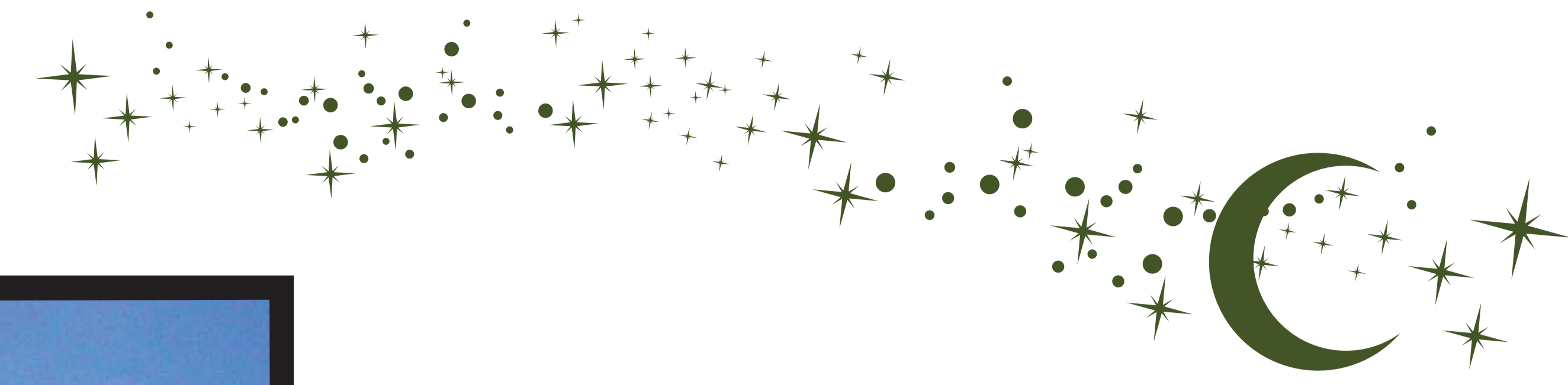


Islam in Suriname



From the start of the colonial establishment of Suriname, formerly known as Dutch Guyana, Islam has had its presence there. At that time the Dutch had been actively engaging in the transatlantic slavetrade, slaves were being taken from West Africa.

A common misconception amongst many historians (often deliberately) is that all slaves brought to Suriname originated from Ghana, this however is not true.

A certain number of slaves were being transported through Fort Elmina and also through Goree Island (Senegal), these being the most western locations, they were primarily used as a transshipping location and not as a prime sourcing location for slaves. Meaning that the slaves were not necessarily from that area. Slaves were kidnapped during wars and raids further inland. Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Mali, Guinee Bissau were the primary sources for slaves. All these countries had Muslim populations at that time and also suffered from the slave trade.

There are estimations that up to 30% of the slaves were of Muslim origin. The Muslim tribes that were being shipped to Suriname and the rest of the Americas were: the Fulani, the Hausa, the Wolof, the Mandinka and many more. Due to the cruel and christian nature of the slavery regime, Islam was not able to survive amongst the second generations of Muslim descendants. There is however evidence that indicates that Muslims played a significant role in the Maroon rebellion wars. Prime examples were the famous Maroon leaders Alabi and ZamZam.

The name Alabi is derived from the name Arabi which in Arabic language means Arab. The name ZamZam is derived from the famous holy water source the ZamZam, it is also a common name amongst African Muslims. These facts are a strong indication that these two heroes of the Surinamese slave resistance were Muslims.

The second wave of Muslim presence in Suriname were the Indian and Indonesian indentured labourers, whereby the Indonesians were the largest Muslim group as they were all practising Islam in Indonesia. The Indians were a mixed group of Hindu majority and a Muslim minority. With the arrival of Indian and Indonesian Muslims, Islam had resurrected in Suriname. And with the establishment of many mosques Islam once again became visible in Suriname. In recent years there has been a revival interest of Afro-Surinamese including from the Maroon community regarding Islam. Islam has gained a permanent foothold in Suriname.

Suriname has an estimate of 75.053 muslims (2012), equal to 14% of the population, thus giving Suriname the highest percentage of muslims within the America's.



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