

Mosque Near Siege Area Is Focal Point for Blacks

By RONALD SMOTHERS

For the last three years, in a three-story building at 52 Herkimer Place in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, the Ya Sin Mosque has been a gathering spot and place of worship for a growing number of predominantly black Brooklynites who have converted to orthodox Islam and become Sunni Muslims.

Attention was focused on the mosque last week after its ministers were invited to the scene of a 47-hour siege of a sporting-goods store on the border of the Bushwick and Bedford-Stuyvesant sections. They had been called by a mayoral aide to translate the Arabic spoken by one of four men, who professed to be Sunni Muslims.

A policeman was killed and nine persons were held hostage in the shootout.

Court Hearing Delayed

A Criminal Court hearing on murder, kidnapping and robbery charges for Salih Ali Agdulah, 25 years old, Dawud ar-Raahman, 22, and Shuaib Abdulah Raheem (Carey Earl Robinson), 25, was postponed yesterday pending expected grand-jury action in the case next week. The fourth man, Yusef Abdulah Almussudug, 20, is recovering from gunshot wounds suffered in the incident and has not been arraigned.

Minister Abdullah Rahman and three other mosque officials said this week that the four men may have prayed at the mosque, but were not known to mosque officials. He stressed that the action they are accused of did not accurately portray the beliefs of the Ya Sin community.

The Ya Sin, along with the larger Dar-ul-Islam Movement of which it is a part, is one of many, mostly black groups of converts to Islam who exhibit sharp differences that are partly mirrored among the Brooklyn groups.

While mosque officials would not discuss the size of the community, its presence in the area has long been noticeable along the nearby Nostrand Avenue business area, where groups of men dressed in loose-fitting shirt-like garments and women with ankle-length dresses and covered heads walk to and from the mosque. Often, above the bustle of the area, the Arabic chant of the muaththin can be heard as he summons area Muslims to their obligatory prayers five times a day.

The daily prayers, the belief in Allah as the one and only God, the fasting during the Ramadan (mid-autumn), the payment of 2½ per cent of annual income to the community and at least one pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi

Arabia are the basic tenets of Islam, Minister Abdullah said.

The Ya Sin is one of an estimated 15 Sunni mosques in the city where 15,000 converts to orthodox Islam pray. The Sunni, along with the Shia, make up the two main branches of Islam. The Sunni have four schools named after ancient codifiers of the Islamic doctrine.

Minister Abdullah said the four schools—Hanafi, Shafi, Hanbali and Maliki—did not differ radically and were all recognized as orthodox.

Koran Followed

"Rather than to say we are of any of these schools," he said, noting that the distinction between the four is not made by the mosque, "we merely say we are adhering to the law of the Quran." The Quran, or Koran, is the holy book of Islam, which is considered the top authority along with the account of the life of the prophet Muhammad called the Hadith.

"The Quran was the only book that I had studied that could not be contradicted," said Minister Abdullah, who has been a Sunni Muslim for eight years. "It is a walking living book."

One adaptation of the Quran, mosque officials said, is the Nation of Islam, or Black Mus-

lims, who are followers of Elijah Muhammed. "The Quran describes a Muslim as one who adheres to the five basic tenets and doesn't describe the color of his skin," said Minister Abdullah, criticizing the Black Muslim doctrine barring whites from Islam.

One Moslem official speculated that Islam, viewed as a growing phenomenon among blacks, attracted them mainly because of its all-inclusiveness as a "way of life." Its dictates regarding prayer, dress and diet have to be observed in a community atmosphere that is more natural not only to blacks, but to all men, he said. Furthermore, he said, Islam establishes a balance between the material world and the spiritual world "and asks only that you be a man and not a spiritual superman," as he said was required in Christianity.

Mosque officials insist that the way of life and the community atmosphere required by Islam do not isolate followers from the larger community. In most instances, they said, area schools have agreed to allow Sunni Muslim students to leave school early on Friday, or Juma, for required weekly congregational prayers. The mosque has also established the Muslim Rover Scouts, patterned after the Boy Scouts, which is open to non-Muslims.