



MUSLIM MINORITY COMMUNITY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: A STUDY OF TRANSNATIONALISM

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Abstract

A vibrant Muslim minority exists in Trinidad and Tobago distinguished by its multicultural and multi-religious makeup. The genesis of this Muslim society can be attributed to the African slaves, Indian indentured immigrants, and Arabic-speaking immigrants hailing from the Middle East. Throughout the course of time, the Muslim community has experienced notable growth, making substantial contributions to the societal, cultural, and economic framework of the nation. Extensive scholarly investigations have been conducted regarding the historical roots of Muslims and the expansion of the Muslim populace. However, there remains a scholarly imperative to undertake an academic inquiry into the establishment and progression of the Muslim minority community in this specific geographical location. Such research should be approached through the application of a suitable social sciences theory, accompanied by a systematic and rigorous examination of existing literature. The notion of transnationalism places emphasis on the interconnections and relationships that individuals and groups maintain beyond the confines of national borders. This idea acknowledges that social, cultural, and economic connections are not limited to a singular nation-state but transcend geographical boundaries. It is recognized that migrants frequently uphold robust affiliations with their nations of origin while concurrently participating in their host communities. Hence, the objective of this study is to investigate the historical roots and demographic expansion of the Muslim minority in Trinidad and Tobago, employing the transnationalism theory as a framework to ascertain the most precise and comprehensive elucidation.

Methodology

The present case study research employs a rigorous methodology to investigate the research question at hand. It utilizes a desk review single case study methodology, which is grounded in a qualitative research paradigm. The subject matter being examined pertains to the Muslim minority population residing in Trinidad and Tobago. The desk review process involves the presentation and evaluation of the findings from previously published publications (Creswell & Clark, 2017: 127). Consequently, the discourse analysis conducted for this study encompasses several sources, such as books, newspapers, and academic papers. The search technique involved the utilization of keywords such as “Muslim minority community in Trinidad and Tobago,” “Formation of

Muslim minority community in Trinidad and Tobago,” “Minority community and Social Sciences Theory,” and “Development of Muslim minority community in Trinidad and Tobago.” The in-depth discussion and subsequent analysis exclusively incorporated information deemed valuable, while disregarding any other material.

Practical Implication

The results of this study are anticipated to offer a structured and systematic approach to understanding the Muslim minority community’s experiences, identifying key factors, and informing policies and interventions that can contribute to their overall well-being and integration within the wider society.

Introduction

Migration, both forced and voluntary, can be credited with bringing Muslims to the Caribbean. Three main waves of migration are frequently highlighted in the historical accounts of Islam’s manifestation in the Caribbean, particularly in Trinidad and Tobago. First, about 1807, African slaves started to arrive. Second, approximately 1845 saw the arrival of indentured Indian immigrants. Third, arriving before and after World War I were Arabic-speaking immigrants from the Eastern Mediterranean/Levant region who are known as Syrian-Lebanese (Kasule: 1986). According to Kassim (2016: 143), Muslims currently hold a favorable position in Trinidad and Tobago. In light of this, current study intends to look into the elements influencing the growth and development of the Muslim population in Trinidad and Tobago. The transnationalism theory is applied in this study in an attempt to establish it as the most suitable social science theory for examining and explaining the expansion and development of this community.

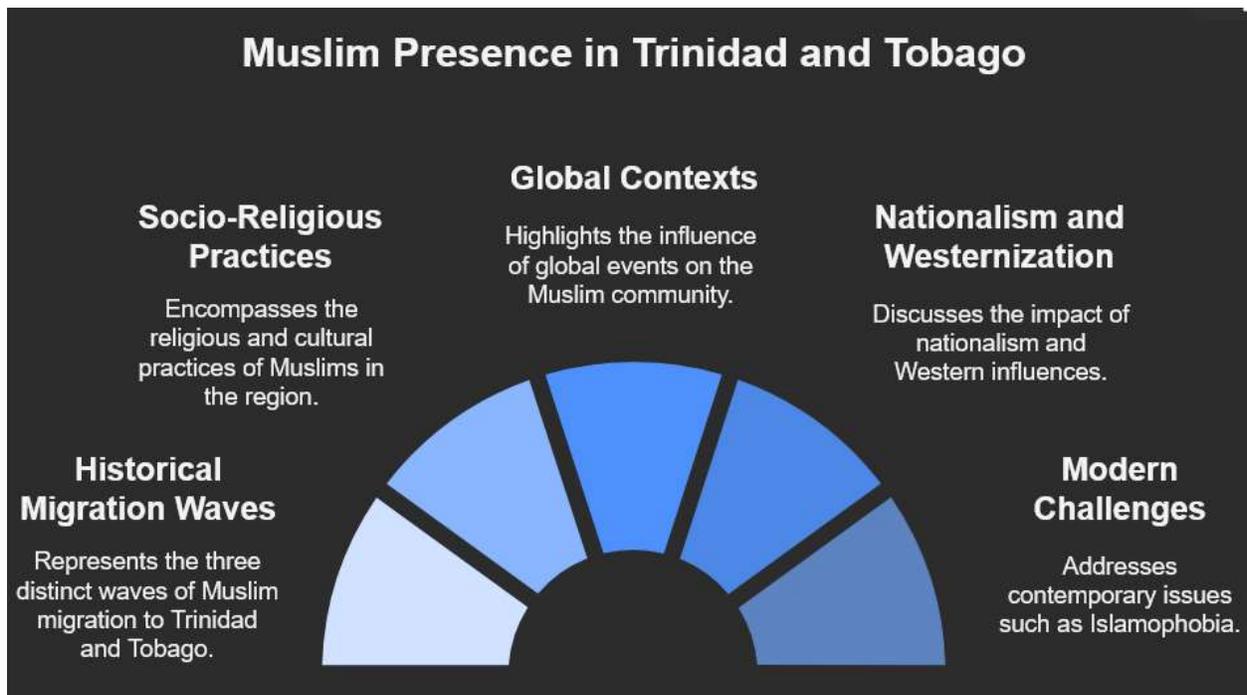
Theoretical Framework:

The current research is guided by an appropriate theoretical framework that provides the groundwork for understanding and analyzing the research problem. Social science theories span a wide range of themes, including historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts (Berkhus, 2008). These theoretical frameworks can be used to study the historical and social circumstances that affected Muslim immigration to Trinidad and Tobago, as well as their establishment and growth. Various social science theories can be employed to comprehend the developmental trajectory of the Muslim minority community in this particular region. The theories of transnationalism, cultural assimilation, and social capital are highly pertinent in this context. Although these concepts provide insightful information, it is important to remember that the development of Trinidad and Tobago’s Muslim minority community is a complex phenomenon that has been influenced by a number of factors. Consider a variety of perspectives from the domains of migration, religious sociology, ethnicity, and social integration in order to have a thorough grasp of the founding and development of the community.

This study examines the capacity of migrants and their descendants to engage in transnational social fields or networks characterized by the flow of resources, practices, and ideas between individuals who have migrated and those who have not. The importance and longevity of national borders are not disregarded in social domains. Vertovec (2001) considers both the ease of crossing geographical boundaries and the connections and social practices that migrants engage in across national borders.

The significance of transnationalism in the field of migrant and immigration studies is comparable to that of ideas on assimilation, acculturation, and minority group inequality, as evidenced by the impact it has had on scholarly discourse (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007; Waters, 2014). Transnational migrants are socially integrated across a variety of places, platforms, and communication channels. Lacroix (2014) asserts that people participate in groups that assist their efforts to settle and to keep their ties to their country of origin alive. Among the various factors that influence immigrants' identities and experiences in the country of settlement are their ties to their family, economy, politics, culture, and religion (Gardner and Grillo, 2002). In reaction to the phenomenon of transnationalism, several countries have been forced to reevaluate the idea of citizenship due to the development of communication technology, the ease of traveling abroad, and the construction of neoliberal political and economic frameworks. The discussion in this article proceeds step by step (clockwise), as shown in Figure-1 below.

Figure-1



Source: Devised by the author

Trinidad & Tobago: A Concise Historical Overview

Trinidad was first discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1498, thereafter becoming subject to Spanish occupation for a period spanning three centuries. The acquisition of Tobago by Britain occurred in 1763 through the Treaty of Paris, marking the end of over 260 years of Dutch and French dominion over the island. In 1797, the British government took control of Trinidad from Spain. Subsequently, in 1889, the two islands were merged for administrative efficiency, leading to their establishment as a joint colony in 1899. After establishing self-government in 1958, Trinidad and Tobago declared its independence from the United Kingdom in August 1962. It became a republic in August 1976 (Kassim, 2016: 142). The nation of Trinidad and Tobago is made up of two adjacent islands in the southern Caribbean Sea. Geographically, Trinidad is located about seven miles inland from the Venezuelan coast and covers a total area of 4,828 square kilometres (1,864 square miles). The Gulf of Paria serves as their natural border. Tobago is situated around 19 miles northeast of Trinidad Island and covers an area of about 300 square kilometres (116 square miles). With daytime highs of 20 and nightly lows of 33 degrees Celsius, the islands' temperature is consistently comfortable all year round.



Source: <https://www.mapland.com/north-america/trinidad-and-tobago/>

Migration and Settlement of Muslims to Trinidad and Tobago

Similar to other Caribbean countries, Trinidad and Tobago relied heavily on migration to facilitate the exchange of products and ideas. This in turn encouraged the development of both concrete and abstract cultural elements, ultimately forming identities based on language, race, religion, and other characteristics. The historical experience of colonization has established an indissoluble connection with the presence of Muslims. This connection encompasses various aspects,

including the projects of nationalism and Westernization, which are closely associated with globalization and modernity. Additionally, the socio-religious consciousness and practices of Muslims are intertwined with this presence. Furthermore, the current global socio-political environment, characterized by Islamophobia, extreme violence, and terrorism, also plays an important role in shaping the Muslim presence (Kassim, 2016: 157). Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend Muslim migration by taking into account its global, regional, and local contexts that shaped and modified roles and identities, as well as its beginnings. The primary causes of the earliest Muslim presence in Trinidad and Tobago were forced and voluntary migration. In the context at hand, there were three separate waves of Muslim immigration. African slaves, freed Africans, and free immigrants made up the initial wave. The second wave included indentured immigrants from India. The third wave comprised Arabic-speaking immigrants from the Levant and Eastern Mediterranean who were referred to as Syrian-Lebanese by the local populace (Voll, 2002: 266).

African presence: The initial influx of Muslim immigrants to the American continent primarily consisted of enslaved individuals (Kettani, 1986: 201). The scholarly discourse on the Muslim presence within the African population of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as other regions such as Jamaica, St. Vincent, and Brazil, during the period from 1810 to 1850, has mostly been explored by Samaroo (1996) and Trotman and Gilroy (2004). The entry of African Muslims as slaves subsequent to 1807 has been duly documented by them. During the initial phase of Muslim settlement, a limited number of free immigrants, particularly retired soldiers from the British army, established themselves in company villages located in New Grant, Indian Walk/Moruga, and Manzanilla-Turure. Each soldier was allocated a land grant of 16 acres inside the densely forested area. The majority of these immigrants adhered to the Christian faith, with the exception of a distinct group of 400 Mandingoes. This particular group made the deliberate choice to establish their settlement independently, opting for a location along the banks of the Hondo River. Situated as a tributary of the Quare River, this settlement was positioned around four miles south of Sangre Grande. Notably, the Mandingoes who settled in this area identified themselves as followers of the Islamic faith.

Trinidad has historically harbored a modest yet persistent West African Muslim community, which can be traced back to various origins and has endured from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century (Kettani, 1986: 202). The Muslim population in Trinidad throughout the specified period was estimated to be quite modest, potentially numbering in the hundreds or fewer than a thousand individuals. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that despite their numerical minority, Muslims seemed to have exerted a discernible influence on Trinidadian society. According to Samaroo (1996), it was observed that the Port of Spain region and central Trinidad had a notable Mandingo population. Additionally, a sizable proportion of Africans who had moved to the island's eastern regions, such as Manzanilla and Turure, were in some way recognized as Muslims. Furthermore, they not only upheld their religious beliefs but also formed a robust communal structure that managed its constituents in a manner reminiscent of the practices

observed in Islamic communities in West Africa when organizing their internal matters. The African Muslim presence in Trinidad had significantly diminished by the mid-nineteenth century due to many factors such as the conditions of slavery, repatriation, conversion, and socialization, notwithstanding the existence of pockets of Islam in the region.

Indian indentured immigrants: During the middle of the 19th century, the Indian indentured immigrants, particularly Muslims, who left the Indian subcontinent for other locations under the indentured scheme, became a major sub-population. The 72-year indenture system, which operated from 1845 to 1917, made it possible for about 147,590 laborers to immigrate to Trinidad. These individuals were primarily engaged in labor-intensive activities on sugar estates, while a lesser portion found employment on cocoa, coconut, or rubber plantations (Lal, 1996). The scheme was overseen and managed by the British imperial administration, with male laborers receiving an average daily wage of 25 cents and female laborers receiving 18 cents. The immigrants, both male and female, originated from diverse social and occupational backgrounds, predominantly from the United Provinces, Oudh, Bihar, Orissa, Madras, and Bombay. They were typically in the age range of 20 to 30 and were either single or part of a small family unit. Lal (1996) reported that Muslims constituted around 15 percent of the total emigrant population at that time. In contrast, Mahase (2012) provided an estimation indicating that the proportion of Muslim immigrants in Trinidad accounted for 11.56 percent of the overall immigrant population. According to Lal (1996), the United Provinces and Bihar were predominantly inhabited by Sunni Muslims, who constituted a substantial portion of the immigrant population. However, there were also instances of Shi'ites and Wahhabis residing in these regions. Mahase (2012) opines that, over 75 percent of individuals chose to establish permanent residency on the island.

Arabic-speaking immigrants: In the late nineteenth century, specifically around 1860 and 1914, the majority of immigrants who spoke Arabic and were from the Eastern Mediterranean/Levant region were Christians, began to arrive. These individuals predominantly originated from Greater Syria and the coastal towns of Lebanon, but a small minority among them were Muslims (Besson, 2011). According to Karpat's (1985) findings, a significant number of Ottoman emigrants to the Americas were Muslims, with an estimated population of 150,000. These migrants were primarily motivated by the desire to escape conflicts and significant socio-economic disruptions. Specifically, Christian individuals sought refuge from targeted assaults, such as the Druze revolts of 1896 and 1909. According to Besson (2011), before the onset of World War I, the population of Syrians and Lebanese residing in Trinidad was less than 100 individuals. However, by the 1930s, this group had established a stable and self-contained presence, primarily engaged in the retail sector, specifically in the sale of textiles, apparel, and domestic merchandise. Certain families experienced prosperity during this period, which subsequently contributed to their development as a significant component of Trinidad's economic elite following World War II. (Voll, 2002, p. 267).

Muslim Organizations

Muslim organizations in Trinidad and Tobago assume a pivotal role, functioning as fundamental pillars that provide support, and empowerment, and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. These organizations frequently serve as intermediaries for fostering religious and social unity, while also tackling the distinct requirements and obstacles encountered by Muslims residing in countries where they are not the majority population. The platform offered by this organization serves as a means for religious education, enabling the practice of Islam and fostering a collective feeling of identity within the community. The services provided encompass Quranic instruction, Islamic studies, and spiritual counseling. In addition, Muslim organizations serve as advocates for the rights and interests of the Muslim community, effectively representing their concerns and actively opposing instances of discrimination and Islamophobia. In addition, they actively participate in outreach initiatives and engage in interfaith conversation as a means to cultivate mutual understanding and promote harmonious relations among the wider population. Moreover, these entities provide social services, including the provision of food banks, counseling services, and youth programs, with the aim of augmenting the overall welfare of individuals who identify as Muslims. Muslim organizations fulfill a diverse range of functions in fostering a robust, adaptable, and cohesive Muslim minority group within the wider social framework. The subsequent discourse presents us with an overview of significant Muslim organizations in Trinidad and Tobago:

The Islamic Missionaries Guild of South America and the Caribbean (IMG): It is a heavily involved Muslim group whose influence extends outside of Trinidad. When the group was first established in 1960, its first leader was Maulana Fazlu Rahman Ansari. Nevertheless, it wasn't activated until 1962. In 1965, the organization underwent a change, evolving into a regional association with branches and affiliates on every English-speaking Caribbean island. Despite having a modest membership, the organization has erected a sizable Islamic Centre in Kelly Village Caroni, among other outstanding accomplishments. Being the first of its sort on the island, this center is significant.

According to Kassim (2016: 148), the territories affiliated with this organization include Guyana, Surinam, Venezuela, Barbados, Jamaica, St. Vincent, Grenada, Dominica, U.S. Virgin Islands, Curacao, and Brazil.

Trinidad and the Caribbean Muslims have received assistance from The Guild since 1963 so they might complete the Hajj journey. Additionally, organized Umra tours are offered. The Guild broadcasts a 30-minute program called 'The Voice of Islam' in the area of mass communication. Every Friday from 9:15 p.m. to 9:45 p.m., this program is carried on the radio. This program is widely broadcast throughout the Caribbean and is incredibly well-liked by both Muslim and non-Muslim groups. Additionally, during the month of Ramadan, the Guild sponsors a radio program during which the 'Adhan' is played over the airways to denote the start of the evening meal. Epilogue, a fortnightly television program that includes prayer recitation, is broadcast. The Guild has hosted an incredibly well-attended annual youth camp over the Christmas holiday since 1969.

Tackweyatul Islamic Association (TIA): This organization was founded in 1927 and is regarded as the first Muslim organization (Voll, 2002, p. 268). The activity level of the subject is predominantly low. The organization experienced a significant decline in membership as a result of its decision to prioritize its primary schools while displaying minimal engagement in other programs. Despite its limited membership, this organization possesses significant political connections that bestow upon it substantial influence. El Sirocco with 500 students, Aranguez 450, Lengua 400, Warrenville and Five Rivers with 250 students each, are the five primary schools that make up the Association. The Association owns a total of four mosques: the Lengua Prince Town Mosque, the Charlie Village Mosque, the Freeport Mosque, and the Bamboo Settlement Mosque in Valsyn. The newspaper of this association doesn't follow a set timetable, but every now and then it publishes a special booklet, especially around holidays like the *Eid*. The leadership of the Association has a liberal ideological orientation, which has led to conflicts and disagreements with the more traditional Muslim members. This association still adheres to the *Milad* custom, which states that funeral services must be held three and forty-one days after a burial.

Anjuman Sunnatul Jamaat Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ASJA): This is the largest and most powerful Islamic organization in the country (Kassim, 2016: 177). According to estimates, approximately 80-85% of Muslims in Trinidad are affiliated with ASJA, albeit with a predominantly nominal association. The establishment of the Association took place during the 1930s and was formally incorporated in 1935. It diverged from the TIA on certain doctrinal matters. ASJA has been officially acknowledged by the government as the authoritative representative of the Muslim population within the country. As a result, invitations to speak on behalf of the Muslim community are extended to the leader of ASJA at official events. Governmental recognition was given as a result of ASJA's size, which makes it the largest Muslim organization in the nation. A total of 53 mosques are directly managed or administered by the ASJA organization, which also has control over 7 primary schools and 2 secondary institutions. Governmental bodies generously provide financial support to educational institutes. In addition to educational institutions, the ASJA also coordinates public lectures, seminars, and conventions. Annually, it dispatches a hajj delegation. The ASJA organization provides support for many customary practices, such as the observance of *Milad* and the commemoration of mourning periods lasting three and forty days. The Covid-19 instructions disseminated by ASJA during prayer times are presented in Appendix-II.

The Trinidad Muslim League (TML): This is a socio-religious organization based in Trinidad and Tobago. The establishment of this Association took place on August 15, 1947, under the leadership of Ameer Ali, who had severed ties with TIA. Subsequently, in 1950, the Association was formally incorporated. The individuals comprising this group are classified as *Ghair Muqallid*, meaning they do not adhere to any of the four orthodox schools of law. The practice of *ijtihad* is actively promoted, with individuals being strongly encouraged to refer to the primary sources of Islam in order to independently develop their own perspectives. TML, a medium-sized

organization, manages three elementary schools in the communities of San Fernando, Rio Claro, and St. Joseph. Despite consistently refusing any association with the Qadiani religious system throughout his career, Mohammed Hakeem Khan, the individual who founded the Association received his education at a Lahore school that was connected to the Qadiani community. Before 1977, several members of the Qadiani community had served on the executive committee. As a result, the Association broke its ties with the Qadianis and gained the support of the greater Muslim community.

The Islamic Trust: The Islamic Trust is an Association characterized by a restricted membership, comprising of young individuals who possess a high level of education and professional qualifications. The primary objective of this organization is to promote the principles of Islam by means of educating individuals who identify as Muslims, as well as disseminating Islamic doctrine to individuals from both Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds. The Islamic Trust obtained charitable status in 1975. The establishment possesses a bookshop that exhibits a substantial inventory, generating a total revenue of \$140,000 TT for the year 2022.

Jamaat Al Muslimeen: The majority of those affiliated with Jamaat Al Muslimeen are of African heritage and have embraced Islam as their chosen faith. However, it does not espouse any racist ideologies that would prohibit the inclusion of individuals from different racial backgrounds. The movement was founded in 1979 by a number of organizations, including Dar Al Islam, Jamaat Al Muwahiddiin (a branch of the Islamic Party of North America), and a few Ansar Laah adherents. African Muslims founded their own Jamaat in Macurapoas a result of racial conflicts between their community and the Muslim communities of India. The Indian Muslim Group (IMG) was originally given ownership of this land, but the government eventually seized it back. An imam's home, a school, and a mosque are all under construction. The individuals affiliated with this Jamaat refrain from engaging in usurious transactions and adhere to the practice of polygamy. The individuals in question have made a request to the government for the formal recognition of their polygamous unions. The leadership of this Jamaat exhibits a strong inclination towards expressing their views on political matters within the nation. Consequently, there have been apprehensions within official circles regarding the potential engagement of the Jamaat in actions that oppose the government. In the year 1983, a military operation was conducted at the headquarters of the Jamaat with the objective of locating and confiscating weapons that were purportedly accumulated with the intention of destabilizing the government. The Jamaat and its leadership were not charged, and no evidence of guns was discovered.

The Muslim Credit Union: The Muslim Credit Union Co-operative Society Limited represents the pioneering socio-economic initiative within the Muslim community. According to Kassim (2016: 166), this endeavor is the initial instance in which Muslims have effectively established a functional economic organization capable of fulfilling their material needs while adhering to the principles of Islam. The formal existence of the Society was established in November 1983. The operations of the MCU are conducted in accordance with a predetermined set of legal rules, known as the Bylaws of the MCU. The Co-operative Societies Act of 1971 and the regulations

that accompanied it served as the foundation for these regulations. According to its bye-laws, the MCU's primary goals are as follows: The Society must carry out any legal actions necessary to further these objectives in order to: (a) enhance the financial security of its members; (b) encourage the virtues of thrift, self-help, and collaboration among members; and (c) exercise its authority.

All Muslims who practice their faith, live within the territorial jurisdiction of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and exhibit admirable moral traits meet the requirements for membership in the MCU. The acquisition of shares is a paramount and highly esteemed mode of investment inside the MCU.

Publication Activities

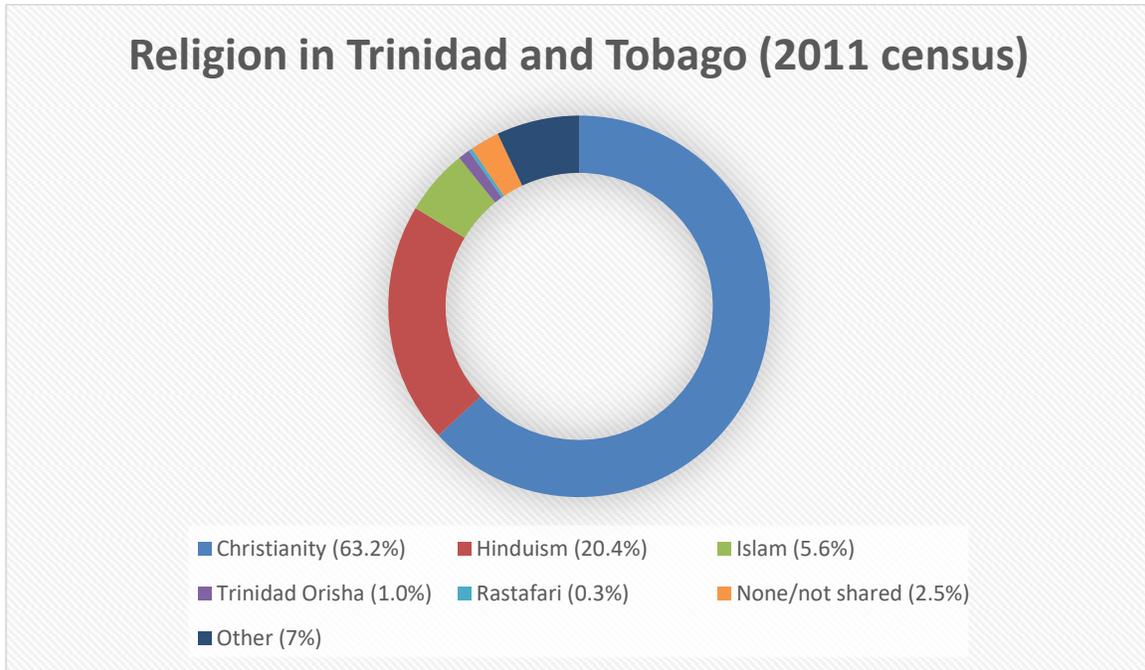
The Torch of Islam is a periodical publication of the Islamic Missionaries Guild that has been in circulation since 1966, as documented by Kassim (2016: 166). *Muslim News* serves as the authorized periodical of the ASJA organization. The publication provides updates on the association's endeavors and sporadically covers topics related to Islam. The Islamic Trust publishes a bi-monthly periodical known as *Muslim Standard*. The magazine includes essays about Islam as well as analysis of regional political and social issues. The Jamat Al Muslimin's official periodical is called *Al Nur*. The platform provides a range of excellent articles and comments that concentrate on the political climate in the country. However, the organization has significant financial obstacles and its operations are characterized by irrationality. *Al Naadiyah* is the Trinidad and Tobago Muslim Youth Association's official publication. A publication of the Baytul Mal is the *Al Ilm* newsletter, which is edited by Dr. Waffie Muhammad. *Al Hikmat* is a periodical newspaper issued on a monthly basis by the Islamic Propagation Centre, under the editorial guidance of Maulana Shefayat Muhammad. *The Voice* is a periodical of commendable caliber that is issued sporadically by the Jamat Al Muminin. Furthermore, it should be noted that the government restricts Muslims' access to mass media platforms for the purpose of disseminating Islamic teachings. In the year 1974, as an illustrative instance, the observance of *Eid el Fitr* prayers was broadcast via radio. Subsequently, a weekly program of thirty minutes in duration has been broadcast every Friday. This program is widely recognized and utilized throughout other adjacent islands. For further information on the publication details of different organizations in the year 2022, please refer to Appendix-1.

Development and Growth

Based on the findings of the 2011 Census conducted in Trinidad and Tobago, it was noted that a sizeable section of the populace identified with different religious affiliations. According to the census, 33.2% of the population identified as Protestant, which included a variety of denominations such as Pentecostal (12.0%), Anglican (5.7%), Seventh-day Adventist (4.1%), Presbyterian or Congregational (3.0%), Baptist (1.2%), and Methodist (0.1%). The study also found that 5.6% of people identified as Muslim, 20.4% as Hindu, and 30% of people identified as Roman Catholic. A small percentage of people practiced African-inspired, pre-Christian faiths in the Caribbean, such as the Spiritual Baptists, also known as Shouter Baptists, who make up

5.7% of the population, and the Orisha, who make up 1%. Chart-1 illustrates the religious composition of Trinidad and Tobago.

Chart-1



Source: Devised by the author based on

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Trinidad_and_Tobago

The number of Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago shows a gradual increase, and it was around 80 thousand in 2020 as per statistics of the Pew Research Centre. The following Table-1 presents the details of the issue:

Table-1

Trinidad and Tobago Muslim Population	
No.	Population
Estimated 1990 Muslim Population	72,000
Estimated 2010 Muslim Population	78,000

Estimated 2020 Muslim Population	80,000
Projected 2030 Muslim Population	83,000

Source: Devised by the author based on <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/>

The cultural and social fabric of Trinidad and Tobago has been greatly influenced by the Muslim minority there. In order to assimilate themselves into Trinidadian society, both before and after the country obtained independence, they, like other migrant groups, have strategically and gradually accepted some aspects of the host community's way of life. Islam's survival in Trinidad was largely due to its symbols, rituals, heroes, and principles. Currently, Trinidad and Tobago is home to over 100 mosques, the majority of which are affiliated with the three main Islamic organizations in the area: the Tackweyatul Islamic Association (TIA), Anjuman Sunnatul Jamaat Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ASJA), and the Trinidad Muslim League (TML). Additionally, there are numerous independent mosques that operate autonomously. The local Muslim community exhibits a degree of diversity in the interpretation of Islam due to the presence of conflicting ideologies. The *Hanafi madhab* is the predominant school of law among the Muslim population, however there are also adherents to several sects such as Sufi (*Chisti-Qaderi silsila*), Salafis, Shi'ites, and Ahmadiyya (Kettani, 1986: 202). There are numerous primary and secondary schools in the area that cater particularly to the Muslim community. Notably, the Haji Ruknudeen Institute of Islamic Studies and Darul-Uloom are two notable institutions that are important in the growth of local scholars and *a'immah*, who take charge of congregational prayers. Additionally, these institutes provide a thorough education in both Arabic and Islamic law, or *fiqh* (Kassim, 2016: 172). Given the prevalence of information and communication technologies (ICTs), the local Muslim community has taken the initiative to develop the Islamic Broadcasting Network (IBN), an Islamic television channel. Additionally, they have created web pages and profiles on social networking sites. These activities serve a variety of functions, including interacting with the younger generation and supporting the spread of Islamic beliefs, also known as *daw'ah*. In the context of modern politics, there has been a discernible movement towards fostering (multi)cultural citizenship and arguing for economic and political fairness for marginalized groups. As a result of this transformation, legislation that is relevant to and distinctive to different cultures and religions has been adopted. For instance, to accommodate the interests of the Muslim population in areas pertaining to marriage and divorce, the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of 1935 (latest amendment in 1980) was introduced. There have also been advancements in the area of funeral rites, notably the acceptance and accommodation of Muslim funeral customs. Furthermore, the declaration of *Eid-ul-Fitr* as a national holiday in 1967 shows an increasing acceptance and incorporation of Muslim religious observances in the public domain. Lastly, the presence of Muslim chaplains in prison settings serves as an example of efforts to cater to the religious needs of incarcerated Muslim individuals (Khan, 2013). Providing students and government workers with time off for Friday prayers (*jum'ah salaah*) is another

example of a government accommodation policy that extends to the corporate world. Additionally, Muslim students are guaranteed halal (permissible/lawful) meals through the government's school food services (Allahar, 2004). This implies that despite their diverse beginnings, Muslims have acquired significant civil liberties that allow them to actively participate in the current socioeconomic framework.

Muslims actively participate in politics and the judicial system as well as the professional world. This engagement is exemplified by notable individuals like Shahfeyei Shah, Wahid Ali, Noor Mohamed Hassanali, Nizam Mohammed, Kamalludin Mohammed, and George Anthony Aslam Edoo, among others. It is significant to bring up Noor Mohamed Hassanali's name. He was a Trinidadian jurist, statesman, and member of the legal profession. He became Trinidad and Tobago's second head of state and presided as president from 1987 to 1997. He made history by becoming the first person of Indian descent and Muslim faith to hold the prestigious office of President of Trinidad and Tobago. He also has the distinction of being the region's first Muslim head of state. In addition to starting mosques and congregations, the Muslim community has grown somewhat self-sufficient. This is demonstrated by the presence of halal meat and food outlets, small and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs) that specialize in clothes and home goods, and supermarkets and pharmacies that are owned and operated by Muslims. These businesses help the neighborhood function both independently and as an interdependent social-economic unit. This assertion is reinforced by the existence of the Muslim Credit Union, the Islamic Funeral Trust, Medinah House (a facility dedicated to providing care for Muslim children), as well as several Muslim women's organizations including the San Juan Muslim Ladies Organization and the National Muslim Women's Organization of Trinidad. Additionally, there are Islamic non-governmental organizations such as the National Islamic Counselling Service, among others. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there exist some prominent firms that are owned by individuals of the Muslim faith, including but not limited to KC Confectionary, SM Jaleel, Alescon Readymix Trinidad Limited, Naisa Brand Products, and WGM Group.

Muslims have consistently shown an ability to live in harmony with a variety of sociocultural groups by actively participating in societal norms in commerce, music, sport, and education. Muslims in Trinidad weren't brought to the attention of the international community until 1983, as discussed earlier, when a Muslim faction tried to overthrow the nation's democratically elected government. The happening of such an event was quite unexpected in a region famed for its festivities, musical traditions, cultural diversity, and religious tolerance. According to the *United States Department of State's 2012 International Religious Freedom Report*, 16 Muslims were also jailed at Port of Spain on suspicion of planning to assassinate the prime minister and three other cabinet members. The people in issue were immediately freed after the government decided not to press any charges against them. Table 2 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the Muslim population in Trinidad and Tobago.

Table-2

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Trinidad and Tobago Muslims		
1	<i>Racial Composition</i>	Over 95% of the Muslims are of East Indian origin. The remainder are of African descent. There are hardly any other racial groups.
2	<i>Geographical Distribution</i>	Muslims are distributed in all parts of the Island of Trinidad in proportion to the distribution of the whole population. Most Muslims live in the center and around the capital city of Port-of-Spain. There are about 100 Muslims on the island of Tobago.
3	<i>Economic Status</i>	Indian Muslims are very successful in business, and they control a higher proportion of the national economy than what their proportion in the population would suggest. Muslims of African descent are <u>economically disadvantaged</u> .
5	<i>Freedom of Worship</i>	There is complete freedom of worship in the country and the rights of Muslims are guaranteed by law. Muslim personal law in marriage and divorce is recognized. The government does not interfere in religious instruction.
6	<i>Schools of Law</i>	It is estimated that 80% of the Muslims belong to the Hanafi school of law. TLM is non-conformist and does not follow any one of the four schools.

Source: Devised by the author

Reflection on Transnational links and Future prospects

According to Lal (1996), Indian Muslims were able to maintain their cultural and Islamic practices due to their sustained connection with their homeland, a privilege that African Muslims did not possess. One of the early settlers in Trinidad was Seyyid Abdulaziz, an individual of Afghan origin, who immigrated to the island in 1883 under the indentured labor system. Following his release from indentured servitude, he proceeded to form the East Indian Association, assuming leadership of the organization from 1893 until his demise. In the year 1907, he was designated as the Qadi of Trinidad. In 1926, he played a pivotal role in the construction of mosques and the establishment of the Young Muslim Association. In the year 1927, he established the Tackweyatul Islamic Association (TIA), which was officially recognized by the government as a representative body for the Muslim community. Moulvi Haj Sufi Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Hanafi Qaderi made his arrival in the year 1914. He advocated for a strict devotion to the principles of Islam, as well as the adoption of traditional Indian attire and the cultivation of facial hair. He strictly implemented the practice of purdah among the female population. During his brief tenure, there was a resurgence of Islam and he garnered significant popularity. Maulana Nazir Ahmad immigrated to the region from India in 1937, assuming the role of an Imam. According to Kassim (2016: 158), his contribution played a significant role in the establishment of educational institutions.

The existence of multiple transnational organizations within the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago, which serve the diverse needs of the community, has been duly observed. The aforementioned statement can be interpreted as an indication of the community's level of social consciousness and its capacity to foster collaborative endeavors aimed at improving and enhancing its circumstances (Kassim, 2015: 232). The Makkah-based organization, *Rabita Al Alam Al Islami* has shown a continuous period of activity. Drs. Ali Kettani, Imanullah Khan, and Al Mujahid Al Sawaff made up the delegation that was sent in 1973 with the mission of promoting unity among Muslims. M.K. Hosein from IMG and Shafiq Rahman from AS JA were invited to a conference in Makkah in 2004 with the aim of promoting unity among Muslims. In addition to serving as President-General of ASJA, the late Shafiq Rahman was a member of the Rabita Constituent Assembly. In 2007, the Rabita hosted a meeting on the Muslim minority in the Caribbean. Additionally, in 2010, the organization conducted a training course specifically designed for Imams. Egypt has been dispatching Muslim speakers during the holy month of Ramadan and has granted numerous scholarships to Trinidadian students for the purpose of pursuing studies at educational institutions in Egypt. The island has experienced minimal direct influence from Libya. However, Ahmad Ahwas, a Libyan ambassador stationed in Guyana, independently visited the islands and left a lasting impression on the younger population. The majority of Saudi Arabia's help has been directed through the organizations of *D'ar Al Ifta* and *Rabita*. The Islamic University in Madina has granted a number of scholarships to individuals from Trinidad and Tobago. During the years 2020 and 2021, the Saudi government provided financial support in the amounts of \$22,000 and \$22,222, respectively, to the International Muslim Group (IMG) for the purpose of constructing an Islamic Centre. Organizations of Muslims in North America keep in touch and start chapters there. The American Muslim Mission, the Nation of Islam, the Islamic Society of North America, the Islamic Party, as well as other organizations like Ansar Laah, which mostly operates in New York City, are included in this category. The presence of revolutionary literature further suggests that Iran is displaying a high level of activity. A significant number of individuals who embrace Islam exhibit a particular inclination towards Shi'ism, leading to invitations extended to numerous of them to embark on visits to Iran. In 2021, the Islamic Centre project of IMG received a monetary contribution of \$11,215 from Kuwait.

Analysis

The above discussion makes it clear that the history of the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago posits an intriguing case study for comprehending the workings of transnationalism theory. This case study research tries to investigate and analyze the historical growth of the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago using the transnationalism theory. By examining the community's formation, transnational practices, and interactions with their countries of origin, we can gain insights into how transnationalism has shaped the community's identity and development over time.

1. **Formation of Transnational Ties:** The early Muslim settlers maintained strong ties with their countries of origin through transnational practices. Among these migrants were Muslims who came from Africa, from various regions of India, including North India, Bengal, and South India and from the Middle East. They brought with them their Islamic faith, cultural practices, and social traditions, forming the initial foundation of the Muslim community in the Caribbean. They often sent remittances back home to support their families and communities. Additionally, they maintained connections with Islamic scholars and religious institutions in home countries, seeking guidance and support in matters of faith. This transnationalism helped preserve their cultural and religious identities and fostered a sense of belonging to both Trinidad and their countries of origin.
2. **Religious Institutions and Transnational Networks:** Religious institutions played a crucial role in the formation and development of the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago. The establishment of mosques and madrasas not only provided a place of worship but also served as social and educational centers for the community. These institutions maintained transnational ties by hosting visiting scholars from India and Middle East organizing religious festivals, and facilitating exchanges between Trinidadian Muslims and their counterparts in India. The networks formed through these religious institutions strengthened the sense of community and transnational identity.
3. **Cultural Preservation and Transnational Exchanges:** Trinidadian Muslims have made significant efforts to preserve their cultural heritage, including language, music, and cuisine, which are deeply rooted in their countries of origin. The use of languages like Urdu and Hindi, the performance of traditional music and dance forms, and the preparation of Indian dishes all serve as cultural markers of the community's transnational connections. Through cultural preservation and transnational exchanges, the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago maintains a strong sense of identity and connection to their ancestral homelands.
4. **Economic Transnationalism and Community Development:** Economic transnationalism has played a vital role in the development of the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago. Many Muslims engage in transnational economic activities, such as remittances, investments, and trade, which contribute to both the local and transnational economies. The economic resources generated through these activities have been used to establish businesses, educational institutions, and charitable organizations, benefiting the community and society at large. This economic integration has not only contributed to the community's development but has also facilitated their transnational ties and connections.
5. **Generational Shifts and Adaptation:** As the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago has undergone generational shifts, the dynamics of transnationalism have evolved. Younger generations often have a dual identity, embracing both their Trinidadian and transnational heritage. They navigate between the local culture and the transnational connections inherited from their parents and grandparents. This adaptation to changing

social and cultural contexts highlights the resilience and flexibility of the community in maintaining transnational ties while integrating into Trinidadian society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the historical account of the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago exemplifies the intricate dimensions of transnationalism and its influence on the establishment and progress of communities. The Muslim community has developed robust connections with their places of origin and actively engages in the local society through transnational practices, religious institutions, cultural preservation, and economic integration. The examination of the historical trajectory of this particular community, employing the framework of transnationalism theory, yields significant elucidation on the intricate dynamics that arise from the intersection of transnational affiliations and localized identities.

Research Limitation

Further research in this field has the potential to enhance our comprehension of the wider ramifications of transnationalism on minority communities within multicultural countries.

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Appendix I

Published or re-printed by various organizations in the year 2022

<i>Name of Book</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Elementary Teachings of Islam	Abdul Aleem Siddiqui	–	reprinted by various organizations
<i>Al Nawawi's Forty Hadith</i>	Imaam Al Nawawi	–	IMG
<i>Islam at a Glance</i>	Anonymous	–	IMG, JM
<i>New Method of Learning Arabic</i>	"	–	IMG
<i>Part 1 of Holy Qur'ān</i>	"	–	IMG
<i>30th part of the Qur'ān</i>	"	–	IMG
<i>Part 2 of the Holy Qur'ān</i>	"	–	IMG
<i>Part 4 of the Holy Qur'ān</i>	"	–	IMG
<i>Juz Amma (English translation)</i>	"	–	IMG
<i>Qurānic Arabic reader</i>	"	–	IMG
<i>Guidelines for Islamic Workers</i>	"	–	IT
<i>Islamic Workers – the prerequisites</i>	A. A. Maududi	–	IT
<i>What the Bible says about Muhammad</i>	A. Deedat	–	IT
<i>Milestones</i>	Syed Qutb	–	IT, IMG
<i>Towards Understanding Islam</i>	A. A. Maududi	–	IT
<i>Malcolm X speaks</i>	Malcolm X	–	IT

Source: Kasule, O.H. (1986) Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago. *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs Journal*, 7(1), 195-213, DOI: 10.1080/13602008608715974

Appendix II



Founders
Al-Haj Maulana Shah Muhammad
Hassan Al-Qaderi (R.A.)
Al-Haj Rooknudeen Sahib (R.A.)

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful
Anjuman Sunnat ul Jamaat Association Inc.

of Trinidad and Tobago
The Ahles Sunnat ul Jamaat Institution

ASJA South Office: 162 Ciper Street, San Fernando, Trinidad W.I.
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Email: asjacharlieville786@gmail.com

Headquarters
Jama Masjid

There is no deity but ALLAH and Muhammad (upon whom be peace) is the messenger of ALLAH

21st April, 2021

ADVISORY GUIDELINES ON COVID-19 FOR IMAMS AND MASAJID

Assalamu Alaikum

Dear Imams,

It has been announced today that new health guidelines on the Covid-19 pandemic with respect to places of worship have been adjusted. The capacity has been reduced from 50% to 25%.

We are also aware of a steady and rapid daily increase of Covid-19 cases and therefore ask you to implement our humble suggestions at your respective masjid to curb the spread of the virus. The following suggestions are advised:

1. All health guidelines and advisories must always be adhered to at the Masjid.
2. If you are not well, (exhibiting flu like symptoms such as a fever, cough or runny nose) please, stay at home and establish all prayers at home.
3. Our Sisters are kindly asked to pray all Sunnah and Nawafil at home.
4. Our elderly people and children should be exempted from the 25% of congregation of Salah. However, someone should carry on Taraweeh with twenty Raka't at our Masjid along with Fard prayers.
5. Eating and drinking should not be allowed at Masjid.
6. You (Imam) know your members of your jamaat and their conditions and situations. Therefore, you must ensure that the appropriate decisions are taken to protect members.

Jazakumullahu khairan
May Allah protect us all.


.....
MUFTI MOHAMMAD ASRARUL HAQUE
Spiritual Guide
ASJA



Anjuman Sunnat ul Jamaat Association Inc.
162 Ciper Street, San Fernando

Source: <https://www.asjatrinidad.com/news-and-events.html>