Black Majority*, 58–62; and Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves*, 76–98.

⁵³ See Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 156–58; Rawley, *Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 334–35. Littlefield (*Rice and Slaves*, 31–32) disagrees with the view that Virginia planters were unconcerned about ethnic origins. To the contrary, Littlefield maintains (based upon Wax’s article “Preferences for Slaves,” previously cited) that Virginians were concerned about ethnicity and that they preferred the Igbo and others from the Niger delta. Rawley, in turn, states that Virginians preferred those from Gold Coast and Windward Coast, accepted the Igbo in large numbers, and disliked those from Angola.

⁵⁴ *South-Carolina Gazette*, October 19, 1738, in Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, III, 35.

⁵⁵ *South-Carolina Gazette*, June 23, 1757, and March 1, 1773, in Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, III, 155, 320.

⁵⁶ *Georgia Gazette*, September 7, 1774, March 15, 1781, and August 17, 1774, in *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, IV, 56, 89, 54–55.

most tools or about horses.”⁵⁷ That same year, Charlestonian R. Heriot also suspected that “an African wench named FATIMA,” who was about twenty years old and spoke “very little English,” may have been “enticed away and is harboured by some worthless person or persons”⁵⁸ However, most Muslim slaves, as was true of slaves in general, were quite capable of stealing away on their own, as reflected in Godin Guerard’s report from Georgia in 1792: “A MOOR SLAVE MAN, about 25 years of age, named MAHOMET who is badged by that name, but passes by the name HOMADY in common”⁵⁹

The matter of absconding obviously involves the question of destination. Muslims were no different from other slaves in that they often sought refuge among American Indians. In 1781 “Hommaday” had been absent from his owner in Savannah for three weeks and was “suspected to be harboured among the Indians.”⁶⁰ Similarly, someone matching the description of the previously mentioned “Mahomet” belonging to John Graham of Augustin’s Creek had “been seen at a settlement near the Indian Line on Ogechee very lately,” three years after his initial flight.⁶¹ While American Indian communities may have occasionally provided safe havens for slaves, some Muslims wanted to escape from America altogether, as was true of “A New Negro Fellow, called JEFFRAY, sometimes, BRAM, or IBRAHIM; . . . From some hints given by himself and others it is suspected he will endeavor to get on board some vessel.”⁶²

The preceding discussion concerns obscure individuals. But there are also accounts of Muslims who enjoyed some notoriety.⁶³ Austin has compiled data on some sixty-five Muslims, of whom only seven who came to North America are discussed in any detail. The question arises: of all the Muslims who came to America’s shores before 1865, what was unique about these seven? An analysis of each case reveals that these people attracted attention for a variety of reasons. Umar b. Said, or “Omar ibn Said,” received the greatest amount of interest, apparently because of both his literacy in Arabic and his possible conversion to Christianity. This “Prince Moro,” or “Moreau” as he was sometimes called, possessed an Arabic Bible.⁶⁴ In fact, he engaged in

⁵⁷ *Edenton Gazette and North Carolina Advertiser*, June 23, 1808.

⁵⁸ *Charleston Courier*, June 19, 1808.

⁵⁹ *Savannah Gazette of the State of Georgia*, June 7, 1792.

⁶⁰ *Savannah Royal Georgia Gazette*, October 4, 1781.

⁶¹ *Savannah Georgia Gazette*, August 31, 1774.

⁶² *Savannah Gazette of the State of Georgia*, December 8, 1791.

⁶³ Austin, *African Muslims*, vii.

⁶⁴ “Autobiography of Omar ibn Said, Slave in North Carolina, 1831,” *American Historical Review*, XXX (July 1925), 787–95; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 445–54.

a campaign of sending such Bibles to West Africa in cooperation with another African Muslim of some renown, Lamine Kaba, or "Lamen Kebe."⁶⁵ This, coupled with his repatriation to Liberia in 1835 after nearly thirty years of slavery, probably explains the latter's fame. An article on the Soninke (or Sereculeh) language was also published based upon an interview with Lamine Kaba.⁶⁶

In contrast to Umar b. Said and Lamine Kaba, Salih Bilali, or "Tom," remained a devout Muslim; the source of his acclaim was his exceptional managerial skills. Born *ca.* 1765, he arrived in North America in 1800; by 1816, he was the head driver on a plantation at Cannon's Point, on the Georgia island of St. Simons. Such was his reliability that the owner left Salih Bilali in charge of the entire plantation for months at a time, without any supervision.⁶⁷ Likewise, Bilali (or "Ben Ali"), a contemporary of Salih Bilali, was also a dependable driver and managed a four-hundred-to-five-hundred-slave plantation on the Georgia island of Sapelo.⁶⁸ He is noted as well for an extant collection of excerpts from an Islamic (Maliki) legal text known as the *Risala* of Ibn Abu Zayd.⁶⁹ Furthermore, he served as the model for Joel Chandler Harris's caricature "Ben Ali."⁷⁰

Abd al-Rahman, otherwise known as "Prince," was born in 1762 and arrived in New Orleans in 1788. Several remarkable stories surround him, but the one that probably catapulted him into national fame involves his encounter in Mississippi with a white man whom he had befriended in West Africa. Upon the latter's identification of Abd al-Rahman as royalty, a series of events were set into motion that ultimately led Abd al-Rahman back to Africa in 1829, where he died within months of arrival.⁷¹ The motif of an unexpected, outside influence intervening in the life of an individual whose "true" status was

⁶⁵ Austin, *African Muslims*, 409–11; and "Autobiography of Omar ibn Said," 788; see also Theodore Dwight, "Condition and Character of Negroes in Africa," *Methodist Quarterly Review*, 4th Ser., XVI (January 1864), 77–90.

⁶⁶ Theodore Dwight Jr., "On the Sereculeh Nation, in Nigritia: Remarks on the Sereculehs, an African Nation, accompanied by a Vocabulary of their Language," *American Annals of Education and Instruction*, V (September 1835), 451–56.

⁶⁷ See Wilks, "Salih Bilali of Massina," 145–51; Austin, *African Muslims*, 309–16.

⁶⁸ Lydia Parrish, *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands* (Athens, Ga., 1992), 25–28; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 265–68.

⁶⁹ The manuscript is entitled the "Ben-Ali Diary," in the holdings of the Georgia State Law Library. See also Joseph H. Greenberg, "The Decipherment of the 'Ben-Ali Diary,' a Preliminary Statement," *Journal of Negro History*, XXV (July 1940), 372–75.

⁷⁰ Joel Chandler Harris, *The Story of Aaron (so named), the Son of Ben Ali* (Boston and New York, 1896).

⁷¹ See Alford, *Prince Among Slaves*; [Cyrus Griffin], "The Unfortunate Moor," *African Repository*, III (February 1828), 364–67; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 121–32.

previously unknown is repeated in the life of Ayuba b. Sulayman, or "Job Ben Solomon," who was born *ca.* 1701, captured by traders in 1730, and brought to Maryland in 1732. Before two years had passed he was a free man, and in 1733 he was en route to West Africa via England as a result of the benevolence of a Royal African Company officer very much taken with the plea for liberty Ayuba had penned in Arabic.⁷² Finally, the seventh Muslim of note is Yarrow Mahmud, or "Yarrow Mamout," who in 1819 was living in Georgetown when Charles Willson Peale painted his portrait—apparently because Mahmud had atypical features.⁷³

The extraordinary or unusual circumstances in these seven individuals' lives—not their adherence to Islam—explain their relative prominence in the literature. Indeed, many of the accounts concerning them regularly refer to other enslaved Muslims, who, because they did not share in the special circumstance, did not receive significant recognition. Therefore, the attention that these seven are accorded in the literature is misleading because it conveys the idea that Muslims were very rare in number. A closer examination of the literature reveals the presence of more Muslims than previously known.

An investigation into the background of these seven Muslims supports the earlier discussion of the zones and conditions out of which most of the Muslim captives emerged. Ayuba b. Sulayman, for example, originated from the upper Senegal valley, in the interior of the Senegambia supply zone, from where he traveled to the upper Gambia (ironically) to sell slaves. Unfortunately for him, he fell victim to slave raiders, who ultimately sold him into the transatlantic trade. Also captured and sold with him was Lamine N'jai, or "Lahamin Jay"; both would eventually return to West Africa.⁷⁴ Similarly, Umar b. Said was born in Futa Toro, along the middle Senegal valley, and was captured and sold in the beginning of the nineteenth century. He himself writes that at the age of thirty-one, "there came to our place a large army, who killed many men, and took me, and brought me to the great sea, and sold me into the hands of the Christians"⁷⁵ Austin estimates that Umar arrived in Charleston in 1807, which means that the "large army" is probably a reference to the combined armies of Bundu, Kaarta, and Khasso, who invaded Futa Toro in

⁷² See Thomas Bluett, *Some Memoirs on the Life of Job* (London, 1734); Francis Moore, *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa* (London, 1738); Philip D. Curtin, "Ayuba Suleiman Diallo of Bondu," in Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered*; and Grant, *Fortunate Slave*.

⁷³ Austin, *African Muslims*, 68–70. Austin includes Peale's comments on Yarrow Mahmud in this account.

⁷⁴ J. M. Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (London, 1966), 212.

⁷⁵ "Autobiography of Omar ibn Said," 792–93 (quotation on p. 793).

1806–1807.⁷⁶ This particular encounter is only one example of many such conflicts in the middle and upper Senegal valleys and demonstrates the susceptibility of the Muslim population to the slave trade.

Abd al-Rahman represents the Sierra Leone region in that he was born in Futa Jallon and in fact claimed to be the son of *Almaami* Ibrahima Sori, one of the most important leaders in Guinean history. In the course of a military campaign under his command, he and his army were defeated and captured. What immediately followed is unclear, but at least some of the captives, including Abd al-Rahman, were sold to the Malinke along the Gambia River. Eventually, he and fifty of his former soldiers were traded to an English slaver and transported to the western hemisphere. For Abd al-Rahman, then, his path led to the Gambia, whereas it is possible that other captives from the same company were taken to the Sierra Leone coast. In any event, Abd al-Rahman's personal account underscores the volatility of the region during the eighteenth century and supports the contention that many Muslims from Futa Jallon became captives of war and involuntary participants in the transatlantic trade. Nothing more is said of the other Muslims captured with Abd al-Rahman except for Samba, or "Sambo" as his name was corrupted, who was a part of the former's command in Futa Jallon and wound up on the same Natchez farm, thus explaining his mention.⁷⁷

Like Abd al-Rahman, Bilali and Lamin Kaba were also originally from Futa Jallon. Like Ayuba b. Sulayman, Umar b. Said, and Abd al-Rahman, Bilali was Fulbe.⁷⁸ Lamine Kaba, on the other hand, was from the clerically oriented community of the Jakhanke, along the southern reaches of Futa Jallon. His place of capture and point of departure are not clearly indicated, and similar information regarding Bilali is altogether missing. Lamine Kaba maintained that he was searching for writing paper along the coast when he was captured and subsequently enslaved.⁷⁹ The need for paper is consistent with the clerical

⁷⁶ See David Robinson, *Chiefs and Clerics: Abdul Bokar Kan and Futa Toro, 1853–1891* (Oxford, 1975), 15–18; Robinson, "Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro"; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 450.

⁷⁷ Alford, *Prince*, 3–28.

⁷⁸ Austin, *African Muslims*, 268. Interestingly, Cornelia Bailey says that Bilali's ethnicity was never discussed in her family, so that the Fulbe connection was not an issue (interview, July 1992).

⁷⁹ Dwight Jr., "On the Sereculeh Nation," 451–52. For more on the Jakhanke, see Lamin O. Sanneh, *The Jakhanke: The History of an Islamic Clerical People of the Senegambia* (London, 1979); and Thomas Hunter, "The Development of an Islamic Tradition of Learning among the Jahanka of West Africa" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1977).

nature of the Jakhanke, and his capture once again illustrates the insecurity of the Sierra Leone region.

Origins in the middle and upper Niger valleys are also represented in the list of Muslim notables. The case of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, who eventually landed in Jamaica and is therefore not a focus of this study, nevertheless demonstrates that the tentacles of the transatlantic trade reached as far inland as the Niger buckle (the stretch of the Niger from Timbuktu in the west to the town of Gao in the east), as he was born *ca.* 1790 in Timbuktu and grew up in Jenne, in the upper Niger valley (in the floodplain).⁸⁰ Salih Bilali was also from the area, specifically Maasina, between the floodplain and the buckle. He was captured *ca.* 1790, during the period in which the Bambara were consolidating their control of the upper Niger. After his capture, Salih Bilali was taken south and sold at Anomabu, along the Gold Coast.⁸¹ Sources have heretofore been interpreted to mean that captives coming out of the upper Niger valley were usually traded along the Senegambian coast.⁸² The example of Salih Bilali, however, suggests that those trading in slaves from this area had a variety of options available to them for the disposition of their captives.

Finally, Yarrow Mahmud's origins are unspecified. His appearance, preserved for posterity by Peale, reveals features that are consistent with those of the Fulbe.⁸³ That he arrived in North America in the 1730s, as did Ayuba b. Sulayman, suggests a middle or upper Senegal valley origin.

It is difficult to know the extent to which Muslims in early America had opportunities to engage in corporate expressions of their faith. At first glance, it seems highly improbable that the host society would allow Muslims to assemble for prayer. But evidence suggests that such assemblies may have taken place. First of all, there are recorded instances of Muslims performing *salat*, or prayer, as individuals. In some cases, such prayer was conducted in a threatening environment. Ayuba b. Sulayman, for example, was chased by a white boy who threw dirt in his face and mocked him when he prayed. In other cases, Muslims were allowed to pray in the prescribed manner by their owners. Thus, Ayuba, after his unpleasant encounter with the white youth and subsequent flight, was returned to his owner, who provided him with a private place to pray.⁸⁴ There is also evidence that Abd al-Rah-

⁸⁰ Ivor Wilks, "Abu Bakr al-Siddiq of Timbuktu," 152–69.

⁸¹ Ivor Wilks, "Salih Bilali of Massina," 145; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 309–16.

⁸² Curtin, *Economic Change*, 159–68.

⁸³ Austin, *African Muslims*, 68–70.

⁸⁴ Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 82–84.

man continued to practice Islam and that after either a flirtation with Christianity or a conscious strategy of dissimulation to gain support for his repatriation, he immediately reaffirmed his Muslim beliefs upon returning to Africa.⁸⁵ Salih Bilali was a devout Muslim who fasted Ramadan; Bilali wore a fez and kaftan, prayed daily (facing the East), and also observed the Muslim feast days.⁸⁶ Charles Ball, a slave in Maryland, South Carolina, and Georgia for forty years, must have also witnessed certain Muslim practices among the slaves, for he wrote that "I knew several who must have been, from what I have since learned, Mohammedans; though at that time, I had never heard of the religion of Mohammed."⁸⁷ Ball, like many other observers, took cognizance of the unusual behavior but did not know enough about Islam to recognize what he saw.

Individual examples of adherence to Islam suggest that many more also practiced the religion; perhaps clandestinely or perhaps in full view of unsuspecting eyes such as Ball's. In any event, the possibility that Muslims congregated for prayer is enhanced by the tendency among slaves to steal away into secluded places for religious and social purposes.⁸⁸ It has generally been assumed that at such times slaves practiced their own brand of Christianity or even traditional African religions, but there is absolutely no reason to preclude Muslims from such activity. Indeed, the probability that Muslim worship took place in some sustained way is increased when the question of contact between Muslims is considered. Bilali and Salih Bilali, residing on plantations on neighboring sea islands, were considered to be best friends and were in contact with others who were apparently Fulbe. The sea island Muslim community on Sapelo and St. Simons islands was probably significant in size, as revealed by Bilali's statement when called upon by his owner to defend the island against the British in 1813: "I will answer for every Negro of the true faith, but not for the *Christian dogs* you own," he announced, going on to defend the plantation with a force of eighty armed slaves.⁸⁹ Religion and religious observances must have constituted an important, if not central, component of the Muslims' bond. Abd al-Rahman and Samba, his

⁸⁵ Alford, *Prince*, 57; Austin, *African Muslims*, 6–7.

⁸⁶ Austin, *African Muslims*, 265, 321.

⁸⁷ [Charles Ball], *Slavery in the United States* . . . (New York, 1837; rpt., New York, 1969), 165.

⁸⁸ John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (rev. ed., New York and Oxford, 1979) 130–46; George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*. Vol. I: *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of a Black Community* (Westport, Conn., 1972), 32–45.

⁸⁹ Austin, *African Muslims*, 268 (quotation), 313, and 324–25.

fellow Pullo (singular of Fulbe) and a slave on the same farm, were able to associate closely with each other, and the two communicated with at least one other "Mandinka" from Natchez.⁹⁰ As co-religionists, they surely sought opportunities to pray together.

In addition to the well-known cases of Salih Bilali and Abd al-Rahman, other Muslim slaves may have resided together in significant numbers on the same plantations. For example, thirty-six slaves were taken from a plantation on Amelia Island, East Florida, in 1813 by white "patriots." Of the thirty-six, the following may have been Muslim: Jack and Samba and their two children Saluma and Pizarro; Adam and Fatima and their one-year-old Fernando; and thirteen-year-old Ottemar or Otteman. All of the adults were African-born, and the names "Samba," "Saluma," and "Fatima" make it entirely plausible that the two families were wholly Muslim. Furthermore, fifteen of the thirty-six were African-born, so that it is possible that even more were Muslim. However, the names, including "Hamlet," "Neptune," and "Plato," given to them by their owners conceal their ethnic and religious affiliation.⁹¹

An even more intriguing case is the John Stapleton plantation at Frogmore on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. In May 1816, a list of the 135 slaves on the Frogmore estate was drawn up, and the following individuals were included: "Sambo," eighty-five years old and African-born; "Dido," a fifty-six-year-old "Moroccan"; "Mamoodie" and his wife "Eleanor," both African-born and aged twenty-eight and twenty-nine respectively; and the family of "Nelson," "Venus," and child "Harriett." Sambo and Dido were probably Muslim. Mamoodie and Eleanor had a child named Fatima who was born in 1814 (she died in infancy), so they were very likely to have been Muslim. The most interesting individuals are Nelson and Venus, who were twenty-nine and twenty-seven respectively and both African-born. In a subsequent slave list, drawn up in 1818, their other child "Hammett" appears. Hammett [Hamid or Ahmad] is a Muslim name, which strongly suggests that one or both of the parents were Muslim. Again, the remaining names on the 1816 list suggest no African derivations, but twenty-eight people are listed as African-born. Therefore, others may well have been Muslim as were Nelson and/or Venus, but the absence of corroborating evidence—such as a child with a Muslim name—prevents any such identification.⁹² In any event, those who were Muslims

⁹⁰ Alford, *Prince*, 43–44 and 77.

⁹¹ Augusta *Herald*, November 11, 1813.

⁹² John Stapleton Papers (South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia), microfilmed on reels 6 and 7, of Series A, Part 2 of *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War*, Kenneth M. Stamp, general editor.

would have sought out each other's company and would have searched for corporate ways to express their common faith.

Muslims sought not only to associate with one another but also to retain their common Islamic heritage. Dr. Collins, who wrote a manual on the medical treatment of slaves, stated that many slaves from Senegal "converse in the Arabic language . . . , and some are sufficiently instructed even to write it."⁹³ Joseph Le Conte recalled "an old native African named Philip," a Muslim who during the antebellum period demonstrated the outward expressions of the religion "by going through all the prayers and prostrations of his native country."⁹⁴ Abd al-Rahman often wrote the *Fatiha* (opening *sura* or chapter of the Qur'an) for whites who believed that they were receiving the Lord's Prayer in an exotic hand. And Umar b. Said penned his autobiography in Arabic.⁹⁵

Many Muslims struggled not only to preserve their traditions but also to pass them on to their progeny. Thus, Bilali bestowed Muslim names upon his twelve sons and seven daughters; and, as they regularly communicated with one another in a "foreign tongue," he apparently had taught Pulaar (the language of the Fulbe) and possibly Arabic to all of his children except the youngest daughter.⁹⁶ Samba, the companion of Abd al-Rahman, had at least three sons and gave them all Muslim names.⁹⁷ The previously mentioned Nelson and Venus of St. Helena gave one of their children a Muslim name. In 1786 "Sambo" and "Fatima" escaped Edward Fenwicke of John's Island; Sambo was "of the Guinea country" and probably Muslim, but Fatima was described as "country born" (*i.e.*, born in North America), so she either converted to Islam or had at least one Muslim parent.⁹⁸ The recurrence of Muslim names among American-born slaves corroborates the desire among many to keep their religion and culture alive.

The preponderance of runaway notices containing references to Muslims appear in South Carolina and Georgia newspapers. Consistent with this pattern, there is relatively more information on Muslims and their descendants living along the Georgia coast, both on the var-

⁹³ Dr. Collins, *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves* (1811), quoted in Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 81.

⁹⁴ William Dallam Armes, ed., *The Autobiography of Joseph LeConte* (New York, 1903), 29–30.

⁹⁵ Austin, *African Muslims*, 129. See footnote 64.

⁹⁶ Austin, *African Muslims*, 265 and 272–75 (quotation). Cornelia Bailey maintains that Arabic was not taught but that "some African" was spoken.

⁹⁷ Alford, *Prince*, 77–78. Two of the sons were named "Sulimina" (but called "Solomon" and "Samba").

⁹⁸ *State Gazette of South-Carolina*, July 31, 1786, in Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, III, 400.

ious sea islands and on the mainland near Savannah. The data provide an incomplete but substantive picture of African-born Muslims, their progeny, and associated communities of believers who pursued their religion with diligence and purpose in an atmosphere charged with the teachings of Christianity and the attraction of African traditional religions. There is also possible evidence of non-Muslim slaves converting to Islam. Finally, the grandchildren and subsequent progeny spoke of the African-born Muslims with pride, suggesting a strong and clear identification with an Islamic heritage, if not an actual embrace of the religion.

As noted earlier, Salih Bilali and Bilali served as drivers on very large plantations located on the Georgia sea islands of St. Simons and Sapelo. It appears that the number of Muslim slaves in this area was significant. For example, in May 1802 two Muslim men named "Alik" and "Abdalli" escaped from Sapelo Island; both were probably African-born, as one spoke "bad English," while the other's command of the language was only slightly better.⁹⁹ In March 1807 "Toney," "Jacob," and eighteen-year-old "Musa" also escaped from Sapelo Island, having belonged to Alexander Johnston.¹⁰⁰ Again, it is conceivable that all three men were Muslim.

John Couper (1759–1850) and his son James Hamilton Couper (1794–1866) owned a number of plantations on St. Simons Island and along the Altamaha River, including the well-known Hopeton plantation. In an 1827 document detailing the sale of Hopeton by John Couper to James Hamilton (a close friend) and his son James, 381 slave names are listed.¹⁰¹ Of these names, "Fatima" is repeated six times, "Mahomet" twice, and there is one "Maryam." These were probably Muslims. However, the principal Muslim on the plantation was Salih Bilali, who is listed as "Tom" in the document. How many more Muslims there were at Hopeton cannot be discerned from the available data, but there were probably others whose Islamic identities are hidden behind such names as "Tom." Indeed, James Hamilton Couper himself wrote that "there are about a dozen negroes on this plantation, who speak and understand the Foulah language"¹⁰²

Ben Sullivan was eighty-eight and living on St. Simons when interviewed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser*, May 11, 1802.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, March 27, 1807.

¹⁰¹ State of Georgia Archives, GRG2-009 and GRG2-029 (Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta).

¹⁰² Austin, *African Muslims*, 321.

¹⁰³ Georgia Writers' Project, *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes* (Athens, 1940), 178–83.

Sullivan was the grandson of Salih Bilali, and Sullivan's father's name was "Belali," a direct indication of Salih Bilali's desire to pass on his Islamic identity. Ben Sullivan remembered, in addition to his father and grandfather, two other Muslims in the community, "ole Israel" and "Daphne." Concerning the former, Sullivan reported, "Ole Israel he pray a lot wid a book he hab wut he hide, an he take a lill mat an he say he prayuhs on it. He pray wen duh sun go up an wen duh sun go down He alluz tie he head up in a wite clawt an seem he keep a lot uh clawt on hand" The book Sullivan refers to may have been the Qur'an. Similarly, Daphne prayed regularly, bowing "two aw tree times in duh middle uh duh prayuh," and was usually veiled.¹⁰⁴

On nearby Sapelo Island was the large plantation of Thomas Spalding (1774–1851), the driver of which was Salih Bilali's coreligionist Bilali (pronounced "Blali" in the Sapelo community), also referred to as the "Old Man."¹⁰⁵ Bilali's large family of twelve sons and seven daughters all "worshipped Mahomet," as one observer stated in 1901 based on her memories of the late 1850s.¹⁰⁶ Some details of their religious practices are provided by Katie Brown, who at the time of the WPA interviews was "one of the oldest inhabitants" of Sapelo Island.¹⁰⁷ She was also the great-granddaughter of Bilali, or "Belali Mahomet." She enumerated Bilali's seven daughters as "Magret, Bentoo, Chaalut, Medina, Yaruba, Fatima, and Hestuh"; Margaret was the grandmother of Katie Brown, who went on to say: "Magret an uh daughter Cotto use tuh say dat Bilali an he wife Phoebe pray on duh bead. Dey wuz bery puhticluh bout duh time dey pray and dey bery regluh bout duh hour. Wen duh sun come up, wen it straight obuh head an wen it set, das duh time dey pray. Dey bow tuh duh sun an hab lill mat tuh kneel on. Duh beads is on a long string. Belali he pull bead an he say, 'Belambi, Hakabara, Mahamadu'. Phoebe she say, 'Ameen, Ameen'."¹⁰⁸ In addition to religious observances, Bilali apparently adhered to Islamic prescriptions on marriage; Ms. Brown remarked that "Magret she say Phoebe he wife, but maybe he hab mone one wife. I specks das bery possible."¹⁰⁹ Information on Muslims' adherence to Islamic dietary proscriptions is meager; however, Cornelia Bailey provides a few glimpses with her observation that Bilali's children would

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 179–80.

¹⁰⁵ Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1992. For more on Sapelo Island, see William S. McFeely, *Sapelo's People: A Memory of Slavery, an Appointment with Freedom* (New York and London, 1994).

¹⁰⁶ Parrish, *Slave Songs*, 28n22.

¹⁰⁷ *Drums and Shadows*, 159.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

not eat wild animals or fresh meat and that certain seafoods such as crab were avoided, as were certain kinds of fish.¹¹⁰ Taken together, the testimonies of Ben Sullivan, Cornelia Bailey, and Katie Brown provide the contours of Muslim life in early Georgia—prayer mats, prayer beads, veiling, head coverings, Qur'ans, dietary laws, and ritualized, daily prayer characterized the lifestyle. The composite picture is consistent with a serious pursuit of Islam.

Bilali's daughters, who were also slaves and whose places of birth are not as clearly defined as their father's, were just as religious.¹¹¹ Shad Hall of Sapelo Island, another descendant of Bilali through his grandmother Hestuh, describes the daughters as follows: "'Hestuh an all ub um sho pray on duh bead. Dey weah duh string uh beads on duh wais. Sometime duh string on duh neck. Dey pray at sun-up and face duh sun on duh knees an bow tuh it tree times, kneelin on a lill mat'."¹¹²

A sense of a closely knit family emerges from these WPA interviews. Katie Brown refers to Salih Bilali of St. Simons as "cousin Belali Sullivan." Shad Hall states that his grandmother Hestuh bore a son called "Belali Smith," who in turn was the grandfather of Phoebe Gilbert, also a Sapelo resident.¹¹³ Phoebe Gilbert's other set of grandparents were Calina and Hannah, both of whom were Igbo. Sapelo inhabitant Nero Jones was also related to "Uncle Calina and An Hannah" and says that they were "mighty puhticuluh bout prayin. Dey pray on duh bead. Duh ole man he say 'Ameela' and An Hannah she say 'Hakabara'."¹¹⁴ The last quote is fascinating, for it strongly suggests that Calina and Hannah were Muslim converts, as the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria were not Muslim.¹¹⁵ Likewise, the Igbo population in early America was substantial, but hardly ever associated with Islam.

Islam along coastal Georgia was by no means limited to the descendants of Bilali and Salih Bilali. The WPA interviews of Ed

¹¹⁰ Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1992.

¹¹¹ Though Bilali was African-born, his wife and children may not have been. According to Cornelia Bailey, Bilali's wife Phoebe was "from the islands," meaning that she was either Caribbean-born or "seasoned" there. Since Bilali came with his entire family to Sapelo, this would mean that he also spent some time in "the islands." This, in turn, allows for the possibility that the family developed in the West Indies, rather than in Africa. (Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1992).

¹¹² *Drums and Shadows*, 165–66.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ In response to a direct question about this, Bailey responded that Calina and Hannah were indeed Muslims and that they came to Sapelo via the West Indies. Thus, they could have converted to Islam while in the Caribbean. (Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1992).

Thorpe of Harris Neck, Rosa Grant of Possum Point, and Lawrence Baker of Darien reveal that their ancestors were also Muslim. Like the "Bilali" families, these early Muslims also prayed three times daily in the prescribed fashion, ending their prayers with "Ameen, Ameen, Ameen." In fact, Rosa Grant says of her grandmother Ryna that "Friday wuz duh day she call huh prayuh day." This is not an allusion to daily prayer, as Ms. Grant had previously stated that her grandmother's prayers began "ebry mawnin."¹¹⁶ Rather, this is a reference to the Muslim observance of Friday prayer, on which day Muslims congregate at noon. Whether Ms. Grant and others actually gathered for the prayer is not known, but at least she attempted to keep alive the significance of the day.

Muslims contemporary with Bilali and with names similar to his might have lived in other areas along the Atlantic coast. Speculation on this point arises from the earlier mentioned possibility of Muslim ancestry in the lineage of Frederick Douglass. His great-great-grandfather was named "Baly," and his grandparents were Betsy and Isaac Bailey of Talbot County along Maryland's Eastern Shore. Betsy Bailey's daughter Harriet gave birth to Frederick Augustus Bailey. William S. McFeely, the biographer of Douglass, writes:

In the nineteenth century, on Sapelo Island (where Baileys still reside), there was a Fulfulde-speaking slave from Timbo, Futa Jallon, in the Guinea highlands, who could write Arabic and who was the father of twelve sons. His name was Belali Mohomet . . . "Belali" slides easily into the English "Bailey," a common African American surname along the Atlantic coast. The records of Talbot County list no white Baileys from which the slave Baileys might have taken their name, and an African origin, on the order of "Belali," is conceivable.¹¹⁷

Since Betsy Bailey was born *ca.* 1772, she was essentially Bilali's contemporary and therefore very unlikely to have been his descendant. However, McFeely's point concerning the structural similarities between Belali and Bailey, coupled with the absence of white Baileys in Talbot County, is intriguing, and the possibility of Muslim antecedents in this particular lineage cannot be ruled out.

In sum, the Muslim presence in coastal Georgia (and possibly elsewhere along the Atlantic) was active, healthy, and compelling. Clearly, the history of Africans along the South Carolina-Georgia continuum is more complicated than previously understood; its study can no

¹¹⁶ *Drums and Shadows*, 120-21, 144-45, and 154-56.

¹¹⁷ William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York and London, 1991), 3-5 (quotation).

longer be limited to the Gullah language and associated handicrafts and artifacts, notwithstanding their importance.

Vis-à-vis other Africans, Muslims were generally viewed by slave owners as a "more intelligent, more reasonable, more physically attractive, more dignified people."¹¹⁸ The belief in the superiority of the "Mohammedans" was apparently a consistently held view throughout the colonial and antebellum periods. As an example, Salih Bilali is described as "a man of superior intelligence and higher cast of feature."¹¹⁹ In part, this view of the Muslim was informed by the physical appearance of slaves funneled through the Senegambia and Sierra Leone supply zones, such as the Fulbe and such Mande-speakers as the Malinke, who were believed to be phenotypically closer to Europeans than were other Africans.¹²⁰ But the more precise reason for the preference for Muslims was that they tended to come from Senegambia, a region whose inhabitants, together with those from the non-Muslim areas of Sierra Leone, were valued for their expert knowledge of rice (and to a lesser extent indigo) cultivation.¹²¹ Clearly, such experience influenced the desire of many Carolina and Georgia planters to purchase Africans from Senegambia and Sierra Leone.

As a result of their agricultural skill and the advantage it gave them, as well as for reasons to be explored shortly, many Muslims were given more responsibilities and privileges than other slaves. Alford writes that Muslim slaves were used as "drivers, overseers, and confidential servants with a frequency their numbers did not justify."¹²² Examples of this general statement include the careers of Bilali and Salih Bilali, who were both placed in positions of high authority and who jointly used that authority to quell a slave insurrection. Zephaniah Kingsley, a slave owner who advocated the "benign" treatment of slaves, recorded that along the Georgia coast during the War of 1812, there were "two instances, to the southward, where gangs of negroes were prevented from deserting to the enemy by drivers, or influential negroes, whose integrity to their masters, and influence over the slaves prevented it; and what is still more remarkable, in both instances the influential negroes were Africans, and professors of the Mahomedan religion."¹²³ This is apparently a reference to Bilali and Salih Bilali. Not only did

¹¹⁸ Austin, *African Muslims*, 29.

¹¹⁹ Newbell Niles Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill and London, 1926), 528; and Lyell, *Second Visit*, I, 266.

¹²⁰ Collins, *Practical Rules*, 37; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 81.

¹²¹ Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 14–15.

¹²² Alford, *Prince*, 56.

¹²³ Zephaniah Kingsley, *A Treatise on the Patriarchal, or Co-operative System of Society as it Exists in Some Governments, and Colonies in America, and in the United States, Under the Name of Slavery, with Its Necessary and Advantages* (Freeport, N.Y., 1829; rpt., 1940), 13–14. See also Parrish, *Slave Songs*, 25; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 268.

they crush the revolt, but Bilali defended Sapelo Island in 1813 with eighty armed slaves and denied access to the English. The majority of these eighty slaves were probably Muslim, given the extensive nature of Islam in the area, combined with Bilali's statement that he could depend only upon fellow Muslims to aid in the armed defense of the island, as opposed to the general slave population, whom he characterized as "Christian dogs."¹²⁴

As the examples of Bilali and Salih Bilali suggest, there were certain tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim slaves, whether the latter were African-born or not. In the first place, there is evidence that some American-born slaves condescended to newly arrived Africans, Muslim or non-Muslim.¹²⁵ To the extent that African Muslims encountered such treatment, they would have experienced pressures to modify or discontinue their Muslim/African practices in order to conform to what was acceptable in the new setting or they would have found the resolve to remain faithful to their convictions.¹²⁶ The evidence shows that the majority of Muslims reaffirmed their faith. With this in mind, it is not surprising to read of Bilali's characterization of his fellow (or actually subordinate) slaves as "Christian dogs." Neither is it startling to read of Abd al-Rahman's comments to Cyrus Griffin, in which "he states explicitly, and with an air of pride, that not a drop of negro blood runs in his veins."¹²⁷ This attitude was confirmed by the children of Bilali, all of whom were Muslims, and who were described as "holding themselves aloof from the others as if they were conscious of their own superiority."¹²⁸ Bailey essentially confirms this, stating that not only did Bilali "keep his distance" from others because he "did not like mixing" with them but also that Muslims and non-Muslims as a whole tended to "keep to themselves," although they generally "got along" and could work with others for specific purposes or special occasions.¹²⁹

The attitude of Muslim superiority, to the degree that it in fact existed, must first be explained within the context of the West African background. The probability that these people themselves had been slaveholders in the Old World influenced their view of slaves. Their African experience was shaped along the lines of highly stratified so-

¹²⁴ Ella May Thornton, "Bilali—His Book," *Law Library Journal*, XLVIII (1955), 228 (quotation)—29; and Austin, *African Muslims*, 268. Cornelia Bailey disagrees that the Muslims of Sapelo enjoyed advantages over non-Muslim slaves and maintains that slave owners treated both groups the same. (Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1992).

¹²⁵ E.g., see Puckett, *Folk Beliefs*, 528–29.

¹²⁶ See Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 73.

¹²⁷ [Griffin], "Unfortunate Moor," 366.

¹²⁸ Georgia Bryan Conrad, *Reminiscences of a Southern Woman* (Hampton, n.d.), 13.

¹²⁹ Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1992.

cieties in which the servile population was seen as inferior. The ethnic factor is also relevant in that there is considerable data on the ethnocentricity of the Fulbe of West Africa, who were clearly present among the American Muslim population.¹³⁰ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, in discussing three related, yet distinct psychological responses by men to enslavement, cites Ibrahima as a prime example of a Fulbe man who, by virtue of his exclusionary early socialization vis-à-vis other ethnicities, embodied the first category of response, which was characterized by a "ritualized compliance in which self-regard is retained." That is, Ibrahima maintained his culturally inculcated dignity and pride as he reconciled himself to enslavement by remembering his *pu-laaku*, the essence of the distinctive Fulbe character and prescriptive code of behavior. Hence, he never descended to the second category of response which "involves the incorporation of shame," or to the third category, described as "samboism" and "shamelessness."¹³¹ Indeed, to Ibrahima's mind, the internalization of enslavement was characteristic only of other, lesser, non-Fulbe ethnicities.

A second factor in explaining Muslim attitudes of superiority concerns Islam itself. To live as a Muslim in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century West Africa was to live in an increasingly intolerant society. This was the period of the *jihad*, of the establishment of Muslim theocracies, of self-purification and separation from practices and beliefs that were seen as antithetical to Islam. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq summarized the perspective of the Muslim when he wrote:

The faith of our families is the faith of Islam. They circumcise the fore-skin; say the five prayers; fast every year in the month of Ramadan; give alms as ordained in the law; marry four free women—a fifth is forbidden to them except she be their slave; they fight for the faith of God; perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, i.e. such as are able to do so; eat the flesh of no beast but what they have slain for themselves; drink no wine, for whatever intoxicates is forbidden to them; they do not keep company with those whose faith is contrary to theirs, such as worshippers of idols¹³²

As the evidence grows that a substantial number of slaves practiced to varying degrees African traditional religions, the Muslim would have felt besieged by the non-Muslim majority and would have been under

¹³⁰ For the Fulbe in West Africa, see Victor Azarya, *Aristocrats Facing Change: The Fulbe in Guinea, Nigeria, and Cameroon* (Chicago and London, 1978); Marguerite Dupire, *Organisation sociale des Peul* (Paris, 1970); Paul Marty, *L'Islam en Guinée: Fouta-Djallon* (Paris, 1921); and G. Vieillard, *Notes sur les coutumes des Peuls au Fouta Djallon* (Paris, 1939).

¹³¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The Mask of Obedience: Male Slave Psychology in the Old South," *American Historical Review*, XCIII (December 1988), 1228–52 (quotations on p. 1232).

¹³² Wilks, "Abu Bakr al-Siddiq," 162–63.

considerable pressure to conform.¹³³ Notwithstanding such pressure, there are many accounts of the piety of these Muslims, who steadfastly pursued their religion under adverse conditions. In the same spirit as Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, Salih Bilali is described by his owner as “the most religious man that [I] had ever known.”¹³⁴ Another observer depicted him as a “strict Mahometan,” who refused alcohol and who held “in great contempt, the African belief in fetishes and evil spirits.”¹³⁵ In like manner, Ayuba b. Sulayman prayed daily in the Muslim fashion, despite sustained harassment by a white youth who was quite amazed and amused.¹³⁶ Fundamental differences between Islam and other systems of belief clearly could have further militated against a uniform experience of enslavement.

But a third factor in Muslim attitudes of superiority is as important as the first two; namely, a number of these Muslim slaves were from prominent backgrounds in West Africa. For example, Abd al-Rahman was a scion of *Almaami* Ibrahima Sori. Ayuba b. Sulayman’s father was a leading cleric in the upper Senegal valley. Several Muslims, including Lamine Kaba, Bilali, and Umar b. Said, boasted of extensive educations in West Africa. In fact, it was more common than not that West African Muslims had an Islamic education and were therefore literate, and the various documents that discuss notable Muslims invariably comment that they could write Arabic. Literacy within the West African Muslim community was widespread; most Muslim villages and towns maintained *madrasas* to which boys and girls from ages seven to fourteen went for instruction. At *madrasa*, the Qur’an was memorized and Arabic grammar was introduced. From *madrasa*, young men of sufficient means moved on to more advanced studies, often requiring travel from one town to another in order to study under the appropriate *shaykh*, or master teacher of a specific curriculum. The most advanced students would go on to towns such as Pir and Jenne, where there were concentrations of scholars. Thus, the educational process was well established, with a tradition reaching back to at least the fourteenth century.¹³⁷ Reducing an educated elite to the

¹³³ An important work on the role of African retentions in North America is Sterling Stuckey’s *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York and Oxford, 1987).

¹³⁴ Austin, *African Muslims*, 316.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹³⁶ Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 82.

¹³⁷ Paul Marty, *L’Islam en Guinée*, 108–47; Jean Suret-Canale, “Touba in Guinea: Holy Place of Islam,” in Christopher Allen and R. W. Johnson, eds., *African Perspectives* (Cambridge, Eng., 1970); and Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 26–28. Curtin refers to literacy among Muslim slaves in Jamaica. See Philip D. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830–1865* (Cambridge, 1955), 24–25.

status of slaves—a status shared with those of humble birth—was especially demeaning.

Reflecting the pastoral background of many Africans and referring to considerations of “class,” it is important to note that some of the Muslim slaves, such as Ayuba b. Sulayman, were completely unaccustomed to agricultural labor, as became evident very quickly.¹³⁸ Dr. Collins remarked that slaves from Senegal “are excellent for the care of cattle and horses, and for domestic service, though little qualified for the ruder labours of the field, to which they never ought to be applied.”¹³⁹ The aristocratic and/or pastoral background of some West Africans, combined with the aforementioned agricultural expertise of others, meant that Muslims were, in the eyes of the host society, “better suited” for domestic and/or supervisory roles. This determination, it follows, widened the schism between Muslim and non-Muslim, because the former would more likely be assigned the less physically demanding jobs.

Finally, some Muslims probably were deeply affected by the racist views of whites toward other Africans. That is, they would have been encouraged to distance themselves from the average African, even to the point of denying any similarity to them. Thus, there is Abd al-Rahman’s claim that he had no “negro” blood. In fact, Abd al-Rahman claimed to be a “Moor,” and he placed “the negro in a scale of being infinitely below the Moor.”¹⁴⁰ The convention of claiming Moorish or Berber ancestry was not unique to Abd al-Rahman; apparently it was used occasionally by those who could neither deny nor fully accept their African ancestry. As a result, a few slaves maintained the following position, as expressed *ca.* 1937 by centenarian Silvia King of Marlin, Texas: “I know I was borned in Morocco, in Africa, and was married and had three chillen befo’ I was stoled from my husband. I don’t know who it was stole me, but dey took me to France, to a place called Bordeaux, drugs me with some coffee, and when I knows anything ‘bout it, I’s in de bottom of a boat with a whole lot of other niggers.”¹⁴¹

While some evidence points to strained relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, there are also indications of cordiality between the

¹³⁸ Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 81.

¹³⁹ Dr. Collins, *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves*, quoted in Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 81.

¹⁴⁰ [Griffin], “Unfortunate Moor,” 366.

¹⁴¹ Rawick, ed., *American Slave*. Vol. IV: *Texas Narratives*, Part 2 (Westport, Conn., 1972), 290.

two. For example, Abd al-Rahman himself married a Baptist woman in 1794, had several children with her, returned to Liberia with her in 1829, and expired in her arms a few months later. Charles Ball mentions his acquaintance and friendship with a number of Muslims.¹⁴² These two examples illustrate that, despite Muslim attitudes of superiority, Muslims and non-Muslims interacted in fundamental ways.

Notwithstanding the vitality of the Islamic tradition and the strength of their bonds (especially in coastal Georgia), Muslims in early America faced certain distinct challenges to the preservation of their religion. Though they may have gathered in small numbers and clandestine places to pray, they could not openly maintain Qur'anic schools and did not have access to Islamic texts. Inevitably their collective memory eventually faltered. As an example of not having access to the necessary texts, Bilali, author of the "Ben-Ali Diary," put together passages from Ibn Abu Zayd's *Risala* in such a haphazard fashion that Nigerian clerics, upon reviewing the document, declared it to be the work of *jinn* (spirits).¹⁴³ Likewise, Salih Bilali, while claiming to possess a Qur'an, could not write Arabic coherently.¹⁴⁴ The gradual loss of Islamic knowledge, combined with the tendency to use Arabic exclusively for purposes of religion, undermined Islamic culture in early America.

Islam was in competition with other African religions practiced by the slaves, especially prior to the nineteenth century. In the North American setting, most Africans from various parts of the continent adhered to non-Islamic beliefs. In the process of intermingling, there were pressures to find points of agreement or similarity in religious expression, and the need to establish a community was intense. As the nineteenth century progressed, the host society, while at times amused by the varieties of religions practiced by the slaves, became increasingly concerned with controlling the religious expression of its captive population. Finally, the number of Christian converts among African Americans increased rapidly as a result of their own desire to embrace an Africanized version of Christianity and of a post-1830 campaign within the "militant South" to use religion as a means of social control. As Africanized Christianity became more of a force, Islam necessarily suffered.

¹⁴² Austin, *African Muslims*, 127–31; and [Ball], *Slavery in the United States*, 164–65 and 167; see also Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains, or the Life of an American Slave* (New York and Indianapolis, 1859).

¹⁴³ Greenberg, "Ben-Ali Diary."

¹⁴⁴ Austin, *African Muslims*, 321.

The process by which Christianity began to compete with and eventually overtake Islam can be seen in the Sapelo community. The progeny of African-born Muslims (who tended to restrict their social interactions with non-Muslims) eventually began attending the Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday night "prayer houses" that each community on the island had, while continuing their own Muslim gatherings. With the establishment of the First African Baptist Church in May 1866, however, the open and collective pursuit of Islam became increasingly rare, although it is difficult to say when, exactly, it ended on the island.¹⁴⁵

The response of African-born Muslims, however, was another story. Despite pressure to convert to Christianity, the majority of African-born Muslims evidently resisted with success any and all coercion to abandon their faith. Examples inconsistent with this finding are few and include Abd al-Rahman, whose supposed conversion to Christianity is contradicted by his subsequent recommitment to Islam upon repatriation to Africa. And while it is true that Lamine Kaba and Umar b. Said both professed Christianity, questions surround the conversion of the latter.¹⁴⁶

Having stated that most African-born Muslims remained loyal to their religion, it should be noted that ethnocentricity, combined with other cultural differences, probably restricted Muslim efforts to proselytize among non-Muslims. Therefore, the continuity of the Islamic tradition was heavily dependent upon a cultural transfer within existing Muslim families and over generations. This was a formidable task, especially since the importation of non-Muslims into North America greatly exceeded that of Muslims in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and thus many Muslims had little choice except to marry non-Muslims. Further, African-born Muslims may have been unable to communicate with their children and grandchildren because they could not speak a common language well enough to convey detailed information and would therefore have been frustrated in their attempts to convey the tenets of Islam adequately.¹⁴⁷ Enslavement itself impeded such matters as formal Muslim education, circumcision, the formation of brotherhoods, the maintenance of moral proscriptions,

¹⁴⁵ Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1992.

¹⁴⁶ See Austin, *African Muslims*, 448. Umar b. Said continued to implore the help of Allah and the prophet Muhammad with invocations found even within the margins of his Christian Bible.

¹⁴⁷ Indeed, in the Georgia coastal area, none of the descendants of African-born Muslims claim to be Muslim themselves in the WPA interviews.

and the observance of basic dietary laws. The children of African Muslims were probably socialized within the context of the larger, non-Muslim slave culture and were deeply influenced by this process. In short, Muslims would have had great difficulty in preserving Islam within their own families, assuming a stable slave family. Given the vicissitudes of slavery, such an assumption is most unwarranted.

Questions concerning the resilience of Islam take on significance with the children and grandchildren of African-born Muslims, and it has not been established whether these progeny were or were not Muslims. The Islamic heritage was certainly present, so that individuals bore Muslim names and retained a keen collective memory of the religious practices of their ancestors. However, whether they themselves practiced Islam is unclear. A reluctance to be unequivocal about religion as well as about other matters can be observed in the responses of Georgia coastal blacks to the queries posed by the WPA interviewers. Indeed, a careful reading of these interviews reveals considerable anxiety among the informants, which is understandable given the period's sociopolitical dynamics.¹⁴⁸ If they were practicing Muslims, they certainly would not have volunteered such information to whites in the rural South of the 1930s.

One account given by the interviewers underscores the ambiguity of religious affinities during this time and supports the contention that the informants did not tell all. The account concerns one Preacher Little, who was encountered on Sapelo Island and whose physical appearance, demeanor, and dress were initially described as "Mohammedan looking." Although the interviewers were subsequently assured that the minister was a Christian (and they went on to witness the minister preside over a religious service), their first impressions are instructive, especially since this encounter took place after the interviews with the descendants of Salih Bilali and Bilali.¹⁴⁹ Preacher Little could very well have been the embodiment of a certain Islamic-Christian synthesis. Indeed, this possibility is enhanced by the reflections of Charles Jones in 1842, who wrote that African-born Muslims related Yahweh to Allah and Jesus to Muhammad.¹⁵⁰ His observation contains a number of potential meanings, including the possibility that these Africans, while ostensibly practicing Christianity, were in reali-

¹⁴⁸ For example, Rosanna Williams of Tatemville, Georgia, became so alarmed at the questions of the interviewers that she asked: "Wut yuh doin? Is yuh gonuh sen me back tuh Liberia?" (*Drums and Shadows*, 71).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 169 (quotation)—70.

¹⁵⁰ Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes* (Savannah, 1842), 125.

ty reinterpreting Christian dogma in the light of Islamic precepts. If this were the case, then they were probably more Muslim than Christian in their worldview, given that Islam had already shaped their perspective. It is conceivable, therefore, that their descendants could have continued this kind of syncretism (or perhaps dissimulation).

A further example of this possible syncretism (or even dualism, in which case a person keeps the two religions separate and pursues them as such) again comes from Sapelo and the descendants of Bilali. Cornelia Bailey's grandmother told her about the life of Harriet Hall Grovner, Bailey's great-grandmother and the granddaughter of Bently, Bilali's daughter. Harriet Grovner was a practicing Muslim until the First African Baptist Church was organized in 1866, at which time she joined. Although she became very active in the Sunday School, she may have continued to practice Islam.¹⁵¹ This speculation is based upon evidence that she frequently stole into the woods to pray. It is not clear whether she continued such clandestine activity after 1866 or why she would have found it necessary to do so after that time, unless she was praying something other than Christian prayers. Harriet died in 1922 and until her death may have still been practicing Islam as the legacy of an African Muslim tradition.

In view of the above discussion and examples, it is reasonable to conclude that Islam's long-term survival in America was highly unlikely. This conclusion, however, is based on the notion that Islam in early America was, at the very most, inconsequential. One would not, therefore, search for remnants of what supposedly never existed. This study does not purport to make conclusive statements concerning Islam's legacy in America. Rather, it argues that, given Islam's importance in African and African American history, there are several areas into which further investigation may prove very beneficial. First of all, the Muslim/non-Muslim distinction played a role in social divisions among slaves. Not all "lighter-skinned" house servants (and others with similar "privileges") were the result of black-white miscegenation; at least some were Fulbe and other Africans with "atypical" features. This point, in turn, leads to a much broader question on the role of ethnicity within the slave community and deserves further study.

Second, the very important research of Robert Farris Thompson on the relationship between African and African American art and philosophy has revealed that, at least in the area of quilt-making, African Americans exhibit clear Mande influences.¹⁵² The Mande world con-

¹⁵¹ Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1922.

¹⁵² Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York, 1983), 218–23.

tained a large number of Muslims, so that such evidence points to the possible continuity of an Islamically influenced cultural heritage, if not the religion itself. Such a possibility may be supported by intriguing archaeological evidence involving the "recovery of blue, faceted glass beads from slave cabins that were of European manufacture [that] may be related to the Moslem belief that a single blue bead will ward off evil spirits."¹⁵³

Third, an investigation of the potential influence of Islam upon the practice of Christianity by African Americans in certain areas or communities would be instructive. On Sapelo Island, for example, the congregation of the First African Baptist Church always prays to the east, which is the direction in which the church is pointed.¹⁵⁴ Regarding personal prayer, individuals are instructed to pray to the east, given that the "devil is in the other corner." The deceased are also buried facing the east.¹⁵⁵ Such details reveal substantial influence indeed, which may even be reflected in the teachings and beliefs of the church. Islam may not have survived as a complete and coherent system of faith, but some of its constituent elements may yet continue to guide and sustain.

Finally, further investigation is required into the backgrounds of such men as Elijah Muhammad (born 1898) and Noble Drew Ali (born 1886), the latter having been the founder of the Moorish Science Temple in 1913 in Newark, New Jersey, and the possible forerunner to Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam. Both men were born during a time in which Islam may have still been practiced by African-born Muslims.¹⁵⁶ Both grew up during a period in which the children and grandchildren of these earlier Muslims were, at the very least, highly cognizant of their Islamic heritage. Both were born in the South (Ali in North Carolina, Muhammad in Sandersville, Georgia). Elijah

¹⁵³ Theresa A. Singleton, "The Archaeology of the Plantation South: A Review of Approaches and Goals," *Historical Archaeology*, XXIV (No. 4, 1990), 75.

¹⁵⁴ Cornelia Bailey interview, July 1992.

¹⁵⁵ See Margaret Washington Creel, *"A Peculiar People": Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York and London, 1988), 320. Creel maintains that the Gullah in general buried their dead so that the body faced the east; the practice may not, therefore, reflect a Muslim influence, but a west-central African one. Very little has been written on the subject, however, and additional research is warranted.

¹⁵⁶ Ben Sullivan, Rosa Grant, Katie Brown, Shad Hall, Nero Jones, and Lawrence Baker all remember seeing and hearing their grandparents pray, etc. Since many of these people were in their seventies and eighties when interviewed in the 1930s, it would mean that their grandparents were still alive in the 1870s and 1880s (in order for the grandchildren to be of sufficient age to remember the specifics of their religious practices). In fact, Rosa Grant was only sixty-five years old at the time of her interview.

Muhammad is particularly intriguing, as he came from an area relatively close to the Georgia coast. He was born Elijah Poole; his father, Wali Poole, was a Baptist minister and sharecropper. The term *wali* means “holy man” or “saint” in Arabic and refers to individuals noted for pious living and miraculous feats. The runaway slave notices include references to a number of “Walleys,” all of whom come from either Gambia or “Guinea,” a possible indication of Muslim identity.¹⁵⁷ Did Elijah Muhammad’s father take the name Wali (or was it given to him) as a reminder of an Islamic family heritage? Did Elijah Muhammad, when he converted to Islam in 1931, do so because the words enjoining him to Islam were in some way familiar, reminiscent of concepts and ideas he had been exposed to as a child? Further research may or may not reveal a clear linkage. If so, it would mean that Islam in America never really disappeared but rather underwent a brief hiatus and has reemerged under more appropriate conditions to resume its place as an important aspect of the history of the African experience in America.

¹⁵⁷ E.g., *Charleston South-Carolina Gazette*, January 15–22, 1754, and February 3, 1757, and *Savannah Gazette of the State of Georgia*, January 13, 1785, all in Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, III, 125, 152, and IV, 122. Sources for Elijah Muhammad and Noble Drew Ali include Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Berkeley, 1971); E. U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago, 1962); C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston, 1973); and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1965).