

The Transition from the Particularistic Black Nationalist Stance to a Universalistic Mainstream Religion: The Role of Relations and Interactions between the Nation of Islam, Muslim Organisations in the USA, and Muslim Countries (1950-1990)

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This paper examines the historical transformation of one of the controversial Muslim movements, The Nation of Islam (NOI), that emerged not in the Muslim World but in the West, the USA, in the 20th century as a reaction to, and a consequence of historical, racial, ethnic and political policies against them, and experiences that Black people had since slavery. It also aims to explore how the relations and interactions between the NOI, and mainstream Muslim Organisations in the USA and the Muslim World influenced and directed the movement's organisational structure, religious teachings and policies in the course of its history and the process of its transition from Black Nationalistic posture and periphery to a legitimate religious community and to centre of mainstream American society. However, the framework of this study covers and takes into account the historical process between 1950 and 1990.

Key words: Black Muslims, the Nation of Islam (NOI), American Muslims, the Middle East and Muslim organisations and politics in the USA.

In the United States, the term 'Black Muslim' has literally been used to refer to social, protest, and even religious movements, like the Moorish Science Temple of America and the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam (NOI) is also popularly known as the Black Muslims Movement, a name coined by C. Eric Lincoln in the 1960s. But prior to Lincoln's terminology, the Nation of Islam were variously referred to as "People of the Temple" or sometimes "Voodoo People" or even as a "cult".¹ Apart from this popular

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1 Lawrence H. Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement: Their Evolution and Implication for the Study of Religion in a Pluralistic Society", *Conflict and Cooperation between Contemporary Religious Groups*, Tokyo: Nakamura Printing Co. Ltd., 1988, p. 206; Erdmann D. Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult Among Negro Migrants in Detroit", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol 43, No. 6, 1938, pp. 894-907.

usage, the term 'Black Muslim', has also been applied to various fragmented Black religious and political movements who have different names and labels in the USA throughout the history of indigenous Muslim groups in this century. For instance, such groups are, at a minor or local level, the Ansaaru Allah Community (also known as the Nubian Islamic Hebrew Mission), the Nation of Five Percent, the Hanefi Sect and the Nation of Islam (the Caliph) fall into this group, while at the major level, these groups consist of the World Community Al-Islam in the West, which later was transformed into the American Muslim Mission, and the Nation of Islam of Louis Farrakhan.²

The focus of this paper will in particular be the experience of the Nation of Islam, in its different forms; there are two major reasons for this. First, the Nation of Islam is the largest and longest-lasting organisation to have succeeded in generating mass appeal in its claim to Islam and Black Nationalism. Second, the Nation of Islam has been displaying distinctive forms of ideological, political, organisational and structural symbolic transformations since the early 1930s. Within the scope of this paper, the historical periods of the Nation of Islam between 1950 and 1990 will be taken into consideration under the following headings; 1) a brief historical development of the Nation of Islam and 2) the relations between the Nation of Islam and the Muslim World from religious, economic and political perspectives. Moreover, this part is further divided into three sub-sections so that these relationships can be examined during three distinctive periods: a) the Elijah Muhammad period, b) the Warith Deen Muhammad period and c) the Louis Farrakhan period. Before moving on to discuss the concise historical development of the Nation of Islam, it would be appropriate to have a glance at its precursors.

Although there are no organisational links with earlier racist religious cults, the Nation of Islam incorporated two traditions in particular; the Moorish Science Temple and the International Negro Improvement Movement.³ The former was founded by Noble Timothy Drew Ali, who claimed that the true religion of Black people was Islam. He established the first Moorish Sci-

2 Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement...", pp. 215-225; "Religious Split Among Blacks", *US News and World Report*, Feb. 5, 1973; Prince A. Cuba, "Black Gods of the Inner City", *Gnosis*, No. 25, Fall issue, 1992; *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 3rd edition, pp. 836-842.

3 E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: (A Search for an Identity in America)*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970, (Fifth impression), p. 63; Gutbi Mahdi Ahmed, "Muslim Organisations in the United States", *The Muslims of America*, ed. by Yvonne Y. Haddad (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 18.

ence Temple in 1913 in Newark, New Jersey, and emphasised that he had been commissioned by Allah to restore to Black Americans the knowledge of their true self and identity, which had been stolen from them by Christians. Ali preached the message of Moorish identity, calling the Black Americans “Asiatic” or “Moorish”, but not Negroes; he also taught them that their homeland was Morocco and that they were the descendants of the Moabites of Canaan. The teachings of Moorish Science are explained in *The Holy Koran*, a sixty-page booklet, which is not to be confused with the orthodox Islamic Qur’an. While affirming some Islamic beliefs, it consisted of a variety of non-Islamic sources, most prominently the Christian Bible and Marcus Garvey’s injunctions. Ali moved his headquarters to Chicago, where he died as a result of a mysterious conflict within the movement, which in 1929 had split into several fractions.⁴ Thus, we can see that Ali’s aim was to provide an answer to the condition of the Black Americans in a country dominated by white people and to seek religious and cultural revival by changing the symbols of Negro culture and establishing links with oriental religion. Though heretical in the perception of orthodox Islam, the Moorish Science Temple was the first organisation to spread awareness of Islam among Black Americans as an alternative religion to the dominant Christian culture.

On the other hand, although its influence was relatively small on the Nation of Islam, the International Negro Improvement Movement, founded by Marcus Garvey in 1914, advocated the improvement of the socio-economic condition Black Americans and initiated the “back to Africa” movement. This particular ideology was both nationalist and racial.⁵

Consequently, the Nation of Islam became successful because it combined the racial particularism and pride of the Garvey movement with the universalism of Islam, taken from the teachings of the Moorish Science Temple, in a new form, thus creating a potent mix that appealed to the needs of the illiterate and unskilled Southern Black migrants who had moved to the industrial urban North in the early 1930s.

4 Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis (Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North)*, Ch. V – “Moorish Science Temple of America”, New York: Ortegón Books, 1977, pp. 41-51; Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek a City*, N.Y.: Garden City, Double Day, 1945, pp. 174-177; Frank Simpson, “The Moorish Science Temple and its Koran”, *The Muslim World*, Vol. 37, 1947, pp. 56-61; C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1961, Revised Edition, 1973, pp. 52-57; E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 33-36.

5 E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 36-39; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, pp. 57-67.

II. The Nation of Islam: Its concise historical development

Social movements, whether religious or political in character, tend to arise within the contexts of depressions or moments of social uncertainty. The Nation of Islam, later popularly known as the Black Muslim Movement, emerged from the social, political and economic crisis of the 1930's when streams of unskilled and illiterate Blacks migrated from America's rural South to the industrial urban North.⁶

The Blacks who moved to the industrialised Northern states expected to improve their socio-economic conditions and to attain the promise of equality and justice. However, many Black migrants in the northern cities were confronted with difficulties, such as severe economic hardship, inequalities due to their illiteracy and lack of skills and racial discrimination. As a result of the economic pressure that faced them, the new Black migrants concentrated on religious causes as a way out. As Fauset points out, Black Americans' traditionally high religious preoccupation was in part the result of the fact that other channels were not open to them. The various Black cults and semi-religious movements accommodated therein catered for their interests in activities like business, politics, social reform and self-expression.⁷

It was within this context, in July of 1930, that Wallace D. Fard appeared in the Black ghetto of Detroit as an amiable and casual, but faintly mysterious peddler, selling silks and raincoats door-to-door to the residents. Although there is no accurate account about his early life, he is said to have declared:

*"I am W. D. Fard and I came come from the Holy City of Mecca ..."*⁸ According to Elijah Muhammad (the successor and trusted minister of Fard), Fard maintained that he was the son of a wealthy member of the royal dynasty of the Hashimide Sheriff, a branch of the tribe of Koreish (the tribe of Prophet Muhammad's).⁹ This kind of ethnic connection gave Fard credit in the eyes of his followers, and provided links with Orthodox Muslim history. Fard proclaimed himself a prophet whose mission it was to prepare Black people for the Armageddon and to free them from white oppression in Amer-

6 It is roughly estimated that the number of migrants were between 1900 and early 1930s, nearly 2,250,000 Blacks left the rural South. This growth represented an increase of over 400 per cent in the Black population of the North; in Detroit, that increase reached 611 per cent (Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, pp. xxiii-xxiv).

7 A.Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, pp. 107-8.

8 Bontemps and Conroy, *They Seek a City*, p. 178; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 44-46.

9 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, p. 44; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 16.

ica. He taught them about the character of the white people, whom he called “blue-eyed devils”. Like Noble Drew Ali, he maintained that Blacks were in reality Muslims, not Americans; they were Asiatics who had been enslaved by the white man’s deception. Accordingly, he instructed his followers that they had no allegiance to the American flag.

Within a few years Fard formed several organisations such as the Temple of Islam, which was a place of worship, and the University of Islam, which offered essentially a combined elementary and secondary education for Black children, the Muslim Girls’ Training Class, which aimed to teach young women the principles of home economics, and the Fruit of Islam which was a quasi-military organisation of male Muslims who served as honour guards and organised the internal discipline of the movement. Through these organisations, the members of the movement gained a new concept of selfhood and were able to improve their social status.

The prophet Fard’s mysterious disappearance, like his appearance, took place in June 1934 and contributed enormously to the movement’s mythology, which claims that he was supernaturally endowed. The divine status of Fard was reinforced by Elijah Muhammad,¹⁰ one of Fard’s trusted ministers. After Fard’s disappearance, Elijah Muhammad succeeded him, taking up the leadership position of the movement. He announced to the members of the Nation that Wallace D. Fard was actually the incarnation of Allah and that he, Elijah Muhammad, was his messenger. When some refused to accept his leadership a schism occurred and he moved the organisation to Chicago.. The movement lay relatively dormant in the late 1930s and 1940s until Malcolm X (formerly Malcolm Little) joined the organisation.

After the relocation of the movement’s headquarters, Elijah Muhammad began to reshape the organisation under his own highly militant leadership. He fashioned a ‘message to the Black man’ and taught the Black masses within the context of that message; in this were included their origin, history, the concept of evil and the economic philosophy of “Do for self”. In his three major works, *The Message of the Black Man in America*, *The Supreme Wisdom* and *The Fall of America*, Elijah Muhammad gives his version of the understanding of Islam to the Nation of Islam, which is based on Fard’s teachings.

¹⁰ Lawrence H. Mamiya and Eric C. Lincoln, “Black Militant and Separatist Movements”, in *The Encyclopedia of American Religious Experience*, ed. by Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, Charles Scribner’s Sons, Vol. 3, 1988, pp. 765-66.

According to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, the Black man's history starts with the creation of the earth. However, he states that the Black man's history is only 6,000 years long. He also teaches that the Black people (at this time called Negroes in America) were the descendants of the Asian Black Nation and of the tribe of Shabaz which had established the Holy City of Mecca in Arabia.¹¹ The concept of evil and the evil behaviour of white people are interpreted according to the myth of Yakub, who was believed to be an evil scientist who created a race of whites through genetic engineering. Consequently, the whites he had created turned out to be devils. Allah allowed the race of white devils to rule the world for 6,000 years, a period which will end with the destruction of the world in the "Battle of Armageddon"; after this a new world will be ruled by a nation of righteous Blacks.¹²

Elijah Muhammad elaborated a detailed programme, which he called "*Economic Blueprints*"¹³ for the Nation; this included establishing Black Muslim businesses in order to achieve economic independence. For this reason, as well as in order to create a separate identity for members of the Nation of Islam, he initiated a series of ethical codes, some of which forbid Black Muslims from using alcohol, drugs, tobacco, cosmetics, pork, etc. He also taught them some economic principles like frugality, the avoidance of debt or credit and a conservative life-style. Because of their ascetic concept of life, the Black Muslims have been described as "Black Puritans".¹⁴

The myths, doctrines, and beliefs of the Nation of Islam seem to be illogical and irrational from the view point of outsiders and non-Blacks. However, this teaching system made sense to the Black masses. Mamiya and Lincoln indicate that "these myths and doctrines have functions as a theodicy for

11 Elijah Muhammad, *Supreme Wisdom*, p. 33; Idem, *The Message to the Blackman in America*, Chicago, 1965, p. 31; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 77; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 130-132.

12 Elijah Muhammad, *The Message to the Blackman in America*, pp. 112-113; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, pp. 78-79; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 133-134; C.E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslim: The Transition from Separatism to Islam*, Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1984, pp. 56-57.

13 Elijah Muhammad put forward economic principles that consist of five propositions:
(i) Recognise the necessity for unity and group operation (activities).
(ii) Pool your resources, physically and as well as financially.
(iii) Stop wanton criticisms of everything that is Black owned and Black-operated.
(iv) Keep in -jealousy destroys from within.
(v) Observe the operations of the white man. He is successful ... Work hard in a collective manner (see Elijah Muhammad, *The Message to the Blackman in America*, p. 174; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, pp. 95-96; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, p. 164.

14 Michael Parenti, "The Black Muslims: From Revolution to Institution", *Social Research*, Vol. 31, 1964, pp. 184-185; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, pp. 93-96.

the Black Muslims as an explanation for the pain and suffering inflicted upon Black people in America".¹⁵

Elijah Muhammad and his ministers applied every possible means and method to spread his 'Message' to the Black masses. Muhammad's strategy was to recruit African-Americans who were '*in the mud*' into the movement and to uplift their socio-economic status. In addition to the more ordinary places they also targeted unusual places and people: prisons, penitentiaries, ghetto streets, bars and pool halls were all recruiting grounds, with alcoholics, ex-convicts, deviants, pimps, prostitutes, and narcotic addicts being proposed converts.¹⁶

In the late 1940s, the Black Muslims discovered a very energetic convert called Malcolm Little, who was serving a ten year prison term for burglary in the Norfolk state prison. His cellmate whispered to him that: "The white man is the Devil". This gave him a rational explanation for the pain and suffering he had experienced, for example his father's death, the destruction of his family, his having to drop out of school and the years he worked as a hustler and pimp on the streets of Ruxbury and Harlem. With his brother's help and via correspondence with E. Muhammad Malcolm Little then converted.¹⁷ He rose to prominence as minister and the chief spokesman of Elijah Muhammad. The ability of Malcolm X as an orator and organiser enabled him to enjoy great popularity among Muslims and to lay bare some of the subterfuges endemic to American society, such as the 'myth of integration'.¹⁸ In short, Malcolm X was responsible for the expansion of the organisation, for popularising the teachings of the Nation of Islam, and for increasing the membership of the movement throughout the country (1952-1963).

By the late 1950s, the Nation of Islam had drawn widespread media attention¹⁹ as a result of its rapid growth and the realisation of its teachings about race. During the civil rights period Malcolm X had become one of the

15 Mamiya and Lincoln, "Black Militant and Separatist Movements: ...", p. 766; Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement..." (1988), p. 211.

16 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 31.

17 Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, London: Penguin Books, 1968, p. 256.

18 In July 1959, Mike Wallace made a TV documentary entitled "The Hate that Hate produced", about the movement, and this marked the beginning of America's awareness of the Black Muslims' presence and teachings. (Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 190; Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslim*, p. 74; Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pp. 339-346).

19 Curlew O. Thomas and Barbara Boston Thomas, "Natural History of the Transformation of the Black Muslim Movement", *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*, Vol. 14 (1), 1986, p. 73.

most articulate critics of racial injustice in the country. Rejecting the non-violent and integrationist approach of Martin Luther King Jr., he argued that separatism and self determination were necessary if Blacks were to achieve full equality.²⁰ But the rapid growth and heyday of Black Muslims faltered in the early 1960s and the movement became the centre of controversy due to internal and external factors, such as the sex scandals of Elijah Muhammad and his secretaries,²¹ rivalry for power and leadership²² - Malcolm's popularity overshadowed and challenged Elijah Muhammad's position - and Malcolm's impatient statement concerning the assassination of president John F. Kennedy; consequently, Malcolm X left the movement.²³ All of these factors caused a schism and disintegration within the movement. Mamiya puts forward three major factors for this: firstly, a power struggle for the leadership of the movement, secondly, serious disagreements over teachings and thirdly, the changing socio-economic conditions of members of the movement.²⁴ The first two reasons had already arisen in the case of the Nation of Islam and were the main causes of the schism.

Breaking away from the Nation of Islam in 1964, Malcolm made his pilgrimage to Mecca; here he observed the racial cosmopolitanism and tolerance of Islam and concluded that the teachings of the Nation of Islam were incompatible with his new understandings of the religion.²⁵ In order to carry out his understanding of Islam, he founded two organisations; one was in the religious realm, The Muslim Mosque Inc., while the other was secular and concerned with politics, the Organisation of Afro-American Unity.²⁶ A short time after establishing these organisations, Malcolm X was assassinated on February 21.²⁷ The assassination of Malcolm X left behind some unanswered questions, and within the movement led to internal disintegration. The life and death of Malcolm X helped to increase interest in orthodox Islam among Black Americans.

20 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 100.

21 Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p. 403; Martha F Lee, *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement*, Queenston and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press. (1988), p. 54.

22 Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pp. 398-400.

23 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 210; Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pp. 410-412.

24 Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement...", p. 215.

25 Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pp. 452-454; Mamiya and Lincoln, "Black Militant and Separatist Movements", p. 768.

26 Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pp. 427-28; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 211; Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslim*, pp. 80-81.

27 Mamiya and Lincoln, "Black Militant and Separatist Movements: ..." , p. 768; Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslim*, pp. 84-85.

Although Elijah Muhammad tried to keep alive the doctrines of the Nation and to hold the members together by concentrating on the millennial predictions concerning the Fall of America,²⁸ by mid-1975 he had slightly changed his policies and moderated his teachings by toning down his anti-white rhetoric; moreover, he now appeared to have moved a few steps closer to orthodox Islam.²⁹ When Elijah Muhammad died on the 25th of February, 1975, the Nation's policies and doctrines underwent modifications; there were even changes in racial perception or radical changes and outright reversals in direction with the accession of his son, Wallace Muhammad.

Following his election as Chief Minister of the Nation of Islam, Wallace Muhammad began the decultification of the followings he had inherited from Elijah Muhammad. He moved the members of the movement toward embracing orthodox Islam. He explained that the teachings of Wallace D. Fard and Elijah Muhammad were to be understood allegorically, not literally. He opened the doors of the Nation to white people and encouraged his followers to join in the civil and political life of the US. These changes reflected the organisational structure of the movement. He also introduced several names to the Nation of Islam in three stages; the first was the Bilalian,³⁰ the second, the World Community Al-Islam in the West and finally, the American Muslim Mission.³¹ Consequently, Wallace Muhammad completed the Islamisation of the Nation of Islam, changing ministers to imams, and temples became mosques and later masjids. He also changed his name from Wallace Muhammad to Imam Warith Deen Muhammad.³² However, these changes were rejected by some Black Muslims who had come together under the leadership of Minister Louis Farrakhan, who had been appointed as a National Spokesman of the movement after Malcolm X's death. This faction broke with the World Community Al-Islam in the West, in 1978,³³ returning to the

28 Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, pp. 60-70; Elijah Muhammad, *The Fall of America*, Chicago, 1973. The Book was compiled from his speeches and articles over several years about the millennial predictions on the fall and destruction of the America.

29 Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, p. 73-74. The improvement of relations between the Nation and Muslim Countries might be one of reasons and the white relations as well.

30 Lawrence H. Mamiya, "From Black Muslim to Bilalian: The Evolution of the Movement", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1982, Vol. 21(2), pp. 139-140. In choosing the name, Bilal was significant and the quest for identity and historical and racial roots in the history of Islam among the Black Muslims in America.

31 C. Eric Lincoln, "The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History", *The Muslim Community in North America*, eds. Earle H. Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban, and Regula B. Qurshi (Edmonton, Canada: University of Alberta Press, 1983), pp. 227-28.

32 *Ibid*, p. 229; Adolph Reed Jr., "The False Prophet I: The Rise of Louis Farrakhan", *The Nation*, January 21, 1991, pp. 54-55.

33 Edwin Black, "Would you buy a toothpaste from this man?: A few things you might not

original teachings and ideals of Elijah Muhammad, and readopting the old name, the Nation of Islam.

In short, while Imam Warith Deen Muhammad abandoned his father's provocative rhetoric and rejected his racist doctrines, Louis Farrakhan has kept the old dogmas alive. Muhammad tried to lead the Black Muslims deeper into the religion of orthodox Islam. Farrakhan, on the contrary, has taken them deeper into the realm of American politics.

III. The Relations between the Black Muslims AND the Orthodox Muslims in the U.S. and the Middle East

From the beginning, the Black Muslims of both the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam have traced their national and cultural roots of identity to the Muslim World. While the Moorish Science Temple was looking toward North Africa and calling themselves Asiatic and Moorish, with their homeland being Morocco, the Nation of Islam traced its origins to the Arab Peninsula, claiming that the founder of the cult came from the Holy City of Mecca and was a member of the royal dynasty of the Hashimide Sheriff, a branch of the tribe of Koreish (the tribe of Muhammad, the Prophet of orthodox Islam). Although these two movements considered themselves devout adherents to the Muslim faith, the Black Muslims were not generally accepted by orthodox Muslim groups, both indigenous and immigrant, as a real Muslim community in the US until the mid-1970s. For this reason, by the late 1950s, they had begun to look for recognition outside the US, that is, from the Muslim World. Here, the Moorish Science Temple will not be taken into consideration, due to its short-lived history and a lack of sources about it. Rather, the main focus will be on the Nation of Islam.

The history of relations between the Nation of Islam and the Orthodox Muslims in the US and the Middle East has developed in both negative and positive ways and is sometimes intense, primarily on religious, political, and economic grounds. The relations will be examined in three distinctive periods: the Elijah Muhammad era (the early 1930s-1975), the Imam Warith Deen Muhammad era (1975-mid-1980s), and the Louis Farrakhan era (1978-the early 1990s).

have known Louis Farrakhan", *Chicago Reader*, 1986, April 11, pp. 35-36; Reed, "The False Prophet I: The Rise of Louis Farrakhan", p. 55.

a) The Elijah Muhammad Period:

As has been indicated above, the Black Muslims, the Nation of Islam, were not recognised by orthodox Muslim groups in America. The race issue was not the main reason for this rejection, as some of the earliest Muslim converts in America had been the Black followers of Soufi Abdul-Hamid, an orthodox Black American Muslim.³⁴ Lincoln believes that the rejection of the Black Muslims was due to Elijah Muhammad's unorthodox Islamic teachings and doctrines. These were "his extreme racial views, his emphatic militancy and unhistoric teachings about the Black Nation".³⁵ The most contentious issues concerned doctrines and attitudes, which were directly in conflict with the actual Islamic faith. Ansari points out that these notable beliefs are *the Concept of God, the Prophethood, Resurrection and the Hereafter*.³⁶ In addition to these, because of his deviation from the doctrines of orthodox Islam's universal or all-embracing brotherhood of mankind, the Nation of Islam focused on Black supremacy and particularity. Therefore, many orthodox Muslim groups did not wish to be identified with such doctrines. Instead, they preferred to publicly disassociate themselves from Muhammad's movement.

During the 1950s, several Muslim group leaders, such as Al-Hajj Talib Ahmed Dawud,³⁷ the leader of the Moslem Brotherhood of America Inc, Nur-ul Islam,³⁸ (president of the Chicago Mosque, the Ahmadiya Movement), and Jamil Diab, a Palestinian teacher, criticized Muhammad's teachings. Immigrant Muslims reported that despite the use of a few prayers and occasional quotations from the Qur'an, Muhammad relied mainly on the Bible and that

34 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, pp. 182-183. Abdul-Hamid embraced Islam during his journeys in Asia. His followers remain scattered in the country in small numbers notably like Iman Amiri Baraba (Leroi Jones), and Abdul Jebbar (Lew Alcindor).

35 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*. 183; Morroe Berger, "The Black Muslims", 1964, *Horizon*, vol. 6.

36 Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "Aspects of Black Muslim Theology", *Studia Islamica*, 53, (1981), pp. 142-161.

37 Davud's attack on Muhammad began shortly after the white press had unleashed its expose of the Nation of Islam. He made his comments of Muhammad in *The Chicago New Crusader* and charged that Mr. Muhammad "does not believe in an unseen God" and in life after death. He carried to charge that Muhammad's followers do not practice five prayers a day as required of all true Moslems and hence do not regard as bona fide believers. (Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 313-317).

38 Several of the Ahmadiya Movement leaders such as Nur al-Islam, and Adib E. Nuriddin charged that Muhammad is a "race-hating, scheming, cynical and monopolise power and profit. They said that Muhammad claimed "He is a self-appointed Messenger of Allah. He teaches nationalism. Places emphasis upon economic, political and social independence. Religion for him is the last thing. It is a tool for these goals ..." Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 311-312.

his doctrines were directly opposed to orthodox Muslim doctrines. Some of the most significant critics were employees of the Nation of Islam. Jamil Diab, for instance, who occasionally worked at the University of Islam as an Arabic teacher, had a serious impact, and sowed the seeds which, after over a decade, contributed to the sprouting of orthodox Muslim ideas that are now being expounded by Warith Deen Muhammad.³⁹ Diab said that Muhammad's cult was totally lacking in the requisites to constitute a Muslim group.

"They have different religious books, prayers, their fasts, in fact the criteria by which Muslims judge an organisation or group to be an Islamic one -cannot be applied to this group ..."⁴⁰

Although from time to time the Nation of Islam employed individual Muslims like Jamil Diab from the Near and Middle East, the official body of the movement was very careful not to let such people teach the religion of Islam; rather they were employed to teach Arabic.

For the above reasons, most Middle Eastern Islamic organisations, such as The Federation of Islamic Associations, which is the official Muslim organisation in the United States and Canada, refused to acknowledge Elijah Muhammad as a true Muslim. It made an official statement to the effect that

"the Negro Society in Chicago led by Elijah Muhammad is not affiliated and is not recognised as truly Muslim. Although he conducts the largest Arabic school in the US, and claims to use the Qur'an as the basis for his teachings, the Federation officers have remained suspicious of him."⁴¹

In order to respond to these accusations and criticisms made by several orthodox Muslims at both individual and organisational levels, Muhammad readily admitted that some of the teachings and practices of his movement were at variance with those of other orthodox Muslim groups, but he argued that these differences derived from various interpretations of Islam. Islam requires different understandings and interpretations according to the context. Therefore, Muhammad found an excuse in interpreting Islam for the Black Americans who had suffered from slavery and harsh oppression, and

39 Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "W. D. Muhammad: The Making of 'Black Muslim' Leader (1933-1961)", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 2(2), 1985, pp. 255-256.

40 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, p. 318.

41 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, pp. 183 & 243. The similar statement has been made by other orthodox Muslim organisations in England, called *The Working Moslem Mission in Surrey*, in 1959. See Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 317-318.

argued that the orthodox Islamic faith was not appropriate to their needs. He said that

“My brothers in the East were never subjected to the conditions of slavery and systematic brainwashing by the Slave masters for as long a period as my people here were subjected. I cannot, therefore, blame them if they differ with me in certain interpretation of the message of Islam.”⁴²

In rejecting orthodoxy, Muhammad was careful not to reject Islam; neither, for that matter, did he reject all orthodox Muslims. He did not want to lose the recognition of the important and the more flexible officials in the Muslim countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, because it was his dream to have a solid Black Muslim community in the US that was recognised and supported by all Muslims throughout the world as a legitimate part of the International Muslim Community. The Black Muslims found the opportunity to contact the Muslim world by the mid-1950s through a short-lived magazine called *The Moslem World and the US*. The editor/publisher, Abdul Basit Naeem, was the US representative of the Jami'ut-ul Falah, a Pakistani religious organisation that expounded and propagated the Islamic faith. The magazine was avowedly pro-Nasser and pro-Arab. It was aimed at Muslims in the US as well as at Black nationalists, and contained news about Muslim political affairs concerning the Middle East, particularly Nasser's nationalisation policy in Egypt and the Algerian independence movement. Muhammad contributed several articles that dealt with the activities of his movement. Although Naeem was aware of the heterodox teachings of Muhammad, he served as a chief apologist and interpreter to the world of orthodox Islam. According to Naeem, Muhammad was

“the humblest of all important Black men ... extremely gentle, very courteous and kind ... and the core of Mr. Elijah Muhammad's teachings is, of course, the faith of Islam ...”⁴³

It seemed clear that Naeem's attention was to bring the Nation of Islam, step by step, from a racial line to the orthodox line of Islam and to unite it with the international Islamic community.

These cordial relations bore fruit in the late 1950s,⁴⁴ when the Nation of Islam got in touch with the Muslim World at an international level for

42 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 243; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, p. 80, (footnote 45).

43 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 185.

44 There are different dates about the first official relations between the Nation of Islam and the Muslim countries. For instance, Lincoln indicates January 1958, Essien-Udom, on the

the first time. In 1958, Elijah Muhammad wrote letters to and received replies from the heads of several states, including Ghana and Egypt.⁴⁵ For instance, he sent a message to President Nasser, who was then host to the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Cairo. Elijah expressed his feelings in his own words:

“Freedom, justice and equality for all Africans and Asians is of far reaching importance, not only to you of the East, but also to cover 17,000,000 of your long-lost brothers of African-Asian descent here in the West ... May our sincere desire for universal peace which is being manifested at this great conference by all Africans and Asians, bring about the unity and brotherhood among all our people which we all so eagerly desire (Elijah Muhammad)”⁴⁶

Nasser replied the message cordially: ...

“... May Allah always grant us help to work for the maintenance of peace, which is the desire of all peoples. I extend our wishes to our brothers of Africa and Asia living in the West (Gamal Abdel Nasir).”⁴⁷

The socio-economic and political changes in the fifties and sixties encouraged the millennial dreams of Black Muslims in the Middle East and Africa. Egypt in particular had special historical significance in the religious belief system of the Nation. According to Elijah Muhammad, alongside the Egyptian revolution of 1952, the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, the emergence of Pakistan in 1947, the independence of Ghana in 1957 and so forth had eschatological significance and increased the belief that the “*Devil*” was being driven out of the Original Black Man’s lands, indicating the fall of the white race.⁴⁸

Although relations between the Black Muslims and the Muslim World had been improved, they were still isolated and rejected by orthodox Muslims in the USA. To eliminate this negative image, Elijah Muhammad appointed Malcolm X as his *National Representative of the Nation of Islam* and sent him on a tour to Africa and the Middle East in July 1959, in order to both test the acceptability of the Nation and to look for recognition and political approval for the movement’s status as a true Muslim movement outside the

other hand, points 1959. Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 248; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, p. 279.

45 See the full text of mutual correspondence in Lincoln (1973), pp. 248-249; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, pp. 279-280.

46 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 248; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, p.280.

47 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 249.

48 Akbar Muhammad, “Muslims in the United States..”, Yvonne Y. Haddad, B. Heines and E. Findly (eds), *The Islamic Impact*, USA: Syracuse University Press, 1984, p. 206.

United States. Malcolm was welcomed as a “*Brother*”.⁴⁹ By the end of the same year, he and two of his sons set out on a tour to several Muslim countries in the Middle East, including Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia. He was received and honoured sincerely as a “*Muslim Brother*” by several Muslim scholars and political figures, including the late Sheikh Mahmut Shaltut, former Rector of Al-Azhar University and President Nasser of Egypt.⁵⁰ During his tour, he discussed some theological issues with the Middle Eastern scholars who were accompanying him. He realised that some beliefs, like the Concept of God and the mission of Prophet Muhammad, were in direct contrast to those he was propagating as fundamental to his theological and social teachings, and making them difficult to disregard. On his return to the US, he spoke proudly of his official reception as a statesman. He said that

“The whole world of Islam is behind me. I was received as a brother leader. I did not have to ask for a visa to make the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca, the Holy City. They asked me to go.”⁵¹

Both Malcolm X’s and Muhammad’s visits to Muslim countries had political implications, rather than religious ones. The Black Muslims, however, persisted with the unorthodox doctrines of the Nation of Islam, but by the mid-1960s these mutual relations between the Black Muslims and the orthodox Muslim world introduced ideological and theological dissent among members of the movement. This dissent became public with the departure of Malcolm X from the Nation and his subsequent assassination caused disintegration among the Black Muslims.

Apart from their relations with the Muslim World, the Black Muslims also addressed the American public in the 1960’s with the movement’s regular magazine, *Muhammad Speaks*, concerning news about their anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli attitude. The Muslim information came from Middle East Report, a widely read column in *Muhammad Speaks*, written by Ali Baghdadi, former president of the Organisation of Arab Students. The following quotation indicates their pro-Arab and anti-Israeli sentiments:

“The Arab people are faced with a pattern of Israeli aggression, occupation of land, exiling of Arab inhabitant, annexation of Arab territories, recognition of a

49 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 246, Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, p. 177.

50 Akbar Muhammad, “Muslims in the United States:..”, p. 205; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 248.

51 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 250.

fait accompli and then more US arms and more Israeli preparation for new aggression.”⁵²

What the Black Muslims meant with this reference to Arabs was the displacement of Palestinians by Israel. The Palestinian problem still remains central to not only the Black Muslims’ feelings, but also those of the orthodox Muslim World.

In the early 1970s, the Nation of Islam’s socio-economic programme for Black Muslim businesses to achieve economic independence was realised to some extent when it received a \$3,000,000 loan from the government of Libya. This economic and political support was further strengthened in 1972 when the prime minister of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar’s minister of finance visited Elijah Muhammad in the US. These two heads of States made economic endowments to the Nation of Islam to promote the cause of Islam in America.⁵³ These visits and conditional forms of support⁵⁴ made a significant contribution to the recognition of the Black Muslims as a part of the International Islamic Community. As a result, we can say that it is not clear whether it was due to visits by leading officials to Muslim countries or to the financial aid from the Muslim world that the Nation of Islam moderated its policies and teachings by the time of the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975.

(b) The Imam Warith Deen Muhammad Period:

With his death, the legacy of Elijah Muhammad came to an end and a new era in the history of the Nation of Islam, marked by a new rationality and a new understanding, began. The ascension of Warith Deen Muhammad to the leadership, as Supreme Minister of the Nation of Islam, was, in a sense, the symbolic birth of reason out of myth. Warith Deen gradually initiated a process of reconstructing the World Community of Islam in the West and its teachings, organisation, symbols and practices, not only to accommodate the Sunni doctrines of Islam, but also to be more consistent with its social context and environment in the US.⁵⁵

52 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, p. 181.

53 Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, p. 71.

54 John Ali (The Nation of Islam’s general secretary) made a statement concerning these visits and financial supports in *The New York Times*, December 6, 1973. He said that the money was given in exchange for a promise that the Nation would move closer towards orthodox Islam (Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, p. 72).

55 See further information about the doctrinal and organisational changes of the Nation of Islam in the line of its Islamisation process, Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, pp. 81-101; Lincoln,

Since Warith Deen's ascension to the leadership until the 1980s, the World Community of al-Islam in the West received a total of nearly \$3,500,000 in donations from a variety of Arab sources; all such donations were aimed to propagate the Islamic message in the "Western Hemisphere". For instance, in 1976, in order to teach orthodox, Sunni Islam to the Black Muslim community, Warith Deen received \$2,500,000 in financial support from Sheikh Sultan Bin Muhammad Al-Qassimi (the ruler of Sharja, an autonomous state in the United Arab Emirates), and \$1,000,000 from Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan, the ruler of Abu Dabi. Also in 1979, Warith Deen received a donation of about \$320,000 from the Secretary-General of the Islamic World Conference.⁵⁶

Apart from this financial support, some organisations, such as the Saudi Arabian Hajj (Pilgrimage) Committee, encouraged and organised tours for Black Muslims who wanted to make the Hajj.⁵⁷ The major aim was to unite and acquaint the American Black Muslims with the international Islamic Community through the hajj, an annual ritual ceremony which brings together Muslim people from all over the world.

Warith Deen Muhammad enjoyed cordial relations with the former Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, as had Elijah Muhammad with Sadat's predecessor, General Nasser.⁵⁸ In particular, Warith Deen was received and honoured sincerely as an "*American Mujaddid*", or reviver of faith, during his three-week tour to the Middle East in 1977 as the personal guest of King Khalid of Saudi Arabia and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. The most significant event that indicated an international recognition and acceptance of the American Black Muslim community by Muslim countries occurred when their leader was the only American observer invited to the 10th Annual Islamic Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which met in Fez, Morocco. Most importantly, in 1978, Warith Deen was named by the governments of the oil-rich Persian Gulf States, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, as the American imam who was the "sole consultant and trustee for all American Muslim organisations eligible to receive economic endowment

"The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History", pp. 227-29; Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement...", pp. 216-217.

56 Bruce Michael Gans and Walter L. Lowe, "The Islam Connection", *Playboy*, May 1980, Vol. 27, No. 5, p. 130.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Lincoln, "The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History", p. 230.

from those countries for the propagation of Al-Islam in the 'Western Hemisphere'.⁵⁹

However, these cordial relations and donations by Arab sources raised vital questions: What did the Arab states want from Warith Deen and his followers? Did they, in fact, plan to control him through their financial support or did they expect a favour in return? In 1978, they revealed their interests when they wondered whether Warith Deen Muhammad could play a role in the US-Middle East relations. In addition to their religious sentiment for the cause of Islam in the US, certain Arab factions enquired whether he would head up a nation-wide pro-Arabic Lobby to counteract America's pro-Israeli interests. In 1979, he was asked to represent the Palestinian rights at the United Nations. However, not only did Warith Deen turn down both offers, he also refused some awards that were offered by the Arab community in the US in connection with their interests.⁶⁰

In my view, Warith Deen displayed a rational and balanced policy towards the Middle East during the Carter administration, when the hostage crisis took place in Iran. The new Islamic Revolution was fully aware of the impact of Islam among a sizeable and sensitive segment of the Black Muslim community when Ayatollah Khomeini called for American Blacks to rise up against the "satanic" United States. This was a chilling moment in race relations; for the last three decades, Elijah Muhammad had taught his followers that the white man was the "blue-eyed devil" and white civilisation was an expression of their evil power.⁶¹ The US was fortunate in the late 1970s, because Muhammad was no longer in power and his teachings had been amended by his son, who worked to improve race relations; otherwise, there could well have been chaos and destruction throughout the country. In accordance with his former rational and well-balanced policy, Warith Deen did not heed this kind of call due to his convictions that any form of terrorism was not in accordance with the spirit of the Qur'an. Furthermore, Warith said he would argue against the actions of Ayatollah Khomeini concerning the hostage crisis, despite his personal revulsion at the reports of the Shah's cruelty.⁶²

By the early 1980s, Warith Deen Muhammad had accomplished a series of changes and reforms in doctrines, structure, administration, as well as

59 Lincoln, "The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History", pp. 230-31; Gans & Lowe, "The Islam Connection", p. 120.

60 Gans & Lowe, "The Islam Connection", p. 130.

61 Gans & Lowe, "The Islam Connection", p. 120.

62 Gans & Lowe, "The Islam Connection", p. 203.

in the name of the movement; there were also changes in official attitude towards race, political involvement and military service. There were efforts to eliminate racist and separatist teachings and to reinterpret other doctrines to achieve consistency with Sunni Islam.⁶³ In a word, the Black Muslims' doctrine had been de-eschatologised. Next, Warith Deen decentralised the Black Muslim community, by changing its structure and name to the "American Muslim Mission" in order to achieve full integration with major Sunni American Muslims.

c) The Minister Louis Farrakhan Period:

The enormous doctrinal and organisational transformations that occurred on a world-wide with the major reforms led by Imam Warith Deen Muhammad led to an important schism in the Muslim movement.⁶⁴ While Warith Deen had taken the Black Muslims closer to integration with orthodox Islam by successfully reforming and re-naming the movement, Louis Farrakhan, by contrast, merely rebuilt and brushed up the old teaching of the Nation of Islam.

In the early 1960s, like Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan was the minister of the Nation of Islam's important Boston Temple, and he was under the instruction of Malcolm X. He obviously side with Elijah Muhammad, the organisational and doctrinal founder of the Nation, against Malcolm in the bitter 1963-65 dissension that ended with the assassination of the latter. Farrakhan replaced Malcolm as minister of the Harlem Temple and later

63 See further information the catalogue of changes and reforms carried out by Warith Deen Muhammad; Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, pp. 81-98; Lincoln, "The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History", pp. 225-31; Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement...", pp. 216-217.

64 It was actually not the first schism that the Nation of Islam had experienced since the early 1930s. The first schism occurred in 1934 between Abdul Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad over theological issues when W. Fard mysteriously disappeared. (Lincoln, *The Black Muslims of America*, pp. 17-18). Afterwards, two splinter groups developed; one emerged in the 1960s among young members of Malcolm's Temple No. 7 and it was led by Clarence 13X Smith, called the Nation of Five percent. (Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement...", p. 225); the other emerged in 1973 because of some doctrinal disputes and was led by Hamaas Abdul Khalis who founded a sect of orthodox Hanafi Islam in Washington DC. (Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement...", p. 225; "Religious Split Among Blacks", *US News and World Report*, Feb. 5, 1973; Askia Muhammad, "Civil War in Islamic America", *The Nation*, June 11, 1977, pp. 721-724). Apart from those small groups, the most significant splits in the Black Muslim Movement occurred in 1964-65 with Malcolm X's departure from the Nation of Islam and between 1975-77 when the largest schism took place among, at that time, Wallace Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan (Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement...", p. 215; *Idem* [1982]).

became Muhammad's national spokesman. Consequently, he rose to prominence during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Muhammad's Nation was trying to establish a greater presence in the Black activist arena.

During the early 1980s, after his defection from the movement, Farrakhan preserved a relatively low profile. He formed his organisation by duplicating the forms of the old Nation and cultivated membership drawn from the Black lower classes.⁶⁵

Farrakhan did not become a national figure who was familiar with most Americans until the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson. From this time on, he attracted the attention of both Black and white people by making statements and comments concerning domestic politics, anti-Semitism and US policy towards the Middle East. Because of the limited scope of this paper, his relations with the Muslim world will be only briefly mentioned here. Most of Farrakhan's relations with Muslim countries have developed in a pragmatic fashion. His first contact with the Middle Eastern countries took place when he was building a programme known as POWER-People Organised and Working for Economic Rebirth. Like Elijah Muhammad, Farrakhan concentrated on the economic independence and socio-economic improvement of his followers. With the Nation's own limited sources, it was impossible to generate the funds that were required for a nation-wide tour simply by selling tapes and toiletries. Therefore, he called on a friend for help. This friend was Colonel Muammar Kaddafi of Libya, who had a history of friendship with the Nation of Islam; for instance, Kaddafi had supplied economic assistance to Elijah Muhammad in 1972. In February 1985, Farrakhan arranged for Kaddafi to make a special address to Black America via satellite in Chicago, during the Nation's annual "*Saviour Day Convention*". This gave him an opportunity to introduce the Libyan leader to the POWER economic policy. Subsequently, Farrakhan received a controversial \$5 million dollar interest-free loan⁶⁶ from Kaddafi, which is widely reported as having been granted after Farrakhan's visit to Tripoli in May 1985.⁶⁷

Farrakhan embarked upon an extended tour of the Middle East in early 1986, in order to promote his economic programme and, like other Black Muslims, to develop more fully the Nation's ties with Islamic countries. After

65 Reed, "The False Prophet I: The Rise of Louis Farrakhan", p. 55.

66 The financial support caused some speculation when the US and Libyan relations became intense in 1986, and even within the bank administration where the loan held, the Independence Bank of Chicago, Black, pp. 28-30.

67 Black, "Would you buy a toothpaste from this man?:...", p. 20; Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, p. 114.

his stopover in Tripoli, Farrakhan flew to Syria; here he met the PLO leader Abu Musa, who had led the Syrian-inspired El-Fatah rebellion against Yasser Arafat, and he was then officially received by the leaders of political party of the Syrian president, Hafez Assad. From Damascus, Farrakhan flew to the United Arab Emirates to meet with Dr. Ibrahim Ezzadine, an adviser to the leading Emirate sheikhs. These two men had been close since 1972.⁶⁸

Farrakhan's next stop was Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where in particular he wanted to meet with Idi Amin, the former Ugandan dictator. He says

"I liked Idi Amin. I thought he was a very strong man, very dedicated to his people, very committed to Uganda. I felt that he needed much more growth ... intellectual[and] spiritual as well ...".⁶⁹

From Jeddah, Farrakhan flew to Sudan, where he met with the leader behind the coup, Omar Basher, then, through Tripoli, he returned to the US. Consequently, his tour of the Middle East, made with the hope of building closer ties, played a speculative role in international politics and relations rather than having a role in the religious vision of Farrakhan's teachings. For instance, the relations between Libya and the Reagan administration became tense in 1986, when the US government issued an executive order forbidding Americans to visit Libya, and subsequently authorised the American bombing of Libya. Minister Farrakhan defied that order and vehemently spoke against it. He said that "the President had put himself in the position of 'chief evil' with aggressive actions against other nations, particularly those which are primarily Islamic".⁷⁰

The last event to which Farrakhan called the attention of both Americans and Muslims happened in the early 1990 during the Gulf Crisis. He denounced in strident terms the Bush administration's troop deployment. In the December 10 issue of *Final Call 1990*, the official magazine of his movement, Farrakhan attacked Bush for contemptuously sending "Blacks, Native Americans, ... Hispanics and even poor white boys and girls" to fight a war that was motivated only by "greed, material gain and [to] keep people in power [in the region] who bow down to the will of America".⁷¹ However, Farrakhan did not make any statement concerning Saddam Hussein's actions. He did not wish to antagonise heads of the Saudi and Kuwaiti States, which he regarded as fellow Muslims, not enemies. Reed describes Farrakhan's at-

68 Black, "Would you buy a toothpaste from this man?...", p. 22.

69 *Ibid.*

70 Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, pp. 119-120.

71 Reed, "The False Prophet I: The Rise of Louis Farrakhan", p. 54.

titudes towards the problem as: “by invoking Islamic solidarity and carefully avoiding any expression of support for Saddam or any hint of criticism of the deposed Kuwaiti regime or the Saudis, Farrakhan shows a concern not to alienate any possible Arab or Muslim source of good will.”⁷² Therefore, the Gulf Crisis posed a dilemma and a moment of indecision for Farrakhan. From the beginning, he had always remained a pragmatist in making policy and relations with the Middle East and generally with the Muslim World.

The political discourse of Farrakhan’s religion is conceivably disclosed by its fanatic and fervent anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism; this attracted mass media attention during the presidential campaign of Jackson when he described Jews as “*Hymies*” and Judaism as “*a gutter religion*”.⁷³ In using his notoriety, Farrakhan frequently referred to the Qur’an, claiming that it is inherently anti-Jewish. His unbalanced attitudes towards theological and religious issues led Muslim scholars in the United States, such as De Paul University’s Professor M. Cherif Bassiouni, and the nationally recognised Islamic thinker, former Professor Fazlur Rahman of the University of Chicago, to condemn him. For instance, Dr. Rahman criticised the movement saying that,

“Farrakhan is an extremist. When he uses the language of the Koran to condemn Jews, he is misinterpreting the Koran. The Koran makes clear that there are good men and bad men among all peoples, including Jews and Christians. He is a politician, not a man of God, and I think he should stop interpreting the Qur’an in a way that has nothing to do with Islam.”⁷⁴

However, Farrakhan began to moderate his policies towards traditional Islam from the late 1986 onwards, and to develop a programme of Qur’anic study for the improvement of his followers’ understanding of Sunni Islam. Similarly to Warith Deen Muhammad, Farrakhan partially changed the rhetoric he had used about race relations and doctrines of the Nation. The future prospects of Farrakhan’s Nation would enjoy economic prosperity while it would be transformed step by step to a stance closer to orthodox Islam. However, Farrakhan still seems to be stuck on Elijah Muhammad’s original doctrines concerning race relations and politics, and even, to some extent, religious issues. This gradual transformation of the Farrakhan’s Nation of Is-

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Milton Coleman, *The Washington Post* reporter who revealed Farrakhan’s notoriety about Jews and Judaism during the election campaign 1984. The Farrakhan reacted strongly calling Coleman “filthy traitor”, and threatening him that “one day soon we will threaten you with death” (Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, p. 108; Reed, “The False Prophet I: The Rise of Louis Farrakhan”, p. 56). That event led to damage the popularity of Jackson for the presidential election.

⁷⁴ Black, “Would you buy a toothpaste from this man?...”, p. 36.

lam has relatively produced visible and concrete results from the mid 1990s, especially from the early 2000s onwards. To analyse these developments is not in the scope of this paper. Rather it would be more appropriate to examine Farrakhan the Nation of Islam's policies, reforms, agendas and changes that he introduced in mainstreaming his community towards both the mainstream Islam and American society in a different work.

Conclusion

The Nation of Islam of the Black Muslims in its various forms and aspects, according to Mamiya and Lincoln, "is the longest lasting and most enduring of the Black militant and separatist movements in America". They add that the Nation made a significant contribution to "the development of the Black conscious" and paved the way for the emergence of an Islamic presence in America by introducing Islam as a fourth major alternative tradition in American society, alongside Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism."⁷⁵ The Black Muslims interpreted Islam to suit the peculiar needs of the Black population which was suffering from socio-economic problems in the hope of changing their social fortunes; eventually they formed a radically different world view through Islam. However, they used Islam not as a primary factor, but as a secondary one, in order to boost their own doctrines and eschatology. Therefore, the Nation served to combine Black identity with the culture of Islam to form the myth of Black supremacy. Nevertheless, these dogmas and teachings have been eroded, with the partial exception of Farrakhan's, stage by stage in line with their ongoing and changing relations to orthodox Islam and the Muslim World. The developments and relations between African American Muslims and the Muslim Organisations in the USA and the Muslim World from 1990 onwards need to be examined and analysed in detail in other study. This is because African American Muslims have entered a new phase in terms of their organisational structures, the adjustment and modification of their religious teachings in the process of mainstreaming, and their policies towards the American society and its establishments. As they have initiated and launched new forms of relations with mainstream American Muslim communities and organisations, as well as with the Muslim World in political, economical, and religious and moral solidarity terms through the influences and benefits of globalization, especially aftermath of September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the USA in order to form a common grounds in political, social cultural and religious perspectives.

75 Mamiya and Lincoln, "Black Militant and Separatist Movements", p. 770.

Özet

Özel siyah milliyetçi duruştan evrensel dine dönüşüm: Siyah müslümanlar örneđi

Bu makale, XX. yüzyılda ABD'de ortaya çıkan Siyah Müslüman Hareketi / Akımı (the Nation of Islam, NOI) diye bilinen tartışmalı grubun tarihsel evrimini ve dönüşümünü incelemektedir. Bu akım, siyah insanların kölelik döneminden bu yana maruz kaldıkları deneyimlere, kendilerine uygulanan tarihsel, ırkî, etnik ve siyasal politikalara reaksiyon olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Aynı zamanda bu makale, Siyah Müslüman Hareketi'nin ABD'deki Müslüman kuruluşlarla ve İslâm dünyasındaki resmi otorite ve organizasyonlarla olan ilişkileri ve karşılıklı etkileşimlerinin akımın kurumsal yapısını, dinî öğreti ve politikalarını nasıl etkilediđini ve yönlendirdiđini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu da akımın siyah milliyetçi duruş ve çevreden meşru dinî topluluđa ve merkez Amerikan toplumuna doğru evrilişini ve dönüşümünü gösterir. Fakat makalenin çerçevesi, 1950-1990 yılları arasındaki süreci kapsamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Siyah Müslümanlar, Siyah Müslüman Hareketi, Amerikalı Müslümanlar, Ortadođu ve ABD'de Müslüman kuruluşlar ve politikaları.