

## ISLAM IN SOUTH AMERICA

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ISLAM is still a missionary religion. It has within the last two decades spread into new territory at Cape Colony, in the Fiji Islands, Burma, Siam, Tibet, Perth (Australia), and in South America. While in the past centuries its spread has been due to sword conquest, to powerful Moslem rulers, inter-marriage, the preaching of the derwish orders, especially in Africa, as well as through the slave trade and returned pilgrims from Mecca, in more recent years it has spread through emigration. With the exception of a small colony of Moslems at Bahia, Brazil, who are supposed to be descendants of negro Mohammedans from Africa, the Moslems of South America and the West Indies are, on the one hand, immigrants from India and Malaysia, whose history, as that of indentured labour at Trinidad, British Guiana, Surinam and Jamaica, is given in the reports of the East Indian government. There are also considerable colonies of Moslems from the Turkish Empire in Argentina Republic and Brazil. Although the total number of Mohammedans in this part of the world is a negligible quantity when compared with the total population of South America of thirty-eight millions, and their settlements are mere specks on a total area of 7,000,000 square miles, yet the character of Islam as a missionary religion in the past leads us not to omit these corners of the earth from our survey.

A summary of statistics regarding Mohammedans in South America was given by Mohammed Djinguiz in the *Revue du Monde Musulman* for October, 1908. We summarise his detailed figures as follows :—

Argentina ... ..	7,520	Windward Islands	205
Brazil... ..	100,600	Jamaica ... ..	3,000
Chili ... ..	150	Trinidad ... ..	10,499
Cuba ... ..	2,500	Guadeloupe ...	3,000
Paraguay ... ..	300	Martinique ...	2,000
Peru ... ..	500	French Guiana ...	1,570
Uruguay ... ..	500	Dutch Guiana ...	3,500
British Guiana ...	21,300		
		Total ... ..	157,139

Doctor Hubert Jansen, in his "Verbreitung des Islâms" (1897), had given the total number of Mohammedans in South America as 49,563. Of these he says 21,372 are found in British Guiana, 2,600 in Dutch Guiana, 5,000 in Peru (chiefly from China and Malaysia). In his figures for Martinique he gives 2,700, for Trinidad he only gives 600, but for Guadeloupe 3,200, and for Jamaica 2,000. Jansen's figures for all America, including Mexico and North America, are 49,563, but in every case they are based on old census reports, and, therefore, are not thoroughly reliable. Recent missionary correspondence in most cases corroborates the estimates of Mohammed Djinguiz, although in some cases the figures are even higher. The Rev. W. Wilson Nicholls, of Essequiba, British Guiana, says that the Moslem population of that country at the last census was 18,217. The Rev. R. Voullaire gives the number of Javanese Mohammedans in Surinam (Dutch Guiana) at 8,000, but another correspondent says that the number of Moslems in Dutch Guiana is more than 20,000. It seems, therefore, that the statistics given in the *Revue du Monde Musulman* may be taken as approximately correct, until further and more careful investigation is made. There seems to be no doubt, both from government reports and missionary correspondents, that these numbers are steadily increasing, both by births and by immigration.

On the island of Trinidad alone more than one thousand five hundred Moslem marriages are consummated annually. And according to the reports of the conditions of Indian immigrants in the British colonies of Trinidad, British Guiana and Jamaica, the number of indentured women for the plantations is steadily increasing. Conditions are not conducive to morality, especially in

Trinidad (see Gov. Report for 1914, pp. 312-315):—  
“The women who come out consist as to one-third of married women who accompany their husbands, the remainder being mostly widows and women who have run away from their husbands or been put away by them. A small percentage are ordinary prostitutes. Of the women who emigrate otherwise than with their husbands or parents the great majority are not, as they are frequently represented to be, shamelessly immoral. They are women who have got into trouble, and apparently emigrate to escape from the life of promiscuous prostitution, which seems to be the alternative to emigration. It is obviously difficult to elicit from the women themselves a full and frank account of their antecedents. But what appears to be true as regards a substantial number is that they ran away from home alone or accompanied by someone, by whom they were abandoned, that they drifted into one of the large recruiting centres, and after a time were picked up by the recruiter.”

In British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica, the Moslems are employed on the sugar and coffee plantations, and most of them have come as contract labourers. The history of this immigration goes back to 1836, when slavery was abolished, with the natural result that the freed slaves worked only when it suited them or when compelled to do so by hunger. According to the Rev. F. P. Luigi Jose, of Georgetown, British Guiana, “the country was nearly ruined. Plantation after plantation was abandoned. Then it was that some of the more venturesome planters started a system of immigration from India, Malaysia and China.” In Demerara eighty per cent. of the Asiatic immigrants are adherents of Hinduism, while the remainder are Mohammedans. But the testimony is that the Mohammedans “glory in their religion and are doing what they can to propagate their own faith.” In the contract made with immigrants proceeding to Surinam, we are not surprised, therefore, that in addition to Sunday and holidays, and the festivals acknowledged by the government, the Indian Mohammedans specify that sixteen days in the year shall be given them as special religious holidays (Gov. Report p. 187).

Marriages at Trinidad, Jamaica and Georgetown take place according to the Moslem ritual. The present law in Trinidad is regarded as unsatisfactory in the Report of the Commission already quoted. They state: "Very few non-Christian marriages are registered. They are celebrated by hundreds, just as marriages are celebrated by Hindus or Musalmans in India with all publicity, but they are seldom registered. The consequence is that the marriages have no legal validity, and in the case of intestate succession to property of any value a higher succession tax has to be paid. The Colonial Government might but never does claim the property as being without legal heirs. The children are illegitimate in law, and the compilers of vital statistics record their births as illegitimate. No reason was given for the almost total abstinence from registration except that Indians were not accustomed to it and did not like appearing before the Registrar after their own priest or *kazi* had married them. This state of affairs is unsatisfactory from every point of view."

In regard to education we learn from the same report: "Elementary education in Trinidad is imparted in schools managed for the most part by denominational bodies. The latest annual report showed that fifty-two Government and 200 denominational schools, assisted by Government grants, were in operation. In schools under denominational management religious instruction is given at a stated time, and children may not at any time be placed under religious instruction contrary to the wishes of parents. No fees are levied. . . . A few of the large estates contribute to schools attended by children of indentured parents, and some have given land free for schools. Forty-three schools, of which forty are managed by the Canadian Presbyterian Mission, two by the Anglican, and one by the Roman Catholic Church, are special Indian schools, at which both Urdu and English are taught. Indians send their children more willingly to schools for Indian children only. The attendance of Indians at all schools is not known, but the Canadian Presbyterian Mission schools, situated in small and large centres of Indian population, attract about

ninety per cent. of the school-going Indian children. The reports show a total roll of more than 8,000 and an average attendance of 4,542. The schools have an excellent reputation for efficient teaching, and all classes of Indians speak highly of the educational work of this Mission." Not all of these, however, are Moslems.

In Surinam colony there are sixty-six schools, of which twenty-five are in Paramaribo, and are attended by 4,443 boys and 2,264 girls, and forty-one in rural districts are attended by 1,661 boys and 985 girls. In Paramaribo 147 Indian boys and twenty-three girls attend school, and 510 Indian boys and fifty-five girls attend rural schools. It is estimated that more than half of the boys of school-going age attend school, while poor parents seldom send girls to school. A beginning has been made in teaching Hindustani in schools, with gratifying results as regards the attendance at the schools where Hindustani is taught.

In regard to French Guiana, the *Revue du Monde Musulman* gives the interesting information that the 1,570 Moslems here are all under penitentiary surveillance. They are either under court sentence, on parole, or interned. A penal colony has been established here since 1865.

We turn now to the Moslems of Brazil and Argentina. Scattered all over South America there are many people who go by the name of Turcos. Many of these, however, are Syrian Christians of various sects. The Moslems are said to be active in the building of mosques, in journalism and in stimulating the coming of new immigrants, and venturing out into new centres as traders. They have already reached Cuba, Ecuador, Panama, Honduras, the Danish Antilles and Mexico. The Rev. George P. Howard, newly appointed World's Sunday School Association's secretary for South America, gives, however, a conflicting opinion as to their strength and activity :—

"I am afraid that I cannot give you much information regarding the Moslem population in Argentina, South America. There are a large number of Turks in Buenos Aires ; they have their own quarter. My work has kept me out of Buenos Aires, therefore I am not

acquainted with the conditions under which they live. I know that no missionary work is being done among them. In a few cases I have known of them as colonists, working the soil. But in general they stick to the city. They are not aggressive with their faith; in fact, the Moslem immigration is still small in comparison with that of other nations. We feel in South America that at the close of the European war there is likely to be a larger stream of Turks and other Moslems entering the open doors of that continent."

There is danger, also, lest we confuse this so-called Turco population with the Syrian immigrants, who are most of them nominal Christians.

According to Shekri Effendi Khoury, director of the Arabic newspaper, *Abu'l Houl*, of Sao Paulo, Brazil, there are now in South America 250,000 Syrians, of whom only 15,000 are Moslems and 15,000 Druzes. Brazil alone has 70,000 Syrians, almost all of them engaged in the dry goods trade, both wholesale and retail, and in the importation of manufactured articles from Europe. They have monopolised the manufacture of cotton goods to such an extent that it can be almost said that the clothing trade is wholly in their hands. Throughout the whole area the Syrian population is well-known, and even among the Indian tribes they are the chief traders in necklaces, rings, bracelets, etc. For a quarter of a century their influence has steadily developed, and they have become citizens of the Republic and are gradually gaining in commercial prestige. In Brazil the Syrians have six Arabic newspapers: *El Manadhir* published three times a week, *Es Sha'oob*, *El Manaret*, *El 'Adal*, *El Afkar*, weeklies, and the bi-monthly *Abu'l Houl*. "These organs are much appreciated by the Syrians for the reason that they constitute the one and only link which connects them to the country of their birth. They have six schools where the Arabic language is taught together with the elements of French and Portuguese; three at Sao Paulo, one at Rio de Janeiro, and three in the interior of the country. They have established fifteen benevolent societies, and have erected three mosques at their own expense."

It is interesting to notice here that a number of Cairo journals have many subscribers among these Syrians, also among the Mohammedans of Brazil and other parts of South America.

Except for Brazil the other Moslem communities seem to have no public buildings for worship, the people being too poor to build or to support religious teachers. Up to the present the Turkish government has established two consulates, one at Rio de Janeiro and the other at Sao Paulo. According to Mohammed Djinguiz, of the 100,600 Moslems of Brazil only 600 are Ottoman subjects in origin, and the remaining 100,000 are Brazilian negroes, descendants of freed slaves. These live mostly in Bahai and Rio de Janeiro.

More detailed information concerning the Moslems scattered throughout Brazil reaches us from the Rev. Jas. P. Smith, of Sao Paulo, most of which is based upon statistics of the Federal Department in Rio de Janeiro. He estimates the total emigration from the Turkish Empire to Brazil at about 70,000; almost all of these, Syrians, the great majority of them Roman Catholics. His opinion is that there are not 2,000 followers of Islam among them, and he says they have no mosque and no official religious teachers, but it is supposed that there are among them what would correspond to lay teachers, or preachers. There is no propaganda of Mohammedanism being made by them in Brazil, and they have no paper. These Moslems are mostly in the State of Bahia and largely in the capital city, Bahia itself.

According to Dr. Said Abu Jamra, editor of *Al Afkar*, the figure of immigration into Brazil is not over 50,000, the calculation being based on government returns of a few years ago, which placed it at about 40,000, and the immigration since then. Of these two-thirds are nominally Maronites; about 15,000 Greek Orthodox; and not over 1,000 Moslems; most of these being found in Bahia and Manaos, the inland city, in the heart of the continent on the Amazon, and capital of the state of Amazonas, the inland rubber centre. Among these 1,000 are to be found a good proportion of Druzes who have fled army service.

In Argentina, however, Dr. Jamra has calculated the proportion of former Turkish subjects at 150,000, and the Moslems at a half of the total ! It is his belief that the reasons for this immigration are economical, and, among the Syrians, political. The tendency of Moslems to settle in Argentina rather than Brazil he ascribes to what he terms a characteristic of his people, gregariousness. In the early days of immigration to Brazil, Romanists had gone thither, and others had followed, called by those who had gone before. In Argentina, Moslems having taken the lead, determined a stronger current of immigrants of that faith. The Arabic newspapers, described by Dr. Jamra as being fairly well established and permanent, in contrast with a number which are merely ephemeral, are :—

*Alfcar*, bi-weekly, published for 13 or 14 years.

*Al Jadid*, weekly, published for 5 or 6 years.

*Al Adl*, daily, Rio de Janeiro, published for 14 years.

*Al Barid*, weekly, published for 7 or 8 years.

*America*, daily, published for 2 or 3 years.

*Fata Lubnan*, published for 1 or 2 years.

With the one exception indicated these papers are published in the city of Sao Paulo, the great inland city of South Brazil, a centre for the coffee trade, and the wealthiest and most prosperous city next to Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, having about 450,000 inhabitants. As early as 1840 Moslem negroes are said to have founded a mosque in Rio de Janeiro, and the names of a few "sheikhs" or "imams" are mentioned. On investigation an old negro was discovered, and it was learned that he had been in the habit of holding meetings occasionally in his own home. When he was questioned it was discovered that his religion was largely or entirely fetishism, but he claimed that the Moslems were his brethren. The name of the one Moslem he furnished was that of the only follower of Islam he knew in Rio, a city of over 1,000,000. This man in turn declared that there was no mosque in Rio, but that some negroes held prayers in their own houses. When the Department of Statistics asked the Turkish consul recently, it was asserted that there was no group or circle of Moslems in



Brazil, though the Syrian colony included a number of Moslems. He declared that there was no mosque in Brazil, and attributed this lack to the poverty of the Moslems in the land. This seems to be an entirely insufficient reason. The Department has no information concerning the existence of Moslem worship anywhere in Brazil. The Turkish Consul in Sao Paulo states that there might be over 200 Moslems in the state of Sao Paulo, which has a population of some 2,300,000 or more.

The Moslems of Chili are for the most part Turkish subjects, and live in the provinces of Tarapaca, Valparaiso, Santiago and Magellan. Those of Paraguay and Uruguay are also Turkish subjects, while those of Peru include Chinese and Indian immigrants.

In Argentina the Moslems are widely scattered. Nearly all of them are Turkish subjects with the exception of some French subjects from Morocco and Algiers; they have neither mosques nor Moslem schools as far as I have been able to learn. The manager of the *Az Zaman* newspaper puts the number of Mohammedans in Argentina, Chili, Paraguay and Uruguay, at 19,000, but this number is perhaps exaggerated. There are, however, no less than five Arabic newspapers published in Argentina: *Az Zaman*, *As Salam*, *As Sudk*, *Ar Romouz*, *Al Hakayet*.

In regard to belief, the Sunni sect is predominant among all Moslems in South America. Although there are also Shiahhs in the West Indies, Guiana and Brazil, they only represent two or three per cent. of the total Moslem population. The Nusairiah from Syria are represented in Brazil, while in British Guiana the whole Moslem population is of the Sunni sect from India. Mr. George Assas states that Buenos Aires has 30,000 people who call themselves Druzes. In regard to Trinidad Mr. J. C. MacDonald writes: "There are several mosques scattered throughout the colony, and the principle sect represented at the services is that of the Sunnis or a sub-division thereof." According to Jansen, the Kadiria and the Schadiliya Derwish Orders have representatives in South America.

Mr. Nicholls writes that there is very little effort made by the Moslems to convert others to their teachings or to spread their faith, and no books or papers are published by the Moslems in British Guiana. Missionary R. Voullair states in regard to Dutch Guiana that for a time "there seems to have existed an organised Hindu and Mohammedan counter-mission as seen by a number of small temples and mosques that were erected, and an occasional proselytising missionary, but this movement has had little significance, and the edifices of the cult have in many instances gone to ruin." Mr. George Assas, who is connected with the Y.M.C.A. at Rio de Janeiro, writes that the Moslems there are strong in their faith and fervent in their religion. They do not modify it, although so far removed from its centres. On the other hand, they have no active missionary work, nor do they, as far as he knows, publish books. According to the testimony of Mr. H. C. Tucker, of the Bible Society, "the Moslems, while holding to and practising their ancestral faith among themselves in Brazil, have not to any very perceptible degree become active propagandists of their religious beliefs. They do, of course, influence some of the Brazilians and perhaps a larger number than we know, if we were only in closer contact with them and had a more accurate knowledge of their work."

In regard to missionary work among Moslems in South America information is meagre. In 1868 the Presbyterian Church of Canada undertook mission work among the East Indians on the island of Trinidad. Many of their converts there are in business, several have gone into the ministry, law, medicine and the teaching profession. But the majority among whom this work is being carried on are Hindus. Although no *special* effort is being put forth for the winning of Moslems we are told, "in some parts of the island encouraging results are seen." Among the Javanese of Surinam mission work is also carried on, and there are fifty converts; these are distributed in many of the districts as contract or free labourers. At Sao Paulo there is one independent worker who claims to be doing special work among

Moslems, but some seem to question his methods. The American and the British and Foreign Bible Societies' colporteurs circulate a number of Bibles, Testaments and Gospels in Arabic, Turkish and other languages among the Moslems in South America. Mr. H. C. Tucker writes: "In Rio at different times, one and another of the young men, who have been converted to Christianity before coming to Brazil and were educated at Robert College or other mission schools, have attempted some little work among their people. For lack of wise counsel and help they have not been able to sustain any definite work or movement. A number of the missionary workers among the Brazilian population are deeply impressed with the needs and the importance of some definite Evangelical mission work among the increasing Moslem population in Brazil. I hope the subject may have attention at the Panama Congress or at the subsequent Conference to be held at Rio."

That the Moslem population of South America is accessible needs no proof. This incident taken from the British and Foreign Bible Society's report for 1914 is appealing: "At an *estancia* I had been reading portions of the Word of God to little groups of natives whenever I saw an opportunity. One terribly rough night I was awakened at about half-past ten by a loud voice saying: 'Missionary, come here with the Bible.' I dressed, and found a Turk waiting for me. He took me to a shed, where round a fire sat a number of Argentines, and by the light of a lamp consisting of a tin of mutton fat I read to them for over an hour. Nearly every night from that time until the day I left, peons (*i.e.*, labourers) came to the kitchen to hear a chapter of the Bible read. I discovered that the foreman read his Bible in bed; he had never seen a copy before."

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