

JACKSON, SHERMAN. *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking
Toward the Third Resurrection*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005.
pp. 235

The psyche of the modern African American is still imprisoned in the tragic history of his unplanned beginning. The past is a constant reminder of his present being. His every action, thought, emotion, and motivation stems from the adventitious roots of his yesteryears. Yet, there was a force that held everything together. The binding factor in the African American experience, according to Sherman Jackson, was Black Religion, *religio negra*, a facile connector of all blacks. In my estimation, Jackson's Black religion in reality was *spiritus negrus*, the collective, silent, innate, resistant spirit that defied tyranny during those torturous and nightmarish centuries. Jackson in his book identifies Black religion as the uniting, life-giving elixir, a draught, which he believes, can still work its magic today, and hence, must be consumed by all African American Muslims especially, if they are to survive recent challenges that threaten to alter, weaken, and depose their voice in society.

According to Jackson, in the case of the Blackamerican Muslim today, his existence is jeopardized and marginalized by Immigrant Islam in the US. This, as Jackson rightfully states, is a phenomenon of recent import, and the Blackamerican Muslim, who owed his choice of Islam to none, is displaced by the imposing nature of the immigrant Muslim, who sees himself as the repository of Islamic knowledge. Jackson suggests that the appropriate response to this is "Blackamerican Muslim mastery and appropriation of the *Sunnism super-tradition*" which he hopes will bring about a "Third Resurrection," an awakening that is necessary for the survival of the Blackamerican Muslim. The result of this mastery, according to him, will stamp out the possibility of domination, provided that the knowledge is not used to regurgitate the ideas of "immigrant or overseas masters." For Jackson, it is the blind acceptance of the ideologies of Immigrant Islam that poses to displace the heritage and history of the modern Blackamerican Muslim and result in the

effacement of his identity, caused by a conscious act that, more often than not, concludes in predictable unconscious assimilation.

One could argue that the readiness with which Immigrant Islamic ideologies are accepted by African American Muslims is because of their desire to practice the religion in what appears to them to be its pristine form. They may see Immigrant Islam in this light, though Jackson's fears are valid, that is, the possibility of African Americans accepting "false universals" as truths. However, in the absence of viable alternatives within the African American milieu, one cannot fault the seeker for looking at what he sees as real Islam because he can only ascertain truth to the best of his ability. The many truths that serve as valid outlets to different situations (*ahwāl*) and customs (*urf*) as borne out by the verse "we have made you different... so that You can learn from one another," and the hadith, "differences in my people are a blessing," encourage thinking and diversity.

Though Jackson criticizes the African Americans eagerness to be led, he is quick to caution the reader that "Immigrant Islam is not synonymous With Immigrant Muslims," especially since those of the second and third generations from amongst the immigrants too "are actually opposed to its hegemony." Obviously, new generations tend to naturally assimilate into a dominant society and experience similar problems and pressures as the indigenous segment. In this, Jackson should have found a tangible, possible outlet to his problem that is more wholesome: the possibility of acceptance by fellow detractors to any authority or collective council, be it black or otherwise—those wary of not only the predicaments of the American society, but cognizant of palpable Islamic Solutions. In this regard, Jackson could have argued that the African American Muslim, by virtue of his historical advantage, is eminently positioned to take the lead.

On the issue of the attitude of Muslim immigrants to "whiteness," Jackson's argument falters. If the African American's "inability to see whiteness as an idiosyncrasy with the same immediacy with which we see blackness or Hispanicness [is] that [which] preserves the former's status as a neutral, objective benchmark" is true, then for the Muslim immigrants of the Indo-Pakistani persuasion, on the contrary, it spells superiority. Jackson is