

Islam and the Region

How did the religions of the region influence social life?

ISLAM

Some Africans were Muslims but they had to abandon this when they were forcibly transported to the West Indies. This religion revived with the introduction of the East Indian immigrants.

The central figure of this religion is the Prophet: Mohammed. Muslims believe in one God. His name is Allah. There were five important pillars which each Muslim had to practice on a daily basis. They had to pray three times a day at particular hours facing Mecca. The masses felt that this was too demanding. It would not fit in with the strenuous workload that they had to carry.

Gender Relations

The man of the house had ultimate power in house matters and decision making. Women were not allowed to be educated. Fathers sent sons but not daughters to school. At the mosque or masjid, the men sat together at the front while the women huddled together at the back.



Masjid

Family Life

Men were the head of the house hold Women were home makers. They stayed home and raised the children. Boys were considered more important than girls and were generally privileged. Both Hindus and Muslims practiced arranged Marriages and got married at an early age. Most women did not leave their home without a veil covering their hair and sometimes a robe covering their clothing. They were teased for their dress and beliefs.

Muhammed Khan came to Jamaica in 1915 and built Masjid Ar-rahman in Spanish Town (1957) Masjid Hussein (another organization) was built in Westmoreland. British Guiana and Trinidad had the largest Muslim population and number of Mosques since they received the most East Indians in the migrants during the

period of slavery.



The Mosque in Port of Spain, Trinidad, Trinidad and Tobago

Festivals

The festivals were most commonly practiced in Trinidad and Guyana. The two most known festivals are Ramadan and Hosein. A number of the lower classes found the thrill, color and pageantry of Hosein very attractive and they would actually join the processions.

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar Calendar. During this month Muslims all over the world abstained from food drink and pleasure. Young children, elderly, chronically ill and the pregnant were exempted. This was conducted in order to purify the soul and reconnect with God. This was something that African men felt they definitely could not manage!

Conflicts

Name calling: some were scorned due to the fact that some blacks were Muslim. They were ridiculed by other religions because of the five pillars (praying five times a day)