

Surinamese Muslims in a Plural Society

R. S. Chickrie

Abstract

The paper “Surinamese Muslims in a Plural Society” attests that in Suriname, Islam survived since its second arrival in 1873 and Muslims have excelled in this plural society of many races and religions: Hinduism, Christianity, Africans, Amerindians, Chinese, Hindustanis, Indonesians, Jews and Dutch. Muslims who originated from the Island of Java, Indonesia and Hindustan (India) have assimilated with ease in Suriname. This paper summarizes the social and political history of Surinamese Muslims in negotiating with the secular state to meet the needs of their community since their arrival. In doing so, it divulges into the intricate relationship of the Muslims with the state, with other ethnic and religious groups, and brings to light the triumphs and challenges they face in a plural society. An attempt is made to analyze Hindu/Muslim relations outside of the motherland, Hindustani, (India) which has been characterized by mutual respect, and cooperation, but was sometimes antagonistic and mainly due to external factors such as the arrival of the Arya Samajis from North India bringing with them the practice of sudhi. After a turbulent period, the relationship today is cordial. The paper asserts that the local Muslims and the state were very aware of the Muslim/Hindu conflict in the motherland and were keen to prevent communalism from engulfing Suriname. Further, this paper exposes the schism that exists among the Islamic organizations in Suriname. It can accurately be concluded that the Islam has become part of the social and political fabric of Suriname.

Brief history of Suriname

Suriname, a Dutch speaking republic located on the northern shoulder of South America, is one of the most unique country in the world (see figure 1). Interestingly, it is the only country in the world where a mosque and a synagogue face each other and where aspects of *Sharia* Law (Islamic) were granted to its local Muslim community since 1940. Suriname has a population of about 492,000 and is home to over twenty languages and where the world’s three major religions- Hinduism, Christianity and Islam coexist peacefully (see figure 2). The multicultural face of Suriname is a result of Dutch colonialism which began in 17th century and the institution of slavery to support the plantation economy. With the end of slavery in 1863, the Dutch turned to India to fill this void. Quickly, the Dutch planters used the successful experiment of the British in neighbouring British Guiana, and began importing contract labourers from China, British India and Dutch Indonesia. The Chinese came from Southeastern China, while 33,000 Indonesian from 1893 to 1940 came from the Island of Java. Between 1873 and 1916 about 37, 000 East Indians labourers came mostly from the Indian States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and the former United Provinces and Oudh. (see figure 3). Thus, it was under these historical circumstances that Islam arrived in Suriname, first among the West Africa and then with the arrival of Hindustanis and the Indonesians. Suriname was a Dutch colony until 1954 when it became an autonomous province within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Unlike, the French and British, the Dutch were not interested in “civilizing” the Asian. Dutch policies towards the different ethnic groups were “off hands,” and quickly the Dutch embraced ‘asianization.’ A validation of this was the Asian Marriage Decree (Muslim Marriage Act) adopted by decree of the governor in 1940. At the end of World War II, a number of

ethnic and religiously oriented parties blossomed, and in 1975 when Suriname left the Kingdom of the Netherlands, it had one of the highest standards of living in South America. This once prosperous country just after independence in 1980, was rocked by several coups led by Colonel Desi Bouterse. Inflation and devaluation of the Surinamese guilder brought standard of living down. Today, democracy has been restored in Suriname and with tightened fiscal policies, the liberalization of the economy, and the introduction of the new Surinamese dollar, the economy is steadily growing. Suriname today is making great economic and political strides.

Islam in Suriname

The Muslim population of Suriname is predominantly made up of Hindustanis who belong to the *hanafi madhab*, while the Javanese belong to the *Shafi* theological school of Islam. A small group of Africans are Muslims and they were the first Muslims to set foot in Suriname, and have given Suriname some of its heroes, like Zam-Zam and Arabi of the Mandinka clan. With the arrival of the Hindustani and Indonesian, the Muslim population of Suriname grew to 25% up until the 1980s; however with the generous offer of Dutch nationality, thousands went to the Netherlands. From the 1970s to 1980s an estimated 200,000 Surinamese left for Holland. Today, the population is estimated at 20% of the population, but the data of the 2004 census puts the figure at 13%. There could have been some flaws in the data collection which may not reflect the true religious affiliation of the people. There are over 100 mosques in the country and elements of Shariah, Islamic Law have been incorporated into Suriname's Civil Code since 1941 when Governor Johannes Kielstra by decree passed the Asian Marriage Act which ended in 2003.¹ Going back to the late nineteenth century in Suriname, the Muslims have had some charismatic political, civic and religious leaders such as Munshi Rahman Khan, Hazrat Ahmad Khan, Kallan Khan, Habiboel Rahman, Moulvi Shekh Ahmadali, Karmat Ali brothers, Kallay Khan, Abdoel Hafiez Khan, Gul Khan, Haji Mohammed Islam Ramjan and Mohammed Hassan Ashruf. These leaders constituted the local *ullema* who had enjoyed great religious legitimacy. Many of these men spoke Urdu, Persian and Arabic and were very verse in Quran and *hadith*. There is something to be said about Gul Khan who was an Afghan refugee. He spoke Arabic, Urdu and Persian and was versed in the Quran and *fiqh*, and he came into confrontation with the colonial authorities and some of his fellow Muslims when he lectured them about the paying and collecting interests; he also addressed the issue of *bidah* or innovations that had penetrated Islam in Suriname. He was exile to his homeland and during his absent he became a hero, many named their sons Gul Khan after him. Many felt that the wrath of god had descended on them when they lost their wealth and cried dearly for Gul Khan.² These men were shaped by events at home and in the motherland, India, as the Hindu/Muslim conflict in India raged , , leading up to the division of the subcontinent, it had serious repercussion for Hindu/Muslims relationship in Suriname.

The Muslims of Suriname have always been politically and economically active. Naturally, Suriname's first political party, the Muslim Party was founded by Janab Asgar Karamat Ali in 1942 who had a volatile relationship with the **United Hindustani** Party (VHP), a Hindu political party. The Muslims did not want to be dominated by Hindus from the bitter experience of events in the homeland. Today, the Muslims are well represented in Suriname's *Staten* (National Assembly), and they face no discrimination. In fact, the country once had a Muslim Prime Minister, Janab Liakat Ali Khan and a Muslim Foreign Minister, M. A. Faried Pierkhan, and prior to that, many Muslims served as members of the National Assembly. The state accommodates Muslims for their religious obligations like giving them time off for the Friday *Jumma* prayers and Ramadan. The end of Ramadan, *Eid-ul-Fitr* is a national holiday, and Suriname is a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) since 1996. The country has since appointed three envoys to the

OIC- Dr. Anwar S. Lall Mohammad, Maurits Hassan Khan and Mohamed Rafeeq Chiragally who have all traveled to some important Islamic countries to forge ties on behalf of the government of Suriname.

There are about eight *jamaats* (societies) in Suriname- Hidayatul Islam, (1921) Khilafat Anjuman (1931) and Surinaamse Islamitische Vereniging (SIV-1929). These are some of the earliest organization in the Suriname and they still exist today. Other organizations are the Madjlies Moeslimien Suriname (MMS) founded in 1974 and the Suriname Moeslim Association (SMA) founded in 1954. The Majlis Muslimin Suriname (MMS) or Council of Muslims in Suriname is an umbrella organization founded in 1974 to represent all the Muslims regardless of race. They have successfully established contacts with the World Muslim League, the World Islamic Call Society, the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations and the Islamic Missionaries Guild.³ The *masjids* in Suriname have institutionalized social welfare programme to address the needs of their communities like the Catholics churches. They have established an efficient social infrastructure that aggressively addresses the basic needs of their communities such as homes for the abused and runaway boys and girls. They distribute *zakaat* to the poor; maintain *qabarstan*(graveyard), elderly homes, and operate many Islamic schools that offer Islamic studies, *adaab* (*etiquette*), Quran, math and the sciences. These religious schools have received government subsidies since 1950 when the National Assembly of Suriname voted to subsidize all Hindu and Muslim temples and schools to end a the discrimination of aiding Catholics and Protestants institutions for over a century. Finally, this injustice was corrected, Suriname and its Muslim citizens have come a long way forward. Suriname today prides itself as a showcase of multiculturalism.

The rebirth of Islam- the arrived of the Hindustanis

With the arrival of the Hindustanis in 1873, Islam was reintroduced in Suriname when the ship Lalla Rookh arrived with forty-five Hindustani Muslims from North India (see Figure 4). These Hindustani Muslims were from the Urdu speaking belt but many also spoke their regional dialects like Avadhi, Braj, Bhopuri and Maithli. Around Forty-Five Muslims migrated from what is now Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, known before as the United Provinces and Oudh(See figure 3). They were mostly from the following districts: Bareilly, Gorakhpur, Mirzapur, Lucknow, Allahbad, Jaunpur, Azamgargh, Gaya, Faizabad, and Benares. Seven Muslim died of natural causes before their five-year contract ended. In fact, six die before spending one year in Suriname. With eleven returning to India and seven dead in less than five years, roughly thirty two Muslims of the Lalla Rookh remained in Suriname. Most of the Muslims were Urdu speakers whose decedents today still speak Urdu in Suriname today. From the early period of indentureship, Urdu was taught at the Madarsas in Suriname. Some of the fathers of Urdu in Suriname were Hazrat Ahmad Khan, Munshi Rahman Khan, and Moulvi Shekh Ahmadali.⁴ “Some years later the descendents of the immigrants, like Sardar Karmat Ali, Kallay Khan and Abdoel Hafiez Khan and other carried out this work.”⁵ There were two Urdu-publications dating back to 1938, *Hakikatul Islam(the Truth of Islam)* and *Juma Akhbar (Friday News)*.⁶ Moulvi Ahmadali edited *Hakikatul-Islam* which was handwritten for twenty-four years since 1935. Urdu developed rapidly in Suriname since all the *Moulvis*, *Maulanas* and *Ustaads* were literate in Urdu and because of the proliferation of Urdu publications and radio programs. Urdu remains a functional language among Suriname’s Hindustani Muslims today, and a major part of their cultural identity.

In Uttar Pradesh between 1873-1916 Muslims constituted about twenty percent of the population. About fifty percent migrated to Karachi, Pakistan in 1947 when the sub-continent was divided between Hindus and Muslims. And even after the bloody partition when hordes of Bihari and Uttar Pradeshi Urdu speaking Muslims flocked to Karachi, the Muslims today are still about twenty percent of the population due to high birth rate. Uttar Pradesh has a vibrant Muslim population facing many challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, diseases and religious conflicts. Many backward castes exist in Uttar Pradesh today and Hindus have a cordial to strain relationship with the Muslims. Lower castes Hindus and Muslims have forged a unique alliance during election time to oppose the upper caste Hindus who dominate the political landscape of the North India. It was from this area of India that the majority of immigrants came from.

When the Muslims arrived in Suriname they were scattered in different districts throughout the country but they strived to make contact with their fellow Muslims because of their common religious bond by establishing the *jamaat* system. Small mosques were built across the country; some alleged that the first was a small mosque which was built behind the Wolfenbuttel while others claim that it was at Plantation Marienburg. The land was donated by the Abdul Kariem family.⁷ With the arrival of more learned Muslim of Islamic theology such as Ahmed Khan (Hafidji) in the 1900's, marked the beginning of a vibrant period for Islam in this former Dutch Colony.

During the early period of indentureship many Muslim men bore three to four names with Mohammed being the most popular. Baksh was also a very popular name among the men and which was misspelled repeatedly. Khuda was also another popular prefix, and Ally is a popular suffix. Amongst the women were a large percentage with the common suffixes *UN* or *AN* at the end of an Arabic name to make it feminine which is very common in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. For example, Nasir or Amir becomes Nasirun or Ameeran. Some women bore the name Wazirun, Bashiran, and Ameeran. Bibi, Persian for lady, was a name that many women bore was well- Bibi Jainab, Bibi Khatun, or Bibi Maryam. Another interesting phenomenon is the spelling of names such as **Ramjan** instead of **Ramzan**, **Jainab** instead **Zainab**, **Najir** instead of **Nazir** or **Nijamuddin** instead of **Nizamuddin** because in parts of Uttar Pradesh, *zeen* is pronounced like a *jeem*. Numerous names were misspelled, and some are beyond recognition. Muslims men normally bear three to four names, and this created massive confusion during the recording process. For example, there is certainly an error in names such as *Emambaksh* *Hassanbaksh* and this is a pattern common among the names of Muslims in Suriname.

Hindustani Islamic Organizations

Surinamese Muslims were once united especially during the early period of indentureship but from 1925 to 1935 they became bitterly divided, and like in neighboring Guyana, they tend to compete rather than compliment each other. They are divided into Sunnis, Ahmadis, Hindustani and Indonesian. The most significant factor that led to deep division was the entrance of the Ahmadis in Suriname during the 1920s.⁸ The Surinamese Islamitische Vereniging (SIV) was officially founded in 1929 under the leadership of two brothers, H. Asgar Ali and Karamat Ali. The first board of directors comprised of Asgar Ali (President), Hanief Mia (Vice-President), Baas Abdul Sovan (Secretary) and Asgar Karamat Ali (treasurer). In 1931, the land on the Keizarstraat was purchased and a mosque was built under the guidance of Baas Ibrahim. In its quest to make international contact, the SIV came into contact with Maulana Ameerali of Trinidad who visited Suriname in 1934. The Maulana visited Suriname however, "his explanations of the doctrine and the principles of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement divided the *jamaat* into two parties."⁹ The uproar over the Ahmadiyya centered over the controversy of its

alleged proclamation that its founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed prophethood which is in stark contrast to Islamic teaching that Muhammad (SWS) is the final Prophet. The Surinamese Lahori agrees that Prophet Muhammad is the final Prophet and stressed that they belong to the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat –E-Islam, Lahore. Their official website reads:

“We believe that no prophet can come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, neither new nor old, and that this was also the strongly-held belief of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who always denied the allegation that he claimed to be a prophet.”¹⁰

This division led to the founding of the Khilafat Anjuman in 1931. Later, in 1950, the Suriname Muslim Association (SMA) was founded under the guidance of Maulana Mohammad Aleem Siddiqui of Pakistan, who denounced the Ahmadiyya Qadiani and urged the Sunnis to unite and establish the SMA.¹¹ After a bitter battle within the SIV, some prominent members such as Moulvi Hafiez Khan, Moulvi Kalay Khan, Moulvi Mohamed Safie, Moulvi Ibrahim Illahibaks, Moulavi Mohamed Abbas, Moulvi Baktali and Moulvi Mahtab Mia left the SIV, founded the *Khilafat Anjuman*, and the *Anjuman Hidayatul Islam* (AHI). More divisions later led to the collapse of the Anjuman Hidayat Islam, and the founding of the Suriname Muslim Association (SMA).¹² The oldest Islamic organization in Suriname was the Anjuman Hidayat Islam which was divided into two factions in 1921. One faction was led by Gafoer Somardien Ketwaru. In 1929, the AHI moved to Wolfenbuttel on the Keizarstraat, the said year that the Ahmadiyya entered Suriname, and whose leaders took control of the property at the Keizarstraat under the name SIV.

During the 1940s the SIV was led by Jabbar and then under S. M. Jamaludin. According to the SIV, it was a fruitful period because intense *tablighi* work was done by foot, radio, as well through publications in Arabic, Dutch and Urdu. An Urdu periodic, *Juma Akhbaar* was also published. The sick and poor were cared for and the cemetery at Nagelstraat was kept. However, politics engulfed the Jamaat during the presidency of Mohammed Radja who was an active politician. Elections were held and the group led by Mr. Niamut won. Finally, the new mosque construction began to take shape and on July 27, 1984, in grand style, that ornate mosque that graces the landscape of Paramaribo today was opened. This Mughal style mosque was designed by Mohamed Nazier Ataoellah, an architect with a civil engineer degree. It is one of the most beautiful mosques in South America. From 1985 to 2005 the SIV was under the presidency of M. R. Pierkhan and relationship with the other Muslim communities improved. The SIV published numerous literatures on Islam, and Muslims in Suriname in Dutch, English and Urdu. Some of its most popular publications are *AL-Nur*, *AL-Haq* (1971-1980) and *AL-Fajr* which is its current periodical.¹³

The Khilafat Anjuman was founded on March 15, 1931 by Haji Lall Mohammed Kalay Khan, and its first president was Somardeen Ketwaru. Kariem Bux donated the land where the Khilafat Anjuman is located today. Haji Kalaykhan was the founder and the first president was Mr. Ketwaru whose brother-in-law was president of the SIV, Karamat Ali. Haji Islam Ramjan and Hassan Mohammed Ashruf, who came from India in February of 1882, had a turbulent relationship. Ashruf accused Ramjan of dishonesty in a land dispute. Ashruf asked Ramjan to vacate his property but was shocked to learn that Islam Ramjan had become the owner of his property. Ashruf trusted Ramjan to register the land for the establishment of a mosque, but did not expect that Islam would later become the owner of the property. After problem with the Ashruf family, the Anjuman Hidayat moved to Calcuttastraat. The AHI was divided over the issue of leadership in 1931, and moved the AHI to the Hernhutterstraat where a small mosque was built of wood by the Hassan Mohammed Ashruf family. The land was also donated by the latter family. Tension rose most significantly when members

discovered that the SIV was influenced by the Ahmadiyya after the Maulana Ameer Ali visited Suriname in the 1934. In 1948, Soekhai donated a plot of land to the AHI on the Kankanriestraat where they are still currently housed. At this juncture of history there was a rift between the AHI and the Ashruf family which led to the AHI moving to Calcuttastraat.¹⁴

The Khilafat Anjuman was located at Grote Cobeweg, where the SIV orphanage is now located. This land was owned by Somardeen Ketwaru the brother-in-law of Mr. Karamat Ali. The mosque was made of wood and half opened. Ketwaru who had owned a bakery there was in a financial predicament and could not repay his debts so he decided to sell the land that housed the mosque. The board of the Anjuman requested his price and wanted sometime to acquire the property, however Karamat Ali, his brother-in-law who was an influential political and president of the SIV, convinced Kewtaru to sell him the land. The mosque was locked from the public after it was sold to Karamat Ali. The Anjuman Khilafat moved out, and then a Freddie Karimbux convinced his mother to donate a piece of land they had on the Cromelingstraat for the establishment of a *sunni* mosque. In 1946, the Anjuman moved to Cromelingstraat and in 1981 a new mosque was erected. Haji Ameer Nanekhan was the president up to 1980 when he was removed from office by order of the court by a youth faction. The building of the mosque finally continued under the new leadership and by 1985 a striking new mosque was constructed, and officially opened in 1987. The Khilafat Anjuman also built the Tiedul Islam mosque at Henrikstraat, but abandoned it to the *Deobandis* led by Amir Roshan Nanekhan and Rehmatoellah Abdoel Bashier who they accused of introducing *Wahabi* doctrines in Suriname. In 1983 the Khilafat Anjuman ended its cooperation with the SMA and two years later the so-called *wahabis* were driven out of the Khilafat Anjuman, they then aligned themselves with the SMA. Eventually, they were flushed from the SMA.

In 1985 Al Haji Ashruf took over the leadership of the Khilafat Anjuman, and prior to that he was secretary of the Anjuman for many years. When he became president he collected and spent his own money to pay off the debt of the Anjuman. He worked with the Afro and Javanese Islamic communities, and established contacts with Muslims in Guyana and Trinidad. Ashruf has donated generously to other Muslim communities in Suriname and during his leadership a home for the elderly was established. He has been working hard with the Muslims of Cayenne, French Guyana to build a mosque there. Most recently, the Khilafat Anjuman has been plagued by an internal strife which led to the resignation of Haji Ashruf in 2006. The mosque is divided into two groups one led by Imam Chitanie and the Haji Ashruf faction. The elderly home which was named after Haji Ashruf has been renamed after Maulana Noorani by Imam Chitanie, who is the current head of Khilafat Anjuman.

The Suriname Muslim Association (SMA) came into being in the year 1950 when the Khilafat Anjuman, the Anjuman Hidayat Islam (AHI), and the Akaidoel Islam united to establish this association under the leadership of Pakistani Maulana Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqi. The Maulana was supposed to have been a guest of the SIV but upon learning that the Ahmadis had penetrated the SIV, he angrily severed ties with them and urged other Islamic groups to unite against the Ahmadis. In 1955, the SMA began building the Jama Masjid on the Kankanriestraat, and in 1957 it was opened. The opening was blessed by the visit of the son-in-law of Maulana Siddiqi, Dr. Fazlur Rahman Ansari. Maulana Siraj Ahmad from Pakistan became a teacher there and in 1960 Maulana F. R. Ansari Madrasa was founded which expanded to two schools in 1966. 1964 marked the first visit of Pakistani Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani Siddiqi, son of the late Maulana Aleem Siddiqi, and on a second visit to Suriname in 1967, Maulana Noorani and the leaders of the Ahmadis held a public debate.¹⁵

Mr. Mohammed Islam Ramjan who was the last leader of the AHI became the president of the SMA and A. R. Nanhekhan was the assistant president. Karamatkhan Rahman who was second in command of the AHI was also given a leadership position on the board of directors of the SMA and so were A. William and J. Soebhan Khan. Ramdjan controlled the SMA from 1950 to 1973. By the year 1963, two *madrassas* were founded and named after the Pakistani Maulana F. R. Ansari and in 1963 a widow, Ms. Nirhoe donated a plot of land to the SMA. A second school was founded at the Hernhutterstraat, and also a mosque was built on land donated by two brothers Haji Deen Mohammed Zahoer and Imam Alim Mohamed Khodabaks. Internal division rocked the SMA when the land of the Khilafat Anjuman at Crommelinstraat was taken over by a new administration of the SMA. The Khilafat took the SMA to court which ruled in favor of the Khilafat Anjuman in 1968.¹⁶

The period 1970 to the 1980's witnessed great division in the SMA, but then again, the division persists to date. Maulana S. S. A Qadri was pitted against the administration in 1972 and both sides traded insults and accusations. SMA's Chairman, Haji M. Islam Ramdjan died and Haji I. Hussain Ali took control which sent Maulana Sayed Ali Qadri in 1973 running to Pakistan. Factions pitted against each other went to court to seek justice, and in 1974 a judge appointed an independent commission under the leadership of Mr. Budhulal to prepare and hold election. Haji Mohammed Amin Ashruf won and became the new chairman. The losing faction led by Haji Hussain Ali left the *jamaat* and called themselves the Suriname Muslim Federation (SMF). Suddenly, Chairman Mohammed Amin Ashruf died and the leadership went to Mr. Aziemoella Abdoel Bashier.¹⁷

From 1980-1990 division continued unabated and was marred by new tensions between Mohammed Junas Gaffar who was chosen chairman and Mr. Humphrey Nurmohamed left in defeat. A joint compromise was reached by Junas Gaffar and the Nurmohamed group to administer the organization, but it was futile. The Gaffar group left in 1982 over dissatisfaction. SMA was plagued again with internal strife as usual; making and breaking alliances where one faction was pitted against the other because they all want to be in control. By 1990, Chairman Haji Junas Gaffar left for Holland and in 1991 Haji M. I. Soebhan became the chairman, and again tension rose over land and *masjid* ownership that engulfed SMA. On an interesting note, around the same period a Catholic Nun, Maria S. Steward of Nickerie donated a parcel of land to the SMA to build mosque. Open conflict rose again in 1998 when under the leadership of Ms. Angelica Nanekhan members of the board and Chairman Michel Soebhan traded insults and accusations. Soebhan was accused of various irregularities, but the chairman survived and in 1999 called early election, not surprising, he won and today he remains the head of the SMA.¹⁸

The Indonesian Muslim

Since their arrival in Suriname from the Indonesian Island of Java (See Figure# 5), the Javanese have been the most disadvantaged group educationally and economically. They are vulnerable to evangelism which has made converts of them. The newer generations have quickly assimilated into the Surinamese society. Javanese were "outcaste minorities" like their Hindustani brothers but the Hindustanis were protected by the British Consul in Paramaribo and up until 1927 they were British subjects, on the other hand, the Javanese were unprotected.¹⁹ Javanese, according to Surparlan, author of the book, *The Javanese in Suriname in an Ethnically Plural Society*, had to strike a balancing act of not appearing too Javanese or too Dutch. In the early period of indentureship many did not send their children to school unlike the Hindustanis, and today most Javanese youths of Suriname have embraced Dutch-Western culture. Many especially the children of the upper class have an identity crisis.²⁰ From

the last national census about 10,000 reveal that they do not know which religion they belong to. In various interviews with Surparlan many admit that they do not know what religion they belong to. They are circumcised but don't remember the grand *slametan* ceremony, and not all remember the *imam* guiding them to pronounce the *kalimat sahadat (shahada)* before the circumcision. Three reveal they don't remember while two said they do.

The Javanese are divided between traditionalist, reformists and in the center are the moderates. They have their own interpretation of the Quran and the *sunna* (teachings) of the Prophet Muhammad. Their Islam is a combination of indigenous practices going back to the Island of Java. The traditionalists combined *agama djawa* with Islam, while the reformists explicitly reject *agama djawa* as un-Islamic.²¹ *Agama Kiwa, slametan* and *tajub* are old pre-Islamic traditions. Most of them were *kejawen* Muslims. *Agama Djawa (Kejawen)* Islam, which was dominant in Javanese villages, is a syncretic Islam which incorporated old Javanese beliefs, including Hindu-Buddhist elements. Another schism is the direction of prayer. While in Java they faced the West, Mekkah, to pray and did not realize that now being in Suriname they must face the East which has caused much feud among them, reformists within their own community and the Hindustani Muslims. They are divided also over the question of *slametan*, and *tajub*.²² *Slametans* and *Tajub* are "rituals ceremonies with food, social gatherings and feasts."²³ Reformists assert that these festivities are *haram* because they are sometimes sexual in nature, and involve alcohol and gambling, and extravagant spending of money that leads to the detriment of Javanese society.²⁴

From 1890 to 1939, the Dutch began importing Javanese labourers to work the sugar and cocoa plantations of Suriname like their Hindustani counterpart. The Javanese arrived in Suriname without persons learned in religion. It was not until the beginning of the 1930s that partly through contacts with Hindustani Muslims some realized that the *Kaaba* was not located in the West, but to the northeast of Suriname.²⁵ Subsequently, a number of Javanese Muslims started praying in that direction. This small group, led by Pak Samsi, encouraged people to change the direction of prayer from west to east. Since then, this small group has been called *wong madhep ngetan* (East-Keblat people). Later some became very critical of what was seen as the superstition and religious innovation (*bidah*) among the Javanese Muslims. The moderates do not openly criticize the practice of praying to the west as most of the Javanese Muslims continued to do; hence they are called *wong madhep ngulon* (West-Keblat people).²⁶

There are no Arabs in Suriname and Arab missionaries seldom visit this country. Most of the Muslim teachers and visitors come from Indonesia, Pakistan or India. Yet, the Arabs are getting blame for the schism that exist between the *sunnis* and the *ahmadis* and between the traditionalist and the reformists Indonesian Muslims. But it's the Hindustani Muslims who first came in contact with the Indonesians in Suriname when this issue of facing East or West became highly contested. "The *Kejawen* Muslims conceive the reformists as belonging to an 'Arabic Islam'. In their attempts to preserve their Javanese identity, the question of keblat occupies an important position."²⁷ But according to many eyewitness accounts, many Javanese at home pray towards but when visiting a mosque, *Kejawen* Muslims follow others and pray facing east.²⁸ This small group argues that it is not the direction of West or East that is of prime importance, but rather the way one purifies his or her soul. They argue, "religious devotion is regarded as having no value when one hurts and offends others."²⁹ These differences have fractured the Javanese Muslims into different religious organizations. There are about four major Indonesian Islamic organizations- Stichting der Islamitische Gemeenten, Sarekat Ashafia Islam (SAI), P.J.I.S- Shafiiten, and Federatie van Islamitische Gemeenten Suriname (F.I.G.S).

More recently, the local Javanese Muslim community in Surinamese has come under the microscope of the United States's "war on terror." Suriname today, because of its close people to people religious ties to Indonesia and Pakistan is today under America's CIA microscope because the alleged ring leader of the Bali bombing, Ali Imron Al Fatah spent a year in Suriname where he taught at an Islamic school among his countrymen. In November of 2003, after Suriname's government confirmed that Ali Imron lived there for a year, the head of the MMS, Isaac Jamaluddin met with the US Ambassador to protest the stigmatization that Suriname was becoming a terrorist heaven. He noted that this will polarize the Surinamese community and give the local Muslims a bad image; as well, he reiterated that the Muslims want a continuation of friendly ties with the USA, the Netherlands, and with Asian, African and Arabic countries.³⁰ The United States remain very unpopular in Suriname not only among the Muslims but in the general society. Scangzer of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, writes, "The Surinamese defense official insists that Washington "is lashing out in anger at the Muslim world after 9/11." Over breakfast, several prominent Muslims agreed with one Islamic leader when he said that the U.S. war on terror "is a war against the Muslim world."³¹ Collectively the Muslims have met local politicians and the academia. They remain cynical about American involvement in the Middle East. The government of Suriname refused to allow US soldiers to exercise in their country and for years ignored the request of the US Embassy in Paramaribo to close a major road in front the embassy they allege pose a security risk. Suriname ignored the request for years, but finally, after about five years, the United States will pay for the reconstruction of the road and a new community plan.

Javanese Islamic Organizations

Islam was used to mobilize the Javanese in the 1930s. The Persatuan Islam Indonesia (PII) which was founded in 1932 came into existence to unify the Javanese and to reform Islamic teaching. In 1935 the Sahabatul Islam was founded and it aimed to purge Islam of *bidah* (innovations) or un-Islamic practices.³² The Javanese became politically conscious after contact with the Hindustani Muslims. These latter two parties according to Surparlan were reformist's parties.³³ The PII built the first Javanese mosque in Paramaribo in 1933 which was named Nabawi. Most recently Indonesia has paid for the restoration of this mosque. The Sahabatul Islam (Friendship of Islam) came into being to reform Islam and the "Javanese sociocultural system in Suriname."³⁴ However, the organization and its leaders were disliked by the traditionalists. Members of this group stayed away from the traditionalist and were very much influenced by the reformists Muhammadiyah movement of Java that whose crusade was to purge Islam of *bidah*.³⁵ The Muhammadiyah came to Suriname in the 1930's. The PII and the Sahabatul have maintained friendly relationship, but "the PII was more gentle and refined in dealing with traditionalists" and because of this relationship the PII was been able to bring traditionalist into the reformist's camps.³⁶ Also, the Indonesian Embassy has been very active in teachings of Islam, and offering courses in Bahasa Indonesian and traditional dances.

The Muslim Marriage Act of 1940

The Muslim Marriage Act was part of the Asian Marriage Act that took effect on January 1st, 1941. It was a result of strong lobbying by the Suriname Immigrants' Association since 1913. This plea got a sympathetic ear from the Dutch Social Democratic member of Parliament, H. van Kol who "urged the reorganization of Asian marriages since 1920."³⁷ Muslims have been living in Suriname since 1873 and up to 1941 their religious marriages were not registered by the government, and that led to "many

problems regarding law of succession and registration of children.”³⁸ It was in this context that the Dutch Governor, Kielstra who came from Indonesia in 1937 and very familiar with Hindu and Muslim traditions finally “proposed to legalize marriages performed according to the Muslim or Hindu religion.”³⁹ The draft bill met “strong opposition in the *Koloniale Staten*,” (local parliament) Creole members feared the “asianization” of Suriname would lead to division of the country along ethnic lines.⁴⁰ By decree of the governor, the Asian Marriage Act came into effect in 1941. This bold step taken by the Dutch governor giving special privileges to the Muslim and Hindu community by treating them as equals was a kind gesture. As well, it demonstrated that the Dutch were not interested in the civilizing doctrine. It was a rejection of “Dutchification,” and embracing of multi-culturalism. The decree consisted of two parts, the Muslim Marriage Act and the Hindu Marriage Act which legalized marriages performed by Hindu and Muslim religious leaders.⁴¹ The Muslim Marriage decree concerned marriages among Muslims only and has drawn much debate since the 1990’s. Critics see this dual law as a violation of Suriname’s constitution and unfair to women. Non-Muslims have always had to register their marriages with the civil authorities, but cracks in the civil code because of the Asian Marriage Decree led to abuse of the laws by non-Muslims as well. The sentiments of the Muslims are encapsulated in an article found in *al-Fajr*, a Muslim newsletter, “the Muslim Marriage Decree should apply only to Muslims to prevent misuse by non Muslims for example “by passing the marriageable age or parental consent.”⁴²

There are sharp differences on the issue of divorce of Hindus and Christians as compared to Muslims, and this has been the bone of contention. Suriname’s Civil Code entitles every man and women to a divorce. Marriages of Hindus and Christians cannot be dissolved because they are regulated by their “religious books,” thus, a Hindu or a Christian must apply for a divorce based on Suriname’s Civil Code.⁴³ On the contrary, the Islamic Marriages are regulated by the Quran (*sharia*) and “the legislator could insert a separate regulation regarding divorce into the Muslim Marriage Decree.”⁴⁴ Suriname’s Civil Code contains four grounds for divorce which is in stark contrast to Quranic laws where there are no specific grounds for *talak* (divorce).⁴⁵ A Muslim man according to the Muslim Marriage Decree has many options for a divorce; however the wife has only two routes to a divorce:

1. She can apply for a divorce based on Article 4 of the Muslim Marriage Decree
2. She can apply for a divorce via a magistrate.⁴⁶

With regards to the second case, the magistrate must abide with the Civil Code of Suriname to grant a divorce, however he is brief by an expert of Islamic *fiqh* who verifies whether divorcee is necessary. The role of this expert of Islamic Law is to save the marriage, and he must determine whether or not the couple can live peacefully, and then advises the magistrate if a divorce is necessary.⁴⁷

In the past decade the Muslim Marriage Decree has come under attack from international human rights groups, women groups, as well as Muslims who supports the integration or standardization of the country’s Civil Code. This they assert complies with the country’s constitution. Islamic organizations, SIV, MMA, and SMA presented a united case to the president of Suriname. They supported the modification of the Muslim Marriage Act in 1973 which became know as the Adhin Law (Marriage Law Revision Act 1973” which was ratified finally by the Surinamese Parliament in 2003. The Muslim intelligentsia who were part of the several commissions since 1973 to revise the Asian Marriage Act did not see it as an infringement of their religious freedom. In fact, they see it as an improvement of their country’s human rights record because the dual laws created cracks for abuse where women were at the receiving end. Revision included the age of marriage for both male and female to 17 for male and 15 for female, grounds for divorces, inheritance, guardianship or parental authority after divorce,

maintenance or allowance; its further led to uniformity with the Civil Code of Suriname. Religious marriages of Muslims will now have to be registered with the civil authorities and divorce by a secular court. More or less the Muslim Marriage Act of 1940 was abrogated.

Castism Vanished Among the Hindustanis

Casteism is deeply rooted in India and was very rigid from 1873-1916, the period that Hindustanis migrated to Suriname. This especially affected the backward states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where illiteracy, poverty, drought and communalism is rampant. Casteism has impeded India's social mobility and has led to violent conflicts. Since 1873 when Hindustanis began arriving in Suriname from North India casteism began eroding amongst the Hindus. Most of the Hindustani that came to Suriname belongs to the schedule castes (*dalits*) such as *ahirs*, *dhobis*, *telis*, *chammar* or *kurmis*. Take for example Bihar, where the ancestors of many Guyanese, Surinamese and Trinidadians originated from, 64 percent of Bihar's population is composed of *dalits* who "nursed a justifiable historical grievance against the upper caste (13 percent), who dominated the economic, cultural and political structures".⁴⁸ "The constant battle waged by the rural *dalits* in acquiring social dignity or "izzat" against the bloodthirsty and avaricious behaviour of upper caste landlords and rich farmers have been indefatigable and quite measurably successful."⁴⁹ However, in the Caribbean this evil disappear because these Indians had to survive outside of India in difficult circumstances.⁵⁰ According to Moses Seesnarine who cited Smith, Jayawardena and Schwartz, foremost experts on the Indian diaspora, castism persist in East Africa but is less prevalent in Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad.⁵¹

The three month voyage from India to the Suriname played a major role in the disappearance of the caste system in Suriname. Hindustanis were recruited from various parts of India and were sent to the port of Kolkota where they stayed for up to three months before being shipped to Sri Ram Tapu (Suriname). There life long bonds and friendship developed. We get a first hand account of the journey from India to Suriname from Munshi Rahman Khan, an ethnic *Pathan*, from the Hamipur, Uttar Pradesh, India in 1898 at age 24 the left India for Suriname. At the depot *Brahmins* and *khryastias* quickly abandoned their traditions. The *janau* (sacred thread), *tikka* (sign on forehead) and the kanthi mala were abandoned and many no longer acted in accordance to the rules and regulations of his or her caste or religion. They were not force to give up their traditions but voluntary many did before they came to Suriname. "The *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and others laughingly began to throw off their threads and necklaces into the river saying: 'Mother Ganges, we offer you our belongings, if ever we return, we shall adorn them again'.⁵² Suddenly, according to Khan the *Brahmins* became sudras. There was no longer an interest to maintain the "sanctity of caste and creed."⁵³ No longer were there differences between *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* or *sudras*. *Brahmin*, *Muslims*, *Chammar* and *Ahirs* queue together and eat the same food, and neither was the Brahmin insulted to be fed by someone wearing shoes. They all shared the same plates and eat alongside each others. Hindus did not complain about eating next to a Muslim. These upper castes Hindus quickly kept company with lower castes women since many traveled single. Infidelity started prior to the departure to Suriname since they were shortages of women and mostly single men made the voyage. "The breach of religion did not end here and these people resorted to infidelity. "They also were very close and intimate with the untouchables, and ate, drank, and had fun with them, and started relations with their womenfolk."⁵⁴ *Brahmins* eat meat, drank and sell alcohol like others. Some *Brahmins* who wanted to make the voyage lied about their caste since the authorities were not interested in recruiting *Brahmins* to the colony.

When the Indians arrived in Suriname they were forced to cooperate with each other. They were strangers uncertain of the future and they toiled the same sugar and cocoa plantations. The language and culture of Suriname was peculiar to them. Alienation from the motherland also helped in the demise of the caste system in Suriname. There was indeed tension between Hindus and Muslims but not at the

level that we see in India at the beginning of the 20th century. To resolve religious differences among its members and to prevent Creole domination, the VHP, an Indian political party in 1949 adopted the following slogan to bridge the gaps with the other Hindustani religious group:

Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Isai
Sab hai bhai bhai
Bharrat mata sab ke mai
Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christians
They are all brothers
*India is the mother of them all*⁵⁵

Hindu -Muslim Tension

Hindu Muslim relationship going back to the motherland, Hindustan was cordial, antagonistic and bloody at different times and places. Most of the violence since the 1700s took place in North India, homeland of many Surinamese Muslims. Since the coming of Islam to India with the invasion of Muhammad bin Qasim of Syria, to the Ghaznavid invasions of the Punjab, India came under Muslim rule. This was followed by the Ghurid invasions and the Timurids led by Babur and culminated with Aurangzeb son of Shah Jehan. Muslims controlled India for over 500 years. They assimilated, becoming part of the social and political fabric of India. Their rule of India came to an end in the 18th century. Some see the Muslims as aliens who pillaged and conquered Hindus, while others see them as indigenous and that the seeds of division and communalism were planted as a result of the Islamic invasion.

Most communal riots centered took place when *Muharram* or the *Eids* coincided with *Ramlila* and *Navratrhi*, cow slaughter and according to Indian historian Dr. Yoginder Sikand the founding of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu revivalist Arya Samaj fomented communalism.⁵⁶ The most controversial feature of the Arya Samaj goal was “its work of *shuddi*, i.e., the reconversion of Hindus who have been converted to Islam or Christianity. The members of the Arya Samaj are often called “The aggressive Hindus” as they sought to bring back by coercion, threat and other means all those who had renounced Hinduism in favour of Islam or other religions.”⁵⁷ With the rise of the Arya Samaj who advocated protection of the “sacred mother” (cow), other radical groups as well joined in the cry. The cow slaughter issue provoked Hindu Muslim riots in Uttar Pradesh in the 1880s and 1890s. As well, it was an issue during the Mughal reign. Mughal emperors such as Babar, Akbar, Jahangir and Aurangzeb “imposed selective ban on cow slaughtering to accommodate the Jain and Brahmanical feeling for and veneration of the cow.”⁵⁸ “In 1893, in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh anti-Muslims riots broke out.”⁵⁹ Again in 1912-1913 in Ayodhya riots broke out over the “sacred cow.”⁶⁰ From 1910 to 1918 major communal riots over the cow slaughtering took place in Ayodhya, Banaras, Nellore, Kanpur, Patna, Gaya, and Shahabad and what is today know as India’s “cow-belt.”⁶¹ These are the districts and cities where most Surinamese Hindus and Muslims originated from and the issue of the “sacred cow” was brought to Suriname which led to communal tension. The issue was persisted until the 1970s because Suriname’s Hindus were adamant that the colonial government of Suriname ban cow slaughtering by the Muslims on *Bakra Eid*.

When we look at Hindu/Muslim relationship in Suriname we have to take into consideration a few facts. Unlike Guyana, Trinidad and Fiji, Muslims are large minority in Suriname, something like 25%. They also maintained their mother tongue, Urdu or Javanese unlike these latter countries. The geography of Suriname played an important role in forging strong communication among Muslims. It was easy for ten powerful religious figures to oversee the religious and social affairs of the Muslims

community throughout Suriname which has a good physical infrastructure. Guyana on the other hand, is divided by larger rivers and the British kept Guyana poor and dependent. Suriname on the other hand, was one of the richest countries in South America by gross national product. Economically, the Surinamese Muslims are well off. In stark contrast to Guyana or Trinidad, Muslim and Hindu politicians of Suriname come from the *masjids* and the *mandirs* still speak their mother tongue; and unlike in Guyana are not afraid to admit that they represent their constituent. Nationally they advocate for Islamic or Hindu issues and not behind the scene only. They keep strong ties to the religious institutions and many are practicing Muslims modeling good behavior: praying five times a day, refraining from pork and alcohol, and some keep beards and wear topis.

When Muslims and Hindus arrived in Suriname they maintain friendly relationship with each other. They were alien to this strange land and much uncertainty surrounded them, thus they cemented relationship since they were all sons and daughter of Hindustan. It was not uncommon to find them at each others birth, weddings, death, religious ceremonies and celebrating holidays together. Muslims have been keen to respect old customs by respecting the religious sanctity of Hindus. They did not cook beef and made vegetarians meals for the upper class Hindus. Munshi Rahman Khan, a devout Muslim was also a champion of Hindu culture and quickly he became a Ramayana teacher. Rahman became famous in Suriname and many flocked to him to learn to read the *Ramayana*. After arriving at his assigned plantation, Khan was invited for the evening Katha by Pandit Janki Prasad. Pandit was already aware that Khan can read the *Ramayana*, and without hesitation asked Khan to recite, Khan was however, hesitant since he was a Muslim and once he was lectured for touching the book. After, reading for three hours, Pandit Prasad presented many gifts to Khan. There was a raged to learn the *Ramayana* and Khan quickly got over thirty students. This in essence capsulate Hindu/Muslim relationship during the early period of indentureship.⁶²

After the arrival of the Arya Samajis in 1929 in Suriname, friction developed within the Hindu community. "By the early 1920s Hindu-Muslim conflict, which had been steadily growing with the onset of British rule, witnessed a sudden upsurge, with the emergence of numerous aggressive communal bodies and movements. In 1922, the Hindu revivalist Arya Samaj launched a well-organised campaign to bring the Muslim back to Hinduism also know as *shuddi* (cleansing). They targeted large number of Muslim groups that had still retained many customs and practices associated with their pre-conversion Hindu past. In a few months they claimed to have made several hundred thousand such converts. Muslim leaders reacted with panic at the news, and several efforts were launched for *tabligh*, or Islamic mission, aiming principally at bringing back the apostates into the Muslim fold and to prevent further conversions to Hinduism by spreading Islamic awareness among non-Muslims The *tabligh jamat* was only one of several such Islamic missionary groups that were launched at this time in response to the Arya challenge, but it was the only one to outlive its founder and grow into a global movement."⁶³ Sinha-Kerkhoff and Bal translated a newspaper article written by a journalist, B.R.A. Sovan in which he claims that in Suriname the Arya Samaj main goal was "*sudhi*," a movement to reclaim or reconvert former Hindus now in Islam or Christianity; and since Muslims were very resistant and ignored their call the Arya Samajis leaders became bitter.⁶⁴ Muslim leadership under men such as Munshi Rahman Khan, Janab Asghar Ali, Imam Kallan Mian, Maulana Hafiz Ahmad Khan, Janab Kazi Ahmad Ali, among others who engaged the Arya Samajis in intense debates. As well, the Arya Samajis could not make converts out of Muslims and that enraged them.⁶⁵

In Suriname, the Sanathan Dharm and the Arya Samajis were at each other's throat because of attempt by the Arya Samaj to win converts. Initially, there was verbal and physical conflict between these two groups. The Arya Samajis wanted to control the Sanatans, but eventually they accepted each other, allowing visits and marriages among their children. This harmony was short lived. During this time the Muslim kept friendly ties with both groups. In 1931, publicly the Arya Samajis leader, Shukdev verbally attacked the Sanatis and the Muslims. "He even remarked that the Quran was not the

ultimate truth and was incorrect.”⁶⁶ Swiftly, the Muslims confronted him. With the *Satyarth Prakash* and the Quran, Rahman Khan and his son Suleiman Khan visited Sukhdev and confronted him about his remarks, however, Sukhdev denied the entire episode alleging that the Bible contained many flaws. Suleiman in an attempt to embarrass Sukhdev offered him one hundred dollars to “decipher” the meaning of a verse, knowing fully well that Sukhdev can’t read Arabic.⁶⁷

The Hindu/Muslim tension was brought to the attention of the Bharrat Uday Committee, a Pan-Indian organization in 1931. Maulana Ahmad Khan, a member of Bharrat Uday who could not attend a meeting that took place on April 19, 1931 requested that Rahman Khan write a letter to the Chairman, Ramprasad to identify “the perpetrators” responsible for the conflicts among the Hindustani community. Rahman Khan penned the letter in Hindi since Ramprasad could not read Urdu, however Maulana Ahmad Khan only knew Urdu. Ahmad Khan and Ramprasad were influential leaders of Bharrat Uday.⁶⁸ Bharrat Uday however, was torn into two factions along religious lines and failed to effectively address or solve the Hindu/Muslim tension because the organization was dominated by Arya Samajis and sixty-five Muslims who wanted to join the organization were rejected.⁶⁹

A verbal exchange between a Muslim and a Hindu in 1933 further strained tense relationship. At a Muslim wedding Imam Kallan Mian and Babu Puroshottam Singh “got involved in an altercation” and the Hindus left the wedding without eating. Vegetarian meal was prepared for them. Kallan Mian was at fault and two weeks later he admitted to his mistake and apologized to Puroshottam Singh. They both made peace with a handshake, and sharing tea and a cigarette, however this peace gesture did not end the conflict. The instigators were bent in fomenting Hindu/Muslim confrontation. They demanded that Kallan Mian apologized to the entire Hindu community. Quickly rumors spread in Livorno that the Muslims were always mixed beef with mutton and feeding it to the Hindus. At the house of Nagesh and Sahati Bahadur it was decided to boycott the Muslims.⁷⁰ A number of committees were set up to resolve the issues but their attempts were unsuccessful. The *Brahmins* demanded that if they accepted the Muslim demand the food must be prepared by Hindus, however the Muslims proposed that half of the cooks must be Muslims. This did not go well with the Hindus because of the Brahmins leading the flock refused to compromise. To up stage the *Brahmins*, the Muslims went for the juggler by demanding that they cease eating or accepting gifts from lower castes, stop keeping their women, refrain from eating meat and eggs, consuming alcohol and selling their cows to butchers and then they will agree to their demands. They did not reach a resolution and the conflict continued to brew.⁷¹

As *Bakra Eid (Eid-ul-Azah)* approached, rumor went out that the Muslims intended to slaughter a cow but according to Khan this was just rumor. There was no such intention asserted Khan. News spread that the Hindus were collecting money to slaughter a pig on *Bakra Eid*. Money was collected by upper caste Hindus in Livorno. This was against the holy books of the Hindus but not in conflict with the Quran, Muslims argued. The Muslim argued that the Hindus killed, while they sacrifice (*qurbani*) in accordance with their religious injunctions. Nine months before *Bakra Eid* the Hindus boycotted the Muslims and on one occasion a *chammar*, Biseshar who refused to go along with the boycott came under attacked by six *chamars*. A Muslim, Habib went to his rescue, and Habib was beaten to death. The Hindu community appealed to the colonial authorities to ban the killing of cows unsuccessfully, and in 1933 the day of *Bakra Eid*, the Muslim went ahead and sacrificed a cow while the Hindus took out a procession with flags and killed a pig near a mosque.⁷² This rage could have become bloody and sensing this, “the government sent troops to control the situation at the site of the slaughter. They forced the mob to disperse within minutes leaving all their drums and flags scattered.”⁷³ Elsewhere in Suriname, the government troops guarded places of sacrifices. The Hindus felt defeated with the government backing of the Muslims and employed some other strategies to avenge the cow killing. The cow slaughtering upheaval threatened the Hindu Muslim peace in Suriname. There was fear that Suriname would become embroiled in communalism like India. Muslims were aware of communal conflicts in India. Khan writes, “On 26 March 1934, cows were sacrificed in Ayodhyapuri and riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims. Shops belonging to Muslims were looted and their houses were burnt.”⁷⁴

Some Hindu leaders of the Sanathan, Pandits Paltan and Jadhunath were at the forefront looking to convert Muslims to Hinduism. The Muslims confronted the Sanathan leaders, and asked, “What do you get by converting poor foolish Muslims who never even knew their religion?”⁷⁵ He continued, “You should accept a knowledgeable Muslim in your fold so that your fame and religion would increase in status.”⁷⁶ Pandit replied, “Through the conversion of the illiterates, I received money and their services as well.”⁷⁷ This development led to the division of the first Hindustani organization of Suriname, Bharrat Uday. Two Muslim organization in 1934 Anjuman Islam and Hidayat Islam under the leadership of Janab Ashgar Ali attempted to unite the two communities. Several meetings did not result in any resolutions. The Sanathans did not invite the Arya Samajis, and the Hindus demanded the end of cow slaughtering, while the Muslims demanded that the boycott against them be lifted before they refrained from cow sacrificing during *bakra eid*. In the district of Nickerie, where Hindus are majority, the slaughtering of cows was banned by the local government.⁷⁸

Putting aside their differences, Pandit Paltan at the helm of the Sanatans sought the support of Babu Heerasingh who was the chairman of the Arya Dewarkar since they could not stop the cow sacrificing in 1934. These two groups who condemned each other publicly were now united in their effort to antagonize Hindu/Muslim relationship but history prove that this alliance did not last and eventually the Hindus were embroiled in their own bitter conflicts. On April 1st, 1934 the two groups met at the Arya Dewarkar and passed an eleven- point resolution against the Muslims. By 1934 both the Arya Samaj and the Sanatis were united in the anti-Muslim boycott and the ban on cow killing.⁷⁹ Interestingly, the Arya Samaj employed the same tactics in Fiji which led to conflict with the Muslims there. Ali writes, “Arya Samaj formed the Sangathan Movement in Fiji and began the onslaught on Muslims through a string of social and commercial boycotts.”⁸⁰ Besides Khan’s account, the Hindu boycott of the Muslims is documented by DeKlerk and Biswamitre.⁸¹ The edict read as follows:

1. *Stop all business dealings with Muslims*
2. *Stop greeting each other*
3. *Cease giving and receiving invitations from them*
4. *Refrain from sharing water from the same well*
5. *Stop talking to them*
6. *Hindu women should discontinue help in Muslim delivery cases*
7. *Avoid giving alms to Muslim beggars and saints*
8. *Make Hindu beggars refuse alms from Muslims*
9. *Stop visiting Muslim homes*
10. *Prevent Hindus and Muslims from walking in each other’s death processions*
11. *Do not allow Muslims to partake in the last rites of a Hindu*⁸²

The boycott was emotionally devastating to Muslims and marked a dark chapter in Hindu/Muslim relationship in the Suriname. It was an economic pact among the Hindus that was meant to hurt the Muslims economically; however it was unsuccessful and led to more mistrust between Hindus and Muslims.

In Paramaribo the Hindu leaders rode high on this edict hoping to capture the anti-Muslim sentiments of the time. They purchased a large plot of land in Paramaribo for the establishment of a Hindu bazaar. “The bazaar was ready and equipped within one night and early next morning it was open to everyone except the Muslims.” This displayed the solidarity that existed among the Hindus in their attempt to antagonize the Muslims; however the government intervened by ordering the closure of the bazaar and punished the ring leaders. Governor Kielstra was fully aware of the conflict in India between Hindus and Muslims. As well, Munshi Rahman Khan was very aware of the cow slaughtering issue that was simmering in his motherland and it provoked him to take actions in Suriname. Khan received letters and newspapers from India and he was keen in not letting communalism engulf his new homeland, Suriname. It was during the governorship of Kielstra, 1933 to 1943 that communal bloodletting in India was at an all time high. Hindu and Muslims leaders in Suriname were very much in touch with the motherland via local ethnic Hindu and Muslims newspapers that they received from

the motherland. Back in the homeland, cow killing had caused great communal tensions that led to violence and Suriname was not spare this ordeal. However, in Suriname it was not bloody. Many Hindus did not abide with the boycott. They continued their close ties with the Muslims, and in no severe term did the ban affect the Muslims, however it did cause more mistrust between the two communities. Eventually, the pact between the Aryas and Sanatis did not last. By the end of 1934 they were physically man handling each other. This friction according Khan was a result a few *Brahmins* who suddenly reclaim their status after arriving in Suriname. "Let's not forget that they were the said people who pontificated with untouchable's women, eat meat and sat next to Muslims."⁸³

Conflicts over Political Representation

Suriname is a secular state that is neutral to all religions. Some argue that the Quran does not demand the establishment of an Islamic state. Muslim in Suriname view Islam as a personal battle to make oneself better and not a means of establishing an Islamic state. They are equal citizens in a plural and multi-religious Suriname with pragmatic visions void of separatist mentality that has plagued the Indian subcontinent. Surinamese Muslims are not poor, illiterate, and backward like their brethren in South Asia. Interestingly, they do not view the world as *Darul-Islam* and *dar-ul-harab*. They have sought religious, political and economic cooperation with other ethnic and religious group. Their support of a secular state is not in violation of Islamic injunctions, and in the past they have bargain with the state taking advantages of the spaces and freedom it offers. For example in the 1940s they successfully lobbied the state to adopt aspect of *Sharia* Law. Governor Kielstra by decree adopted the Asian Marriage Decree Many law makers challenged the motion in *Staten* and the governor was accused of favoring the Asians. However, in 2003 Suriname's National Assembly adopted the Adhin Law or the Marriage Revision Act which Muslims supported. Muslims have been granted *Eid-ul-Fitr* a national holiday and government employee can take half day on Fridays to attend the *Jumma Namaz*. Today, Surinamese Muslims continue to enjoy the freedom of being able to fulfill their religious obligations in this secular republic.

Muslims have always had an active political life in Suriname for Islam does not separate religion, and politics. In fact, Islam urges Muslims to be active in their society and to serve the interest of all; Muslims must be involved in politics. So it is not surprising that the first political party in Suriname was founded by Muslims. The Muslim Party founded by Ashgar Karamat Ali had a religious and secular platform. Going back to the 1940's, the Muslims were torn between the VHP and the National Party of Suriname (NPS). Some of the earliest Muslims in politics were Ashgar Karamat Ali of the SIV who entered the *Staten* in 1967 to 1973, M.S. Nurmohammed, S. Rassam, T. A. Ahmad Ali of the SIV, (VHP)- Minister of Social Affairs 1969-73, Soemita of the KTPI, S. A. Soeperman (KTPI), Minister of Economic Affairs, was a member of the Pengel government 1973, Islam Radja of the SMA, H. Nurmohamed (SMA). Willy Soemita, Indonesian, (LVV) in 1973 entered the National Assembly. Amat Rahim, an Indonesia, (KTPI) entered National Assembly in 1973; S.P. Soemoharjo (NPS) an Indonesian, entered the National Assembly in 1973. There are many Muslims since 1975 who have been members of the National Assembly and in various cabinets, and are too numerous to mention-

After World War II the Dutch government began to democratize the *Staten* and invited local politicians for constitutional reform talk in the Netherlands. In 1945, a delegation from Suriname was appointed to travel to the Netherlands to be part of the autonomy talks. The Hindus and the Javanese were angered that only Christians were part of the delegation and eventually a Hindu and a Javanese were included. This was unacceptable to the Muslims and there was an outcry because no Muslims were invited. The delegation was made up of four Christians and one Hindu. Asgar Karmat Ali, a member of the National Assembly and a notary clerk up the political ante. "Setting up the Muslim Partij (MP) in May 1946," he claimed to speak for both Javanese and Hindustani Muslims.⁸⁴ Ashgar Ali was a member of Bharrat Uday and that organization had had a history of Hindu Muslim friction Ali was keen that Hindustani Muslims not be yoked with their Hindu countrymen. Islam was the basis for the party platform. He called for universal suffrage and some sort of autonomy beginning at the village level. The

Muslims quickly sent a cable to the Dutch queen demanding representation since they were “sixty thousand Muslims in Suriname.”⁸⁵ (60). and with the “intervention of the Dutch Minister of Overseas Affairs, the *Staten* hastily included a Javanese Muslim.”⁸⁶

Following the Muslim move, the Hindus and Catholics founded their own parties. The Catholics founded Unie Suriname, which became National Party of Suriname (NPS) in 1946 and led by J. Pengel from 1959 to 1969. NPS were founded and they tried to appeal to all races and religious groups. Since the 1930 the rivalries between the Hindustanis groups continued. “The proselytizing rivalry between members the orthodox Hindu Sanatan Dharm and the more reformist Arya Samaj had become intense since the 1930’s and had continued so through the 1940’s.”⁸⁷ The Suriname Hindoe Partij (SHP) was founded in 1947 followed by the Hindostans-Javaanse Politieke Partij (H-JPP). Some Javanese who were former members of the Muslim Party joined the HJPP and the KTPI leaders accused them of selling out the Javanese to the Hindustanis. Leader of the Arya Samaj, J.S. Mungra attacked the Hindu party as narrow minded and not having any Aryans in its leadership.

Taking examples from the Creoles and Hindustanis, coupled with developments in their homeland, Indonesia, the Javanese became “politicized”⁸⁸, In 1947, the Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia Party (KTPI) was founded by Iding Soemita with the assistance of Ashgar Karamat Ali. The party’s aimed to reawaken and mobilize the Javanese socially, culturally and economically. Later, Salikin M. Hardjo left the Unie Surinam Party to form the Pergerakan Bangsa Indonesia Suriname (PBIS) in April of 1947.⁸⁹ This party was made up of a mixture of reformists and moderates, traditionalists and Christian Javanese who were more educated than KTPI members.⁹⁰

The Asian parties “demanded more civil jobs, the removal of the derogatory term *coolie*, more agricultural lands, roads, credits, agricultural extension programs and asked for a more sympathetic treatment towards Asians”⁹¹ Fearing Asian domination of the political landscape, the Creoles opposed Asian universal suffrage and some favorable amendments by Governor Kielstra. From 1940- 1950, the Hindus and Muslims had an antagonistic political relationship as well. The Muslims were keen not to be swallowed by the Hindus and had a pact with the VHP of sharing power according to a 2:1 proportionality, but by 1950 the division became apparent. As we approached the 21st century, the unwritten law of allotting two cabinet position to the Muslim, one going to the *Ahmadis* and the other to the *sunnis*, remains the status quo more or less, however there are complains that Muslims are only awarded one cabinet post these days. Muslim hardly sits on the executive board of the VHP, and do not support the VHP as a block but can be found in the other political parties of Suriname.

In the 1950’s, Muslims and Hindu politicians verbally traded attacks at each other in the media and the once secular VHP- Hindustani Party changed its name to Verenigde Hindoe Partij. Prior to events leading up to 1950, all Hindu *Staten* members supported the government of Pengel; however the only two Muslim in the *Staten*, Mohammed Radja and S. M. Jamaluddin supported the opposition. Mohammed Radja was a VHP member but by 1950 the split among the Hindustanis grew wider when he left that party. The VHP informed the Dutch government that Mohamed Radja no longer represented that party and in a meeting with the Sanathan Dharm, Professor Dew in his book, *The Difficult Flowering of Suriname*, quoted Lachmon as saying, “if I Lachmon, take no revenge on Mohamed Radja and S. M. Jamaluddin, then am not a son of a Hindu.”⁹² In 1950 these men accused the VHP of driving out the Christians and Muslims from the party. They also accused the party of undemocratic maneuvering. “They warned that these forces were violating the established principle of 2-1 proportionality between Hindus and Moslems.”⁹³ This led to the VHP selecting a Muslim candidate in the October election, however that candidate did poorly which further inflamed Muslim and up the anti-

Hindu sentiments. Dew attributes this low point in Hindu Muslim relationship to the bloodshed leading up to the division of India and the creation of Pakistan.⁹⁴ Adding more discontent to the rocky Hindu/Muslim relationship, Muslim parliamentarians who had long lobbied for an increase in the price of paddy, were not credited for this accomplishment. The Creole members of the NPS attributed this development to Hindu *Staten (parliament)* members which further inflamed Mohammed Raja and S.M. Jamaluddin. In fact, *De West* a local paper “replied that credit should really have gone to Mohamed Radja.”⁹⁵ An angry Jamaluddin then wrote an open letter to Lachmon:

*And now you present yourself as a martyr, blaming.... You and Mungra are busy day and night pumping the Hindus full of hate and revenge against the Moslems. The consequence is that the Moslems are being boycotted in the districts and are being unnecessarily harass and bothered by Hindus. Any action against us will be against all Moslems.”*⁹⁶

Tension between the Muslims and the Hindus mounted in 1951. The split between the Hindus and Muslims were obvious in January 1951 when the VHP change its name to *Verenigde Hindoe Partij*, and ran only Hindu candidates in all districts but Commewijne when it shared a ticket with a Creole coalition.⁹⁷ Mohammed Radja and S. M. Jamaluddin joined the NPS but received the cold shoulder; they were not place on the March election of the NPS ticket. They then joined the KTPI Indonesian party in Saramacca and Paramaribo, however they were badly beaten by VHP candidates. In 1954, when the VHP and NPS partnership was announced and that they will work to change the election law, KTPI’s Ashgar Karamat Ali denounced the changes on the eve of an election and accused VHP of dirty tricks. He called on Muslims to denounce the VHP, which grew a swift reply from the Aryan VHP leader, J. S. Mungra:

*“VHP has done everything possible to get Hindus and Moslems to work together again..., a Hindu can never tolerate a Moslem to threaten him and sit on him. We are not afraid of death. We can be born again”*⁹⁸

The electoral amendments were passed and a robust VHP Hindu vote supported Pengel.

Mounting Hindu pressure to stop cow slaughtering was influence by the communal mayhem in India. Hindus, under the leadership of Jaggernauth Lachmon demanded that Muslim butchers stop cow slaughtering in Hindu neighborhood, and he raised the issue with the government which ruled that it had no jurisdiction on such matter. Hindus and Muslims do not live in separate communities in Suriname. They are demographically integrated, thus it is impossible to differentiate a Hindu or a Muslim residential community. The Javanese as well were embroiled in the cow slaughtering issue and KTPI’s leader, Soemita demanded that an end to the slaughtering of pigs in Muslim areas. Friction with the VHP-Hindus brought the KTPI on the side of the government. The KTPI were the power peg at that time since they held the balance of power in the parliament.⁹⁹ Later the Muslim will again seek partnership with the VHP and to date that fragile coalition still exist. Muslim support to the VHP is much fractured.

Relationship with the Islamic World

At people to people level, strong ties have always existed with the larger Islamic World. In spite of geographical disadvantages and limited financial resources of an uprooted society from Asia to South America, the Muslims of Suriname have maintained strong ties with the Islamic World since 1873. Naturally, strong bonds exist between the local Muslims and Indonesia and with India and Pakistan because it is from these countries that Surinamese Muslims originated from. Up to the 1920, they were

relatively isolated from the Islamic World until the coming of the Ahmadis. Locals were exuberant when men such as Maulana Amir Ali, Maulana Shah Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqi, Maulana Ahmad Shah Noorani, and Maulana Ansari visited Suriname. Suriname is geographically at the Islamic periphery. Locals are eager to welcome any Islamic scholars to Suriname in an effort to renew the teachings of Islam. The local Muslims leaders were yearning of an Islamic reawakening. They did not question whether these Maulanas were *Ahmadis*, *Shia*, *Sunnis* or *Ishmaelis*, for them there was only one Islam. One *kalimah* (*shahadah*) as one Suriname articulated it. It did not matter if they were *Sunnis*, *Shia*, Ahmadis, Hindustanis, Arabs or Indonesians. They were unaware of the *Ahmadi*. They were only Muslim and were not divided between *shia* and *sunnis*. It was only after World War II when Maulanas from Pakistan arrived in Suriname that the locals were informed that the Ahmadis are not Muslims and that their doctrines are in violations of the Quran and the *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad. These *maulanas* are well respect in Suriname and has been instrumental in clarifying theological issues. Their contribution to the development of Islam in Suriname is widely known among the locals. On the other hand, they are blamed for the schism that exists among the Muslims of Suriname today. This relationship with the *maulanas* has led to numerous *maulanas* from India and Pakistan coming to work in Suriname to give theological support and to clarify issues relating to *shariah*.¹⁰⁰ However, locals were not ignorant that back in the motherland, India, there were *sunnis* and *Shia* Muslims. In fact, *Shia* Muslims who came to Suriname from India were quickly neutralized by the majority *sunnis*. By the 1969's the *Shia* observation of *taziyah* had disappeared in Suriname.

The Indonesians community is the most recent immigrants and they have maintained strong ties with the motherland. The embassy of Indonesia in Paramaribo has been instrumental in forging cultural ties with the local Indonesian population. The embassy regularly organized courses in dances, including contemporary Javanese dances. They also offer elementary and advance courses in Bahasa Indonesia in Paramaribo and in cities with a high concentration of Javanese. Most Indonesians heads of states and Surinamese heads of states have visited each other's country testifying to this vibrant relationship between Suriname and Indonesia. The majority are Muslims while a handful have accepted the gospels of the evangelists flooding the country from North America. It is in this back drop that the Indonesian government has more recently has been active in educating and nurturing this diaspora outside of Indonesia.

Since the 1960's the Muslims have been drawn closer to the Islamic World partly due to mass communication- proliferation of newspapers, television and now the internet. Dramatic events in the past fifty years have helped in bring them closer to the Muslims world. They have spoken out on the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian, Israeli occupation of Lebanese and Syrian land and more recently the conflicts in Kashmir, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosova, Afghanistan and Iraq. More recently, they held rallies in front of the US Embassy in Paramaribo protesting the US invasion of Iraq, and in 2001, the Madjilies Moeslimien Suriname (MMS), renewed its solidarity with the global *umma* when it declared, "our taughts are with the peoples of Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq and the victims of diseases, poverty, hunger and ignorance in the Third World."¹⁰¹ In that said statement, MMA in alluding to Israeli "state sponsored" terrorism called for the EU and the UN to exert pressure to end the Israeli occupation and illegal settlements in Palestine. They further exerted that "Palestinian children and their parents are also entitled to calm and peace."¹⁰² On the issue of Iraq all the major organizations, SIV, SMA and MMS in 2003 with the support of former Surinamese President Jules Wijdenbosch help to organize a protest rally against the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. Some posters read, "Bush, terrorist No: 1"¹⁰³

Suriname, the OIC and the Islamic Bank

At the government to government level, Suriname since 1975 has maintained friendly ties with major Islamic countries. There has been forever a natural fraternal relationship with Indonesia, the largest Islamic country in the world, since 18% of Suriname population is made of people of Indonesian decent. Libya is the only Arab-Islamic nation to maintain an embassy in Suriname, but in the 1990's this relationship was further enhanced because of the hard efforts of the Surinamese Muslims who pushed to have Suriname join the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). They played an active role in this relationship. Since the 1990's Suriname has established diplomatic ties with Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. The majority of Surinamese Muslims who have made it into the country's national assembly were imams or leaders of mosques and Islamic organizations. Most of them have had had a strong Islamic education. Thus, when these very Muslims enter the National Assembly or were ministers in various cabinets, they work for and speak for the needs of Islam and the Muslim community at large. Their efforts paid dividends when Suriname became the first country in the Western Hemisphere to join the OIC in 1996 becoming the 55th member of that organisation, and in 1997 Suriname also became a member of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). In 1996, Suriname made a pragmatic move to establish diplomatic ties with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This relationship Suriname hopes will facilitate exports and investments from Saudi Arabia. Suriname is keen in attracting capital investors for the different Suriname sectors. Saudi Arabia is also a member of the OIC, and is one of the largest shareholders of the IsDB.

Since becoming a member of the OIC, and especially during the presidency of Jules Wijdenbosch relationship with the Islamic World grew rapidly. . In Tehran, the foreign minister of Suriname met his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharazi on the sidelines of the 8th summit of the OIC in 1997. Praising Iran, the foreign minister of Suriname expressed pleasure for attending the OIC Summit in Tehran. Briefing Kharazi on economic conditions in Suriname, the Suriname foreign minister expressed hope that his country will begin cooperation in industrial and oil sectors with Iran. He also asked for expansion of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Welcoming the proposal Kharazi expressed Iran's readiness in cooperation with Suriname in the fields of interests of both countries.¹⁰⁴ Iran then appointed an ambassador to Suriname.

Since becoming a member of the OIC, many Arabic speaking countries are keen in learning more about Suriname and help in its development. More recently, in New York in October of 2005, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the leader of Qatar requested a meeting with Suriname's President Venetian. Oil rich Qatar wants to explore areas of cooperation with Suriname in areas of oil and water "Many countries have shown an interest forging economic ties with Suriname and we are looking to cooperate with them." says President Venetian.¹⁰⁵ President Venetian visited Qatar in March 2009 to attend the Arab South American Summit. Qatar is interesting in cooperating with Suriname in the oil sector. Suriname has a fledging oil industry.

Surinamese Muslims are doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, bankers, entrepreneurs and diplomats and the government is tapping this human resource to put a focus on economic diplomacy by using its religious ties with the Muslim World to emphasize economic diplomacy. After a year in the IsDB, Suriname joined the highest levels of this organization; its former Central Bank Governor, Henk Goedschalk was elected First Vice Chairman of the IsDB for 1999 at a meeting of the IsDB Board of Governors. Henk Goedschalk was elected First Vice Chairman of the IsDB for 1999 during its annual meeting of the Board of Governors. He is now replaced by Mr. Andre Tetling and Mr. Hendrik Asgarali Alim Mahomed. This led to an IsDB delegation who visited Suriname in 1999 and again in 2005 to

discuss various projects. Besides government officials that they met, two professors from the University and advisors to the government, Mr. Hassankhan and Mr. Nur Mohammed sat with the visitors to trash out some of these projects. Another visit took place in February 2005 by Mr. Mohammad Reza Yousef Khan who came to take a first hand look at the Zanderij and Nickerie project which eventually was approved at the June 2005 IsDB governor's meeting in Malaysia. The IsDB's main goal is to promote economic growth and social progress in the member states of the OIC. Suriname's purpose in joining this organization is to find new sources for financing development projects. Besides current projects that were being implemented for that year, Suriname submitted 15 projects totaling US\$ 160 million for 1999-2003. However, when the Venetian government came to power they were skeptical about ties with the Islamic world and they did not engage the OIC seriously. This only happened during the second term of President Venetian. An indication of this change was the presence of a large Surinamese delegation to the 10th Summit of the OIC in Dakar, Senegal in 2008 headed by its Foreign Minister, Lygia L.I. Kraag-Keteldijk.

Due a thaw in relationship with the OIC during the Venetian presidency, Suriname has managed to get the IsDB Bank to fund only four projects in this tiny South American country. Suriname first appointed Mr. Lall Mohammed as special enjoy to the OIC and currently that post is held by Mr. Rafiek Chiragally and Maurits HassanKhan who have all at different periods attended OIC summits and foreign minister conferences across the world representing Suriname. Now Suriname has demonstrated consistency, diligence, and put in place man power to maintain strong ties with the Middle East. Since becoming a member of the OIC and the IsDB, many visits were made by Surinamese diplomats to various Islamic countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Mali, Burkina Faso and Yemen. There a person at the Surinamese Foreign Ministry who handles OIC affairs. This consorted have brought some tangible benefits to Suriname but a more serious engagement with the OIC and the IsDB can yield more benefits for Suriname.

So far the IsDB is financing two infrastructural and two health projects in Suriname. In February, the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Tourism (TCT) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a delegation of the IsDB for the purchase of radar equipment to help air traffic controllers monitor flights within a radius of 220 miles. This project was approved at the governor's meeting in Malaysia in June, 2005 and the Saudi Arabia-based IsDB agreed to loan Suriname US\$23.5 million to pay for the new airport radar system. This radar navigation system will improve air traffic safety at Suriname's international airport.¹⁰⁶ The IsDB and the Surinamese Government also signed a MOU for the rehabilitation and expansion of the New Nickerie Harbor. The bank will finance US\$10 million for this project, and more recently allotted an additional 5 million to for the project. The ministry of Regional Development and Public Health of Suriname are in cooperation with the IsDB to execute a health project in Suriname's hinterland. With this project, the primary health care in the interior of Suriname will be improved. This project envision the building of twenty one new standard outpatient clinics and 57 personnel houses for the benefit of health workers, three health centers and three landing sites on various locations. The IsDB has also agreed to finance the building of a Radio Therapeutics center for cancer treatment in the Paramaribo Academic Hospital.¹⁰⁷ This project and the one above will cost a total sum of approximately 16 million US dollars. Suriname is now asking the IsDB to open a local office here with a local representative and if Guyana becomes a member of the IsDB it will be more reason for the IsDB to have a local representation in South America. This step will ensure execution of projects and foster closer ties with the bank and the Islamic world.

Conclusion

Surinamese Muslims came from West Africa, Hindustan and Indonesia, and coexisted peacefully among Hindus and Christians, Creoles, Whites and Jews. However, in the early period of indentureship communalism embroiled the Hindustani community after the Arya Samaj launched its reform program to reform and mobilize the Hindu community which disrupted the tranquil Hindu/Muslim relationship that existed in Suriname since 1873. The Arya Samaj's *shuddhi* mantra, to return Muslims to the Hindu fold angered the Muslims community and led to verbal confrontations between Muslim and the Hindu leaders. When Surinamese Muslims arrived from Hindustan they were united but later they became divided into Javanese and Hindustanis, Ahmadiyya and Sunnis. And with the founding of the SIV in the 1920s, it waged a long battle to educate the public about Islam, fought for political representations of Muslims, undertook *dawah* work and established many social-welfare programs to benefit the Muslims. Also, they have written extensively on Islam and Surinamese Muslims. Interestingly, when some learned Muslims discovered the SIV had been penetrated by the doctrines of the Ahmadiyya, it led to verbal confrontations and debates. This schism led to the establishment of other organizations; however division among Surinamese Muslims has not ended but has exacerbated because organizations compete against each other rather than compliment each other. It is evident that Muslim organizations in Suriname are more divided than ever. Muslims are very active in politics, but are divided in their political allegiance and are found in all political parties. In the period, 1940-1960s there was Hindu/Muslim friction as they competed for political power. Muslims felt dominated by Hindus and left to support other political parties especially the Creole parties, eventually some returned to the VHP Hindu party who today allots one cabinet seat to the Muslims. Suriname today enjoys fraternal relationship with the Islamic World since it joined the OIC and the IsDB. As we move into the late 20th century, the Muslim community faces many challenges such as how to preserve Islam in a multi-religious and ethnic community in an ocean of evangelism and to balance the growing influence of globalization in which the youths are propelled to western culture. Suriname's different races continue to interbreed; many families or offspring are unsure what religion they belong to. Many youths do not identify themselves as Muslim which is evident when we compare the 1980 and 2004 census of religious distributions which shows that the Islamic population of Suriname has plummeted from 20% to 13%.

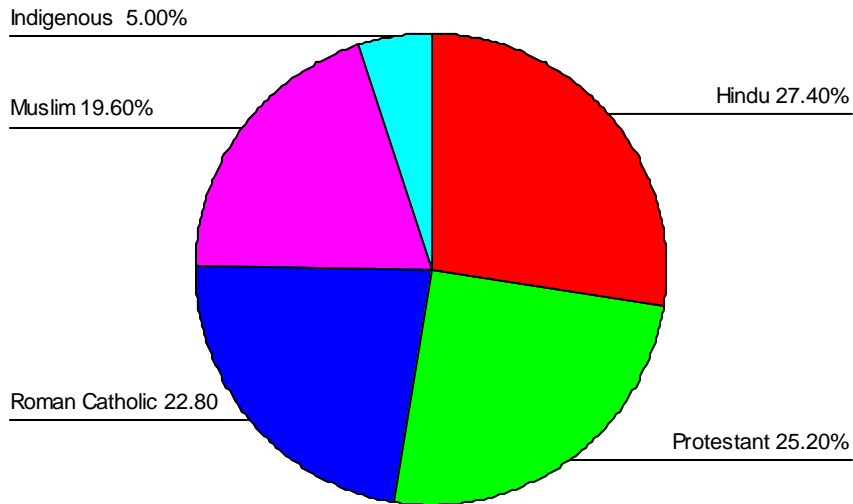
Figure 1: Map of Suriname



Source: Suriname Country Overview, available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/country/country_home_en.cfm?CID=sr&lng=en&type=home&status=new#overview

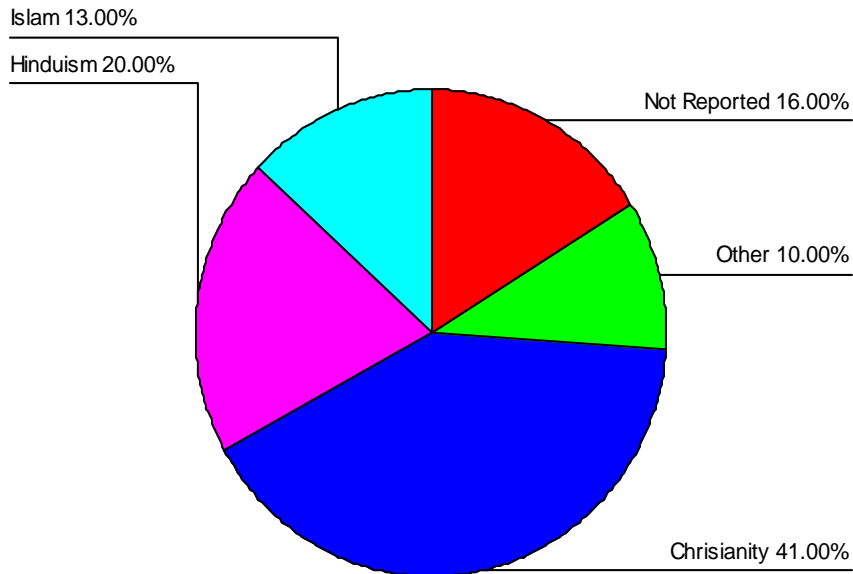
Figure 2: Suriname Religious Affiliation

Suriname Religious Affiliation 1980



Source CIA Factbook: Available on line at: <http://www.umsl.edu/services/govdocs/wofact2005/fields/2122.html>

Suriname Religious Affiliation 2004



Source: Suriname Bureau of Statistics: available on line at: <http://www.statistics-suriname.org/>

Figure 3: Map of India



Source: historical maps of India, available at: <http://www.india-history.com/british-india/india-in-1919-1947.html>

The ancestral home of Suriname's Hindustani Muslim- majority came from the United Provinces and Bihar, North India from 1873-1916.

Figure 4: First Muslims to arrive in Suriname from North India in 1873

NAME	AGE	SEX	STATE OF ORIGIN
Hussein Baksh	3	M	Allahabad
Goolam Ally Chand	20	M	Gorakhpur
Elahi Baksh	UN	M	UN
Deen Mohamed Hoolasy	30	M	Lucknow
Rajab Ally	30	M	Muzaffarpur
Shahab Ally Danno	17	M	Allahabad
Najeeb Habeebullah	20	M	Azamghar
Maksood	UN	M	UN
Zoorab Mowlaye	18	M	Basti
Kadeer Ali Baksh	20	M	Gorakhpur
Khodabaksh Peer Khan	22	M	Gorakhpur
Soogeea Edoos	27	F	Mirzapur
Juman	5	M	Mirzapur
Dilawar Moosan	30	M	Fyzabad
Moosaheb Ghoorahoo	22	M	Gorakhpur
Bhugmooneea Hunooman	23	F	Azamghar
Miloodah Peer Baksh	20	F	Jhaunpur
Elahi Peerbux	25	M	Gaya
Khordear Thamahmood Khan	18	M	Gaya
Khodabux Peerbux	16	M	Allahabad
Hossen Bocus	3	M	Allahabad
Muckdoom	8	M	Allahabad
Muntoreea Dussoye	20	M	Allahabad
Meer Peerally	40	M	Gorakhpur
Wazirun Kareem Bocus	27	F	Benares
Hazarun Goolab Khan	27	F	Lucknow
Anayat Fatehally	40	M	Barielly
Homrawo Neezamally	32	F	Barielly
Wazeerrun Mohamad Khan	24	F	Mirzapur
Emam Hasjenbux	30	M	Jhaunpur
Moegul Jan Meersaheb	15	F	Azamghar
Kallu	7	M	Mirzapur
Zohorah	3	V	Barielly
Anayatally	16	M	Barielly
Akram Anayatally	5	M	Barielly
Abdul Anayatally	7	M	Barielly
Ameen Anayatally	9	M	Barielly
Mohammad Madarin	25	M	Mirzapur
Hooseneo Neetul	35	M	Mirzapur
Attah Jufozool Hosfun	20	M	Sewree
Runyan Bahadur Khan	33	M	Lucknow
Aleembocus Korbau	25	M	Lucknow
Deenally	20	M	Gorakhpur

This list was compiled from the database below. Author's discretion was used to correct the spelling of some names what were beyond recognition. http://www.nationaalarchief.nl/suriname/base_hindo/introductie.html

Figure 5: Map of Java, Indonesia



Source: Available on line at: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/indonesia/>

Java: The homeland of many Surinamese Muslims

Notes:

¹ B. Ahmadali. *Herziening Huwelijksrecht, in Dutch, The New Asian Marriage Act in Dutch.*

<http://www.geocities.com/ivisep/tijdschriften/nb200306.htm#huwelijkswet>

² M. S. A Nurmohamed. *De Geschiedenis van de Islam in Suriname*, SMA Handbook in Dutch, Suriname, August, 1985, pp. 14-15.

³ Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel, *20th Century Suriname*, KITLV Press, Leiden, 2001

⁴ Dr. K. Gafoerkhan, paper presented at the 7th World Hindi Conference in Suriname, June 5-9, 2003.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ M. S. A Nurmohammed. *De Geschiedenis*, p. 14-15.

⁸ M. S.A Nurmohamed. *De Geschiedenis Van De Islam in Suriname*, SMA Handbook, August 1985, *50 Jaar Surinaamse Moeslim Associatie 1950-2000*, 50th Anniversary Handbook of SMA in Dutch, 2000 and *De Surinaamse Islamitische Vereniging Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore*, SIV Handbook, July 1989, Paramaribo.

⁹ *De Surinaamse Islamitische Vereniging Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore*, SIV Handbook, July 1989, Paramaribo, p.18.

¹⁰ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-ul-Islam, Lahore. Available on line: <http://www.muslim.org>

¹¹ M.S.A Nurmohamed. *De Geschiedenis*, p.19.

¹² M.S.A Nurmohamed. *De Geschiedenis*.

¹³ *De Surinaamse Islamitische Vereniging Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore*, Handbook of SIV, July 1989, Paramaribo, pp.18-

¹⁴ *50 Jaar Surinaamse Moeslim Associatie 1950-2000*, SMA 50th Anniversary Booklet, Paramaribo, 2000, p. 51.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.51-57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.51.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.126.

²¹ Moch Nur Ichwan. "Prayer in the Surinam-Javanese Diasporic Experience," *ISIM Newsletter*, No. 3, 1998.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ P. Surparlan. *The Javanese in Suriname in an Ethnically Plural Society*. Arizona State University, 1995, p87.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp, 86-90.

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- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ *De Ware Tijd*, Newspaper in Dutch, Paramaribo, Suriname, November 11, 2003.
- ³¹ J. Schanzer, "Unforced Error," *New Republic*, November 26, 2003 available on line: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=687>
- ³² P. Surparlan. *Javanese in Suriname*, p.134.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p.225.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 225.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ Rosemarijn Hoeft. *In Place of Slavery, a Social History of British Indian and Javanese Laborers in Suriname*, Univ. Florida Press, 1998, p. 177.
- ³⁸ The Quran, *The Asian Marriage Decree and the Practice*, *De Ware Tijd*, May 17, 2002, and *Al- Fajr*, Paramaribo, Suriname, July 7 2002, pp. 3-4.
- ³⁹ Rosemarijn Hoeft. *In Place of Slavery, a Social History of British Indian and Javanese Laborers in Suriname*, Univ. Florida Press, 1998, p. 177.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ The Quran, *The Asian Marriage Decree and the Practice*, *De Ware Tijd*, May 17, 2002, and *Al- Fajr*, Paramaribo, Suriname, July 7 2002, pp. 3-4.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ George, Goldy, M. *The Dalit World of Injustice & Peacelessness*, available on line: <http://daga.dhs.org/justpeace/reflective/dalit.html>, May 26, 2006.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
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