Spread of Islam in Africa
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Abstract: Africa was the first continent, outside of Arabia that Islam spread into in the early 7th century. Almost one-third of the world’s Muslim population resides in this continent. Muslims crossed current Djibouti and Eritrea to seek refuge in current Ethiopia during the Hijarat. Most Muslims in Africa are Sunni or Sufi the complexity of Islam in Africa is revealed in the various schools of thought, traditions, and voices in many African countries. African Islam is not static and is constantly being reshaped by prevalent social, economic and political conditions. Generally Islam in Africa often adapted to African cultural contexts and belief systems forming Africa’s own orthodoxies. It was estimated in 2002 that Muslims constitute 45% of the population of Africa. Islam has a large presence in North Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Swahili Coast, and much of West Africa, with minority but significant immigrant populations in South Africa.
Key words: Islam, Islamic History, Islamic Civilization, Islam in Africa, Islam in South Africa.

I. Introduction:
The history of Islam concerns the religion of Islam and its adherents, Muslims. Muslim is an Arabic word meaning one who submits to God. Muslims and their religion have greatly impacted the political, economic and military history of the Old World, especially the Middle East, where its roots lie. Though it is believed by non-Muslims to have originated in Mecca and Medina, Muslims believe that the religion of Islam has been present since the time of the prophet Adam. The Islamic world expanded to include people of the Islamic civilization, inclusive of non-Muslims living in that civilization. In pre-Islamic Arabia, Arab people lived on the Arabian Plate [5]. In the south of Hedjaz (principal religious and commercial center of post-classical Arabia) the Arabic tribe of Quraysh (Adnani Arabs) to which Muhammad belonged, had been in existence. Near Mecca the tribe was increasing in power. The Quraysh were the guardians of the Kaaba within the town of Mecca and was the dominant tribe of Mecca upon the appearance of Islam [12]. The Kaaba, at the time, was used as an important pagan shrine. It brought revenues to Mecca because of the multitude of pilgrims that it attracted. Muhammad was born into the Banu Hashim tribe of the Quraysh clan a branch of the Banu Kinanah tribe, descended from Khuzaimah and derived its inheritance from the Khuza’imah (House of Khuza’a) [4].

A century after the death of last Islamic prophet Muhammad the Islamic empire extended from Spain in the west to Indus in the east. The subsequent empires such as those of the Abbasids, Fatimids, Almoravids, Seljukids, Ajuraan, Adal and Warsangali in Somalia, Mughals in India and Safavids in Persia and Ottomans were among the influential and distinguished powers in the world [8]. The Islamic civilization gave rise to many centers of culture and science and produced notable scientists, astronomers, mathematicians, doctors, nurses and philosophers during the Golden Age of Islam. Technology flourished; there was investment in economic infrastructure, such as irrigation systems and canals and the importance of reading the Qur’an produced a comparatively high level of literacy in the general populace [6]. In the later Middle Ages destructive Mongol invasions from the East and the loss of population in the Black Death greatly weakened the traditional centre of the Islamic world stretching from Persia to Egypt and the Ottoman Empire was able to conquer most Arabic-speaking areas creating an Islamic world power again although one that was unable to master the challenges of the Early Modern period. Later in modern history (18th and 19th centuries) many Islamic regions fell under the influence of European Great powers. Although affected by ideologies such as socialism and secularism during much of the 20th century the Islamic identity and the dominance of Islam on political issues intensified during the early 21st century [10]. Global interests in Islamic regions, international conflicts and globalization changed the type of Islamic influence on the contemporary world. In the contemporary period a set of ideologies holding interpretations of Islamic texts that advocate the unification of religion and state has spread, but the ideology has been criticized. Islam has been in Africa for so long since its genesis on the Arabian peninsula that some scholars have argued that it is a traditional African religion [9].

Although the majority of Muslims in Africa are Sunni or Sufi the complexity of Islam in Africa is revealed in the various schools of thought, traditions, and voices that constantly contend for dominance in many African countries.
Islam in Africa is not static and is constantly being reshaped by prevalent social economic and political conditions [3]. Islam in Africa is often adapted to local cultural contexts and belief systems forming the continent's own orthodoxies. Africans have generally appropriated Islam in both more inclusive ways, or in the more radical ways, as with the Almoravid movement. Additionally Islam in Africa has both local and global dimensions [1]. On the local level experts assert that Muslims (including African Muslims) operate with considerable autonomy and do not have an international organization that regulates their religious practices. This fact accounts for the differences and varieties in Islamic practices throughout the African continent. On the global level Muslims in Africa are also part of the ummah or worldwide Islamic community and follow global issues and current events that affect the Muslim world with keen interest. With globalization and new initiatives in information technology Muslims in Africa have developed and maintained close connections with the wider Muslim world [12].

II. Islam in Africa:

The presence of Islam in Africa can be traced to the seventh century when the prophet Muhammad advised a number of his early disciples, who were facing persecution by the pre-Islamic inhabitants of the Mecca to seek refuge across the Red Sea at the court of Axum in Zeila under the rule of al-Najashi. In the Muslim tradition this event is known as the first hijrah or migration. These first Muslim migrants provided Islam with its first major triumph and the coastline of Eritrea became the first safe haven for Muslims and the first place Islam would be practiced outside of the Arabian Peninsula. Seven years after the death of Muhammad (in 639 AD) the Arabs advanced toward Africa and within two generations Islam had expanded across the Horn of Africa and North Africa.

In the following centuries, the consolidation of Muslim trading networks connected by lineage trade, and Sufi brotherhoods had reached a crescendo in West Africa enabling Muslims to wield tremendous political influence and power. During the reign of Umar II the then governor of Africa Ismail ibn Abdullah was said to have won the Berbers to Islam by his just administration. Other early notable missionaries include Abdallah ibn Yasin who started a movement which caused thousands of Berbers to accept Islam [11]. Similarly, in the Swahili coast Islam made its way inland - spreading at the expense of traditional African religions. This expansion of Islam in Africa not only led to the formation of new communities in Africa but it also reconfigured existing African communities and empires to be based on Islamic models. Indeed in the middle of the eleventh century the Kanem Empire whose influence extended into Sudan, converted to Islam. At the same time but more toward West Africa the reigning ruler of the Bornu Empire embraced Islam [13]. As these kingdoms adopted Islam, its populace thereafter devotedly followed suit. In praising the Africans' zealouness to Islam, the fourteenth century explorer Ibn Battuta stated that mosques were so crowded on Fridays that unless one went very early it was impossible to find a place to sit.

III. Islam in South Africa:

Islam in South Africa is a minority religion practiced by less than 1.5% of the total population, according to estimates. Islam in South Africa has grown in three phases. The first phase brought the earliest Muslims as part of the involuntary migration of slaves political prisoners and political exiles from Africa and Asia (mainly from Indonesian Archipelago) that lasted from about 1652 to the mid-1800s. The second phase was the arrival of Indians as indentured laborers to work in the sugar-cane fields in Natal between 1860 and 1868 and again from 1874 to 1911. Of the approximately 176,000 Indians of all faiths who were transported to the Natal province, almost 7-10% of the first shipment were Muslims [2]. The third phase has been marked- post apartheid – by the wave of African Muslims that have arrived on the shores and borders of South Africa. Recent figures put the number at approximately at 75-100 000. Added to this are a considerable number of Muslims from the Indo-Pak subcontinent that have arrived as economic migrants. The first recorded arrival of free Muslims known as Mardyckers is in 1658.

Mardycka or Maredhika implies freedom. The Mardyckers were people from Amboyna in the southern Moluccas and were brought to the Cape in order to defend the newly established settlement against the indigenous people and also to provide labour in the same way that they had been employed at home first by the Portuguese and later by the Dutch in Amboyna. Jan Van Riebeeck had requested that the Mardyckers be sent to the Cape as a labour force. The Mardyckers were prohibited from openly practising their religion Islam. This was in accordance with the Statute of India (drafted by Van Dieman in 1642) which stated in one of its placaats.

No one shall trouble the Amboinese about their religion or annoy them so long as they do not practise in public or venture to propagate it amongst Christians and heathens. Offenders to be punished with death, but should there be amongst them those who had been drawn to God to become Christians, they were not to be prevented from joining Christian churches. The same Placaat was re-issued on 23 August 1657 by Governor John Maetsuycker probably in anticipation of the advent of the Mardyckers to the Cape of Good Hope. The Placaat governed the Cape as part of the Dutch Colonial Empire. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century the Dutch continued to exile Muslim leaders from Dutch East Indies to the Cape. 1667 saw the arrival of
first Muslim political exiles banished by the Dutch to the Cape. These political exiles or Orang Cayen were Muslim men of wealth and influence who were banished to the Cape from their homeland in the East because the Dutch feared them as a threat to their political and economic hegemony. The first political exiles were the rulers of Sumatra. They were Sheikh Abdurahman Matabe Shah and Sheikh Mahmood. Both were buried in Constantia. From the very outset the Cape authorities accommodated the exiles away from Cape Town as they feared the exiles would escape [11]. A tomb for these political exiles has been erected on Islam Hill in Constantia in the Cape. Sheikh Abdurahman Matabe Shah used his exile to consolidate the teaching of Islam among slaves in the Cape. The next Orang Cayen was Sheikh Yusuf of Bantam who arrived on board 'De Voetboog' on 2 April 1694 along with his family and followers. They were housed on a farm in Zandvleit near the mouth of the Eerste River in the Cape far from Cape Town on 14 June 1694. The Company's attempt to isolate Shaykh Yusuf at Zandvleit did not succeed. On the contrary Zandvleit turned out to be the rallying point for fugitive slaves and other exiles from the East. It was here that the first cohesive Muslim community in South Africa was established. Since the Sheikh and his followers hailed from Macassar the district around Zandvleit is still known today as Macassar. Sa'id Alowie (Sayyid Alawi) popularly known as Tuan Sa'id of Mocca in Yemen, Arabia arrived at the Cape in 1744 with Hadjie Matarim [14]. They were banished to the Cape by the Dutch and were incarcerated on Robben Island. On his release from Robben Island Tuan Sa'id settled at the Cape where he worked as a police constable - an occupation which gave him ample opportunities for visiting slave quarters at night to teach. Tuan Sa'id is known for his active Da'wah (missionary endeavor) amongst the slaves in the Slave Lodge. He is generally regarded as the first official imam of the Cape Muslims. In 1767 Prince Abdullah Kadi Abu Salaam of Tidore, Indonesia, was exiled to the Cape. He wrote a copy of the Quran from memory during his incarceration and the volume is still preserved in Cape Town. He was released from jail in 1793 and establish a madrasah or Islamic school the same year. It is the first madrasah in the country and extremely popular among the slaves and the Free Black community. It played an important role in converting many slaves to Islam. It was also at this madrasah that the literary teaching of Arabic-Afrikaans emerged. It was through his work at the madrasah that he gained the appellation Tuan Guru, meaning mister teacher. In 1793 the growth of the community encouraged Cape Town's Muslims to petition the VOC for permission to build a mosque [4]. Tuan Guru became the first imam of the first mosque established at the Cape. Islam was a popular religion among the slaves its tradition of teaching enabled literate slaves to gain better positions in their masters' households and the religion taught its followers to treat their own slaves well.

IV. Arrival of Indian Muslims:

In 1800s there were two waves of Muslims that emigrated to South Africa from India. The first began with a wave of immigration by indentured labourers from South India in 1860s. These labourers were brought to South Africa by the British. 7-10% of these labourers were Muslim. The second wave of immigrants were merchants or traders (Passenger Indians) that arrived from North India and settled in Natal, the Transvaal and the Cape. The first mosque in Natal, Jumuah Musjid was built in Grey Street in Durban in 1881. By 1911 152,641 Indians had come to Natal. Since South Africa became a democracy in 1994 there has been a growing number of Muslim migrants from South Asia and North Africa; however, their numbers are fairly low. Most of the Muslims are urban dwellers and thus live in or near Cape Town, Durban Port Elizabeth East London Kimberley Pretoria or Johannesburg. According to converts quoted by the Christian Science Monitor, their biggest reason for the dramatic rise in Islam is that the religion is a refuge from sex AIDS alcoholism and domestic violence that is rampant in the black townships where the greatest rates of conversions are seen [10]. It is estimated that Islam is the largest religion of conversion in South Africa. Islam grew by sixfold in thirteen years during the time from 1991 to 2004. Even though organizations such as IPCI the Islamic Dawah Movement of South Africa and the Africa Muslim Agency have been eager to proselytize in the region there have been other civic organizations such as the MYMSA and the Call of Islam who considered other approaches to weave Islam into the social fabric of South Africa as a more significant way of making the Muslims presence conspicuous.

According Michael Mumisa a researcher and writer on African Islam there has been an increase in the number of black South Africans converting to Islam particularly among the women and the youth. He believes that for some of the youth and women who were schooled in the politics of South African resistance and confrontation with the security forces of the former Apartheid state the acceptance of Islam has become part of a radical rejection of a society based on Christian principles which are seen as having been responsible for establishing and promoting the Apartheid doctrine through the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. The influence of the radical ideas espoused by Malcolm X is very evident among South African Muslims of all races. Branches of the Nation of Islam are already established in South Africa. Louis Farrakhan paid a visit to South Africa and was received by President Nelson Mandela and African Muslim communities. Another Reason has been the presence of a growing Number of Sufi Orders and Groups. Amongst these is the Murabitun a group that has a strong following in Spain [6]. When the first democratic elections took place in April 1994 two Muslim parties emerged, the Africa Muslim Party and the Islamic Party. The AMP contested the National
Assembly as well as the provincial legislature and the IP contested only the Western Cape provincial legislature. Neither party was able to secure seats in either legislature.

V. Prominent Muslims in South Africa:
In addition to Cabinet ministers there are a number of Members of Parliament as well as councillors in the various provinces. The former Western Cape premier, Ebrahim Rasool is Muslim (Rasool is currently serving as South Africa's Ambassador to the United States of America). Imam Hassan Solomon (Raham) was a Member of Parliament from 1994 until his death in 2009. During the struggle for liberation, Imam found himself being asked by many communities to preach even in churches. He joined the United Democratic Front, seen by many as a front for the banned African National Congress (ANC). During his years in exile in Saudi Arabia Imam Solomon furthered his Islamic education but was always available to enlighten people on the situation in South Africa. Imam Solomon returned to South Africa in 1992 and took up a seat in the National Assembly in Parliament following the first democratic elections in 1994. He served Parliament until his death in 2009 [1]. Hazrat Sheikh Ahmed Badsha Peer was a highly respected Sufi. He arrived in South Africa in 1860 as an indentured labourer and was given an honourable discharge by the colonial British authorities when he was discovered to be mystic. His tomb is at the Badsha Peer Square/Brook Street Cemetery in Durban. Abu Bakr Effendi was an Osmani qadi who was sent in 1862 by the Ottoman sultan Abdulmecid I at the request of the British Queen Victoria to the Cape of Good Hope in order to teach and assist the Muslim community of the Cape Malays. During his stay at the Cape he produced one of the first works in Afrikaans literature with his work in Arabic Afrikaans, Uiteensetting van die godsdiens.

VI. South African schools of Islam:
Most South African Muslims are members of the Sunni branch of Islam there are however a small number of individuals who had converted to the Shi'a school. Although they were vocal in the late 1980s and early 1990s they seem to have become part of the silent Muslim minority at the turn of the 21st century. This could be attributed to the fact that South Africa's large Sunni oriented community have not adopted a favourable and accommodating attitude towards the Shi'is and that Iran's influence had dwindled in the 1990s. Organizations such as the Jamiat-ul-Ulama of the Transvaal (est. 1923) The Muslim Judicial Council (est. 1945)The jamaa of nepali Muslims whose leader is today Dr Jigme Rai and Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa (est. 1970) enjoyed a fair amount of moral and financial support from the Muslim community for their social welfare activities. The once strong Muslim Students Association of South Africa (est. 1974) which had branches on many tertiary campuses, became less vocal and thus lost its grip on student activities the MSA was thus replaced by Islamic societies that were either independent or affiliates of other Muslim organizations outside these institutions [5]. The Muslim Students Association of South Africa has recently been very active once again. The first National Muslim Students Association of South Africa Conference (first in the last 10 years) was held in Durban in January 2004. MSA representatives from all over the country met here. This was hoped to be a new future of student work in the country. There is also a recent presence of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community who established in the country in 1946. and a small community of Qur'an Alone Muslims. There is also a Sufi community.

VII. Community & Interfaith Relations:
The Muslim community in South Africa lives in harmony with other faith communities. This religious cohesion is most obvious in the Indian and Coloured residential areas where Muslims live amongst work with and attend school with fellow South Africans of Hindu Sikh, Buddhist, Christian Atheist and Agnostic beliefs. South African Muslims generally do not segregate themselves from people of other faiths. As per the culture in South Africa it is not uncommon for South African Muslims just like their fellow non-Muslims to shake hands hug or even kiss (in the case of close friends and distant or close family) as a greeting- even with non-mahrams. The National Interfaith Leadership Council which advises President Zuma includes former Western Cape premiere Ibrahim Rasool [3].
The Muslim community has been affected by a rise in drug abuse, particularly in Cape Town of the drug Tik crystal meth Crime and gangsterism are also visible in the poorer Muslim communities. Qur'an are available in libraries including the National Library. During the month of Ramadan, many retail stores radio stations (public and private) publications and organisations send messages of goodwill to the local Muslim community. Many Muslim stores are closed on Eid-ul-Fitr. The majority of South African Muslim attend mixed gender public schools while some attend private (mostly Catholic or Anglican) schools where they are exempt from prayer sessions and Biblical curriculum [14]. Islamic schools also exist as well as Madrasahs. Some institutions offer short courses on Islamic teaching, while Islamic Law and Islamic finance studies are also available. Qur'an Study groups are common and Arabic studies are available through private tutoring, or universities such as Wits University and University of the Western Cape. South Africa has also been bestowed with numerous Dar al-Ulums (institutes for higher Islamic learning). These institutes attract students from around the world. One

VIII. Conclusion:

The History of Islam in Africa and accounts of how the religion spread especially in North and the Horn of Africa have always been contentious. Head of Awqaf Africa London, Sheikh Dr. Abu-Abdullah Adelabu has written in his Movements of Islam in face of the Empires and Kingdoms in Yorubaland claims about the early arrival of Islam in the southwestern Nigeria. He seconded the Arab anthropologist Abduhu Badawi on the argument that the early Muslim missionaries had benefited their works from the fall of Kush in southern Sudan and the prosperity of the politically multicultural Abbasid period in the continent which according to him, had created several streams of migration, moving west in the mid-9th century into Sub-Saharan Africa. Adelabu pointed at the popularity and influences of the Abbasid Dynasty (750–1258), the second great dynasty with the rulers carrying the title of ‘Caliph’ as fostering peaceful and prosperous migration of the inter-cultured Muslims from the Nile Valley to Niger as well as of the Arab traders from the desert to Benue. Adelabu's claim seems to be in line with the conventional historical view that the conquest of North Africa by the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate between AD 647–709 effectively ended Christianity in Africa for several centuries. In the sixteenth century, the Ouaddai Empire and the Kingdom of Kano embraced Islam, and later toward the eighteenth century the Nigeria based Sokoto Caliphate led by Usman dan Fodio exerted considerable effort in spreading Islam.

Today Islam is the predominant religion of the northern half of Africa, mainly concentrated in North Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, as well as West Africa.

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