

HEINONLINE

Citation: 8 J. Islamic L. & Culture 1 2003

Content downloaded/printed from
HeinOnline (<http://heinonline.org>)
Sun Jan 2 23:16:37 2011

- Your use of this HeinOnline PDF indicates your acceptance of HeinOnline's Terms and Conditions of the license agreement available at <http://heinonline.org/HOL/License>
- The search text of this PDF is generated from uncorrected OCR text.
- To obtain permission to use this article beyond the scope of your HeinOnline license, please use:

[https://www.copyright.com/ccc/basicSearch.do?
&operation=go&searchType=0
&lastSearch=simple&all=on&titleOrStdNo=1528-817X](https://www.copyright.com/ccc/basicSearch.do?&operation=go&searchType=0&lastSearch=simple&all=on&titleOrStdNo=1528-817X)



WE WERE HERE FIRST:
*The Rhetoric of Identity and Anterior Among
African-American Muslims and Muslims in Mauritius*

Shawkat M. Tooranwa
Cornell University

Before joining the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Cornell University as Assistant Professor of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies, Shawkat M. Toorawa (B.A., M.A., Ph.D. Pennsylvania) was a Fellow at Harvard University's W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research, and taught Humanities at the University of Mauritius. He publishes widely on Arabic literature and Arab-Islamic culture. Forthcoming books include a critical edition and translation of a collection of modern Arabic poetry by Adonis (A Time between Ashes and Roses, Syracuse University Press, 2004), and a study of a ninth century bookman in Baghdad (Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur and Arabic Writerly Culture, Routledge Curzon, 2005).

The traits that align heritage with religion help explain its potent pull but they also pose serious risks. A dogma of roots and origins that must be accepted on faith denies the role of reason, forecloses compromise, and numbs willpower. Credence in a mythic past crafted for some present cause suppresses history's impartial complexity.

– David Lowenthal

The map is not the territory

– Alfred Korzybski

Introduction

Identity matters. We are all, to different degrees, members of particular groups. Dis-identification with a particular ethnic, racial, communal, religious, or convictional group is no less an acknowledgment of the presence and pervasiveness of such longings and belongings than is actual identification, participation and celebration of a particular identity. I agree, with Edward Said, that no one today is purely one thing, but everyone (almost) wants to know what the elements are that constitute them, even if they have no problem with not being purely one thing¹, or not being pure — whatever that might mean, racially or otherwise.

An important question in the United States, as in all societies constituted so heavily by immigration, both voluntary and forced, is: Who is (an) American? To make matters more complicated, the logical extension of that question is: How is one (and can one be) responsibly and loyally American, as one celebrates (also) being, say, Irish or Iroquois, Mexican(-American) or Muslim? These questions — which have long been negotiated in private, in federal offices (e.g. the Census Bureau), and in the context of discussions about such things as national (i.e. non-American) and religious (i.e. non-secular) festivities — have since September of 2001 also been thrust into the national limelight. It is now essential to know who is an American and who is a friend of the American.²

¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), p. 336.

² Even as the coin of citizenship is rendered counterfeit by U.S. citizens who wish the United States harm.

In the constitution of their identity, some African-American Muslims eagerly insist that “their lineages, languages, fossils, even rocks are previous to those of others,”³ claiming an African Muslim discovery of the continent. Why do they present and invent such stories even after the evidence supporting that claim can be shown to be doubtful? Put differently, and to paraphrase Sandhya Shukla, how and why do people and subjects, constructed through difference, create stories about themselves and about the groups to which (they feel) they belong?⁴ As I show below, Indian Muslims on the island of Mauritius claim an Arab discovery of the island and continue to do so even when the evidence is questionable. I argue in this article⁵ that

³ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 173.

⁴ Sandhya Shukla, ‘Relations of Race: Anti-Colonialism, Non-Alignment and Migrations of the Caribbean – Abstract of Research Project,’ The Society for the Humanities, Cornell University (2001).

⁵ I am grateful to Sherman A. Jackson for suggesting this essay to *JILC* and to Aminah McCloud for so graciously soliciting it, welcoming it, and providing critical feedback. The essay has had several lives that deserve acknowledgment. I thank Vinesh Hookoomsing for occasioning it, then publishing it as ‘Imagined Territories: The Pre-Dutch History of the South-West Indian Ocean,’ in *Proceedings of the Conference on Globalisation in the South-West Indian Ocean*, ed. S. J. T. Evers and V. Y. Hookoomsing (Réduit, Mauritius: University of Mauritius & International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden, 2000), pp. 31-39. I thank Zulfikar Hirji for inviting me to present “Mauritius, Zanzibar and the ‘endowing’ dhow” at the Dhow Culture Workshop, Stonetown, Zanzibar in July of 1999, a version of which I also presented at The Ohio State University in January 2000. I thank Skip Gates and the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Studies at Harvard University for a Rockefeller African Humanities Institute Junior Fellowship in 1999-2000 when I conducted research on the North American material; and to Kwame Anthony Appiah for asking me to present “‘We were here first’: The politics and rhetoric of an Arab-Islamic Mauritius and an Afro-Islamic America’ at the Harvard Africa Seminar in April 2000. I am grateful to Bernard Haykal and Michael Gilsean for including me as a Fellow, and “Resisting Creolization: Posit(ion)ing an ‘Arab’ Mauritius” as a paper, in the Creolization in the Indian Ocean Research Workshop at the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, New York University in January 2001. I presented ‘What does the “diasporic” imagination beget: Imagined histories (and rhetoric) of discovery among Muslims in Mauritius and the United States’ while a Fellow of the Society for Humanities at Cornell University on a numb 12 September 2001. For incisive comments which, alas, I have often ignored, I am grateful to Anthony Appiah, Larry Bowman, Liz DeLoughrey, Joel Dinerstein, Khalil Elahee, Sherman Jackson, Dominick LaCapra, Mandana Limbert, and Sabra Webber.

they do so because anteriority confers prestige, because antiquity can be taken as a reliable indicator and marker of civilization and progress, because “to be first in a place warrants possession [and] to antedate others’ origins or exploits shows superiority,” because “things indigenous are deeply rooted,” and because “primordial origins connote divine aims and attributes.”⁶

Lowenthal argued in his 1996 *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* that claims of priority suffuse every realm of heritage⁷. I contend that these are not just ways of building heritage and heritage pride, but also a strategy employed by Muslims to construct identity. Having so constru(ct)ed, they are then in a position to postulate an ‘origin’ for which they can then yearn — as ‘diasporic’ Muslims. The motivations and consequence of this myth-making and identity-construction would benefit from greater scrutiny and serious study. This article, then, is part of a preliminary attempt to understand how “diasporic” Muslims (re)imagine their pasts and presents. Responsible discussion about Muslim identity in North America, indeed anywhere, cannot fruitfully advance without this understanding.

Such an understanding is needed for all groups. Non-Muslim Americans are similarly engaged in constructions of identity. White Americans are positioned, and position themselves, in a Eurocentric history of “discovery” (e.g. Leif Ericson; 1492; Manifest Destiny, and so on). Some project certain values that can be defined along racial or communal lines (e.g. patriotism, profiling, perpetration of hate crimes, and so on). The risks of these projections are enormous: the erosion of the notion of a melting pot; the transformation of an affirming multiculturalism into a sinister miscegenation; the undermining of civil liberties that were integral to the founding of the nation. The risks associated with the invention by Muslim North Americans of histories and diasporas are dangerous to the individual and to the polity, but, as I argue here, still damaging.

⁶ All quotes from Lowenthal, *Heritage Crusade*, pp. 173, 174, 184.

⁷ Lowenthal, *Heritage Crusade*, p. 173.

America and Ships

Notwithstanding the distinguished historian Ali Mazrui's reference to an African Muslim migration to the North American continent in the 14th century,⁸ as Jane Idelman Smith notes, "Commentators on the emergence of Islam in the North American scene have looked for the most part to the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century as signaling the first real arrival of Muslims."⁹

Going back considerably further, some scholars argue that for nearly two centuries before the time of Christopher Columbus's venture in 1492, Muslims sailed from Spain and parts of the northwestern coast of Africa to both South and North America and were among the members of Columbus's own crew. African Muslim explorers are said to have penetrated much of the Americas, relating to and sometimes intermarrying with Native Americans. Some hypothesize that Muslims set up trading posts and even introduced some arts and crafts in the Americas. Evidence to support such claims, cited from artifacts, inscriptions, and reports of eyewitness accounts, is still sufficiently vague that the thesis remains somewhat hypothetical.¹⁰

Cautiously, Smith's reference is to Allan Austin's magisterial 1984 *African Muslims in Antebellum America* alone.¹¹

No such caution at the 1999 conference on 'The Growth of Islam in America' at Harvard University which included a splendid traveling exhibit by CSAM, 'Collections of Stories of American Muslims.' The cover of the promotional pamphlet distributed by CSAM describes 'Series One' of 'America's Islamic Heritage Series,' namely 'Early Muslim Presence in

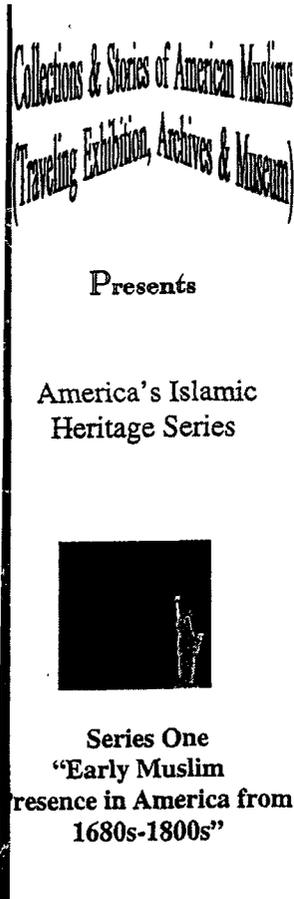
⁸ Ali Mazrui, McMillan-Stewart Lecture, I, W. E. B. Du Bois Institute, Harvard University, April 2000.

⁹ Jane Idelman Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 50.

¹⁰ Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 50.

¹¹ Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic stories and spiritual struggles* (New York & London: Routledge, 1997; revised edition of *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (London: Garland, 1984).

America,' as covering the 1680s to the 1800s [see *figure 1*], in keeping with Smith and Austin. On the inside of the pamphlet, however, the story of Muslim presence is said to have begun not in the 1680s, but in the early 1300s:¹²



[*figure 1*]
Cover of CSAM pamphlet

Collections and Stories of American Muslims (CSAM)

CSAM was created in 1996 as a 501 (C) 3 nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, education and establishment of an Islamic museum and traveling exhibit in the United States. Which reflects America's Islamic history and culture.

As America moves to understand the various threads of culture, colors, religions, and lifestyles that make up the American quilt, CSAM seeks to shed light on the depth, diversity, growth, and history of Muslim Americans.

Throughout America's history Muslim Americans have played a significant role. The exhibit brings to life America's Islamic heritage by easy-to-comprehend text and eye-catching photographs of America's early Islamic personalities, writings, communities, and tombstones.

The exhibition represents the first major effort to bring together the extraordinary range of documents on Muslim Americans, and Muslims in the history of the African Diaspora.

The exhibit also features some photos of America's Masajids (Mosques) and Islamic Centers.

By 1312, Mansa Musa's brother Sultan Abu Bakari II of Mali had made two expeditions on the Atlantic ocean. The Mandinkas under Abu Bakari explored many parts of North America via the Mississippi river.

[*figure 2*]
Inside of CSAM pamphlet

¹² Amir Muhammad, 'Collections of Stories of American Muslims,' column 1.

By 1312, Mansi [sic] Musa's brother Sultan Abu Bakari II of Mali had made two expeditions on the Atlantic ocean. The Mandinkas under Abu Bakari explored many parts of North America via the Mississippi river [see *figure 2*].

America's Early Islamic History

In 1492 Columbus had two captains of Muslim origin during his first voyage. Martin Alonso Pinzon was the captain of the Pinta, and his brother Vicente Yanex Pinzon was the captain of the Nina. The Pinzon family was related to Abuzayyan Muhammad III, the Moroccan Sultan of the Marinid Dynasty (1196-1465).

From 1566-1587 Spain kept and maintained a military outpost and settlement called Santa Elena on the southern tip of Parris Island, SC. Portuguese were known to be among the Spaniards at Santa Elena. In Spain 1568 the Alpujarra uprising of the Moriscos (*Muslims who were forcibly converted to Catholicism*) gave cause to another wave of Portuguese Moriscos to leave Spain.

In 1600 the first Melungeons were reported in Southern Appalachian valleys. As English and Scotch-Irish settlers moved in, they pushed the Melungeons into the mountains of North Carolina, and into Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. The Melungeons were the first people, aside from Native Americans to penetrate so deeply into the Appalachian region at the time. Many of the Melungeons were primarily of Portuguese ancestry, with North African and Indian traits, tracing their roots to the early Moors of Portugal.

By the late 1600s Moors were found living in Delaware near Dover and in southern New Jersey near Bridgeton. It's reported that the Laser Tribe of Hertford, NC were descendants from a Moorish captain who married a white woman and settled in the area. Many Muslims lived among the different Maroon communities in America.

[*figure 2 continued from previous page*]

The 1700s

By 1700 many Muslims started appearing in America's print and legal documents as free men and as slaves. In 1730s an enslaved Muslim named Job ibn Soloman Dgiallo (Jallo) gained notoriety for his intelligence and writing ability. Job gained his freedom after three years of enslavement. Kunta Kinte arrived on the shores of Maryland. In the 1700s at least twelve Moors petitioned the South Carolina government for their freedom.

In the late 1700s America signs peace treaties with four different Islamic countries. At least three Muslims fought in the Revolutionary War. The two most well known are Peter (Saleem) Salem and Salem (Saleem) Poor from Framingham, MA, and the third Yusef Ben Ali (Joseph Benenhal) fought with General Thomas Sumter in South Carolina.

The 1800s

By the early 1800s many notable Muslims came to the forefront in America's history like Yarrow (Mamout) Marmood, Ibrahim Abdul Rahman Sori, Lamen (Old Paul) Kebe, Omar ibn Sayyid, Salih Bilali, Bilali (Ben Ali) Mohammad, Abraham, Osman, Hajji (Holly Jolly) Ali, and Muhammad Ali Said. Many of these Muslims left written Arabic text about their history and lives.

Abraham, Salih Bilali, and Bilali Muhammad fought in the War of 1812 and Muhammad A. Said fought in the Civil War.

By the late 1870s Muslims from Greater Syria arrive in America and at least three notable Muslims Captain Harry Dean, Edward Blyden, and the diplomat Muhammad A. Russell Webb traveled across America giving lectures about Islam.

When I contacted Amir Muhammad of CSAM regarding these historical details, he directed me to his web site.¹³ There, I found a 1996 article by Jose V. Pimienta-Bey that summarizes the information circulating about an early Muslim presence, giving pride of place to the work of Ivan Van Sertima.¹⁴

In Van Sertima's bid to muster evidence from all over — which includes attempts to establish open sea Arab navigation in the Atlantic by relying on Chau-ju-kua's work on Arab and Chinese trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which I am not competent to examine or assess — Van Sertima frequently overplays his hand.¹⁵ He describes the 12th century al-Idrisi as "the Nubian geographer," legerdemain that serves only to raise skeptics' eyebrows.¹⁶ There is *no* evidence in the sources that al-Idrisi was African. Another piece of evidence he (and Quick following him, on which see below) considers to be significant is a map by the Ottoman cartographer Piri Re'is. This map, made in 1513, is important to prosecutors of the argument for a Muslim discovery of North America because, it is held, European cartographers could not have provided the longitudinal accuracy it displays. But, as Soucek has shown, Piri Re'is's post-1492 knowledge and map are "anchored in a double tradition: that of the Mediterranean portolan chart,

¹³ Then at <<http://www.erols.com/ameen/africanm.htm>>, now to be found at <<http://www.muslimsinamerica.org/default.htm>>. See especially 'The Early History Pre Columbus & Pre Slavery Years, compiled by Amir Muhammad' at <<http://www.muslimsinamerica.org/earlyhis.html>>, which opens as follows: "In Dr. Barry Fell's [sic: cf. note 17 below] book *Saga America*, he reports that the southwest Pima people possessed a vocabulary which contained words of Arabic origin. Dr. Fell also reports that in Inyo County, California, there exists an early rock carving which stated in Arabic: 'Yasus ben Maria' ('Jesus, Son of Mary'). Dr. Fell discovered the existence of Muslim schools in Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, and Indiana dating back to 700-800 CE.

"By 1312, Mansa Musa's brother Sultan Abu Bakri II of Mali made his second expedition on the Atlantic ocean. In 1324 on his famous journey to Hajj, Mansa Musa reported in Cairo that his brother had left him in charge of Mali. Anthropologists have proven that the Mandinkas under Abu Bakri explored many parts of North America via the Mississippi and other river systems. At Four Corners, Arizona writings show that they even brought elephants from Africa to the area."

¹⁴ Jose V. Pimienta-Bey, 'Muslim Legacy in Early Americas: West Africans, Moors and Amerindians.'

¹⁵ Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus* (New York: Random House, 1976).

¹⁶ Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus*, p. 234.

and that of the world map of the Great Discoveries," and pieced together from up to five sources: a map made by Columbus, as well as between one and four Portuguese charts, according to the author's own statements and internal evidence.¹⁷ Incidentally, his map was, ironically, met with indifference during his lifetime. It should go without saying that even if it does use African Muslim navigational knowledge, its 1513 date in no way corroborates a transatlantic voyage of 1312.

Van Sertima concedes that accidental drift voyages by Africans would have had minimal effect on discovery. But, like the providential winds that are said to have blown the Vikings to L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, to have blown the maker of Columbus's putative map,¹⁸ and to have blown the first visitors to the mythical Waq al-waq,¹⁹ planned expeditions "or expeditions intended for other destinations in Africa which were blown off-course, would be a different matter." According to Van Sertima, these "would bring not only a substantial but a select group of aliens to American shores."²⁰ Van Sertima also produces other ship-borne evidence:

A recent find in South America seems to suggest an Arab presence there as early as the eighth century A.D. "Off the coast of Venezuela was discovered a hoard of Mediterranean coins with so many duplicates that it cannot well be a numismatist's collection but rather a supply of cash. Nearly all the coins are Roman, from the reign of Augustus to the fourth century A.D.; two of the coins, however, are Arabic of the eighth century A.D. It is the latter which gives us the terminus a quo ...of the collection as a whole... Roman coins continued in use as currency into medieval times. A Moorish ship seems to have crossed the Atlantic around 800 A.D."²¹

¹⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 8:309, art. 'Piri Re'is'; S. Selen, 'Die Bord-Amerika-Karte des Piri Reis (1528),' *Belleten* 1 (1961), pp. 519-23.

¹⁸ Paul Kahle, 'A lost map of Columbus,' in Kahle, *Opera Minora* (Leiden: Brill, 1956), pp. 247-65;

¹⁹ Buzurg ibn Shahriyar, *Kitab 'Aja'ib al-Hind (Livre des Merveilles de l'Inde)*, ed. P.A. van der Lith, tr. L. Marcel Devic (Leiden, 1883-86), pp. 8-9.

²⁰ Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus*, p. 26.

²¹ Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus*, p. 234.

But it is rash to assume that a 'Moorish' ship crossed the Atlantic in the early ninth century based on two Arabic coins that anyway establish one terminus, and not the other. The reference to these coins, in Cyrus Gordon's *Before Columbus*, reads:²²

Mendel Peterson of the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington D.C., who is preparing this hoard of coins for publication, has kindly showed me the material.

I have, so far, found only two possible Peterson pieces that might be the source of this information: his well-known 1977 *National Geographic* article, 'Reach for the New World,' and a 1979 article entitled 'Graveyard of the Quicksilver Dungeon,' neither of which mention the Moorish coins.²³

In his 1976 *They Came Before Columbus*, Van Sertima relied on an account in the *Masalik al-absar fi mamalik al-amsar* [Highways of vision on country and region] of Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari,²⁴ who was born in 1301, and who died in 1349. The following is my own somewhat literal translation, based on a critical edition of the Arabic prepared by the Moroccan scholar, Mustafa Abu Dayf Muhammad in 1988 [see figure 3]:²⁵

Ibn Amir Hajib said: I asked King Musa, "How did rulership devolve to you?" and he replied, "We are from a House where rulership is inherited. My predecessor did not believe that it was impossible to reach to the ends/extremities of the Encompassing [i.e. Atlantic] Ocean, wanted to reach them, and so set himself assiduously to the

²² Cyrus Gordon, *Before Columbus* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), pp. 68, 195n36.

²³ Mendel Peterson, 'Reach for the New World,' in *National Geographic* 152/6 (December 1977), pp. 724-68; 'Graveyard of the Quicksilver Galleon,' 156/6 (December 1977), pp. 850-76.

²⁴ See also Barry Fell, *America B.C.: ancient settlers in the New World* (New York, 1976) = Bari Fall, *Iktishaf Amrika qabla Kulambas*, tr. Fu'ad al-Kabazi and 'Abd al-Qadir Mustafa al-Mahishih, and ed. Fawzi Jad Allah and Amin Tawfiq al-Taybi (Tripoli: Markaz Dirasat Jihad al-Libiyin didda al-Ghazw al-Itali, 1988).

²⁵ Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari, *Masalik al-absar fi mamalik al-amsar, min al-bab al-thamin ila al-bab al-rabi' 'ashar*, ed. Mustafa Abu Dayf Muhammad (Casablanca: Tawzi' Susbaris, 1988), p. 69 [sect. 10 = pp. 59-77].

task. So he outfitted two hundred boats full of men, and as many full of gold and water and provisions and two years' worth of foodstuffs. He said to the travelers: 'Do not return until you have reached the end/extremity of the ocean, [or until] your provisions and water have been exhausted.' They set off. Their absence was protracted without anyone returning, until, after a long time, one of the boats returned. We asked the Captain about what had happened to them and of the news [of the others], to which he replied: 'Your Majesty, we traveled for a long time until there appeared in the open sea a river with strong current' (*fi lajjat al-bahr wadin labu jariyah qarwiyah*). My boat was the last boat [bringing up the rear]. As for the [other] boats, they would proceed and when they reached that place [the current] they would disappear never to reappear. We had no idea what happened to them. So, I reversed course, and did not enter that river-current (*dhaliqa l-*

في ملكة مال 70

بكتهم سنين. ولما للمساكين فيها : لا ترجعوا حتى تبلغوا نهايتها، وتقلد انزلواكم ورايتكم، فساروا⁽⁵³⁾ وطالت مدة غيبيهم لا يرجع منهم أحد حتى مضت مدة طويلة لم عاد مركب واحد منها، فسألنا كبيرهم عما كان من أمرهم⁽⁵⁴⁾ ورجعهم فقال : تعلم أيها السلطان، ان سرنا زمانا طويلا حتى عرض لي لينة البحر ولد له حرية فيها، وكنت اخبر تلك المركب، فاما تلك المركب فانها تقدمت، فلما صارت في ذلك المكان ما عادت ما عادت ولا بانيت ولا عرفنا ما جرى لها وما لنا رجعت من مكاني، ولم أرسل ذلك الوادي، قال لناكر عليه. قال : ثم ان ذلك السلطان اعد لثني مركب ألفا له ورجال⁽⁵⁵⁾ استصحبهم منه ألفا للزاد والماء، ثم استخلفني وركب بمن معه في البحر المحيط وسار فيه، وكان اخر المهدي به يجمع من ميه واستقل لي الملك⁽⁵⁶⁾.

تدين السلطان موسى :

قال ابن ابر حاجب : ولقد كان هذا السلطان مدة مقامه بمصر قبل توجهه إلى الحجاز الشريف وبعد، على نمط واحد في العبادة والتوجه إلى الله عز وجل⁽⁵⁷⁾ كأنه بين يديه لكثرة حضوره، وكان هو ومن معه على مثل هذا مع حسن الزني في الملابس والسكينة والوقار، وكان كهيما جوادا، كثير الصدقة والبر. خرج من بلده بمائة وسق حمل من الذهب، أنفقها في حجة على القنابل بطريقه من بلاده إلى مصر ثم بمصر ثم من مصر إلى الحجاز الشريف في التوجه والعود حتى استجاب إلى الفرض فاستدان على ذمته [504] من التجار بمكاسب كثيرة والرأ جعلها لهم، بحيث جعل لهم، في ثلثمائة دينار، سبع مائة دينار ربحا، ثم بنها إليهم بالربح. قال ابن ابر حاجب : وبعد لي بحسنة مثقال ذهباً على سبيل الانقاذ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

(53) ساروا في د.

(54) رجس في د.

(55) لرجس في د.

(56) بلغ نص قصري في سبع المص 5 - 296 - 295.

(57) تبار، في ط.

(58) قال من امر... الانقاذ، سار في د.

مال واكتشاف المحيط 69

له أنه مطوية فيملكها بئر ترويح مثل ما ملكت اليمن مع ظهور الاسلام بينهم وندمهم بمذهب المالكية. قال ابن ابر حاجب هذا مع كون هذا السلطان موسى كان متديبا محافظا على الصلاة والقرآن والذكر. قال : قلت له : ان مثل هذا لا يجوز ولا يحل لمسلم شرعا ولا عقلا فقال : ولا للملوك ؟ قلت : ولا للملوك ورسل العلماء. فقال : والله ما كنت أعلم وقد تركت هذا ورجعت رجوعا كليا عنه⁽⁵⁹⁾.

صفحات السلطان موسى :

قال ابن ابر حاجب : ورأيت هذا السلطان موسى محبا للخير وأمله، وزك مسلكه واستجاب بها ربه ميمدا، وهاجر إلى الله ورسوله فأدى فريضة الحج فزار⁽⁶⁰⁾ النبي ﷺ، وعاد إلى بلاده على أنه يقر لإبه الملك ويتركه له بالكلية ويحرم إلى سكة المحظمة ويقيم مجالروها فأثابه أجله رحمه الله تعالى.

قال ابن ابر حاجب : وسأته ان كان له اعداء بينهم حروب وتقال، فقال : نعم لنا عدو شديد، هم في السودان كاتباير لكم بينهم وبين التتار مناسية من جهات منها، انهم ورواس الرجوه، نفس الاثوية، جودون الرمي بالشاب ويحرموا كادش شقيقة الاثوية⁽⁶¹⁾، وثا ولهم واقع، ولهم بأس شديد باصا به وبهم بالشباب، وبيننا وبينهم ثوب والحروب ثلاث. قلت : وقد ذكر ابن سعيد في المغرب طائفة للدمدم الذين خرجوا على أمستاف [503] السودان، فأهلكوا بلادهم وهم يمشون بالثرة وكان خروج الفريضة في مصر واحد، انتهى كلامه في هذا المعنى.

مالي واكتشاف المحيط :

قال ابن ابر حاجب : سألت السلطان موسى، كيف انتقلت إليه السلطنة. فقال : نحن أهل بيت تنوارث الملك، وكان الذي قبلي لا يصدق ان البحر المحيط لا يمكن التوقف على آخره، وأحب البروق على هذا ولعب به، فنجوز مئين مركب⁽⁶²⁾ ملوؤة من الرجال ولناها مسلوؤة من الذهب والماء والزاد وما

(59) بلغ نص قصري في سبع المص 5 - 301 - 301.

(60) رواه في د.

(61) بعين الرمي... البروق، هاه في ط.

(62) مركب، في د.

[figure 3]

Passage from Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari

wadi).” “But,” King Musa [continued], “the ruler refused to believe him. So he prepared two thousand ships, a thousand for him and the men who would accompany him and a thousand for provisions and water. Then he invested me with power (*istakhlafani*), and he and his men set out on the [Encompassing] Ocean, and sailed away. That was the last of him and of those with him. Sovereignty remained with me.”

Van Sertima, and many of those reprising him, only some of whom appear to read Arabic, use the 1927 French translation of Gaudefroy-Demombynes and the 1958 one of Muhammad Hamidullah (who also translated Gaudefroy-Demombynes into English in 1968). Gaudefroy-Demombynes glosses the passage in question as follows:²⁶

This account is reported almost word for word by Qalqashandi (V, 294), according to the *Masalik*; the variant is: “the current swallowed up the ships”. Compare Idrisi’s account reproduced by Carra de Vaux (*Penseurs de l’Islam*, II, 47) and similar accounts in Fagnan, (*Extraits*, p. 30 ff.) This leads [us] to believe that there were local attempts made to explore the Southern (*méridional*) African coast[line], and that our knowledge of ancient West African navigation is as incomplete and erroneous as that which we have of navigation in the Indian Ocean, in spite of the fact that Gabriel Ferrand’s work has considerably illuminated the terrain and pointed out much that is new [that was unknown]. But where did the Malian sovereign get the port, the estuary, the ships, and the sailors in order to undertake such an expedition? One imagines him, rather, sailing down the Niger and being lost in the rapids. It is probable, therefore, that the [Africans] wanted to dispose of the embarrassing questions asked by their Egyptian hosts, and to impress them a little too.

Where Amir Muhammad discerned the Mississippi, Gaudefroy-Demombynes discerned the Niger, and Hamidullah, as we shall see, the Amazon. D. C. Conrad does not pronounce one way or another in his careful

²⁶ Ibn Fadl Allah al-‘Umari, *Masalik al-absar fi mamalik al-amsar*, traduit et annoté avec une introduction par M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes (Paris, 1927).

Encyclopaedia of Islam article on Mansa Musa, summarizing the passages in question as follows:²⁷

One of al-'Umari's informants, Ibn Amir Hadjib, was often in the company of Mansa Musa when he was in Egypt [in 1324], and among the things told him by Mansa Musa himself was that he came to power when his predecessor (Muhammad, of a different branch of the same family) appointed him deputy before leaving on a seafaring expedition, from which he never returned, to discover the limits of the Atlantic Ocean.

The first scholar to plumb the al-'Umari passage in order to argue for landfall in the Americas appears to have been Muhammad Hamidullah, who in 1958 published in French an article entitled 'Afrique discovers America before Christopher Columbus.'²⁸ Hamidullah, a well-known scholar of Arabic and Islam, is speculative, but systematic, offering translations of the two texts that provide an *arrière-plan* to an African, Muslim knowledge of the Atlantic and points West, namely al-Idrisi for the Canary Islands, and al-'Umari, for Brazil. Indeed, Hamidullah, as noted above, believes the river in question to be the Amazon, based essentially on the linguistic link he makes between the word Brazil and the Berber tribe, Birzalah, mentioned elsewhere in al-'Umari. Hamidullah goes on to adduce much other linguistic and etymological archaeology, in particular the work of Leo Wiener.²⁹

In Hamidullah's conclusion, his erstwhile often implicit arguments take a back seat to an explicit motivation:³⁰

These few, sparse facts show perhaps that the history of humanity is not only a continuous chain, but also interdependent. No race, nor any age can claim a monopoly on inventions and discovery: everything

²⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 6:421, art. 'Mansa Musa.'

²⁸ Muhammad Hamidullah, 'L'Afrique découvre l'Amérique avant Christophe Colomb,' *Présence africaine*, 18-19 (février-mai 1958), pp. 173-183.

²⁹ Leo Wiener, *Africa and the discovery of America*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1920-22).

³⁰ Hamidullah, 'L'Afrique découvre l'Amérique,' p. 183.

follows on from things that came before, no matter how primitive [*tout vient des données et des faits antérieurs, si primitifs soient-ils*].

This closing statement is evidently to be read in the context of a rectification of the record, of the need to write Africa into a world narrative. Hamidullah writes of Muslims on the opening page, but does not dwell on it. In his 'Muslim Discovery of America Before Columbus,' however, published in March 1968 in *al-Ittihad*, the journal of the Muslim Students Association of the United States and Canada, the inscribing of such a possibility within a specifically Muslim context is unambiguous. The opening line, invoking a legendary Muslim jurist, underscored this: "Already Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 767) knew that the earth was like a ball..."³¹ Moreover, whereas the 1958 article had speculated on the Brazilian link in a scholarly way, here Hamidullah lets himself go a little:³²

If Brazil, UNESCO and even the U.S.A. send submarine expeditions, maybe they will find in the mouth of the Amazon traces of the boats said to have drowned there.

Ten years after Hamidullah's article appeared, Clyde-Ahmad Winters published in the same journal an article entitled 'Islam in Early North and South America,' evidence for which comes from "a passel of sculptures, oral traditions, eyewitness reports, artifacts, and inscriptions."³³ He marshals all the evidence hitherto published and disseminated on the question of pre-Columbian African and/or Muslim presence in the Americas, and can be read with profit. The same cannot be said of Van Sertima or Abdullah Hakim Quick. Here is what Van Sertima had to say about the purported Mansa Musa journey:

We shall see, however, from our examination of [the] evidence that the Arabs returned home rather than settling in America, and hence,

³¹ Muhammad Hamidullah, 'Muslim Discovery of America Before Columbus,' in *al-Ittihad* 4/2 (Muharram 1388/March 1968), p. 7.

³² Hamidullah, 'Muslim Discovery,' p. 9.

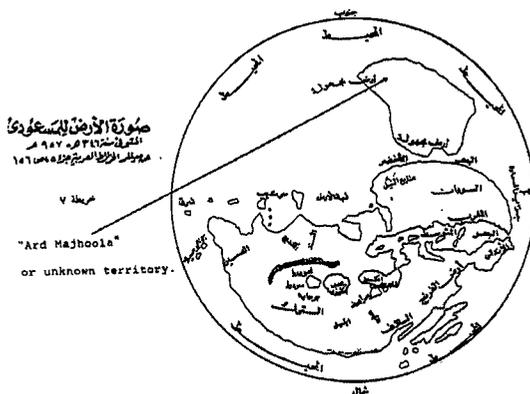
³³ Clyde-Ahmad Winters, 'Islam in Early North and South America,' *al-Ittihad* 14/3-4 (Rajab-Shawwal 1397/July-October 1977), p. 57.

like the Vikings, left a very negligible influence upon aboriginal Americans. We shall discover also such a strong Negroid element among the Arab-African mariners, an element numerically if not politically dominant, that as a consequence, there are no skeletal remains or traces of cultural influence in America that can be distinguished from the earlier or later African-Negro presence with but one signal exception [...] in the area of family or tribal names.

Quick's *Deeper Roots* begins problematically: its front cover purports to be "a picture of Al Masudi's map," explained in greater detail in Quick's Appendix 2 [see *figure 4*].³⁴ But al-Mas'udi produced no maps of the world.

Appendices

APPENDIX 2



Al Masudi's Map of the World.

This picture of Al Masudi's map was extracted from *Atlas of the History of Islam* by Dr. Hussain Mones (Al Zahraa for Arab Mass Media, Cairo, 1987).

Note: The South is to the top of the map. Turn map upside down to see actual position.

[*figure 4*] Purported al-Mas'udi map in Quick, *Deeper Roots*

³⁴ Abdullah Hakim Quick, *Deeper Roots: Muslims in the Americas and the Caribbean From Before Columbus To the Present*. (London: TaHa Books, 1996), p. 71.

Quick's source, Husayn Mu'nis's *Atlas of Islamic History*,³⁵ effectively cites Konrad Miller's *Mappae arabicae*,³⁶ and Miller's source in turn was a reconstruction of a map by Reinaud based on al-Mas'udi, and not a map by al-Mas'udi at all [see *figure 5*]. Quick is not only unrigorous with maps, but also relies on many of Van Sertima's weaker arguments; fully eleven of Quick's Appendices reproduce images and maps [see *figure 6*] from Van Sertima.³⁷

Mauritius and maps

The dependence on "maps" to establish anteriority and to stake out identitarian claims is exhibited also by Muslims on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius. Mauritian Muslims are, with a handful of recent exceptions, of Indian origin. A small number of Muslims arrived in Mauritius as 'free coloreds' during the French period, between 1721 and 1810; most came during the early British period, the heyday of which was from 1832 to the 1920s, as indentured laborers and as merchants. Yet many claim Persian and Arab ancestry. This has helped in the attempt to ethnicize a 'communal' identity, something it is very difficult to get away from on an island that has ethnicized and communalized identity for two centuries, and where independence politics, and post-independence alliance politics in particular, has then been able to play what has come to be known as the 'communal card.'³⁸

Language is important in this regard, because its legacies demand acts of faith: "those born to a tongue must wholly retain it, others must acquire and perfect it. Linguistic affiliation bespeaks a community, perpetuates its heritage, and alienates outsiders."³⁹ Benedict Anderson, and others, have

³⁵ Husayn Mu'nis, *Atlas tarikh al-Islam* (Cairo: al-Zahra' li al-I'lam al-'Arabi, 1987).

³⁶ Konrad Miller, *Mappae arabicae: arabische Welt- und Landerkarten des 9.-13. Jahrhunderts...* (Stuttgart, 1926), 1:156.

³⁷ In an advertisement for the videotape that accompanies Quick's book, the African-American Muslim genealogy identified there, that stretches, unbroken, to West Africa, is a genealogy that also filiates and affiliates Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass and the wife of Abraham Lincoln [see *figure 7*].

³⁸ For an echo of this during the Republican primaries, see Michael Paulson, 'Campaign 2000/Primary and Caucus results,' *Boston Globe* (3rd ed.), 1 March 2000, p. A1, where Mark Silk of Trinity College, Hartford, is quoted as saying "They're playing particular religion cards that have to do with voting constituencies."

³⁹ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, p. 69.

signaled the importance of sacred languages such as Arabic in creating an ontological reality.⁴⁰ One of the defining characteristics for Muslim Mauritians is the Arabic language. It has been touted, by them — and, paradoxically, by a political establishment, not unhappy with what it calls the rainbow nation formula⁴¹ — as the domain of Muslims (alone). Indeed, it may well have been because of a similar Hindu attachment to Hindi,⁴² Tamil attachment to Tamil, Telugu attachment to Telugu, and Creole attachment to French, that the 1997 government alliance was resoundingly voted out of office.⁴³

There is a tendency in Mauritius, North America, and elsewhere, to see language as something proprietary, to see the associated cultural territory as

⁴⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 12-19. But see Patrick Eisenlohr's paper, 'Hindu Nationalism in the Mauritan state: Creole impurity and ancestral culture,' for a critique of this in the context of the appropriation by Hindus of Hindi in Mauritius, <<http://www.src.uchicago.edu/users/kenny/PATRICK.PDF>>.

⁴¹ The rainbow nation formula is one in which each 'community' is represented by a different color of a rainbow. It presupposes that everyone can find their color in the spectrum; that everyone in fact has a color; and that, unlike a real rainbow, where every color's periphery blurs imperceptibly into neighboring colors, each color is discrete, different, unmixing. This all but denies the possibility of mixing and creolization. The Mauritian flag, four horizontal stripes of red, blue, yellow and green, is enlisted in the same way. See my 'Religion in Mauritius: I have a vision....,' in *Consolidating the Rainbow, Independent Mauritius, 1968-1998*, ed. Marina Carter (Moka: Centre for Research on Indian Ocean Societies, 1998), pp. 113-120.

⁴² Hindu inscription of Mauritius into the wider cartography of Bharat (Greater India) is receiving scholarly attention (e.g. Patrick Eisenlohr, 'Language and identity in an Indian diaspora: "Multiculturalism" and ethno-linguistic communities in Mauritius,' in *Internationales Asienforum/International Quarterly of Asian Studies* 33(1-2) (2002), pp. 101-114). The study of creolized Hinduism in the Mascarenes is also now well served. See e.g. Jean Benoist, *Hindouismes créoles: Mascareignes, Antilles* (Paris: Éditions du Comité des Travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1998).

⁴³ As William F. S. Miles, 'The Politics of Language Equilibrium in a Multilingual Society,' *Comparative Politics* (January 2000), p. 215, observes: "rulership in one of greater Africa's two continuously performing democratic systems [thereby] became unhinged." Miles goes on to note, not prophetically one hopes, that the ramifications "extend well beyond the Indian Ocean highlight[ing] the delicate nature of linguistic balance in pluralistic societies."

one's own.⁴⁴ But, as Said has famously observed, "culture is never just a matter of ownership."⁴⁵ When cultures and communities eventually come to be associated aggressively with what they see as a cultural property, differentiating 'us' from 'them,' associated exclusions and initiatives will follow. That is when they become combative sources of identity, occasioning 'returns' to culture and tradition, and 'returns' to a mythical past, or place. Under such circumstances, the abiding attachments to anteriority, origin, and displacement become, to adapt Françoise Lionnet, either a necessary myth, or an enabling metaphor.⁴⁶

When the Dutch landed in uninhabited Mauritius in 1598, they noted in their logs the presence of wax tablets that had washed ashore. The logs were translated into German in the seventeenth century and received widespread attention. Notable among the translation's numerous errors was the observation that the flotsam had 'Arabic' lettering on it. Mauritian maritime historian Robert Barnes has shown that the logs in fact mention 'Greek,' not Arabic, lettering, and that the mariners inferred from this that a Portuguese, not an Arab or Muslim, ship was shipwrecked nearby.⁴⁷ The widely held belief that the Dutch inferred from the so-called 'Arabian' letters printed on the wax that an 'Arab' ship had been cast away is a counter-history 'corroborated' by a counter-geography, namely the erroneous belief that

⁴⁴ A similar attachment to Arabic exists in modern day Zanzibar, although there Arabic was used on a wide scale by officials and religious scholars well into the 20th century. Jonathan Glassman has shown, in 'Narratives of Civilization and Streetcorner Violence in Colonial Zanzibar' (delivered at the 42nd Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association in October 1999), that Arabic was also used by political groups up to the 1930s.

⁴⁵ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 217.

⁴⁶ Françoise Lionnet, *Postcolonial representations: women, literature, identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 12. See my 'Culture's Permeable Frontiers,' in *The Zimbabwean Review*, 3(4) (October-December 1997), 12-14.

⁴⁷ Robert Barnes, 'New light on a 400 year-old mystery,' in *Proceedings*, ed. Evers and Hookoomsing, pp. 41-50.

Mauritius appears on pre-fifteenth century Arab-Islamic maps (see below page 23).⁴⁸ These 'facts' have been deployed by Mauritian Muslims — roughly 17% of a population of 1.3 million — to support the idea that the Arabs were the first to discover (and name) Mauritius.⁴⁹ The attempt to inscribe the islands onto a global pan-Islamic map is part of a strategy to establish anteriority, to make sense of forces that resulted in transoceanic dispersal, and to construct an original ethnic identity and thereby resist and counter a process of cultural, religious, and linguistic creolization.⁵⁰

In this project — that of resisting cultural, linguistic and religious creolization and *métissage*, that of developing a rhetoric of pureness and anteriority in Mauritius, and that of making sense of a displacement and dispersal, howsoever voluntary, one increasingly characterized as a diaspora⁵¹ — the Muslims of Mauritius are not alone. Every so-called 'community' has attempted to establish anteriority of one form or another: physical and Natural, as in the assertion of many Hindu Mauritians that the Ganges flows into the Mauritian lake, Grand Bassin, or Ganga Talao, numerically the largest Hindu pilgrimage site outside of India; linguistic, as demonstrated by the recent outcry by Tamil Mauritians over the reversal of the position of Tamil and Hindi script on the new 1998 bank notes; linguistic also in the cultural ascendance accorded the French language by

⁴⁸ The unviability of inferring a ship's provenance based on its cargo appears to have been lost on a succession of otherwise careful scholars.

⁴⁹ See my 'Imagined Territories,' in *Proceedings*, ed. Evers and Hookoomsing, pp. 30-39.

⁵⁰ One significant indication of creolization is the ground lost by the so-called ancestral languages to Mauritian Kreol. For 99% of Mauritians, Kreol is their mother tongue. For instance, whereas Gujarati merchant communities in Madagascar, East Africa, Singapore and elsewhere on the Indian Ocean littoral have retained Gujarati as a first language, Gujarati Muslims in Mauritius no longer read, write or even speak it (though Gujarati Hindus do); their mother tongue is Kreol. (Cf. Claudine Bavoux, *Islam et Métissage. Des musulmans créolophones à Madagascar: Les Indiens sunnites Sourti de Tamatave* [Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990].) Bihari Muslims, who form the bulk of Mauritian Muslims, continue to speak Kreol natively but have additionally latched on to Arabic as an 'ancestral' language, in spite of the fact that their forbears only used it in scriptural — predominantly oral/aural — contexts. This has contributed further to the development of the rhetoric of an Arab-Islamic Mauritius.

⁵¹ Cf. Huguette Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo, *La diaspora chinoise dans l'océan Indien occidental* (Aix-en-Provence: GRECO - Océan Indien, 1981).

Creole Mauritians, people of mixed African and European descent, and Franco-Mauritians, Mauritians of predominantly or exclusively Breton descent. Important in these projects and projections is the *imagined* nature of the supposed anteriority: Arabs were almost certainly not the first discoverers of Mauritius — Robert Barnes has marine archaeological evidence of a first or second century possibly Phoenician shipwreck, for instance; the Ganges does not flow beneath the Ocean; Tamil was not obligatorily the first Indian language spoken on the island; French was certainly not the ‘first’ language spoken on the island; and so on.

These projects and projections are akin to other such claims on the Indian Ocean littoral, the East African perpetuation of the myth of a ‘Shirazi’ period of history and of ‘migration’ to Eastern Africa, for instance. Recent work by linguists, archaeologists and historians suggests, rather, “that Bantu-speaking fishing and farming lineages occupied the East African coast around AD 1000 in a purposeful migration from areas in today’s Kenya.”⁵² As a colonial strategy to demonstrate the civilized and civilizing Middle Eastern origin of the Swahili in contradistinction to any possible, and therefore uncivilized, African origin, it is similar to the strategy in Mauritius to demonstrate a discovery of Mauritius by the ‘Middle Eastern’ masters of the Indian Ocean rather than by the marauding, barbarian and colonizing Europeans. It is akin also to the Zimbabwean Lemba’s claim “that their ancestors descended from Muslim Arabs or at least had direct contact with them.”⁵³ And akin to diverse groups in southern Somalia who have settled in the same areas, who forge an ‘alliance’ that assumes a ‘tribal’ structure, and who then go on to invent a single eponymous ancestor in spite of their obvious linguistic diversity.⁵⁴

⁵² J. H. Hanson, ‘Islam and African Societies,’ in *Africa*, ed. P. M. Martin and P. O’Meara, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1995), p. 103. The presence of Mauritians of African descent (Creoles, Afro-Mauritians), however, is the result of French slavery. There is a vast literature on this subject. Of special interest given the Catholic Church’s collusion in this, are the works of the Indo-Mauritian Monsignor and scholar, Amedée Nagapen, e.g. *Le marronnage à l’Isle de France — Ile Maurice: rêve ou riposte de l’esclave?* (Port-Louis: Centre culturel africain, 1999).

⁵³ E. C. Mandivenga, *Islam in Zimbabwe* (Gweru: Mambo, 1983), p. 30.

⁵⁴ I. M. Lewis, *Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Saho* (London: International African Institute, 1969), pp. 93-95, 118-21.

There are currently only a handful of accounts of Islam in Mauritius.⁵⁵ By far the most comprehensive account is by Mauritian Muslim Moomtaz Emrith. It is consequently the most widely used and quoted, cited for example in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam's* entry on Mauritius. Emrith's account begins with the 'Arab' discovery of Mauritius. On page six of the revised 1994 edition, reprising page 4 of the 1967 first edition, Emrith writes at length:⁵⁶

MAURITIUS — a volcanic mass, pear-shaped, a mere speck... had remained unknown to the western world for centuries, in all its wild splendour and from [sic] the touch of civilisation. [...]

Years passed. Centuries passed. Then in the middle of the sixth century, there arose in the sun-drenched desert land of Arabia (to-day *Saudi Arabia*), the new religion of Islam whose followers, by their undaunted zeal and religious fervour, were to make a powerful impact on the world and history. Some three centuries later, in the wake of Islam, the Arabs visited Mauritius. There are definite proofs that Arab-seafarers who plied in the Indian Ocean did come to Mauritius and also to the neighbouring islands of Réunion and Rodrigues during the ninth century.

Even if the egregious calendar errors and the language and tenor of these paragraphs are set aside, the phrase "definite proofs" is disturbing. These are

⁵⁵ René Gassita, *L'Islam à Maurice* (Paris: Editions REI, 1913); Moomtaz Emrith, *History of Muslims in Mauritius* (Vacoas, Mauritius: Editions Le Printemps, 1994); Raymond Delval, 'La communauté musulmane de l'île Maurice,' *Annuaire des pays de l'Océan indien* 6 (1979), pp. 50-77; Muhammad al-'Ubbudi, *Jawlah fi jaza'ir al-bahr al-zanji, aw hadith 'an al-islam wa al-muslimin fi juzur al-muhit al-hindi* (Riyadh: al-Matba'ah al-Ahliyyah li al-'Offset', 1982). See also Ameenah Jahangeer's 1997 Université de Bordeaux doctoral thesis, 'La communauté musulmane et l'espace géographique à Maurice,' for its inclusion of much valuable information on the differences between the various kinds of Muslim communities in Mauritius; and Raza 'Ali 'Abidi's Urdu travel account, *Jahazibhai: safarnameh* (Lahore: Sang-i Meel, 1996), for its observations on the role of Urdu in the Muslim community.

⁵⁶ Emrith, *History of Muslims in Mauritius*, p. 6 (boldfacing in the original).

The Arabs, it is true, did not settle in Mauritius... nor did they leave anything behind as proofs of their visits. They came and left without any trace. But for the maps, the world would have never known of their visits to Mauritius...

Mauritian historian Alfred North-Coombes had already shown in his 1979 *La Découverte des Mascareignes par les Arabes et les Portugais*, revised and re-issued in 1994, that there was in fact nothing definitive about Arab presence in the Mascarenes,⁵⁹ the name given to the group of Southwest Indian Ocean islands to which Mauritius belongs together with Réunion (currently a French département) and Rodrigues (part of the Republic of Mauritius). Most of the authors North-Coombes cites for erroneous statements concerning Arab presence on the island are, regrettably, to be found in Emrith's bibliography. This includes W. H. Ingrams's 1935 *A School History of Mauritius* — the offending text that North-Coombes suggests is the original source for this assertion.⁶⁰ North-Coombes indicts Ingrams and those inheriting his errors on three separate counts.⁶¹ He (rightly) criticizes these authors for suggesting: (1) that the Arabs sailed *all over* the Indian Ocean,

⁵⁹ Alfred North-Coombes, *La Découverte des Mascareignes par les Arabes et les Portugais*, rev. ed. (Port Louis: the author, 1994 [1979]).

⁶⁰ North-Coombes, *Découverte des Mascareignes*, pp. 14–16; Emrith, *History of Muslims in Mauritius*, pp. 377–79; W. H. Ingrams, *A School History of Mauritius*, (Port Louis, 1931). J. Addison and K. Hazareesingh, *A New History of Mauritius*, rev. ed. (Rose-Hill, Mauritius: Editions Océan Indien, 1993 [1984]), p. 1, were not immune to this influence.

Just as the Arab discovery of Mauritius was popularized by a school text, so too was the Shirazi colonization of East Africa. Remarkably, an Ingrams text is again implicated — through Hollingsworth's *A short history of the east coast of Africa* (London, 1929), an official school text translated into Swahili, and one of the earliest documents to popularize the myth of a Shirazi colonization and Islamization.

⁶¹ North-Coombes, *Découverte des Mascareignes*, pp. 14–16. To North-Coombes's three indictments, I would add a fourth, namely the reductive tendency to collapse all 'Muslim' navigation into 'Arab' navigation, which is both misleading and counterfactual.

which they did not;⁶² (2) that the Arabs came to the Mascarenes several times, for which there is so far no evidence whatsoever, textual or material; and (3) that the Mascarenes are to be found on the maps of al-Idrisi (d. ca. 1165), geographer and cartographer to the Norman court of Roger I of Sicily.

That the Mascarenes do not figure on al-Idrisi's maps is a fact that North-Coombes discovered to be untrue in 1979, but which many Arabists have long known to be untrue.⁶³ In the following cautious statement in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*:⁶⁴

Although probably known to Arab navigators from as early as the twelfth century AD, none of the Mascarene Islands (or of the more northerly Seychelles) were ever colonized by Muslim — or any other — peoples before their discovery by Europeans in the early sixteenth century AD.

The “probably” adumbrates something which, ultimately, it cannot deliver: The Mascarenes appear on *no* non-European map dating from before Cantino's map of 1502.⁶⁵

The unawareness of the Mascarenes on the part of Arab or Muslim navigators is not altogether surprising. Although Arab-Islamic texts refer to travel as far east as Formosa and the Banda Islands, and as far south as Kilwa and northern Madagascar, there is a ‘fringe area’ where navigational details are sparse and where only general directions are given, an area where others had a sailing monopoly and where Arab-Islamic knowledge was second-

⁶² See e.g. M-R. Djalili, *L'océan indien* (Paris: PUF, 1978), pp. 19-20: “[ils] longèrent les côtes d'Afrique jusqu'à la région de l'actuel Mozambique. Durant tout le Moyen Age, les Musulmans dominèrent en quelque sorte la navigation dans l'ouest de l'océan Indien et eurent le quasi-monopole de la route menant vers la Chine. A côté d'eux, les navigateurs indiens dominaient la baie de Bengale et des vaisseaux chinois faisaient des incursions occasionnelles dans l'océan Indien.”

⁶³ North-Coombes, *La Découverte des Mascareignes*, p. 18.

⁶⁴ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 6:849, art. 'Mauritius' (1989).

⁶⁵ The information in the 1502 map of Cantino is duplicated in the most important subsequent maps, those of Canerio (ca. 1502), Waldseemüller (1507) and Ruysch (1508).

hand.⁶⁶ The evidence in all accounts concerning Arab-Islamic Indian Ocean navigation are clear on the point that they did not venture below the East African port of Sofala just below the Zambezi (which has been identified with the town of Mozambique),⁶⁷ whereas Mauritius is, precisely, *beyond* Sofala.

The usual name given to this area beyond is Waqwaq.⁶⁸ The names used for the waters surrounding Waqwaq were *Bahr al-Hind* and *al-Bahr al-Hindi*, the Indian Sea, and *Bahr al-Zanj*, the Sea of the Blacks, which corresponds to the land of the Zanj on the African mainland.⁶⁹ The multiple names reflect an uncertainty that is corroborated by the name for the waters further south into which the *Bahr al-Hind* appears to melt, the *Bahr al-zulma*. This Sea of Darkness lay just beyond limit of early Arab settlement in the Western Indian Ocean, probably around Sofala.⁷⁰ Of the sea, al-Idrisi, to whom is mistakenly credited cartographic knowledge of Mauritius, writes:⁷¹

No-one knows what lies beyond, for reasons all of which frustrate navigation: the depths of the darkness, the size of the waves, the

⁶⁶ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 7:52, art. 'Milaha' (1990).

⁶⁷ G. R. Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Portuguese*, being a translation of "Kitab al-Fawa'id fi usul al-bahr wa'l-qawa'id of Ahmad b. Majid al-Majid", (London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1971), 431, 433; J. Auber, *Histoire de l'océan Indien* (Tananarive: Editions Les Trois Iles, 1955).

⁶⁸ For a comprehensive discussion, see my article on 'Wakwak' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 11:103-108 (2000), and the references cited there, especially my "Wâq al-wâq: Fabulous, Fabular, Indian Ocean (?) islands," in *Emergences* 10(2) (2000), pp. 387-402, and Claude Allibert, 'Wakwak: Végétal, Minéral ou humain? Reconsidération du problème,' in *Etudes Océan Indien*, no. 12 (1991), pp. 171-89.

⁶⁹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:930, art. 'Bahr al-Hind.'

⁷⁰ On the Sea of Darkness, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:934, art. 'Bahr al-Muhit.'

⁷¹ For sections dealing with the Indian Ocean, P. A. Jaubert, *Géographie d'Edrisi traduite de l'arabe en français d'après deux manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi et accompagnée de notes I-II* [= al-Idrisi, *Kitab Rujar*] (Paris, 1836-40) is now superseded by F. Viré, 'L'Océan Indien d'après le géographe Abû Abd-Allah Muhammad Ibn Idrîs al-Hammûdî al-Hasanî dit Al-Sarîf AL-IDRISI (493-560 H/1100-1166), Extraits traduits et annotés du «Livre de Roger», in *Etudes sur L'Océan Indien. Collection des travaux de l'Université de la Réunion*, ed. A. Jacquemin [?] (St Denis: Université de la Réunion, 1984), pp. 13-45.

frequency of storms, the abundance of sea monsters, the violence of the winds. There are nonetheless a large number of islands in this sea, inhabited and uninhabited. *But no navigator risks crossing it or heading for open sea*, always making sure to hug the coast without losing sight of the shore.⁷²

And of Sofala, first identified by the encyclopaedist al-Mas'udi (d. 965),⁷³ the translation of a lost Arabic work dating from about 1506, the *Crónica dos reyes de Quiloa*, mentions that trade there (especially in gold) was conducted by merchants from Mogadishu until the governor of Kilwa learned of the lucrative trade there from a fisherman driven off-course. Mariners driven off course were said to be tossed forever in the Sea of Darkness.⁷⁴ According to North-Coombes, similarly winds may have blown a Muslim vessel, manned by Indonesian-Malayan, Arab, or Gujarati traders, swept Southwest, in the vicinity of the Chagos archipelago and then in the vicinity of Mauritius and the other Mascarene islands.⁷⁵

This is described in the story which Annick Sadon and Idriss Lallmohamed tell in *Un pays est né* [A Country is Born], a popular 1996 cartoon history of Mauritius.⁷⁶ Its opening pages are devoted specifically to the 'discovery' of Mauritius in 1490. Not only is a precise date provided

⁷² Jaubert, *Géographie*, I, 58 = Viré, 'L'Océan,' p. 40.

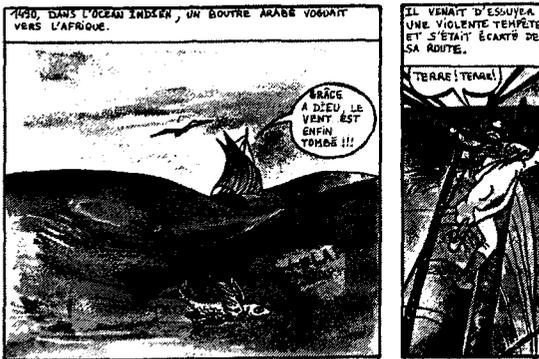
⁷³ al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab wa ma'adin al-jawhar*, ed. C. Pellat (Beirut: Lebanese University, 1965), para. 332. For the information that follows, I have relied on the recent article on 'Sofala' (1997) by G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 10:698-702.

⁷⁴ Buzurg ibn Shahriyar, *Kitab 'Aja'ib al-Hind*, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁵ North-Coombes, *Découverte des mascareignes*, p. 30. Just as American Muslims are urged to expect Muslim shipwrecks in the Amazon, so too so Mauritian Muslims maintain that Arab ships are wrecked on the reefs of Mauritius

⁷⁶ Annick Sadon and Idriss Lallmohamed, *Un pays est né* (Port-Louis: MASA, 1996). For a keen analysis of this work's portrayal of Creoleness, see Megan Vaughan, 'Marooned: Creating the creole island,' delivered at 'Islands: histories and representations,' University of Kent, Canterbury, April 1999.

[see figure 10],⁷⁷ but *A Country is Born*'s discoverers do so in an Arab vessel and are apparently Muslim Arabs themselves [see figure 11]. These Arabs 'name' the island [see figure 12] and the narrative of 'discovery' then culminates in a frame showing the placement and appearance of Mauritius on a European map [see figure 13].



[figure 10]
Opening frames of *A Country is Born*



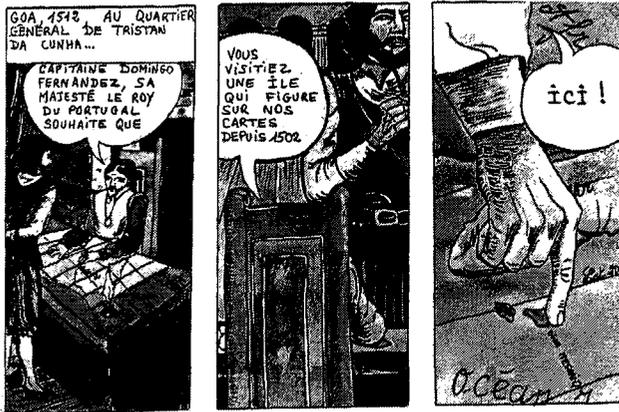
[figure 11]
Frames from *A Country is Born* showing Muslim discoverers

⁷⁷ Providing a precise date for the discovery has, incidentally, become de rigueur. An article on Mauritius in the August 1999 issue of *High Life*, the British Airways inflight magazine, for instance, asserts that Mauritius was discovered in 972 by a certain Arab explorer, al-Hasan ibn 'Ali.



[figure 12]

Frames from *A Country is Born* showing Arab 'naming' of Mauritius



[figure 13]

Frames from *A Country is Born* showing the European map

This map is the map of Cantino evoked above. It is on Cantino's map, and its derivatives, e.g. that of Waldseemüller [see figure 14] that the names *dina morare*, *diba margabin* and *dina arobi*, are recorded. *Dino Arobi* has been identified as coming from the Arabic words *Arabi* (Arab), *Ahraba* (to abandoned), or *Akhraba* (to devastate), and has consequently been specifically identified as Mauritius. The scholar Gabriel Ferrand for instance, relying on one Portuguese captain's testimony that his 'Moorish' pilot nearly put him high and dry at a pass called 'Karab', broken and ruined, equates *karab* with *kharabat*, *kharabat* with devastation, devastation with cyclones, and cyclones consequent with Mauritius...

But, in addition to the fact that these names are not to be found on any Arab-Islamic maps, the names are themselves frankly problematic. In the first place, the first term of the compound names, *dina/diba*, is not Arabic at all but from the Sanskrit *dwipa*, island. It is attested in the name *maladvipa* for the Maldives, meaning 'garland of islands,' and in the name *laksadvipa*, a thousand islands, for the Laccadives. There is no Arabic attestation for any

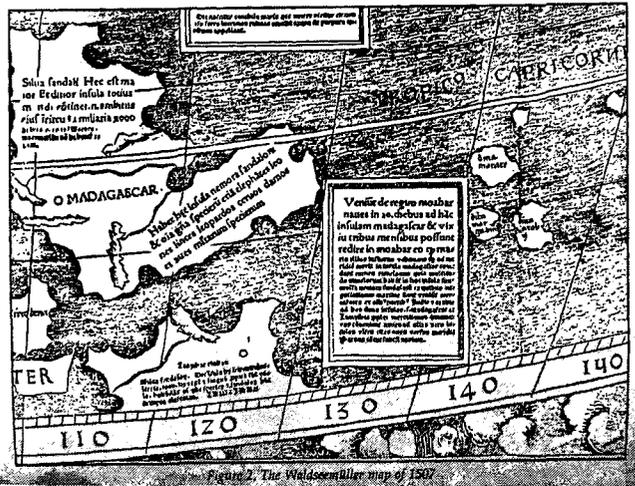


Figure 2. The Waldseemüller map of 1507

[figure 14]
Waldseemüller map of 1507

other islands to be called *dina* or *diba*; the *Dibajat* of al-Idrisi's and other Arabic sources refers exclusively to the Laccadives and Maldives.⁷⁸

To come to the second part of the names, the first problem is evidently orthography and transcription. *Arabi* is also transcribed (?) *arabi*, *morare* as *moraze* and *noraze*, and *margabim* as *margabin*. It is true that *margabim* may be a distortion of *maghribi* 'western,' and that it is possible to find *mashriq*, 'East,' in *morare*, for instance, but this is not particularly convincing. Moreover, *dina morare*, the so-called eastern island, is not east of the other islands. If it is conceded that this is due to errors of transcription and to copyist corruptions, this admits into the whole enterprise the possibility of error. Pierre Vérin, the doyen of the study of southwest Indian Ocean Islam, has always suspected this:

[N]ous *supposons* que la carte de Cantino (1502) a été faite avec des indications arabes; *mais pourquoi omet-elle les Comores*, déjà partie intégrante du monde islamique, au moins cinq siècles avant l'irruption des lusitanines?⁷⁹

A circumspect Vérin goes on to wonder:⁸⁰

Il est hors de doute que *les islamisés* qui dominèrent le commerce et la navigation dans l'océan Indien *ne s'intéressèrent guère* à un pays dépourvu d'habitants où les échanges ne pouvaient se pratiquer. Ces

⁷⁸ al-Sharif al-Idrisi, *India and the Neighbouring Territories*, tr. S. Maqbul Ahmad (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 116. I have not yet pursued the possible — and intriguing — connections between these islands and the Swahili references to the waDiba and waDebuli. See *inter alia* J. Gray, "The waDebuli and the waDiba," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 36 (1954), pp. 22-42.

⁷⁹ Pierre Vérin, *Maurice avant l'Isle de France* (Paris, 1983), p. 5 (emphasis mine): "We assume that the Cantino map (1502) was made with Arab information; *but why does it omit the Comoros*, already an integral part of the Islamic world, at least five centuries before the appearance of the Portuguese on the scene."

⁸⁰ Vérin, *Maurice avant l'Isle de France*, p. 5 (emphasis mine): "There is no doubt that the Islamicized peoples who dominated trade and navigation in the Indian Ocean were not at all interested in a land that was uninhabited and where trade could not be conducted. Did these Muslim mariners in fact really know this island at the ends of the Earth? The *routiers* of Sulayman al-Mahri and Ibn Majid are not at all explicit."

marins musulmans connaissaient-ils d'ailleurs vraiment bien cette île au bout du monde? Les routiers de Suleyman al Mahri et d'Ibn Madjid ne sont guère explicites.

Vérin's doubts not only fuel the suspicion that if the Portuguese could have gotten these names from the Muslim navigators without themselves having called there, the Muslim navigators too could have gotten these names from someone else.⁸¹ But he also uses the term *islamisés* to describe the mariners, not *arabes*, underscoring his acknowledgment — and the reality — of the plural (and creole) milieu of southwestern Indian Ocean Islam, and the slipperiness of 'Arabness.'

When I first suggested, at a conference on the four hundredth anniversary of the Dutch landing in Mauritius, that an Arab discovery of Mauritius was imagined rather than real, a riposte published in the Muslim press accused me of denying my heritage. Like-minded Muslims insisted that, since Prince Maurits of Orange-Nassau had unveiled a monument commemorating the Dutch arrival on the island, there ought also to be one commemorating the pre-European 'Arab' arrival. This was not about history but about the building of heritage and of identity. As David Lowenthal avers, "While it borrows from and enlivens historical study, heritage is not an inquiry into the past but a celebration of it, not an effort to know what actually happened but a profession of faith in a past tailored to present-day purposes."⁸² In diasporic contexts, where others are making similar, often compelling — if not always factual or ultimately provable — claims of precedence, priority, entitlement, and rootedness, Mauritian Muslims and African-American Muslims are seeking ways to legitimate and valorize themselves and their respective communities.

In 1998, Robert Barnes laid to rest the fiction that the Dutch mariners in Admiral Van Warwijck's party inferred from the so-called "Arabian letters or

⁸¹ On such borrowing, see e.g. T. G. Goodrich, 'Ottoman Americana: The Search for the Sources of the Sixteenth-century *Tarib-i Hind-i garbi*, ' *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 85/1 (Autumn 1982), pp. 269-94.

⁸² Lowenthal, *Heritage Crusade*, p. x.

characters printed” on the wax they found ashore “that some Arabian ship might be castaway thereabout.”⁸³ That same year, I thought I had laid to rest the fiction that the island had been ‘discovered’ by ‘Arabs.’⁸⁴ And yet, in spite of the demonstrable tenuousness of the claim of an ‘Arab’ discovery of Mauritius, Muslims there continue to hold on to the idea tenaciously. Scholars have inherited the theory of an Arab discovery in ignorance and unwittingly fueled this fire. In his entry on Mauritius in the 1999 edition of *Encyclopaedia Africana*, for example, Ari Nave writes that:⁸⁵

The renowned geographer Al-Sharif El-Edrissi drew a map in 1153 that clearly demarcated the island of Mauritius with the name Dina Mozare.

Mauritian Muslims have been helped by other ‘evidence.’ Arabic writing made the headlines in Mauritius in July of 1998 when a visiting Omani minister observed that there exist manuscripts in Zanzibar of correspondence dating from the fifteenth century between the Omani empire and its “governors in the Indian Ocean islands, including Mauritius.”⁸⁶ A trip to Zanzibar and verification with scholars of Zanzibar, Oman and East Africa revealed that no such manuscripts (are known to) exist. It is reasonably clear, then, that the correspondence to which the diplomat referred dates from later centuries, at a time when Omani administrative presence on the southeast coast of Africa was in fact significant. What may have been zealous diplomacy — Oman is, with Mauritius, a member of the regional grouping, the Indian Ocean Rim — was front-page news in the mainstream Mauritian press, but more importantly, deployed by the tabloid Muslim press to confirm Arab presence in Mauritius.

Also in 1998, a Mauritian Muslim Sunday tabloid paper carried a story

⁸³ Barnes, ‘New light on a 400 year-old mystery.’

⁸⁴ Toorawa, ‘Imagined Territories: The Pre-Dutch History of the South-West Indian Ocean.’

⁸⁵ Kwame Anthony Appiah & Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Africana: the encyclopedia of the African and African American experience* (New York: BasicCivitas Books, 1999).

⁸⁶ *L’Express* (17 July 1998), 1.

with the following three titles [see *figure 15*]:

- [1] "The Explorers" on the track of the Arabs who visited Mauritius
- [2] The founder Ibrahim Goolam Hossen convinced of an ancient Arab colonisation of Mauritius
- [3] Arabic letters etched in rocks in Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest?



[*figure 15*]

Headline from cover of STAR newspaper

The last title was formulated as a question.⁸⁷ The sequence is interesting as it displays progressively less certitude about a pre-European Arab presence in Mauritius. On the tabloid's front page, the article is similarly titled with one small, yet critical difference: the question mark is missing, giving, 'Arabic letters engraved on rocks at Grande Rivière Nord Ouest,' thereby turning a tantalising speculation into a spectacular statement [see *figure 16*].

⁸⁷ STAR (13 September 1998), p. 3.

The article is an interview with Ibrahim Goolam Hossen who explains that he and fellow amateur explorers "...got information at the time [that is, some ten years ago] that the Arabs and, much later, the French, had followed this path [that is, the climb along the course of Grande Rivière Nord Ouest] on their arrival in Mauritius."⁸⁸ I spoke with Mr Goolam Hossen and asked him, first, where he got his information that there was Arabic writing on rocks in Grande Rivière, and second, how he knew that the Arabs had followed the river's course. To the first query he replied that there was proof that the French had followed the river and that had the Arabs landed there they would surely have done the same. To the second he replied that someone who lived in the area had noticed some Arabic lettering on rocks near the falls when he went swimming as a child: this person was presently out of town. I then asked if "The Explorers' had found the 'inscriptions.' No, he replied, they had not... Just as Muslim Africans are held to have sailed up the continent's major river, the Mississippi, so too are Muslim Arabs in Mauritius held to have sailed up the island's major river, Grande Rivière...

Envoi

The first attested and recorded migration of Muslims in North America occurred as a result of forced settlement as slaves.⁸⁹ The horrors of slavery and separation from co-religionists and compatriots meant that Islam was soon erased; so too facility in native languages. The former was replaced by Protestant Christianity; the latter by English. In spite of the fact that most African-American Muslims use only English, the discovery of the Arabic original of the autobiography of the slave 'Umar ibn Sa'id is particularly noteworthy. The manuscript, thought lost, surfaced at an auction in 1998 and has since been published.⁹⁰ This autobiography, which predates Frederick Douglass's by fourteen years, makes Arabic a language of the Americas. And

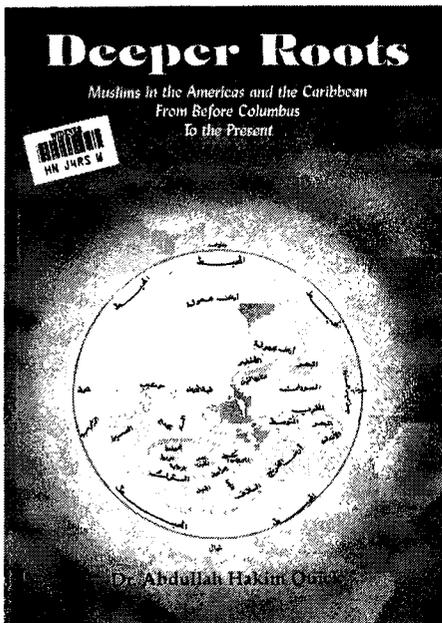
⁸⁸ *STAR* (13 September 1998), p. 3: 'Nous avons eu des informations à cette époque [il y a une dizaine d'années] que les arabes et, beaucoup plus tard, les Français avaient empruntés cette route [la remontée du cours de la Grande Rivière Nord Ouest] à leur arrivée dans l'île'.

⁸⁹ Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

⁹⁰ *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature*, ed. Marc Shell and Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 2000), ch. 4.

yet, African-American Muslim attention has not turned to this text, but rather to more dubious claims and traces of Muslim presence, typically because they establish anteriority to European presence.

Heritage pride inheres no less in precedence than in perpetuity, in unbroken connections, permanent traits and institutions.⁹¹ Maintaining or restoring such links confirms for members of a given group that the group to which they belong is not ephemeral but rather is an enduring organism.⁹² Abdul Hakim Quick, a popularizer of a pre-European African Muslim presence in the Americas, appears to realize the importance of maintaining such a claim and such links. In the Introduction to *Deeper Roots: Muslims in the Americas and the Caribbean From Before Columbus To the Present* [see Figure 17] he writes: "In actuality, the history of the Americas and its peoples stretches back over twenty-



[figure 17]
The cover of Abdullah Hakim Quick's *Deeper Roots*

⁹¹ Lowenthal, *Heritage Crusade*, p. 184.

⁹² Lowenthal, *Heritage Crusade*, p. 184.

thousand years. It tells the story of a rich continent with thriving civilizations and talented, organized human beings.”⁹³ As Marshall Sahlins has argued, in a book on the historical emergence of Hawaii, myths such as these provide a framework through which the experience of the world achieves significance.⁹⁴ Bruce Kapferer, writing about Sri Lanka among other places, has argued that:⁹⁵

the legitimating and emotional force of myth is not in the events as such but in the logic that conditions their significance. This is so when logic is also vital in the way human actors are culturally given to constituting a self in the everyday routine world... The myths and legends of political rhetoric have emotional and legitimating power... because they enshrine and incorporate a fundamental intentionality... They carry ontological weight and derive their powerful potential accordingly.

The ways in which African-American Muslims in the United States and Muslims (mostly Indian) in Mauritius invent their past(s), map their presence and present(s), and imagine their futures, is apparently inextricably linked to the ways in which they construct their identities. African-American Muslims, stripped of their native languages, their religion, and of free will, specifically develop a rhetoric of anteriority and precedence in order to position themselves vis-à-vis a largely Christian nation that continues inadequately to deal with the African-American experience of slavery, forced migration to the continent, and social justice. Mauritian Indian Muslims develop a rhetoric of anteriority and precedence in order to position themselves vis-à-

⁹³ Quick, *Deeper Roots*, p. 4. Cf. Lowenthal, *Heritage Crusade*, p. 182: “First-comer claims... are no less anachronistic than other heritages; the identities they compel are newly constructed. The pre-Columbian America to which ‘first peoples’ migrated millennia ago had no such meaning for ancestral Inuits or Indians... their horizons were no less circumscribed than the Europeans.”

⁹⁴ Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981).

⁹⁵ Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance, and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), pp. 46, 48.

vis a largely Hindu nation that continues inadequately to deal with its minorities, the history of indenture, and social justice. The minority diasporic experience in each setting, in spite of the different historical and social experiences of the Muslims in each place, appears to have given rise to a similar politics and rhetoric of identity.

